

From Trend Tracking to Social Forecasting

Looking Back and Looking Forward at Social Life in Canada



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ABSTRACT

The author has spent most of his career tracking social trends in Canada dating back some 50 years to around 1967. He now is embarking on what he sees as a complementary research project, where he is attempting to do some informed forecasting about what social life in Canada will look like around 2067. The pivotal year for looking back 50 years and looking ahead 50 years will be Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017. In this paper, he discusses some of the key factors that have influenced interpersonal life in Canada over the past five decades, complete with important and unique illustrative trend data. He then shifts his attention to how a sociologist might responsibly engage in projections about what interpersonal life in Canada will look like in the future. He concludes with some illustrations of what might be possible.



Monitoring Trends: Project Canada Surveys

* **7 Adult...** 1975 → 2005: > 10,000

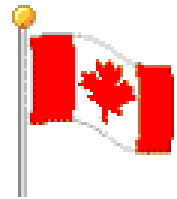
* **4 Teen....** 1984 → 2008: > 15,000



■ Readings of

- Boomers * Pre-Boomers * Post-Boomers
- Teens 80s 90s 00s Now

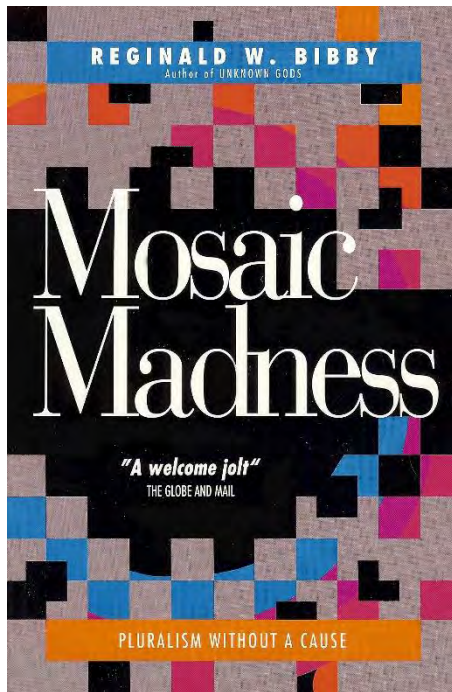
- ## ■ Together: surveys lots of information on how we have changed & not changed since 1960s



- ## ■ Ongoing surveys: Angus Reid



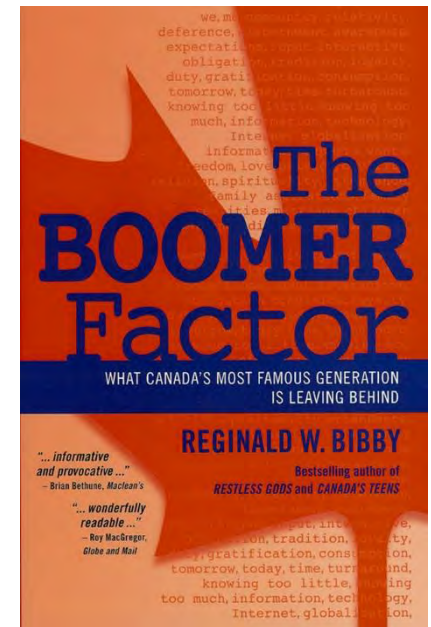
Some Attempts to Read Things Along the Way



1990



1995



2006

Canada Since 1967

Looking Back 50 Years



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Forthcoming
2017.

