

Earning their support: feelings towards Canada among recent immigrants

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This article examines the factors that lie behind Canada's success at earning the support of its newcomers. It examines the extent to which feelings towards Canada are grounded in immigrants' experiences in the host country, predispositions inherited from their lives prior to migration, and their comparative assessments of the host country and the country of origin. The findings indicate that although feelings towards Canada are partly shaped by post-migration factors, immigrants also interpret experiences in their new host country through the lens of their pre-migration experiences.

Keywords: immigration; political; Canada; attitudes; integration; opinion

Introduction

Global migration has increased dramatically over the last several decades, and the resulting transformation of populations in immigrant-receiving countries has been quite striking. In developed countries, the demographic strain of ageing populations and growing economic demand for labour with varied skills and training has made immigration a steadily more important policy domain. However, for many countries the growing diversity associated with immigration also poses a challenge when it comes to creating and maintaining social and political cohesion (Banting and Kymlicka 2010).

Canada is generally considered a success story when it comes to the integration of newcomers (Kymlicka 1998; Bloemraad 2006; Reitz et al. 2009; Banting and Kymlicka 2010). Not only are immigrant naturalization figures high in comparison to other countries (Bloemraad 2006), but newcomers also appear to develop the sort of deeper attachments to Canada that produce social and political cohesion. For example, immigrants – even recent arrivals – have a strong sense of belonging to Canada (Reitz and Banarjee 2007; Banting and Soroka 2012).

Why is this so? How do host countries like Canada earn the support of newcomers? What are the sources of the bond between immigrants and the country in which they have just settled? This article examines the factors that lie behind Canada's apparently successful efforts at winning the support of its newcomers. That issue is especially salient given that the economic prospects of the country's immigrants have declined steadily over the last several decades, even as Canada has ostensibly risen to the social and political challenges of accommodating greater diversity. How is Canada, then, able to maintain strong positive orientations and loyalty among its newcomers? The focus is on a fundamental political orientation: support for the political community. This diffuse

form of political support generates solidarity and legitimizes political institutions and binding political decisions: it is, in short, the glue that holds political communities together (Fuchs 2007), and is seen as a crucial foundation for regime stability in democracies (Easton 1975; Norris 1999). Positive orientations towards the political community also play an important role in shaping citizens' long-term political behaviour by influencing levels of participation, and the nature of that participation (Easton 1975; Mueller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982).

The following analysis aims to empirically assess several propositions concerning support for the political community. To explore these propositions, the analysis relies on a unique survey of nearly 500 immigrants who have lived in Canada for a decade or less.

Trends in Canadian immigration and policy

Since the 1960s, Canada's immigration policy has been tied quite explicitly to the country's labour needs. The 1967 Norms of Assessment 'point system' introduced standards for selection of immigrants that favoured applicants with education, skills and training, and those who had made employment arrangements prior to arriving in Canada (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, 362). Not all immigrants are assessed in precisely the same way; refugees and immediate family members, for example, do not have to meet the same criteria as 'economic-class' immigrants. However, the trend since the late 1960s has been quite clear: labour immigrants are a growing segment of Canada's foreign-born population. Approximately two-thirds of all new admissions were economic class in 2011 (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, 362) – roughly double the proportion in the early 1980s (McLaren and Black 2005).

One significant effect of Canada's point system for immigrant selection has been to gradually open the door to immigrants from developing countries. According to the most recent data, between 2002 and 2011 one in three new immigrants came from China (13%), India (11%) or the Philippines (9%) (CIC 2012). The proportion of immigrants arriving from those three countries is twice as high as it was three decades earlier. By way of contrast, Europe, once the biggest source of immigration to Canada, is now a marginal source of recruitment (CIC 2012).

Ironically, however, even as Canada's immigrant selection policies increasingly emphasize labour market criteria, new immigrants have fallen behind economically. Since the 1970s, the average employment earnings of immigrants – even economic-class immigrants – have declined steadily compared to those of Canadian-born workers (Picot 2008; Kustec 2012). The reasons for the decline are not entirely clear, but there appears to be a number of contributing factors: discrimination (Oreopoulos and Dechief 2011), insufficient language skills, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience in source countries (Ferrer and Riddell 2008), and growing labour market competition from highly educated Canadians (Picot 2008).

