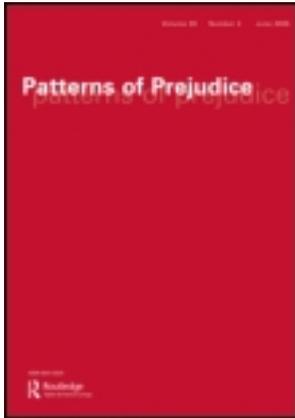


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The distinctiveness of Canadian immigration experience

JEFFREY G. REITZ

ABSTRACT Canada's experience with immigration has been comparatively positive and mass immigration has considerable popular support within the country. The distinctive Canadian policy model—including large numbers with skill-based selection, multiculturalism and other policies aimed at promoting integration, and provincial autonomy—deserves international attention. However, Canada's success with immigration is only partly related to its policies and these may not be easily transferable to other contexts. Skill-based immigrant selection may be the most important feature of the Canadian model contributing to its success, and the effectiveness of this policy is clearly contingent on border control, which in the case of Canada is facilitated by geographical isolation. Canada's symbolic commitment to multiculturalism emphasizes the social integration of immigrants and this goal is also served by significant social services supporting settlement and language acquisition. The most significant distinctive feature of the Canadian approach to immigration may be the belief that immigration represents a positive opportunity to build the economy and develop the country. This belief represents a resource helping the country address some of the current problems confronting immigration, including reduced employment success of immigrants and evidence that racial divisions have significance particularly for certain groups. The belief in mass immigration as a positive resource and development opportunity underlies much of the positive discourse on immigration in Canada.

KEYWORDS Canada, discrimination, employment, Europe, immigration, integration, multiculturalism, policy, racism

Canada, one of the three traditional 'nations of immigration' along with the United States and Australia, continues to receive relatively large numbers of immigrants and with what would appear to be relatively few problems. By contrast to Canada, many European countries—the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands, which have reluctantly become 'immigration countries,' and also Italy, Spain and Scandinavian countries, which have moved toward that status—seem to be embroiled in intense and often emotional debates over immigration. Their citizens are often deeply divided over questions of how to accommodate immigrants in economic, social, cultural and political life. As these debates

proceed, how can we understand the distinctiveness of the long Canadian experience with immigration?

To achieve a proper perspective requires that this experience be considered in light of the broader context of immigration and that account be taken of the fact that Canadian immigration policies are constantly changing. The case of Canada commands attention because of its comparatively positive experience managing immigration and diversity in recent decades, and the comparatively positive attitudes of the Canadian public toward immigration.¹ France's president, Nicolas Sarkozy, praised Canadian respect for diversity as well as Quebec's ability to defend its identity without rejecting others, which he called a 'lesson to the world'.² Some speak of a 'Canadian model' for immigration policy lying behind Canada's success, explicitly reflected in the title of a book published recently in Sweden: *Kanadamodellen: Hur invandring leder till job* ('Canada model: how immigration leads to jobs').³

If some specific Canadian policy approaches to immigration, including selection of skilled immigrants, settlement and integration policies, multiculturalism and provincial decentralization deserve international attention, they should not, however, simply be copied. There are several reasons. First, Canada's successes are not only due to its policies, whatever their merit; there are other reasons, including a number of historical, institutional and geographic circumstances unique to Canada.⁴ So at the level of specific policies, the implications to be derived must be considered in light of particular circumstances. Each country presents distinctive issues, so local Canadian policies may, or may not, travel well.

Second, circumstances that facilitated success in Canada in the past are now changing and a number of new problems and challenges have emerged, requiring that Canada reinvent its own policy model. In fact, Canadian policy has changed considerably over time and policy revisions are continuing. In considering Canadian experience, other countries should take these newly emerging Canadian problems and policy changes into account. They may wonder if the traditional 'Canadian model' still exists; and they also may find it particularly interesting to consider how Canadians are responding to both the new realities and to the lessons they have learned from their own past experience.

1 German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends Immigration: Key Findings 2010* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States 2010).

2 *Globe and Mail* newspaper article, 17 October 2008, A2.

3 Martin Ådahl and Petter Hojem, *Kanadamodellen: Hur invandring leder till job* (Stockholm: FORES 2011).

4 Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Canada: immigration and nation-building in the transition to a knowledge economy', in Wayne Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, James F. Hollifield and Takeyuki Tsuda (eds), *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press 2004), 97–133.

Third, and most importantly, I suggest that the most significant lesson to be gleaned from the Canadian case is actually on a broader level. Canadian experience suggests that the effort to address problems that accompany immigration should not neglect the opportunity side of the equation. Immigration has produced major benefits for Canada—and for all three traditional immigration countries—not only economic, but also social and cultural. These benefits are an important reason why Canada, and also the US and Australia, are successful nations in the modern world and why they continue to be attractive to new generations of immigrants. And to a significant extent, the Canadian successes and the resulting benefits arise from the stability of public support for immigration and for the integration of immigrants into Canadian society.⁵ By the same token, Canada's attempts to reinvent its own policy model in response to current problems are aided by the country's strong and continuing commitment to immigration and its positive opportunities.

What is Canada's immigration policy model?

There are three specific features of Canadian immigration policy, which have been considered as distinctive and of possible interest internationally. The first of these are policies for the selection of skilled immigrants, most notably the use of a 'points system'. The second are policies for the integration of immigrants into the labour market and into society, and this includes the policy of multiculturalism. And the third feature is the extent of provincial autonomy in the administration of immigration, most notably in Quebec, but increasingly across the country.

To place these and recent policy changes in context it is important to emphasize first the large size of Canada's immigration programme. Canadian immigration policy is most fundamentally about numbers. It is a 'mass immigration' policy. As a percentage of the resident population, Canadian immigration has been relatively large for over a century and an expansionist policy has been pursued more or less continually since the end of the Second World War. For most of the past 20 years, the intake has been 200-250,000 annually, representing 0.8 per cent of the population (see Figure 1); the number in 2010 was the highest in decades: 280,000. This Canadian programme, on a per capita basis, is nearly twice the size of its American counterpart—even including undocumented immigrants from Mexico.

