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Exploring Immigrant Economic Participation in British Columbia**

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**Canadian immigration and the selection-settlement services trade-off: Exploring
immigrant economic participation in British Columbia**

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Abstract: Canada's immigrant selection policy is structured around several major classes of entry: refugees, family members, and economic immigrants. Policy makers and researchers have long assumed that economic immigrants, especially those who are assessed according to the points system, are best prepared to enter the labour market. Until recently, we were unable to test this assumption with systematic data, since information on entry class is not included in Canadian social surveys. However, the Immigrant Database (IMDB), which has been built by combining immigrant landing records with their subsequent income tax returns, enables new research on the relationship between entry class and economic outcomes. In this paper, the income and rates of employment/self-employment of immigrants living in British Columbia are explored using data from a special tabulation of the IMDB. The human capital of economic immigrants is, indeed, much higher than that of other groups, and economic immigrants receive more income and are more likely to be employed and/or self-employed than other entry groups. However, more complex patterns become apparent as sub-groups within classes are analyzed and when more variables are brought into the picture. Within the economic class, for example, business immigrants appear to have low rates of labour market participation and income. Also, refugees are faring better in British Columbia than might be expected given the widespread attitude that they are economically marginalized. This latter outcome, I argue, is likely due to the enriched set of social services available to refugees in the year after their arrival in Canada and, more broadly, points to the role of the state in establishing the conditions for successful immigrant integration in Canada.

Key words: Immigrants and the labour market, Immigrant entrepreneurship, British Columbia, Immigrant class, Human capital, Immigrant selection, Immigrant services

Introduction: The selection-settlement services trade-off

While migration occurs in many forms throughout the world, there are only a few countries with active programs encouraging the permanent settlement of immigrants; the main ones are the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the special case of Israel.¹ In each of these countries, the state plays several fundamental roles in the migration process. In the first place, immigrant-receiving countries establish rules to choose which immigrants will be considered acceptable. Some countries prioritize the entry of family members or refugees, for example, while others fill vacancies in the labour market, or simply allow immigrants to enter based on their religious or ethnic identities. Secondly, countries develop programs to facilitate the socio-economic integration of immigrants. In some cases these are minimal and immigrants receive little or no public support. In others there are elaborate systems to provide immigrants with housing, labour market training, welfare, language training, and so on. Finally, governments establish a set of institutional structures and rules that help determine the ‘place’ of immigrants in societies. Some states, for example, have enacted legislation that prohibits discrimination against non-mainstream cultural groups in labour markets, while others have taken this issue a step further by implementing affirmative action programs. Similarly, some governments allow refugee claimants and their children access to education and welfare payments, while others do not. In his comparative analysis of Australia, Canada and the United States, Reitz (1998) identifies immigration policy, the labour market, education, and the welfare system as the key institutions that set the parameters of immigrant integration.

In this paper, I concentrate on the first two roles of government in the immigration process, selection and settlement services. Generally speaking, we can think of these policies/practices/institutions as substitutable trade-offs. That is, open selection systems are likely to yield immigrants who will need considerable support; conversely, selection systems that exclude most applicants, and only allow entry to those who will easily adapt to the receiving society, reduce the need for extensive settlement support. Put another way, from an economic point of view, governments strike a balance between two basic elements when they establish immigration policy: encouraging ‘appropriate’ people to migrate (selection); and providing the conditions to ensure that immigrants will succeed (settlement).

In terms of actual practices, Israel is probably the best example of a country that has devoted its efforts to the settlement side of the equation. Throughout its existence as a nation state, Israel has

maintained a straightforward selection policy, allowing immediate entry to those who can demonstrate Jewish origin. For permanent immigrants, this is a ‘minimalist’ selection system (note that Israel’s procedures for admitting temporary migrants are more complex). However, the Israeli state provides one of the world’s most generous systems of support for immigrants, with a high level of Hebrew training, financial assistance, and other benefits (Razin 2001).

Canada has taken essentially the opposite approach. Starting in the 1960s, Canada developed a set of stringent selection criteria, which have been adjusted several times since then (see Reitz 1998, Pendakur 2000). The original policy and subsequent adjustments have been motivated by a primary goal: selection is designed to admit applicants who will require minimal state support. Settlement programs, in keeping with this institutional climate, are not especially elaborate. In 1996, for example, Canada admitted 226,000 permanent residents; in that year, the federal government spent C\$235.4 million on settlement programs, or the equivalent of just over \$1,000 per person.² To put this figure into perspective, that would be approximately the cost, in 1996, of one month’s rent for a low-budget, two-bedroom apartment in a major Canadian city such as Vancouver. Of course these moneys are spent unevenly, and some immigrants receive no settlement assistance while others receive more than this average. Also, some (government sponsored refugees in particular) are eligible for additional support systems, which are drawn from different budgets. But the main point is that settlement assistance is modest, especially in comparison with the Israeli system.

While it is largely beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth considering the factors that shape the selection-settlement trade-off. In large measure it reflects the overall orientation of the welfare, or neoliberal/post-welfare, state (see Esping-Anderson 1990). Countries with active welfare states are likely to offer financial and other forms of support for immigrant settlement (Zolberg 1997, Engelen 2000). Neoliberal states, conversely, are based on ideologies that are antithetical to this type of spending: the belief in ‘small government’ and therefore low fiscal expenditures; and the belief that individuals who receive welfare benefits are discouraged from seeking paid employment. Over the late 20th century, Canada (as is the case of many other western states) shifted considerably from the welfare to neoliberal model. To illustrate this point: total program expenditures by the federal government declined from 17.2 percent of GDP in 1985 to only 11.6 percent in 2001.³ This fall in

¹ The case of Israel will be discussed in greater detail below. I label it ‘special’ because all Jews are given the right to settle in the country but other groups are not. The other countries in this list have more general programs open to applicants from all cultural and religious backgrounds

² There was a drop in immigrant admissions after 1996 and per capita settlement spending has risen since then, to approximately \$1,380 per immigrant arriving in 2000. These figures have been drawn from Citizenship and Immigration Canada annual reports, available at www.cic.gc.ca.

³ By total program expenditures, I mean spending on all government programs, not including the amount paid by government to finance the national debt. In general, the cost of debt servicing as a ratio of GDP rose dramatically until quite recently, and is now falling. The cost of all other program spending has fallen over a

spending has been highly controversial and the Canadian government faces more scrutiny of its activities than ever before. Devoting money to immigrant settlement, in this politicized atmosphere, is difficult to justify, especially in the context of a growing polarization of incomes and needs among existing Canadian residents. The prevailing philosophy is to expect immigrants, as far as possible, to provide for their own needs in these areas.

In this paper I examine the relationship between immigrant selection and the economic participation of immigrants in British Columbia, which has received roughly 20 percent of immigrants to Canada in the past decade. I focus on the role of human capital – measured by educational attainment and official-language fluency at the time of landing – and how it is related to rates of employment and self-employment on the one hand and earnings on the other, and how this differs by class of entry. This part of the analysis reveals that the selection criteria for Skilled Worker immigrants appear to work well in promoting the entry of individuals with significant human capital and who are able to succeed in the labour market. But the relationship between the human capital and labour market performance of other entry classes is more complicated, and in some cases defies conventional wisdom about immigrant settlement in British Columbia. I argue that these rather unanticipated results may reflect the influence of the settlement services system. Unfortunately, due to a lack of appropriate statistical information, this part of the analysis is rudimentary and speculative.

Canadian selection system and the IMDB

Canada's modern selection system was designed in the 1960s and, since then, has been dominated by three major categories. Two of these are generally seen as humanitarian in nature: immigrants who come to join family members already in the country, and those who arrive as refugees. In the former case, a member of the family (generally this is confined to nuclear families) sponsors an individual and promises to assist them for a period of 10 years (Table 1). The latter program is complex because it includes a number of sub-categories: refugees selected by government, typically in overseas camps and with the help of international aid organizations; privately sponsored refugees who are also selected overseas in much the same way; and asylum-claimants who arrive in Canada and are deemed legitimate refugees by a determination board. Note that the Refugee Class, therefore, includes some individuals who are selected and others who, in a sense, select themselves (claimants). While family immigrants and refugees are mainly admitted to Canada to satisfy humanitarian objectives, these

longer period, and much more dramatically. The figure for 1985 was drawn from Statistics Canada (1996), Table 15.5. The figure for 2001 is a projection taken from the 2000 Canadian budget, available at: http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget00/bp/bpch1_2e.htm#Spending.

entry programs also contain economic criteria. In both cases, individuals who are able to demonstrate that they will eventually become self-supporting are given priority (Nash 1994).⁴

Table 1: Canadian immigrant selection classes and criteria

Family	close family member of Canadian citizen or permanent resident who acts as sponsor sponsor must support immigrant for 10 years must pass medical exam and provide police certificate(s) from countries of previous residence expected to become self-supporting
Refugees	Convention Refugees or members of the Country of Asylum or Source Country Class designations must demonstrate an ability to eventually re-establish their lives in Canada must pass medical, security and criminality assessment
Skilled workers	70 points necessary (out of 105)
Assisted relatives	5 bonus points for close relative who is Canadian citizen or permanent resident
Self employed est. 1969	same as skilled worker, except 30 bonus points if able to establish/buy a business in Canada, provide employment for applicant and make an economic or cultural contribution to Canada
Entrepreneurs est. 1978	25 points, plus: must establish or buy a business in Canada no set amount to invest, but it should be sufficient to establish the business within two years, while supporting the entrepreneur and dependents expected to participate in managing the business admitted on the condition that these requirements are met within two years of landing; applicant expected to meet regularly with an immigration officer to monitor compliance with terms and conditions
Investors est. 1986	25 points, plus: must invest a minimum amount in approved projects in Canada (provincially specific) must provide a minimum investment of \$400,000 and have a minimum net worth of \$800,000

The final major entry category is the Independent, or Economic Class. Prospective immigrants from any country, regardless of their family connections within Canada or political status, are entitled to submit applications under this class. As seen in Table 2, points are assigned according to various demographic, language, educational, and labour market characteristics of the applicant. For example, a 32 year-old applicant will receive more points than a 57 year-old one on the assumption that the former person will be in the labour market longer. Higher levels of points will also be given to well-educated individuals who are able to speak English and/or French, and who have advanced levels of education and skills training. Those who can fill specific jobs (such as medical technicians)

⁴ In times of immediate crisis, such as the recent movement of Kosovars to Canada, the selection process is done quickly and there is little emphasis on the potential for long-term economic success. Also, those who arrive as claimants, as noted, are not 'selected' as such but are granted permanent settlement status according to international refugee conventions. Aside from these circumstances, economic criteria are invoked in the refugee

where there is a high demand for labour, gain extra points, as well as those who have arranged employment in Canada. The rationale for the points system is simple: it is designed to differentiate between those who are more vs. less able to enter Canada's labour market. Generally, a threshold of 70 points is used in this determination.⁵ Note that applicants who fall a few points below this number can gain up to 5 extra points if they have a relative in Canada who offers to help them settle; in that case they are processed as Assisted Relatives.

