

ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL TRUST IN CANADA: IS THERE A DEEPENING DIVIDE?

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Abstract. This study uses Canada's 2008 General Social Survey to assess ethno-racial variations in political trust. Patterns differ substantially among Canada's three major minority communities. While French and visible minority Canadians exhibit the highest political trust of all groups in the study, Indigenous Peoples express the lowest trust. The British, Other Europeans, and Mixed-Origins Canadians also indicate below-average trust. Multivariate analyses show certain "ethno-cultural markers" – religion, language, immigration status – are important for understanding the trust levels of the French and visible minorities. However, controlling for socioeconomic factors – education, income – and social engagement influences – voluntary association activity, ethnic diversity of friendships – has little impact for these two groups. None of the control variables explains the lower trust among Indigenous Peoples. The latter results underscore the unique position of Indigenous Peoples and their longstanding negative experiences with Canada's political system.

Keywords: Political trust; Minorities; Indigenous; French Canada

Résumé. Cet article utilise l'Enquête sociale générale de 2008 pour comparer la confiance politique des groupes ethniques au Canada. Les minorités francophones et les minorités visibles ont la plus grande confiance, et les peuples autochtones ont les plus faibles. Les Britanniques et les autres Européens sont en dessous de la moyenne. Les résultats suggèrent que les minorités francophones et les minorités visibles ont davantage confiance dans le fait que le gouvernement protège leurs droits, mais les peuples autochtones, en raison de mauvais traitements dans le passé et dans le présent, ont une faible confiance dans le gouvernement.

Mots clés: Confiance politique; Minorités; Indigène; Canada français

INTRODUCTION

Canada is among the world's most ethnically and culturally diverse countries, with a high percentage of foreign-born and visible-minority citizens, a large French-speaking minority, and a sizeable Indigenous population (Statistics Canada 2010, 2013). For some time, researchers have been interested in the implications of this ethno-racial diversity for societal cohesion (Aizlewood and Pendakur 2005; Soroka et al. 2007; Breton 1990, Breton et al. 2004; Kazemipur 2006; Reitz 1980; Wu et al. 2011).

The present paper considers one crucial indicator of societal cohesion: trust in government, or what I label "political trust." Scholars have argued that, along with trust in other people, political trust is one of the two most important facets or dimensions of cohesion in Canadian society (Breton et al. 1980; Soroka et al. 2007). This argument suggests that democratic societies like Canada are more coherent when citizens are confident that government agencies and officials act in the public interest, protecting people's rights and interests. Political trust is an important element of more generalized trust which, as Simmel (1908:318) argued, is "one of the most important synthetic forces within society."

My central goal is to determine whether three sets of explanatory factors account for ethno-racial differences in political trust. These factors include: (1) three "ethno-cultural markers" – religion, language, and immigration status; (2) two socioeconomic influences – education and income; and (3) two social engagement indicators – voluntary association activity and ethnic diversity of friendship networks. I use the term ethno-cultural marker to distinguish this set of factors from ethno-racial background itself, while signifying that the three markers share clear empirical and conceptual overlaps with ethnicity or race. This is the first analysis to consider the relative explanatory value of all these variables, and is one of the few studies to include Indigenous Peoples when comparing political trust across Canada's major ethno-racial communities.

RESEARCH ON ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL TRUST

The link between ethno-racial background and trust should be a prime concern for researchers studying ethnic and race relations. One scholar has argued that "race is *the* life experience that has the biggest impact on trust [emphasis in the original]" (Uslaner 2002:91). Smith (2010:47)

has commented similarly that “race is the most important determinant of trust” in the United States. Considerable attention has been devoted to ethnic and racial variations in *interpersonal* or *social* trust. Research in both Canada (Johnston and Soroka 2001; Soroka et al. 2007; Breton et al. 2004; Reitz and Banerjee 2017; Hwang 2016) and the United States (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Smith 2010; Uslaner 2002, 2011; Wilkes 2011) has generally found that ethno-racial minorities express lower social trust than do non-minorities.

There is also a large general literature on political trust (Brooks and Cheng 2001; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Dalton 2004, 2005; Inglehart 1997; Levi and Stoker 2000; Miller and Listhaug 1990; Nevitte 1996; Norris 1999; Perlin 1997; Putnam 2000). However, relatively few studies have assessed ethno-racial differences in political trust, especially in Canada. Most American studies show that blacks are less trusting than either whites or Latinos, although the differences are often modest, particularly when compared to differences in social trust (Abrahamson 1983; Howell and Fagan 1988; Cole 1973; Putnam 2000; Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). Some studies find political trust among blacks is either the same as or slightly higher than that of whites (Cantril and Cantril 1999; Emig et al. 1996; Nunnally 2011, 2012). A consistent outcome in American research concerns the police and criminal justice system. Blacks report having more negative experiences with both law enforcement and the justice system than do other groups (Carr et al. 2007; Tuch and Weitzer 1997; Weitzer and Tuch 2004; Nunnally 2012). A study comparing multiple ethno-racial groups also found that blacks had the most negative views about criminal justice in the US, with Asians and whites the most positive and Latinos and Native Americans in between (Hagan et al. 2005).