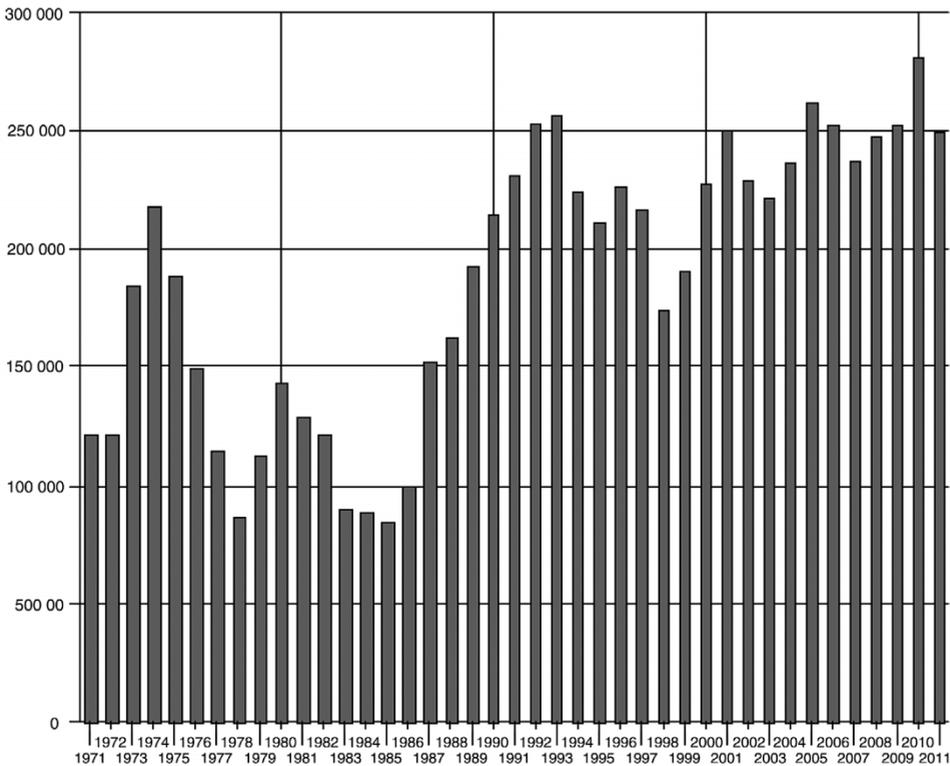
As a result, and despite a certain amount of emigration or return migration, Canada has substantially more foreign-born residents as a percentage of the population than the US and most European countries (see Figure 2). When Canada removed country-of-origin barriers to immigration in the 1960s,

⁵ Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Pro-immigration Canada: social and economic roots of popular views', *IRPP Study*, no. 20 (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy October 2011).

the origins of immigrants shifted to sources outside Europe (see Figure 3). The impact of the shift to non-European origins has been greatest in Toronto and Vancouver, where populations of virtually entirely European origins in 1970 are now projected to have majorities of non-European origins by 2017.⁶ Lower immigration in Quebec compared to Ontario and British Columbia is because of economic problems linked to political instability, but recently, immigration in Montreal, the third major Canadian metropolis, is back up again (see Figure 4).

Canadian immigration has been unarguably successful in economic and social terms. The education-based skills level of immigrants is high, translating into a considerable degree of employment success, and the national celebration of cultural diversity seems to indicate a smooth social integration of minorities within distinct communities and in the wider society. The programme is successful also in political terms, and this may be

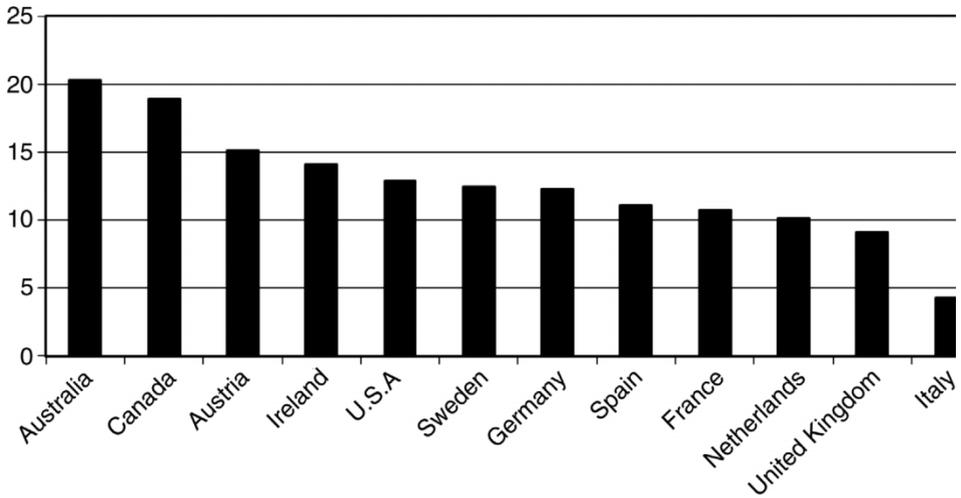
Figure 1 Numbers of Immigrants to Canada, 1971–2011



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview Permanent and Temporary Residents* (Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Research and Evaluation Branch, various years)

⁶ Alain Bélanger, and Eric Caron Malenfant, 'Ethnocultural diversity in Canada: prospects for 2017' (Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 11-008), *Canadian Social Trends*, winter 2005.

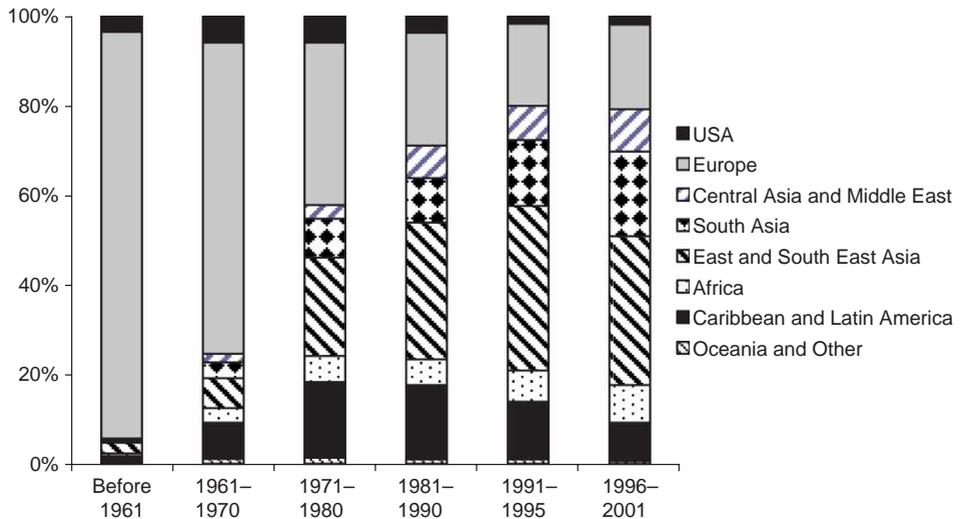
Figure 2 Immigration Nations: Per Cent Foreign-born, 2005



