

Patterns of Social Differentiation in Canada: Understanding their Dynamics and Bridging the Gaps

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Le présent article avance que la différenciation sociale est un outil efficace de conceptualisation pour voir les liens qui existent entre la diversité et la polarisation ainsi qu'entre la différence et l'iniquité. Il met l'accent sur les processus économiques et normatifs dont découle la différenciation sociale au Canada. Il fait état des iniquités fondées sur l'âge, des critères spatiaux, le sexe et la race et examine les mécanismes qui sous-tendent ces iniquités. Il explore également les liens tissés entre les politiques gouvernementales, la différenciation sociale ainsi que les causes d'iniquité sociale et les moyens de la réduire. Enfin, cet article énonce que la mitigation des différences socio-économiques constitue le meilleur moyen de dissocier la diversité et la polarisation.

This article argues that social differentiation represents an effective conceptual tool for grasping the connections between diversity and polarization and between difference and inequality. It focuses on the economically based and normatively informed processes constitutive of social differentiation in Canada. It documents age and spatially related, gendered, and racialized inequalities and examines the mechanisms underlying these patterns. It explores the relationship between public policy, social differentiation, and the production and reduction of social inequality. Finally, it suggests that the mitigation of socio-economic disparities constitutes the best tool for disassociating diversity and polarization.

INTRODUCTION

In Canada, as in most modern western societies, there is a strong and warranted concern about what are called the faultlines between diversity and polarization.¹ This study of social differentiation points to a number of these: the maintenance of a gendered order and the spread of non-standard employment relations; the privileging of prime-age workers and the high unemployment of youth; the

penalty for all visible minorities who earn less than whites and whose income falls below the national mean; the highly disadvantaged position of Aboriginals and the economic and demographic decline of agriculture, resource and fishing dependent regions.²

Issues such as the seemingly opposite tendencies of globalization and increased individualization, fragmentation, and differentiation are matters of concern, here and elsewhere. Individuals are

perceived to be isolated and lacking resources, especially those coming from strong social bonds and networks. However, the election in many countries of social democratic governments intent on abolishing the negative effects of harsh neo-liberalism marks a change.³ While they do not plan to return to the former reconstructive post-war *entente*, we are now entering the second phase of the end of the consensus concerning the welfare state.⁴ Such is the context within which the present analysis of social differentiation in Canada is located. This article argues that social differentiation should be viewed as a process located at the juncture of inequality and difference. It analyzes how differences are socially constructed through the unequal access to economic, political, and cultural resources, and it examines how these differences become salient and are rendered operative. By treating social differentiation as a process and social differences as the outcome, I reverse the usual mode of reasoning. This approach allows me to challenge the assertion that diversity causes social conflicts and is an obstacle to social cohesion. It follows, I contend, that social policies must aim at reducing social inequalities, and not diversity.

I begin with the concept of social differentiation and propose a definition which makes it an effective tool for grasping the connections between diversity and polarization. I then present the major features of social differentiation in Canada, focusing on the economically based and normatively informed processes constitutive of, and underlying, these patterns. The ensuing discussion indicates that social policies such as social transfers and new compensation systems which seek to mitigate social inequalities and diminish fault lines will best foster cohesion in Canada.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Why Social Differentiation?

Changes in paradigms are accompanied by changes in concepts, in social policies — such as those pres-

ently observed in Great Britain and in France — and, more generally speaking, in public debates.⁵

Concepts are important; they guide the questions asked, define the situation, and, therefore, orient the solution. Concern about fragmentation and weak social bonds has, for example, fostered an interest in social capital, social economy, civil society, and social cohesion. In Canada, the federal government has emphasized social cohesion⁶ as a basis for creating and strengthening social bonds, solidarity, and value consensus. We are also reminded that social cohesion should involve social justice and social equality, which entails the reduction of wealth and income disparities and the development of equal opportunity.⁷ It has recently been suggested that the current emphasis on social cohesion as a concept and as a goal can act as a *cache-misère*, masking the growth of social inequalities in Canada.⁸

In capturing the process located at the juncture of diversity and polarization and of difference and inequality, the concept of social differentiation allows us to avoid such a pitfall. It helps us explore how differences are constituted through varying access to resources (such as the formal labour market) and how this varying access produces socio-economic disparities and social tensions which, in turn, reinforce social differentiation.