The task at hand, then, is not just to understand how Canada earns the support of its immigrants, but to understand how it manages to do so when newcomers' financial prospects have worsened.

Understanding immigrants' orientations towards the host country

The empirical literature concerning immigrants' political integration has typically explored the influence of two broad sets of considerations: the particular experiences of immigrants in the host country (post-migration factors) and what happened in immigrants' lives prior to migration (pre-migration factors). Thus, the first line of investigation asks: to what extent is immigrants' support for Canada grounded in what Canada actually delivers to immigrants in terms of social, economic and political goods? The second avenue explores the extent to which new immigrant support for Canada is grounded in predispositions and memories inherited from immigrants' lives prior to migration.

We build upon this dichotomy by proposing an additional perspective, namely that newcomers are not simply driven by either their experiences in the host country or in the country of origin. In many ways, we argue, the two sets of considerations are linked. Comparative assessments of the host country and the country of origin may also matter. Each of these perspectives generates its own set of hypotheses.

The impact of post-migration factors

When assessing the roots of immigrants' orientations towards the host country, the intuitive point of departure is their actual experiences in the host country. Simply put, those who fare reasonably well ought to be more favourably disposed towards the host country. Immigrants are often motivated by the desire for a better future for themselves and their children, and a variety of studies have reported their optimism (Kao and Tienda 1995; de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia 1996; Maxwell 2010a, 2010b). Whether or not those expectations are fulfilled might have a significant impact on how newcomers feel about the host country.

First, there is evidence that economic considerations are linked to a variety of immigrant attitudes. Although Walters, Phythian, and Anisef (2007), for example, show that immigrants who participate in the Canadian economy are no more likely than others to self identify as Canadian, and de Vroome et al. (2011) uncover contrary evidence with respect to refugees in the Netherlands. Likewise, Maxwell (2010a) reports that immigrants who are more satisfied with the economy in the host country are more inclined to express greater satisfaction with the government. Accordingly, the expectation is that immigrants satisfied with their current economic situation, and those optimistic about their prospects for economic success in Canada, will be more inclined to express positive orientations toward Canada than those who are dissatisfied or pessimistic about their economic prospects (hypothesis 1a).

Second, evaluations of the performance of the host political institutions might also influence orientations towards the host country (Ogbu 1993; Maxwell 2010a). More specifically, recent immigrants might reward or punish the host country for its record at protecting human rights. In this case the expectation is that immigrants who believe that Canada does a good job of protecting human rights are therefore more likely to express positive orientations for Canada than those who do not (hypothesis 1b).

Third, immigrants' social integration is undoubtedly a critical determinant of orientations towards the host country. For example, perceived discrimination in the

host country can affect immigrants' relationships with host political institutions (Michelson 2003; Maxwell 2010a). More relevant here is the possibility that perceived discrimination might discourage immigrant identification with the host country (Ono 2002; Berry et al. 2006; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2007). The implication is that immigrants who believe that they are treated worse than other citizens are less likely to express positive orientations towards Canada than other immigrants (hypothesis 1c). Above and beyond the effects of perceived discrimination, immigrants presumably have a strong desire to be accepted as full members of their host country (Kao and Tienda 1995), and a weak sense of acceptance might diminish positive orientations towards the host country (Hwang and Murdock 1991; Nesdale 2002). The implication is that recent immigrants who feel fully accepted will be more likely to view Canada positively than immigrants who do not (hypothesis 1d).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the process of adapting to the host country might also have systematic effects on immigrants' orientations towards the host country that are not captured by the aforementioned hypotheses, particularly as immigrants gain familiarity with the dominant political culture of the host country (Berry 1997; Michelson 2003). Discrimination, lack of acceptance and economic hardship in the host country might impede the development of positive orientations for the host country among immigrants. But, all else being equal, there are good reasons to think that the residual effects of longer residence in the host country is otherwise associated with more favourable orientations towards the host country (hypothesis 1e): having made the decision to migrate, newcomers are predisposed to view Canada in a favourable light (Kao and Tienda 1995; Maxwell 2010a, 2010b).