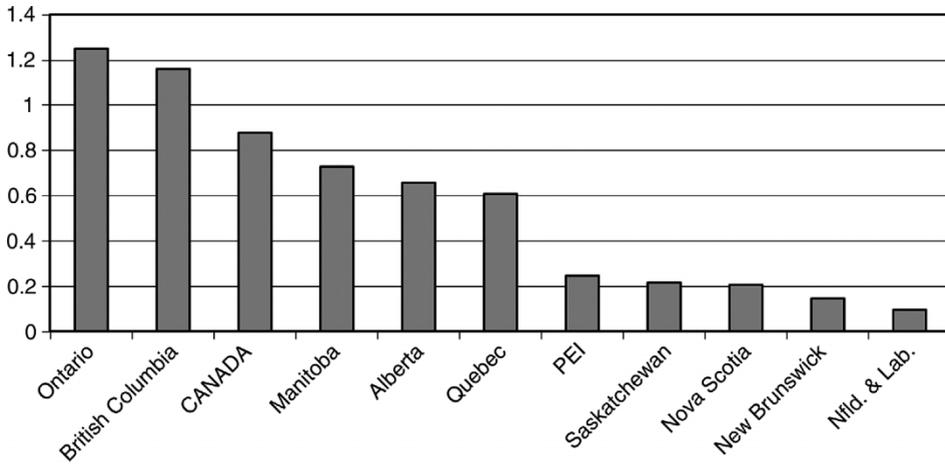
Source: United Nations, *International Migration 2006* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, UN Publication Sales No. E.06.X111, 2006)

the most important success indicator. There is relatively widespread acceptance of and support for immigration policy in Canada, and relatively little of the acrimonious debate seen elsewhere. Public opinion polls from Gallup (Figure 5) show that over the period 1975–2005, in every year but one (1982, a recession year), a majority of the population has either supported immigration levels or has wanted them increased. A more recent sequence from EKOS over the period 2004–10 (Figure 6) using a similar question

Figure 3 Birthplace of Immigrants by Period of Arrival, Canada 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Public Use Microdata File—Individuals File. See *User Documentation* (Ottawa: Industry Canada, 95M0016XB, 2005)

Figure 4 Immigration in 2005 as Proportion of 2001 Population, Canada and Provinces

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures* (Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Public Use Microdata File, 2005)

shows that this support has continued. In most countries, the reverse is true: there is less immigration, and a majority still wants to see a reduction.

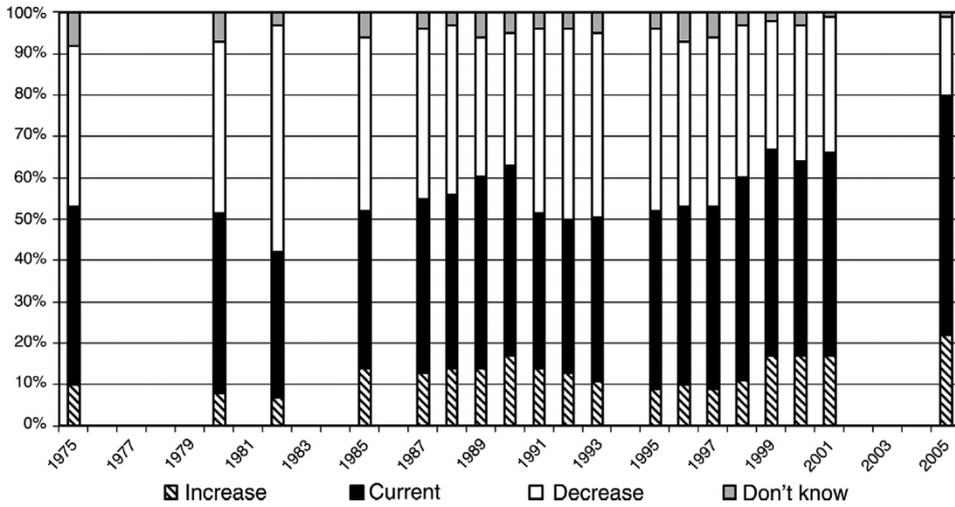
Most telling, there is rarely any debate on immigration during Canadian election campaigns. Canadian political parties all espouse pro-immigration policies; the public rarely asks them to defend their policies. The word 'immigration' is seldom, if ever, mentioned in the nationally televised leaders' debates. In the most recent debate preceding the May 2011 election, a question on immigration and multiculturalism was posed by a voter. The four debating prime ministerial candidates each attempted to put forward the most pro-immigration position, defending more accessible immigration and the interests of immigrants in Canada.

Beyond sheer numbers, there are three pillars of Canadian policy affecting the success of immigration: immigrant selection policy, immigrant integration policy and provincial decentralization. A review of these will help place the Canadian case in perspective.

Selection of skilled immigrants: the points system and recent changes

In seeking these large numbers, Canada's immigrant selection system has emphasized the selection of highly-skilled workers. The most distinctive feature has been the so-called 'points system'. Introduced in 1967, this system selects immigrants based on points awarded for possessing characteristics predictive of employment success such as education, knowledge of one of Canada's two official languages and work experience. The system was essentially copied by Australia and there have been influential

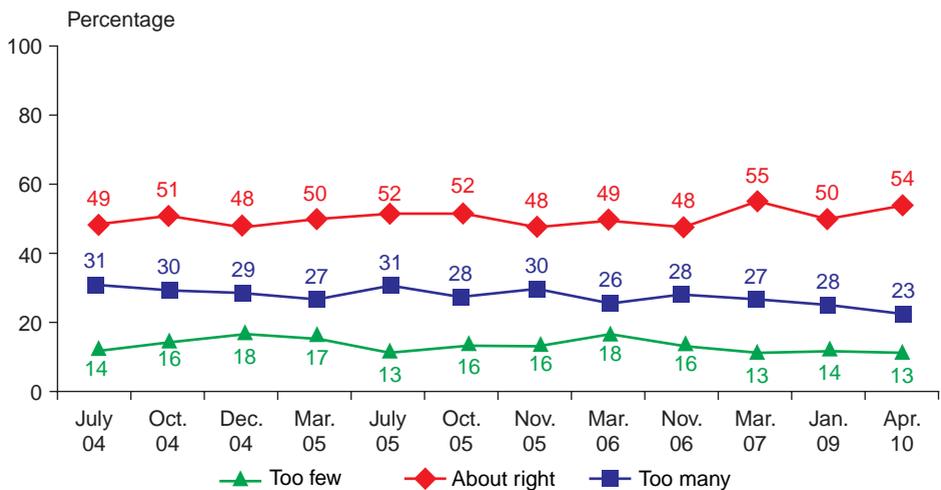
Figure 5 Canadian Public Opinion on Immigration Levels, 1975–2005: Gallup Canada



