Multinational Studies and the Question of Unity: Bringing the Citizens In

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Over the last 20 years, the emergence of a "strange multiplicity" (Tully 1995) has pushed scholars of multinationalism to explore new groundings for unity outside the traditional frameworks of "color-blind" liberalism, modern constitutionalism, and undifferentiated citizenship. Canadian scholars have been very active in this undertaking (Papillon 2009), largely in response to what they perceived as Trudeau's national unity legacy (chiefly the Charter, a territorial conception of federalism, and the policies of multiculturalism). We now have a solid set of propositions, within both the literature on recognition and dialogue (moral approaches to multinationalism), as well as the literature on multinational and consociational states (political approaches to multinationalism). We will engage here a dialogue between these literatures and the emerging and stimulating literature on social trust and on post-conflict societies, two sets of literatures that have yet to be considered together.

In this paper, we will discuss these literatures by focusing on their understanding of unity. Given both the scholarly and political context from which it has emerged, it is unsurprising that multinational scholarship has paid scant attention to the question of unity. When not entirely absent, unity is often defined negatively - simply as the happy result of institutions which have prevented the collapse of the state. In other words, while diversity is treated extensively as a value in itself, interdependence is often presented as simply a matter of fact.

We believe that two assumptions, which are also limitations, permeate the consociational and multinational literatures:

1. *Unity is to be understood as an outcome of political action, rather than a condition.*

2. *Unity is to be constructed at the political or constitutional level, rather than at the societal level.*

In this paper, we present a concept of unity that is non-constraining. We do not address the *substance* of unity per se – whether, to borrow from Charles Blattberg, it is a monarchical,

polyarchical, or patriotic unity (Blattberg 2003). We rather address the *locus* of unity in a plurinational state, drawing on Daniel Weinstock's stimulating paper on "trust in divided societies (1999)." In our understanding, the concepts of trust and unity should be closely linked.

Trust can be defined as expectations and predictions about the other's future and contingent behaviour. These expectations are based on the accumulated history of cooperation and betrayal, social narratives and memory, contextual characteristics and the others' motivations (Axelrod 1984). In final instance, trust relies on the *suspension* of uncertainty and ignorance - that is, acting "as if" we know the intentions of the other (Möllering 2001; Sztompka 1999; Baier 1986). Trust is the capacity to live with and tolerate uncertainty. In a plurinational state, uncertainty is variable: some institutions are highly predictable, such as the constitution, while others are rather unpredictable, such as intergovernmental relations.

This paper develops these two points and explores their limitations. We argue that trust ought to be understood as a necessary input, rather than simply an outcome of political action or settlements, and that unity at the political level is incompletely understood if we do not look at unity at the societal level. After addressing the limits of the *recognition and dialogue* literature (part 1) and the *multinational and consociational* literature (part 2), we propose some future research avenues. In particular, we suggest considering insights from the peace building literature, which stresses the importance of civil society and intergroup relations, and trust in post-conflict settings. This paper is very much a work in progress, and does not seek to present a final set of critiques or a definitive alternative model. Our intention is simply to point the way towards filling potentially-critical gaps in the literature.

I. RECOGNITION AND DIALOGUE

The 'moral' approach to multinationalism, which emphasizes recognition and dialogue, argues that unity is a continual process, and that it is constructed through political and dialogical activity as well as mutual recognition. As discussed by James Tully (2004), our understanding of the nature of recognition and dialogue has recently undergone a major shift within the field. In this

section, we will describe this change and discuss the extent to which it has reconfigured the question of unity in multinational states. We will formulate three main criticisms to this approach: (1) flexibility and non-finality are seen as conditions of trust and legitimacy, while flexibility may in fact lead to distrust and distrust back to fixity; (2) unity and trust are conceived as outcomes of the conversation, while there is reason to suggest that they are preconditions to the very demanding dialogical ethic proposed by the authors; and (3) unity and recognition are conceived in a vertical manner, thus leaving horizontal or inter-communal relations relatively unexplored.

1. From fixity to flexibility

As discussed by James Tully (2004), the nature of recognition and dialogue has undergone a major shift within the literature, which can be characterized as a shift away from the principles of *fixity* and *finality* towards the principles of *flexibility* and *non-finality*.

The fixity approach is best exemplified by Will Kymlicka (2001), who conceives recognition in constitutional and legal terms through for instance, "policies of minority and cultural rights" (Kymlicka 2001: 59). It gives a large role to theorists, courts, and policy makers rather than the public, and generally seeks to achieve a final and definitive set of policies, such as group representation, governmental autonomy, and differentiated citizenship (Kymlicka 2001: ch. 3).

 James Tully is a major proponent of the flexibility approach, which conceives recognition in more fluid terms. Struggles over recognition are not simply the recognition of a minority by a majority, but involve a constant mutual acknowledgement, as well as the articulation, discussion, alteration, reinterpretation and renegotiation of the identity of every actor in the course of the struggle. Rather than freezing identities in a set of immutable constitutional rights, a policy of recognition must institutionalize the "dialogical civic freedom" itself - that is, a set of flexible mechanisms and institutions that allow those affected by the system to call the prevailing norms of recognition into question (Tully 2004: 99). For Tully, struggles over recognition are *continual*, *intersubjective*, and *multilogical*, and therefore always unpredictable, mutable, partial, open to questioning, and revisable. They involve a multiplicity of actors talking on their behalf, while claims to recognition affect the identity of all the participants (1999: 13-4).

