Fire and Ice Revisited: American and Canadian Social Values in the Age of Obama and Harper

Presented by

Michael Adams
President, The Environics Institute for Survey Research
for Canada Institute
Woodrow Wilson Center
March 14, 2014
2003
Most Canadians held the view that Canadian and US cultures were converging*

Over the past ten years Canada has become:

- More similar to the United States: 58%
- No change: 31%
- Increasingly distinct: 9%

*Source: EKOS, May 2002
But our social values research was telling a different story

Agree: *Father of family must be master in his own house*
In fact, US and Canada are distinct cultures, with unique socio-cultural trajectories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taking</td>
<td>Risk-averse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money is everything</td>
<td>Money is suspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winner takes all</td>
<td>Income redistribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest standard of living</td>
<td>Best quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will win the lottery</td>
<td>Have won the lottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricious philanthropy</td>
<td>Compulsory philanthropy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put down humor</td>
<td>Self-effacing irony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Donner Prize later, what seemed counter-intuitive became obvious. Which led to a book.
2013
So are Americans and Canadians trading places?
Research Methodology

- The Environics program tracks people’s personal values, motivations and mindsets.

- Multiple statements are used to ensure the robust measurement of several facets of each social value.


- In 2012, we tracked 60 values dimensions with 109 items in each country.
## Beyond the Morality of Good and Evil

*Examples of the 60 values we track:*

- Acceptance of Violence
- Adaptability to Complexity
- American Dream
- Attraction to crowds
- Concern for Appearance
- Duty
- Flexible Families
- Global Consciousness
- Joy of Consumption
- Just Deserts
- Obedience to Authority
- Patriarchy
- Penchant for Risk
- Personal Challenge
- Question Authority
- Religiosity
- Sexism
- Sexual Permissiveness
- Spiritual Quest
- Xenophobia
Examples of Social Values

Religiosity

Placing great importance on religion as a construct which guides one's life. Also, placing great significance on having an affiliation with an organized religious faith. Tendency to consider that religion represents the essential values.

Agree:

- My religious beliefs are important to me.
- I consider myself to be a member of a religious faith.
- I would like to have a religious service at my funeral.
- It is important for children to receive a religious upbringing.
Examples of Social Values

Personal Challenge

Setting difficult goals, even just to prove to themselves that they can do it. People strong on this trend finish what they start, persevering until their self-assigned task is completed to their satisfaction.

Agree:

• I often do something simply to prove to myself that I am able.
• When I really want to do something, I almost always do it.
• Once I start something, I stick with it until I am satisfied with the results.
Examples of Social Values

Acceptance of Violence

People highest on this trend believe that violence is an inevitable fact of life that must be accepted with a certain degree of indifference. Belief that violence can be both cathartic and persuasive.

Agree:

• Violence can sometimes be exciting.

• When a person can't take it anymore and feels like he/she is about to explode, a little violent behavior can relieve the tension.

• Violence is a part of life. It's no big deal.

• It's acceptable to use physical force to get something you really want. The important thing is to get what you want.
Examples of Social Values

Just Deserts

Confidence that, in the end, people get what they deserve as a result of the decisions they make, both positively and negatively.

Agree:

• People get what they are entitled to have.
• People get what they deserve.
• Rewards and punishments are fairly given.
• People who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves.
The Socio-Cultural Map

- Authority
  - Traditional Family
  - Religiosity
  - Duty
  - Spiritual Quest
  - Personal Challenge
  - Emotional Control
  - Social Intimacy
  - Cultural Assimilation
  - Concern for Appearance
  - Aversion to Complexity
  - Personal Expression

- Survival
  - Patriarchy
  - Confidence in Advertising
  - Xenophobia
  - Saving on Principle
  - Sexism
  - Ecological Fatalism
  - Need for Status Recognition
  - Ostentatious Consumption
  - Multiculturalism
  - Pursuit of Intensity

- Fulfillment
  - Penchant for Risk
  - Joy of Consumption
  - Attraction for Crowds
  - Parochialism
  - Financial Security
  - Adaptability to Complexity
  - Scepticism of Advertising
  - Personal Creativity
  - Global Consciousness

- Individuality
  - Acceptance of Violence
  - Sexual Permissiveness
  - Equal Relationship with Youth
  - Rejection of Authority
  - Flexible Families

- Indifference
  - Obedience to Authority
  - Parochialism
  - Adaptability to Complexity
  - Ecological Concern
  - Patriarchy
  - Cultural Assimilation
  - Religiosity
Mental Postures of the Quadrants

Status & Security
- Obedience to Traditional Structures and Norms

Authenticity & Responsibility
- Well-being, Harmony and Responsibility

Exclusion & Intensity
- Seeking Stimulus and Attention

Idealism & Autonomy
- Exploration and Flexibility
Status & Security Quadrant

- Pursuing the American dream by following accepted rules and norms
- Strong work ethic
- Desire for achieving material success and demonstrating social standing
- Belief in traditional institutions and identities
Authenticity & Responsibility Quadrant

- Strong sense of duty and responsibility to others
- Care deeply about ethics and fair-mindedness
- Take care of mind, body and spirituality in the face of daily challenges
The Idealism & Autonomy Quadrant

- Self-reliant and in control of their own destiny
- Idealistic and open-minded
- Rejecting what they believe are “out-dated” norms and institutions
Exclusion & Intensity Quadrant

- Taking risks and challenges for the thrill or for personal gain
- Flaunting one’s success and material possessions
- Craving constant attention, excitement and distraction
- Living on the edge with risky, anti-conformist behaviour
The evolution of social values

On which values do Canadians and Americans differ the most in 2012?

**Stronger in Canada**
- Flexible Families
- Ecological Concern
- Cultural Assimilation

**Stronger in the US**
- National Pride
- Fear of Violence
- Work Ethic
- Spiritual Quest
- Propriety
- Religiosity
- Patriarchy
Canadians and Americans also differ on Acceptance of Violence, especially among youth

*Violence is a part of life. It’s no big deal.*

Young American men are especially comfortable with violence

*Violence is a part of life. It’s no big deal.*

Although we have seen that Americans are more patriarchal than Canadians, recent data has shown that the gap is narrowing.

Father of the family must be master in his own house

Agree: USA and Canada: 1992 – 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Obama was the clear choice among Canadians for US President – even among Conservatives

Preference for US President (2012)
By Federal political party preference

- NDP: 89 total votes, 2 for Romney, 87 for Obama
- Liberal: 87 total votes, 8 for Romney, 79 for Obama
- Bloc Quebecois: 86 total votes, 1 for Romney, 85 for Obama
- Green: 80 total votes, 7 for Romney, 73 for Obama
- Conservative: 58 total votes, 29 for Romney, 29 for Obama
Where are American values heading in 2016?
Where will Americans be in 2016?
Now that we know that
Canadians are avant-garde progressives . . .
... they are now also wealthier than Americans

*Net Worth* per Household by Component: Canada and the United States

*Dollars (Canadian or American at Nominal Amount)*

- **Canada Net Worth**
- **United States Net Worth**

*Net worth*: Total combined of assets (liquid & real estate) minus debt

Sources: Environics Analytics WealthScapes 2011 & U.S. Federal Reserve