Source: Gallup Canada, Inc., various years. The question asked was: 'If it were your job to plan an immigration policy for Canada at this time, would you be inclined to increase immigration, decrease immigration, or keep the number of immigrants at about the current level?'

advocates for its adoption in other countries. The points system in the Canadian case serves as a means for ensuring that large numbers of immigrants will have minimum qualifications for survival in a modern economy. Since 1971 Quebec has had an agreement to collaborate with the

Figure 6 Canadian Public Opinion on Immigration Levels, 2004–10: Ekos Research



Source: Ekos Research Associates, Inc., *Annual Tracking Survey: Winter 2010* (Submitted to: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa: Ekos Research Associates, April 2010), 4. The question asked was: 'In your opinion, do you feel there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?'

federal government in the selection of immigrants and Quebec administers its own points system, giving priority to the French language.

From the standpoint of public perception, this selection system feeds directly into one of the basic reasons why Canadians support immigration, namely the belief that immigration contributes to the economy.⁷ Although economists in Canada (as elsewhere) have tended to view immigration as only a small economic benefit,⁸ Canadian policy makers—and the general public—have ignored this. They support immigration as a boon to the economy, not only for meeting labour shortfalls, but as a source of economic stimulation. They believe immigrants support the economy by adding size, new ideas, creative potentials, international awareness and linkages critical in a global economy. These views exist across the country, not only in the major immigrant settlement cities, or in Alberta, a province where the oil industry during the economic boom has created an insatiable demand for workers of all kinds, but also in Atlantic Canada, where there are relatively few jobs and immigrants are sought as a way to create them.

The points system, with its focus on employability, contributes to this perception of immigration as an economic boon. However, it is mainly a tool to provide a large supply of skilled immigrants and most of those immigrants will not have pre-arranged jobs. Although some points usually have been allocated for having a pre-arranged job, greater weight to this factor inevitably reduces the relative weight for other factors such as education. In effect, the points system has offered a means of managing the trade-off between education and arranged employment. For example in the points grid used recently, most points were given for high levels of education, but without a university degree, sufficient points for admission may be scored by other indicators of employability, such as an arranged job or relative youth. Although most immigration officials want immigrants with a four-year university degree, because of the large numbers sought and taken, over 20 per cent of the points-selected immigrants in 2005 did not have a four-year university degree.

Most international interest in the points system has not been concerned with this trade-off, because large numbers have not been a key goal. And yet, if a country wishes to admit only a smaller number of skilled immigrants, there are other ways to administer selection to get quite satisfactory results. The US uses an employer nomination process that ensures high skill levels when coupled with a minimum education standard of a four-year university degree. Some countries adopting what are called 'points systems' in Europe

7 Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Pro-immigration Canada: social and economic roots of popular views'.

8 Peter M. Dungan, Morley Gunderson, and Tony Fang, 'The macroeconomic impact of Canadian immigration: an empirical analysis using the FOCUS model', Paper presented at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Research Network meeting, Ottawa, 26 October 2010); George J. Borjas, *Heaven's Door* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999).

are borrowing the Canadian administrative formula but not the underlying Canadian policy, since they are not seeking mass immigration.

In its selection of permanent immigrants, Canada itself has recently moved away from the points system, while keeping the emphasis on large numbers and high skills. Some of these initiatives have been modeled after changes previously introduced in Australia and recommended for Canada in a comparative study by Hawthorne.⁹ One might well ask whether the Canadian model has been replaced in Canada with an 'Australian model'. However, the significance of the change depends on the impact, which is not yet known.

One main change targets occupations in demand in the labour market. The points grid has been revised to lay more emphasis on official language knowledge, youth and having a job offer. Previous work experience has been reduced in significance as a qualification. However, applicants without a Canadian job offer must now have experience in a particular occupational category in current demand, regardless of their total points. The list posted initially includes 29 specific occupations at various skill levels, from physicians, dentists and architects to chefs, plumbers, electricians, welders, mechanics, crane operators and workers in mining and oil and gas drilling. The latter do not require a university education and hence effectively lower the educational standard for selection.

The shift toward targeted occupations may be a reason for the decline in the educational levels of immigrants in the economic stream in the past few years, but this decline is small and the policy may not remain in place very long. Past experience in Canada already indicated that selecting immigrants based on occupations in demand was ineffective, because such demand changes so quickly. This finding prompted the shift in the 1980s to selection based on formal education, since highly educated immigrants proved better able to adapt to labour market change. Australia recently abandoned its policy of selection based on occupations in demand.¹⁰

Another recent change increased emphasis on temporary foreign workers, with potentially greater implications for the 'Canadian model'. When first introduced in 1973, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) was relatively small and targeted at those with highly specialized skills, including academics, business executives and engineers. There are other categories, including seasonal agricultural workers and the live-in caregiver programme that allows foreign caregivers to apply for permanent residence after two years. Employer demand for workers to perform jobs requiring lower skill levels prompted the federal government to introduce in July 2002

9 Leslyanne Hawthorne, 'The impact of economic selection policy on labour market outcomes for degree-qualified migrants in Canada and Australia', *IRPP Choices*, vol. 14, no. 5, May 2008, 1–47.

10 Mark Cully, 'Skilled migration selection policies: recent Australian reforms', *Migration Policy Practice*, vol. 1, no. 1, October–November 2011, 4–7 (5).

the pilot project for hiring foreign workers in occupations that require lower levels of formal training, with no limits on numbers.¹¹ The number of temporary immigrants entering the country each year has increased from about 100,000 new entrants in the 1990s to nearly 200,000 ten years later.