The impact of pre-migration factors

Over the last two decades, more attention has been paid to the transnational linkages between immigrants and their countries of origin. This field of research has put a well-deserved spotlight on the complex connections between immigrants' homelands and host societies. The primary emphasis of this research has been on transnational *behaviour* (DeSipio 2006). Vertovec (2009, 13), for instance, observes that studies on transnationalism emphasize 'a range of practices and institutions linking immigrants, people, and organizations in their homelands', and Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc (1995, 48) suggest that transmigrants 'are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated'.

This study is concerned instead with immigrants' cognitive and affective linkages to their countries of origin. These linkages may or may not be related to immigrants' transnational activities; the significant point is that immigrants have rich histories of social, economic and political experiences in more than one country. Furthermore, research has shown that some of these experiences – especially experiences with political repression – have a structuring impact on political attitudes and behaviours in the host country (Gitelman 1982; McAllister and Makkai 1992; Bueker 2005; Bilodeau 2008). The same could hold for orientations towards the host country: immigrants from contexts of severe political repression or poverty might exhibit resolute goodwill

towards the host country in comparison to other immigrants (hypotheses 2a and 2b, respectively).

Beyond the pre-migration context, orientations towards the country of origin could also play a significant role in the development of orientations towards the host country. There are at least two opposing possibilities to consider. The first is that orientations towards the country of origin act as a barrier to the development of favourable orientations towards the host country. This possibility is grounded in classical theories of political socialization, which anticipate that established political outlooks might pose a challenge to developing new ones (see e.g. Sears 1983). Indeed, as Janmaat (2008) demonstrates, immigrants who identify strongly with their country of origin or ethnic group exhibit lower levels of pride for the host country. Similarly, Staton, Jackson, and Canache (2007) observe that dual nationality weakens Latino immigrants' connection to American politics. The implication of this line of reasoning informs a 'conflicting loyalties' hypothesis: strong positive orientations towards the country of origin make immigrants *more* likely to express negative orientations towards Canada (hypothesis 2c).

The inverse relationship, however, cannot be ruled out. Positive orientations towards the country of origin might instead facilitate the development of favourable orientations towards the host country. Immigrants, it seems, are certainly able to 'transfer' some political orientations from one setting to another (Black 1987; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Wals 2011). It is reasonable to suppose that a similar dynamic applies when it comes to orientations towards the host country. That is, prior to migration, immigrants do not simply learn to feel supportive or unsupportive of the country in which they were born and raised, but rather learn to feel supportive or unsupportive of whichever country they inhabit. That line of conjecture (a 'loyalty transfer' hypothesis) suggests that the relationship between immigrants' orientations towards their country of origin and Canada is positive (hypothesis 2d).

Comparative assessments of pre- and post-migration experiences

To this point, the focus has been on the ways in which pre- and post-migration experiences might independently influence immigrants' orientations towards the host country. A more realistic account of immigrants' support for the host country should, arguably, also consider how post-migration experiences compare to life before migration. Unlike native-born citizens, immigrants have a highly salient reference point for evaluating their host country. They arrive with some awareness of how well the state in their country of origin delivers services, ensures economic well-being, and protects individual liberties and political rights. For many, the performance of the host country on these dimensions might well be significantly different from those that prevailed in their country of origin. As Ogbu (1993) contends, immigrants interpret experiences in their host country through the lens of their experiences in their country of origin. Harles's (1997) intensive interviews with Lao immigrants in Canada provide complementary evidence for this. Moreover, Maxwell (2010b) proposes that these reference points explain why many immigrants have lower expectations than their native-born counterparts when it comes to the performance of political institutions and actors in their host country.

If such comparative evaluations could serve as drivers of immigrant orientations in their host country, then the proposition deserves attention. Many Canadian immigrants arrive from developing countries, or countries with relatively poor human rights records. Orientations towards Canada might depend on immigrants' evaluations of how well Canada protects human rights when compared to the human rights records of their country of origin (hypothesis 3a). Orientations towards Canada could also depend on the extent to which immigrants see their personal financial situation improve upon moving to Canada (hypothesis 3b). The important consideration is not how well immigrants are doing in Canada, but how much better, or worse, they are doing when compared to their pre-migration situation.

