Promoting Social Integration – A Brief Examination of Concepts and Issues
Prepared by M. Sharon Jeannotte for
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Introduction

Social integration is one of a constellation of "social" terms that is being used widely in contemporary policy development to describe concepts whose aim (as stated by the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action) is to foster societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, and respect diversity, equality of opportunity and participation of all people. Other terms that often invoked in support of this goal are "social inclusion", "social cohesion" and "social capital". All of these are contested terms, which often results in fruitless debate about what is meant when the terms are used. More seriously for policy makers, they are also notoriously difficult concepts to measure and operationalize, which is a distinct disadvantage in the current context of "evidence-based policy making".

This short paper is intended to highlight some of the main conceptual, contextual and policy issues surrounding the use of the terms. It is likely to raise more questions than answers, but that may be appropriate as a point of departure for a series of brainstorming sessions focused on the problems of promoting social integration. While participants at these sessions were encouraged to conclude their papers with policy recommendations, the conclusions at the end of this paper should be considered in the same light – as provisional and as points of departure for further discussion.

Conceptual issues

Social inclusion

Study of the concept of social inclusion in Canada was initiated by the Laidlaw Foundation in 2002 in the context of policy debates on the needs of children and families. The Foundation reframed the debate around traditional notions of poverty by highlighting the social dimensions of poverty, and by linking poverty and economic vulnerability with sources of exclusion, such as discrimination and disability. Rather than elaborating an all-encompassing definition of social inclusion, the Laidlaw Foundation developed a social inclusion framework, outlined in Box 1. Both the Laidlaw formulation and a related framework developed by Malcolm Shookner for Health Canada (see Appendix 1) appear to owe an unacknowledged debt to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which divided human needs into five levels as depicted in Figure 1.

Box 1:
Laidlaw Foundation Social Inclusion Framework

Dimensions	Elements	
Spatial	Public spaces Private spaces Physical location	Geographic proximity/distance Economic proximity/distance
Relational	Social proximity/distance Emotional connectedness	Recognition Solidarity
Functional/ developmental	Capabilities Developmental capacities	Assets/liabilities Talents/potential/ Human capital
Participation/ empowerment/ agency	Participation Agency/freedom	Empowerment/power

Source: Laidlaw Foundation (2002)

In Maslow's pyramid, the lower four levels – the "deficiency needs" – must be met before the highest level can be achieved. In the Laidlaw Foundation and Shookner formulations, inclusion also depends upon the satisfaction of these needs, although neither are as explicit as Maslow about matching orders of inclusion or well-being to specific needs. However, both conceptualizations do recognize that social inclusion must be both multi-dimensional and transformative. In this regard, they are also in line with the conclusion of Canadian social cohesion researchers that policy interventions must be taken on several fronts and must have substantive and measurable outcomes.

Figure 1
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
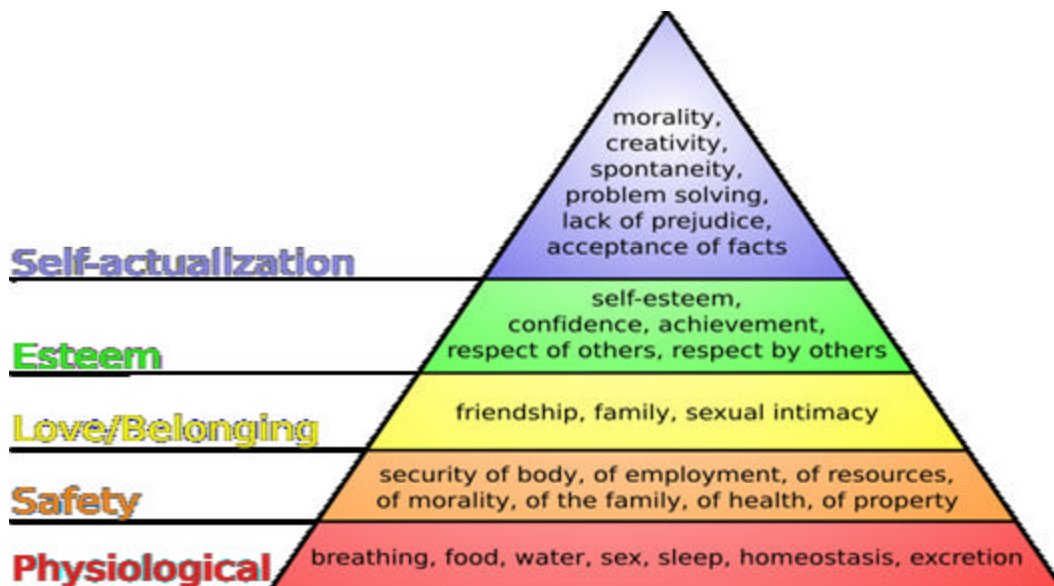
Social cohesion