The high-skill component of the temporary worker stream may now apply to become permanent residents. A new Canadian Experience Class introduced in 2008 provides opportunities for temporary foreign workers in skilled occupations and with sufficient Canadian work experience, and also for international students in Canada with one year of work experience, to apply for permanent residence from within the country. Eligible 'skilled occupations' include management and professional occupations in which a university degree is normally required, but they also include occupations such as carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers and others in the construction trades where much training may be based on apprenticeship. The numbers have been only a very small proportion of the permanent immigrants being sought.¹²

About half of the temporary foreign workers admitted to Canada in recent years have been at skill levels requiring secondary school training only, or below, and would not qualify for the Canadian Experience Class. Although policy-makers expect that these persons will leave Canada when their temporary visas expire (they are two-year visas, renewable once), experience with 'guest worker' programmes in other countries suggests that many such workers overstay their visas and in effect become permanent undocumented or 'non-status' immigrants. Enforcement efforts have proven ineffective and, in the case of Canada, there is little provision even to monitor visa compliance. The potential increase in the non-status population as a result of increased temporary immigration is quite considerable. If, for example, half of the nearly 200,000 temporary immigrants each year had low skill levels and half of these overstayed their visas, then the increased non-status population would be close to 50,000 per year. This number on a per capita basis would be comparable to the numbers of undocumented immigrants arriving in the US from Mexico in a typical year. Based on international experience, Martin¹³ suggested that Canada be 'cautious' in developing temporary worker programmes.¹⁴

11 Delphine Nakache and Paula J. Kinoshita, 'The Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker Program: do short-term economic needs prevail over human rights concerns?', *IRPP Study*, No. 5 (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, May 2010).

12 Research and Evaluation Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Canada Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview. Permanent and Temporary Residents*, 2010, 13.

13 Philip Martin, 'Temporary worker programs: US and global experiences' (University of California-Davis, 15 March 2008).

14 Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Selecting immigrants for the short term: is it smart in the long run?', *Policy Options*, July/August 2010, vol. 31, no.7, 12–16.

Multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants in society

Regarding integration policy, the best-known facet is the country's official policy of multiculturalism, introduced in 1971 (and enshrined in the constitution in 1982, with further legislative mandate in 1988). It is important to emphasize that there are other major programmes to encourage settlement and effective integration into local communities, including language training, fast-track citizenship and an array of human rights and equality guarantees. Recently, efforts have been made also to promote better utilization of immigrant skills in the Canadian labour market, including improved recognition for foreign-acquired qualifications.

Multiculturalism policy has been most visibly labelled part of the Canadian success story. It, too, has been exported, including to Australia and Europe. As US sociologist Nathan Glazer says, 'We are all multiculturalists now'.¹⁵ With respect to the US, Glazer describes a particular variant of multiculturalism that not only recognizes minority cultures but attempts to promote cultural relativism and displace mainstream values. This theme also runs throughout the writings of critics of multiculturalism including the American historian Arthur Schlesinger,¹⁶ and political theorists Brian Barry¹⁷ and Samuel Huntington,¹⁸ among others. In Europe, multiculturalism has been criticized as promoting radical cultural relativism, displacing basic values of democracy, free speech and gender equality.¹⁹

In Canada, multiculturalism is regarded as a strategy for immigrant integration, rather than isolation. The Canadian policy was first formulated by Pierre Trudeau in 1971 in a speech to parliament.²⁰ Although he equated multiculturalism with cultural freedom, he also made clear that multiculturalism was intended to promote the integration of immigrants into the mainstream society. Trudeau specified four specific 'supports' that emphasize the connection of minority groups to the whole: (1) promoting contribution to Canada; (2) full participation in Canadian institutions; (3) interchange between groups in the interest of national unity; and (4) acquisition of an official language. These objectives include strongly

15 Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1997).

16 Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W.W. Norton 1992).

17 Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, Harvard University Press 2001.

18 Samuel Huntington, *Who We Are: Challenges to America's National Identity*, New York, Simon and Schuster 2004).

19 Amartya Sen. 'Two confusions, and counting', *Globe and Mail*, 6 August 2006, and 'The uses and abuses of multiculturalism: Chili and Liberty', *New Republic*, 27 February 2006; see Paul Kelly (ed.), *Multiculturalism Reconsidered: Culture and Equality and its Critics* (London: Polity Press 2002).

20 Parliament of Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 3rd session, 28th Parliament, volume 8, 8 October 1971, Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

integrationist elements, suggesting that Canadian multiculturalism is very far from a recipe for displacement of mainstream values.

The Quebec parallel to multiculturalism, termed *interculturalisme*, also reflects integrationist goals. It is important that multiculturalism in Canada was initially shaped by inter-provincial relations and the need to accommodate Canada's English-French linguistic duality. The awakening of Quebec national identity in the 1960s led to a proposals for a policy of 'bilingualism and biculturalism', prompting objections from immigrant groups who feared pressures to assimilate and suggested that multiculturalism was an alternative. The compromise was accepted fairly quickly, although with reluctance among many francophone Canadians as downgrading their concerns. Quebec's policy of *interculturalisme* emphasizes provincial responsibility to bring immigrants into the French linguistic community. Quebec is also in charge of all integration services, with particular emphasis on providing permanent residents with the means to learn the French language.²¹

This integrationist aspect of Canadian multiculturalism is reflected in two themes which can be observed in public opinion. First, Canadians regard multiculturalism as a key feature of the national identity. Polls show that that it now ranks quite highly in that regard: not as high as icons such as the flag or universal health insurance, but equal to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and, most notably, above hockey (and also above the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).²² Support for multiculturalism as part of the national identity, and a point of difference from the US, is one of the important bases of popular support for immigration in Canada, alongside the belief in its economic value. Second, polls also show that Canadians expect immigrants to blend into Canadian society and adopt Canadian values and they worry whether this is happening. In short, Canadians are both multiculturalist and integrationist. This is important for the European context because in Europe, multiculturalism and integration are often discussed as opposed to one another. Critics of multiculturalism in Canada, for example Neil Bissoondath, as elsewhere emphasize the potential isolation of ethnic communities,²³ but the majority seems to endorse the Trudeau ideal of multiculturalism as a positive symbol supporting the integration of immigrants.

The extent to which Canadian multicultural policies actually affect the integration of immigrants is not clear. Will Kymlicka, who influentially

21 Margaret Young, 'Immigration: the Canada-Quebec Accord', Ottawa: Library of Parliament, Law and Government Division, 2004. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp252-e.htm>.

22 Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Pro-immigration Canada', 15.