Research design and descriptive data

The analysis relies on the 2006 New Immigrant Survey (NIS), conducted as part of the Canadian component of the World Values Survey (WVS). The full sample is comprised of 495 face-to-face interviews with immigrants who have lived in Canada for ten years or less. The interviews were conducted in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, three immigrant-rich Canadian cities. The survey's focus on recent immigrants limits our ability to generalize about all immigrants' orientations towards Canada, but these data provide a unique opportunity to shed some light on the ways in which immigrants relate to Canada by taking into account their orientations and beliefs about their countries of origin. Mass surveys of foreign-born populations are few and far between, and ones that include multiple items about social, economic and political aspects of life in both the host country and the country of origin are rarer still.

A common approach to measuring immigrants' orientations towards the host country is to ask whether they think of themselves as members of the host country (Staton, Jackson, and Canache 2007; Lien 2008; Reitz et al. 2009; de Vroome et al. 2011), or to ask how proud they feel about the host country (de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia 1996; Janmaat 2008). This approach, however, is typically employed when studying immigrants who may have been in the host country for quite some time. Not surprisingly, our evidence suggests that a question asking about levels of national pride might not be appropriate in the case of recent immigrants. The survey asked: 'How proud are you to be Canadian? Very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not proud at all?' Although 53% indicated that they were either 'very proud' or 'quite proud', 44% of recent immigrants volunteered instead that they were 'not Canadian'.

The large proportion of respondents who do not consider themselves to be Canadian is understandable, as 74% had yet to acquire Canadian citizenship. Standard measures of national pride may well be useful when it comes to understanding how immigrants who have been in their host country for quite some time feel about that country, but such measures are less useful for ascertaining how recent immigrants feel about their host country. Most immigrants seem to see this question as applicable to them only after they have acquired citizenship.

In order to measure recent immigrants' orientations towards Canada, the NIS asked an alternative question: 'Using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means very negative and 10 means very positive, how do you feel about Canada?' Recent immigrants to Canada clearly have arrived at some assessment of their host country, with only one respondent

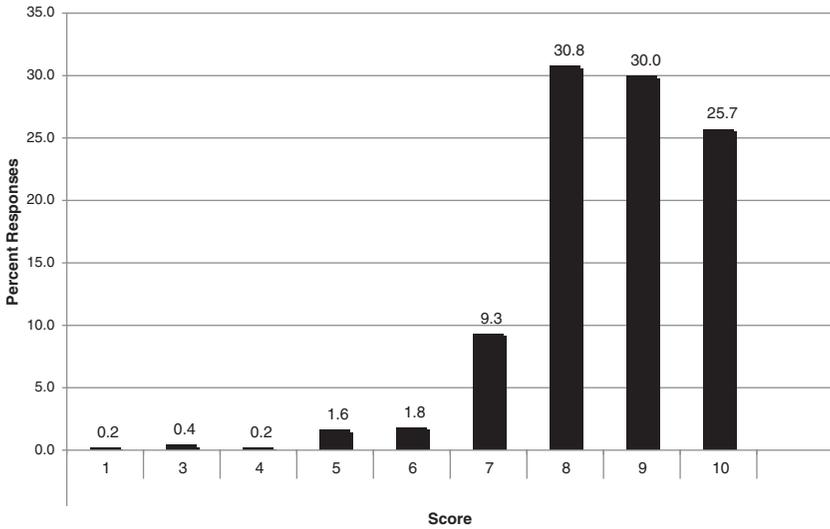


Figure 1. Feelings toward Canada among recent immigrant.
 Source: New Immigrants Survey (2006).

in the NIS sample reporting otherwise. Moreover, immigrants express a substantial amount of support for Canada during their first decade of residence (Figure 1). Eighty-six per cent of recent immigrants gave a score of 8 or higher, and only 2% reported scores between 1 and 5 ($M = 8.6$). On average, immigrants who have been in Canada for less than a decade feel just as positively about their host country as do their native-born counterparts: comparable data from the 2006 Canadian Election Study indicate that the native-born Canadian population exhibits the same mean score as that of recent immigrants in the NIS. But which immigrants feel more and less positively about Canada?

