

their expectations. In the less civic regions nearly everyone expects everyone else to violate the rules. It seems foolish to obey the traffic laws or the tax code or the welfare laws, if you expect everyone else to cheat.

Trust, religious values, and community ties all lead people to make the leap beyond self-interest toward moral behavior. If you live in a world where most people are moral, you can make a reasoned calculation that obeying a society's maxim is a safe bet.

Social Capital and Culture

The three Anglo-American democracies are not mean worlds. Each ranks in the upper half of trusting nations, though hardly at the top. In 1981 50 percent of Canadians, 45 percent of Americans, and 44 percent of the British agreed that "most people can be trusted." The three share a similar heritage: Canada and the United States are former British colonies. But they have evolved into distinctive political cultures.

One common view sees the United States at the individualistic pole and Britain, with its monarchy and strong class divisions at the collectivist end. Canada lies in between (Hartz, 1964, 34; Kornberg, 1990, 713). It resisted independence from Britain as America fought its revolution, still has a strong Tory tradition. But it is also a creature of its southern neighbor. Canadians often joke (or lament): "The United States is destined to be our best friend, whether we like it or not." So Canada is a mixture of American individualism, often echoed in the Prairie provinces, and British collectivism, strongest in Ontario.

An alternative view, which I favor, focuses on the British tradition of support for individual rights, as encapsulated in the Magna Carta, dating from 1215--long before European settlement in the New World. On this perspective, the British and American cultures both emphasize liberty (on Britain, see Russell, 1823, chs. 12-13). American society emphasizes individualism (Hartz, 1955). British culture puts greater emphasis on one's obligations to the larger society (Conover *et al.*, 1991, 822). Despite these differences, the two societies look a lot like each other. Americans and the British are strikingly similar in their support for--or opposition to--civil liberties (Barnum and Sullivan, 1990). Both recognize the need for reciprocity to achieve collective ends (Conover *et al.*, 1991, 818). American individualism is tempered by a sense of social responsibility (Tocqueville, 1945, 122), while British collectivism is limited by belief in fundamental liberties.

Cultural similarities trump institutional differences (Barnum and Sullivan, 1990, 731-735). A Westminster system should provoke sharp differences in a society with strong class differences. But a strong commitment to national consensus among all classes tempers tendencies toward majoritarianism (Christoph, 1965; Russell, 1823, 17-18).

The British see their society as an organic whole bound together by national symbols such as the Crown (Conover *et al.*, 1991). Theirs is the least diverse society. Americans believe that they have--or can--transform heterogeneity into a common culture: E pluribus unum, one out of many, is the national motto. Canada has weaker social bonds. It has at least two "founding nations" (the English and the French). While Britain sees itself as homogenous and the United States views itself as a melting pot, Canadians have fewer national symbols. They consider their society a mosaic, where ethnic and religious communities are expected to maintain their own identities. Canadians define their culture