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# The New Liberal Dilemma: Social Trust in Mixed Societies

Ken Newton

University of Southampton and WZ-Berlin

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## The New Liberal Dilemma

The new liberal dilemma is based on evidence that socially heterogeneous societies – that is, ethnically, linguistically, religiously, or culturally mixed ones - tend to be characterised by a wide range of social, economic, and political disadvantages. Evidence has accumulated over the past ten years or so that that, in contrast to homogeneous states or societies, heterogeneous ones tend to have a poorer economic performance (Easterly and Levine 1998; Knack and Keefer 1997; Alesina, et al., 2003; ), spend less on public goods (Goldin and Katz 1999; Alesina, Baqir and Easterly 1999; Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Banerjee, Iyer and Somanathan 2005), deliver these less efficiently, less fairly, and to a lower standard (Mauro 1995; La Porta, et al., 1998), are more corrupt and have a larger black market (Easterly 2000; Svensson 1998; Alesina, Baqir and Easterly 1999; Annett 1999), are less redistributive (Hero and Tolbert 1996; Plotnick and Winters 1985; Lind 2003; Luttmer 2001), and are less likely to benefit from economies of scale (Alesina, Baqir and Hoxby 2004).

There is also evidence that diverse societies are less stable politically (Mauro 1995; Annett 1999) and find state and national building more difficult (Adelman and Morris 1967), and are less well developed democracies (Paxton 2002: 266). Socially, mixed societies have been found to have lower levels of social trust, civic cooperation, and social capital (Leigh 2006a, 2006b; Eisenberg 2006; Coffe and Geys 2006; Glaeser et al. 2000; Helliwell 1996; Knack and Keefer 1997; Putnam 2003; Alesina and La Ferrara 1999; Zak and Knack 2001; La Porta, et al. 1997; Hero 1998, 2003; Costa and Kahn 2003), lower rates of volunteering and participation in voluntary associations (Alesina and La Ferrara 1999; Costa and Kahn 2003a, 2003b; Lassen 2003), and lower levels of civic culture (Rice and Sumberg).

Whereas liberals and progressives favour tolerant, cosmopolitan, mixed, inclusive, and open societies that they judge to be more humane, vibrant and creative, research suggests that ethnically mixed societies tend to undermine some of the values that liberals hold most dear.<sup>1</sup> While the kind of

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term liberal to refer to the classical political theory that holds that values religious toleration, government by consent, and the freedom of all people from oppression, exploitation or discrimination. I

social unity often associated with social homogeneity is what Weinstock (1999) calls a morally ambiguous property that has both 'goods' and 'bads' attached to it, the irony of the liberal dilemma is that mixed societies seem to produce a set of serious 'bads' that result from the active pursuit of the 'goods'. The tension between what Goodhart (2004 - see also Miller 1995; Barry 2001) calls the solidarity of homogenous societies and the diversity of mixed societies is likely to become sharper and more urgent as the pressures for population movement grow as a result of poverty, war, natural disasters, the wish to move from poor to rich countries, and cheaper and more rapid transportation.

In this paper I will concentrate on the association between mixed societies and trust between the citizens, partly because this kind of generalised social trust between citizens is thought to be a crucial foundation for social integration and democratic stability, and partly because the consequences of heterogeneity seem to be so many, so varied, and so complex that it seems best to take one variable, trust, and follow it through as thoroughly and systematically as possible. In this way we may be able to avoid the tendency to confuse and complicate matters by trying to cover too much ground which might require glossing over differences between theoretically distinct but empirically related phenomena.

I will use the terms 'mixed', 'diverse', 'heterogeneous', 'fragmented', 'plural' and 'fractionalised' interchangeably to refer to societies that contain within them, significant proportions of people who differ in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, or nationality, or marked differences in historical and cultural backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> These are the sorts of differences that can become the basis of social cleavages, although they do not necessarily do so and although the nature of the cleavages and the critical mass necessary to create them varies according to time and place. Societies are divided in other ways along class, or age, or gender lines, for example, but ethnicity, religion,

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do not use the term liberal to refer to the (neo-liberals) who believe in a market economy, often accompanied by a strong state.

<sup>2</sup> Lijphart (1980: 2-3) calls plural societies those that are organised along segmental cleavages of a religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, or ethnic nature.

language, nationality, and culture are more likely to produce deep and persistent cleavages.

The argument of social capital theory is that modern society depends rather heavily on social trust for its social stability and integration, which, in turn, is the basis for politically effective and efficient democratic government. Trust is the belief that others will not deliberately or knowingly do us harm, if they can avoid it, and will look after our interests, if this is possible. Trust is a close cousin of mutuality and reciprocity – mutual and cooperative interchange – which are the basis of many religious and philosophical codes of conduct, just as they are the basis of the every day social relations, whether the business dealings of diamond dealers or the casual interactions of total strangers in the street.

In this respect there seems to be a difference between small-scale communities and large-scale societies. Trust involves risk: it is a short-cut that enables us to perform social transactions with greater ease, efficiency, and satisfaction (Baier 1986: 235; Hardin 1993: 507). But it is one thing to trust someone you have known all your life or who is a cultural and social replica of yourself, quite another to trust a complete stranger of a very different social group. Trust rests heavily on common understandings and values, but trust between members of a small and comparatively closed community is likely to be quite different from the trust between more or less complete strangers in a city.

Members of small communities – that is, tribal societies, isolated habitations, rural villages, small, free-standing towns, and traditional and stable communities - share a common cultural background and often know each other personally. This is likely to tie them closely together by strong feelings of particularised trust. Le Roy Ladurie's classic study of medieval Montaignou, a village in the remote Sabarthès region of France, estimates that it had a population of around 250 between 1294 and 1324, and that the local shepherd, who spent much of his time in the surrounding mountains, would have met not many more than two or three dozen people in his whole life, most of them relatives from families who had lived in the same tiny, isolated community for generations. In small communities like Montaignou thick, personalised trust is based upon close personal interaction, clear community

boundaries, powerful socialisation, and strong social sanctions to punish unacceptable behaviour and untrustworthy behaviour. The problem with thick personal trust is that it tends to be associated with an equally thick distrust of outsiders.