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for our proposed determinants of feelings towards Canada, including socio-economic and demographic characteristics that become important standard controls in analyses that follow (see Appendix 1 for item wording). The first group of independent variables focuses on post-migration factors. The immigrant respondents in the NIS sample have more than four years of experience in Canada on average. In general, those experiences appear to be quite positive. Recent immigrants are more likely to be satisfied, rather than dissatisfied, with their current personal economic situation, and they express considerable optimism about the prospects for improvement in the next ten years. Most also believe that Canada does a good job when it comes to respecting human rights.

The effects of discrimination are measured using both subjective and objective indicators. The objective measure indicates whether immigrants come from a racial minority group, and most newcomers do: approximately three-quarters of the recent immigrants in the NIS sample are from ‘non-Caucasian’ backgrounds (a demographic category termed ‘visible minorities’ by the federal government of Canada). The subjective indicators capture recent immigrants’ assessments of how they have been treated by the Canadian government and by other Canadians. Few immigrants think

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, independent variables ($N = 399$).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
<i>Post-migration factors</i>				
Accepted in Canada	0.67	0.25	0	1
Financial situation in Canada	0.54	0.22	0	1
Financial situation in 10 years	0.83	0.15	0.33	1
Human rights in Canada	0.84	0.18	0	1
Treated worse by government	-0.06	0.34	-1	1
Treated worse by other citizens	-0.08	0.40	-1	1
Length of residence	4.19	2.43	1	10
'Visible minority'	0.74	0.44	0	1
<i>Pre-migration factors</i>				
Orientations towards country of origin	0.66	0.24	0	1
Freedom House score	10.28	3.06	2	14
GDP per capita (\$10,000s)	0.44	0.53	0.03	2.77
<i>Comparative assessments</i>				
Financial situation (Canada – country of origin)	-0.11	0.37	-1	0.78
Human rights (Canada – country of origin)	0.37	0.30	-1	1
<i>Socio-demographic controls</i>				
Age	36.45	8.89	17	82
Female	0.49	0.50	0	1
University education	0.74	0.40	0	1
Income	0.40	0.28	0	1

Source: New Immigrant Survey (2006).

that they have been treated worse than other citizens, either by the Canadian people or the Canadian government. Perhaps not surprisingly then, most feel accepted in Canada. Indeed, more than one third (35%) of recent immigrants feel that they have been 'fully accepted' by Canada.

The second group of independent variables focuses on pre-migration factors. One set to consider concerns whether the economic and political contexts in immigrants' countries of origin are related to how they feel about Canada. The measure of political context is based on the democratic status of the respondent's country of origin for the fifteen-year period prior to migration using the Freedom House score on civil liberties and political rights. This variable takes on values ranging from 2 to 14, where 2 indicates political freedom and 14 indicates a high level of political repression. Most recent immigrants in the NIS sample came from relatively repressive countries ($M = 10.28$). The measure of economic context is based on the average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (in US\$10,000) in the respondents' country of origin for the fifteen-year period prior to migration. The data in Table 1 show that the economic development of recent immigrants' countries of origin varies widely.

Immigrants' subjective orientations towards their country of origin, while quite positive, are nevertheless markedly lower on average than their orientations about Canada. The distribution of responses is somewhat surprising: some 28% actually express negative orientations towards their country of origin (score of 1–5). Recall that just 2% of the sample harboured negative orientations towards Canada.

Table 2. The roots of political support among immigrants in Canada ($N = 399$).