Social Differentiation and Social Inequality

Most people would agree that individuals belong to different categories, such as those related to sex, race, ethnicity, age, and region, and that these categories are somehow connected to social differences and wage differentials. They are less of a single mind, however, when it comes to explaining this connection. While some begin with existing categories and measure their impact on variables such as jobs and income, others discard such an approach as static and emphasize the formation of such categories and the allocation of individuals to them. The latter analysis explores a process through which differences are socially constructed, become salient, and are rendered operative. It examines how unequal

social relations engender different social categories and overlapping boundaries. In this approach, social differentiation is conceived as a process, and social differences, the outcome. Indeed, what has occurred amounts to a complete reversal of former approaches to differences and inequality.⁹

The reasons for choosing to examine social differentiation should now be clear. The process itself, not the categories it produces, constitutes the principal unit of analysis. An in-depth analysis of this process requires a detailed and integrated understanding of the economic, political, cultural, and normative dimensions of social relations producing socially differentiated categories. Such categories function in the allocation of resources, the definition of group monopolies, and the structuring of boundaries between the “ins” and the “outs.”¹⁰ These boundaries have a structural existence repeatedly confirmed through social relations and practices characterized by social closure. This approach looks at those mechanisms, such as market forces, structural changes in the demand factor, and mobile labour markets, which link age and spatially related, gendered, and racialized forms of differentiation to the economy. It pays greater attention to political processes, norms, and representation, and to how policies shape economic functioning and relate to normative definitions. It studies, for example, the impact of policies on the distribution and accessibility of societal resources, including material and ideal ones such as prestige. In sum, social differentiation is defined in terms of two interlocking processes: individuals are assigned to socially constructed categories — which are usually conceived as given; this categorization is then used to allocate them to diverse positions and circumstances characterized by unequal resources, opportunities, and life chances.¹¹

This process is now examined in terms of gender, age, race-ethnicity, and region and focuses on women, youth, visible minorities, Aboriginals, and region types.

THE FLUCTUATING BOUNDARIES OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES

A preliminary observation concerns the fluctuation of the boundaries of socially-constructed categories. Consider the case of age-related differentiation.¹² Although youth has traditionally been defined as comprising individuals aged 15 to 24 (by Statistics Canada, for example), these boundaries are now being questioned. The problematic transition from school to work has prolonged the dependency of young adults beyond age 24 and as a consequence, has delayed the completion of social adulthood. This is why associations like the Canadian Youth Foundation advocate extending the category of youth to 29. It would also appear that the age boundaries of youth fluctuate according to the problems under consideration and to specific policy interests. Programs intended to promote education, for example, focus on the 15 to 24 age bracket while those dealing with intergenerational issues limit themselves to the 16-19 age bracket.¹³

The influence of social policies in defining social boundaries is clearly illustrated in the case of Aboriginals.¹⁴ The creation of distinct legal categories has differentiated *Indians* from other *Canadians*. Within *Aboriginals*, legal categories distinguish status and non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit, with each one possessing different rights and privileges, not to mention different subjectivities. The recognition in 1981 of broader Aboriginal and treaty rights has further modified former categories. Visible minorities also constitute a very interesting example of the influence of government on the construction of social categories.¹⁵ The Royal Commission *Report on Equality in Employment* made visible minorities a designated category on the basis of their unequal life chances. This categorization was reinforced and institutionalized by inclusion in the *Employment Equity Act* in 1986 and reinforced by its operationalization in the 1986 Census.

Pressures to modify the definition of social categories also arise when they lose their usefulness for

understanding social patterns, and thus become irrelevant. Such is the case for the distinction between rural and urban, where the less dominant rural pole is defined in negative terms in relation to the positively perceived urban pole. In order to make sharper and more meaningful comparisons, new classifications are needed. Chris Southcott has this in mind in proposing that we use six region types: urban, urban fringe, agriculture, resource, fishing, and Northern Native.¹⁶ Lastly, another striking and quite different example of changing boundaries is given in the analysis of gender differentiation. Here, the extension of non-standard employment relationships to categories other than women and immigrant workers transforms the former relation between the standard employment relationship (SER) and the non-standard employment relationship (NSER) distinction and gender differentiation.¹⁷

THE PATTERNS OF SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Social differentiation is inseparable from inequality, which characterizes both the economic and the normative order. Unequal access to economic and educational opportunities and the negative perceptions accompanying minority status serve to create and reinforce social differentiation. Minorities are seen as deviating from the norm, as not fitting the norm, and generally speaking, as possessing less value. Thus economic inequality and normative deviation from universal standards interconnect and reinforce one another.

Although there has in some cases been some improvement, the minority status of women, youth, visible minorities, Aboriginals, people living in agricultural, fishing, and resource-dependent areas; and the Northern Natives has been clearly established in this study of social differentiation.¹⁸ There continues to be unequal access to employment opportunities and differential rewards for those who are seen as not fitting the norm.¹⁹

Women and Gender Differentiation

Gender differentiation in the Canadian labour market is a well-known and persistent fact, as indicated by many studies on sex segregation.²⁰ Less well known are the factors that underlie this gendered order which is in fact rooted in the standard/non-standard employment relationship (SER/NSER) distinction.²¹