Modern urban societies are 'societies of strangers' who depend upon generalised trust in others they do not know personally, and may never have met in the past or again in the future. When I walk on the pavement or drive in the street I trust that others will not endanger my life; when I buy something I trust that it is what the seller claims it to be; when I get into a lift, cross a bridge or enter a building I trust that they will not collapse; when I walk home at night I trust that I will not be mugged or rapped or harassed; when I dine in a restaurant I trust that I will not get food poisoning; when I drink in a pub I trust that the beer is not watered. Without this thin, impersonal and generalised trust life would be impossible. And yet modern societies face a twin problem. On the one hand they are increasingly composed of mixed populations in terms of class, education, culture, language, religion, and ethnicity. On the other, their instruments of socialisation, including informal social sanctions, are weaker than traditional, bounded communities, and less able to generate trust for this reason. As Lehning (1998: 238) puts it 'The greater the number and diversity of persons in a group, the more that universalistic norms require altruism, and yet – at the same time – the weaker the forces of altruism.'

At the other extreme, London shares with New York and Toronto the claim to be the most mixed and heterogeneous city in the world. Of Greater London's 7 million residents in 2005, 2.2 million (30%) were not born in the UK, and another large minority (there are no exact figures) were second and third generation immigrants with their own blends of cultural backgrounds. It is estimated, probably correctly, that more than 300 languages are spoken in the city and that virtually every race, nation, culture and religion in the world is to be found among at least a handful of residents, making London 'the world in one city' (Benedictus 2005).

Foreign-born residents are scattered throughout the London metropolitan region, but a great many national groups have also come together in their own neighbourhoods and communities of 10,000 or more -

Poles in Hammersmith, West Africans in Southwark, Turks and Kurds in Haringey, Congolese in Tottenham, Somalis in Wembley, Koreans in New Malden, Portuguese in Stockwell, Vietnamese in Hackney, Afghans in Southall, Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, Italians in Soho, Clerkenwell and Streatham, Colombians, Ecuadorians and Peruvians around The Elephant and Castle, Japanese Totteridge, Hanger Hill and Acton, Australians in Earl's Court, Shepherd's Bush, Willesden, Putney and Southfields, and so on (Benedictus 2005). More than fifty different religious, ethnic, linguistic, and national groups and sub-groups have come together in this way and in large enough numbers to be plotted on a map of Greater London (Table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

The new liberal dilemma is that the increasingly diverse populations of contemporary society means that (quite apart from all its many other social, economic, and political disadvantages) it is likely to have lower generalised social trust because this is more difficult to sustain in heterogeneous communities.

### **Generalised Social Trust and Heterogeneity A First Appraisal**

Evidence that social heterogeneity is accompanied by lower levels of generalised social trust is accumulating and, moreover, it seems to be a general rule that applies to individuals, communities, and whole countries.

#### Individual Trust

Discussing social trust in the USA, Patterson (1999: 190-191) makes the following observations:

'...Afro-Americans are the most untrusting ethnic group in the nation. The difference between whites and Afro-Americans is staggering: The mean percent of trusting persons among blacks for the entire period [1972-1994] is only 17, compared with 45% for whites...while blacks are obviously partly subject to the economic and other forces driving down the numbers of trusting people, the main factors responsible cannot have been the greater levels of poverty and socioeconomic insecurity among them. The reason is that the low percentage of trusting remains true for nearly all groups of blacks – rich or poor, young or old, married or unmarried.

Patterson's conclusion about the low trust of Afro-Americans is repeated in many other studies. In *Bowling Alone*, (2000: 138) Putnam observes that American blacks express less social trust than whites, and the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey reports that blacks and Hispanics in the USA are less than half as likely to trust other people in their neighbourhoods as whites - 56% of whites trusted people in their neighbourhoods compared with 21% of blacks and 19% for Hispanics (<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/communitysurvey/results2.html>).

Analysing more than 7,000 respondents in the General Social Survey of the USA, 1974-1994, Alesina and La Ferrara (2002), find that Afro-Americans have, on average, a generalised social trust score that is 24% lower than other Americans, a conclusion that is consistent with that of Demaris and Yang (1994) and Smith (1984). Brehm and Rahn (1997: 1015-16) find the same thing using the same data but a different mixture of independent variables. Immigrants in Australia tend to be significantly less trusting of the people who live in their local neighbourhood (but not of Australians in general) than those born in Australia. Lastly, experimental research using two-person trust games conducted by Glaeser, et al. (2000), finds that Harvard undergraduates of different ethnic groups or nationalities behave in a less trustworthy manner with one another.

### Community Trust

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000: 400) observes that 'social capital is inevitably easier to foster in homogeneous communities', a suggestion confirmed by other research in the USA. Alesina and La Ferrara (2002: 231), examining both individual and community effects, conclude that interpersonal trust is lower in more racially heterogeneous communities, largely because 'individuals trust those who are similar to themselves' and because 'racial fragmentation affects the level of trust much more for individuals who are averse to racial mixing.' Their results suggest that it is the social trust of whites that is lowered by living in heterogeneous communities.

Much the same sort of conclusion is reached in The Social Capital and Community Benchmark Survey in the USA

(<http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/results3.html>), which finds that ‘...interracial trust is substantially lower in ethnically diverse communities. Residents of ethnically diverse communities are less likely to trust people in their neighborhoods, the clerks where they shop, the people they work with, and even (quite remarkably) people of their own ethnic group.’ Moreover ethnic diversity in communities seem to be a contextual influence that increases the effects of class. Class differences in political involvement are much greater in ethnically diverse cities (Los Angeles, Houston, and Yakima, Washington) than in less diverse ones (Montana, New Hampshire).

The same conclusion is suggested by Hero (2003) who correlates the *Bowling Alone* social capital index, which includes social trust among its measures, and ‘minority diversity’, which is based on the percentage black, Latino, and Asian residents in the American states in 1990. Hero concludes (p. 113) that ‘More minority diversity is related to less aggregate social capital; less diversity is related to higher social capital’ (see also Costa and Kahn 2003).