Canadian research is more limited, mainly focusing on French-English differences. In early research, French Canadians, especially in Quebec, expressed comparatively less satisfaction with and more isolation from the federal government (Roseborough and Breton 1968; Simeon and Elkins 1974; Grabb 1979). Recent studies, however, show that French respondents now have somewhat higher levels of political trust than other Canadians (Soroka et al. 2007; Grabb and Curtis 2005; Henderson 2004).

Using data from the 1991 World Values Survey, one study compared political trust among multiple ethno-racial categories, including: “white non-ethnic,” “white ethnic,” “non-white,” and French respondents (Johnston and Soroka 2001). The white non-ethnic group, most of whom self-identified as “English Canadians,” expressed slightly higher political trust, but the differences across groups were

small. A more recent analysis used the Canadian and American samples of the 2001 World Values Survey to compare ethno-racial attitudes about four political institutions: the federal government, the civil service, political parties, and the police (Grabb et al. 2009b). Sample size limitations restricted the ethno-racial comparison to “white” versus “non-white.” Like most studies in the US, the findings indicated lower confidence in the police among American non-whites. In Canada, however, there were no racial differences regarding the police. Moreover, non-whites were significantly more likely than whites to be confident in the other three institutions. The authors concluded that the higher political trust among non-whites in Canada could reflect their being predominantly foreign-born. Presumably, most foreign-born Canadians actively and willingly chose to come to Canada, suggesting that they see both the country and its government in positive terms (Grabb et al. 2009b:392).

For Indigenous Peoples, the evidence is even more limited. Some research shows that Indigenous Peoples, especially the young, are more disillusioned with the political process than other Canadians, and less likely to participate politically (Taiaiake et al. 2007; Elections Canada 2012). Indigenous experiences with the justice system have also been more negative (Canadian Criminal Justice Association 2000; Hagan and Leon 1977), as have their views about the police (Perreault 2011; Statistics Canada 2009).

Overall, then, the Canadian evidence, though not extensive, suggests that both French Canadians and visible minorities, especially in recent times, express more trust in political institutions than do other Canadians. In contrast, political trust among Indigenous Peoples appears lower than for other groups, including other minorities.

EXPLAINING ETHNO-RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL TRUST

Ethno-cultural Markers

Central to this analysis are explanations that involve ethno-cultural markers, i.e., cultural factors that are often closely linked with, but analytically separable from, ethnicity or race *per se*. When Martin Luther King Jr. expressed his dream that his children would “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character,” he was identifying the unfortunate truth that simply having a skin colour that is *visibly* different from the majority can profoundly affect how minorities relate to and are treated by others.

A principal contention of the present paper is that religion, language affiliation, and immigration status constitute significant ethno-cultural markers that, like race, are often visible or otherwise identifiable. While typically not as obvious as skin colour or other physical traits, these markers can have similarly important effects, and can be observable in various ways, e.g., wearing clothes or symbols signifying a religion that is not the majority faith; publicly speaking a language different from the majority language; or speaking the majority language with a discernibly “foreign” accent. Hence, religion, language, and immigration status are important characteristics that often identify people as distinct from the majority, and so can affect how minority group members are perceived by and perceive others (see Breton 2012). These factors can be viewed as component elements in a more general explanatory approach that unpacks key social processes underlying ethno-racial relations, including trust relations.

This hypothesis stems partly from analyses of the “social boundaries” separating cultural groups (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnar 2002) and from early American research on “social distance” by Bogardus (1925, 1928, 1967). Social distance denotes the degree that majority ethno-racial groups place boundaries between themselves and others. Bogardus showed that individuals from dominant ethnic groups (e.g., those with northern or western European backgrounds) preferred to have their closest social interactions with people culturally similar to themselves. They were less accepting of people from eastern and southern Europe, who shared only some of their characteristics, (e.g., being European and mainly Christian), and were least accepting of ethno-racial groups who were the most culturally distinct (e.g., blacks, Asians, Hispanics). More recent studies have shown a decline in social distance over time, but the same general ranking has persisted (Kleg and Yamamoto 1998; Parillo and Donoghue 2007; Bleich 2009; Hagendoorn 1993). Relevant Canadian studies have shown similar tendencies for majority Canadians to set themselves apart, expressing the most positive attitudes about people who are like themselves, and offering more negative views about ethno-racial minorities (Berry et al. 1976; Pineo 1977; Reitz and Breton 1994; Li 2003; Satzewich 2011).

What the work on social boundaries and social distance has generally not addressed are the perceptions of minority group members themselves, who can experience a sense of separateness or exclusion because of these mechanisms. That is, a reciprocal process can occur, in which individuals on both sides of the minority-majority divide come to accept, or be resigned to, this socially constructed reality. For

minority group members, this process tends to lead to lower social trust (Hwang 2016). In the case of *political* trust, however, I suggest that the opposite occurs, at least for minority groups who have reason to be positive about government. Specifically, both the French and visible minorities enjoy important legal and political protections, through initiatives like the Official Languages Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Multiculturalism Act, and, for immigrants, Canada's various Immigration Acts (Grabb and Curtis 2005; Boyd and Vickers 2017). Consequently, the French and visible minorities are likely to have relatively high political trust. Moreover, these trust patterns could be partly explicable by the markers of religion and language for the French, and by religion, language, and immigration status for visible minorities.