Between 1998 and 2000, Canadian scholars and policy researchers spent a great deal of effort analyzing the concept of social cohesion and attempting to develop indicators based on this conceptualization. The most well-known of the Canadian theorists is Professor Jane Jenson of the University of Montreal, whose unpacking of the five dimensions of social cohesion is outlined in Box 2. In Jenson's framework, the degree of social cohesion in a society can be characterized by where it ranks on the continuum represented by each of the five dimensions. (Jenson, 1998:15).

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        Box 2 - Jenson's Five Dimensions
              of Social Cohesion

    Belonging ------------ Isolation
    Inclusion ------------ Exclusion
    Participation --------- Non-involvement
    Recognition --------- Rejection
    Legitimacy ----------- Illegitimacy
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Paul Bernard, a colleague of Jenson's at the University of Montreal, later suggested that another dimension – equality versus inequality – be added to her framework to make it more complete (Bernard, 1999: 13). Bernard also pointed out that the resulting six dimensions could then be paired, since they represent either conditions promoting social cohesion (as manifested by formal state policies and programs) or substantive societal outcomes of these policies and programs. The resulting pairing is shown in Box 3.

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    Box 3 – Bernard's Formal and Substantive Dimensions of Social
                              Cohesion

    FORMAL                      SUBSTANTIVE

    Equality / Inequality       Inclusion / Exclusion
    Recognition / Rejection     Belonging / Isolation
    Legitimacy / Illegitimacy   Participation / Non-involvement
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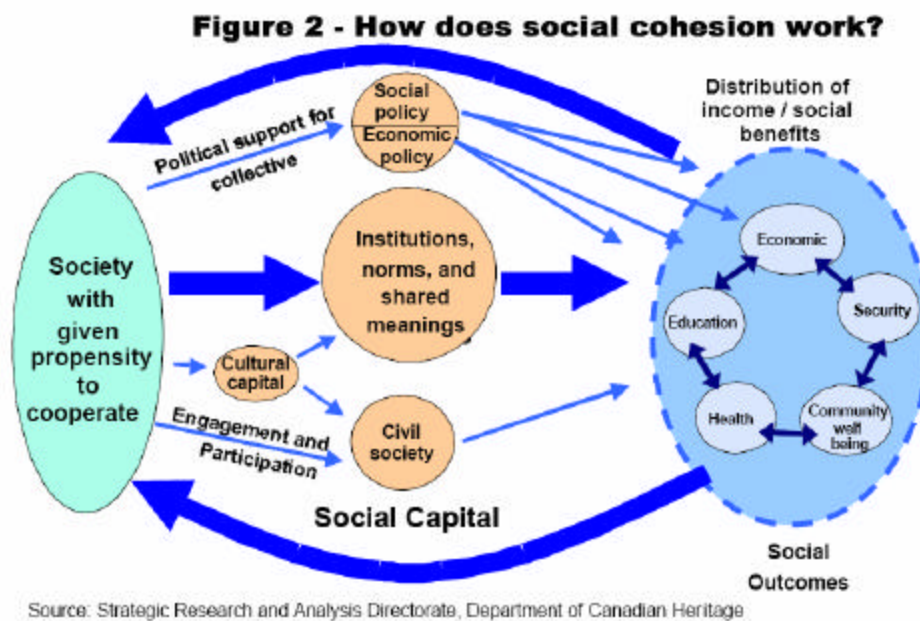
In this formulation, inclusion is one of the elements of social cohesion and it is an **outcome** or result of policies and programs that promote equality. For example, a state may have in place a variety of policies and programs to promote social, cultural and economic equality. If these policies are effective, the substantive outcome will be citizens who feel included in the life of their communities. If they are not, large portions of that population may feel excluded, posing a threat to the cohesion of that society or community. Similarly, the legitimacy of political, social, economic and cultural institutions, as established by constitution, rule of law or tradition, frequently dictates the degree of political, social and economic participation by individuals within the society. If political institutions are not viewed as legitimate, large numbers of citizens may withdraw their support. Withdrawal from the political, social and cultural spheres manifests itself in a variety of behaviours, such as low voter turnout and falling

volunteerism rates, that are frequently considered to have negative consequences for social cohesion.