These studies are American, but similar results have been found at the community level elsewhere. In Australia, Leigh (2006a) examines variations in two distinct types of social trust: localised trust in those who live in the same neighbourhood, and generalised trust in those who live in Australia. Leigh finds that both localised and generalised trust are lower in linguistically mixed neighbourhoods. Both immigrants and those born in Australia have lower levels of local trust in linguistically mixed communities, but for generalised trust this is true only of immigrants. That is, those born in Australia do not seem to be affected by the mixed nature of the community they live in, but the more mixed the community, the lower the general trust of those born overseas.

Coffe and Geys’s (2006) study of Belgian communities does not consider social trust specifically, but finds that multi-national communities have significantly lower levels of social capital as measured by electoral turnout, the crime rate, and associational life. They conclude that ‘the creation of groups and the formation of bonds of trust and reciprocity thus appear to be less problematic in communities where people share a common nationality.’



## Cross-National Studies of Social Trust

Collier's study of political economy and ethnicity, <http://www.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1072&context=csae>) finds that the effect of ethnic fractionalization on social trust is not statistically significant but concludes that the evidence 'weakly suggests that ethnic diversity is a barrier to the formation of trust'. This is the case especially where ethnic diversity is combined with an absence of political rights, when the interaction effect of the two variables is very substantial. Knack and Keefer's (1997) analysis of 29 market economies finds a stronger and statistically significant effect of ethnic homogeneity and linguistic divisions on social trust, as well as on civic norms (roughly speaking, honesty in public and private life). Stronger still, Zak and Knack's (2001: 314) comparison of 41 market economies shows that trust declines continuously as ethnic homogeneity increases. Based upon a still larger number of 50 countries, Helliwell (2003) finds that ethnic diversity has a significant negative correlation with social trust.

### **On Second Thoughts: Generalised Social Trust and Heterogeneity**

The fact that more than a dozen empirical studies show an association between heterogeneity and low social trust at individual, community, and national levels might be taken as strong confirmation of the new liberal dilemma. And the fact that the studies have been carried out by economists, sociologists, political scientists, and historians all of whom reach roughly the same conclusion, must surely add substantially to the point.

However, a second look at the links between social trust and heterogeneity reveals much more complex and much less certain conclusions. There are some serious problems to be overcome before we can conclude with any certainty that the liberals are right to be worried. Some of these are more minor points of a technical nature but some raise substantive issues that suggest the liberal may be wrong.

#### 1. The Diversity of Diversity.

Heterogeneity has a wide set of possible meanings. It can refer to ethnic, religious, cultural, ideological, regional/national or linguistic differences, to

groups that are in numerical minorities, to groups that are discriminated against, to groups that are visibly different, usually in skin colour, and to groups born in different places but who might otherwise be indistinguishable. These seem to have different associations in different circumstances with social trust. For example Alesina and La Ferrara (2002) find that ethnic fractionalization is strongly associated with social trust cross-nationally and in the USA, whereas in Australia Leigh (2006) finds that linguistic fragmentation, not ethnic fractionalization, is important. Helliwell (2003) finds that ethnic diversity matters for social trust but not religious or linguistic diversity. In Canada, it seems, those born in the country and those who have recently emigrated to it, express different levels of trust for different types of objects, but in other respects their social trust is much the same (Nevitte 2003). It seems that generalisations about the relationship between social trust and diversity are hard to come by: it depends upon different types of diversity, different measures of trust, and the circumstances in which they are combined.

Because there are different kinds of diversity, it is difficult to capture in a single measure. The Alesina and La Ferrara scale, for example, is a widely used one because it is generally thought to be the most reliable and valid. Nevertheless, it has its problems. Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg have ethnic fractionalisation scores that are (0.5314, 0.5726, and 0.5302) close to Brazil, Panama, and Mexico (0.5408, 0.5528 0.5418) and above the score of the United States (0.4901). The apparent uniformity of the predominantly white, dark-suited, office-working, middle class populations of the three European countries contrasts with the ethnic mixtures found in the South American ones.<sup>3</sup> Liechtenstein is made up of one-third foreign-born immigrants (who make up two thirds of the labour force), but it is 86% Alemannic, and many of the immigrants come from nearby Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The rest (14%) are mainly from Italy and Turkey. Three quarters of the population are Roman Catholic and the Alemannic dialect is spoken by the great majority. By most standards, other than the third of the

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<sup>3</sup> Barry (1975) does not regard Switzerland as a plural society.

population made up of immigrants (who are mainly from other Alemannic areas) Liechtenstein is comparatively homogeneous.

Switzerland has a comparatively large immigrant population, with 20% resident foreigners, 87% of whom are European from Yugoslavia, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Turkey, France and Austria. While Brazil is 75% Catholic and wholly Portuguese speaking, Switzerland is fairly equally split between Catholics (42%) and Protestants (35%) and between 4 official languages, of which German is spoken by two-thirds of the population and French by another one fifth. Panama, on the other hand, is mixed in a very different way from Brazil. Ethnically, the majority of the population is *mestizo* or of mixed Amerindian, African, Spanish and Chinese descent. Spanish is the official and dominant language, but English is also an official language spoken widely on the eastern coast and by many in business and the professions.

On some measures each of these six countries is relatively homogeneous, on others each is mixed, but the Alesina and La Ferrara score, useful though it is, tries to capture these differences by rolling them up into one measure.

## 2. Minorities and 'Minorities'

Patterson (1991: 191) points out that the Japanese minority in the USA has high trust:

‘The data make it clear that the mere fact of being an ethnic minority is not inimical to trust. On the contrary, members of ethnic groups no longer persecuted may even have a higher propensity to trust, in view of the greater sense of community they may have experienced growing up. It is significant that the religious group with the highest percentage of affectively trusting responses is the Jews.’