In contrast, the expectation is that Indigenous Peoples will express comparatively low political trust. Unlike the French and visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples have not received the same protections through such government policies as the Official Languages Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Multiculturalism Act. Even more problematic have been other government initiatives, including elements of the Indian Act and the infamous system of residential schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015; Furniss 2002). These government actions have entrenched many of the injustices experienced by Indigenous Peoples, making it understandable that they would be less trusting of political institutions and agencies.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic factors comprise a second set of explanations for ethno-racial differences in trust. Canadian research shows that minorities, including Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, and the French, typically earn lower incomes than the British and other more privileged groups. These income gaps have reduced over time, partly because some minorities, especially visible minorities, have above-average education; nevertheless, socioeconomic inequalities persist (Hou et al. 2009; Pendakur and Pendakur 1998, 2002; Reitz and Banerjee 2017; Davies and Guppy 2014; Fortin 2017). Researchers have also concluded that problems of prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization underlie the socioeconomic disadvantages of ethno-racial minorities (Henry and Tator 2005; Satzewich 1998; Satzewich and Lioudakis 2007).

Consequently, disadvantaged minority group members may feel that government should do more to enhance opportunities and remove obstacles to social mobility. The findings for the effects of socioeconomic

factors on political trust have been mixed (Soroka et al. 2007; Reitz and Banerjee 2017; Grabb et al. 2009b). Additional research is necessary to determine whether income and education mediate the relationship between ethno-racial background and trust.

Social Engagement Explanations

Social engagement influences could also account for political trust differences. In this analysis, two such factors are considered: voluntary association activity and ethnic diversity of friendship networks.

First, researchers argue that people who participate in voluntary organizations are more likely to develop a sense of trust in political institutions (Uslaner 1998; Stolle 1998; Putnam 2000). Involvement in the parapolitics of different organizations can enhance the belief that the democratic system works and, therefore, that civic officials and government agencies are generally trustworthy (Curtis et al. 2009). In Canada, Veenstra (2002) found a weak but positive relationship between voluntarism and political trust. One review of international studies also suggests a positive relationship between voluntarism and political trust, although the findings were not completely consistent across countries (Newton 2001).

Canadian research generally indicates that minority and non-minority groups differ in their voluntary association involvement, which could partly account for ethno-racial variations in political trust. Studies show that French Canadians, especially in Quebec, report below-average voluntary activity (Caldwell and Reed 2000; Curtis and Grabb 2002; Hwang et al. 2007), as do some visible minority communities (Baer 2008; Breton et al. 2004; Johnston and Soroka 2001). One analysis of national survey data (Grabb et al. 2009a) found that Latin American and East Asian Canadians were below-average on voluntary memberships, but that South Asians, Indigenous Peoples, and Jewish Canadians, were at or above the average (also Chui et al. 1991). Overall, the research suggests significant ethno-racial variation in association membership, which could affect ethno-racial differences in political trust.

A second social engagement factor is social networks, which some researchers see as crucial for developing trust (Glanville and Paxton 2007; Stolle 2001). The possible bridging effects of networks may be especially important if individuals establish contacts with people whose backgrounds are different from their own. The network measure considered here is ethnic diversity of friendships. Ethno-racial minorities who have close acquaintances from diverse backgrounds

seem less likely to experience cultural barriers in their relations with others, enhancing their trust in both civic institutions and society generally. Putnam (2007) concluded, based on contextual evidence, that ethnic heterogeneity may actually reduce trust (see also Hou and Wu 2009). However, the results of most contextual studies contradict this conclusion (Abascal and Baldassarri 2015; Kesler and Bloemraad 2010; Kazemipur 2006). There are few individual-level studies of this topic, but Uslaner found that ethnic diversity is positively associated with trust (Uslaner 2011). Given the shortage of research, especially in Canada, the present analysis explores whether ethnic diversity of friendship networks has a positive effect on political trust, and whether this accounts for differences across ethno-racial communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research questions are:

1. Do ethno-racial groups differ significantly on political trust? In particular, do visible minorities and French respondents express higher trust than other Canadians, and do Indigenous Peoples express lower trust than other Canadians?
2. Are ethno-racial differences in political trust partly attributable to ethno-cultural markers (religion, language, immigration status), socioeconomic influences (education, income), and social engagement factors (voluntary association activity, ethnic diversity of friendships), and which explanatory variables are most influential?
3. Are ethno-racial differences in political trust affected by controls for region, age, and gender?

DATA AND METHODS

Sample

The data are from the 2008 General Social Survey Public Use Microdata File. Because the analysis focuses on adults well-established in their lives (e.g., those with a completed education), only respondents older than age 24 are considered. The working sample includes 17,374 cases. Survey estimates were weighted to represent the target popula-

tion, but weighting produces too large a sample for meaningful statistical significance tests. Therefore, the weight was adjusted by dividing the sample weight variable by its average weight. Because of the large sample, results that are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < .05$, $p < .01$, $p < .001$) represent minor substantive effects. Consequently, I apply a more conservative alpha level, concentrating on findings significant at $p < .0001$.