Canada In 2067

Looking Ahead 50 Years



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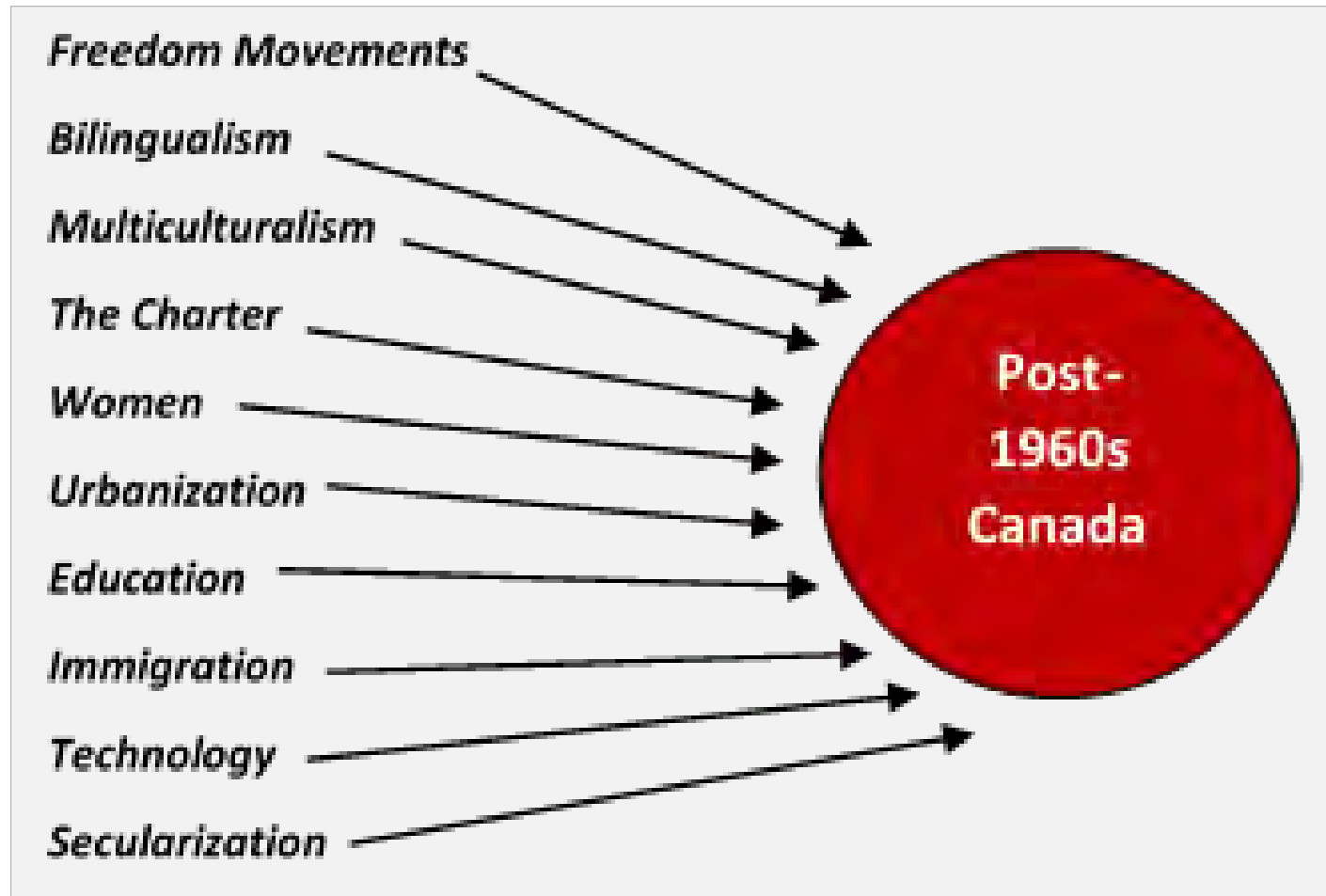
Canada Since 1967

Looking Back 50 Years



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Key Determinants of the Post-1960s



The Major Architect



*The High Priority Given to Creating
A Just Society*

**Canada Since
1967**

Looking Back 50 Years



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I. Six Major Shifts

1. From Dominance to Diversity



The Old Canada

*Many of us knew a Canada in 1950s & 60s
that was very different from today...*

- Immigrants
- Interracial dating & marriage
- Women & sexual harassment
- Gays & lesbians
- The nuclear family
- Religion

TODAY

Pluralism is pervasive.

Themes like equality and diversity

have been enshrined...

part of our taken-for-granted social reality.