This makes the important point that it may not be ethnicity, religion, language or country of origin that matters so much as the injustice with which these minorities have been treated in some societies. The same point seems to emerge from Leigh's work (2006: 269), which finds that both inequality and ethnic heterogeneity are independently correlated with social trust but when both variables are entered into a regression, it is inequality not heterogeneity that counts. Similarly, Alesina and Ferrara (2002: 231) find low trust among groups that ‘traditionally claim to have been discriminated against, especially

women and minority (blacks in particular)'. Collier (1988) reports that the effect of ethnic fractionalisation on social trust is not statistically significant but becomes so when it is entered as an interaction term in the analysis with the absence of political rights. In other words, the work of Patterson, Leigh, Alesina and La Ferrara, and Collier suggests that it is not ethnic diversity that matters so much as a combination of ethnic diversity and discrimination, injustice, and inequality.

Some social groups are described as 'minorities' not because they are a numerical minority of the population, or because of their ethnic or religious identity, but because of the way they are treated. Women are the most striking example. They make up about half the population or more in many western societies but they have been labelled a 'minority' because of unfair and unequal treatment. In the same way it is important to note that lower levels of generalised social trust are found in a wide range of social groups that that might be described as the 'losers' in society, whether they form numerical minorities or are marked out by particular ethnic, national, religious or linguistic characteristics. These include women, the unemployed, the poor, the poorly educated, those who are less happy, and who are less satisfied with their jobs (Orren 1997; Newton 2006: 86; Whiteley 1999: 40 – 41; Patterson 1999: 187 – 91; Putnam 2000: 138, 2002: 403; Wuthnow 1999; Delhey and Newton 2003; Stolle 2001: 130). All societies contain minorities of this kind, whatever their ethnic mix, but mixed societies with ethnic minorities seem to have marked differences in levels of social trust on different sides of the majority-minority cleavages. Trust does not thrive in an unequal world (Uslaner 2002: 6-22) and mixed societies with a high proportion of immigrants are often unequal ones. If so, the new liberal dilemma is not new, but a special case of the old liberal objection to inequality and injustice. And it (low trust) is not a problem of mixed societies but of all societies that are unequal, unjust, and undemocratic.

### 3. How Fractionalised is Fractionalised?

According Zack and Knack's study (2001: 314) much depends not just on ethnic fractionalisation and homogeneity, but on the number, size, and geographical distribution of minorities. They observe that heterogeneity does

not have a linear relationship with trust, but its effect is increased where there are a small number of relatively large minority ethnic group in a society. In Tanzania the impact of fractionalisation is small because there are many small groups, not one of which is large enough to be a threat to the others. Hence, they argue, the effect of ethnic fractionalisation is greatest for the middle values of the ethnic homogeneity measure. Collier (1988: 16) reaches the same conclusion when he concludes that:

‘Highly fractionalised societies are actually directly safer than less fractionalised societies. Indeed, the high level of diversity in Africa is a source of strength, not of danger. It is the middle-levels of fractionalisation which are more dangerous for violence, whereas the effects of fractionalisation on economic growth are continuously negative.’

#### 4. Imported Trust From Countries of Origin and From the Past

There are marked differences in social trust between countries, ranging from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada at the top of the world table (65-53% trusting) to Peru, Brazil, the Philippines, Turkey, and Macedonia at the bottom (3-8%). The impact of heterogeneity caused by an immigrant population may depend on where immigrants come from and how their trust levels compare with those of the host country they move into. Rice and Feldman (1997) find that the American descendants of European immigrants retain at least a portion of the culture from their home country despite living outside that country, often for generations. Halliwell finds that there is no difference between the trust levels of immigrant and of the Canadian born, once one has controlled for the trust levels of the countries that immigrants come from (Halliwell 2003).

In other words, it may not be heterogeneity that lowers trust levels, because an ethnic mix caused by population movement from a high to a low trust area might increase trust in the receiving area.<sup>4</sup> The liberal dilemma, however, is based on the normal pattern of population movement from low trust to high trust areas, but if this is the case then it may not be heterogeneity that pulls down the trust levels of the host society, but the trust levels of the countries from which immigrants come from in the first place. If country of

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Scots, for every one of them who emigrates to England the mean IQ of both countries goes up.

origin is associated with low trust one then has to ask what happens to the trust levels of the immigrants after they have lived in their new country for some time, or to the trust of the second and third generation after them.

Social trust may also be imported from the past. As Patterson (1999: 191) points out, low trust is found among all sections of the black population of the USA, even when they have the kind of education, income, and occupational status that is associated with high trust in whites. He argues that 'the distinctive historical experiences of Afro-Americans as descendants of the slave population' partly explains this (see also Putnam, 2000: 294). Once again this makes the point that low trust among ethnic minorities may be the result not of ethnicity or ethnic heterogeneity, as such, but the conceptually different matter of how different social groups are treated, whatever their distinguishing features.

In this sense history may weigh heavily on the present. The patterns of social trust one finds in the USA, with its history of slavery (see Patterson above), or in the future in South Africa, Serbia and Croatia, may not be the same as one finds in countries such as the Netherlands or Britain where mixed and immigrant populations have a different history.

##### 5. Heterogeneity is Closely Linked with Many other Factors

Social trust is an integral part of a complex and tightly inter-twined syndrome of variables of which social homogeneity is only one. The social trust levels of communities and countries and the extent to which they are socially mixed is closely associated with their wealth, economic development, income equality, corruption, democracy, good government, and Protestantism. Among individuals social trust is associated with happiness, job satisfaction, education, income, majority/minority status, ethnicity, religion, anxiety, social integration, and (perhaps) membership voluntary associations. It is sometimes exceedingly difficult to disentangle the independent effects of each variable on the others.

In one sense this does not matter: if heterogeneity is strongly associated with a range of other variables that cause low trust, then the liberals are right to be worried about it in general. In another sense it does matter: if it is injustice and inequality (for example) that causes the low trust,

not heterogeneity, then we should worry less about heterogeneity than about injustice and inequality.

