

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

A NORTH AMERICAN DIVIDE

The U.S.-Canada relationship looks very different depending on which side you stand, writes **Nik Nanos**

OPINION

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In 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy famously said, about the U.S.-Canada relationship, that: "Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies."

Fast forward 65 years, and Canada and the United States are still neighbours, partners and allies. It just doesn't feel like they are good friends right now. In some ways, the relationship feels less like a friendship than a very long marriage under strain. One partner is angry, the other partner distracted. Both are still deeply tied together by shared interests and a future that cannot easily be separated.

The reality is that the confidence Canadians have in the United States as a source of economic security and geopolitical stability has been shaken.

A new survey for the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy New North America Initiative suggests a paradox: The relationship looks very different depending on which side of the border you stand.

If this were a hockey game, Canadians have dropped their gloves at centre ice ready to take a swing, while Americans are wondering what's up with the angry Canucks.

According to the survey of more than 1,000 Canadians conducted by Nanos and 1,000 Americans conducted by Ipsos for the School of Public Policy, four in five Canadians (81 per cent) describe the Canada-U.S. relationship as negative. That is not a partisan minority or regional phenomenon. It is about as close as you can get to a national consensus. Canadian views of the United States have fallen noticeably to become comparable with Canadian views of China. As a reminder, at a low point in Canada-China relations, Canada arrested a Huawei executive, and in response China detained two Canadians. No hostages have been taken in the Canada-U.S. relationship.

What's clear is U.S. President Donald Trump's talk of tariffs and counter-tariffs have raised the temperature among Canadians to a point where it is no longer an economic issue. It is emotional and symbolic.

The paradox is that while 81 per cent of Canadians see the relationship negatively, only 31 per cent of Americans do. (Sixteen per cent of Americans are not even sure how to characterize the relationship, compared with one per cent of Canadians.) More than seven in 10 Americans have never visited Canada (75 per cent) and seven in 10 (70 per cent) never follow Canadian news. Canada occupies far less space in the American mind than the United States does in the Canadian one. For Americans, Cana-

dians are the nice, quiet neighbour to the north they don't know much about or visit.

The reality is that for Canadians, the majority of whom live within a one-hour drive of the border, the U.S. is the house next door. For Americans, Canada is the house they hardly ever notice.

Even with the trade disputes and political tension, 52 per cent of Americans have a favourable opinion of Canada while only 11 per cent hold an unfavourable view. Only eight per cent of

Americans see Canada as a major challenge to their country's economic prosperity. This is the lowest score of any country tested in the survey of Americans.

The public mood in both countries remains far more collaborative than the political rhetoric would suggest. More than seven in 10 Canadians (73 per cent) and nearly six in 10 Americans (58 per cent) support closer economic co-operation. Comfortable majorities in both countries support economic co-operation around energy and critical min-

erals (65 per cent of Canadians and 77 per cent Americans) while seven in 10 Americans (71 per cent) and Canadians (72 per cent) support defence co-operation.

Views on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) reveals that real common ground exists. Almost nine of 10 Canadians (88 per cent), support a trilateral trade deal, while a majority of Americans (59 per cent) support it as well. Ninety-three per cent of Canadians believe failure to renew USMCA would hurt the national economy, while 65 per cent of Americans similarly agree that not renewing would have negative economic consequences for the U.S.

The difference is that Canadians see USMCA as essential, while Americans see it as beneficial.

Canadians should not confuse the actions of the current president of the White House with how average Americans feel. The current political situation is surely turbulent, but Americans have not turned against Canadians. Americans, in fact, are more optimistic about the future of the relationship than Canadians. Thirty-eight per cent of Americans believe the relationship will be positive 10 years from now while only 10 per cent expect it to be negative. Canadians are a little more cautious. Thirty-one per cent expect a positive future and 21 per cent foresee a negative one.

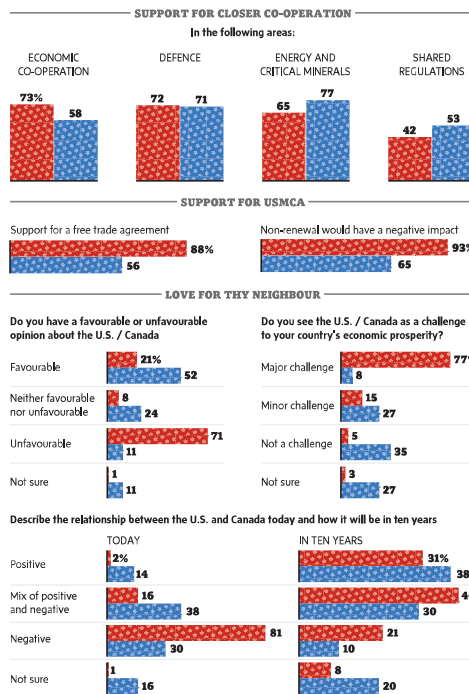
The numbers today speak more to an economic and psychological stress test than permanent damage. The current tension should be seen as an opportunity to renew and remake the partnership because the two economies, driven by geography, are inextricably interlinked. Now is the time to think about a new North America built on new national, regional, and provincial/state partnerships.

One should not be upset with an American president looking to get the best deal for the U.S., nor should Americans be upset with a Canadian prime minister fighting for Canada's best interests.

The risk is not divorce but drift, where political theatre, tariff fights and wounded Canadian pride make the relationship worse. Like all marriages, things can get worse before they get better, particularly if political leaders confuse short-term leverage with long term national interest.

Like a long marriage with ups and downs, neither Canada nor the U.S. should expect the relationship to be easy, but they should hope for it to endure.

Canadians and Americans



Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent because of rounding.