Approval of Intergroup Marriage: 1975-2015

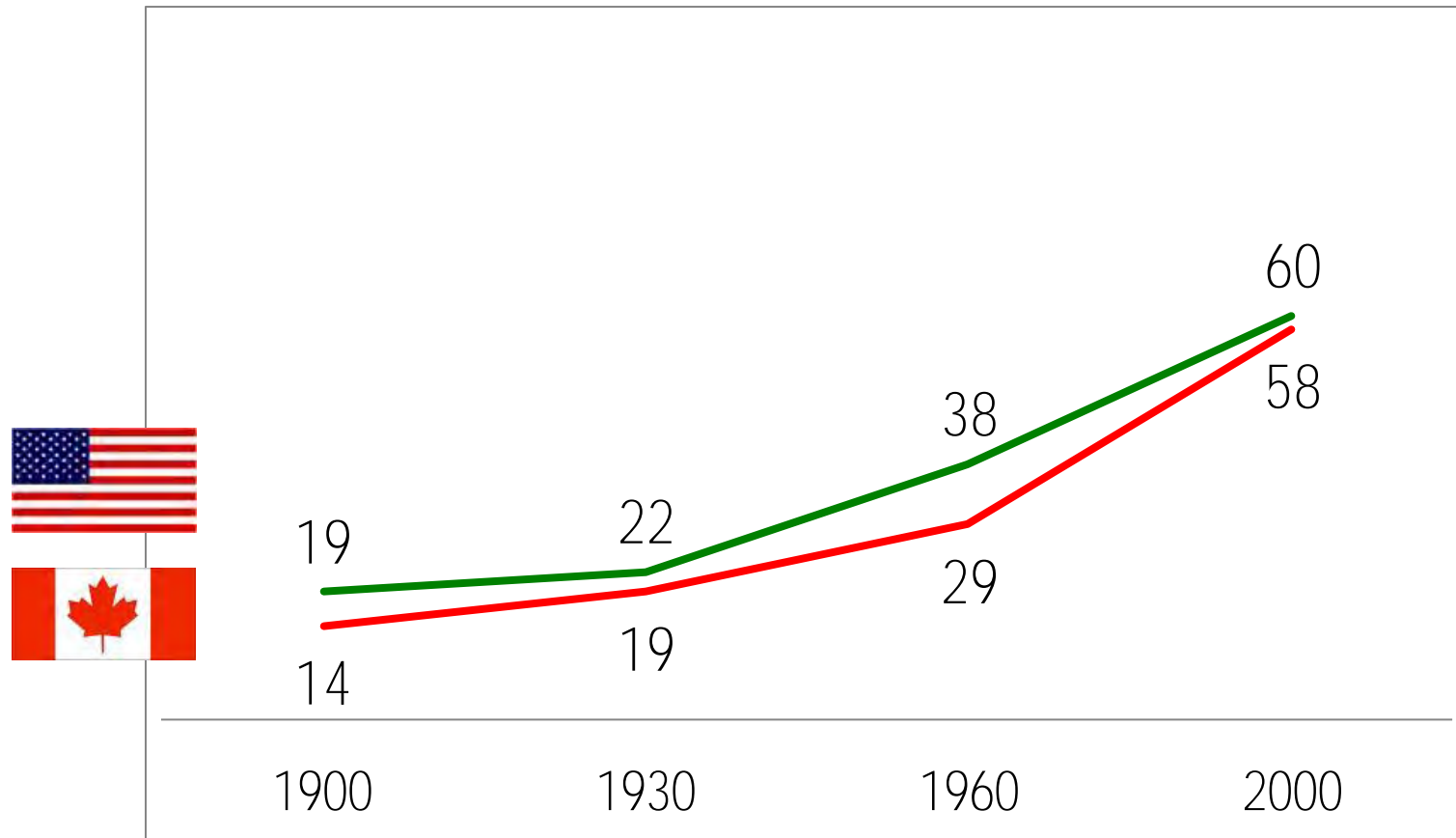


	1975	1995	2015
Whites & Aboriginals	73%	84	95
Whites & Asians	64	84	95
Whites & East Indians	56	81	92
Whites & Blacks	55	81	94
<i>Pre-Boomers</i>	45	63	85
<i>Boomers</i>	81	90	95
<i>Post-Boomers</i>	***	96	96

Diversity a Given



Women Employed Outside the Home: 1900-2000 (%)



Sources: U.S. and Canadian census data.

Attitudes Toward Women Being Employed: 1975-2005



*“Married women should not be employed if their
husbands are capable of supporting them”*

	1975	2005
Nationally	35	11
Pre-Boomers	42	21
Boomers	16	9
Post-Boomers	***	6

"One of the priorities for you was to have a cabinet that was gender-balanced. Why was that so important to you?"



"Because it's 2015."

Acceptance of Homosexuality: 1975 & 2005



Decriminalized in 1969
*"There is no place for the state
in the bedrooms of the nation."*
—Pierre Trudeau, 1967

	1975	2005
NATIONALLY	28%	62
Pre-Boomers	21	45
Boomers	43	66
Post-Boomers	***	70

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, Project Canada Survey Series.