#### 6. Particularised and generalised trust: zero-sum entities?

The liberal dilemma tends to assume that particularised trust (more likely to be generated by in ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic groups) is the mirror image, or the 'black side', of the generalised trust on which contemporary mixed and large-scale society depends. Bahry, et al., (2005) challenge this assumption in their study of trust in two highly mixed regions of the Russian Federation. 'High ingroup trust', they write, 'is no barrier to faith in others. In fact, we found most people to be inclusionary – displaying confidence both in their own and in major outgroups...Only one fifth of our sample displays generalized faith in others; but roughly four fifths trust the major outgroup in their republic...arguments about the connection between ethnicity and trust need to be refined.'

In other words, it is not necessarily the case that particularised trust will drive out generalised trust, or that high levels of particularised trust preclude high levels of generalised trust. There are intermediate forms of trust that do not fit neatly into the two categories. Could it be that some heterogeneous societies display these intermediate forms? We have become used to thinking of thick, personalised trust and thin, generalised trust, but perhaps we should try out questions that start to explore the ground in between?

#### 7. Elites in Mixed Societies

It may be that one of the crucial differences between mixed societies trying to resolve their problems is the effectiveness of elites. According to consociational theory the Netherlands was once deeply divided along religious lines, but this cleavage was managed with a high degree of success by the willingness of elites to sit down at the same table in order to sort out their differences. In contrast, religious conflict in Northern Ireland since the 1970s has been rancorous and prolonged because elites could not meet to resolve their problems, until, that is, the historical breakthrough on 8 May 2007, when Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams held their first ever press conference on March 26, 2007 announcing the start of power-sharing on 8

May. It may not be heterogeneity or cleavage that matters so much as how a political system and the leaders of social groups manage conflicts of interests. If leaders on different sides of the cleavages can do deals, then the chances of cooperation may be high, irrespective of widespread distrust among the different group in the wider society.

Similarly, minority immigrant groups may manage to negotiate a more satisfactory position within their host society if their elites can sit down with majority group leaders, even if there is general distrust between majority and minority populations. Hence Fennema and Tillie (2001) write:

‘We assume that the political impact of the social capital of the ethnic community largely depends on the relations of these ethnic leaders with the power structure of the multi-ethnic society. If the leaders of an ethnic group have many contacts with the leaders of the dominant group this indicates a high level of social integration, if they have hardly any such contacts, the ethnic group is not integrated.’

Leigh (2006a: 3-4) also draws attention to the importance of political elites when he writes:

‘Race and redistribution are powerfully linked....The simplest interpretation of this finding is that people are less generous to those who are different from them, but there is also another factor: politicians who use racial hatred to discredit redistributive policies. Pat Buchanan, Joerg Haider, Jean-Marie LePen, and Pauline Hanson have all used hatred against racial minorities as a way of building an anti-redistribution constituency.’

One might respond to this by pointing out that these political leaders have all found a following among their populations, and that racist appeals have often been popular to a greater or lesser extent. Nonetheless, the remarks of Fennema and Tillie and of Leigh point to the possibility that elites of all kinds, and political elites in particular might have their own independent influence on the nature of the link between heterogeneity and trust.

Majority group political elites that are available for contacts with minority group leaders may well be more integrationist in their political attitudes and more likely to create institutions that are open to minority groups, or even to institutional forms that discriminate in their favour.



## 8. Multi-Cultural Integration and Mono-Cultural Assimilation.

In explaining differences between the USA and Canada, Helliwell (2003) draws on Heath's distinction between integrative and assimilationist ideas about citizenship. Assimilation is based on the idea that social stability and peace requires a common culture, a consensus about values, and identification with a single nation state. Immigrant groups are expected to change in order to better fit into their host societies. Integration is a broader, looser, and more inclusive form of citizenship that permits greater cultural diversity with multiple identities and loyalties (see also Kymlicka 1998).

Guttman (1994: 5) argues the point in the following way:

Recognizing and treating the members of some groups as equals now seems to require public institutions to acknowledge rather than ignore cultural particularities, at least for those people whose self-understanding depends on the vitality of their culture. This requirement of political recognition of cultural particularity – extended to all individuals – is compatible with a form of universalism that counts the culture and the cultural context valued by individuals as among their basic interests.'

Could it be that the effects of heterogeneity are conditioned, in part at least, by whether the host society chooses mono-cultural assimilationist policies, or multi-cultural integrationist policies?

## 9. The Impact of Political Institutions

According to Collier (1998) democracy (in this case the granting of political rights to citizens) massively reduces the problem posed by ethnic diversity. Collier writes (p. 16) that 'Democracy has the capacity almost completely to offset the economic damage which can be done by a high level of fractionalization.' Knack and Keefer (1997: 1284) come to the same conclusion when they argue on the basis of their cross-national study that '...institutional rules that constrain the government from acting arbitrarily are associated with the development of cooperative norms and trust.' Easterly (200) adds weight to the same point with his finding that good institutions mitigate ethnically based social conflict. Good institutions, in this case, are measured according to whether government contract are enforceable, citizens

are free from expropriation, the rule of law, and bureaucratic quality (all derived from the International Country Risk Guide).

In a close examination of trust in Tartarstan and Sakha-Yakutia, two highly diverse regions of the Russian Federation, Bahry, et al. (2005: 530) that confidence in political institutions 'bolsters cross-ethnic trust'. Since Russian government has not been highly rated for its democratic practices since the late 1990s, they argue that a little more than the provision of stable rules of the game may have an effect on cross-ethnic trust.

What these various studies suggest is that the impact of heterogeneity may dependent, in part, on political institutions, and that the less democratic they are and the less predicable the rules of their game, the more likely it is that heterogeneity will result in comparative low levels of social trust, presumably because political inequalities, like economic and social inequalities, produce tension, conflict, political resentment, and a low support for the political system. It is for this reason that more inclusive and less divisive forms of the welfare state tend to be associated with higher levels of social trust (Rothstein 1998, 2000; Rothstein and Stolle 2003).