23 Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (revised edition) (Toronto: Penguin 2002).

defended the principle of multiculturalism in liberal society,²⁴ also argues that in Canada it has an important social impact in integrating immigrants.²⁵ However, if immigrants are better integrated in Canada, there are likely many reasons—including the immigrant selection system, which ensures relatively high levels of education and a degree of economic success, and also the many settlement programmes directly aimed at integration, including the strong emphasis on language training. If skilled immigrants in Canada are compared to their counterparts in the US where there is no official multiculturalism, differences in most indicators of integration are not marked.²⁶ The most convincing positive evidence on multiculturalism comes from a study by Irene Bloemraad,²⁷ showing that government funding of ethnic community organizations produces higher citizenship acquisition rates in Canada compared to the US. How this may affect the broader social integration of immigrants is not known, however.

Provincial autonomy

There is considerable provincial autonomy in both aspects of the Canadian model discussed above, selection and integration. Quebec led the way and, as mentioned above, has had an agreement with the federal government since 1971 to coordinate immigration policy and to collaborate in the selection of immigrants. The most recent update, the Gagnon-Tremblay/McDougal Accord in 1991, was intended to preserve Quebec's demographic weight within Canada and to integrate immigrants in a manner respecting the distinct society of Quebec.

The effort to make immigration serve local needs may contribute to its political acceptability, not only in Quebec but now in other provinces as well. Since 1998, most other provinces have negotiated Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) with the federal government and, in each case, the stated purpose is to boost economic and industrial growth based on local needs and priorities. Initially, compared to Quebec's role in selection, these PNPs were relatively small. However, they have continued to grow and by 2011 immigrants admitted under PNPs numbered 38,402, representing 15 per cent of all immigrants (still less than the 51,736 immigrants bound for Quebec). Their greatest impact has been in provinces like Manitoba, where relatively few immigrants settle.

24 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995).

25 Will Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998).

26 Jeffrey G. Reitz and Raymond Breton, *The Illusion of Difference: Realities of Ethnicity in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute 1994).

27 Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press 2006).

The provinces in Canada also play an important role in settlement programmes. Costs are shared between federal and provincial governments, with most services mounted locally, and the federal-provincial agreements on immigration include provisions for settlement service funding.

The impact of provincial autonomy in Canadian immigration is difficult to assess. Studies show that inter-provincial migration favours the high-immigration provinces of Ontario and British Columbia and these movements significantly offset PNP schemes. A Citizenship and Immigration Canada study (2000) of inter-provincial migration among tax filers tracked in a specially prepared Immigration Database (IMDB) shows that immigrants to the relatively unattractive provinces tend to move toward those that are more attractive. Ontario and British Columbia experienced net gains as a result of inter-provincial migration; Quebec lost the largest absolute numbers. Settlement programmes are rarely evaluated, partly because they are decentralized to the provincial level and partly because many activities are proposed and operated by local community agencies with their own specific plans.

Emerging problems of Canadian immigration

Looking at the three pillars of Canadian policy, we can see that their impacts are uncertain and limited in what they can accomplish: the points system, because of the mass nature of Canadian immigration; multiculturalism, because it is largely symbolic; and provincial autonomy, because of inter-provincial migration.

At the same time, as suggested at the outset, the success of Canadian immigration is due also to a variety of circumstances other than these well-known policies. And some of these circumstances are changing, leading to new problems.

Geography is part of the context. The geographic isolation of Canada from all countries other than the US has limited illegal immigration and has made legal immigration more attractive. This factor has been important in sustaining the political perception of Canadian immigration as being controlled in the national interest. Yet a number of factors that might be summed up under the heading of 'globalization' are creating greater opportunities for migration and a much more visible flow of undocumented immigrants into Canada, and this could threaten public support for immigration.

Other things are changing too and associated problems are emerging. Skill-based selection has not prevented a significant decline in the labour market performance of immigrants and a related increase in immigrant poverty. Furthermore, increased racial inequality is now evident, making it clear that despite their value and popularity, multiculturalism and other

related policies have not in themselves resolved the ambiguous status of racial minorities in Canada.

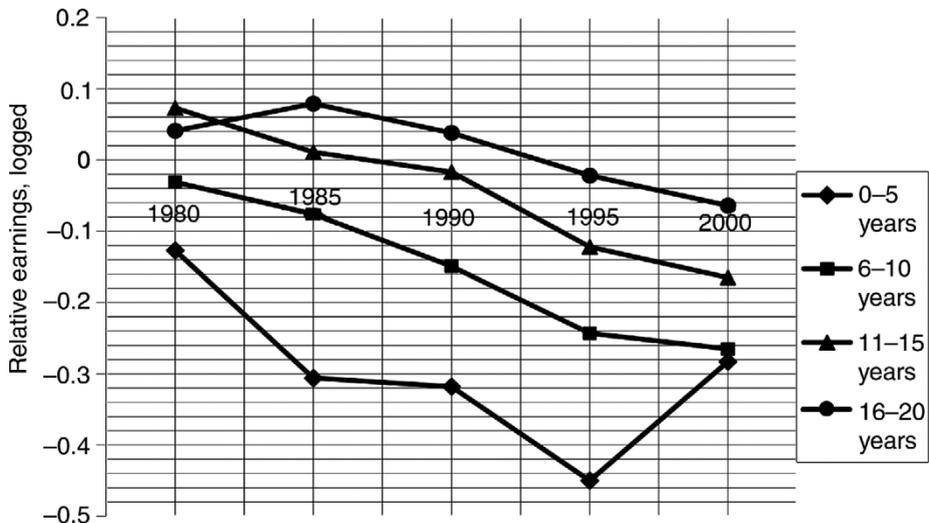
If changing circumstances have affected the success of the 'Canadian model' for immigration, it may be important to examine these if we want to assess the implications of Canadian policy for other countries. The following discussion examines two issues: the decline in employment success of the most recent cohorts of immigrants and emerging race relations issues.

Declining employment success for immigrants in Canada

Recognition of employment problems was somewhat slow in coming because general trends over several decades were masked by the ups and downs of the business cycle. But the 2001 census showed a serious problem, and Frenette and Morissette have documented a significant decline in the earnings of successive cohorts of new immigrants since the 1970s—virtually the entire period during which the points system has been in place (Figure 7).