Table 2: Selection Criteria for Economic Class Immigrants: The "Points System"

Factors assessed	Maximum points
Education	16
Employment training	18
Experience	8
Occupational demand	10
Arranged employment	8
Demographic factor	10
Age	10
Knowledge of official language(s)	15
Personal suitability (interview)	10
Total points possible	105

Another subset of the Independent Class has become increasingly important. In the 1960s, the Canadian government introduced a program to facilitate the entry of self-employed immigrants. Individuals applying under this category still face the points test but the threshold is reduced from 70 to 40 points if they can demonstrate the ability to establish a business in Canada soon after arriving (Table 1). Future potential is largely determined by past success, so documenting previous business activities is an important ingredient in the application process for this class. The Entrepreneur Class was added in 1978, which was more ambitious. Initially the government expected these immigrants to create or purchase an existing Canadian business that would employ at least four individuals beyond the entrepreneur himself or herself. In subsequent years this requirement was reduced to one worker, as it was believed that the previous level was seen as too high by prospective applicants. At the present time, Entrepreneur Class immigrants must submit a credible business plan and show that they have the experience needed to run a business; they also need a minimum of 25 points. Their landed status in Canada is conditional, however, and they must prove that they have established a business within two years of arrival to receive permanent landing rights. Finally, the Investor Class was established in 1986 in an effort to attract immigrants willing to invest in the Canadian economy or, more specifically, in venture capital funds that would support Canadian businesses. As in the case of

selection process. Detailed information on all immigration programs is available at the government's internet page: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugee/ref2-e.html>

the Entrepreneur Class, the point threshold was set at 25 for the new class, but applicants must have a net personal worth of at least \$800,000 – this amount varies depending on the intended province of settlement – and invest \$400,000 of it in an approved fund, for a minimum period of three years (Nash 1987, Harrison 1996).

As noted, the Skilled Worker program has at its core the idea that immigrants with certain characteristics will be likely to succeed in the Canadian labour market. Similarly, the Business Classes are based on the idea of admitting people with business expertise and/or capital, again to ensue that they will quickly become economically active. These are both clear examples of prioritizing selection over settlement services, in the sense that individuals entering Canada through these programs should have the wherewithal to be self-supporting. As I have pointed out in another paper (forthcoming in *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*), the assumption is also made that success in business in other places around the world is a valuable predictor of success in Canada, despite different institutional structures and economic systems (also see Ley 2000).

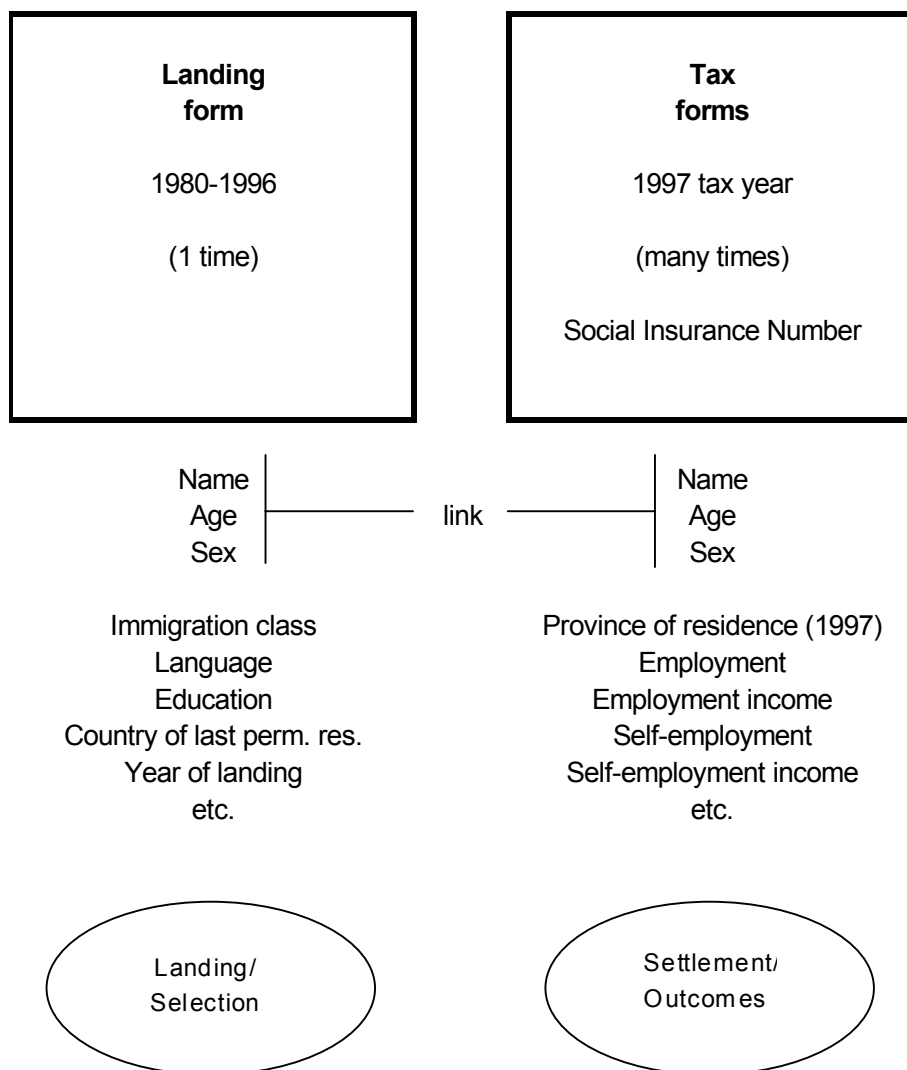
Canadian scholars have written extensively about immigrant labour market participation and income levels (see, for example, Li 1988; Reitz 1990; Boyd 1992; de Silva 1992; Beach and Worswick 1993; Baker and Benjamin 1994; Prescott and Wandschneider 1995; Reitz 1998; Pendakur and Pendakur 1997; Wanner 1999; Reitz 2001 and 2002). Much of this work has been done by economists, who compare the returns to human capital for immigrants versus the Canadian-born. Most of these studies use only a small number of variables to measure human capital (usually language and education, as is done in this paper), while others are somewhat more elaborate (e.g., Reitz 2001, and Reitz 2002, who creates a surrogate variable for labour market experience) and also introduce many control variables, such as full vs. part time workers, industrial sector, and urban area (e.g., Pendakur and Pendakur 1997), to make sure that the relationship between human capital and income is as precisely measured as possible. Most researchers agree that immigrants realize below-average returns to their human capital and conclude that this provides evidence of discrimination in the Canadian labour market. However, this view is not universally shared (notable exceptions are de Silva [1992] and Wanner [1999]). Despite their differences in methodology and findings, these studies share one common element: all are based on census data and therefore do not differentiate by immigrant class. All of the administrative categories of immigrants, including refugees, are therefore by necessity viewed as a homogeneous group in this sense. Thus, these studies can make reasonable

⁵ At present (early 2002), Citizenship and Immigration Canada appears intent on raising the minimum requirement to 80 points. This initiative will be discussed in the conclusion.

assessments of the efficacy of the immigration program in general but not about the class-based nature of selection in particular.⁶

This problem has long been acknowledged in the Canadian federal government, and nearly 20 years ago a decision was made to create a new database that would allow direct investigation of the economic participation of different classes of immigrants. The Immigrant Database (IMDB) has been built by linking the considerable information provided by immigrants when they officially land in Canada with their subsequent tax files (Figure 1; for a description of the database, see Langlois and Dougherty 1997). On the IM-1000 landing forms, immigrants record their general demographic characteristics, including sex and age, a few elements of their migration history (country of birth and country of last permanent residence), and key information on their readiness to enter the labour market (language facility, level of education, prior work experience). The form also includes a precise indication of the class of entry, which is provided by a landing official.

⁶ There have been numerous qualitative studies of the economic participation of specific classes and types of immigrants, such as refugees and business immigrants. These are by necessity based on relatively small samples and typically focused on experiences in a single city. I have not surveyed this work here, as the present study deals with comprehensive quantitative information.

Figure 1: Immigration Database

After landing, immigrants who receive more than approximately \$700 in income in any given year must submit a tax return, in which they record their residential location, occupation, place of work, and give a detailed accounting of the income they have received from various sources (employment, self-employment, investment, welfare, etc.). The IMDB allows researchers, for the first time, to investigate the economic participation and performance of different classes of immigrants. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this paper, there is still one vital missing ingredient. We have no way of knowing critical events that happened between landing and the filling of tax forms. In particular, the database has no record of settlement services offered to immigrants or additional education or training they may have undertaken to improve their human capital.

The IMDB has only recently been released to researchers, first in a set of compendium tables based on tax returns between 1980 and 1995, and in late 2001 in a second set that includes information up to 1997. Little has been published so far based on this information, not only because it is so new but also because the compendium tables narrow the range of questions that can be studied. They do not lend themselves, for example, to the kind of study discussed earlier where researchers examine the role of human capital in the labour market – an insufficient number of variables are included in the tables that have been made available so far. However, a few studies have emerged. Policy makers themselves have documented the database and presented a series of studies, at the national level, analyzing the income of different immigrant classes (CIC 1998 a, b, and c; CIC 1999). One of these is particularly relevant for this study, and shows that Skilled Workers rapidly exceed the average income level of Canadian tax filers (CIC 1998b). Ley (2000) has used the 1995 compendium tables to investigate the relative income of Business Class immigrants living in British Columbia. Contrary to widespread views, he demonstrates that they have below-average incomes relative to other immigrant classes. This unexpected finding is corroborated by a set of interviews with (mainly) Entrepreneur Class immigrants, also presented in the same paper, where respondents described their difficulties establishing successful businesses in Canada.

