

→ CANADA'S ART OF DIVERSITY.

MULTICULTURALISM, CHOICE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the composition of the Canadian population has been dramatically transformed with the significant influx of non-European immigrants. Currently, more than two-thirds of Canada's immigrants came from countries outside of Europe thus contrasting with the historic immigration pattern based on the vast majority of new arrivals originating in Europe. Recent projections of the Canadian population indicate that by 2017 more than one-fifth of Canadians will be non-European. In Toronto and Vancouver the percentage of non-Europeans will be even more important as they will constitute the near majority of the population in these major Canadian cities where the largest communities will be of Chinese and South Asian descent. Canada's rapidly evolving demographic reality has prompted analysts to pay more attention to how public and private sector institutions will be affected by the change in clientele. As immigrants adjust to life in Canada so too will the country further change to accommodate this growing segment of the population. Some observers have extended this broader reflection over future institutional change to the arts and culture sector by considering what the demographic shifts will entail for consumer habits. Also greater attention is being directed at the ethnic composition of Canada's creative and performing artists.

Arts and culture are an essential part of Canadian identity. The country is characterized by its multiple identities as reflected by its fast-evolving demographic composition. More than nine out of ten Canadians agree that preserving Canada's cultural heritage is important for the country to remain distinct and that its artists play a vital role in supporting the country's cultural identity. Nearly all Canadians agree that the arts teach us about different cultures and ways of life. Compared to many other countries, Canadians are proud of their ar-

tistic and literary heritage. A 2004 survey of 33 countries reveals that 88 per cent of Canadians are proud of the country's achievements in arts and literature (27 per cent are very proud). This contrasts with Germany where the percentage expressing pride in artistic and literary achievement is 76 per cent (17.6 per cent report being very proud). For all countries combined nearly 80 per cent are proud of achievements in arts and literature with 28.2 per cent declaring that they are very proud (International Social Science Programme, March-April, 2004). It is not clear that the degree of a country's ethnic diversity undercuts pride in artistic achievements.

2. Multicultural and Arts Policies

For nearly thirty-five years Canada has had a multicultural policy which is often considered the main element in the government's support of diversity. But multicultural policy in Canada has seen adjustments over the decades in keeping with changing priorities in support of immigrants and ethnic communities. When introduced in 1971, the multicultural policy provided funding to several ethnic community organizations in order to help them build institutional capacity. It also provided funding for cultural festivals and exhibits of various ethnic groups other than British, French or Aboriginal peoples. By the early 1980's such *»cultural funding«* was not continued and by the end of that decade operational funding for minority ethnic organizations were no longer offered. While favorable to multiculturalism many Canadians seemed apprehensive about using public funds in capacity-building of ethnocultural advocacy groups. As regards funding for ethnocultural artists it was believed to be in their best interests to seek support through either government or private sector bodies devoted to the arts and not funds directed at ethnic communities. Arts funding agencies were seen as best suited to support and evaluate the work of artists independent of their ethnic origin. In short, for funding purposes they were first and foremost considered artists and not members of minority ethnic groups.

By the 1990's Canada's multicultural policy focused on the follow-

ing objectives: promoting full and active participation of ethnic, religious, and cultural communities in Canadian society; increasing public awareness, understanding and informed public dialogue about multiculturalism, racism and cultural diversity in Canada; improve the ability of public institutions to respond to ethnic, religious and cultural diversity by assisting in the identification and removal of barriers to equitable access and by supporting the involvement of these communities in public decision-making processes and encourage and assist in the development of inclusive policies, programs, and practices within federal departments and agencies. Hence if it were demonstrated that artists from ethnic minorities were facing barriers in conducting their work then the policy would attempt to address that issue but not likely through the provision of funding from that program.

Recent evidence confirms that Canadians react favorably to the philosophy of multiculturalism which they equate with the country's diverse demographic character. When asked about accepting immigrants from many different countries a majority of Canadians believe such diversity strengthens national culture. Only one in five Canadians feel that the diversity of Canada's immigration weakens its culture. When asked to weigh two statements about the nation's multicultural policy most Canadians feel that it helps rather than hinders integration of immigrants into Canadian society. Still some 40 per cent of Canadians surveyed agree that multicultural policy causes some groups to never fully integrate (Jedwab 2004).