Measuring Political Trust

Six items were selected to measure political trust. Respondents were asked how much confidence they had in: the police; the justice system and courts; the health care system; the school system; the welfare system; and the federal parliament. Answer choices were: a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, and no confidence at all.

Combining the six items into a composite measure produces a scale with high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). Factor analysis confirmed that the six items produce a clear single-factor solution. To construct the scale, response scores on the six items were summed, after being standardized using Z-score transformations. Items were also weighted using the component score coefficients from the factor analysis, to account for the different weight that each measure contributes to the underlying construct derived from the factor analysis. The component score coefficients are: police (.225), justice system and courts (.268), health care system (.248), school system (.249), welfare system (.247), and federal parliament (.248). The trust scale is a standardized variable, with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.0. Bivariate findings are reported for all six individual items and the overall scale, but multivariate analyses involve the scale only. Mean values were substituted for the few missing cases for each item. Preliminary analyses revealed virtually the same results with missing cases excluded.

Ethno-racial Background

The main independent variable, *ethno-racial background*, has six categories: British (the reference category); French; Other European; Indigenous; visible minority; Mixed-Origins. Mixed-Origins respondents, i.e., those giving multiple answers about their ethnic ancestry, are included to explore the hypothesis that people with multiple ethno-racial identities have established more bridges to other groups, through ethnic intermarriage, for example, which could enhance trust.

A “Canadian” category was retained in analyses to maintain sample size, but not reported in tables, because the vast majority were French Quebecers with patterns virtually identical to the French group in the tables. An “Other” ethno-racial category was also retained in the analyses, but not reported, due to its indeterminate nature.

Explanatory Controls

Immigration status compares native-born and foreign-born respondents, with the foreign-born subdivided by their period of arrival in Canada. Immigration status is not a relevant factor for the French and Indigenous Peoples, who are overwhelmingly Canadian-born, but is pertinent for other ethno-racial groups. Responses were: Canadian-born (the reference category); immigrated in 2000 or later; immigrated in 1990-99; immigrated in 1980-89; immigrated in 1970-79; immigrated before 1970. Dividing foreign-born respondents by immigration period allows a test of whether, as previous studies show, immigrants increasingly resemble the native-born on various social integration indicators, the longer they have been in Canada (Soroka et al. 2007; Breton 1964; Hou et al. 2009; Reitz and Banerjee 2017).

Religion includes four categories: no religion; Roman Catholic; Protestant (the reference category); non-Christian. Canadian research suggests that, compared to Protestants, Catholics and other denominations have higher political trust (Soroka et al. 2007; Stolle et al. 2008; Grabb et al. 2009b).

Language is respondent’s household language, grouped into: Anglophone (the reference category); Francophone; Allophone. Recent studies suggest that the Francophone and Allophone minorities will have higher political trust than Anglophones (Breton et al. 2004; Soroka et al. 2007).

Education is respondent’s highest completed education, with 10 categories that were converted to dummy variables: (1) post-bachelor’s degree or higher (the reference category); (2) bachelor’s degree; (3) some university or completed community college; (4) some community college or trade school; (5) completed high school; (6) some high school; and (7) elementary school or less. This approach was used because preliminary research showed education has a non-linear association with political trust that cannot be captured by treating education as a ratio-level or continuous variable. For the same reason, this procedure was also used for income. *Income* is total annual household income from all sources, with 12 categories as follows: no income; less than \$5,000; \$5,000-\$9,999; \$10,000-\$14,999; and so on, up to

\$80,000-\$99,999; and \$100,000 or more (the reference category) Occupation was considered as a socioeconomic factor but excluded because of the substantial number of respondents not in the labour force.

Voluntary association involvement counts respondent's voluntary memberships during the last year, using eight categories: union/professional association; political party/group; sports/ recreational organization; cultural/educational/hobby organization; religious-affiliated group (excluding respondent's religion itself); school group; service club/fraternal organization; other. Because this variable has a non-normal distribution, with most respondents reporting one membership or none, it was converted to dummy variables: no memberships (the reference category); one membership; two memberships; three or more memberships.

Ethnic diversity of friendships measures friends contacted in the past month, asking respondents "how many come from an ethnic group that is visibly different from yours?" Answer choices were: all, most, about half, a few, and none (the reference category).

Other Controls: Region, Age, Gender

Region involves five categories: Atlantic; Quebec; Ontario (the reference category); Prairies; British Columbia. Region is included primarily to control for the over-representation of French respondents in Quebec. *Age* includes 12 categories that were assigned values reflecting their mid-points: age 25-29 = 27, 30-34 = 32, and so on, up to 75-79 = 77, and 80 or more = 80. Age is controlled because some groups, especially visible minorities and Indigenous Peoples, are comparatively young, and research suggests that younger people exhibit lower political trust (Soroka et al. 2007; Samuel and Basavarajappa 2006; but see Veenstra 2002). For *gender*, males are coded 0 and females coded 1. Females tend to display comparatively greater trust (Smith 1997; Grabb et al. 2009b). Gender is controlled because gender compositional variations across ethno-racial groups might influence trust differences.