Ley's data did not allow for direct analysis of the relationship between the human capital and the incomes of business immigrants, but he advances the argument that the low human capital threshold of this group (compared with Skilled Worker Class immigrants) may be a key factor in explaining their lack of economic achievement – a point to which I will return later. Finally, Li (2000) has obtained a custom tabulation of 1995 IMDB information (i.e., beyond that in the compendium tables) to study immigrants' returns from self-employment. He includes a fairly extensive list of variables – landing year, tax year, age at landing, sex, class, country of last permanent residence (classified into world regions), education at landing, and employment status (employed vs. self-employed) – and employs multiple classification analysis.

His study demonstrates that, while the level of self-employment among immigrants has increased since 1980, the earnings of the self-employed have fallen relative to those in the regular labour market – once appropriate variables are held constant. Li therefore concludes that immigrants are being pushed into self-employment by their inability to obtain decent jobs in the labour market, a point to which I will return below. Li acknowledges some discomfort with this finding, since it contradicts the conclusions he reached in an earlier study based on census data (see Li 1997). He is unable to explain the discrepancy and speculates that it may be due to the fact that all immigrants

were included in his previous study while the IMDB study focused exclusively on those that are recent.⁷

The settlement services system

Immigrants entering Canada need a wide variety of settlement services, including help finding accommodation, language training (in many cases), special educational programs for their children, health care, and so on. Some of these services, such as education for children, are directly provided by the state (Table 3). In most cases, provincial governments are responsible for delivering services to immigrants – sometimes with funds transferred from the federal government. Other services are funded by the state but delivered by non-government organizations, including adult language classes, assistance in locating housing, financial support, and general orientation sessions. A number of services are also available through the private market. Immigrants gain access to services depending on their class of entry. Government sponsored refugees, for example, are expected to need, and entitled to receive, the most complete set of support services. In contrast, immigrants who come to Canada to join their families are offered much more limited support (based on the principle that the family will take care of most of their needs). Economic Class immigrants are expected to purchase many of their services in the private market.

Table 3: Selection policies and Services provided for immigrants to Canada

	Immigrant class			
	Family	Refugee	Economic classes	
			Skilled worker	Business classes
Selection criteria	Sponsored by close family member	Complex	70 points	25-40 points, experience, money
Settlement services	Language Orientation Counselling	Language Orientation Counselling Welfare* Housing*	Language Orientation Counselling	Language Orientation Counselling

*These services are available for Government Sponsored Refugees, but not those sponsored by private individuals or organizations

⁷ In another paper (forthcoming in *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*) I argue that individuals appear to fill out census and tax forms quite differently. Generally, they seem to be much more assiduous in reporting business losses on their tax forms, since there is an economic incentive to do so. Thus, analyses of self-employment incomes based on the census vs. the IMDB will show considerably different results. In the former, self-employed individuals earn more than their counterparts employed in the regular labour market while the opposite is true in the census. This discrepancy is somewhat worrisome but is not an issue for this paper, which compares different immigrant classes using the same database.

A few services are widely available and state-funded, for all immigrants. The most important of these is access to English or French language classes, although the level of these programs is often criticized as too low, and only Refugees are eligible for financial support (through the Adjustment Assistance Program; see CIC 1998a) when taking them.⁸ General orientation services are also universally available without cost to immigrants. A few special services are targeted for Business Class immigrants and are available at centres run by provincial governments. At the British Columbia Business Immigration Office, for example, counselors are available to discuss business plans with immigrants. Seminars are also conducted weekly, in several languages, which describe business opportunities in BC and the rules and procedures of the various business immigration programs. In particular, Entrepreneur Class immigrants are told how to apply to have their conditions-of-entry removed within two years. Participants in these half-day seminars are charged a small fee. Finally, the Business Immigration Office maintains data on the business climate in BC and also a *Business Opportunities Bulletin*, a list of local companies seeking investment or business partners. Note that these centres do not actually train immigrants to establish or run businesses in Canada, nor do they provide detailed orientation on the systems in place to regulate business practices. Some of this information is available through the counseling process, but not systematically in general courses.⁹

A small number of NGOs in Canada offer business orientation classes, which are open to immigrants from all classes. In Vancouver, for example, an organization called SUCCESS, which primarily serves the Chinese-origin immigrant population, runs such a program.¹⁰ It is also worth noting that there are a number of programs on operating small businesses available through Human Resources Development Canada, but these are provided to all Canadians who meet certain criteria, and are not specifically focused on immigrants.

Summarizing this section and the previous one, the Canadian government has established a comprehensive selection system intended to admit immigrants who will be self-supporting. This includes special programs for immigrants who are expected to transfer capital to Canada, or to become successful entrepreneurs. Given this philosophy of selection, settlement services are generally modest. Certain groups, especially refugees, have access to financial aid and a number of programs,

⁸ Since language education is funded by provincial governments, there is quite a lot of variation across the country in the amount of training that is freely available to immigrants. The number of hours of English classes available to immigrants in BC is low, relative to other Canadian jurisdictions.

⁹ Information in this paragraph was gathered from a combination of the Internet sites of relevant government offices, and conversations with the officers who operate these programs. These conversations took two forms. First, a research assistant contacted managers of various programs and asked them to explain what they do (I thank Geoff Rempel for his help on this part of the project). Secondly, members of MCAWS – the branch of government that administers programs for immigrants to British Columbia – commented on their roles at a special seminar held to discuss preliminary results of this paper.

¹⁰ Information on the SUCCESS program was provided by a manager of that organization.

but most are eligible for relatively few services. Business immigrants are offered advice and a list of opportunities, but not any comprehensive programs designed to assist them enter the economy. As noted, the whole ethos of the business immigration program mitigates against this type of service, since those admitted are expected to establish businesses quickly and make an economic contribution to Canada (not the other way around).

Immigrant settlement in British Columbia

The profile of immigrants arriving in British Columbia is unique relative to the rest of the country. The geographical position of the province on the west coast has always meant that it receives a larger share of immigrants from Asia than other parts of Canada (Table 4). At the same time, individuals from Africa, the Middle East, South America, and the Caribbean are more drawn toward other provinces, notably Ontario and Québec. Further, British Columbia receives a small number of refugees relative to its total immigrant intake and, concomitantly, a larger share of economic immigrants. This is especially true of those who enter through the business immigration programs (Table 4). These two patterns are interrelated, of course: few of the refugees admitted to Canada come from East and South Asia, compared with the number originating in Europe and Southeast Asian countries; conversely, most Business Class immigrants come from East Asian countries.

Table 4: Immigrant profile of B.C. relative to Canada: (1980-1996 landings, over 15 years old, 1997 tax year)

BC	Total landed	Family Class	Refugees	Economic Class	Business programs
Total	287,250	115,860	33,190	119,860	12,465
Europe/N. Amer./Australia/NZ	63,745	22,265	10,105	29,065	2,025
South & Central America	8,735	2,310	3,540	2,725	250
Caribbean & Guyana	1,930	1,145	50	690	20
Africa	9,360	2,110	1,895	5,240	225
West Central & Middle Asia	11,395	1,675	4,345	5,120	375
Eastern Asia	95,590	26,625	585	55,880	8,745
Southern Asia	45,470	39,845	2,045	3,535	85
Southeast Asia & Oceania	51,000	19,870	10,635	17,595	745
Canada	Total landed	Family Class	Refugees	Economic Class	Business programs
Total	1,533,610	599,525	287,770	600,445	34,330
Europe/N. Amer./Australia/NZ	413,265	131,515	87,930	186,860	7,790
South & Central America	79,505	23,660	32,040	23,280	760
Caribbean & Guyana	136,610	96,665	2,595	35,710	210
Africa	95,555	25,690	29,430	39,710	1,545
West Central & Middle Asia	125,270	24,670	34,460	64,655	4,350
Eastern Asia	250,180	82,600	3,035	142,305	17,700

Southern Asia	198,900	123,880	37,320	37,215	775
Southeast Asia & Oceania	234,095	90,755	60,950	70,600	1,190

BC Index	Total landed	Family Class	Refugees	Economic Class	Business programs
Total	100	103	62	107	194
Europe/N. Amer./Australia/NZ	82	90	61	83	139
South & Central America	59	52	59	62	176
Caribbean & Guyana	8	6	10	10	51
Africa	52	44	34	70	78
West Central & Middle Asia	49	36	67	42	46
Eastern Asia	204	172	103	210	264
Southern Asia	122	172	29	51	59
Southeast Asia & Oceania	116	117	93	133	334

Source: IMDB special tabulations

Generally speaking, there are two widespread stereotypes associated with Canadian immigration. The first, that Economic Class immigrants are more successful than their counterparts who are admitted through humanitarian programs (particularly refugees), is ingrained in immigration policy, of course, and echoes through much of the academic work on the subject and also media treatments of immigration.¹¹ The second, that immigrants from East Asia tend to be well off financially, is mainly associated with public opinion and the media rather than scholarly analysis. Whatever its origins, this view is firmly held and has been used to explain the relative buoyancy of British Columbia's economy during the early 1990s. Similarly, the economic downturn later in the decade was thought to be exacerbated by the re-migration of Chinese-Canadians to Hong Kong in the aftermath of the colony's repatriation to China. For example, Thomas Walkom (1997) stated that:

The big fear here [in Vancouver] is that they're going back, those Hong Kong big-money investors who have been migrating to British Columbia and who, with their wads of cash and trans-Pacific connections, were supposed to turn this laid-back city into some kind of frantic New York West.¹²

The high representation in BC of east Asian immigrants generally, and those who were admitted through the Business Class specifically, would lead one to expect immigrants living there to

¹¹ Diane Francis, for example, makes this point approximately once a month in her opinion column in *The National Post*. Academics have likewise called for a higher ratio of Economic Class immigrants; see, for example, the essays contained in DeVoretz (1995).

