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Patterns of Ethnic Identity and the ‘Canadian’ Response

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In this study, we used the 1993 National Census Test to examine patterns of ethnic identity in Canada particularly with respect to those reporting Canadian as an ethnic origin. We found that people reporting Canadian as an ethnic origin have very similar attributes to those who report either British or French as ethnic origin but are not similar to those reporting origins other than British or French. It appears therefore, that despite the relatively high proportion of people reporting Canadian, it does not impact on the reporting of minority ethnic groups. Thus, at present, the question still provides valid and useful results for the Multiculturalism program. However, the longer term impact of introducing ‘Canadian’ as an example category in the ethnic origin question remains unclear.

Patterns of Ethnic Identity and the ‘Canadian’ Response

Ravi Pendakur and Fernando Mata

Purpose and Background:

The purpose of this study is to understand the patterns of ethnic identification and assess the impact of an increased ‘Canadian’ response rate on the validity of the ethnicity question. The impetus for this study stems from two sources. First, in the 1996 census, the format of the ethnicity question was changed substantially and ‘Canadian’ was added to the list of examples. The new question format means that it will be very difficult, if not impossible to compare data from previous census years. As well, it has been shown in previous National Census Tests, that including ‘Canadian’ as an example, markedly increases the number of people who report Canadian as an ethnic origin.

Second, as part of the 2001 Census consultations, it is necessary that Multiculturalism provide its response and requirements regarding the 2001 Census. Presentations as well as initial discussions with Statistics Canada personnel made it clear that Statistics Canada wished to remove the question from the 2001 Census on the grounds that:

1. It is difficult and expensive to code.
2. It imposes a respondent burden.
3. It is politically sensitive; and
4. There was a marked increase in the proportion of respondents writing in ‘Canadian’ as an ethnic origin.

It was, thus, important to analyze and understand the pattern of responses and assess the impact of the changes on the validity of collecting ethnic origin data. However, because of time constraints imposed by Statistics Canada regarding the necessity of having a response by mid-March of 1998 regarding a departmental response to the 2001 Census requirements, and the fact that the necessary data to conduct the study would not be released until the spring of 1998, we used the National Census Test to conduct the study.¹

This paper is divided into two parts. Part one reviews the way in which ethnicity data is collected by the Census and the changes to the question between 1991 and 1996. Part two examines the responses to the ethnic origin question from the 1993 National Census Test, using descriptive and

¹. The 1993 NCT was administered to a representative sample of Canadian households and tests the 1996 Census questionnaire and methodology.

discriminant analysis in order to determine the degree to which people responding ‘Canadian’ are similar to people reporting other origins.

The Ethnic Origin Questions:

Ethnicity is a multifaceted concept. Criteria for membership in an ethnic group can include, among other things:

1. Self-categorization / identification
2. Descent
3. Specific cultural traits such as custom or language
4. A social organization for interaction both within the group and with people outside the group

Past censuses have asked a number of questions which attempt to tap these facets of cultural origin. Such questions include those on place of birth, period of immigration, mother tongue and home language in addition to the more general question on ethnic origin. Thus, in the absence of a question on ethnic origin, it would be possible to capture at least some information on Canada’s ethnic dimension. However, a question which probes more generally for ethnic origin, casts a wider net than is evident in the questions above by capturing people who are not immigrants, do not speak a heritage language, but nevertheless are part of a minority ethnic group.

The 1991 ethnic origin question captured information through the use of 15 check-in boxes as well as two write-in boxes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: 1991 Question on ethnic origin

15. To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?

Mark or specify as many as applicable

Note:
While most people of Canada view themselves as Canadian, information on their ancestral origins has been collected since the 1901 Census to reflect the changing composition of the Canadian population and is needed to ensure the everyone, regardless of his/her ethnic or cultural background, has equal opportunity to share fully in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada. Therefore, this question refers to the origins of the person's ancestors.

See Guide
Examples of other ethnic or cultural groups are: Portuguese, Greek, Indian from India, Pakistani, Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese, Lebanese, Haitian, etc.