The intricate relation between the economic and normative order is clearly established here. For it is the state, employers, and organized labour who constructed, through labour market policies and employment practices, the SER as a (white) male norm associated with the family wage. Gendered norms are harnessed to the SER/NSER distinction and institutionalized at the level of public policy. Between 1945 and the early 1970s, this institutionalization is manifest in labour law, such as collective bargaining and legislation concerning minimum wage and basic employment standards; unemployment insurance policy; and employment practices in the federal public service. Consequently, women's and other marginalized groups' full-time participation in the labour market is inhibited, and members of these groups are relegated to forms of employment with lower wages, lower levels of social protection, fewer benefits, and limited access to collective bargaining rights.²²

One of the striking features of the post-1970 period is the spread of NSERs in the form of temporary work, self-employment, and part-time work which increased significantly between 1976 and 1994.²³ This change has led to a more porous SER/NSER distinction, one that no longer constitutes the primary axis of gender differentiation in the labour market. This does not, however, signal the eradication of gender differentiation, only its restructuring. In spite of the changing relation between the SER/NSER distinction and gender differentiation during the post-1970 period, and contrary to many perceptions, the organization of the labour market is not becoming less gendered. Women continue to represent a high proportion of part-time and temporary

workers, and remain concentrated in low-wage sectors such as sales and services, clerical work, and child care.²⁴

Gendered labour-market inequalities are now fuelled by the erosion of minimum standards legislation, the deterioration of collective bargaining, reforms to unemployment insurance, and cutbacks in the federal public service. These inequalities persist because the normative pre-eminence of the male SER endures at the level of policy. Gendered notions of SER/NSER forms of employment are part and parcel of the design of labour policies. The new employment insurance program, for example, exacerbates gender differentiation by introducing a family income supplement that assumes an equitable distribution of resources within households.²⁵

Finally, the spread of NSERs, the deterioration of employment norms, and the casualization of jobs can be conceived as the feminization of employment, a term that would therefore encompass much more than the growing participation of women in the labour force. This phenomenon can be observed when examining the situation of youth.

Youth and Age-Related Differentiation

Although wages and benefits tied to economic production have accumulated among the middle-aged, youth have difficulty finding full-time, well-paying jobs.²⁶ This difficulty has prolonged their transition from school to work and increased their financial dependency and pauperization.

Between 1982 and 1992, “Entry Men” (aged 20-24) saw their earnings decline in absolute and relative terms for most of the period, as their mean earnings fell by 23.7 percent. In contrast, the mean earnings of the “Prime Men” group (aged 35-54) dropped slightly during the 1982-83 recession, then grew steadily throughout the rest of the 1980s, and dropped somewhat in the early 1990s. In 1992 they were no worse off than they had been a decade before.

Among women, the contrast in the fortunes of young workers and prime-age workers is even greater. The mean earnings of “Entry Women” changed in a similar fashion to “Entry Men,” culminating in an overall decline that was almost as great at 19.7 percent,²⁷ while the mean earnings of the “Prime Women” group rose in every year except one, as they finished with an overall earnings gain of close to 20 percent.²⁸

Many factors account for the observed income inequality: distribution of unemployment; distribution of labour force participation; distribution of hours of employment; distribution of “good jobs” and “bad jobs”; and distribution of wages. For example, the unemployment gap between youth and all adults has doubled over the past 30 years, from an average three percentage points in the mid-sixties to six percentage points or more by the mid-1990s.²⁹ Meanwhile the participation of young people in part-time employment has increased. Almost one-quarter of all youth working part-time in 1998 would have preferred to work full-time.³⁰ Finally youth often find themselves in bad jobs, which negatively affects their situation by influencing their future wage level.

Further analysis indicates that these economic disparities between youth and prime-age workers are rooted in four types of differentiation: functional differentiation (market functioning), status differentiation (status in seniority systems), program differentiation (evolution of government programs), and life course differentiation (position in life course).³¹ Furthermore, it would appear that recent economic difficulties experienced by Canadian youth are not entirely due to the changing organization of work, but to the changing organization of rewards from work.

In summary, age-related differentiations within the working-age population cannot be reduced to a single factor. The economic strains of youth have lasted over two decades³² and can best be understood in terms of a process of extended social

differentiation.³³ Let me turn now to another form of social differentiation which shares many features with the two cases just analyzed.

Visible Minorities and Racialized Differentiation

In 1996, all categories included under visible minorities fall below the national mean and earn less than whites in Canada.³⁴ The data also show that some visible minorities have lower economic returns in the labour market and that life chances differ for various groups.³⁵ The gross labour market earnings of South Asians for example are \$6,933 under the national mean while those of Vietnamese fell below by \$4,968. These disparities hold even when factors such as human capital, labour market experience and demographic variables have been taken into account. In other words, there is a penalty attached to visible minority status.