¹² T. Walkom, T. 'Hong Kong Exodus Worries B.C.: Vancouver Real Estate Prices Drop as Immigrants Start Going Home,' *Toronto Star*, 29 Sept. 1997. For a sampling of similar comments published at around the same time, see D. Flavelle, 'Well-off Chinese are Big Spenders: survey,' *Toronto Star*, 10 Jan. 1997; J. Harasemchuk, 'Exodus Benefits Calgary – Envoy,' *Calgary Herald*, 11 April 1997; and G. Yiu, 'Money Concerns, not Disclosure Fears, are Sending Immigrants Home,' *Vancouver Sun*, 17 September 1997.

be affluent relative to those settling in the rest of Canada. Actually, both census and tax data suggest that immigrants living in BC have slightly lower incomes than their counterparts elsewhere in Canada. In the 1996 census, for example, the total average annual 1995 income of immigrants living in BC who had landed between 1980 and 1996 was \$17,946, around \$500 less than the Canadian average for the same demographic group.¹³ Even so, the objectives of the business immigration program, together with the popular image of immigrants from East Asian countries, could reasonably lead us to expect that:

- Immigrants entering BC through the Economic Class should have higher rates of participation in the labour market than those entering through other programs. Further, Business Class immigrants, who are admitted because of their previous economic accomplishments, should exhibit the most successful patterns of economic incorporation of all groups.
- Immigrants entering BC from East Asian countries should have higher rates of participation in the labour market and also higher levels of employment earnings and self-employment income than those coming from other parts of the world, with the possible exception of those coming from highly industrialized, western countries.

Labour force participation and employment earnings

Aggregate IMDB statistics reveal a clear relationship between the human capital possessed by immigrants when they arrive in Canada and their success in the labour market (also see CIC 1998b and c). Principal Applicants to the Skilled Worker program are assessed according to the points system and have, by a substantial margin, the highest levels of education and facility in an official language (Table 5). In British Columbia they also reported the highest levels of income on their 1997 tax returns, some 75 percent above average for men and nearly 80 percent above average for women (in these cases the average is for immigrants who landed in Canada between 1980 and 1996 who filed a 1997 tax return with a non-zero income).¹⁴ At the opposite end of the scale, the spouses and dependents of immigrants entering Canada through the business programs had the lowest levels of education, official language competence, and incomes.

¹³ These numbers were drawn from a custom tabulation of census data made available to the Metropolis research centres in Canada by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada (CICT10h.ivt). The low incomes of immigrants living in BC are also noted in CIC (1999).

¹⁴ As in other analyses of IMDB data, I refrained from including immigrants who landed in 1997 in this study, since their incomes for the 1997 tax year would be only partial (CIC 1999).

Table 5: General characteristics of the BC immigrant population, landing years 1980-1996 (1997 tax year)

	#	Average years of education	% official language	% self- employed	Average total income	% female
Total immigrant population						
Total	287,250	11.6	53.5	13.7	15,389	50.2
All family class	115,860	10.9	43.9	11.8	13,756	55.0
All refugee class	33,190	10.8	29.8	16.7	14,233	38.4
All economic class	119,860	12.5	68.1	15.5	17,807	49.5
Skilled worker PA	34,635	14.3	92.5	20.5	27,907	40.5
Skilled worker Sp. & Dep.	21,455	11.9	77.0	13.7	15,514	68.3
All business PA	12,465	12.8	51.1	23.3	13,858	13.4
All business Sp. & Dep.	25,555	10.7	38.0	9.5	8,908	66.9
Assisted relatives & Other	25,750	12.1	66.1	12.5	16,877	46.3
Other	18,340	12.1	61.2	8.0	11,995	46.3
Males						
Total	142,910	11.9	54.8	17.5	18,621	
All family class	52,135	11.1	45.8	16.1	17,390	
All refugee class	20,435	11.0	32.6	20.8	16,762	
All economic class	60,495	12.8	69.8	19.0	21,380	
Skilled worker PA	20,605	14.8	91.1	24.3	32,137	
Skilled worker Sp. & Dep.	6,805	11.1	77.8	14.6	18,419	
All business PA	10,800	12.8	51.0	23.9	14,318	
All business Sp. & Dep.	8,455	10.3	40.6	8.8	9,409	
Assisted relatives & Other	13,830	12.4	66.6	15.5	19,639	
Other	9,850	12.3	55.8	9.2	12,052	
Females						
Total	144,335	11.4	52.2	9.8	12,189	
All family class	63,725	10.7	42.2	8.2	10,784	
All refugee class	12,755	10.5	25.3	10.1	10,184	
All economic class	59,365	12.1	66.4	12.0	14,167	
Skilled worker PA	14,030	13.6	94.5	14.9	21,693	
Skilled worker Sp. & Dep.	14,645	12.3	76.7	13.2	14,164	
All business PA	1,665	12.6	51.4	19.8	10,873	
All business Sp. & Dep.	17,105	10.9	36.7	9.9	8,661	
Assisted relatives & Other	11,920	11.8	65.6	9.1	13,673	
Other	8,485	11.9	67.4	6.7	11,929	

Source: special tabulation of IMDB data (dan_bc.ivt)

Special tabulations of the IMDB allow us to investigate these relationships more deeply. Figures 2a and b indicate the propensity for men and women to report employment earnings based on their class of entry, education level and official language ability. For men, there is surprisingly little

variation in the percentage of those declaring employment earnings *in the major entry classes*. Whether they arrived as refugees, skilled workers, or to join family already living in Canada, and regardless of their level of education or language ability, around two-thirds of male immigrants living in BC reported employment earnings in 1997. While there were minor exceptions within these three large classes (e.g., men who were admitted in the family class with low educational attainment), the only group that really stands out is that which came to Canada through the three business programs. Only 40 percent of these immigrants reported earnings through employment and this ratio actually declined with educational attainment and was lowest for those who arrived with university degrees. However, we must remember that Business Class immigrants are *not* admitted to Canada on the basis of their potential to join the work force, but rather because they intend to establish businesses or invest money. Therefore, we should expect these individuals to have high rates of self-employment and investment activities rather than salaried employment.

Figure 2a: Percent reporting employment earnings, BC, 1997, males

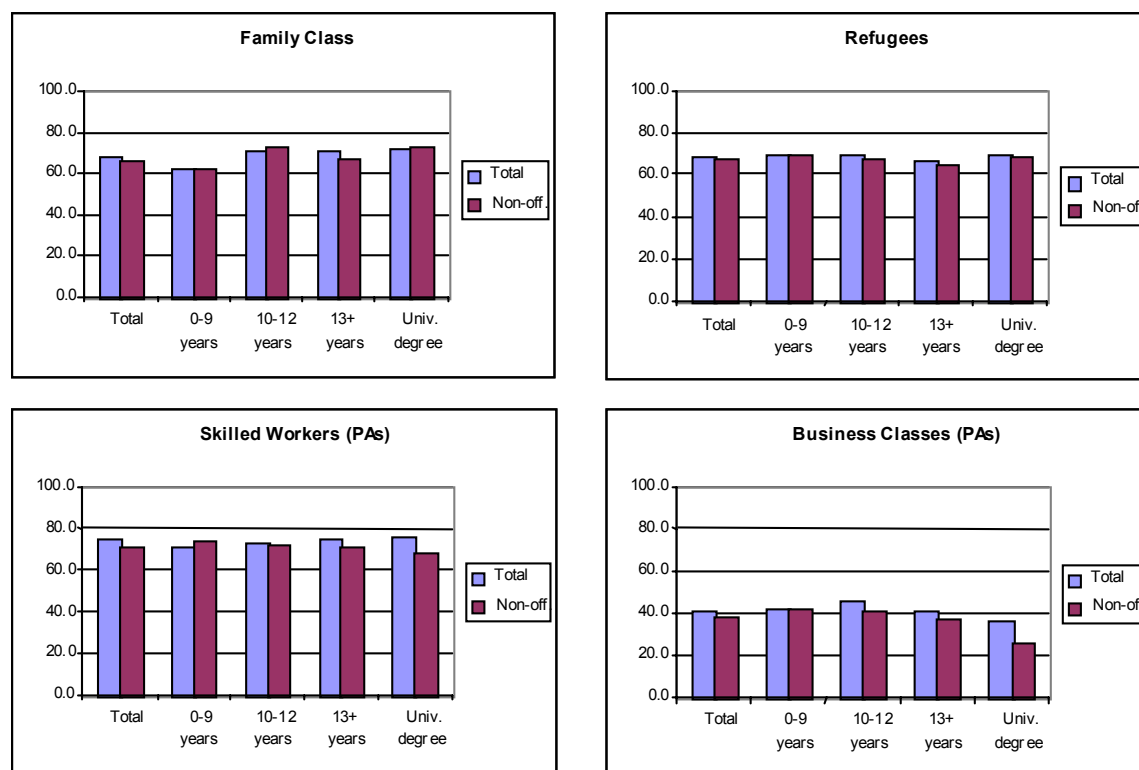
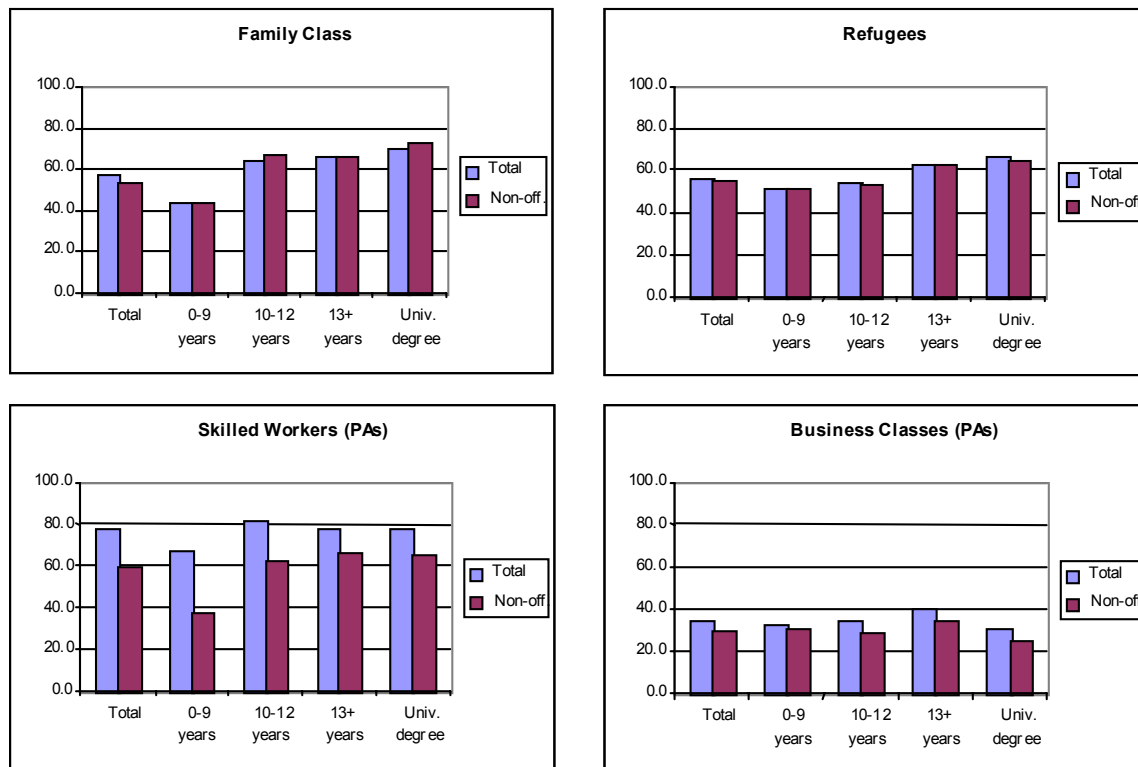


