The contribution of an Irish sensibility to Australian irreverence, rebelliousness, and egalitarianism—or desire for flatter hierarchies—is evident in such Australian practices as “knocking,” “cutting down tall poppies,” and the social phenomenon of “mateship.” These Australian cultural features distinguish Australia from Canada and point to a historically significant “Irish factor” that Canada does not share. In contrast, while the Scots also represented a sizeable immigrant community in Australia and Canada, there does not appear to have been an equivalent “Scottish factor” despite their cultural significance. For economic and ethnocultural reasons, the Scots in both countries tended to align with the British establishment far more than did the Irish, whose numbers in Australia were particularly large. As Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are useful indicators of national variation,1 this chapter explores power distance and individualism–collectivism to attribute Australia and Canada’s salient cultural characteristics to particular regions of Anglo-Celtic origin.

Power distance and ethnocultural distinctions

According to American psychologist Victor Savicki’s study of English-speaking cultures, important differences exist in Hofstede’s cultural work value dimensions of power distance and individualism–collectivism but


not on uncertainty avoidance or masculinity–femininity measures. While Hofstede’s dimensions of culture compared dozens of nations, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Savicki segregated Scotland from England, and English Canada from French Canada, which helps ascribe Australia and Canada’s salient cultural characteristics to the regions of Anglo-Celtic origin.

The British who came to Australia and Canada—and their descendants who assumed powerful roles in each society—arrived with a cultural background immersed in the rigidly formal English class system. Although not overtly replicated in Australia or Canada, notions of class were sufficiently familiar to the dominant British Protestant population of English Canada to encourage tolerance of social hierarchy. Thus, contrary to the “melting pot” of the contemporary United States where different ethnic cultures are expected to subordinate their identities to a singular “American” culture, Canadians have been encouraged since the 1960s to retain their multicultural identities as part of a “Canadian” identity cultivated by a founding population largely sympathetic to British cultural tradition as distinct from American. Like Canada, Australia since the 1970s has also transformed from a settler country to a multicultural nation. However, as the Irish comprised a large percentage of Australia’s colonial and later migrant population, the Australian national character was disproportionately influenced by them.

In *The Irish in Australia*, historian Patrick O’Farrell asserts that the very presence of a “substantial and insubordinate Irish minority deflated and confused the English majority.” According to O’Farrell, “Their refusal to act out a deferential role discomfited the elite, eroded their superior certainties, provided a constant liberalising creative irritant, and gave notice that the old-world social order could not be reproduced in Australia.” Irish Catholics, therefore, presented a great challenge to Australia’s established Protestant/Anglican colonial society because

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4 Ibid., 90–91.
5 Ibid., 101, 109–112.
6 Prior to 1851, about half of the assisted immigrants arriving to New South Wales were Irish. R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788–1851* (Sydney, NSW: Sydney University Press, 1969), 234.