	B (SE)	β
<i>Post-migration factors</i>		
Accepted in Canada	0.20 (0.04)	0.22***
Financial situation in Canada	-0.10 (0.06)	-0.10
Financial situation in 10 years	0.19 (0.07)	0.13**
Human rights in Canada	0.09 (0.06)	0.07
Treated worse by government	0.03 (0.03)	0.05
Treated worse by other citizens	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.07
Length of residence	0.02 (0.00)	0.18***
'Visible minority'	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.05
<i>Pre-migration factors</i>		
Orientations towards country of origin	-0.77 (0.20)	-0.80***
Orientations towards country of origin squared	0.90 (0.16)	1.16***
Freedom House score	0.00 (0.00)	0.03
GDP per capita (\$10,000s)	-0.39 (0.22)	-0.09
<i>Comparative assessments</i>		
Financial situation (Canada – country of origin)	0.15 (0.04)	0.22***
Human rights (Canada – country of origin)	0.11 (0.04)	0.14**
<i>Socio-demographic controls</i>		
Age	0.015 (0.005)	0.60***
Age squared	-0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.52*
Female	0.04 (0.02)	0.08
University education	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06
Income	0.02 (0.04)	0.02
Constant	0.01 (0.15)	
Adjusted R^2	0.31	

Source: 2006 New Immigrants Survey.

Note: Estimation technique used was regression with clustered standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Our final group of independent variables – comparative evaluations of economic and political life in Canada – suggests that life improves with migration in some ways, but perhaps not in others. Recent immigrants are generally more likely to think that Canada does a better job than their respective countries of origin when it comes to protecting human rights. At the same time, however, newcomers are more likely to experience a net decline in their personal financial satisfaction during the first decade in Canada.

The sources of orientations towards Canada: multivariate analysis

Table 2 presents the results of a multivariate analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to identify the determinants of orientations towards Canada's among recent immigrants.¹ The dependent variable is the logged values of responses to the NIS survey item about orientations towards Canada, ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates very negative orientations and 1 indicates very positive orientations.²

The effect of post-migration experiences

The results show that some, but not all, aspects of recent immigrants' experiences in Canada have significant effects on feelings about their host country. First, the evidence is mixed when it comes to the role of economic perceptions (hypothesis 1a). Optimism about their financial futures improves immigrants' orientations towards Canada ($\beta = 0.13$). Everything else being equal, immigrants who are strongly optimistic about their economic future are almost 0.19 points more positively oriented towards Canada than those who are strongly pessimistic. However, immigrants' assessments about their present financial standing have no significant impact. By the same token, the evidence suggests no significant impact for evaluations of how well Canada protects human rights (hypothesis 1b). Nor is there any evidence of a relationship between immigrants' evaluations of the way that they are treated by other citizens or by the government and their general orientations towards Canada. Far more striking is the discovery that 'visible minority' immigrants, those who are more likely to be victims of discrimination, report orientations towards Canada that are just as positive as those of other immigrants. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no support for hypothesis 1c.

There is strong support, however, for hypothesis 1d. Immigrants develop more positive orientations towards Canada when they feel accepted by other Canadians. The difference is substantial: the regression estimates indicate that feeling fully accepted (1) rather than not at all accepted (0) substantially shifts orientations towards Canada in a positive direction ($\beta = 0.22$), when all other factors are held constant. Moreover, orientations towards Canada appear to accumulate during the first decade of residence, an effect of a similar magnitude to feeling accepted (hypothesis 1e).

Overall, post-migration experiences have a substantial impact on how immigrants feel about Canada. What matters most is their optimism about a better future, and how much they feel accepted as full members of Canadian society. Immigrants do feel quite positively towards Canada upon arrival, above and beyond the above factors, but the significant finding here is that this reservoir of good feelings accumulates with the passage of time.

The effect of pre-migration experiences

Pre-migration economic and political contexts exert no significant effect on immigrants' orientations towards Canada. Contrary to what others have observed with respect to trust in government (McAllister and Makkai 1992), support for democracy (Bilodeau, McAllister, and Kanji 2010) and participation in protest activities (Bilodeau 2008), immigrants from countries of origin with systematically different levels of wealth and political repression do not express distinctive orientations towards Canada (hypotheses 2a and 2b).

However, the potential effects of immigrants' *subjective* orientations towards their country of origin, we suggested, might be revealed by exploring the 'conflicting loyalties' and 'loyalty transfer' hypotheses (2c and 2d, respectively). It turns out that the relationship between feelings about the country of origin and Canada is curvilinear. In order to more accurately estimate this relationship, the regression includes not only a parameter for immigrants' orientations towards their country of origin, but also a

parameter for the squared values of such orientations to indicate how much, and in which direction, the relationship between orientations towards the country of origin and Canada ‘bends’.