Figure 2b: Percent reporting employment earnings, BC, 1997, females



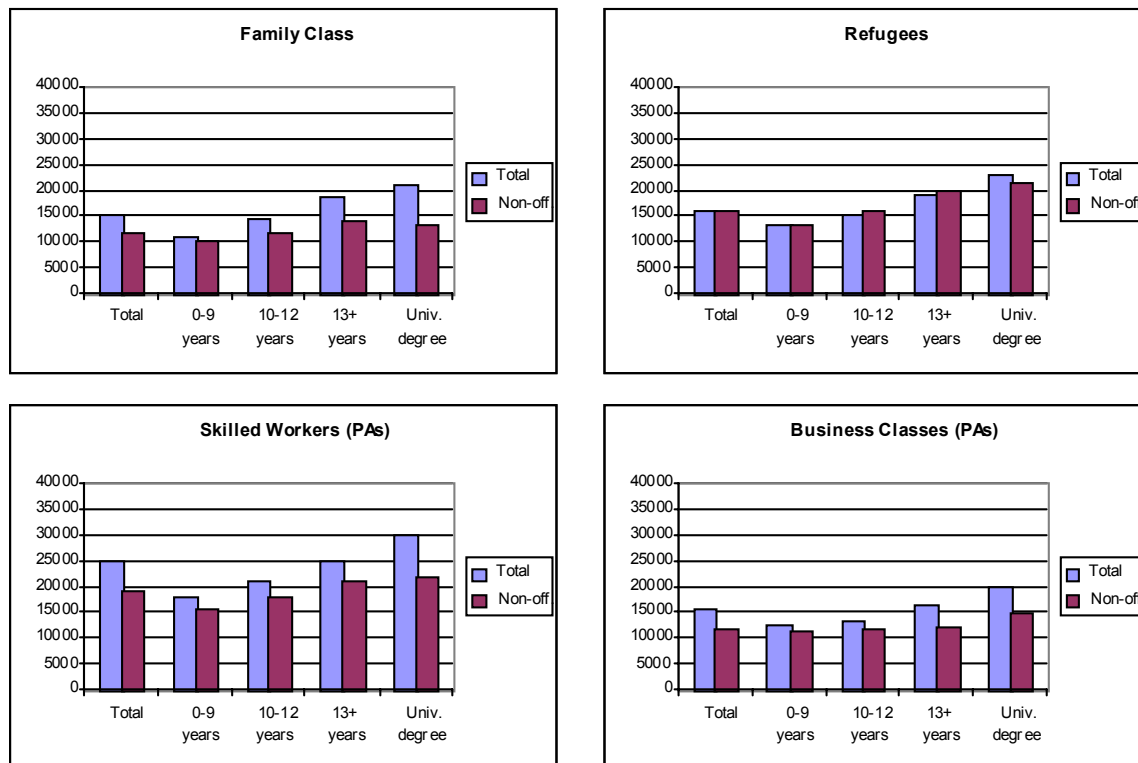
Female immigrants, in total, have lower rates of labour market participation (as is the case for the Canadian-born). Their experience is distinct from that of men in another way, however: their propensity to report employment earnings rises with educational attainment for those who entered under the humanitarian programs, and with official language competence for those who came as skilled workers (but not vice versa). I will not attempt to explain these patterns here, but simply note that they illustrate the fact that the labour market is structured in fundamentally different ways for women and men, a point that has been made repeatedly by feminist scholars (e.g., Hanson and Pratt 1995, Boyd 1992). As in the case of men, women who entered Canada through the business programs are significantly less likely to report employment income than those admitted under the three major classes.

The impact of education and language fluency is more apparent in the level of employment earnings (Figures 3 a and b). For both women and men, there is a monotonic rise of reported income with each step of educational attainment, for all classes. Clearly, those arriving with less than high school equivalency face major barriers to upward mobility in the labour market. Significantly, these do not appear to dissipate over time. While employment earnings are higher for men and women who have lived in Canada (in this case BC) longer, the ratio of earnings for those with university degrees vs. those with less than 10 years of schooling is approximately the same for those who arrived in the

early 1980s and the mid-1990s (Table 6). In other words, the labour market penalty for lower educational attainment seems to be long term.

Figure 3a: Average employment earnings, BC, 1997, males



Figure 3b: Average employment earnings, BC, 1997, females**Table 6: 1997 income by landing period and education for BC immigrants**

	Total	0-9 years	10-12 years	13+ years	Univ. degree	Ratio of Univ.: 0-9
Total						
1980 - 1984	27,407	19,669	26,241	33,067	44,816	2.3
1985 - 1989	23,157	14,048	21,542	27,391	35,988	2.6
1990 - 1994	18,704	11,207	15,942	21,440	28,311	2.5
1995 - 1996	14,986	9,785	11,874	15,708	20,518	2.1
Males						
Total, 1980-1996	23,957	16,204	20,371	27,597	34,032	2.1
1980 - 1984	32,228	22,219	30,964	39,433	52,799	2.4
1985 - 1989	26,735	15,966	24,400	31,210	42,148	2.6
1990 - 1994	21,463	12,797	17,856	24,315	32,520	2.5
1995 - 1996	17,565	11,449	13,670	18,512	23,149	2.0
Females						
Total, 1980-1996	17,055	11,894	15,723	19,779	23,349	2.0
1980 - 1984	21,999	16,628	22,045	25,838	33,371	2.0
1985 - 1989	19,324	11,892	19,044	23,238	27,914	2.3
1990 - 1994	15,710	9,415	14,110	18,417	22,733	2.4
1995 - 1996	11,954	8,030	10,032	12,577	16,511	2.1

Source: special tabulation of IMDB data (dan_bc.ivt)

The relationship between education and employment earnings is, however, modified by language proficiency. For most groups of women and men, earnings rise steeply between educational categories *for those who arrived in Canada knowing one of the official languages*. For those who landed without English or French, the labour market premium for additional education is much less. As seen in the case of education, the penalty for those arriving without an official language does not decline very much over time. The ratio of income for men and women (together) who arrived between 1995 and 1996 with, as opposed to without, an official language was 1.7. For those who arrived between 1980 and 1984, the ratio was 1.5. Incomes for those landing with and without language skills both rose, but at relatively equal rates, and those who faced early penalties in the labour market have been unable to close the gap.¹⁵

There is an important exception to this pattern. As noted, for most groups those who arrive without knowing English or French receive little benefit from higher levels of education, while those who are proficient in an official language are, on average, rewarded for their human capital. But the case of refugees living in BC – both men and women – is quite different. For this group, the relationship between education and reported income is not affected by language proficiency at landing. In fact, male refugees who do not speak English or French earn almost as much, on average, as *Principal Applicants* who passed the points test in the Skilled Worker program. Moreover, male refugees with a university degree (and lacking an official language) earn more than their Skilled Worker counterparts in the same circumstances. The earnings trend for women refugees relative to skilled workers is similar, though not quite so striking. There is no easy explanation for this result, though it is worth noting that it is also true at the national scale (forthcoming paper). Moreover, the earnings gap between those who arrived with vs. without an official language among refugees is lower than for other immigrants in every level of educational attainment *and in each immigrant cohort arriving since 1980*.

Returning to the basic theme of this paper, we saw earlier that Refugee Class immigrants receive a different package of settlement services than those offered to other groups – especially those who are sponsored by the government. In particular, they are uniquely entitled to a combination of language training and welfare support. While there is no means to prove this assertion given the data at hand,¹⁶ it is likely that refugees are able to learn English (in the case of BC) more quickly and

¹⁵ The income gap related to language is larger in BC than other Canadian provinces (CIC 1998c). This may reflect the fact that the BC government provides a low level of free language training to immigrants compared with other provinces.

¹⁶ A new type of data is currently being collected that may help us answer this question: the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LCIS), which will trace the settlement services used, including language training, by a cohort of newly arriving immigrants, over a four year period. The results from the LCIS will be released in 2005.

effectively than other immigrants. Other groups, while entitled to free language training, must secure work immediately in order to meet their financial needs, limiting the amount of time they can devote to learning English. This explanation is speculative, but I think it is the most plausible way to explain the reduced barriers, in both the short and long term, faced by refugees who arrive without official language competence.

Immigration and entrepreneurship

The proportion of British Columbian immigrants declaring self-employment income varies widely between different entry classes. For both men and women, those who came to join family members already living in Canada had the lowest level of entrepreneurship, doubly so for those arriving without the ability to interact in an official language (Figures 4a and 4b). An intuitive explanation for this result may be that family-class immigrants are assisted in the labour market by their spouses, parents, or children when they arrive, and therefore are not pushed – as much as other groups – towards self-employment.