How can one elucidate the link between ethnically and racially defined differences and social inequality? Many factors create barriers to employment and social mobility for non-white Canadians, especially immigrants. These include difficulties in having credentials recognized, direct job discrimination, and language traits such as accents. Beyond that point, the answer is not simple, and the too obvious explanation must be rejected. Inequality is not caused by ethnic differences per se nor is it attributable to the growth, however significant, in ethnic diversity in Canada.

In 1961, 88 percent of the “third force” was of European origin, while in 1991, 55 percent of this category was European and roughly 25 percent was Asian and African. Changes in Canada’s immigration policy in the 1960s broadened the diversity of the Canadian population. In 1971, 96.3 percent of the population in Canada was of European origin; the proportion of visible minorities in Canada went from 6.3 percent in 1986 to 9.4 percent in 1991, and reached 11.2 percent in 1996.³⁶ But what is determining here is not the presence of diversity but the way in which diversity is constructed and perceived.

In other words, what must be explored is less difference than the politics of difference. The fact that immigrants and visible minorities are defined as less valuable affects their economic opportunities;³⁷ in turn, lower life chances and economic position lowers the value attached to them. Thus lower market value and social worth are assigned to those who are construed as different.

That the social inequality linked to minority status carries both an economic and a normative dimension clearly stands out for visible minorities. As we will see below, this is also very much the case for Aboriginals in Canada, whose gross income falls well beneath the national mean (-\$8,899).

Aboriginal People and Social Differentiation in Canada

The highly disadvantaged position held by Aboriginals in Canada has been well documented, most recently in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.³⁸ Aboriginal peoples as a whole rate much lower than the national average on key socio-economic indicators such as income, education, and labour force participation.³⁹ The overall situation of Aboriginal peoples, who possess unequal resources, opportunities, and life chances in comparison with other Canadians will be explored in terms of how the economic and normative order, not to mention social policies, influence social differentiation.⁴⁰

Understanding how Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal differentiation is constituted must begin with an examination of their respective life chances and conditions. Almost 70 percent of Aboriginal people live outside census metropolitan areas, in rural reserves, smaller urban centres, and rural and isolated areas off-reserve. Furthermore, those who live in urban centres never represent more than 7 percent of the population.⁴¹ This geographic distribution is significant for the delivery of services and programs and access to educational and employment resources.

The link between social differentiation and social inequality manifests itself in employment and

income differentials. Aboriginal people participate less in the labour force (by about 10 percent) and are more likely to be unemployed (by about 2.5 times), be in NSERs (by 20 percent), and have lower earnings (34 percent overall and 21 percent for those working full-year, full-time).⁴² Other facets of relative deprivation, such as poverty, homelessness, social assistance support, AIDS, and incarceration add on to the previously mentioned disadvantages and reinforce the unequal life chances differentiating Aboriginals from non-Aboriginals in Canada.

Many factors such as age, lower education, work patterns, and community location account, but only partially, for these disparities. Other factors, such as those examined previously in the case of visible minorities, and linked to the normative order, come into play. Many Aboriginals feel that being Aboriginal is a deterrent to finding stable employment. Behind these words, one detects the phenomenon identified by Li as racially based normative values, which results in the lower social worth accorded to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Lower social worth engenders lower market value and vice versa, as the vicious circle put into place reinforces social differentiation based on an economic and normative order.

This strand of social differentiation in Canada is deeply ingrained in historical processes such as colonialism and was reinforced through private interests and governmental policies. Explanatory frameworks focusing on cultural differences have finally been discarded as have most micro-level approaches centred on individual attitudes and behaviour in favour of perspectives emphasizing institutional structures, domination, conflict, accommodation, and resistance. Analyses of the processes through which Aboriginal people have been marginalized and excluded from central social, political, and economic activities in combination with a focus on their attempts to redefine and renegotiate their position appear more relevant in making sense of unequal situations and life chances.⁴³ These new theoretical and research orientations seem best

suitable to capture the complex processes that operate at a macro-level to engender interlocking strands of social differentiation in Canada.

Region Types and Spatially Related Differentiation

In the light of trends such as the de-spatialization of production and the development of communications technology, hypotheses regarding a growing convergence between urban and rural regions in Canada abound.⁴⁴ They have, however, proved difficult to assess, because the old dichotomy between rural and urban has lost its usefulness for evaluating spatially related differentiation. The uselessness of this categorization is related to the initial definition of rural, which was conceived as the opposite of whatever urban was. Consequently, rural has been identified with agriculture and has not captured the diversity of non-urban settings. As in the case of other minorities, rural constitutes a deviation from the norm and carries a negative connotation.⁴⁵

The differentiation of spatial forms, each corresponding to a specific socio-economic situation, is examined in terms of the specific — and changing — relationship between commodity production, socio-economic production, and socio-historical conditions.⁴⁶ This analysis differentiates six region types, where urban and urban fringe differ sensibly from the other four, namely agriculture, resource, and fishing-dependent types as well as the Northern Native type.⁴⁷ While urban and urban fringe areas are experiencing demographic and economic growth, agriculture, resource, and fishing dependent areas are encountering economic and demographic decline. The Northern Native type stands alone, experiencing both demographic growth — due to a high birth rate — and economic decline.