The parameter estimates in [Table 2](#) (negative for immigrants’ orientations towards their country of origin, but positive for the squared values of such orientations) indicate a ‘U-shaped’ relationship, which appears to be partially consistent with both hypotheses. Those with the most positive orientations towards Canada are recent immigrants who have either strong negative orientations towards their country of origin or strong positive orientations. In the case of the former, we argue that the strong negative orientations towards the country of origin may make recent immigrants more receptive to positive orientations towards Canada. Arguably, some of these newcomers, perhaps refugees, may have come to Canada precisely because of a strong dislike for their country of origin. In the case of the latter, strong positive orientations towards the country of origin, by contrast, may facilitate the development of positive orientations towards Canada. In effect, there seem to be two different factors at work. For some, Canada is a place that attracts their affection precisely because of their dislike of their country of origin. For others, positive orientations towards the country of origin are transferable loyalties.

The effect of pre-/post-migration comparative assessments

Finally, the analysis presented in [Table 2](#) examines the impact of pre-/post-migration comparative assessments. Recall that post-migration considerations, such as immigrants’ current financial well-being in Canada or assessments of Canada’s record at protecting human rights, have little or no direct impact on orientations towards Canada. But, it turns out that comparative assessments do matter. The more satisfied newcomers are with their finances in Canada compared to their personal financial situation in the country of origin, the more positive they are about Canada. Similarly, the better immigrants evaluate Canada’s performance when it comes to safeguarding human rights in comparison to the performance of their country of origin, the more positive they are towards Canada. These findings clearly support hypotheses 3a and 3b: the evidence is that immigrants do interpret experiences in their host country through the lens of their experiences in their country of origin.

Conclusion

How newcomers feel about their new host society and what factors help immigrants develop a favourable initial impression of their host country are questions that have significant policy implications. These questions have been empirically explored using survey data on recent immigrants. Although it is quite possible that orientations towards Canada, and their determinants, differ somewhat for immigrants who have spent more than a decade in the country, the key findings presented here reveal the multiple and complex ways in which factors associated with their experiences in both Canada and their countries of origin influence newcomers’ broad orientations towards their host country. There is unambiguous evidence that immigrants generally develop strong positive orientations towards Canada during their first decade of residence.

It turns out that those orientations are as much a product of their attitudes towards their countries of origin as they are a consequence of reactions to Canada. To the question of whether Canada earns the support of recent immigrants, the answer appears to be a qualified 'yes'. Newcomers generally find Canada welcoming, and that sentiment of acceptance goes some way towards explaining why recent immigrants express strong positive orientations towards their host country.

The potential policy implications of these findings are not trivial. It may well be that citizens and government have a role to play when it comes to ensuring that newcomers feel accepted in the host country. That conclusion is consistent, certainly, with Bloemraad's (2006) findings: proactive outreach and support initiatives by governments, rather than 'laissez-faire' approaches, have a significant impact on immigrant integration. Comparative survey evidence about immigrants' sense of acceptance in other countries would provide a useful starting point for ascertaining whether this factor is pivotal in explaining why some countries do a better job than others in integrating newcomers. To our knowledge, there has not yet been a cross-national investigation of this sort.

It is also clear that immigrants' orientations towards Canada are shaped by the perceived financial gains or losses associated with migration. This finding raises important concerns, particularly when newcomers fall behind financially when compared to other Canadians. But it also prompts a further question: if financial satisfaction matters, then how does Canada maintain the overwhelming support of these newcomers? The data provide a partial answer. First of all, unlike their domestic-born counterparts, recent immigrants' reference point for financial success, or failure, may well be their own pre-migration financial situation, rather than their position in the economic strata vis-à-vis other Canadians. Second, immigrants' perceptions about how their financial situations have improved or deteriorated with migration certainly affect their orientations towards Canada. Optimism about their financial futures also structures those orientations. Many immigrants in our sample report that they face financial challenges in Canada; at the same time, an overwhelming number remain quite hopeful about their financial futures.