Figure 4a: Percent reporting self-employment earnings, BC, 1997, males

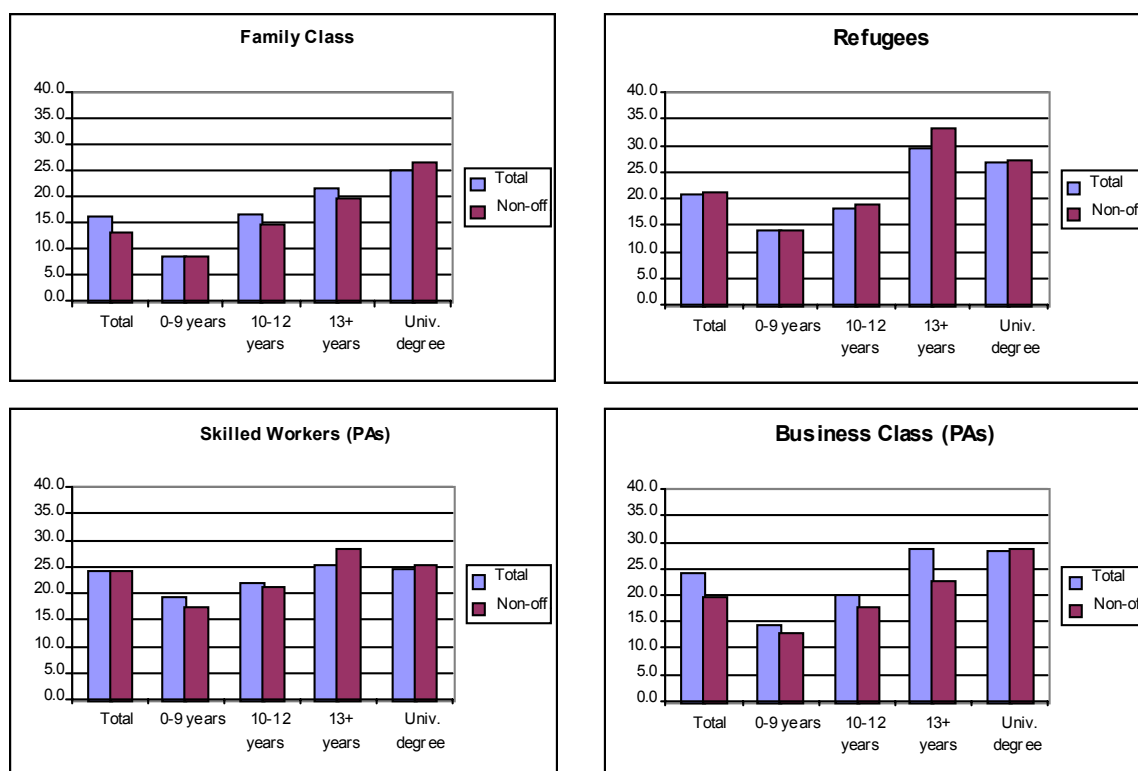
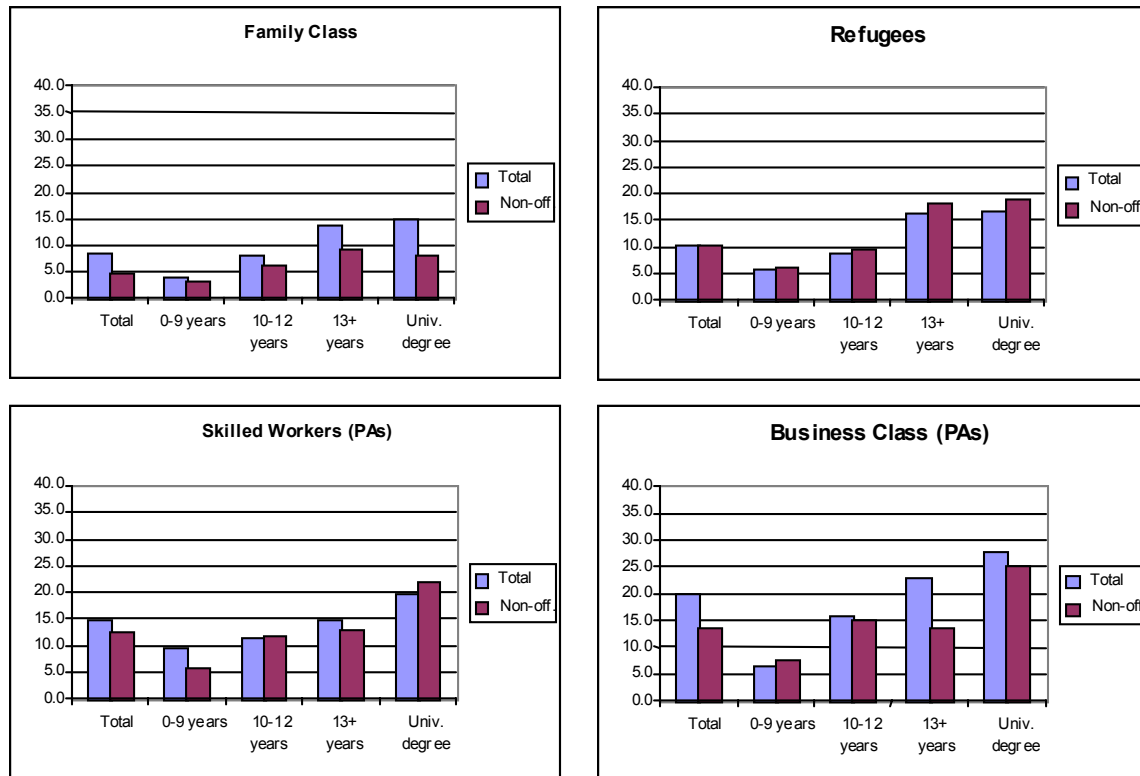


Figure 4b: Percent reporting self-employment earnings, BC, 1997, females

The rate of self-employment for male and female refugees is above average for immigrants in general (Table 5), though below that of the Principal Applicants who entered through the business and skilled worker programs. Once again, refugees stand out as the only group of immigrants where the rate of self-employment of those who landed without an official language is as high (women), or slightly higher (men), as those proficient in English or French upon their arrival. As might be expected, Principal Applicants who came as skilled workers or through the business programs have the highest reported levels of self-employment. Many skilled workers entered as professionals trained in medicine, architecture, or engineering, occupations that lend themselves to self-employment in the Canadian context. Moreover, those who are blocked from regular employment through the non-recognition of their credentials may well chose to establish businesses in related fields. Business Class immigrants, of course, are selected on the basis of their potential either to invest in businesses or create them. We should not be surprised at a high level of entrepreneurship among this group. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere (forthcoming), given the requirements of the Independent and Entrepreneurial programs, the rate of self-employment of business immigrants to British Columbia may well be lower than expected.

We saw earlier that the level of educational attainment makes little difference to the rate of labour force participation, for most groups of immigrants. In contrast, entrepreneurship is closely associated with education – those holding university degrees are about twice as likely to report self-

employment income as those who did not enter high school. In part, this is understandable (as noted in the above paragraph) given that many well-paid professionals in Canada are self-employed. But it also suggests that those with low levels of education might not have adequate preparation to operate businesses successfully. Therefore it reveals a possible error in ‘push’ theories of immigrant entrepreneurship, which are predicated on the idea that individuals who face the greatest barriers in the labour market have little choice but to engage in self-employment. Perhaps there is a kind of educational threshold effect, in that men and women with less than 10 years of schooling, and without an official language, are unlikely to be self-employed. However, for men particularly, those with university degrees who lacked an official language when they landed in Canada are more likely to be self-employed than those who were proficient in English or French. At the low end of the educational spectrum, the combination of poor language skills and little formal education seems to inhibit entrepreneurship. At the high end, those who have an official language can enter the regular labour force and, as seen above, tend to be reasonably well paid. Those without language skills, conversely, have more to gain by becoming self-employed.

This disappointing picture of self-employment is reinforced when we examine income data. In fact, the average earnings from self-employment of all the immigrants in British Columbia who declared this type of income were only \$7,120. Since most of those who declared self-employment earnings also have other sources of income as well, their total average reported income for 1997 was \$18,880. It seemed reasonable to use this statistic for measuring the well-being of self-employed immigrants, rather than confining the analysis to the meager amount earned exclusively through entrepreneurship. Note that the corresponding *total* average income figure for all those receiving employment earnings was \$22,370.¹⁷

In general, the total incomes of those who report self-employment earnings are even more affected by language proficiency and education than those of wage and salary workers (for corroboration on this point, see below). For all three major classes, those who have university and other tertiary education receive much higher incomes than those who do not (Figures 5a and 5b).

¹⁷ We must exercise caution interpreting these figures. There is no doubt that many individuals are included in both of these categories, i.e., by receiving both forms of income. We should also recall that self-employment statistics are *net* income rather than gross, and that it is in the economic interest for individuals to report as many costs related to their self-employed activities as they possibly can. Conversely, in the Canadian tax system it is difficult—in most cases impossible—to reduce employment income because of costs incurred. For example, while it is entirely legitimate to deduct transportation expenses from self-employed earnings, this is not the case for wage and salary income. In other words the self-employment income statistics considered here might be artificially low. For further discussion of the meagre incomes of the self-employed, see Li (2000) and (forthcoming).

Figure 5a: Average total income of self-employed, BC, 1997, males

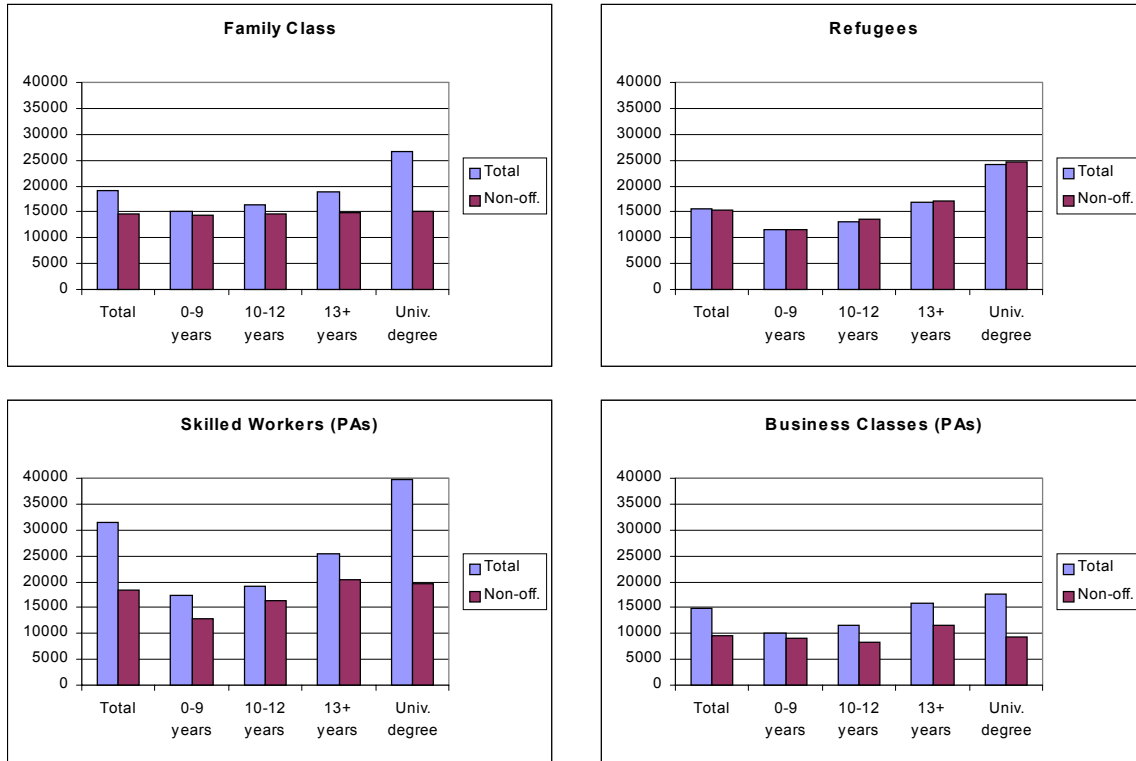


Figure 5b: Average total income of self-employed, BC, 1997, females

Again, men and women who come to Canada through the Family and Skilled Worker programs and who can communicate in an official language reap the benefits of higher education, while there is little return for the human capital of those who do not (note the especially prominent difference for Skilled Workers with university education). And, again, the situation is different for those who landed as Refugees, the one group for whom the lack of English at the time of landing does not appear to be a long-term impediment. The really surprising trend in these data, though, is the situation of Principal Applicants who landed through one of the three business programs. As seen earlier, this group had modest rates of participation in the regular labour market, and low incomes from employment activities. And, contrary to popular opinion, this group reports the lowest amount of self-employment income of all the entry categories analyzed here. It is worth noting that the category ‘total income’ used in this discussion includes income from employment, self-employment, and interest and dividends – thereby including the main forms of income that would be expected for all three of the business classes.¹⁸