MURAT YÜKSEL / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH, IPSOS

Lessons from my daughter's road trip playlist

RORY GILLILAN

OPINION

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As we drove to see Zach Bryan play down in Florida last summer, I was convinced my 14-year-old daughter's first concert was going to be the equivalent of my father shooting frozen tennis balls at me after I told him I wanted to be a hockey goalie. While the ordeal wouldn't be as painful, I was certain that her experience of going to a concert would be similarly disillusioning.

Concerts today weren't like The Who show my friends and I hitched a ride to in the back of a potato truck. And they weren't like seeing Pearl Jam still giving their all on the long tail end of a career that used to matter. Concerts today were more often watching someone lip sync on a giant TV from a vast distance. Musicians weren't forged any more. There was no Nirvana playing in their garage and sucking into one day they didn't and then taking over the world. Artists were discovered, plucked from obscurity on YouTube, American Idol and The Voice. They didn't play. They performed. Concerts were all choreography masking indifference, voices corrected by autotune, and tickets that cost more than God. Performers showed up late and left early. You got the T-shirt to prove

you were there and departed spiritually emptier than when you arrived.

The Who was right. Rock is dead. She would see.

But I was wrong. It wasn't the first time. My musical captivity actually began a year before the Zach Bryan concert, while driving my daughter to volleyball tryouts and, when she didn't make the team, to lacrosse tournaments. Before the big moments in life everyone talks about — marriage, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one — it's the first goal, the first time you make a team when it's not automatic, competing in games that matter and are played into the twilight of a long Canadian spring evening. For my daughter there would always be life before lacrosse and all that followed after. That first season on the team, we were launched on a tour of the hinterland: Owen Sound, in the middle of nowhere, and Burlington, in the middle of everywhere. And like every great adventure and coming-of-age journey, we needed a soundtrack.

Growing up, mine had been dominated by Kenny Rogers, not by choice but by paternal fiat. People who say they love Kenny Rogers are really saying they love tracks like *The Gambler* and *Coward of the County*. No one ever mentions the lesser-known *Duets* record that launched a thousand easy listening stations, or his beloved Christmas album. And Kenny Rogers was absolutely benign compared to the breadth and sheer scope of the Rita Mac-

Neil catalogue — a cleaning lady from Cape Breton who presaged and foreshadowed Susan Boyle, covering such immortal classics as *Land of a Thousand Dances* and *From a Jack to a King*. Even with Canadian content regulations, you can always just change the station. Riding in a car with my dad, I didn't have that option. I wanted my daughter to have a better life, and while I had no intention of being the cool Dad, much less seeking that North Star of a lost generation of parents who thought that being best friends with their kids was healthy, I wanted to be at least accessible. So whenever we set out on the road to a tournament, I let her make the playlist.

Early on it was clear that I was never going to get Drake any more than my father was going to get Soundgarden. I didn't understand what he was singing about, and as a teacher, I found his swearing both gratuitous and jarring. His song, *Nokia*, with lyrics comparing a woman to a prostitute, was abhorrent to me. I found Doja Cat abrasive and she seemed intent on doing the work of misogynists for them.

Country, while cheesy, was at least less explicit. And I found I could bury it behind the sounds of my Subaru's broken air conditioner. Every now and again when I was paying attention, I would mock Zach Bryan's *Pink Skies*, saying that he sounded like he'd swallowed a washcloth or had spent the past 20 years lighting one cigarette off another. I said Tyler Childers sounded like a

hillbilly and that Megan Moroney needed to worry less about the "cheatin' men" in her life and more about her lack of self-confidence.

But Ghandi was right: First you laugh at your daughter's music, then you fight it and then you lose.

Somewhere on the way to a field located in the depths of a Jane Jacobs suburban cautionary tale, I had started to recognize their songs. Then I started to have ones that I "didn't mind." From there it was a steep and slippery slope to falling for Childers' *Charleston Girl*, Maroney's *Tennessee Orange* and, yes, even Bryan's *Nine Ball*. I started talking in what I think was a Southern accent. I was hooked.

It turned out that Bryan was slated to play in Tampa while we were going to be down there during March Break this year. Maybe because her tween friends had started going to concerts, or because she was in the blast radius of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, she begged me to go. The tickets wouldn't require me to remortgage the house, so I acquiesced despite the fact that I was sure it would be a disappointment. And then, in the immortal words of Trapper from the ancient television series *MASH*, I managed to "screw up in reverse." The Bryan concert was about to validate every one of my daughter's concert fantasies.

Zach Bryan played until I couldn't stand up any more. He sang into the setting sun. People were dancing. He appeared hap-

py and thankful to be on stage, playing with his friends. My daughter knew and sang the lyrics to every song. Two college girls in the row ahead of us danced and laughed the entire night. It was magical. I didn't feel a shared catharsis like I remembered experiencing when I was young, but my daughter was right: A concert could still be great. And, I learned that my musical taste didn't have to be cryogenically frozen in the wake of Kurt Cobain's death.

We only got so many Thanksgivings, but my daughter's many birthdays while our parents are alive, and a dwindling number of years where our children are still interested in us. My daughter won't always be 14. Some day I will see Head. These special celebrations are important, but sometimes, life happens in the car, in that space between one track ending and another beginning. It's in the profound conversations masquerading as banter. How French fries taste better after winning a Bronze Medal. In debating what a song lyric means and whether or not you could hate an artist but love their art. The openness that comes when you're away from home. A boy she likes at school. A girl I liked when I was in Grade 6 and some things that broke my heart but helped me later on. Conversations that could never happen at home.

The most special moments might just happen while listening to music, on the way to somewhere else.