The 2001 data suggest that the much-touted policy framework no longer ensures the employability of immigrants. This is puzzling to many, as major upgrades to selection policies throughout the 1980s and 1990s were expected to prevent the decline in immigrant employment success. For one thing, the points system was revised to maximize the proportion of immigrants selected on economic grounds—up from roughly 40 per cent in the early 1990s and averaging nearly 60 per cent over the past decade—to minimize

Figure 7 Earnings Trends for Immigrant Men, Canada



Source: Marc Frenette and Rene Morissette, 'Will they ever converge? Earnings of immigrant and Canadian-born workers over the last two decades', Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Catalogue no. 11F0019MIE, no. 215 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada 2003)

the proportion admitted for family reunification. Changes in the points system and the shift towards more immigrants selected on points produced significant increases in the educational attainments of immigrants; by 2000, 45 per cent of arriving immigrants had university degrees. Yet there was still a decline in employment success.

There is a debate about the causes of this trend and the following factors have been cited as relevant: declining employment opportunity for all new labour market entrants; a shift in immigrant origins (which occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s, and so would not account for more recent changes); a shift to the 'knowledge economy' and increased credentialism, with implications for the transferability of immigrant skills; a decline in the labour market value of foreign labour market experience for immigrants; and increased overall labour market inequality.²⁸ The evidence supports some explanations more than others, but most explanations refer to broader institutional bases as causes and, in most cases, they do not lead to solutions based on elaboration or 'fine-tuning' of the existing immigrant selection model.

Most policy responses to the decline in immigrant employment success have been in the area of labour market reforms. There has been an effort made to increase the recognition and use of foreign-acquired skills in the Canadian economy. These include encouraging professional licensing agencies to remove bureaucratic barriers to the acceptance of foreign qualifications, providing bridge-training programmes to 'top-up' foreign-acquired skills and enhance their relevance in Canada, and setting up mentorship programmes (a kind of apprenticeship for immigrants to 'learn the ropes' and learn workplace-specific practices in Canadian firms). These programmes are still under development. They may work, or they may turn out to be difficult and expensive.

If the mounting problem of immigrant poverty is an offshoot of the 'knowledge economy' emerging in Canada, similar problems may be expected to surface in other countries as well. They certainly exist in the US; skilled immigrants in that country have lower relative earnings than in Canada and their earnings are in decline. One does not hear much about this from the US because its focus is understandably on other problems, mainly at the Mexican border.

Some recent policy initiatives have placed less focus on education for the selection of immigrants and more on skilled trades. The Canadian Experience Class is a new category in the selection system, introduced in 2008, which provides temporary immigrants who have two years' experience in Canada to apply for permanent status. Under this policy revision, not only university-trained workers but also persons trained in skilled trades, such as chefs, crane operators, carpenters and electricians, would

28 Jeffrey G. Reitz, 'Immigrant employment success in Canada, part II: understanding the decline', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2007, 37–62.

gain permanent admission to Canada, thereby becoming part of the immigration-generated workforce of the future.

A key difference in this selection method is that filling the demand for less-skilled immigration would be based on employer-driven selection. Employers would be the gatekeepers for initial admission to Canada and the gatekeepers for permanent residency. As this is done, the following two issues should be addressed. The first is the question of the potential for longer-term integration of less-skilled workers selected by an employer-driven scheme. These workers have a short-term advantage in that they have a job and access to Canadian experience. However, evidence also suggests that less educated immigrants are less resilient in responding to labour market difficulties which may arise. The second issue concerns enforcement. Accountability must be built into the privatized aspects of the selection system to ensure that permanent visas are granted only for bona fide employment and that the power exercised by employers in creating documents required for the granting of these visas is not abused.

Racial tensions and the retreat from multiculturalism

Despite multiculturalism, there are continuing concerns about racism and discriminatory treatment in key areas such as employment, housing and policing. Although treated as a marginal issue by politicians, the impact of racism has been debated by researchers and reports of discrimination are widespread among African- and Asian-Canadian communities. Racial groups in Canada differ in their appreciation of the significance of racial discrimination.

Racial minorities in Canada have the lowest individual and family incomes. Not surprisingly, the declining employment situation for immigrants affects racial minorities more than other groups, and there is greater poverty among racial minorities in Canada. There are other mounting concerns, which compound the issue: for example, gun-related gang violence in some parts of the black community, mainly in Toronto. A blue-ribbon report *The Roots of Youth Violence*,²⁹ released in 2008 by the Ontario government, documented these problems and noted their basis in racism, poverty, community isolation and other interconnected features of Canadian society.

The idea that multiculturalism may not be the answer to all problems of inter-group relations is hardly news in Europe. Of course, much of this feeling (and the retreat from multiculturalism mentioned earlier) is related to security issues in the post-9/11 world, or the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. Yet Canadians tend to think that these issues do not

29 Roy McMurtry and Dr Alvin Curling, *Review of The Roots of Youth Violence: Findings, Analysis and Conclusions*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario 2008).

really apply to Canada. Even when 17 alleged members of a purported Islamic terrorist cell were arrested in Canada in 2006, most Canadians—rightly or wrongly—discounted the threat.

For Canadians one question is whether racial inequalities and discrimination as a domestic issue threaten the unity of the country, despite multiculturalism. Obviously, a number of the problems in Europe also have domestic sources in equity issues: the disturbances in France in certain Maghreb communities with high rates of unemployment, to cite one example. In Canada, some prominent observers point to evidence of the marginality of minorities; inequality and poverty; the growing size of some minority communities and the concomitant possibility of social isolation; and emerging social problems in certain minority communities. They note that these problems happen despite multiculturalism. Although few predict a serious breakdown in social cohesion in Canada as a result of ethnic diversity or because of the policy of multiculturalism, concern has been expressed on both the left and the right, by advocates for minority rights³⁰ and by advocates for reductions in immigration into Canada.³¹

Concerns about racism and discrimination exist in Canada. Analysis of statistics from Canada's massive Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), based on over 40,000 interviews in diverse groups across the country, shows that visible minorities are less integrated into Canadian society than their white counterparts.³² To measure integration, the survey asked questions about attachments and commitments of individuals to the society as a whole, including 'sense of belonging', trust in others, feeling 'Canadian', becoming a citizen, participating in voluntary activities and voting in Canadian elections, and also life satisfaction. Thirty per cent fewer visible minorities respondents identified themselves as 'Canadian' and 30 per cent fewer bother to vote in federal elections—largely due to lack of will rather than to lack of eligibility, because visible minorities actually become citizens more quickly than immigrants of European origin. Smaller, though quite significant, gaps exist with regard to life satisfaction and trust in others, differences that are partly related to the recent arrival of many racial minorities.