A first problem emerges, however, when it comes to the question of trust. In line with Tully's argument, we believe that institutional rigidity makes the barriers to further modification high and enhances uncertainty by increasing the costs of miscalculation. Incremental and continual amendments may be a relief against one-time games and zero-sum logics like Meech and Charlottetown (Lusztig 1994: 751). Therefore, seeing a Constitution as "an endless series of contracts and agreement, reached by periodical intercultural dialogues" makes sense. Institutional rigidity tends to suppress the incentives of competing groups to compromise on their demands, and thus to acknowledge and recognize (Manfredi 1997).

However, *flexibility* is also very problematic; it leads to a potential series of *unanticipated* and *unpredictable* outcomes that groups are not naturally inclined to accept, probably even less when norms of recognition are adopted out of conflict. In its most common definition, to trust is to tolerate vulnerability, by acting "as if" we knew the intentions, the motives and the responses of others to endogenous as well as exogenous changes (Baier 1986; Gambetta 2000: 218). In the absence of trust, the "suspension" required by flexibility - that is, the "cognitive mechanism that brackets out uncertainty and ignorance, thus […] enabling the leap of favorable (or unfavorable) expectation" (Möllering 2001: 415), is unlikely. In response, actors may tend towards restructuring institutions in favor of more rigidity, close down the potential for renegotiation, or simply refuse to compromise on their initial position. Distrust may lead to a rupture of dialogue, or at best, to "structural assurances" which neutralize uncertainties through contract-like regulations and procedures (Yamagishi et Yamagishi 1994).

Consequently, mutual trust appears as the very condition of both flexibility and fixity, rather than its outcome. While the institutionalization of a dialogical civic freedom may enhance legitimacy, the literature has yet to account for the dynamics of trust/distrust between groups. A similar point can be made for the principles of dialogue, to which we now turn.

2. Principles of dialogues

In regarding the principles of dialogues, a similar shift can be observed: requirements of consensus have given way to acceptance of "reasonable disagreement." Both approaches stress very demanding attitudes when it comes to dialogue.

Earlier approaches stressed the *procedural* aspect of public discussion, seen as fostering legitimacy and stability. By procedures, it is meant that although groups have divergent goods, they ought to share a minimal consensus setting the standards used to judge the validity of competing claims. By shielding public deliberation from particularistic claims and asymmetrical relations of power, public reasoning is seen as "a virtual thread or web linking citizens together across their discrepant schemes of interpretation and enabling them to coordinate their actions" (Maclure 2006: 40). Hence, for John Rawls social unity is based on an overlapping consensus about the basic terms of the political community and justice. The failure to reach such a consensus is deemed to lead to "social instability and disunity" (ibid: 48). For Wayne Norman, "overlapping consensus" in a multinational federation is different, to the extent that it ought not to be about common institutions, but about the "casual factors likely to destabilize a pluralistic federation." Through discussion, federal partners aim at identifying "federation-busters" and then strive to develop concrete institutions and policies that lessen and avoid their potential impact (Norman 1994: 91). Therefore, a federal consensus in a multinational state should not be about the ties that bind, but about what might divide us. In the long run, by avoiding conflicts, the overlapping consensus will make people feel at home and part of a common destiny (Norman 1994: 92). In the same fashion, Kymlicka and Raviot argue in favour of the institutionalization of a "federal confidence," on the model of the German *Bundestreue* (1997: 821).

For the second approach, it is argued that even when it comes to what might divide us, an overlapping consensus is highly unlikely in a truly multinational federation. The problem? The very idea of consensus. Consensus is inherently "monistic" (Maclure 2006: 48) or "mono-nationalistic" (Requejo 2001: 265). In consequence, the second approach argues in favour of removing the "generalizability filter" by allowing "reasonable disagreement." Civic bonds are weakened when dissenting voices are muted, therefore only reasonable disagreement may foster unity since "social cooperation and stability are no longer contingent on the dissolution of political disagreement" (2006: 51). According to Tully (2004), considerations of reasonable disagreement should also apply to the procedures of negotiation, which are themselves norms of mutual recognition, and thus be open to questions. As Karmis and Maclure argue, multinational states are natural "dissensual communities of conversation." According to James Tully, reconciliation happens through dialogue, which fosters a new form of unity based on a "sense of

mutual understanding and trust among the contesting partners and an attachment to the system of governance" (2004: 85). Along with "reasonable disagreement", three other principles of dialogue are presented. First, intergroup conversations are oriented towards mutual understanding and listening (audi alteram partem), or in the words of Guy Laforest, standing in the shoes of the other (1998: 52). Second, intergroup conversations require an ethic of reciprocity, sensitivity, and civic responsiveness, or in other words, a duty to consider and acknowledge the claims of the others (Maclure 2006: 53-4). Third, intergroup conversations generally aim to be reflective and potentially critical and self-critical.