#### 10. Deviant Cases

Although there is little doubt that there is generally a tendency for heterogeneous countries to have lower levels of social trust, this is not always the case. For example, in Table 2, which presents the Alesina and La Ferrara fractionalization scores alongside the World values generalised social trust scores, it is clear that the first few places in the league table are filled by high trust countries with a homogeneous population (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and Ireland ). At the bottom of the Table there is a cluster of low trust, highly mixed countries (Brazil, Peru, Macedonia, Colombia, Venezuela, South Africa, Pakistan). Canada is a striking exception, being a country with high levels of trust and a large fractionalization score. Canada ranks 4<sup>th</sup> on the trust scale (53%) but it is a highly diverse country with a fractionalization measure (0.7124) that is exceeded only by South Africa. South Africa has a fractionalization score of 0.7517 with the low trust that one could predict from its mixed population.

At the other end of the Table 2, Poland also stands out for its low trust score of 16% and its low heterogeneity score of 0.1183. This makes it less heterogeneous than New Zealand (0.3969) but with a trust score less than a third of New Zealand's (49%). One approach to an understanding of the association between trust and heterogeneity is to look at the deviant cases to see how they manage to stand out from the crowd. Poland's deviant pattern may well be explained in terms of its World War 2 history and its subsequent period as part of the Soviet bloc. Low trust in central and east European countries is often thought to be associated with totalitarian government and their common practice of spying on their people (Sztompka 2000; Mischler and Rose 1997; Warner 2003), as well as their comparatively low GDP per capita. As a deviant case, however, Canada is intriguing as a country that manages to combine a very mixed population with high levels of generalised social trust.

### **Canada as a Deviant Case**

Countries handle heterogeneity in very different ways. Singapore is a densely populated, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic city-state that had acute housing and land shortage problems together with race riots in the 1970s. As a one-party state with a ruling party in total control of government with ambitious goals of social engineering (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006: 8-10) it was able to implement a centralised and comprehensive planning policy that has been notably successful in ensuring improvement in the housing stock, a mixture of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds in each community and neighbourhood, and in promoting community participation and ethnic harmony (Goh 1988). It has not experienced anything like the racial problems and conflicts that preceded its focussed attempts to produce social harmony in the past three to four decades.

Canada, however, is a very different case. Unlike Singapore it is not a one party state and nor does it have the high degree of centralised control over social and economic planning. And yet it compares favourably with its neighbour, the USA. Canada and the USA are comparable in many ways (wealth, geographical space and position on the globe, colonial past, immigrant history, democratic stability, federalism, an advanced industrial

economy with a large agricultural sector, an indigenous population, two large and mixed cities in New York and Toronto) their experience of heterogeneity and immigration seems to be rather different. Canada has a higher ethnic fractionalisation score (0.7214) on the Alesina and La Ferrara measure than the United States (0.4901), but it also has a higher trust level (53% compared with 36%). Canada has, like Singapore but without its one-party centralised political system, concentrated on a sustained and elaborate public policy of multi-cultural integration. The pluralist system of the USA together with its history of slavery has produced limited attempts at social engineering, certainly since the limited success of the Great Society program of the 1960s, with possible consequences for the impact of ethnic heterogeneity on social trust.

### Canada and the USA

In America the trust levels that parents and grandparents have imported from their country of origin seem to throw a long shadow over the trust levels of their second and third generation descendants (Rice and Feldman 1997). In Canada the shadow is much shorter and more indistinct; Helliwell (2003) finds that once allowances have been made for trust levels in their country of origin, immigrants are no less trusting than the Canadian born. According to Nevitte's (2003) analysis of the 1990/1 and 2000 waves of the World Values survey in Canada<sup>5</sup>, there is no significant differences between native-born Canadians and immigrants so far as trust in fellow Canadians is concerned. This form of trust did decline from 80% to 75% between 1990 and 2000, but by world standards it is still very high and, as Nevitte (2003: 2) puts it, 'people born in the country and immigrants appear to rise and fall on the same tide.' So far as general trust in 'most people' is concerned, immigrants are more trusting in both 1990 and 2000 than native-born Canadians, but after five years residence immigrant scores tend to regress towards the host country mean. The finding that Canadian immigrants acclimatise more rapidly to their host country than immigrants into the USA is confirmed by Soroka, Johnston and Helliwell (2006).

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<sup>5</sup> The 2000 survey included an extra 600 interviews with new immigrants

Another study (Johnston and Soroka 1999) reinforces the conclusion that there is something special about immigration and social trust in Canada. Using the World values data for 1990/1, it shows that 'white ethnics' (about a third of whom are immigrants who came to Canada more than 15 years before the survey) have high levels of social trust. While 'non-white ethnics' (mainly recent immigrants from East and South Asia) have a relatively low level of trust they are not much different from the French Canadian born, most of whom lived in Quebec. Johnson and Soroka conclude (p. 12) that 'The general picture here confirms a pattern identified by Black (1982) that immigrant adaptation to Canadian political life is very rapid.'<sup>6</sup>

Another Canadian study, this time at the community level, does more than confirm the individual level results – it strengthens them. Using Cycle 17 of the Canadian General Social Survey (GS17) which interviewed 25000 people in 2003, Kazemipur (2005-2006) finds that the level of trust in cities is positively influenced by ethnic diversity – that is, the more diverse ethnically a city, the *higher* its social trust. And just as Johnson and Soroka (1999) find that French Canadians have the lowest trust levels, so Kazemipur finds the cities of Quebec have low trust, even though they are comparatively homogeneous ethnically.

Finally, there is survey data suggesting that Canadians in general do not see themselves as facing the new liberal dilemma. Three out of four of them agree that 'different ethnic groups get along well here', compared with the American figure of 58% (Kymlicka 1998: 21). This is closely linked with the finding that twice as many Americans as Canadians describe themselves in terms of a hyphenated label (that is as German-Americans, Polish-Americans, Korean-Americans, etc.), whereas Canadian immigrants are more likely to call themselves Canadians (Heath 1997). Similarly, the Canadian rate of voluntary immigrant naturalisation is more than twice the American rate, and more than other comparable countries (Brubaker 1989). About 80% of immigrants become Canadian citizens within ten years of arriving in the country.

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<sup>6</sup> The pattern identified by Black (1982: 25) is that 'immigrants effectively match the participation levels of the Canadian born – not to mention the partisanship and political interest findings.'