Gagnon and McFarlane (2003) argue that on the one hand, in order »to build capacity«, the Department of Canadian Heritage wants »to promote and help sustain Canada's cultural diversity and promote Canadian identity by ensuring that we have the community, institutional and industrial capacity and infrastructure that are required«. On the other hand, in order »to connect Canadians to one another« the Department of Canadian Heritage wants »to help Canadians overcome differences and distances to better understand one another and increase our appreciation of the values that we share as Canadians«. According to the authors there is a paradoxical desire to both sustain and overcome cultural differences. Within this paradox, the government of Canada is compelled to celebrate at once both the mainte-

nance of cultural difference and the assimilation of those differences within a broader, multicultural vision of Canadian collectivity.

Still when it comes to the expression of culture through the arts very few Canadians seem concerned with a lack of integration of immigrants and ethnic communities. In part this is because such choices are deemed to be part of the private domain where Canadians widely support diverse cultural expression. Only where government support for artistic expression in languages other than English, French or aboriginal is there debate over the extent to which significant financing should be offered to ethnic artists. If there is an integration-related concern it arises from the larger arts institutions in Canada wondering whether the increasingly diverse consumers will attend their events and performances to make up for losses in traditional clientele.

During a 2003 Government Forum on Cultural Diversity, Canada's Minister responsible for multiculturalism (Minister's Forum on Diversity and Culture, April 22, 2003) declared that the artistic landscape must reflect the country's demographic diversity. To this end the Canadian government committed to facilitate access to funding for artists of diverse ethnic origins in order to generate more opportunities for them. According to the Minister, doing this would help strengthen the ethnic communities and ensure that their cultural uniqueness be preserved as part of their heritage. The Minister added that providing all Canadians with exposure to a variety of cultural influences through diverse artistic expressions helps build bridges between cultures and thereby improve understanding between communities. In this regard the development of diversity in the arts and culture is a necessary step in the continuing evolution of a multidimensional Canadian culture. The Minister concluded that the arts and cultural sector of Canadian society should reflect our multicultural demography, both in the diversity of its players and in the diversity of its creation.

In November 2005 Canada's Multiculturalism Program and the Canada Council for the Arts (Partnership Agreement 2005) struck a multi-year agreement to increase diversity in the arts sector by enabling professional artists and arts organizations from diverse cultural communities to increase their access to the Council's programs and enhance their artistic development. According to the Minister respon-

sible for Multiculturalism: »The new agreement would help reaffirm the commitment to support artists and arts organizations across the country in reflecting Canada's rich diversity.«

The specific objectives of the partnership are to promote the professional development of individual artists and encourage the development of culturally diverse arts communities; to further professionalize and strengthen the development of new arts organizations; to disseminate the work of artists and organizations representing culturally diverse communities in Canada and abroad; to better inform and advise artists and arts organizations from diverse cultural communities on Council programs.

3. Canada's Changing Demographics

The substantial increase in the numbers of non-Europeans in Canada and their growing share of the national population is the focus of much interest and attention as regards its possible impact on the arts. In the January 2002 edition of Statistics Canada's publication »Focus on Culture«, Marie Lavalée-Farah (2002) observed that: »[T]he increased number of immigrants coming from a non-European background may be having an impact on the interest in performing arts of European origin. At the same time, they can encourage a broadening of the focus of the performing arts in Canada and perhaps open up new areas of growth. This, combined with declining attendance and a growing supply of diverse entertainment products, poses major challenges to performing arts organizations seeking new audiences.«

It is worth keeping in mind that the ethnocultural and ethnoracial minorities are heavily concentrated in the country's larger cities where in effect the vast majority of immigrants settle. Researchers contend that ethnicity is multidimensional and includes ancestry, birthplace, language and visible minority identification. Moreover the strength of ethnic attachment can evolve with age and its influence on cultural choices often shifts over time. In other words the changing nature and intensity of ethnic attachment can modify cultural tastes. Clearly, the role of ethnic identification on cultural consumption habits operates along with other facets of identity in determining con-

sumer choices. In addition to one's age, such things as gender and income further influence artistic and cultural participation.