While the first approach encouraged the institutionalization of trust, through a federal *bundestreue* for instance, the second approach relies exclusively on the conversation itself to foster mutual trust. If it can contribute to mutual trust, we argue along with Michael Rabinder James (2003) and Monique Deveaux (2003) that the literature overlooks the *conditions* – other than moral – inviting groups to adopt such a demanding ethic of dialogue. Recent empirical evidences suggest that mutual trust is one of those very conditions. Trust is beneficial in contexts of negotiation. It invites groups to explore alternative solutions, lower their thresholds of acceptability, and question their own beliefs and motives (Kramer and Carnevale 2008). It also "strengthen[s] the willingness of trusting parties to rely upon each other and expand the resources brought into the exchange" (Rousseau et al. 1998: 399). In general then, mutual trust allows group to appear as vulnerable, therefore downplaying the strategic logic of intergroup relations. The dissensual approach also overlooks the strategies put forward in order to live with conflict and its underlying uncertainty and instability. For instance, as John Dryzek (2005) argues, frustrations and deadlocks are often pre-empted by avoiding and putting aside divisive issues. This is consistent with empirical evidences: low intergroup trust encourages interlocutors to circumscribe the objects of cooperation, and to engage in instrumental, rather than moral or fiduciary relationships (Sztompka 1999). Intergroup trust appears as a precondition to the *ethic* of dialogue, as well as the continued *commitment* to a dissensual conversation.

3. Vertical unity

Authors agree that unity is achieved as a result of reciprocity and mutual respect, which emerge out of institutional and symbolic recognition. "Where cultural diversity has been recognized and

accommodated in various ways", argues Tully, "confrontation and conflict have eased and the members of a constitutional association have been able to work together on their common problems" (1995: 197). Kymlicka is more ambivalent on the existence of different citizenship regimes and argues that it is "improbable that rights to self-government could assume an integrative function" (1995: 257). It provides minorities with an alternative to secession, but also reinforces the belief that the group is able to exercise full sovereignty. In the end, unity resides in a "common pride" fostered by institutions opened to the realization of the potentials of every individual and group (Kymlicka 1995: 189). Taylor argues that a multinational state ought to encourage a "plurality of ways of belonging," and that belonging to the whole does not exclude other belongings. Rather, belonging to the whole is experience through one's identity, which comes with the respect for deep diversity (Taylor 1991: 76).

Those who recognize the fluid character of recognition posit unity in the discussion itself. For Jeremy Webber, Canada is shaped by the "pattern of its public life" and the "terms of its public discussion," and unity, by the commitment to that conversation and the fact of seeing it as one's own (1994: 186, 256). For Maclure, the bond created through conversation "cultivates a thin or second-order form of belonging that can withstand periodic disagreement on substantive matters." For Tully, while struggling for recognition, partners come to develop an attachment to the larger association by learning on and being acknowledged by the other and by having the liberty to challenge the latest hegemonic norms of mutual recognition.

In general then, unity is conceived in a vertical manner. Vertical relationships are links connecting citizens of each social group to a set of common institutions. Here, groups seek institutional recognition and as a consequence, belong to institutions that recognize their identity or are committed to a common conversation. Few authors discuss the question of horizontal relationships that link citizens from one group to another, either on a personal basis, a civil society basis or a political basis (Breton 1980: 142-44). To be fair, Karmis and Maclure, as well as Webber discuss the importance of inter-provincial institutions and programs, cultural as much as political, as well as the necessity to take intercultural relations seriously. Jean-François Caron argues in favour of a "hybrid identity" resulting from mutual recognition (2006: 143). It remains the case, however, that inter-communal relations have not been a central preoccupation for the

recognition and dialogue school, much like the consociational and multinational approach. In the final part of this paper, we will explore the extent to which this is problematic.

II. CONSOCIATIONALISM AND MULTINATIONAL FEDERALISM

In contrast with the 'moral' approach to multinationalism, which emphasizes fluidity, multilogical exchange, and constant re-negotiation, the political approach subscribes to what James Tully has called the monological and finality orientation: "theorists, courts and policy makers […] look for a definitive and final solution" to conflicts over recognition, "by working out theories and policies of the just norms for the mutual recognition of types of minorities and individuals" (2004, p.90). Unity is defined in minimal, inherently conservative, generally a-normative and realpolitik terms. The state manages conflict by crystallizing configurations of group actors, while unity is thought as the product of elite agency and institutional calibration. The general acceptance of those configurations by each group is the substance of political unity, which is rooted in short-term concerns for peace and stability, and often presented as all that is possible in a divided society. This approach, like the former, conceives unity as an outcome.

We are able to identify two distinct but overlapping bodies of prescriptions adopted by political multinationalists. Consociationalism argues that elite cartels are best equipped to negotiate unity at the centre. Multinational federalism suggests that unity is only possible as an instrumental or functional union of autonomous territorial units. Both operate upon two critical shared arguments: (1) that divided societies are best bridged by elites, who can act as stabilizing agents on behalf of their respective communities; and (2) that the empirical reality of disunity prohibits any deeper basis for unity, and that the only institutional mechanisms that might lead to unity are those that accommodate divisions. We contest both of these assumptions. First, heavy reliance on elites is out of step with what has been declared the age of 'the decline of deference' (Nevitte, 1996). There is evidence to suggest that elite endorsement of settlements can have the effect of actually *undermining their support in the general public,* and that *cross-group antipathies may diminish elites' capacity to accommodate each other.* Second*,* a focus on short-term solutions to immediate problems fails to consider the perverse effects of settlements that freeze disunity in place, and which may in fact erode trust over time. Present-mindedness may be necessary in the navigation of crisis moments. But in extending our time horizons as scholars, we are challenged

to consider the likely sustainability of political settlements. These two shortcomings– it will be argued – drive us towards understanding unity at a societal level, and as an input to settlement.