As a result of research by Jenson, Bernard and others, Canadian policy makers moved toward the following definition of social cohesion:

> **Social cohesion is based on the willingness of individuals to cooperate and work together at all levels of society to achieve collective goals.** (Jeannotte et.al., 2002:3).

Considerable work was also carried out to develop a tentative model of social cohesion, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - How does social cohesion work?

Source: Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate, Department of Canadian Heritage

This model attempts to show that there are multiple inputs to social cohesion (or to a society with a given level of cooperation) and that government policies are only one set of these inputs. Civil society and the social and cultural capital that underpins it are also important components of the system, as are the institutions and values upon which the society is founded. There are three main causal mechanisms within this recursive model. First, the higher the degree of social cohesion in a society, the more political support there will be for public policy in such areas as education, health insurance and income distribution programs. These policies have demonstrable positive effects on social outcomes, particularly if they are provided on a universal basis. Second, the higher the degree of social cohesion, the greater adherence to social norms of behaviour and the greater support for social institutions and values, such as trust, respect for the law and fair play. Institutions based on these values tend to make cooperation easier and more risk-free, thereby increasing the efficiency of economic, social and cultural outcomes.

However, it is important to note that not all norms promote social cohesion. Those that do not promote widespread inclusion and trust within a society may actually erode social cohesion. Third, higher levels of social cohesion increase participation in civil society, which not only contributes to good social outcomes but also enriches social capital – an indirect contributor to social outcomes. (Jeannotte, 2003: 10)

Social cohesion and good social outcomes reinforce each other in a virtuous circle. However, if the spiral ever turns downward due to factors such as inequitable or insensitive policies, the result will be negative social outcomes or inequitable distribution of social benefits, both of which can erode social cohesion. This, in turn, will reinforce the deterioration of social outcomes. In other words, a vicious circle can be created instead of a virtuous one. If members of a society are getting their fair share – something which becomes more likely if they live in a society which supports collective action, adheres to norms that promote cooperation, such as respect for the law and fair play, and has a high level of civic participation – they will be motivated to cooperate and contribute to that society.

Social capital

Social capital, as indicated in the previous section, is a factor that contributes to social cohesion. In Canada, the Policy Research Initiative (PRI), a government research institute, undertook its Social Capital project in 2003 to investigate the relevance and usefulness of the concept as a public policy tool. The PRI utilized the following definition of social capital in its work:

> **Social capital refers to the networks of social relations that may provide individuals and groups with access to resources and supports.** (Policy Research Initiative, 2005: 6)

In support of this definition, the PRI identified three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking.[1] Bonding refers to social networks that reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups, while bridging refers to networks that are outward-looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages. (Putnam, 2000: 19) Linking describes connections among people in positions of power that allow them to obtain resources from formal institutions. (Policy Research Initiative, 2005: 12)

At the end of the project in 2005, the PRI concluded that there was benefit to be gained in by incorporating a social capital element into three relevant government policy and program areas: those helping populations at risk of social exclusion, those supporting key life-course transitions (such as passage from school to labour market or from work to retirement) and those promoting community development efforts. (Policy Research Initiative, 2005: 15) In other words, governments should support the development of social capital not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end.

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[1] The first two types were first identified by Robert Putnam, while the third was pioneered by Michael Woolcock of the World Bank.

Social integration

There has been relatively little research on the concept of social integration in Canada, but the definition utilized in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development bears some resemblance to the conceptualizations described above:

> **… the process of fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.** (Commitment 4)

In Canada, the concept has been most often utilized in the field of immigrant integration, where it has been the subject of a recent book, *Immigration, Integration and Citizenship*, published by the McGill-Queen's University Press. In exploring how immigrants can best integrate into Canadian society, the contributors to this book examined not only economic and social inclusion, but also the subject of cultural citizenship, which addresses issues of identity, recognition and participation from a rights-based perspective.