On the question of ethnic background the census of Canada permits up to four responses. Hence it provides an opportunity to better understand the mix of identities amongst an important number of people. On the basis of combined declarations of single and multiple ethnic origins other than those that are Canadian, French or British it is persons with German origins that represent the largest group in Canada followed by those of Italian descent. On the basis however of Canadians that make only one declaration of ethnic background it is persons of Chinese descent that constitute the largest group, though much less those identifying as either Canadian, British or French.

In 1996, the number of persons with European-origin mother tongues (other than French or English) exceeded those with non-European mother tongues by over 600,000 persons. Some five years later the number of persons with European-origin mother tongues (i.e. Italian, German, Spanish, etc.) just barely maintained their collective lead over the non-European languages (Chinese, Arabic, etc.). Indeed, between 1996 and 2001, while European-heritage languages rose by 2 per cent in real numbers, those with non-European mother tongues increased by nearly 30 per cent over that same period.

Despite the trends presented above, one area where the European-heritage languages remain dominant is in the degree to which they are known and spoken as second languages. Whereas in 1996 Spanish was the most important second language spoken following English and French, in the 2001 census it is German that has moved into that position. This is largely due to the movement of German from first to second language amongst the children of persons from countries where that language is dominant. For the first time in the country's history over one million Canadians reported an ability to speak a Chinese language (Mandarin, Cantonese and Hakka) and they have increased considerably in terms of the degree to which they are spoken as second languages.

4. Cultural Diversity in the Arts: Participation and Preference

Surveys illustrate the importance of one's ethnic origin in influencing the cultural consumption habits of the Canadian population. Some 60 per cent of Canadians agree that connecting with one's culture or ethnic background is an important reason for participating in arts and cultural events. About 45 per cent indicated that having more exhibits or performances that connect with the respondent's cultur-

*Table 1: Reason for attending arts events: to connect with your cultural or ethnic cultural or ethnic background by ethnic category
(Subsample: Respondents who participated in an artistic or cultural activity in the past 12 months)*

	Total	Canadian, British and French origins	Other Europeans	Non- Europeans	Aborigines
Very im- portant	21*	19	22	37	33
Some- what im- portant	32	31	34	38	31
Not very important	21	21	21	13	18
Not at all important	25	26	23	9	18
DK/NA	1	1	–	1	–

* in per cent – Source: Decima Research: Access and Availability Study for the Department of Canadian Heritage 2001.

al or ethnic background would enhance the appeal of the arts (Decima Research 2001).

Persons of non-European origins in Canada are by far the most likely to justify their participation in an artistic or cultural activity on the basis of its connection to their cultural or ethnic background.

Some three-quarters regard this as important motivation towards their participation. Nearly two-thirds of persons of aboriginal descent believe that connecting with their culture as an important reason for participating in arts activities.

Consistent with the importance they attribute to the arts supporting their ethnocultural identities the non-European groups have a tendency to attend more performances that reflect their cultures of origin than do Canadians of British or other European origins.

Table 2: Of the performances, events and exhibits that you have attended in the last 12 months, were any of them within the tradition of your ethnic and cultural heritage? Canadians by ethnic origin, 2002 (Respondents who have attended at least one of the activities in the last 12 months)

	British origin	Other European origins	Non-Europeans
Yes	42*	37	61
No	56	62	39
DK	1	1	–

* in per cent – Source: Environics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001.

As mentioned earlier, participation in artistic expression or events has rarely been considered in Canada as an indicator of integration. Choosing to attend cultural performances based on one's ethnic background does not imply that Canadians of diverse origins are not interested in performances that are not connected to their ancestral origins. In fact those with strong interest in cultural expression may see the diversity of options available as strengthening their appreciation of the arts.