More important, the EDS shows that certain important differences for visible minority immigrants grow over time and with more experience in

30 Stephen Lewis, *Report to the Office of the Premier* (Toronto: Government of Ontario 1992); Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond, 'Immigrant settlement and social inclusion in Canada', *Perspectives on Social Inclusion*, Laidlaw Foundation Working Paper Series (Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation 2003).

31 Daniel Stoffman, *Who Gets In: What's Wrong with Canada's Immigration Program—and How to Fix It* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross 2002).

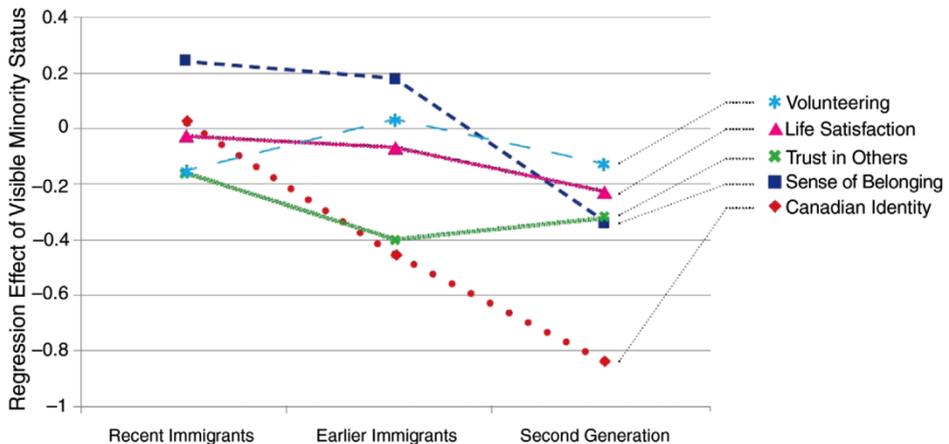
32 Jeffrey G. Reitz and Rupa Banerjee, 'Racial inequality, social cohesion, and policy issues in Canada' in Keith Banting, Thomas Courchene and Leslie Seidle (eds), *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada: The Art of the State*, vol. 3 (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy 2007) 489-545.

Canada. Perhaps surprisingly, the racial gap is greater for the children of immigrants—those born in Canada—than for the parents. This is true despite the high levels of education and employment success of the second generation. The analysis shows that the effect of minority status becomes more negative for those with longer experience in Canada and for the children of immigrants. The trends for the second generation are most pronounced for Blacks, but they are prevalent among all racial minorities (see Figure 8).

Whatever the impact of policies such as multiculturalism in paving the way towards the social integration of immigrants, they appear to have worked less well for racial minorities than for white immigrant groups. Over time and into the second generation, a racial gap has become evident in Canada.

Evidence from the EDS also challenges some of the assumptions of multicultural policy about the impact of minority communities. In fact, the relation between ethnic attachments and an individual's social integration into Canadian society is mixed. On the one hand, ethnic community involvements generally have *positive* relations with sense of belonging in Canada, participation in voluntary activities and overall life satisfaction. In these respects, ethnic attachments make a positive contribution to individual well-being. On the other hand, ethnic attachments have a *negative* relation to the emergence of a 'Canadian' identity and to the acquisition of Canadian citizenship. Ethnic attachments have a negative

Figure 8 Regression Effect* of Visible Minority Status on Selected Indicators of Social Integration, by Generation and (for Immigrants) Period of Immigration



* Regression effects include statistical control for age and (for immigrants) years since immigration. Effects for Canadian identity, trust in others, and volunteering are based on logistic regression and are represented as odds ratios; regression effects for sense of belonging and life satisfaction are standardized OLS coefficients

Source: Jeffrey G. Reitz and Rupa Banerjee, 'Racial inequality, social cohesion, and policy issues in Canada', 489–545

impact on the sense of trust in others.³³ This finding indicates that the potentially negative impact of ethnic community attachments is not only in relation to matters of national identity, but includes some of the social capital aspects highlighted in the American study by Robert Putnam.³⁴

So ethnic communities have social benefits, but they also seem to promote a degree of social isolation. This suggests that multiculturalism policy in Canada might give more attention to working with ethnic communities to promote integration into Canadian society.

Implications of Canadian policies

To what extent does a 'Canadian model' for immigration explain the relative successes of Canadian immigration experience? Which features of Canadian policy may be most important in this regard? And how may Canadians seek to reinvent their own policies in light of new realities? The following conclusions may follow from the discussion above.

First, Canadian experience suggests that skill-selective immigration, however implemented (and assuming a degree of border control, which in the case of Canada is facilitated by the geographical isolation of the country), can be effective in promoting the economic integration of immigrants. Effectiveness also depends on the transferability of foreign-acquired skills. Still, skilled immigrants generally have more positive employment outcomes than unskilled immigrants.

Second, Canadian policy strongly promotes the integration of immigrants into mainstream society and this is also the goal of the Canadian version of multiculturalism. Selection of skilled immigrants is probably the most important tool promoting integration, for reasons related not only to employment but also to language learning and the education of children. Settlement services and language instruction also are important. Multiculturalism in this context is intended to help create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, but evidence suggests that its effects in this regard, compared to those of other policies, are likely to be relatively small.

Third, Canadian experience suggests that economic integration does not guarantee social integration. In Canada, there are problems of social integration which may deserve more attention than they have received thus far. For example, more attention could be paid to the perceptions of the discriminatory treatment among minorities. Existing approaches to multiculturalism are insufficient to address the problem and there is a need for

33 Jeffrey G. Reitz, Raymond Breton, Kenneth Dion and Karen Dion, *Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity* (New York: Springer 2009).

34 Robert Putnam, 'E Pluribus Unum: diversity and community in the twenty-first century: the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2007, 137-74.

policies to address directly equality issues and isolation of minority communities from the mainstream.

Finally, the most distinctive feature of the Canadian experience is the perception of immigration as a positive economic benefit. This is likely to be a result of the fact that most immigration in Canada is skilled immigration. Maintaining skilled immigration as a high proportion of the total is facilitated by the overall large numbers sought.

There may be other ways in which governments can promote immigration as an opportunity, rather than as simply a problem. Canadian popular attitudes provide the country and its leaders with an enormous political resource, which is helpful in finding solutions to problems. This may be the most distinctive feature of Canadian immigration, as much as or more than any specific policies: the national commitment to the immigration project itself—the fact that Canadians want immigration and immigrants.

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