1. Elites as societal stabilizers.

Both consociationalism and multinationalism operate on the assumption that elites are better equipped than their respective publics to bridge the societal divides. This is more explicitly true of consociationalism, which prescribes a solution that is wholly reliant on the agency of elites. The original and definitive statement of consociationalism belongs to Arendt Lijphart: "The essential characteristic of consociational democracy is not so much any particular institutional arrangement as the deliberate joint effort by the elites to stabilize the system (1969, p.213)" of governance in a divided society. Democratic stability relies on an elite cartel that is committed to working together to mitigate ethnic conflict, and that is empowered to "accommodate the divergent interests and the demands of the subcultures." Societal divisions and the trust deficits that fuel conflict are taken for granted; reconciliation is not the goal of consociationalism. Rather, elites negotiate so as to avoid contact and thus, presumably limit conflict between identity groups: "[...] it may be desirable to keep transactions among antagonistic subcultures in a divided society – or similarly, among different nationalities in a multinational state – to a minimum (*ibid*., p.220-221)." In a multinational society, unity thus results from the careful maintenance of space between nations.

Multinational federalism is also structured around a vertical relationship between citizens and state institutions. The uppermost institutions are the only site where 'bridging' across the societal divide takes place. Here again, we find a somewhat elite-centric understanding of unity. The notion of "functional citizenship" embraces this conception. The legitimacy of the central government is functional, and rests on its capacity to act on problems that fall within its limited jurisdiction, as well as protect the jurisdiction of the provinces and internal nations (Rocher 1998: 20). Multinational federations are dedicated to the protection of national groups' autonomy, seen as the locus of authentic identities and political communities (Gagnon and Iacovino 2003: 140). In other words, the nations themselves remain the place where concrete solidarities are anchored. The multinational state may be, at best, the object of a constitutional patriotism based on universal values (idem). Belonging is more often conceived in instrumental terms; unity is taking

the form of a voluntary partnership of equal nations - for some, a minimalist confederal union (Resnick 1991; Gibbins 1998). Unity is therefore an outcome stemming from institutions which comply satisfactorily with national difference and distance.

This characteristic of the political-institutional approach to unity in multinational societies has sustained some strident criticism. In particular, it has factored heavily in the debate between consociationalism and its discontents. It does certainly present an empirical problem. Lijhpart's most critical assumption is what may be termed 'trickle-down unity'. That is – that in the absence of unity at a social level, rational elites may still achieve a political settlement on behalf of the groups they represent, and that those groups will willingly accept this settlement irrespective of social disunity. This places rather considerable faith in the ability of elites to command the acquiescence of their publics, and seems misplaced given the trend towards anti-elitism in all industrial democracies (for instance, see Nevitte 1996). As early as 1972, long before "the decline of deference" had been proclaimed, Richard Simeon wondered whether political elites in Canada wielded sufficient moral leadership to ensure state stability within a consociational framework (1972, p.292). It is now even less likely the case, and the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords provide some empirical evidence of this.

The 'decline of deference' seems to have two major consequences: First, elite endorsement may have the effect of undermining rather than enhancing popular support. Anti-elitist oppositional dynamics were instrumental in the collapse of both Meech and Charlottetown. Second, the public requirement for more transparency in the process of elite accommodation restricts the degree of compromise otherwise available to elites in closed-door settings (Lusztig 1994; Atkinson 1994). In making those discussion public, social dynamics - such as the mobilization of sections of public opinion against each other – are fostered which are unaccounted for in the classical consociational imagination of the grand coalition. If one group favours an uncompromising position, its representative elites will be compelled to gravitate towards that position in order to sustain public favour. Hence, the potential discrepancies between political actors' and citizens' view of political settlement, as well as between political actors' mutual trust and societal distrust must be taken into account. In general then, the decline of deference may distort the traditional binding norm of a 'commitment to the system,' so central to consociational and multinational

theories and practices.

Given the decline of deference, some have pointed to the necessity of engaging publics in political settlements and deliberation. This became a focus of Canadian political scientists in the 1990s, after the elite-centric model of the Meech Lake Accord foundered against public opposition. While the Charlottetown Accord took large strides in the direction of citizen participation, at important stages its substance was still largely drafted by intergovernmental professionals, engendering an angry reaction by the public (Stein, 1997). For many of the authors who have responded to this challenge, the process of public engagement is threefold: it first takes place within the group (society-elites), then between groups at the center (elites-elites), and finally returns to the group for ratification (elite-society). Intergroup deliberation and relations (society-society) are rarely addressed (Noel 2006; Dryzek 2005; James 2003; Deveaux 2003). A notable exception here is Matthew Mendelsohn who argued in favour of de-siloized negotiation, involving citizens from both groups. However, as argued by Dryzek, citizens' forums are mere "micro" moments in the "macro" social life, and there therefore may still be a lack of long term citizens' involvement even in the Mendelsohn's model. Moreover, it offers a partial solution to the first consequence of the decline of deference (public distrust of elite accommodation), but generally leaves the question of how transparency affects elite political dynamics unanswered. As argued by O'Flynn (2007), one consequence of segmental autonomy is that people only engage in political discussions with members of their own groups, potentially encouraging entrenched views. As such, there is a need to account, even in deliberative consociational or multinational models, for intergroup trust as a necessary input to the process.