Some 85 per cent of Canadians are interested in seeing artwork and attending live performances of different cultures (Decima Research: Access and Availability Study for the Department of Canadian Heritage 2004). Most Canadians disagreed (58 per cent) when asked whether they prefer to see performances reflecting their own

cultural background further confirming the level of interest in culturally diverse performances. Just over one-third of Canadians surveyed said that they are more interested in seeing works of art and live performances from their own cultural background than from other cultural backgrounds. There appears no contradiction between preferring arts that appeal to one's own culture and being interested in exposure to other cultures.

But interest in the artistic and cultural expression of other groups outside one's ethnic background does not automatically translate into attendance. This is frequently determined amongst other factors by access, income and language knowledge. About one-quarter of persons of British or other European descent reported attending cultural events that were not European, North American or Aboriginal. On the other hand a majority of non-Europeans did attend such events.

Table 3: Of the performances that you have attended in the last 12 months, were any of them in other traditions, that is non-European, non-North American or non-Aboriginal by ethnic category?

	British Origins	Other European origins	Non-European origins	Aborigines
Yes	28*	23	54	17
No	68	75	45	83
DK	4	2	1	–

* in per cent – Source: Environics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001.

It is worth noting that some three-quarters of persons of Chinese and South Asian backgrounds attended cultural events in their respective traditions. However, their cultural attendance was not limited to events that reflected their own heritage. In fact as observed below some 60 per cent of non-Europeans had attended performances, events or exhibits in North American or European traditions.

Table 4: Of the performances that you have attended in the last 12 months, were any of them in the North American or European tradition by ethnic category?

	British	Other Europeans	Non-Europeans
Yes	78*	80	59
No	19	17	41
DK	3	3	–

* in per cent – Source: Environics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001.

5. Immigrants and Arts Integrated

Immigrants are only somewhat more interested in seeing works of art in their own cultural background than are non-immigrants and the majority believes that the arts would have more appeal if more performances were provided that connected to their cultural or ethnic background. However, more than 90 per cent of immigrants ex-

Table 5: Respondents having attended at least one live performance, arts event or exhibit in past 12 months

	More interested in seeing works of art and live performances from my own cultural background	Arts appeal: more exhibits or performances that connect with my cultural or ethnic background	Interested in seeing artwork and attending live performances from different cultures
Born in Canada	36.6*	43.5	81.3
Born outside of Canada	39.2	51.3	90.5

* in per cent – Source: Decima Research for the Department of Canadian Heritage 2002.

press an interest in seeing artwork and attending live performances from different cultures. So in terms of interest in the diversity of artistic expression perhaps paradoxically it is unapparent that non-

immigrants are less interested in multiple artistic expressions than immigrants.

Does immigrant participation in arts performances evolve over the time that they spend in the country? Survey data suggests that the more an immigrant is established the more he or she attends events that are not connected to his or her cultural origin. The table below demonstrates that those immigrants in the country for more than twenty years are the least inclined to attend performances in their own cultural background.

Table 6: Of the performances, events and exhibits that you have attended in the last 12 months, were any of them within the tradition of your ethnic and cultural heritage? By number of years established in Canada (respondents who have attended at least one of the activities in the last 12 months)

	Born outside of Canada	In Canada 6-10 years	In Canada 11-20 years	In Canada 21 years or more
Yes	57*	64	60	52
No	42	35	40	46
DK	1	1	–	1

* in per cent – Source: Environics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001.

The above findings are confirmed in the next table as a significant decline is observed when surveying immigrants in Canada for less than 20 years. They are more inclined to have attended a non-European event than those longest established immigrants who are least inclined to have done so. The figures suggest that there is an important impact for arts attendance in the transition from a predominantly European to non-European immigration.

Table 7: Of the performances that you have attended in the last 12 months, were any of them in other traditions? That is non-European, non-North American or non-Aboriginal

	Born outside of Canada	In Canada 6-10 years	In Canada 11-20 years	In Canada 21 years or more
Yes	47*	49	39	37
No	53	51	60	63
DK	–	–	1	–

* in per cent – Source: Environics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001.

Not surprisingly those arts-attending immigrants in Canada over two decades have been much more likely to take in events of either European or North American tradition than the more recently arrived who are predominantly non-European.