Table 1: Political Trust Measures by Ethno-Racial Background

	British	French	Other European	Indigenous Peoples	Visible Minority	Mixed Origins	TOTAL
<i>Do you have a great deal, quite a lot, not very much, or no confidence at all in ...</i>							
<i>1. the police?</i>							
Great deal	36%	42%	34%	30%	34%	36%	36% ****
Quite a lot	53	49	51	45	48	52	51
<i>2. the justice system and courts?</i>							
Great deal	12%	17%	12%	14%	26%	12%	22% ****
Quite a lot	47	55	45	35	47	48	48
<i>3. the health care system?</i>							
Great deal	18%	28%	19%	20%	28%	19%	22% ****
Quite a lot	55	54	52	46	46	54	53
<i>4. the school system?</i>							
Great deal	16%	23%	16%	22%	25%	18%	19% ****
Quite a lot	60	61	59	50	55	59	58
<i>5. the welfare system?</i>							
Great deal	7%	17%	9%	13%	17%	10%	12%****
Quite a lot	38	56	36	33	45	43	43
<i>6. the federal parliament?</i>							
Great deal	6%	8%	7%	8%	15%	6%	8%****
Quite a lot	34	46	37	27	41	37	37
Score on the overall political trust scale:							
	-.100	+.257	-.127	-.264	+.189	-.053	0.0****
N =	(4724)	(1848)	(2344)	(561)	(2160)	(2524)	(17374)
Note: **** For individual items, Chi-square values statistically significant at p < .0001. **** For overall scale, ANOVA between groups statistically significant at p<.0001.							

BIVARIATE RESULTS

Table 1 shows the bivariate relationship between ethno-racial background and political trust. The statistical tests reveal highly significant differences on all six individual items and the overall scale, with p-values beyond .0001.

First, we see that the British, one of Canada's more privileged ethnic groups, are below the median rank on the overall political trust scale and on all but one of the individual items. Other Europeans and Mixed-Origins respondents also are below the median. In contrast, visible minorities are among the most trusting on the overall scale, and on 5 of the 6 individual items. Visible minority trust levels fall below the median rank for the police, but even on this item 82 per cent of visible minority respondents have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence. Hence, results support the conclusion that visible minorities view Canada's political institutions as effective in protecting their rights and interests.

Another important finding is that French respondents are the *most* trusting of all the ethno-racial categories. Some government institutions, such as health care and education, are not officially a federal responsibility; therefore, French respondents, who reside mainly in Quebec, may be thinking of their relatively autonomous provincial institutions when indicating their high political trust on these items. Nevertheless, on the item asking specifically about the federal parliament, the French again rank among the most trusting of all groups, being matched only by visible minorities.

As predicted, the ethno-racial minority with the lowest political trust is Indigenous Peoples. In general, Indigenous Peoples are the least trusting of all the groups, as reflected in their score on the overall scale. In absolute terms, Indigenous Peoples are not overly distrustful of some government agencies. For example, two thirds or more express a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police, the schools, and the health care system. Nevertheless, less than half of Indigenous respondents are confident about the welfare system and the justice system, and only about one third are confident in the federal parliament. The latter finding suggests that Indigenous Peoples see federal politicians or the federal government as the least trustworthy of all.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis (Unstandardized) Showing the Effects of Ethno-racial Background, the Explanatory Factors, and Additional Controls for Region, Age, and Gender on Political Trust

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Ethno-racial Group:</i>			
British (ref)			
French	+ .329 ****	+ .034	+ .036
Other European	- .055 *	- .068 **	- .041
Indigenous Peoples	- .193 ****	- .175 ****	- .137 ****
Visible Minority	+ .260 ****	+ .136 ****	+ .163 ****
Mixed Origins	+ .018	- .040	- .027
<i>Immigration Status:</i>			
Canadian-born (ref)			
Immigrated since 2000		+ .217 ****	+ .238 ****
Immigrated 1990-1999		- .019	- .004
Immigrated 1980-1989		- .006	- .007
Immigrated 1970-1979		+ .008	- .016
Immigrated before 1970		- .030	- .089 *
<i>Religion:</i>			
Protestant (ref)			
No Religion		- .210 ****	- .167 ****
Roman Catholic		+ .011	+ .006
Non-Christian		+ .055	+ .053
<i>Language:</i>			
Anglophone (ref)			
Francophone		+ .382 ****	+ .352 ****
Allophone		+ .141 ****	+ .136 ****
<i>Education:</i>			
Post-bachelor degree (ref)			

Elementary or less		-.057	-.104 *
Some high school		-.120 ****	-.139 ****
High school graduate		-.102 ***	-.106 ****
Some post-secondary		-.119 ****	-.119 ****
Post-secondary diploma		-.153 ****	-.147 ****
Bachelor degree		+.030	+.033
Diversity of Friendships:			
No ethnically different friends (ref)			
A few		-.023	-.007
About half		+.018	+.044
Most		-.137 ****	-.123 ****
All		-.218 ****	-.211 ****
Region:			
Ontario (ref)			
Atlantic			+.046
Quebec			+.001
Prairies			-.098 ****
British Columbia			-.177 ****
Age (Years):			
			+.003 ****
Gender:			
(Female=1, Male=0)			+.017
Constant:	-.071	+.046	-.079
Adjusted R-square value	2.4%	6.6%	7.2%

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Paralleling the bivariate results in Table 1, Model 1 in Table 2 indicates that, without controls, the French ($b = +.329$, $p < .0001$) and visible minorities ($b = +.260$, $p < .0001$) express the highest political trust on the overall scale. Indigenous Peoples ($b = -.193$, $p < .0001$) again stand out as the least trusting. The Mixed-Origins group is no different from the British reference group, while Other Europeans are similar to the British but marginally less trusting.