¹⁸ That is, income from welfare and unemployment insurance is not included. Also, business income, that is the profits and losses of firms, is not included in these figures. It is possible that some of the immigrants surveyed here operate highly profitable businesses and reinvest accumulated capital into business growth while taking little cash home. Unfortunately, there is no way to investigate this possibility through existing data, though the Canadian government is exploring the feasibility of linking the IMDB to annual business tax files.

Region of origin

As noted, British Columbia draws different types of immigrants from different areas of the world.¹⁹ During the 1980-1996 period, Western countries (defined in this study as Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand) and those in East and Southeast Asia contributed the largest share of Economic Class immigrants, while nearly all of those arriving from South Asia came to join **family (Table 4)**. Refugees arrived from nearly all parts of the world, but especially from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. Finally, East Asia, Europe (mainly the western part) and to a lesser extent the Middle East, were the most important sources of Business Class immigrants. There are also considerable variations in the age, gender, educational, and linguistic composition of immigrants arriving from these world regions, though I do not have the scope to discuss these detailed patterns here. The important point is that the distinct characteristics of immigrants from various parts of the world are associated with different income and employment patterns. Earlier, I speculated that the degree of economic success of immigrants from East Asia would be particularly high. However, given the unexpectedly low level of income associated with Business Class immigrants, we now have reason to doubt this proposition.

This more skeptical stance is confirmed by the IMDB. Table 7 was generated from a series of simple regression models of employment earnings for men and women, with years of education and language proficiency used as independent variables.²⁰ Separate models were run for each major world source region of immigrants living in British Columbia. There is considerable variation in average earnings from employment, with immigrants from Europe and Africa enjoying nearly twice the income of those from South Asia. As would be expected, this outcome is related to human capital, with the former two groups landing in Canada with much higher levels of official language proficiency and education. Given that such a high proportion of men and women from South Asia came to Canada through the family reunification program, and have therefore rarely been assessed

¹⁹ The relevant variable is based on Country of Last Permanent Residence, grouped into world-region categories. Note that most of the categories used here are actually quite heterogeneous. Eastern Asia, for example, includes Japan and China, which have vastly different standards of living. Similarly, the Africa category includes refugees from countries in the Horn of Africa, Whites from South Africa, second-migrant Indo-Pakistanis who had businesses in Uganda, etc.

²⁰ Results in this part of the paper should not be seen as definitive. The regression models were based on tabular data, not individual cases. This means that there were only 8 possible combinations for each group, 4 categories of educational attainment plus a dichotomous variable distinguishing between those who arrived in Canada with vs. without an official language. To devise a beta value for years of education, I simply used a realistic single value for each educational category: 7 for those with 0-9 years of education, 11 for the 10-12 group, 14 for those with some university but not a degree, and 17 for those with one or more university degrees. While this approach yields a fairly concise and readable set of results, it is based on highly manipulated and interpolated data. Finally, the data also violate one of the most central assumptions of statistical testing, in that they represent the entire population of individuals rather than a sample. For this reason I will not report significance figures though note that, given the population sizes used here, virtually every statistic in Table 7 would be significant at the .01 probability level.

according to the points system, they have conspicuously low levels of English and French proficiency upon their arrival (24 and 16 percent, respectively), as well as the lowest average number of years of education. However, it is important to note that the R values in these equations are modest, with only approximately one-third of the variance in income explained by the two independent variables in the models of the total male and female immigrant populations, and much less in some of the equations for individual source-region groups (e.g., South Asian men, and several groups of women). This means that other variables play a large role in determining employment earnings, a point investigated in the next section of this paper.

Table 7: Employment earnings by source region, BC, 1997

	Average Number	Average earnings	Average education	Average Official language	Regression constant	Beta education	Beta language	Beta R squared
Men								
Europe/NA/A/NZ	22,050	33,661	13.0	0.75	-3,347	2,408	7,506	0.41
Latin America	3,165	20,694	11.1	0.45	4,833	1,312	2,751	0.24
Caribbean	720	27,815	11.5	0.96	-7,395	1,986	12,953	0.23
Africa	3,900	31,672	13.1	0.93	-15,502	3,071	7,480	0.39
W Asia/Middle east	3,820	21,054	12.7	0.70	-824	1,542	3,318	0.24
East Asia	23,890	19,816	12.0	0.52	6,994	886	4,133	0.24
South Asia	17,165	17,878	10.9	0.24	9,761	652	4,227	0.19
Southeast Asia	16,770	22,592	11.2	0.65	9,399	1,088	1,633	0.27
Total population	91,485	23,950	11.9	0.57	3,472	1,422	6,112	0.30
Women								
Europe/NA/A/NZ	20,625	21,517	12.6	0.77	1,319	1,363	3,878	0.37
Latin America	2,415	15,617	11.0	0.46	5,209	939	76	0.16
Caribbean	730	20,758	10.7	0.95	4,142	1,084	5,260	0.14
Africa	2,695	21,149	12.3	0.93	-4,524	1,665	5,584	0.30
W Asia/Middle east	2,430	15,674	12.3	0.67	2,215	991	1,897	0.17
East Asia	20,720	15,027	11.5	0.47	5,759	653	3,713	0.27
South Asia	14,420	11,390	10.7	0.16	7,408	290	5,415	0.29
Southeast Asia	18,635	18,451	11.7	0.78	6,744	822	2,635	0.28
Total population	82,670	17,070	11.7	0.59	4,034	841	5,402	0.34

Source: special tabulation of IMDB data (dan_bc.ivt)

Before turning to that discussion, though, we can gain some understanding of these additional influences by examining the different beta values for years of education and official language for the various immigrant source groups. For both men and women, there is a close correspondence between high levels of education and high returns to education for those immigrants who came to Canada from Africa and Europe. In contrast, there is a general trend for groups arriving with below-average human

capital to benefit less from their knowledge of an official language and educational investments.²¹ This is most clearly experienced by South Asian men, who have the lowest beta value for years of education and a below-average one for language. Here, it is likely that we are seeing the effect of an interaction between source region and the dominant immigrant class from the region. As noted, most immigrants from India, particularly, and other South Asian countries, arrive to join family, and are probably quickly drawn into relatively poorly-paid jobs through kinship networks; given their lack of official language competence, they likely have little choice but to accept unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.

Summarizing the relationships: A multivariate model

Regression models were constructed to provide a more precise analysis of the effects of different variables on employment earnings and the total income of those who were self-employed. For this procedure, several variables had to be converted into simplified forms; in particular, class of entry and source region were transformed into a series of dummy variables. Further, the midpoints of the categories in education (as in the previous section), age, and years since landing were used to convert these variables into quasi-interval-scale data.²² Recall that, when interpreting regression results, beta values indicate the effect on income of the relevant variable when all other variables are held constant. Tables 8a and 8b corroborate much of the preceding discussion, especially the additive impact of official language ability and education on earnings. They also show that immigrants who have been in Canada longer are much more successful in the labour market; women earn around \$800 more for each year since landing in Canada, and men around \$1,200 (net of other effects). Those who entered British Columbia as Principal Applicants to the Skilled Worker program enjoy the greatest

²¹ For men, the correlation coefficient between education level and the beta value for education (that is, looking at the 8 source region groups) is .76, and between proficiency in an official language and the beta for language is .67. The former value for women is .65 but the latter is only .19 since it is affected by the extremely low beta value for Latin American women.

²² Of course it would have been preferable to conduct the regression analysis on individual records in the IMDB but I was unable to do so. Note that I used raw income data in the regression procedure. I found that transforming the income variables to logarithmic scales had almost no effect on the direction and magnitude of equation parameters, no doubt because the observations are grouped into categories with mean income values (as opposed to individuals). Thus, the skewness usually associated with outliers in the distribution of income, was effectively neutralized. I should also add that the individuals who manage the IMDB removed highly unusual values prior to the creation of the tables used for this analysis. As discussed in footnote 21, the application of significance tests to these regression models is controversial, since the observations represent populations rather than samples. However, the tables used in this procedure allowed for thousands of possible combinations as opposed to only 8 in the previous regression analysis. Therefore, results of these models are likely more meaningful. In any case, I chose to calculate significance statistics in order to distinguish between those parameters that have a large effect on the dependent variable vs. those that are of marginal significance. Also, to compensate for the fact that the regression models were built from tables rather than individual cases, a weighted number of cases was used in significance testing, with the weight equal to the total possible number of combinations of all categories in all variables, rather than the actual number of observations in the data set.

rewards for their human capital while, as suggested earlier, Business Class immigrants are poorly paid relative to their language abilities, educational attainment and other characteristics.