- French
- English
- German
- Scottish
- Italian
- Irish
- Ukrainian
- Chinese
- Dutch (Netherlands)
- Jewish
- Polish
- Black
- North American Indian
- Métis
- Inuit/Eskimo

Other ethnic or cultural group(s) - Specify

The question format allowed respondents to provide more than one ethnic origin (in fact a respondent could tick all 15 check-in boxes and write in up to three additional responses). However, it could be argued that the format also led the respondent to choose the tick-off boxes rather than writing in an origin because it was easier to do so. Thus, although its ability to pick up multiple origins was advantageous, the pattern of responses may have suppressed detail (for example, it is possible that people simply ticked off Italian rather than responding with a more detailed answer of Sicilian). In 1996, the response format to the question was changed dramatically. Check-in boxes were removed and the respondent was provided with four write-in boxes (see Figure 2). As well, Canadian was added to the list of examples in the question. Up to six origins were captured.

Figure 2: 1996 Census Question on Ethnic Origin (question 17)

To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's **ancestors** belong?
For example, French, English, German, Scottish, Canadian, Italian, Irish, Chinese, Cree, Micmac, Métis, Inuit (Eskimo), Ukrainian, Dutch, East Indian, Polish, Portuguese, Jewish, Haitian, Jamaican, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chilean, Somali, etc.

The question thus captures information in a different way. In one sense, the question is likely to provide a more accurate picture of ethnic identity in Canada because it does not lead the respondent to the same degree as the older question.

However, previous Census tests have shown that the addition of 'Canadian' as an example category may lead more respondents to simply write-in Canadian, rather than thinking more deeply about their ethnic origins.

The Canadian Response Rate:

Statistics Canada has always accepted 'Canadian' as an ethnic category. However, in past censuses, the proportion of people responding 'Canadian' has been relatively low. Even in 1991 the response pattern for people reporting Canadian was as follows:

TABLE 1. Pattern of Canadian Response, Canada, 1991

Canadian only	765095
British & Canadian	116530
British, Canadian & Other	40160
French & Canadian	20825
French, Canadian & Other	5280
Canadian & Other	58030
British, French & Canadian	13545
British, French, Canadian & Other	13560
Total	1,033,025

source: Statistics Canada publication 93-315

Three-quarters of a million people reported only Canadian origins, with another quarter million reporting Canadian in combination with other origins (most often British or French). What is interesting, is that the reporting of Canadian, even by more than one million people, did not really affect the number of people reporting origins other than British or French.² Thus, it was not an issue in determining the number of people reporting minority origins.

In 1996, the reporting of Canadian as an ethnic origin was substantially higher. One in five respondents reported Canadian as their only ethnic origin (see Table 2). An additional 3.5 million people reported Canadian in combination with other origins (usually either British or French). Thus the impact of the Canadian response rate is important to understand in interpreting the results of the question as well as in coming to conclusions regarding the ethnic character of Canada.

TABLE 2: Ethnic Origin, Canada, 1996

Group	population
Total population	28,528,125
Aboriginal only	477,635
Br. & Fr.	856,985
British only	4,873,970
French only	2,696,270
Canadian only	5,326,995
Can. &/or Br. Fr.	2,057,925
Other	12,238,345
Other only	7,645,935
Fr. & Oth.	435,205
Br. & Oth.	2,217,370
Br. Fr. & Oth.	518,480
Can. & Oth.	579,045
Can. &/or Br. Fr. & Oth	842,310

Source: 1996 Census of Canada.

At least part of the reason for the high 'Canadian' count is probably because 'Canadian' is listed as an example category. However, it is also likely that, particularly in the case of fourth or fifth generation Canadians of British or French origin, 'Canadian' is a legitimate response, and in these instances, the reporting of Canadian should not pose a problem. *Where reporting of Canadian becomes an issue is when respondents misinterpret the motivations of the question to be tests of nationality or loyalty to Canada.* In these instances, there was a perceived danger that people will respond as 'Canadian' even though their origins include other ancestries as well.

The results of the National Census Test, conducted in 1993 suggested that the proportion of people reporting Canadian has increased substantially. If Canadian was being reported by a large number of *randomly* distributed individuals, it could seriously effect our ability to use the results of the question to track ethnic diversity in Canada. However, if reporting of Canadian was largely restricted

². We say this because a comparison of the number of people reporting origins other than British or French in 1986 and 1991 suggested that in many cases, the counts went up rather than down. This suggests that the Canadian response is probably coming from the majority, British and French groups rather than the minority groups.

to those who would have, in previous censuses reported either British or French, such reporting posed less of a problem. It was thus necessary to examine the issue and try to define the characteristics of people reporting Canadian and determine 'who' was reporting Canadian as compared to people who report other origins.