Why do Canada and the USA differ in respect of immigrants and social trust? There are a number of reasons, some good news for the liberals and others bad. The first, and perhaps the most important, is that Canada has followed a very careful policy of selective immigration since the 1960s. Most immigrants are selected for their education, age, and language skills, a good proportion are university graduates and professionals, and immigration is matched to the needs of the labour market. This policy of selection has been made possible, in part, because of the nature of Canadian borders, which are not as porous as those of the EU or the USA, and in part, because Canada is a desirable destination for many people who want to emigrate from their own country.

Canada has pursued an energetic, elaborate and comprehensive program of multi-culturalism aimed at defining Canadian history as one of immigration and fluid national identity. This recognises that cultural change for immigrants can span two or three generations, and the social recognition of individual and collective ethnic identities that should be fostered by ethnic communitarianism. It has also instituted anti-discrimination measures, combined with policies aimed at employment equality between ethnic groups, the teaching of French and English as a second language in such a way as to increase inter-cultural interaction, and language and cultural programs that help minorities preserve their languages and traditions (Eisenberg 2006). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) is a part of multiculturalism, giving great weight to individual rights and freedoms and importance to the Supreme Court that rules upon it. ahead of popular sovereignty, and the One result, according to the Ethnic Diversity Survey, seems to be that immigrants and 'visible minorities' seem to experience comparatively little discrimination and unfairness (<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/89-593-X/89-593-XIE.html>)

Helliwell concludes that 'The contrast between the Canadian and US results also suggest that maintaining ethnic distinctiveness within immigrant groups does not slow down the extent to which immigrants learn about and respond to the norms of behaviour in their new communities.' On the contrary, levels of naturalisation, language learning, social and political trust, and tolerance are higher in Canada than the USA, while segregation in

housing and education, and differences in ethnic income and participation rates are relatively low (Kurthen 1997; Harles 1997; Eisenberg 2006; Kymlicka 1998: 18-22). As a result social trust may be higher in heterogeneous communities to the extent that they are multi-cultural and integrationist rather than assimilationist and mono-cultural. Although Canada has geographical, economic, and political advantages in implementing its multi-cultural policies, it is also the case that it has chosen a policy that seems to confound the worst fears of the liberal dilemma. When it was in danger of rejecting multi-culturalism in the 1990s, and modified the programme and drastically cut its budget, the result was such that it was re-instated.

Canada also contrasts rather sharply with France. In France, which has a low ethnic fragmentation figure of 0.1032 and a low trust figure of 23%, only 51% agree with the statement that 'different ethnic groups get along well here'. In Canada the figure is 75% (Kymlicka 1998: 21). But France has pursued a policy of mono-cultural assimilation rather than multi-cultural racial integration. According to Rudolph (2006: 31)

'French leaders have rarely been favourably disposed towards the demands of ethnopolitical minorities for state protection and promotion of *their* identity. Certainly few developed democracies have as long or aggressively denied the presence of the ethnic factor in their domestic politics as France. Nor, recently, has any Western European state been more broadly influenced by the ethnic factor.' (author's emphasis)

### The Netherlands

Although the Netherlands is among the least heterogeneous countries in Table 2, its multi-cultural policies reinforce the conclusions drawn from the Canadian experience, to some extent, at least. The Netherlands has practiced multicultural integration policies for some decades now, giving foreign residents the right to vote in local elections in 1985, and giving the four largest ethnic minorities in the country proportional representation on municipal councils (Fennema and Tillie 2001). Turkish immigrants in Amsterdam have made use of these opportunities to organise themselves into a politically active section of the population with a well developed network of community organisations, a higher voting turnout and more political trust (67% and 54% respectively) than the population as a whole (57% and 59%).

The idea that immigrant integration into political life can be assisted by open structures and institutions that encourage political involvement is supported by social movement research (Kriesi, et al., 1995; Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2000), although it is only partially confirmed by research on the political participation of ethnic minorities at the national level in the Netherlands and in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (Van Heelsum 2005).

The conclusions that can be drawn from the Dutch and Canadian cases must be tentative. We have only two cases and the Dutch one is not well documented. Nevertheless, the Canadian example is quite consistent with the hypothesis that heterogeneity may have different consequences for politics and society depending on two theoretically distinct but empirically associated factors. First, assimilationist and integrationist cultures, attitudes and policies seem to have different implications for the ability and willingness of minority groups to adapt positively to their host societies. Second, political institutions and elites can be more or less open, or can positively discriminate in favour of minority and immigrant groups, with consequences for their inclusion within the political system. Countries with integrationist cultures are, presumably, more likely to adopt open political institutions or to implement political measures that actively facilitate minority and immigrant participation.

## **Conclusions**

It is generally true that the more mixed a society is in terms of ethnic, religious, national and language groups, the lower its level of generalised social trust. The fact that this finding holds at the individual, community, and country levels adds weight to its reliability, and the fact that the finding about social trust is consistent with the results of other research showing that heterogeneity tends to be associated with a fairly wide range of other social, economic, and political problems makes the conclusion even more convincing. However, the link between heterogeneity and social trust is not so close that there are no exceptions to the general rule. On the contrary, a list of 60 countries in the world reveals quite a few cases where heterogeneity is associated with high trust, and homogeneity with low trust. Heterogeneity is neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause of low social trust, even though it is



associated with it in many cases. Association, however, is not cause and although there are many good reasons for believing that mixed societies are likely to suffer from a variety of societal problems, there are also some good reasons for believing that not all of them will inevitably do so.