The urban region type is affected by the rise of post-industrialism and high levels of diversity. Average incomes and levels of education are the highest in the largest cities, but this is also where the highest rates of poverty can be found. They are situated mainly in inner city areas, where one finds

concentrations of less educated, low income, and unemployed persons, caused notably by shifts in manufacturing and employment to the suburbs and beyond.⁴⁸ Another characteristic of the big census metropolitan areas is their ethnic diversity, as 70 percent of visible minorities in 1996 lived there. Urban fringe areas are also experiencing rapid growth, of a non-rural type, as ex-urbanites move out of cities, creating economic and cultural differentiation in former rural areas.⁴⁹ In addition to the economic and demographic decline, areas dependent on resources, agriculture, and fishing are becoming more ethnically homogeneous, and gender differentiation is undergoing slight modifications tied to the higher labour-force participation of women. Finally the Northern Native type continues to experience difficult social and economic conditions.

Thus, the specific combination of competitive capitalism, Fordist industrialism, and post-industrialism explains the persistence of spatially related differentiation in Canada. Region types are constituted mainly through unequal employment opportunities, in terms of jobs and job types, and different levels of internal diversity. Each region type represents a container, so to speak, embodying other forms of social differentiation.

PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

The effectiveness of an historical perspective for apprehending evolving patterns of racialized, gendered, spatial, and age-related social differentiation is established. Consequently, so is the need to shift our analysis from the categories of social differentiation to society as a whole. For it is economic and normative processes, not socially differentiated categories, that engender inequalities and social differentiation.

What stands out is a triadic relationship between economic conditions, normative standards, and government actions and policies. I have already pointed out that the economic and normative dimensions of

social differentiation interconnect, as in the case of market value and social worth. I have also indicated that both general policies and those targeting specific groups' impact on social differentiation must be taken into account. The effect of former government policies on the negative socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples, for example, stands out clearly. Agents of the state can also shape social differentiation through their actions. Their decisions concerning employment opportunities for youth, income transfers, the timing and costs of the transition from school to work, affect the age-related distribution of economic life chances and employment opportunities for the young.⁵⁰

Another aspect of this triadic relationship requires further attention, to wit, the fact that policies are embedded in values and normative standards. These provide a framework for the definition of issues, delineate priorities, legitimize choices, and institutionalize social differentiation. The assimilationist bias of the *Indian Act* and the continuing perception of diversity as divisive constitute such examples, as does the continued normative pre-eminence of the standard employment relationship.

How, then, can state policies respond to and mitigate processes of social differentiation?

PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The deterioration of the economic circumstances of youth, the persistence of gender differentiation in the labour market, the lower market value of visible minorities, the highly disadvantaged economic and social position of Aboriginals, and the demographic and economic decline of areas dependent on resources, agriculture and fishing are all matters for concern and deserving attention. These social categories are constituted as minorities in relation to dominant groups such as men, whites, non-Aboriginals, prime-age workers, and people living in urban centres and the urban fringe. More likely than not, their employment situation is related to

the sharp rise of NSERs after the 1970s and the feminization of employment, as attested by their often deteriorating working conditions and levels of social protection.

Social differentiation has been viewed as both a product of inequality and an instrument of its reproduction. Its origins lie in the creation of group monopolies through the establishment of social closure and social boundaries. It cannot be imputed to intent and individual factors, though the latter are of course present. Nor can it be explained in terms of a single cause. It raises questions which require the adoption of a broad approach to social policy and social change.

The analysis of age-related differentiation indicates that a limited focus on the relationship between education and job mismatch and on more training is inadequate. The solution consists, rather, in fostering a collective strategy for economic growth on the one hand, and in the equitable distribution of work and employment relationships on the other. A review of the *Employment Equity Act*, with particular regard to its endorsement of seniority rights, and its inclusion of youth as a designated group could be envisaged. Finally, extending the upper boundary of youth to age 29 could alleviate some of the problems they face.⁵¹

The need to adopt a fresh policy paradigm likely to produce new prospects affecting life chances is made clear in the case of Aboriginals. Since the 1970s, the quest for equality has been couched in new terms; the concept of Aboriginal rights emerged, and these rights were formally acknowledged in the 1982 *Constitution Act* (section 35). Land entitlements and self-determination initiatives are defined as the best means for redistributing resources and reducing inequalities. It is generally thought that in addition to job creation and employment equity, many Aboriginal people require mentorship arrangements; training programs oriented to youth and adults with prior levels of skills and qualifications; and programs that support healing, early childhood

and family support services, language, and identity.⁵²

More specifically, Aboriginals present a youth-concentrated age structure and high birth rates at a time when health-care needs are thought about in terms of the greying population. This particular demographic structure, as well as the geographical locations of Aboriginal peoples, affects their disadvantaged position and has considerable impact on demand for and delivery of programs and services.