The Data:

Because much of the data from the 1996 census would not be available until after our deadline, it was decided that we would use the 1993 National Census Test (NCT). The 1993 NCT was administered to a representative sample of Canadian households and tests the 1996 Census questionnaire. The NCT database includes responses from approximately 32 thousand persons. Initial analysis determined that this database provided enough cases to conduct an analysis on the patterns of ethnic origin.

From this database we took responses from the following questions:

- mother tongue
- ethnic origin
- place of birth
- province of residence
- citizenship
- age
- education
- labour force characteristics
- income

Data Analysis

In statistical terms, selected characteristics of those who reported 'Canadian origins' may be summarized using simpler measures (e.g., functions or linear combinations of variables). If these measures are orthogonal (independent) to each other, it will allow for the estimation of the average positions of groups as well as the separation that exists between them. If the reporting of the Canadian identity is randomly distributed across all groups, it is expected that the position of the 'Canadian' group will be relatively equidistant to all the other groups. If, on the contrary, the 'Canadian' group will tend to cluster with the British, French or British and French, this could be interpreted as a sign that these respondents come mostly from "majority" backgrounds.

The data analysis strategy of the national census test followed several steps. First we explored the socio-demographic, residential, linguistic and economic indicators, of respondents by according to their responses to the ethnic origin question. Second we conducted a discriminant analysis of the data. To establish differences between groups using the information contained in the major discriminant functions, we performed a hierarchical cluster analysis with a minimal number of solutions. All these analyses were carried out to determine if respondents identifying themselves as 'Canadians' were substantively different or not from those reporting other ethnic origins.

Discriminant analysis is a multivariate analysis technique which determines if a particular combination of variables is able to separate individuals in terms of their group membership. In this case, age, education, place of birth, mother tongue and province of residence were used to see the degree to which they were successful in separating people into different ethnic groups. Discriminant functions maximizes the separation of groups thereby allowing for data reduction to determine the few underlying dimensions along which groups differ. In this case, the separation between those who reported Canadian single origins, combinations of Canadian with other origins and the rest of origins became paramount.

Twelve, mutually exclusive ethnic categories were included in the analysis:

C	Canadian Single
B	British Single
F	French Single
E	European Single
N	Non European Single
A	Aboriginal Single
CBF	Canadian, British and French
CO	Canadian and Other
BF	British and French
BO	British and Other
FO	French and Other
R	Rest

Table 3 describes the major characteristics of the twelve groups studied. At first glance those who identify themselves as Canadian were predominantly citizens by birth, with relatively low levels of schooling. Half reported English as mother tongue and half reported French as mother tongue. It should be noted that only about 23% of the total population reported French as mother tongue in 1996. Forty-three percent of people reporting 'Canadian' lived in Quebec, ranking (in percentage terms) second only to those reporting French as a mother tongue in which almost 60 percent resided in Quebec. The average income of people reporting Canadian only was \$22,355, which was low in comparison to other groups. These descriptive statistics suggested that there were some differences between those reporting Canadian and those reporting other origins which were worth pursuing using a discriminant analysis.

For the discriminant analysis 17 variables were used: age, income and 15 dummy variables representing socio-demographic, residential, educational, citizenship status, linguistic and place of birth individual characteristics. To avoid "closure" errors leading to multiple collinearity, dummy variables corresponding to Atlantic region residence, non citizen status and immigrant status were excluded from the discriminating variables list.

A total of 11 statistically significant functions were extracted from the data. They accounted for a combined Wilks' lambda of .18 which produced a X^2 of 43,348, found to be statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. The first function, the most important, had the greatest eigenvalue (1.11)

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Indicators of the Ethnic Groups Examined