Views of Same-Sex Marriage & Parenthood: 2005-2015

Same-Sex Couples...	2005	2015
Marrying		
<i>Approve & Accept</i>	48%	63
<i>Disapprove But Accept</i>	22	21
<i>Disapprove & Do Not Accept</i>	30	16
Adopting Children		
<i>Approve & Accept</i>	40	60
<i>Disapprove But Accept</i>	21	23
<i>Disapprove & Do Not Accept</i>	39	17

"I think of my father and how pleased he must be that Canada so firmly came together around an ambitious vision for the country that we presented."



**Canada Since
1967**

Looking Back 50 Years



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In Sum...

I. Six Major Shifts

- 1. From Dominance to Diversity**
- 2. From Obligation to Gratification**
- 3. From Deference to Discernment**
- 4. From Autonomy to Attachment**
- 5. From Direct to Digital**
- 6. From Knowing Too Little to
Knowing Too Much**

**Canada Since
1967**

Looking Back 50 Years



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II. Four Major Continuities

1. What People Want

2. Civility

3. Family

4. Religion & Spirituality

There we have it...



From Trudeau...

...to Trudeau



"I think of my father and how pleased he must be that Canada so firmly came together around an ambitious vision for the country that we presented."



"But my thoughts today - sorry Dad - aren't mostly on him. They're very much on my own kids and the kids across this country that we are going to work very, very hard to ensure they have a better future."



We have been **FASCINATED** with the future

- what lies ahead: e.g., relationships, career, finances, health; beyond death
- everyday life: e.g., daily events, interaction, weather, \$, sports, travel, health, safety

Is important to be able to **PREDICT** the future

- curiosity: want to know what lies ahead
- enhanced living: personal & social well-being; aware of best choices
- organizationally: effectiveness, success

Consequently: a **MARKET** for expertise exists

- historically: want to know what lies ahead
- wide range: anointed, self-appointed, un-credentialed, credentialed
- today: **information age** → **explosion of alleged experts**

***Social sciences:**

- *Goals* = **DESCRIPTION, EXPLANATION...PREDICTION**

No lack of efforts

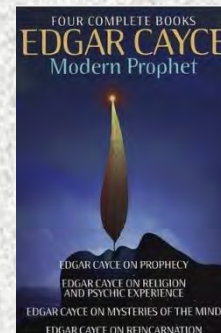
- Conventional



Nostradamus



- Less conventional



FUTURES STUDIES

- Often interdisciplinary
- Emphasizes plural futures
 - limitations of prediction & probability
- Future: possible, probable, & preferable (3 Ps)
- Dominant approach: projections based on trends
- Also emphasizes **“wildcards”**:
 - low-probability, high impact events
 - e.g., 9-11, Internet



The Plan...