Therefore, without even having to follow Horowitz (1985) in questioning whether these state forms provide incentives to elites to cooperate, we simply argue that elite cooperation itself may be insufficient in the face of mass antipathy. Where accommodationist mechanisms at the state level work, it may well because of a public tolerance of such mechanisms born of intergroup trust as a precondition to settlement.

2. Trust as an Output of Minimalist Settlement

These political-institutional approaches also share a common critique of other, more highly normative approaches which prescribe deeper bases for unity. The modest prescriptions of consociationalism and multinational federalism are argued to account for what is possible in dealing with difficult conflicts and entrenched, conflictual identities. Consociationalists articulate a unity vision that is anchored in present-minded concerns. McGarry and O'Leary describe consociational theory as "responsible realism," and respond to its critics simply: "[no other] projects [have] the remotest prospect of winning cross-community support..." Consociationalism is not only the best option, then, but the only option which will satisfy all parties to a conflict. Approaches which emphasize engendering social relations across societal divisions may be theoretically interesting, but are of no use to policy-makers concerned with ending conflicts.

Multinational federalists also argue that their vision is in keeping with a more realist understanding of the nature of intergroup relations in a given society. Rather than having one demos, it is argued, Canada is composed of multiple demoi – a situation that might explain its incapacity to act as a "sovereign people" (Russell 2004). As a result, "Canada as a common political space appears as a theoretical anomaly for citizenship" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 170). The hollow centre of pan-Canadian citizenship makes robust governance from the centre impossible. Multinationalists ascribe irresponsibility to arguments that do not take this sociological reality for granted. In response to certain criticisms, McRoberts writes: "it is hard to see how […] concerns [about multinational federalism] justify the obstinate pursuit of a vision of a unitary nation-state which, by all indications, is doomed to failure (McRoberts, 2001, p.711)." In other words, at a point normative arguments can be set aside in recognition of the plain inapplicability of governance forms that are not responsive to the sociological reality of disunity.

The basic assumption here is that political settlement can occur in an atmosphere of complete distrust, by empowering the parties to the conflict with discrete and guaranteed spheres of power. Groups can co-exist only in a context where each group is sufficiently protected from possible domination by the other, and this can be formalized in institutions and gentleman's agreements. In time, these working relationships can develop into a trust relationship, which forms a stable basis for unity.

We question the contention that trust will result from state designs which are built in the image of

social disunity. While the rather minimal cooperative requirements of consociationalism make sense in post-conflict contexts where divisions clearly preclude anything more, there remains the question of sustainability over time (Horowitz, 2005). This argument flows from the one presented above. Even if elites are able to secure a literal or proverbial (in the case of stable divided societies) cease-fire, they will likely be unable to inculcate anything more substantial. What are the mechanisms by which a political settlement becomes a broadly embraced sustainable peace, in the absence of pre-existing social trust? The instrumental benefits of union are unlikely to overcome prejudice, anger, and distrust, for reasons we discuss below. How, in the aftermath of conflict or disagreement, do we escape the "symbolic politics trap" – the powerful emotional resistance to cooperation felt by many even in the face of elite gravitation towards accommodation (Kaufman 2006)?

In fact, institutions which crystallize societal divisions may perversely erode trust over time. First, the fixed quality of these settlements elevate the costs of modification in future, sowing the seeds of zero-sum conflict between groups. Second, institutions which "[rest] precisely on the division[s] [they] are supposed to solve" (Wilson and Wilford, p.6) may have a feedback effect on the state of recognition and dialogue at a societal level. Therefore, in the absence of preexisting trust, an inter-communal drawing-together at the top can have the effect of prying publics away over time. We argue that a skeletal bridge jerry-built by political professionals between groups which still share powerful distrust is likely to age badly and quickly.

Having discussed the two most prominent bodies of prescription for the problem of unity in multinational societies, we will begin to offer a third approach. We argue that unity can usefully be studied as an input to dialogue and settlement, and as horizontal in nature.

III. SOCIAL UNITY AND TRUST AS AN INPUT

The first critical distinction we draw between our conception of unity and the existing versions is that we view unity as an input, a precondition to dialogue and recognition, and an independent variable which is partly able to explain the success or failure of multinational societies. This

contrasts with the 'moral' approach which treats unity as *a posteriori*, emerging out of processes of dialogue. It also runs counter the political understanding of unity as resulting from elite-institutional accommodation.