Indicators	<i>Ethnic Groups</i>											
	C	CBF	CO	B	F	E	N	BF	BO	OF	A	R
Mean Age	40.0	40.4	34.9	47.2	44.2	48.5	39.6	38.3	38.1	36.5	35.5	42.6
% Males	49.4%	47.1%	42.1%	48.7%	51.1%	50.7%	49.4%	47.5%	46.6%	46.3%	47.8%	47.9%
% Atlantic Residents	22.1%	24.3%	11.6%	41.8%	19.4%	4.3%	5.8%	40.1%	12.7%	12.6%	11.2%	23.6%
% Quebec Residents	43.0%	19.1%	8.3%	1.9%	58.9%	4.5%	5.9%	9.2%	1.4%	16.7%	11.9%	15.6%
% Ontario Residents	18.7%	29.6%	31.1%	29.6%	13.0%	37.0%	28.5%	31.7%	33.5%	30.0%	16.4%	30.0%
%Prairie Residents	11.1%	18.0%	28.5%	17.6%	6.5%	43.0%	43.7%	13.1%	36.9%	32.0%	53.7%	22.2%
% BC Residents	5.0%	9.1%	20.5%	9.1%	2.2%	11.2%	16.1%	5.8%	15.5%	8.6%	6.7%	8.5%
% with P.S.Degrees	7.9%	13.1%	10.9%	12.7%	12.0%	11.0%	18.3%	11.5%	15.7%	9.9%	0.7%	7.3%
% In Labour Force	60.9%	64.9%	68.9%	57.6%	58.2%	59.2%	65.1%	65.7%	69.7%	66.3%	50.7%	48.0%
Average Total Income \$	22355	33004	39872	36161	18059	41993	29387	34031	33595	25249	10243	64184
% Citizens by Birth	98.8%	97.3%	98.0%	88.9%	97.5%	64.8%	49.7%	97.0%	92.4%	92.4%	97.0%	78.7%
% Naturalized Citizens	0.6%	1.6%	1.3%	8.5%	1.6%	28.7%	29.6%	1.9%	4.4%	4.4%	1.5%	5.6%
% Non Citizens	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	1.5%	0.5%	5.0%	18.0%	0.3%	2.0%	1.7%	0.7%	1.2%
% English Mother Tongue	50.4%	71.0%	89.7%	98.5%	12.7%	45.4%	49.7%	82.5%	97.7%	68.5%	62.7%	64.3%
% Mother Tongue French	48.2%	26.3%	9.3%	1.0%	86.3%	1.3%	1.4%	14.8%	0.6%	25.1%	14.9%	17.7%
% English&French MT	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	2.3%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
% Other Mother Tongue	0.8%	1.8%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	52.8%	48.5%	0.3%	1.4%	5.9%	21.6%	5.5%
% Immigrants	0.6%	1.0%	1.6%	0.9%	0.7%	34.1%	47.3%	0.2%	1.9%	3.9%	0.7%	17.7%
% U.K&U.S. born	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%	9.4%	0.6%	1.3%	3.1%	1.6%	5.2%	2.2%	1.5%	2.4%
% European Born	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	1.2%	31.4%	3.5%	0.0%	0.3%	3.2%	0.0%	1.8%
% Other PB Born	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	2.7%	43.7%	0.2%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%	15.9%
Weighted N*	356000	2020000	250000	4590000	2300000	3210000	2250000	6700000	1430000	340000	80000	850000

- Weighted N is rounded to nearest thousand.

Ethnic Groups

C=Canadian Single
N=Non European Single
CO=Canadian and Other

B=British Single
A=Aboriginal Single
BF=British and French

F=French Single
R=Rest of Singles
BO=British and Other

E=European Single
CBF=Canadian, Brit and French
FO=French and Other

Table 3: Discriminant Analysis Results

Discriminant Variables			Standardized Discriminant Coefficients		Structure Coefficients	
Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Function 1	Function 2	Function 1	Function 2
Age	43.15	18.17	0.01	-0.12	0.06	-0.02
Male	0.49	0.50	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.03
Post Secondary Degree	0.12	0.32	0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.02
Total Income	32571	28526	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
In Labour Force	0.61	0.49	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Quebec Resident	0.18	0.39	-0.11	0.10	-0.46	0.46
Ontario Resident	0.27	0.45	0.15	0.22	0.13	-0.08
Prairies resident	0.22	0.42	0.33	0.38	0.28	0.08
BC Resident	0.09	0.28	0.13	0.17	0.11	-0.04
Citizen by Birth	0.87	0.34	-0.13	0.05	-0.40	-0.20
Citizen by Naturalization	0.09	0.28	0.00	-0.01	0.33	0.16
English Mother Tongue	0.66	0.47	0.37	-0.17	0.17	-0.90
French Mother Tongue	0.22	0.41	-0.38	0.62	-0.71	0.66
Other Mother Tongue	0.11	0.31	0.73	0.47	0.65	0.60
Born in UK or US	0.04	0.19	-0.04	-0.15	0.04	-0.21
Born in Europe	0.05	0.21	-0.02	0.09	0.35	0.36
Born in Other Countries	0.04	0.20	0.06	0.02	0.30	0.22
Major Functions	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Canonical Correlation			
	1	1.11	49.2	.72		
	2	0.60	26.5	.61		