Integration in the context of cultural citizenship involves three elements:
- Culture "H" – the repository of past meanings, symbols and traditions;
- Culture "C" – the making of new meanings and symbols through discovery and creative activity in the arts;
- Culture "S" – the set of symbolic tools from which individuals construct their "ways of living". (Stanley, 2005: 22-23)

The integration of any member of a society involves a process that works something like this:
- We use "Culture S" as a tool kit of meanings to understand our daily lives.
- We obtain this tool kit through education and socialization, which draws on "Culture H", our traditions and heritage.
- We introduce new meanings into this mix through the creative arts and industries ("Culture C") where they are tested to see whether they will be useful in adapting to new "ways of living". (Stanley, 2005: 25)

Immigrant cultural integration in his or her new country is very much a "two-way process", one in which policy makers must ask several key questions. First**,** how do newcomers make use of "Culture H" and "Culture C" to adapt their "Culture S" to a new environment and a new country? Second, how does the host society use "Culture H" and "Culture C" to help immigrants develop new symbolic landscapes ("Culture S") that will ease their entry into their new environment? Finally, how might immigrants, through the agency of "Culture C", contribute to the "Culture H" and "Culture S" of the host society, thereby adding new elements to and altering the tool kit that the host society uses to define itself? (Stone et al., 2008: 105)

Culture in this context is not monolithic or homogenous, but an "inventory of possibilities" or a "toolkit" for regulating daily life. It is, in fact, a means of encouraging cultural diversity within a society in a way that does not focus on the immigrant as "the other" but as a participant in and contributor to the cultural life of the community. In many Western host societies, however, the majority of cultural practices still remain within the purview of the dominant classes, making the process described above difficult to initiate and sustain without the resources and authority of the state behind it. (Stone et.al., 2008: 106)

Contextual issues

In a briefing paper prepared in 1994 for the World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) noted that "In each context, there is a pattern of social integration, or network of social relations and institutions, regulated by specific ideas concerning what is right and wrong, which bind people to one another under certain conditions." (UNRISD, 1994: n.p.) This is nowhere more apparent than in the context of post-conflict and fragile societies and in post-colonial and post-communist states.

In 1994, the UNRISD expressed concern that "… national governments have been forced by liberalization and deregulation to strengthen the competitive position of their economies in the global arena, and thus to adopt measures which attract foreign capital and cheapen exports, even when these measures may threaten the standard of living of large numbers of people and the capacity of the government itself to meet its obligations to citizens and to the environment." (UNRISD, 1994: n,p.) Despite this concern, the majority of the peacebuilding missions of the 1990s promoted liberalization – both economic and democratic – in an attempt to transform war-shattered states into liberal market democracies as soon as possible.

In a recent book, Roland Paris analyzed and evaluated the effects of fourteen peacebuilding missions deployed between 1989 and 1998. He concluded that "Peacebuilders in the 1990s seemed to underestimate the destabilizing effects of the liberalization process in the fragile circumstances of countries just emerging from civil wars." (Paris, 2004: 6) While he supported the broad goal of converting such states into liberal market democracies (which in the longer-term are more integrated and peaceful in both their domestic and foreign relations), he proposed a new strategy of "Institutionalization Before Liberalization", consisting of:

- A delay in the introduction of democratic and market-oriented reforms until a rudimentary network of domestic institutions, capable of managing the strains of liberalization, have been established;
- Management of the democratization and marketization process as a series of incremental and deliberate steps, combined with the immediate building of governmental institutions that can manage the political and economic reforms. (Paris, 2004: 7-8)

Even if a society has not experienced recent conflict, Will Kymlicka, a Canadian scholar, has suggested that a too-rapid introduction of liberal multiculturalism policies (or "interculturalism" or "diversity policies" as others prefer to call them) may carry the risk of destabilization. He notes that "… liberal multiculturalism is easier to adopt where liberal democracy is already well established, and where the rule of law and human rights are well protected. In countries where these basic foundations of liberal democracy are not yet present or consolidated, some level of democratization and liberalization may be needed before it makes sense to push for the full implementation of liberal multiculturalism." (Kymlicka, 2007: 8)   He points out that international organizations must sometimes strike a delicate balance between justice for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples and security fears about the destabilizing effects of ethnic politics on democracy and development. (Kymlicka, 2007: 9) While he believes that liberal multiculturalism policies can contribute to freedom, equality and democracy, he urges policy makers to understand the context where they are being introduced: "… the underlying conditions, the nature of the ethnic groups involved, and the types of policies being considered." (Kymlicka, 2007:19) Like Paris, he suggests that a strategy of "progressive implementation" is necessary, "with different minority rights provisions kicking in as the underlying conditions are established." (Kymlicka, 2007: 304)

If liberalization measures impose strains in developed, stable democracies, they can unleash destructive forces in societies that do not have the mechanisms to manage the economic competition of marketization or the societal competition of democracy. It is therefore incumbent upon policy makers to understand the context within which economic, social and cultural policies intended to promote integration and stability are introduced. Policies that work in one context may not be transferable to another context, despite the best intentions of those who attempt to apply best practices from other jurisdictions.