Both of the latter two approaches suffer for their inattentiveness to the possible effects that social disunity can have on the projects they prescribe. The moral unity approaches, of recognition and dialogue, assume a willingness of groups to embrace intercultural dialogues, while empirical evidence suggest that in contexts of intergroup distrust strategic interactions are more likely. The political unity approaches, of consociational and multinational federalism, pay close attention to strategic game playing, but are largely silent on the emotional and symbolic roadblocks to accommodation in contexts of distrust. In both cases, then, theory needs to be more attentive to the logics of intergroup relations. The social unity approach thus suggests a critical intervening variable which may be able to explain why intergroup dialogue and political-institutional settlement are possible in some multinational contexts and fail in others.

Trust as a Prerequisite to Dialogue

We have discussed at length the recognition and dialogue school, with its focus on multilogical exchange, mutual recognition and flexibility. Such an approach is indeed desirable in theory. It can also be argued to be 'social,' in the sense that it entails citizen participation rather than relying solely on elites. What it lacks is a serious empirical grounding in the condition of intergroup relations, particularly in the context of conflict. Here a social unity approach which places trust ahead of dialogical processes is beneficial.

Michael Rabinder James offers a useful discussion of this shortcoming in the literature on cross-cultural dialogue. "The weakness of this consensus," writes James, "lies in its purely normative focus," which assumes a willingness to cooperate shared by groups, which is often disproved empirically (James: p.158). Borrowing from Habermas, he suggests that what dialogue theorists anticipate is "communicative action" – an effort by dialogue partners "to reach an understanding about their action situation and their plans for action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement (Habermas, in James: p.159)." While Tully and others depart from Habermas's pursuit of consensus, their principles of dialogue – an effort at mutual understanding, an ethic of

reciprocity, self-criticism – align somewhat with the concept of communicative action. However, according to James, in the absence of trust, "strategic action" is more likely. When adopting strategic action, "actors pursue their goals while incorporating how others may react strategically to their actions (ibid.)." Communicative action involves the joint pursuit of cooperative understanding; strategic action is limited to the competitive, exclusive pursuit of goal realization. James argues, in our view with justice, that the empirical literature on intergroup relations in divided societies uncovers more of the latter variety of action than of the former.

Communicative action is predicated on our definition of trust – a certain "solidaristic" (James, pp.164) tolerance of uncertainty, and a willingness to participate in exchange 'as if' we can comfortably predict our dialogue partners' reactions to endogenous and exogenous change. When strategic action is activated in the context of dialogue, it can destabilize this commitment to flexibility. The various logics of group conflict which accompany it can lead elite dialogue participants towards trying to consolidate claims to external material, power, and security resources (James, pp.164-167). This is accomplished through fixity, competition over procedures, and so on, prohibiting future dialogue.

Preexisting trust also enables the very demanding condition of recognition upon which dialogue is supposed to be based – sensitivity, reciprocity, *audi alteram partem*, etc. This involves a presumption of value in the cultural traditions of and positions espoused by the dialogue partner (James, p 163). This presumption is by its nature an act of trust, or even faith. In its absence, strategic communication entails only recognition of others as rational actors pursuing self-serving objectives. If this is the initial condition of intergroup relations, than even 'standing in the shoes of the other' is not conducive to building trust. If actor A perceives actor B as exclusively self-interested, then when actor A endeavours to imagine the position of her counterpart, she will see only ambitions that are detrimental to her interests. The effect will be to stimulate resistance and exacerbate distrust. If actor A enters the dialogue having embraced the notion that her counterpart is concerned only with achieving mutual and equitable recognition – that is, if trust is preexisting between groups – only then might the reflexive and empathetic exercises imagined by the dialogue school suggest a path to unity. This relates to what Donald Horowitz terms "positional group psychology" (p.181). As he writes, to posit the importance of dialogue and

other forms of contact at a level of theoretical abstraction "is to miss the decisive impact of the quality of that contact (p.182)."

Thus, while recognition and dialogue theory places faith in process with the expectation that trust will result, the social unity approach looks first to the condition of trust between groups. Where it is absent, it is likely that dialogue will not result in unity, and may in fact only escalate competitive game playing between group actors. Where it is present, actors will be more capable of communicative behaviour aimed at achieving understanding.

Trust as a Prerequisite to Political Settlement

Where the recognition and dialogue school presumes communicative action without stipulating its conditions, political approaches presume rational action without exploring its output as it relates to trust. Much institutional literature focuses on how to lace the state with inducements to cooperate. Consociationalism offers elite incentives for unity at the centre; multinational federalism provides instrumental benefits to regional actors. Another variety of political unity not discussed above – traditional track one diplomacy – also adopts the rationality assumption, and looks to interests-based compromise to resolve conflict. Here, the problem is again an empirical one. In this case, no attention is paid to the emotional-symbolic content of conflict. There is an ill-founded assumption that rational negotiation is able to transcend powerful emotions such as fear, anger and hatred. The social unity approach amends this failure by prescribing social trust as a precondition to successful attempts at political settlement.