Table 8a: Regression results, men

	Employment earnings				Total income of self-employed			
	Average	Beta	t	Signif.	Average	Beta	t	Signif.
Human capital								
Official language	.57	2,512	16.0	.000	.62	2,954	14.3	.000
Years of education	11.9	1,363	66.6	.000	13.0	1,248	43.8	.000
Demographic characteristics								
Years since landing	7.4	1,179	82.9	.000	8.0	897	46.2	.000
Age (years)	38.0	74	13.0	.000	41.0	-134	-14.9	.000
Landing class								
Family	.38	1,952	11.0	.000	.34	78	0.3	.765
Refugee	.15	-1,404	-6.3	.000	.17	-3,939	-12.8	.000
Skilled worker PA	.17	9,893	47.6	.000	.20	7,864	28.5	.000
Business PA	.05	-1,163	-3.7	.000	.10	-3,955	-12.0	.000
Source region								
Europe/Aus/NZ/US	.24	3,600	5.1	.000	.34	-191	-0.2	.879
Latin America	.03	-3,412	-4.4	.000	.03	-4,527	-3.4	.001
Africa	.04	3,015	4.0	.000	.04	6,150	4.6	.000
West Asia/Middle East	.04	-4,874	-6.4	.000	.06	-8,040	-6.2	.000
East Asia	.26	-4,687	-6.6	.000	.25	-6,931	-5.5	.000
South Asia	.19	-4,564	-6.4	.000	.16	-6,685	-5.3	.000
Southeast Asia	.18	-2,592	-3.7	.000	.12	-5,731	-4.5	.000
Dependent variable average	23,950				20,221			
Constant		-5,508	-7.2	.000		3,922	2.9	.004
R ²	.681				.470			
F	1,966			.000	815			.000
n	91,485				25,060			
n (weighted)	13,824				13,824			

Perhaps the greatest surprise in terms of entry class, given the earlier analysis, is that the beta value for men who came to Canada as Refugees is negative, indicating that when source region, age, years since landing, education, and so forth, are all held constant, they earn around \$1,400 less than the average for all immigrants. Still, the gap between the average for all immigrants and those who came as refugees is smaller than might be expected given the widespread view that they are faring poorly in the labour market; to provide a sense of scale, it is roughly equivalent to the incremental income earned for an additional year in Canada or an additional year of education. Moreover, the beta value for refugee women in the employment earnings model is actually positive, though not statistically significant.

Table 8b: Regression results, women

	Employment earnings				Total income of self-employed			
	Average	Beta	t	Signif.	Average	Beta	t	Signif.
Human capital								
Official language	.59	2,776	25.5	.000	.67	3,475	17.5	.000
Years of education	11.7	961	72.1	.000	12.8	993	38.8	.000
Demographic characteristics								
Years since landing	7.4	783	82.9	.000	8.2	734	42.2	.000
Age (years)	36.9	59	15.9	.000	40.8	-45	-5.9	.000
Landing class								
Family	.44	377	3.7	.000	.38	349	1.9	.056
Refugee	.09	54	0.3	.749	.09	-1,448	-4.7	.000
Skilled worker PA	.13	5,405	39.0	.000	.14	5,765	23.5	.000
Business PA	.01	-482	-1.0	.324	.02	-1,306	-2.4	.016
Source region								
Europe/Aus/NZ/US	.25	254	0.6	.567	.41	1,767	2.2	.031
Latin America	.03	-2,535	-5.1	.000	.03	437	0.5	.635
Africa	.03	954	1.9	.052	.04	3,546	4.0	.000
West Asia/Middle East	.03	-3,071	-6.2	.000	.04	-2,042	-2.3	.024
East Asia	.25	-2,096	-4.7	.000	.25	-253	-0.3	.760
South Asia	.17	-3,919	-8.6	.000	.07	834	1.0	.335
Southeast Asia	.23	-1,356	-3.1	.002	.15	84	0.1	.919
Dependent variable average	17,070				16,126			
Constant		-3,108	-6.4	.000		-4,795	-5.1	.000
R ²	.647				.313			
F	1,685			.000	418			.000
n	82,805				14,210			
n (weighted)	13,824				13,824			

As demonstrated in the previous section – but now with more variables held constant – returns to human capital vary considerably between groups originating in different parts of the world. Individuals from western countries receive substantial rewards for their education and knowledge of official languages. Their specific credentials are also more readily acknowledged in the labour market than those of individuals of non-western origins (Basran and Zong 1998, Li 2001, Reitz 2001). Men and women from the rest of the world, generally, earn lower wages and salaries in the regular labour market (net of all variables controlled); the situation for immigrants from West and South Asia is particularly notable. Two of the statistics in this table are unexpected: the negative beta values for immigrants from East Asia (especially for men), and the highly positive ones for those from Africa. It would seem that the successful image of East Asian immigrants is exaggerated, and that they face much the same difficulties in the labour market as those from other non-western origins. At the same

time, there has been absolutely no recognition of the positive economic situation of immigrants from Africa who are living in BC.²³

Turning to those with self-employment income, we see more evidence of a trend identified earlier, but this time it appears even more counter-intuitive: those receiving self-employment income are older than those who do not, and have also been in Canada longer, are better educated, and arrived with a higher level of official language proficiency... yet their *total* incomes are less than the employment earnings alone of those in the regular labour market (for both women and men). The income gap between the self-employed and those earning wages and salaries is particularly striking for men. Even more perplexing, a much higher proportion of the self-employed immigrated from European countries – yet, on average, individuals from this source region have the highest incomes. These results defy simple explanation, especially as they contradict statistics drawn from the 1996 census (this issue is explored, but not fully explained, by Li [2000]). One clue is perhaps provided by the fact that immigrants who report self-employment income are more likely to have come to Canada as refugees or through the business programs, groups that share the common characteristic of below-average incomes.

In other respects, the results of the regression equations for men and women declaring self-employment were broadly similar to those in the regular labour market: nearly all of the beta coefficients are in the same direction. In terms of the magnitude of beta values, the ability to speak an official language is even more important for those engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Once again, Business Class immigrants receive much lower incomes than expected given their human capital and other characteristics. The groups that enjoy premiums in the regular labour market – immigrants from western countries and Africa – also tend to be well off, relative to the average, when self-employed (particularly individuals from Africa and women from Europe). Little changes for those from the Middle East and East Asia: the beta values for these three groups are roughly similar in the two regression models. Apparently, women from South and Southeast Asia, as well as Latin America, are able to improve their economic situation through entrepreneurship; in these cases negative beta coefficients became positive (though not statistically significant). These results suggest that entrepreneurial activities, for some groups at least, are an important means whereby immigrants from non-western regions can achieve higher relative incomes.

²³ In discussing these findings with provincial policy makers, several noted that there was a substantial influx of white South African doctors to British Columbia, both before and after the fall of apartheid. This fact helps explain the positive experience of African-Canadians, but cannot account for the magnitude of the result—the number of South African physicians was simply not large enough. According to the 1996 census, just over one-third of all African immigrants living in BC, who arrived between 1980 and 1996, were from South Africa. A small proportion of these would be white physicians.

Conclusion

In many ways the IMDB data examined in this paper suggest that Canada's immigration system is fulfilling its objectives. In general, while it is true that the educational credentials of immigrants are frequently ignored in the Canadian labour market, participation rates and employment earnings rise steeply with higher levels of educational attainment. Further, the rewards for education are far greater for those who arrive knowing an official language, a key criterion in the points assessment system. This is revealed in income statistics as well as in self-employment rates. Men and women who arrive knowing an official language are rarely drawn to self-employment, most likely because they are able to earn reasonable wages in the paid labour market. Those who do become self-employed realize modest gains from their effort. The story is much more pessimistic for those who land without knowing an official language. They have low rates of participation in the British Columbia labour force and their educational qualifications appear to mean little. They are therefore pushed into self-employment but that option does not prove especially effective in increasing their standard of living. As in the regular labour market, those with higher levels of education who cannot speak an official language do not receive much of an income premium from their entrepreneurial pursuits. In fact, this lack of reward for human capital appears to be true more generally for those who are self-employed, though we should be wary of accepting this result given the different picture provided by census data. In fact it would be well to recall at this point the qualifications made about the IMDB as a source of information; we do not yet fully know the quality of the data.

Still, the IMDB is the only means we have of tracking the participation and success of different immigrant classes in the labour market, and to consider how class effects may be mitigated or intensified by other factors. For most groups, language skills are of decisive importance in shaping economic outcomes. But the case of refugees reminds us that the relationship between language proficiency and earnings is not set in stone. They are the only group who do not face an income penalty if they arrive in Canada without knowing English or French. Based on the logic outlined at the beginning of this paper, this finding could be interpreted in two quite different ways in the policy system. The first is to concentrate on the general trend and try to prevent the entry of individuals without English or French proficiency, that is, to 'solve' the problem through selection policy. In fact, this exact strategy was recommended to the Canadian government in a recent policy assessment exercise (Immigration Legislative Review 1997), which has apparently been accepted. In December 2001, Citizenship and Immigration Canada announced its intention to raise the threshold of points required of Skilled Worker applicants from 70 to 80. This would preclude virtually everyone without an official language from gaining the right to become a landed immigrant (they would have to receive at least 70 points out of a maximum of 80 in the areas of education, skills training, age, work experience, occupation, and arranged employment; an interview would then be held to see whether

they would receive the remaining 10 points needed). However, raising the points bar only really affects Principal Applicants in the Economic Class; it has no effect on their dependents, or immigrants who are admitted through humanitarian programs. As Reitz (1998) reminds us, each Skilled Worker arriving in Canada brings, on average, an additional three immigrants who are not subject to points assessment. The other possible policy response would be based on the counter-trend (the atypical case of refugees), that is, increasing settlement services, especially in the area of social support and language training, in an effort to better prepare immigrants for the work force. This would of course be costly, but would potentially serve all immigrants rather than just the Principal Applicants discussed earlier. At the present time, Refugees receive the most generous combination of language aid and social assistance, and these efforts appear to bear fruit in the labour market. Others are not so fortunate, and seem to face long-term penalties for their lack of fluency in English upon landing.

The results of the regression models underline the fact that women and immigrants from non-western countries face a relatively unfriendly labour market. Even when we hold key aspects of human capital and settlement characteristics constant, these groups face income penalties (which are considerably higher than those faced by Refugees). Immigrants from Africa represent the exception to this pattern, and further research is required to understand this particular outcome. The situation of immigrants from East Asia is perplexing, at least in light of existing stereotypes about this population. Their tax returns show modest incomes, whether from wages and salaries or entrepreneurial pursuits, and reveal no evidence that this as a privileged group. Contrary to prominent stereotypes, then, the particular composition of British Columbia's immigrant population – that is, the high proportion arriving via business programs and from countries in East Asia – helps explain the relatively *low* incomes of immigrants living there.

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