Policy Issues

As noted in the UNRISD's background paper for the World Summit, "The policy-relevant question for those who look at social integration … is not how to increase integration per se, but how to promote a kind of integration which favours the creation of a more just and equitable society." (UNRISD, 1994: n.p.)

Social integration falls into a class of policy problems that a British researcher, Jake Chapman, has described as "messes". In Chapman's book, *System Failure: Why governments must learn to think differently*, he characterizes policy "messes" this way: messes are characterised by no clear agreement about exactly what the problem is and by uncertainty and ambiguity as to how improvements might be made, and they are unbounded in terms of the time and resources they could absorb, the scope of enquiry needed to understand and resolve them and the number of people that may need to be involved. (Chapman, 2002: 27) Policy "messes" founded on complex systems are also distinguished by a variety of perspectives on the problem, based on the different mental

frameworks used by the various stakeholders. These perspectives are not limited to differences in academic disciplines, but may also arise from "… different contexts, different cultures, different histories, different aspirations and different allegiances" (Chapman, 2002: 31). As a result, stakeholders may not agree on the nature of the problem or may dismiss as irrelevant differing perspectives on it which do not fit within their frame of reference. For this reason, it is seldom possible to approach a policy "mess" using a linear or rational model of policy or decision making, since there is never a single, correct way to address it.

Social integration, as one of these policy problems, requires not only a sensitivity to context but also a clear sense of what interventions are most needed and appropriate in that context. Since there is no overarching theories about the appropriate sequencing of social integration policy interventions (or indeed, as Paris and Kymlicka have argued, of liberalization and democratization initiatives writ large), these interventions are often introduced by regional and local authorities for a variety of other reasons which may depend more on the availability of resources and support than on conceptual clarity.

The development of robust indicators of social integration, social inclusion and social cohesion is also a significant policy challenge. While quantitative and statistical indicators exist for some forms of economic integration (for example, employment and income data), other types of indicators that are more qualitative in nature and that measure social integration (for example, levels of life satisfaction, civic engagement, trust and cultural participation) are less readily available. More problematic, however, is the lack of a clear conceptual grounding that provides a theoretical modeling of the linkages among the various economic, political, social and cultural variables that contribute to social integration. In view of the current predisposition toward the "social investment state"[2], it may be useful to utilize various "capital" investments and indicators as benchmarks, but to expand the typology to include physical, natural, financial, democratic, social and cultural capital, as well as human capital, in the investment mix. Until there is a consensus about the systemic aspects of social integration, it may be difficult to develop adequate indicators that will provide the evidence usually demanded by decision makers before committing significant resources.

Conclusions and recommendations

Ass indicated at the beginning of this paper, conclusions and recommendations with regard to concepts and issues may be somewhat premature. However, it may be useful to suggest the elements of a possible conceptual model as a subject for further discussion:

- It must be systemic, multi-dimensional and take into account the role of democratic, economic, social and cultural factors in contributing to integration or inclusion.

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[2] The most well-known exponent of this social policy orientation, which favours human capital investment, is Anthony Giddens.

- It must take into account the policy context – the policy "hierarchy of needs" – within a given society to ensure that integration measures are introduced in a governance environment that is capable of sustaining them.
- It must be transformative – in other words it must provide more than a picture of the formal elements or investments in social integration, but also the outcomes or substantive results of those investments.
- Both investments and outcomes must be measurable through a variety of quantitative and qualitative indicators, derived from both objective and subjective data.

Appendix 2 is an attempt to bring these elements together in a preliminary way for discussion but it should be emphasized that this grid lacks the causal linkages and inter-relationships that would help explain how these elements fit together. While there is a sense of sequencing in the order that the dimensions are presented, it needs to be repeated that all elements are have a role to play in social integration. However, there is little doubt that the sum total of the substantive outcomes contributes to overall well-being and sustainable communities – communities where full and equal citizenship rests upon a foundation of social, economic, cultural and political inclusion.