Donald Horowitz (1985), Crawford Young (1979), Stuart Kaufman (2001) and others have argued persuasively that our understanding of intergroup relations must make space for emotional motivations. For instance: Horowitz invokes social psychological research on group prejudice which has found that when individuals are given the choice to apportion rewards that would either offer maximum benefit to both their in-group and the out-group, offer maximum benefit to the in-group solely, or simply maximize the disparity between the in- and out-group, they select the latter. In other words, there is a willingness to sacrifice in-group profitability in favour of hierarchical superiority relative to the out-group (Horowitz, 1985: 145). This is one example of how the emotional content of a conflict drives actors towards adopting sub-optimal behaviour

(such as pursuing a costly secession). We have reason to doubt, then, that political-elite approaches based on instrumental inducements can alone overcome the unity problem in divided societies. This is an increasingly-accepted view, and is the basic impetus behind the embrace of reconciliation, public apologies, truth-telling commissions, and other mechanisms for 'transitional justice' in post-conflict settings. These diverse undertakings are unified in their focus on "building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday (Hayner, 2003, p.161)" (Quinn, 2009, p.4).

A social unity approach, which treats trust as an input rather than outcome, encourages us to examine the "symbolic politics" of conflict (Kaufman). This involves delving below the surface of political conflict to seek out the "myth-symbol complex," (Edelman, in Kaufman: p.28) which is imbued with historical grievance and which fuels emotional resistance to cross-cultural cooperation. This complex is experienced at a mass and societal level. Elites may have agency in the genesis of national myths, but this does not imply that they are able to easily reform or replace existing myths. Gerard Bouchard describes a process of diffusion, ritualization, and finally *sacralisation*, after which a national myth achieves a power independent of whatever instrumental purpose it originally served (2007). If these myths structure distrust between groups, they are likely to conflict with any elite-level political settlements. Minimalist settlements, which establish union predicated on compromise and rational self-interest, may have a feedback effect on the myth-symbol complex, furnishing further proof of untrustworthy character and inherent 'otherness'. This places the sustainability of a settlement very much in doubt.

Lasting political settlements, including those built simply around offering instrumental benefits to isolated groups, are not possible in contexts where all behaviour is processed through a lens of anger and distrust. Again, the social unity construct points us towards a critical intervening independent variable, social trust, which helps to explain the success or failure of political settlements. The question becomes: what is social unity, and where should we look for trust as a precondition to dialogue and settlement? We next offer a partial answer to this question, by arguing the value of studying civil society linkages and social capital in multinational societies.

IV. LOCATING TRUST: CIVIL SOCIETY IN MULTINATIONAL CONTEXTS

So far, the paper has argued that trust ought to be seen as an input in dialogical and accommodation process. Trust tends to diffuse strategic dynamics and emotions that endanger both the capacity of groups to engage in a fruitful ethic of dialogue and in long-term sustainability of institutional accommodation. We have also argued that, so far, the literature has mainly addressed multinational dynamics in a vertical manner: recognition is sought at the center, trust is oriented towards institutional frameworks, and groups relate to each other solely through their respective elites.

Meanwhile, post-conflict theories have been moving steadily away from understanding peace processes solely at the top level. Borrowing from the idea of "track II diplomacy" and "multi-track diplomacy" (informal diplomacy by non-officials), this literature argues that peace settlements ought to take place through mechanisms bridging social segments as well as different levels of a society. John Paul Lederach argues that peace processes involve *top-level leadership*, which undertake high-level negotiation, but also *middle-range leadership* (NGO, academics, ethnic leaders, social leaders) and *grassroots leadership* (local leaders, community actors) (Lederach 1997: 38-55). Similarly, Maire Dugan (1996) has developed a the idea of "nested paradigm" as a mechanism that address both narrower and broader aspects of conflict resolution, ranging from issues, relationships, subsystems to systems (Lederach 1997: 56). Lower levels comprise temporary institutions, such as problem-solving workshops and peace commissions, but also longer-term institutions, such as actual linkages between groups through non-governmental organizations. The theoretical contention is that intergroup logics operate differently at different levels, and that discrepancies between upper-level settlements and lower-level realities may be damaging for long-term settlements. For instance, Nan (1999) has argued that intergroup trust is partly formed through the *complementarity* and *coordination* of those different levels of group relations. Consequently, recognition at the formal level might be unlikely if groups, in their daily encounters, do not engage in some form of recognition and cooperation at the societal level.

Manlio Cinalli addresses directly the question of power sharing "from above" and "from below." He argues "that prescription of institutional solutions cannot be separated from the empirical assessment of relationships and exchanges in both the public and institutional domains" (2005:

184). He models power sharing types by measuring both vertical ties between communities and the state and horizontal ties between communities through civil society, highlighting the danger of "pillarization" whereby groups are reconciled to the state but not each other (ibid). Hence he argues that to the vertical relationship assumption, so pervasive in the literature under review, the horizontal one is intimately related. The value of reconciliation approaches is that they focus on relational structures and horizontal linkages between groups without denying recognition of the existence of those groups. Scholars of reconciliation study the forces of unity and disunity at play in educational systems, media and the public sphere, associational life, and so on. They work at varying levels of analysis, considering top-level (political), middle-range (civil society), and grassroots arenas for conflict resolution (Lederach 1997).