Canada In
2067

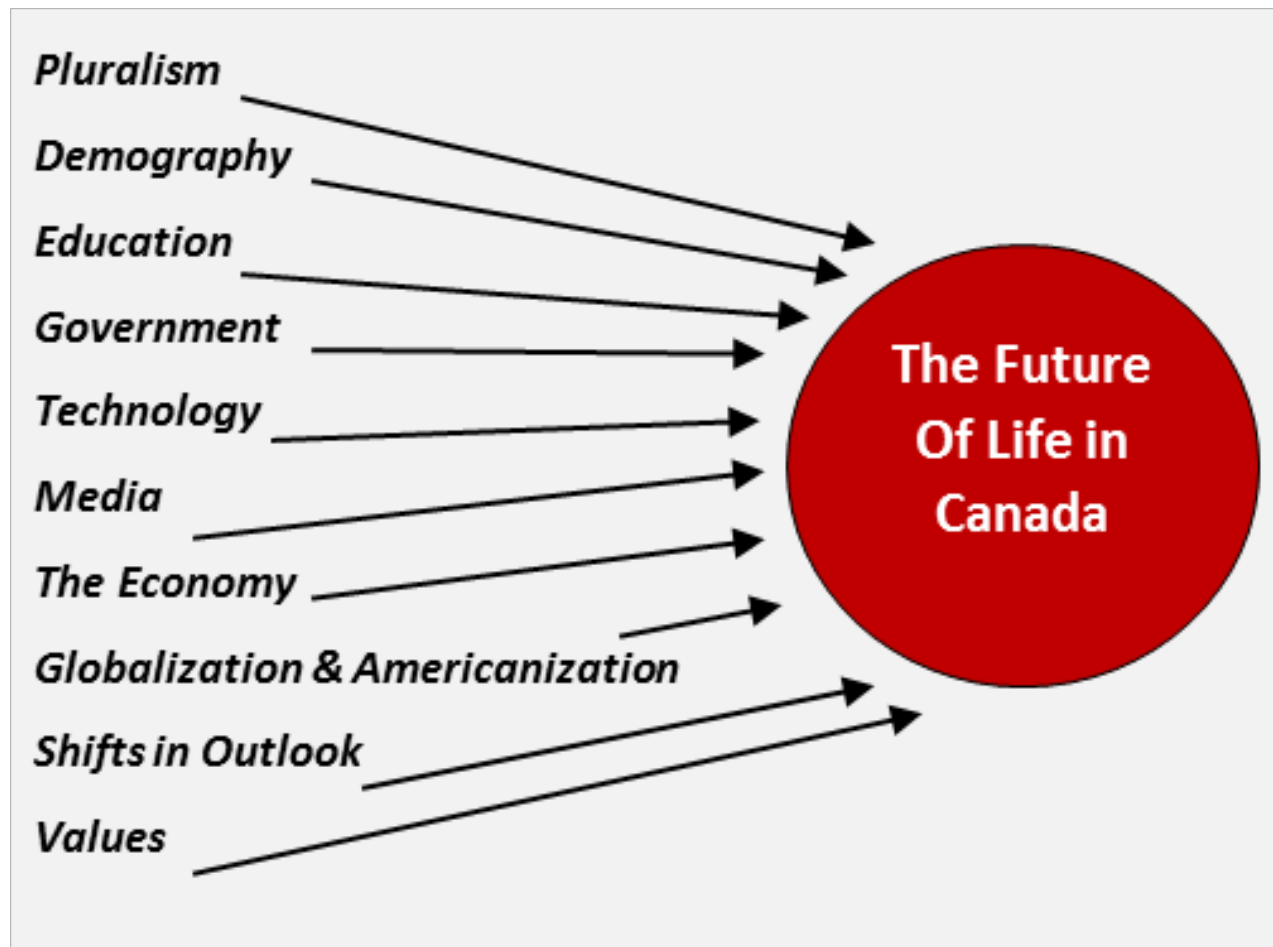
Looking Ahead 50 Years



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Identify

I. Key Determinants



Key Determinants

Pluralism





- Perhaps **our** foremost defining characteristic
- Our mindset: **differences** accepted, co-opted
- **Multiculturalism policy** → **multi-everything** psyche
- **Multiple mosaics** in virtually every area of life
- **“Great Canadian Pluralistic Principle”**
can be expected to have **a profound influence**
on virtually all spheres **as move toward 2067**

Key Determinants

Demography





- Age structure: **2067 Boomers gone...legacy?**
- Immigration: heavily Asian, younger
- >2030: immigration will account for >80% of pop growth
- Migration: key factors eco, geog, lang, credentialing
- Urbanization: slowing, urban growth increasing
- Aboriginal population: increasing 2.8% 1996, 4.3 2011, 5.3% 2031

Key Determinants

Technology



The impact of the global technological revolution is only going to accelerate

- Social interaction
- Instant global links
- Sharing of information
- Diversifying of Platforms
- Endless sites, endless sources



Internet & mobile technology now global, “a part of everyday life” even “in the emerging and developing world.” [2013]



Canada In
2067

Looking Ahead 50 Years



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Focus on....

II. Ten Outcomes by 2067

1. The People

2. Interpersonal Relations

3. Enjoyment

4. Family Life

5. Sex and Sexualities

6. Information

7. Social Engagement

8. Quality of Life

9. Faith

10. Canada & The World

Identify...

III. Trends

IV. Preferable

V. Wildcards

Canada In
2067

Looking Ahead 50 Years



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1. The People

- More ethnically, racially diverse than ever
- Canadian life and culture will be increasingly multiracial
- Probable: in general, ***“a melting of the mosaic”*** will occur
- Preferable?

Wildcard * Reluctance of some to interact & assimilate

2. Interpersonal Relations

- Interaction across categories will be extensive
- Blending **will be pervasive...origins will blur**
- Social barriers & overt discrimination will officially disappear
- Social compassion & civility **will remain steady...women key**
- Preferable?

Wildcards

1. **New arrivals:** opting for social insulation
2. **Economics:** + I-P life subject to eco well-being

3. Sex & Sexualities

- **Sex**: will know only limited organizational guidelines, and will be left up largely to the discretion of adults involved
- **Sexual orientation**: will be viewed as a personal matter, as will marital and parental decisions

Why?

"Because it's 2067."



Xavier



Ella-Grace



Justin



Pierre

- Preferable?

Wildcards

* None.