The analysis of visible minorities indicates that labour market inequalities are broad phenomena involving the social value assigned to groups and to diversity itself. The case has been made that a complete transformation of the economic and normative orders is needed. This does not mean reducing the diversity of Canada, but entails widening our definition of *Canadianness*. Ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity must be conceived not as divisive — as a threat to social cohesion — but as potential resources for multilateral trade, international diplomacy and other global exchanges.⁵³

Some successful ethnic communities⁵⁴ are those possessing a high level of what Breton called institutional completeness and organizational capacity.⁵⁵ The development of such features could prove helpful in enhancing access to labour markets and increasing social worth.

The spread of NSERs since the 1970s has meant that a more porous SER/NSER distinction no longer constitutes the primary pivot of gender differentiation. This should not, however, conceal the fact that gender remains a vital organizing feature in the contemporary Canadian labour market, not to mention Canadian society as a whole. This can be observed in many situations in that women still represent a high proportion of part-time and temporary workers and remain concentrated in low-wage sectors.⁵⁶ Young women do not escape the trend of deteriorating economic circumstances. Visible minority women earn less than visible minority men, and are

often subject to marginalization and exclusion.⁵⁷ Aboriginal women experience inequity in the labour force, inasmuch as they are concentrated in clerical, service, and low-level professional occupations and are overrepresented in poorly-paid service positions and government-related professional activities.⁵⁸ The feminization of urban poverty among urban Aboriginal women, many of whom are single mothers lacking proper child care and other services, is notable. Finally, women in resource-dependent industries have difficulty accessing SERs and are overrepresented in public sector employment and hospitality services.⁵⁹

Obviously the growth of NSERs must be curbed by strong labour market policies. What is also required is that gendered notions of standard and non-standard employment be extirpated from the design of policymaking.

BRIDGING THE FAULT LINES OF SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Our analysis has examined how inequalities, which are socially differentiated, are produced, reproduced, and transformed. The link between economic inequalities, normative standards, and overlapping strands of social differentiation has been established. The presence of multiple fractures in the Canadian social fabric has also been identified. More importantly, the connection between diversity and inequality, which are often mistakenly construed as two independent fault lines, has been revealed. How then can diversity and polarization be disassociated?

The answer depends in part on one's conception of the social order. In the democracy tradition, which is favoured here,⁶⁰ socio-economic disparities, not diversities, constitute the focal point. Unequal life chances are viewed as constituting a source of conflict and consequently, as posing a threat to social cohesion. In other words, lack of cohesion is seen as a consequence, not as a cause of inequality.

Democracy theories emphasize the importance of an active, democratic government in guaranteeing a basic degree of economic equality and equity.⁶¹ Policies become tools in the hands of governments for mitigating social inequalities, for diminishing fault lines, and promoting cohesion. Nothing less than a profound regime shift in thinking about social policy is in order. This involves the use of government social transfers and the establishment of new compensation systems, and the building of human and social capital.⁶²

While the institutionalization and extension of social rights in a redistributive welfare state fosters a more inclusive citizenship, full equality requires that citizenship move beyond being a status, and be viewed as an action and a practice.⁶³ This approach has been taken in the case of the groups examined, by members and associations defending the interests of women and visible minorities and seeking their fuller integration into Canadian society. The actions taken by many Aboriginal people involving community-based programs and the administration of justice also come to mind. Finally, the participation of minorities in defining issues and contributing to their resolution is crucial to the definition of a stronger civil society and the creation of stronger ties between civil society and the public sector. It opens the way to a relationship based on the principles of recognition, respect, sharing, and responsibility.⁶⁴

The combination of a strong democratic government and a vigorous civil society offers solid and effective grounds for the reduction of material and ideal forms of inequalities and, consequently, the achievement of social cohesion.

NOTES

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¹Policy Research Subcommittee on Social Cohesion (1997), quoted in Jane Jenson, "Mapping Social Cohesion:

The State of Canadian Research," *Canadian Policy Research Networks* (CPRN Study No. F/03, 1998), p. 4.

²This article is based on the synthesis essays on social differentiation prepared for the Project on Trends on social differentiation by David Cheal, "Finding a Niche: Age-Related Differentiations within the Working-Age Population," pp. 137-91; Peter Li, "Visible Minorities in Canadian Society," pp. 192-245; Chris Southcott, "Spatially-Based Social Differentiation in Canada's Future: Trends in Urban/Non-Urban Differences in the Next Decade," pp. 323-98; Leah Vosko, "Gender Differentiation and the Standard/Non-Standard Employment Distinction: A Genealogy of Policy Interventions in Canada," pp. 44-136; Terry Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People, Public Policy and Social Differentiation in Canada," pp. 246-322. Their work is based on the main lines of research identified in Canada and provides a critical synthesis of the major issues. These papers are to appear in *Understanding Social Differentiation*, ed. Danielle Juteau (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming). All references correspond to the pages of the manuscript prepared for SSHRC last October.