6. Language and Arts

Less than half a million Canadians are unable to speak either English or French, representing approximately 1.5 per cent of the Canadian population. As observed below in the case of persons whose first language is Italian and Portuguese the share of persons not

Table 8: Knowledge of English and French amongst Canadians and persons of Italian, Portuguese and Chinese mother tongue, 2001

Canada 2001	Knowledge of official languages	English only	French only	English and French	Neither English nor French
Total	29,639,035	20,014,645	3,946,525	5,231,575	446,290
Italian	469,495	293,630	22,020	117,895	35,950
Portuguese	213,805	147,360	11,150	30,495	24,800
Chinese	853,750	655,170	5,825	36,665	156,090

Source: Statistics Canada, Special Compilation, Census of Canada 2001.

knowing one of Canada's two official languages rises somewhat and about one in five for whom Chinese is their first language know neither English nor French. On the one hand the absence of knowledge of a language can be an obvious impediment to certain arts participation and on the other hand the availability of arts and cultural performance in languages other than English and French may be a source of attraction to members of minority ethnic communities.

Language is an important aspect of ethnocultural identification and is considered vital towards the transmission of culture. Almost all Canadians agree that a dynamic arts and cultural identity in their language should be passed on to the next generation. Many Canadians whose principal language is neither English nor French will use other languages particularly in social and cultural activities. Knowledge of other languages is important towards accessing arts and culture production that are neither in the English and French languages. And those persons whose knowledge of either English or French is weaker may be more limited in their cultural choices. Consequently, it is not surprising that amongst those attending arts and cultural events it is allophones that are the most likely to have taken in the non-European performances. The survey below reveals that nearly 80 per cent of allophone respondents attended non-European arts events with English-speakers more likely to attend such events than French-speakers (59 per cent vs. 42 per cent).

Table 9: Number of non-European events attended by language at home (Respondents having attended at least one live performance, arts event or exhibit in past 12 months)

	Anglophone	Francophone	Allophone
None	41*	58	21
One culture/ tradition	27	24	29
Two	17	11	23
Three or more	16	7	27

* in per cent – Source: Decima Research 2001 for the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Ethnic attachments might be very relevant to an individual with limited or no knowledge of the related heritage language. Further confirmation that there is no contradiction between interest in cultural expression in one's own background and that of other cultures is illustrated. Contrary to what might be assumed the attraction of allophones to culturally diverse events does not diminish interest in seeing art and attending performances from different cultures. This is confirmed in the table below wherein some 90 per cent of allophone respondents indicate such interest.

Table 10: Level of agreement: Interest in arts performances in one's own background and from different cultures by mother tongue

	More interested in seeing works of art and live performances from my own cultural background	Would like more exhibits or performances that connect with my cultural or ethnic background	Interested in seeing artwork and attending live performances from different cultures
English	33.4*	39.3	84.8
French	44.0	58.6	86.9
Other	51.1	59.0	89.5

* in per cent – Source: Decima Research 2001 for the Department of Canadian Heritage.

7. Career Choice and Ethnic Origin

One of the concerns expressed by artists of ethnocultural origin is the existence of gaps in representation of minority ethnic groups in the creative and performing arts sector. As revealed below in this sector those of Canadian, British and French (CBF) are better represented than their share of the population, as to a lesser degree those persons of other European origins. For their part, persons of non-European background and the Aboriginal population are rather significantly underrepresented in the creative and performing arts sector.

As observed in Table 12 ethnic origin seems to be an important dimension in terms of the particular careers pursued in the creative

Table 11: Percentage of creative and performing artists and percentage of population by ethnic category for Canada, the Atlantic Region and the Provinces, 2001. Percentage of groups

	All creative and performing artists	Creative and performing arts	In % of the total Canadian population by ethnic categories
Canadian, British and French	30,300	62.5 %	57.9 %
Other European	11,380	23.5 %	20.4 %
Non-European	5,945	12.3 %	18.7 %
Aboriginal	790	1.6 %	3.0 %
Total	48,415	100.0 %	100.0 %

Source: Statistics Canada, Special Compilation, Census of Canada 2001.

and performing arts. A higher than average share of CBF creative and performing artists are conductors, composers and arrangers. The profile of those employed in the creative and performing arts of the 'other Europeans' more closely resembles that of the CBF group except as regards the percentage of musicians and singers and conductors and composers where the respective percentages are more like the non-European group. The latter include a substantial share of the musicians and singers amongst all non-Europeans working as creative and performing artists. In the case of Aboriginals nearly half of those reporting employment in the creative and performing arts declared that they are painters, sculptors and visual artists.