The multivariate results in Model 2 reveal that some controls have the expected main effects on political trust, while others do not. Two explanatory factors originally included in the analysis – income and voluntary association activity – were excluded from Model 2 altogether, because block F-tests revealed they had no statistically significant association with trust. Because these two factors did not affect political trust at all, they were trimmed from Model 2 for reasons of parsimony.

As predicted, political trust is higher among recent immigrants than among the Canadian-born or longer-term immigrants, and is also higher for the two linguistic minorities – Francophones and Allophones – than for the Anglophone majority. These outcomes support the hypothesis that ethno-cultural markers underlie the greater trust in the government felt by some Canadians. As for religion, the third ethno-cultural marker, intermediate models showed, as expected, that the Roman Catholic and non-Christian religious minorities exhibit higher political trust than do Protestants. (These intermediate models are not reported to conserve space, but are available on request.) However, the direct effect of religion on political trust is not significant in the full multivariate model, because religion is highly correlated with both immigration status and language affiliation.

Model 2 shows that education has the expected positive effect, with the most highly educated respondents expressing the highest political trust. Nevertheless, this pattern is not monotonic: trust levels among the lowest education group – those with elementary schooling or less – are not significantly different from trust among the most highly educated. One unexpected finding is that ethnic diversity of friendships has a negative, not positive, effect on political trust. People whose friends are all ethnically different from themselves are actually less trusting of government ($b = -.218$, $p < .0001$) than are people with few or no ethnically different friends.

Controlling for the explanatory factors produces a number of important changes in the trust gaps between the British reference category and the other ethno-racial groups. The largest change involves the French,

who no longer differ from the British. Intermediate models show that this change occurs primarily because French respondents are overwhelmingly Francophone, and the Francophone minority has higher trust in government than the Anglophone majority.

There is also a substantial change for visible minorities, whose tendency to exhibit high political trust remains, but is reduced by about half when the controls are added (from $b = +.260$ in Model 1 to $b = +.136$ in Model 2). Intermediate models reveal that this change occurs mainly because visible minorities are more likely to be recent immigrants and to be Allophones, and both of these characteristics are associated with higher political trust. The effect of immigration status is noteworthy for another reason: this effect should be interpreted cautiously, because the data are cross-sectional, but it suggests an acculturation process in which, after immigrants have lived in Canada for a sufficiently long time, their level of trust in government converges toward that of the Canadian-born.

Model 2 makes it clear that controlling for the explanatory factors has no real impact on Indigenous Peoples. They have the lowest political trust coefficient in Model 1 ($b = -.193$, $p < .0001$) and this result is not appreciably changed with the addition of controls in Model 2 ($b = -.173$, $p < .0001$). Therefore, the low political trust among Indigenous Peoples is not explicable by the ethno-cultural, socioeconomic, and social engagement explanations considered in this analysis.

Model 3 shows the final multivariate results, with additional controls for region, age, and gender. The ethno-racial differences in trust in Model 3 are largely unchanged from the patterns in Model 2, suggesting that these controls do not account for political trust differences across the six ethno-racial groups. Gender has no effect. Age has the expected positive effect on political trust ($b = +.003$, $p < .0001$), and controlling for age reduces slightly the political trust gap for Indigenous Peoples (from $b = -.175$ to $b = -.137$); while marginal, this change suggests that Indigenous Peoples may be less trusting of government in part because they are comparatively young, and younger people have lower trust. Finally, region has a statistically significant effect: residents of the Prairies and British Columbia have lower political trust, and people in Quebec, the Atlantic region, and Ontario have somewhat higher political trust.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis has shown that two of Canada's most culturally distinct minorities – the French and visible minorities – express higher political trust than other Canadians. In contrast, Indigenous Peoples, Canada's

third principal minority community, exhibit the lowest political trust. Multivariate findings reveal that some of the factors proposed to account for ethno-racial differences in trust help to explain these patterns, while other factors do not. As discussed below, the relative explanatory value of these factors differs, depending on the ethno-racial group considered.

Visible Minorities

Canadians of visible minority background share in common that they are apt to be physically observable as distinct from the “white” majority. In addition, visible minorities are the most likely to differ from other Canadians on the three ethno-cultural markers discussed in this paper. As predicted, results show that these markers, especially immigration status and language, are the most influential reasons for the higher political trust among visible minorities. Intermediate models indicate that religion, the third ethno-cultural factor, also has an effect, in that visible minorities are disproportionately non-Christian, a characteristic that is associated with higher political trust. However, because both immigration status and language are so closely related to religion, the direct effect of religion is not significant in the multivariate analysis. Still, the configuration of these three ethno-cultural influences, and the tendency for visible minorities to be in the minority with regard to all of them, accounts for much of the higher political trust within this ethno-racial community. Therefore, the findings for visible minorities confirm the greater explanatory value of ethno-cultural markers compared to the other control variables considered here. The socioeconomic and social engagement factors play no substantial role in explaining the trust gap between visible minorities and more established groups, and neither do the added controls for gender, age, and region.