Wilks' Lambda				
Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	d.f.	Sig.
1 through 11	0.18	43478	187	0.00
2 through 11	0.38	24438	160	0.00
3 through 11	0.61	12469	135	0.00
4 through 11	0.84	4574	112	0.00
5 through 11	0.90	2737	91	0.00
6 through 11	0.96	1116	72	0.00
7 through 11	0.98	471	55	0.00
8 through 11	0.99	205	40	0.00
9 through 11	1.00	59	27	0.00
10 through 11	1.00	25	16	0.06
11	1.00	6	7	0.51

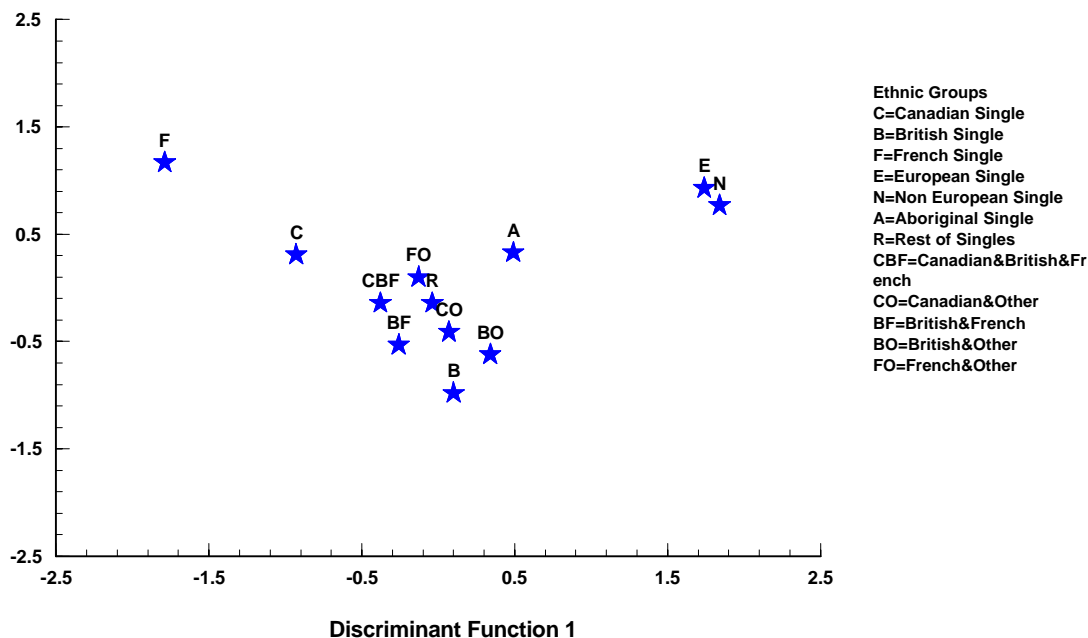
suggesting it had a relatively moderate discriminative power. The second function had an eigenvalue of .60 and explained less in terms of the between- group variance present in the data.

What did the first two discriminant functions measure? The first function clearly separated groups who were mostly made up by Canadian-born (particularly those whose mother tongue is French) from those groups in which immigrants were more numerous. The variable which had the highest positive loadings on this function was ‘Other’ mother tongue (.73). French mother tongue had a negative loading of - .38. The second function maximized the differences between Quebec residents and non-Quebec residents and their corresponding associated characteristics (e.g., English mother tongue). Calculated structure coefficients (correlations between the discriminant function and binary coefficients representing the groups) reinforced this pattern of differentiation.

More than three quarters of the group’s separation was captured by the first two functions, and consequently, the bulk of the separation between the groups across the discriminating variables could be readily summarized by their positions along the functions. The orthogonal property (non correlation) of the major discriminant functions allowed for a mapping of the centroids (average position of groups) on a plane spanned by the two discriminant functions. Locations of the centroids corresponding to each of the groups are presented in Chart 1. Of particular interest was determining the location of centroids corresponding to those who identified themselves as “Canadian” or combinations of Canadian with other ethnicities. Visual inspection of the points in the chart suggested that those who identified solely as Canadians appeared far away from those reporting European and Non-European origins (located in the far left of the figure) while occupying intermediate positions between those reporting French (upper left) or multiple ethnicities (central cluster of the figure). Those who reported a Canadian ethnic origin in combination with other origins appeared to be indistinguishable from the members of the central cluster of the chart.