The factors that contribute to the representational gaps amongst non-Europeans and Aboriginals in the arts occupations have not been examined. And while there may be several issues worth exploring it appears possible to rule out a lack of interest in the arts on the part of the aforementioned groups. When surveyed some 43 per cent of non-Europeans say that are currently or were interested in pursuing a career in the arts or crafts, either as a creator, performer, artist, designer or manager. Some 39 per cent of Canadians of aboriginal descent expressed similar interest while 36 per cent of the European origin

Table 12: Percentage in arts occupations by ethnic category, single responses only, Canada, 2001

	Producers, directors, choreographers and related	Conductors, composers and arrangers	Musicians and singers	Dancers	Actors and comedians	Painters, sculptors and other visual artists
Canadian, British and French	22.4	7.0	31.8	8.4	12.5	18.7
Other Europeans	21.5	2.2	39.8	8.4	9.5	20.7
Non-Europeans	19.2	1.7	43.4	6.1	12.0	18.0
Aborigines	20.8	2.5	15.8	3.1	12.0	45.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Special Compilation, Census of Canada 2001.

population does and 31 per cent of those declaring Canadian, British and/or French background (EnviroNics, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey 2001).

In addition to the slight gaps in representation of certain groups within the arts profession there are also income inequities between the white population and visible minorities as documented below. It is important to note however that income differences between artists of the different groups are nearly eliminated when data controls for education level. In other words when members of the groups listed below with similar levels of education are measured there is little disparity in average income.

Table 13: Average total income for selected artists by visible minority groups, Canada 2001 (in Canadian \$)

Canada population 15+ in labour force, 2001	Musicians and singers	Dancers	Actors and comedians
Total	20,683	17,812	28,673
Visible minority population	16,404	16,652	20,963
Black	16,639	14,349	24,607
South Asian	13,969	19,063	21,702
Chinese	15,734	21,788	21,631
Korean	14,399	—	22,807
Japanese	23,249	—	22,575
Southeast Asian	16,496	—	—
Filipino	17,288	13,104	19,829
Arab/West Asian	23,016	—	8,848
Latin American	13,826	16,583	21,417
All other visible minority groups	18,702	12,950	16,006
White	21,232	17,932	29,879
Aboriginal	17,830	18,733	25,265

Source: Statistics Canada, Special Compilation, Census of Canada 2001.

8. Conclusion: Sharing Canadian Diversity

As the majority of Canadians of non-European origins are immigrants it raises the issue of whether the cultural performance of longer-established groups within Canada will benefit from the participation of this fast-growing segment of the population. Much of this depends on the capacity to adapt their programming to reflect this increasing diversity. Is the preoccupation that any such adjustments are futile because the newer ethnic community's interest in cultural performance is limited to events that reflect their backgrounds? Survey findings in this essay do not support this idea. Indeed in studies conducted between 2001 and 2004 a strong majority of Canadians express

interest in seeing arts from a variety of cultures. Interest in one's own culture by no means implies disinterest in other cultural expression. In effect when it comes to artistic expression there is considerable evidence to suggest that those who attend arts performances more regularly are interested in varied expressions of culture.

Is multicultural assimilation or the maintenance of cultural difference the priority and primary aim of the Government of Canada? According to Gagnon and McFarlane (2003), »[T]he very idea of multiculturalism answers this question because it gives priority to and posits in advance cultural difference. In order for multiculturalism to make sense, the forces of cultural difference must already be in play – and they must be maintained. Multiculturalism also demands that we be open to the productive possibilities of the transcultural spaces in and between different cultures.« The paradox of multiculturalism is such that many Canadians regard diversity as the country's most important shared value. In effect the contradiction between the support of cultural difference and the need to share common values may not be as wide as some observers assume.

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