If Canada fails to meet immigrants' longer-term economic expectations, the consequences are less certain. One possibility is that with the passage of time, immigrants, who do not maintain strong transnational ties, may more readily shift their frame of reference from their country of origin to Canada. Others might lose their positive orientations towards Canada if their socio-economic position compared to other Canadians were to become more salient to their assessments of the host country. Indeed, that dynamic might account for Reitz and Banarjee's (2009) evidence indicating that immigrants who have lived in Canada for a long time exhibit somewhat weaker attachments to Canada than do either recent immigrants or Canadian-born citizens.

That newcomers interpret life in the host country through the lens of their experiences in the country of origin is a significant finding that warrants deeper investigation. Not only are immigrants' orientations towards Canada substantially shaped by comparative economic assessments, but comparative evaluations of other aspects of life in two different countries also seem to matter. This analysis considered the political dimension by analysing the perceived gap between the human rights records of Canada and immigrants' countries of origin. As it turns out, the net aggregate impact on orientations

towards Canada is positive because the vast majority of recent immigrants (77%) judge Canada as doing a far better job when it comes to protecting human rights.

Immigrants' orientations towards their countries of origin also structure their orientations towards Canada, but they do so in somewhat complex ways. For newcomers who feel very positively about the country of origin, national loyalties seem to be transferable. For those who feel very negatively about the country of origin, national loyalties appear to be in conflict.

The most salient findings to emerge from this analysis concern the effects of immigrants' *feelings and perceptions*, not the objective conditions that they confront in Canada or anywhere else. That point is worth emphasizing. Most research on the impact of factors preceding migration focuses on the objective contextual features of the country of origin. But, there is no evidence that the broad economic and political environment of the country of origin has a systematic impact on feelings about Canada. What matters instead are immigrants' subjective assessments.

Policymakers face limits to the potential role that Canadian policies related to immigrant selection, settlement and integration might play in nurturing strong, positive orientations towards Canada. The notion of *earning* support implies that immigrants' favourable impressions of their host country are the result of the efforts of the Canadian state and society. But the evidence suggests that even if Canada has the support of recent immigrants, it has not necessarily earned all of it: immigrants' views about Canada appear to be partly structured by pre-migration experiences largely unrelated to Canadian efforts at immigrant integration.

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Notes

1. Because our data include multiple observations clustered within different countries of origin, the standard OLS assumption of independent errors is violated with respect to our contextual variables (GDP and Freedom House scores). Standard errors in our regression model are corrected to take this clustering into account.
2. Tests using the original measure of orientations towards Canada as the dependent variable in OLS regression indicated that the residual errors were non-normal. The original 1–10 scale has been transformed to a logarithmic scale with base 10. The formula is: $y_t = -\log_{10}(-y_o + 11) + 1$, where y_o is the original 1–10 scale, and y_t is the transformed scale. Subsequent tests of skewness and kurtosis indicated that this measure does not violate the assumption of normally distributed residual errors.

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Appendix 1. Item wording

Accepted in Canada

Since you have come to this country, do you feel that you have been fully accepted, somewhat accepted, or not accepted at all by the people who live here?

Treatment by Government

As an immigrant, do you feel that in your dealings with government you have been treated better than other Canadians, about the same as other Canadians, worse than other Canadians, much worse than other Canadians?

Treatment by Other Citizens

And what about your dealings with Canadian people in general? Do you feel they treat you better than other Canadians, about the same as other Canadians, worse than other Canadians, much worse than other Canadians?

Feelings about Country of Origin

Using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means very negative and 10 means very positive, how do you feel about the country you were born in?

Financial Satisfaction

(Show card) How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? Please use this card again to help you with your answer (Card shows a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is 'completely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied')

Financial Satisfaction in the country of origin

Using the same scale, how satisfied were you with your financial situation before you came to this country?

Financial Situation in 10 years

And what about 10 years from now? Using a scale where 1 means much worse and 10 means much better, how do you expect your financial situation to be 10 years from now?

Protection of Human Rights in Canada

How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in this country? Do you feel there is a great deal of respect for human rights, some respect, not much respect, no respect at all?

Protection of Human Rights in the Country of Origin

And how much respect for human rights would you say there was in the country you were born in? A great deal of respect for human rights, some respect, not much respect, no respect at all?