³Replacing the former post-war consensus, neo-liberalism privileged the market for distributing resources and power, limited the role of the state, and emphasized individual and family freedom as the core values. My analysis of the second phase borrows from Jane Jenson *et al.*, "Présentation. Les mots pour le dire, les mots pour le faire: le nouveau vocabulaire du social," *Lien social et politiques* 41 (1999): 5-13.

⁴Jenson, "Mapping Social Cohesion," p. 7.

⁵Jenson *et al.*, "Présentation," pp. 5-13.

⁶Jenson, "Mapping Social Cohesion," pp. 5-13.

⁷See Judith Maxwell, "Social Dimension of Economic Growth," *Eric John Hanson Memorial Lecture Series VIII*, University of Alberta, 1996, p. 13.

⁸See Paul Bernard, "La cohésion sociale: critique dialectique d'un quasi-concept," *Lien social et politiques* 41 (1999): 47-61.

⁹The challenging epistemological and theoretical debates surrounding this new perspective will not be examined here. See the pioneering work of Colette Guillaumin, *L'idéologie raciste: genèse et langage actuel*

(Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1972); Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70's Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); UNESCO, *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980).

¹⁰Max Weber's analysis of monopolistic closure is very useful for understanding this process of social communalization. He argues that social relations constitutive of socially differentiated groups can be open or closed. In the latter case, differences are used by some groups to exclude others and establish their domination. What must be examined are the economic, political, and ideologically defined relations underlying the construction of such groups and subsequently, the marks chosen to identify the boundaries which have been constructed. This is how unequal relations bring about distinction. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968 [1921-22]).

¹¹This analysis does not separate class from other forms of social differentiation, since the political and normative dimensions of social differentiation are integrated to specific economic situations. Actors are not seen as divorced from institutionalized economic and power structures. By linking economic inequalities to diverse strands of social differentiation, it becomes possible to examine class relations as they interact with race, gender, age, etc. as well as their interconnections. For a longer discussion, see Juteau "Introducing Social Differentiation," pp. 11-42.

¹²Cheal, "Finding a Niche," pp. 137-91.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 139-42.

¹⁴Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," pp. 262-69.

¹⁵Li, "Visible Minorities," pp. 204ff.

¹⁶Southcott, "Spatially-based," pp. 333-38.

¹⁷Vosko, "Gender Differentiation," pp. 46-47.

¹⁸For a further discussion on internal differentiation and the intersections between different strands of differentiation, see Juteau, "Introducing Social Differentiation," pp. 35-38.

¹⁹This was clearly brought out in the report "Social Differentiation Seminar: Governance Perspective," prepared by the Institute on Governance, 1999.

²⁰See Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994).

²¹The following analysis is based on the essay prepared by Vosko, "Gender Differentiation," pp. 44-136. Vosko defines Standard Employment Relationship (SER) as a "[...]continuous full-time, full-year employment relationship where the worker has one employer and normally works on the employer's premises under his or her supervision. Its essential elements include an indeterminate employment contract, adequate social benefits that complete the social wage, reasonable hours of work and employment, frequently, but not necessarily, in a unionized sector" ("Gender Differentiation," pp. 48-49).

²²*Ibid.*, p. 46. For a longer discussion, see part II, pp. 52-75.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 75-79. The proportion of part-time work, for example, increased from 11 to 17 percent.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 47, 75-107.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁶Cheal, "Finding a Niche," pp. 137-38. Youth is defined as the 15 to 24 year age category. The following analysis is based on the Cheal essay.

²⁷See Ross Finnie, *Earnings Dynamics in Canada: Earnings Patterns by Age and Sex* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

²⁸Cheal, "Finding a Niche," pp. 142-43.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 147.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 151-68.

³²For men under 25, the downward trend in wage started in 1977, accelerated during the recession beginning in 1981 and showed little recovery for the remainder of the decade (*Ibid.* pp. 150-3).

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 168-72. Extended social differentiation is defined as "a situation in which some form of differentiation emerging in one sector of social life has an impact upon another sector of social life, so that the latter too becomes more differentiated, and so on in a chain of linked differentiations" (*Ibid.*, p. 170).