First, there are problems with the measurement of heterogeneity. What is often regarded as the best measure we have, the Alesina, et al (2003) fractionalization score, throws up some apparent anomalies of countries that are mixed in some senses (e.g. Switzerland) but not in the way that countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa are mixed so as to produce deep and enduring cleavages. This means that we must treat correlation and regression analysis with a certain amount of caution, and perhaps develop still better measures of heterogeneity and trust. Of course, these might reveal an even closer association between the two, but it would also mean a better understanding of which of the different dimensions of fragmentation (ethnic or religious or linguistic or national) are more important

Perhaps more serious is the close association between heterogeneity and a range of other considerations that are associated with low social trust, notably low income, economic inequality, poorly developed democracy, unequal political and social rights, a poorly functioning governmental and legal system, poor public services, and corruption. The technical problems of disentangling this tightly knit and probably interdependent set of variables makes it difficult to establish with any certainty what is attributable to the effects of heterogeneity, and what is due to other factors that are often, but not always or inevitably, associated with it. There is some evidence that it may not be heterogeneity that matters for trust so much as the political and economic inequalities that are often but not always or inevitably associated with social cleavages of many different kinds. Class inequalities within homogeneous societies also seem to produce lower levels of social trust, in which case the new liberal dilemma may well be a special case of the very old liberal concern with inequality and injustice. Heterogeneity is not always or inevitably accompanied by inequality, and liberal societies have made substantial progress in reducing a wide range of inequalities in the past, often with great difficulty and major political struggles.

There is also some research suggesting that the zero-sum dichotomy between thick and particularised, and thin and generalised trust (which many of us have worked with in the past, including the present author) is not sufficient to capture mixed forms of trust intermediate trust that manage to combine in-group solidarity with a degree of confidence in out-groups. It is also possible that we have placed too much weight on mass social trust and too little on elite trust – or at least the ability of elites on different sides of social cleavages to come to mutually satisfactory arrangements and compromises that establish a degree of social and political harmony in mixed societies. Consociational democracies, it is argued, have managed this in the past, and it is possible that they might manage in the future.

Elites, of course, may be liberal or illiberal, and if liberal they may choose between alternative sorts of policies to deal with their diversity. In this respect the difference between integration, built on multi-culturalism, and assimilation, built on mono-culturalism, seems to be of importance. The experience of Canada, which has implemented a concerted and well-planned government programme of trying to integrate its large and mixed immigrant population, stands out from the general rule. There is no sense in pretending that Canada has solved all its problems as a mixed society but it seems reasonably clear that it has made a better fist of it than France and the USA, both of which are less mixed, have lower social trust, and more visible ethnic problems. It is true that Canada has some considerable advantages when it comes to implementing its multicultural policies (Helly 2003) but it seems equally clear that these policies have met with some success in mitigating the worries of the new liberal dilemma. The paradox is that integrationist policies that recognise the multi-cultural identities of immigrants are more effective at both integrating and assimilating their mixed and diverse populations.

Last, the research shows that politics matter and that political institutions matter. Democracies suffer less, and drastically so, from the economic problems of diversity. So also do diverse societies suffer less from the low trust problems of diversity if they are run according to the rule of law, with low levels of corruption, high quality public services, inclusive and egalitarian political systems and public policies, and universal rather than selective welfare provisions. Such states are likely to be classified as open

and egalitarian in their political structures and processes, and are more likely to take positive steps to implement multi-cultural policies of integration.

Perhaps a liberal state that can hold its liberal nerve and stick to liberal, multi-culturalist policies and to open, egalitarian institutions is the most likely solution to the new liberal dilemma?

Table 1

**The National Groups and Sub-Groups Forming Their Own Local  
Communities of 10,000 or More in London**

Algerian	French	Pakistani
American	Ghanaian	Portuguese
Arab	Greek	Russian
Australian	Hindu	Sikh
Baltic	Indian	Somali
Bangladeshi	Indonesian	South African
Caribbean	Iranian	Spanish
Barbadian	Irish	Sri Lankan
Chinese	Italian	St Lucian
Colombian	Jamaican	Sudanese
Cypriot	Japanese	Tamil
Djiboutian	Korean	Thai
East-African Gujarati	Lebanese	Trinidadian
East European	Malaysian	Turkish
Ecuadorian Congolese	Moroccan	Vietnamese
Ethiopia	New Zealand	West African
Eritrean	Nigerian	Zimbabwean
Filipino	Polish	

Source: The London map on which this list is based is too complicated and large to reproduce here but can be found on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,,1398066,00.html>

Table 2

**Social Trust and Ethnic Fractionalization in 60 Nations**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Trust</u>	<u>Index of Ethnic Fractionalization</u>
Norway	65	0.0586
Sweden	60	0.0600
Denmark	58	0.0819
Canada	53	0.7124
Netherlands	53	0.1054
China	52	0.1538
Finland	49	0.1315
Germany	49	0.1682
New Zealand	49	0.3969
Ireland	47	0.1206
Iceland	44	0.0798
Japan	42	0.0119
Australia	40	0.0929
India`	38	0.4182
Switzerland	37	0.5314
USA	36	0.4901
Italy	35	0.1145
Belgium	34	0.5554
Austria	32	0.1068
Ukraine	31	0.4737
South Korea	30	0.0020
Spain	30	0.4165
UK	30	0.1211
Bulgaria	29	0.4021
Czech Republic	29	0.3222
Mexico	28	0.5418
Albania	27	0.2204
Slovak Rep.	27	0.2539
Dominica	26	0.20003
Armenia	25	0.1272

Croatia	25	0.3690
Latvia	25	0.5867
Belarus`	24	0.3222
Russian Fed.	24	0.2452
France	23	0.1032
Ghana	23	0.6733
Hungary	23	0.1522
Estonia	22	0.5062
Lithuania	22	0.3223
Moldova	22	0.5535
Portugal	22	0.0468
Uruguay	22	0.2504
Azerbaijan	21	0.2047
Bangladesh	21	0.0454
Chile	21	0.1861
Georgia	19	0.4923
Nigeria	19	0.6518
Pakistan	19	0.7098
Romania	19	0.3069
Argentina	18	0.2550
Poland	18	0.1183
Slovenia	16	0.2216
South Africa	16	0.7517
Venezuela	14	0.4966
Colombia	10	0.6014
Macedonia	8	0.5023
Peru	5	0.6566
Philippines	5	0.2385
Turkey	5	0.3200
Brazil	3	0.5408

Sources: Trust - World Values, 1990, 1996.  
Ethnic Fractionalisation – Alesina, et al., 2003.

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