Some authors, in the "social capital" tradition, have taken into account the negative potential of certain kinds of social capital (exclusion of outsiders, excess claims, restrictions on individual freedom) and turned to the notion of "bridging" social capital (Putnam 1995). Bridging social capital is the building of connections between groups which may result in trust. Trust, as understood by Putnam, is deemed to overcome the problem of collective action, therefore de-emphasizing strategic logics of intergroup relations. According to James, civil society linkages between groups tend to circumvent strategic logics of conflict because they involve middle-level actors, which are often less affected by the positional logics of high and symbolic politics. In their recent edited volume, Cameron and Simeon (2009) showed that French and English groups in Canada have successfully worked out agreements and accommodated themselves through different organizational structures. They have developed some forms of trust and recognition, and undertook many common projects. One is forced to admit, however, that recognition and intergroup relations at the societal level has not been a focus the two literatures under review. It is surprising, given that the concept of "bridging" social capital has been researched in many pluriethnic settings (Leonard 2004; Krishna 2002; Svendson and Svendson 2003; see also Patulny and Svendsen 2007). In general then, we have yet to connect these findings to their broader impact on formal institutions and dynamics.

Here it is important to recognize Ashutosh Varshney's masterful study of ethnic conflict in India, which furthers our understanding of those connections. He found that the critical variable

distinguishing conflict-prone and conflict-proof cities is the vitality of interethnic associational life. He distinguishes between formal and everyday contacts and argues that both contribute to interethnic peace, although the organized form is more durable and robust. Interethnic organizations promote communication, even in time of tension, and promote common understanding around economic, cultural and social issues (2001: 375). Integrated civil societies tend to resist conflict and pressure political actors towards settlements and reconciliation, sometimes for very practical reasons: they would lose from a split fight for their turf (ibid: 378).

The challenge remains applying these insights in a multinational context, where there is little face-to-face contact between members of different groups (Coleman 1995). Nonetheless, many non-governmental associations have built strong links between communities, and this is particularly true in smaller settings such as Montréal and New Brunswick (Howe et al. 2006). The problem is thus more theoretical and empirical. So far, the locus of intergroup conversation in the multinational literature has mostly remained unspecified, and even more rarely studied as such. In other words, the quality of that conversation as been argued in normative terms, but to our knowledge it has never been so in empirical terms. It seems, drawing on the peace building literature, that current theories are overlooking an important dimension in the study of multiethnic states.

Of course, many challenges remain, as some have argued that few channels of exchange exist between different groups in a multinational society. For instance, in multilingual states groups discuss in their own language and within their own academic communities (Rocher 2009). In general, in societies divided ethnically and regionally discussions follow autonomous paths and rarely cross-fertilize, issues are treated differently, and consensus takes divergent forms (Webber 1994). Following Maryse Potvin et al. (2004), rather than creating a space for inter-communal exchanges, mass medias may also distort the image of the "Other," either by trivializing some issues or by infusing their treatment with racist discourse. Few have ventured into exploring concrete links between national groups, through for instance civil society organizations (exception: Breton and Stasiulis 1980; Lemieux and Meisel 1972; Cameron and Simeon 2009). Following from the post-conflict literature and its emphasis on civil society links, our impression is that these links exist in varying degrees, but have yet to be explored.

In the peace building literature, the argument that civil society matters is both normative and prescriptive. The implication is that civil society should be fostered in post-conflict settings. What is of interest to us here is not the prescription necessarily, but the theoretical implications: the dynamics of civil society may matter when it comes to understanding multinational political dynamics. What we have observed in this paper is both theoretical and empirical neglect of lower-level dynamics in multinational settings.

Given the preliminary nature of this argument, we conclude with questions rather than answers. We believe that the following issues need to be explored in the interest of better understanding unity in multinational societies:

- What is the consequence of integration/disintegration of intergroup networks on federal and consociational dynamics?
- How do intergroup civil society linkages alter incentives to cooperate at the political level?
- How is the myth-symbol complex constructed/deconstructed at the level of civil society?
- What effect do the institutional forms prescribed to manage ethnically divided societies have on the nature of civil society and intergroup linkages?
- Can intergroup associational links 'stand in' for a lack of face-to-face contact between members of different groups?
- How are political actors responsive to civil society's dynamics?

CONCLUSIONS

It has been our intention to flesh out what we believe is an underdeveloped concept in the literature on multinationalism – the problem of unity. It is not surprising that this is the case, given that normative endorsements of multinationalism have been largely a reaction against the perceived homogenizing impulse of colour-blind liberalism. The word itself is provocative when

used in the political context of this scholarly tradition. But unity is, of course, implicit in multinationalism – it is what makes it 'multi'. Without unity, it collapses into mononationalist secessionism. There is good reason, therefore, to explore the various conceptualizations that are present in the literature.

We have offered some underlying characteristics of unity common both to the flexible (recognition and dialogue) and fixed (consociational and federal) approaches to multinationalism. These are that unity is understood as a siloized vertical relationship, extending from citizens to elites and then shared by elites across the societal divide; and that unity is an outcome of accommodation and settlement. We have suggested some theoretical shortcomings of these assumptions, with anecdotal empirical backing. In explaining or predicting the success of a multinational society, we believe attention should be paid to the condition of social unity, or intergroup trust. This is an input to political reconciliation, and it is a horizontal relationship.

This work is preliminary, and our aims are modest. We merely wish to suggest that this dimension is theoretically important, and its exclusion from analysis is unjustifiable. We have begun to identify a research agenda, that we may better understand the nature of unity in ethnically divided societies.

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