³⁴Visible minorities include: Arab, West Indian, South

East Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, other East/South East Asian, Latin/Central/South American (excluding Argentinean and Chilean), Black, other single and multiple origins. See Li, "Visible Minorities," table 4.5, p. 221.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 223-25. Other sources quoted by Li: Peter Li, "The Market Value and Social Value of Race," pp. 113-30 in *Racism and Social Inequality in Canada*, ed. Vic Satzewich (Toronto: Thompson, 1998); Jeffrey G. Reitz and Raymond Breton, *The Illusion of Difference: Realities of Ethnicity in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, 1994).

³⁶Li, "Visible Minorities," pp. 204-8.

³⁷A study conducted in 1994 by Ekos Research associates found that most respondents feel that there are too many immigrants, especially visible minorities. See Li, "Visible Minorities," p. 226.

³⁸See Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volumes 1-4 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). The following analysis is based on the essay prepared by Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," pp. 246-322.

³⁹Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," p. 246.

⁴⁰Internal differentiations between Aboriginal peoples should not be minimized.

⁴¹Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," p. 274.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 276. Wotherspoon also indicates that "In 1995, 57 percent of Aboriginal people reported earnings, with an average employment income of \$17,382, while 66 percent of the national population reported earnings, with an average employment income of \$26,474" (*Ibid.*, p. 276).

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 255-61.

⁴⁴The following analysis is based on the essay prepared by Southcott, "Spatially-Based Social Differentiation," pp. 323-98.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 331-32.

⁴⁶According to Southcott, differentiation occurs because the impact of fordism on staple areas varies according to pre-existing social relations.

⁴⁷Region types are ideal types in the sense that they are constructions that do not exist exactly as such in reality. The definitions proposed by Southcott are: Urban areas: the largest category and the most dynamic, characterized by the predominance of post-industrial social relations. The Urban fringe: the second largest category, characterized by the combination of urban post-industrial relations and a "non-urban" setting. Agriculture Dependent areas: existing primarily in Southern Ontario and Quebec and the southern areas of the Prairie provinces, characterized by the combination of competitive capitalist and fordist social relations. Resource Dependent areas: existing primarily on the Canadian Shield, characterized by the forest industry and the mining industry and primarily by fordist social relations. Fishing Dependent areas: existing primarily in Atlantic Canada, characterized by the combination of mercantilist capitalist, competitive capitalist, and fordist social relations. Northern Native areas: dominated by native societies built around hunting and gathering traditions but which have come into contact with more recent Euro-American forms of relations. ("Spatially-Based Social Differentiation," pp. 336-37).

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 346-47.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 375-76.

⁵⁰Cheal, "Finding a Niche," pp. 169-70.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 172-73.

⁵²Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," p. 301.

⁵³Li, "Visible Minorities," p. 232.

⁵⁴The Jewish and Franco-Manitoban communities are given as examples by the Institute on Governance, "Social Differentiation Seminar," 1999, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁵See Raymond Breton, "Types of Ethnic Diversity in Canadian Society," *VIII World Congress: Language of Cultural Policies Session*, (August 1974): 1-34 and "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology*, 70 (1964): 193-205.

⁵⁶Vosko, "Gender Differentiation," p. 47.

⁵⁷Li, "Visible Minorities," pp. 220-21; Danielle Juteau "Gendering Immigration/Integration Policy Research: Research Gaps," in *Gendering Immigration/Integration: Policy Research Workshop Proceeding and a Selective Review of Policy Research Literature 1987-1996* (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 1998).

⁵⁸Wotherspoon, "Aboriginal People," pp. 281-82.

⁵⁹Southcott, "Spatially-Based Social Differentiation," p. 377.

⁶⁰As Jenson points out, social cohesion has been explained in terms of three competing theoretical traditions, each of which upholds a distinct conception of the social order. While social cohesion theories examine the social order in terms of interdependence, shared loyalties and solidarities, classical liberalism construes social order and cohesion in terms of private behaviour occurring in private institutions and social networks. For a longer discussion, see Jenson "Mapping Social Cohesion," p. 12; Juteau, "Implementing Social Rights: From Social Differentiation to Social Cohesion," in Juteau, *Understanding Social Differentiation*, pp. 399-405.

⁶¹The shift from a solidarity discourse to a rhetoric emphasizing social rights in the 1992 and 1994 European Commission reports indicates that this orientation seems best suited to fostering material redistribution and countering social inequalities. See Hilary Silver, "Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms," *International Labour Review*, 133, 5-6 (1994): 531-78.

⁶²"Rekindling Hope and Investing in the Future," *Report of the Social Cohesion Network to the Policy Research Committee* (1998), pp. 8-9.

⁶³See Danielle Juteau, "Les enjeux de la citoyenneté: un bilan sociologique," in *Les enjeux de la citoyenneté. Un bilan interdisciplinaire*, ed. Jerome Black, Patrick Glenn, Danielle Juteau, et Daniel Weinstock (Montréal: Immigrations et Métropololes, 1998), pp. 47-72; Yasemin N. Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁶⁴One will recognize the four principles outlined in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.