From Trend Tracking to Social Forecasting

Looking Back and Looking Forward at Social Life in Canada

Reginald W. Bibby

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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

Mosaic Madness

1995

The Bibby Report

2006

The Boomer Factor
Canada Since 1967
Looking Back 50 Years

Reginald W. Bibby
Key Determinants of the Post-1960s

- Freedom Movements
- Bilingualism
- Multiculturalism
- The Charter
- Women
- Urbanization
- Education
- Immigration
- Technology
- Secularization

Post-1960s Canada
The Major Architect

The High Priority Given to Creating A Just Society
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites &amp; Aboriginals</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites &amp; Asians</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites &amp; East Indians</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites &amp; Blacks</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Boomers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Boomers</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationally</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Boomers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Boomers</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationally</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Boomers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Boomers</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, Project Canada Survey Series.
## Views of Same-Sex Marriage & Parenthood: 2005-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same-Sex Couples...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approve &amp; Accept</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disapprove But Accept</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disapprove &amp; Do Not Accept</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approve &amp; Accept</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disapprove But Accept</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disapprove &amp; Do Not Accept</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“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.”
I. Six Major Shifts

In Sum...
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
II. Four Major Continuities
1. What People Want
2. Civility
3. Family
4. Religion & Spirituality
There we have it...

From Trudeau...

...to Trudeau

Canada Since 1967
Looking Back 50 Years

Reginald W. Bibby
“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.”
Canada In 2067
Looking Ahead 50 Years

Canada Since 1967
Looking Back 50 Years

Reginald W. Bibby
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

• 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...
I. Key Determinants
The Future Of Life in Canada

Pluralism
Demography
Education
Government
Technology
Media
The Economy
Globalization & Americanization
Shifts in Outlook
Values
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
- Sharing of information
- Endless sites, endless sources
- Instant global links
- Diversifying of Platforms

Internet & mobile technology now global, “a part of everyday life” even “in the emerging and developing world.” [2013]
II. Ten Outcomes by 2067
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The People</th>
<th>6. Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td>7. Social Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Enjoyment</td>
<td>8. Quality of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sex and Sexualities</td>
<td>10. Canada &amp; The World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify...

III. Trends

IV. Preferable

V. Wildcards
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."

- Preferable?

**Wildcards**

* None.