The most plausible interpretation of these results is that visible minorities develop a comparatively positive view about Canada’s political system because they are, indeed, a *minority*, and also a predominantly *foreign-born* minority. Immigrants typically come to Canada voluntarily, suggesting they are positively predisposed toward the country’s political system from the outset. In addition, for the many visible minority individuals from less prosperous and less democratic parts of the world, Canadian political institutions probably seem more just, generous, efficient, and trustworthy than do institutions in their countries of origin. Members of the visible minority community could also be more likely than other Canadians to believe that the government has their rights and interests at heart. This impression could stem from their awareness of such initiatives as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which explicitly asserts

protection of minority rights, and the Multiculturalism Act, which made Canada the first country in the world to offer official legal safeguards to distinct ethno-racial communities (Breton 1998; Fleras and Elliott 2002). Another explanation is that, unlike the immigration systems in many nations, the Canadian system has been among the most accepting of new arrivals (Li 2003), among the quickest to grant citizenship (Bloemraad 2002), and among the most welcoming to refugees (Levitz 2016; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2016).

Not all government branches receive the same vote of confidence from visible minorities, who have lower trust in the federal parliament and welfare system than in the police and health care system, for example. Another important finding is that higher political trust occurs mainly among recent immigrants, and less so among longer-term immigrants. This pattern implies that visible minority immigrants may become more disillusioned or critical about government over time, although it also implies that, in doing so, minority immigrants are simply acculturating to the Canadian norm, so to speak, with about the same level of political trust or distrust as everyone else. Another consideration could be that visible minorities who are recent immigrants may be comparatively hesitant to state negative views about government, so as not to seem ungrateful or to avoid possible backlash.

The French

Although some early research found that French Canadians exhibited lower trust in government than other groups (Roseborough and Breton 1968; Simeon and Elkins 1974; Grabb 1979), the findings here reveal that the French now have the highest political trust of all, which parallels results from more recent studies (Soroka et al. 2007; Grabb and Curtis 2005; Henderson 2004). Despite being one of Canada's two founding charter groups, the French once experienced problems of exclusion, disadvantage, and discrimination that once were similar to those faced by racial minorities (Breton 2005). These experiences probably engendered much of the negative feeling toward government in earlier times. However, recent evidence shows that, regarding socioeconomic attainment and political power, French Canadians have largely closed the gap with the traditionally dominant British (Fortin 2017). It is likely that these changes in circumstances have promoted a much more positive view about the country and its institutions.

A central purpose of the present analysis was to determine if ethno-cultural factors help to account for higher political trust among French Canadians. Clearly, immigration status is not a relevant explanation for

trust patterns among the French, the large majority of whom are Canadian-born. Nevertheless, the other two markers of language and religion are quite relevant. In fact, multivariate findings show that it is almost entirely because the vast majority of French Canadians are Francophone that they express higher political trust. Intermediate models revealed that being Roman Catholic is another factor connected with higher political trust for the French, but the direct effect of religion is not apparent in the full multivariate models, because of the high correlation between being Francophone and being Roman Catholic. As with the findings for visible minorities, none of the socioeconomic factors, social engagement explanations, and added controls for gender, age, and region plays any substantial role in understanding the higher French political trust in this study.

The findings for the combined impacts of language and religion raise the question: what is it about these factors that make them so important in the French case? Regarding religion, one possibility is suggested in research by Uslander (2004), who found that, when compared to Protestantism, Roman Catholicism fosters a more authoritarian and collectivist world view that is conducive to greater trust and acceptance of political and other authority. Although French Canadians today are among the least likely to attend religious services (Bibby 2002; Clark 2003), many still retain a strong sense of their Roman Catholic past as a key component of their ethnic and cultural identity (Gagnon 2003; Grabb and Curtis 2005). Hence, it is possible that religious heritage, if not religion itself, plays a part in the higher political trust of French Canadians.

The findings indicate that language is even more important as an ethno-cultural influence. The use of the French language is a crucial unifying component of French identity, and symbolizes another fundamental difference between the French minority and the dominant Anglophone majority. Tocqueville (1835:29) was among the first to emphasize the “tie of language” as “perhaps the strongest and most durable” force uniting an ethnic or cultural group (Grabb and Curtis 2005). By the same argument, however, language can be a powerful force for separating one group from another, as Canada’s history of French-English relations has often shown (Posgate and McRoberts 1976; Young 1995). Therefore, being immersed in a minority culture, which for centuries has been written and spoken in a language distinct from the Anglophone majority, may have helped to instil a quite different French perspective about many issues, including orientation to government.

A related impetus is the sense among many Francophones that government agencies and institutions, such as the education system and the justice system, have been constituted with built-in safeguards for their

language rights, and so can be trusted to play their part in preserving the French language and culture. Some of these institutions are provincially administered, which could also contribute to higher political trust among the French. One final consideration is that most French Canadians reside in Quebec, where provincial governments have long implemented more interventionist policies than governments in other regions (Grabb and Curtis 2005). This more statist social context may have fostered greater acceptance or approval of government initiatives in Quebec residents, especially the French majority.