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Appendix 1 – Shookner's Dimensions of Social Exclusion and Inclusion

Dimensions and Indicators of Social Exclusion and Inclusion

Elements of Exclusion	Dimensions	Elements of Inclusion
Disadvantage, fear of differences, intolerance, gender stereotyping, historic oppression, cultural deprivation.	**Cultural**	**Valuing contributions** of women and men to society, recognition of differences, valuing diversity, positive identity, anti-racist education.
Poverty, unemployment, non-standard employment, inadequate income for basic needs, participation in society, stigma, embarrassment, inequality, income disparities, deprivation, insecurity, devaluation of caregiving, illiteracy, lack of educational access.	**Economic**	**Adequate income** for basic needs and participation in society, poverty eradication, employment, capability for personal development, personal security, sustainable development, reducing disparities, value and support caregiving.
Disability, restrictions based on limitations, overwork, time stress, undervaluing of assets available.	**Functional**	**Ability to participate**, opportunities for personal development, valued social roles, recognizing competence.
Marginalization, silencing, barriers to participation, institutional dependency, no room for choice, not involved in decision making.	**Participatory**	**Empowerment**, freedom to choose, contribution to community, access to programs, resources and capacity to support participation, involved in decision making, social action.
Barriers to movement, restricted access to public spaces, social distancing, unfriendly/unhealthy environments, lack of transportation, unsustainable environments.	**Physical**	**Access** to public places and community resources, physical proximity and opportunities for interaction, healthy/supportive environments, access to transportation, sustainability.
Denial of human rights, restrictive policies and legislation, blaming the victims, short-term view, one dimensional, restricting eligibility for programs, lack of transparency in decision making.	**Political**	**Affirmation of human rights**, enabling policies and legislation, social protection for vulnerable groups, removing systemic barriers, will to take action, long-term view, multi-dimensional, citizen participation, transparent decision making.
Isolation, segregation, distancing, competitiveness, violence and abuse, fear, shame.	**Relational**	**Belonging**, social proximity, respect, recognition, co-operation, solidarity, family support, access to resources.
Discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, restrictions on eligibility, no access to programs, barriers to access, withholding information, departmental silos, government jurisdictions, secretive/restricted communications, rigid boundaries.	**Structural**	**Entitlements**, access to programs, transparent pathways to access, affirmative action, community capacity building, interdepartmental links, inter-governmental links, accountability, open channels of communication, options for change, flexibility.

Source: Shookner (2002).

Appendix 2 – Elements of a Model of Social Integration (with examples)

Dimension	Level of Need	Formal Investment	Substantive Outcome
Physical	**Basic** – food, personal security	Agricultural investments, military and justice systems	Adequate nourishment, freedom from fear, lower crime rate
	Enhanced – physical infrastructure	Water and sewer systems, transportation systems, electrical grids, hospitals, public health measures	Clean and functioning communities, healthier populations, easier trade and travel
Natural	**Basic** – clean air and water	Waste management systems, basic environmental standards	Healthier populations, lower pollution levels
	Enhanced – liveable cities, diverse habitats, beautiful scenery	Waste treatment systems, pollution control and conservation measures, parks, wildlife sanctuaries	Aesthetic enjoyment, robust ecosystems, improved quality of life
Democratic	**Basic** – human and civil rights	Functioning legislature, impartial judiciary, free press	Equity before the law, voter participation
	Enhanced – economic, social and cultural rights	Social safety net, collective bargaining, education in mother tongue	Social support for the disadvantaged, fair wages, sense of identity
Economic	**Basic** – employment, adequate income	Labour market standards, minimum wage laws, anti-discrimination laws, access to micro-credit	Lower poverty rates, increased employment
	Enhanced – meaningful work, pensions, savings and investments	Job retraining, employment insurance, accessible banking and investment systems	Labour mobility, high rates of home ownership, equitable income distribution

Dimension	Level of Need	Formal Investment	Substantive Outcome
Human	**Basic** – primary education	Primary schools, incentives for female education	Increased literacy, higher female education rates
	Enhanced – secondary and postsecondary education	High schools, colleges and universities, advanced research institutes, scholarships for disadvantaged students	Increased number of high school and university graduates, increased innovation and productivity
Social	**Basic** – family connections	Family policies, adequate housing	Healthier children, fewer single mothers without support
	Enhanced – community connections, civic engagement, volunteering	Social capital investments (e.g. in clubs, professional organizations, sports teams, charities), community development initiatives	Higher volunteer rates, healthier civil society, more mobility across social groups
Cultural	**Basic** – recognition and respect for identity and culture, basic cultural infrastructure	Employment equity policies, anti-racism policies, language rights, libraries, community centres, broadcasting facilities	Diverse labourforce, linguistic diversity, access to information
	Enhanced – creativity, acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity	Multiculturalism and interculturalism policies, museums, galleries, theatres, recreation facilities, investment in artists and creative industries / districts	Diversity of cultural content supply, high level of intercultural exchange, high level of cultural participation (both active and passive), high number of "creatives" in population, vibrant community cultural life

Source: Jeannotte, 2008