Chart 1: Location of Group Centroids in the Coordinates of Two Major Discriminant Functions

Discriminant Function 2



To move from plain visual inspection to statistical testing aimed at determining if there were clustering patterns present in the data, a homogeneity test using post-hoc comparisons of means was performed using the Scheffé criteria. Results of these tests (presented in the technical appendix) revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the means of the groups and that at least eight and six homogenous subsets could be found for the first and second discriminant functions.

The next and final stage involved cluster analysis of a twelve by twelve-dissimilarity matrix between the groups. A hierarchical cluster analysis using standardized Euclidean distances as dissimilarity measures between average discriminant scores was undertaken. Results of $k < 5$ of solutions (1/3 of the k groups) was thought desirable. Our primary goal was to determine the extent to which the Canadian single identity group would form clusters with other groups. Results of the clustering solutions are presented below. The two cluster solution clearly separated European and Non European single origins from the rest of groups. In the three cluster solution, the Canadian and French single Origin groups formed a separate cluster different from the remaining groups. In the four cluster solution, the Canadian and French single origin groups remain separate while the Aboriginal group separates from the central cluster of groups. In short, those who declared a single Canadian ethnic identity in the NCT had more in common with those who declared a French single origin (or at the most multiples of British and French) and very little in common with those reporting Aboriginal or specific European or non European origins.

Table 4: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis Solutions*

Case	4 Clusters	3 Clusters	2 Clusters
1:C	1	1	1
2:B	2	2	1
3:F	1	1	1
4:CBF	2	2	1
5:CO	2	2	1
6:E	3	3	2
7:N	3	3	2
8:BF	2	2	1
9:BO	2	2	1
10:FO	2	2	1
11:A	4	2	1
12:R	2	2	1

* Based on a dissimilarity matrix of standardized Euclidean distances

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CBF=Canadian, Brit and French

FO=French and Other

Conclusions:

Ethnicity is multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of concepts. If we were limited to the questions concerning language knowledge or place of birth, we would be unable to capture information on the cultural origins of individuals who are born in Canada (which would not be captured by the place of birth question) or those who speak only an official language. Thus, we would lack information on a large and growing portion of the population.

If there are policy or research requirements for information on ethnic origin which go beyond the confines of immigrants, language groups or visible minorities, they can only be filled by the use of a question which specifically probes for ethnic origin or ancestry. However, as with any other question on the Census, the question must yield valid results in order to be useful, and an increased 'Canadian' response rate, could nullify the usefulness of the question. Furthermore, the confusion caused between using 'Canadian' both as an indicator of ethnicity and as an indicator of 'nationality' may force respondents to choose between the two.

In this study, we have examined the pattern of ethnic identity in Canada particularly with respect to those reporting Canadian as an ethnic identity. We found that people reporting Canadian as an ethnic identity appear to have very similar attributes to those who report either British or French as ethnic identity, but are not similar to those reporting origins other than British or French. It appears therefore, that despite the relatively high proportion of people reporting Canadian, it does not impact on the reporting of minority ethnic groups. **Thus the question still provides valid and useful results for the Multiculturalism program.**

Technical Appendix

Table A-1: Homogeneity Subsets found using Scheffe Tests on Group's Centroids

<i>Discriminant Scores from Function 1 for Analysis 1</i>								
	Subset for alpha = .05							
Groups	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00
F	-1.78							
C		-1.03						
CBF			-0.56					
BF			-0.46					
FO			-0.34	-0.34				
CO				-0.17				
R				-0.14	-0.14			
B				-0.12	-0.12			
BO					0.08	0.08		
A						0.19		
E							1.25	
N								1.84
Sig.	1.00	1.00	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.95	1.00	1.00
<i>Discriminant Scores from Function 2 for Analysis 1</i>								
	Subset for alpha = .05							
Groups	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00		
B	-1.09							
BO	-0.88	-0.88						
BF		-0.69						
CO		-0.67						
CBF			-0.32					
FO			-0.24					
A			-0.21					
E			-0.21					
R			-0.16					
C				0.20				
N					0.77			
F						1.10		
Sig.	0.14	0.15	0.58	1.00	1.00	1.00		

Ethnic Groups

C=Canadian Single
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A=Aboriginal Single
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