Indigenous Peoples

That Indigenous Peoples express the lowest political trust of all groups is a central finding in this study. This result may be predictable, given the historical and contemporary forces that have exacerbated the social distance and social boundaries separating Indigenous Peoples from other Canadians. Indigenous Peoples are the only group who descend from the society's original inhabitants. Despite this primacy of place, however, they have consistently benefited least from living in Canada, experiencing perhaps the worst inequalities and injustices of any group (Frideres and Gadacz 2011; Satzewich 2011; White et al. 2007; Menzies and Hwang 2017).

The reasons for this situation are well-documented and can be traced to the history of colonialism and betrayal of Indigenous rights by various French, British, and later Canadian governments. Other important factors include racist actions and attitudes among political decision-makers and the general populace. From the first encounters with European settlers, a fundamental clash of values, cultures, and world views has made co-existence and acculturation extremely difficult for Indigenous Peoples (Fleras and Elliott 1992; Frideres and Gadacz 2011; Maaka and Fleras 2005; Menzies and Hwang 2017; Satzewich 2011). These difficulties have been made worse because Indigenous Peoples comprise an internally diverse set of communities that are also divided by their residence in often sparsely populated, scattered, and remote areas. Added to these longstanding problems, of course, are recent examples of injustice and discrimination faced by Indigenous Peoples, including their treatment in the residential school system and government reluctance to recognize many treaty rights and land claims (Furniss 2002; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes 2012; Frideres and Gadacz 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015).

Therefore, it is not surprising that, when compared to the other ethno-racial groups in this study, Indigenous Peoples are the least trust-

ing toward government agencies and institutions. The surprise may be that, in spite of everything, Indigenous Peoples exhibit as much trust as they do. While Indigenous Peoples express the lowest political trust, especially when asked about the federal parliament, their absolute levels are not uniformly low for other institutions, with clear majorities reporting a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police, the health care system, and the school system.

Relative to other Canadians, however, Indigenous Peoples have the lowest political trust, and none of the explanations posed in this study helps to account for this outcome. The socioeconomic and social engagement influences have no real impact. Moreover, unlike the patterns for the French and visible minorities, the ethno-cultural markers included in this analysis also play no notable role for Indigenous Peoples. The reasons may be partly methodological, given the limited variance for Indigenous Peoples on most ethno-cultural measures. As discussed previously, immigration status cannot affect the results for Indigenous Peoples, who are largely Canadian-born. Language variation is also limited in this study, since more than 80 per cent of Indigenous Peoples in the sample are Anglophone. There is more religious variation, but religion also has minimal impact.

Despite these results, however, it still seems likely that social boundaries and social distance processes are at work among Indigenous Peoples. In particular, although Indigenous Peoples are not officially subsumed under Statistics Canada's visible minority category, they too are typically identifiable as visibly distinct from other Canadians, because of observable physical and cultural cues. This makes Indigenous Peoples subject to social boundaries and forms of prejudice and discrimination similar to, and perhaps more serious than, those faced by visible minorities. Coupled with the historical and contemporary obstacles confronting Indigenous Peoples, it is understandable that they express lower political trust than other groups, even if the ethno-cultural factors considered in this analysis play little part.

Other Groups

Of the remaining groups, the British and Other Europeans generally are among the least trusting of Canada's political institutions. The multivariate analysis suggests that this result occurs partly because neither of these groups shares the distinctive ethno-cultural markers of the three minority categories. In particular, the British and Other European respondents are disproportionately Canadian-born and Anglophone, so that the trust gap between themselves and other groups decreases substantially with

controls for immigration status and language. The lower trust among British and Other Europeans may also reflect their greater knowledge of perceived deficiencies in the nation's public agencies, or their higher expectations about what these agencies should provide to citizens. There could even be resentment among some members of these two groups, who, rightly or wrongly, may believe that the French and other minority groups receive special treatment or privileges from government.

Finally, there is the Mixed-Origins category, which was considered to determine if Canadians with plural ethnic identities might have established meaningful bridges linking different ethnic groups, thereby promoting a relatively greater sense of general trust. There is no evidence of such a pattern, however. Instead, Mixed-Origins respondents resemble the British and Other Europeans in having comparatively low political trust. This outcome is difficult to interpret, given the unknown ethno-racial composition of this group, but it appears that Mixed-Origins Canadians have largely acculturated to the same prevailing beliefs about government as the dominant British/Other European majority. Ultimately, though, a better understanding of trust patterns among Canadians of mixed ethnic heritage must await further research.

In conclusion, this study offers new findings and insights concerning how and why ethno-racial communities differ in political trust. The results demonstrate that a theoretical perspective drawing on the concepts of social boundaries and social distance is useful for understanding many of these differences. Such an approach helps to explain the higher political trust among French and visible minority Canadians, but not the lower political trust among Indigenous Peoples. The latter findings underscore the unique position of Indigenous Peoples. These results identify the principal area to mend in what Breton and colleagues have called Canada's "fragile social fabric," the place with the greatest need of "bridging the social boundaries" that separate ethno-racial communities from each other (Breton et al. 2004:189).

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