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by

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Abstract: This paper explores the relationships between immigration, public opinion and representations of immigrants in the media in order to uncover how the media shape perceptions and understandings of immigration to British Columbia (BC). After reviewing academic research on the portrayal of immigrants in Canadian media, we juxtapose general findings of public opinion polls of Canadian attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism with content analysis of daily newspapers from Vancouver and Prince George from 1995 to 2000. Drawing on the insight of Douglas Palmer (1997b; 1997c), we hypothesize that what is generally "soft" support for policy levels quickly becomes negative following the catalyst of a negatively portrayed immigration event. We highlight such events throughout this report, compare their portrayal in the daily newspapers of Prince George and Vancouver, and observe parallel trends in opinion reflected in polls and in newspaper representations analyzed. Our findings lead us to specific policy implications, outlined at the end of the paper.

I. Introduction

The media play a crucial role in the construction of social identities (Henry 1999). They provide information that shapes citizens' perceptions of events unfolding at local, national, and transnational scales. Media reports reflect and also inform public opinion about national issues like immigration policy (Fleras and Kunz, 2001; Ana 1999). In this report, we explore the relationships between immigration, public opinion and representations of immigrants in the media in order to uncover how the media shape perceptions and understandings of immigration to British Columbia (BC). We review studies that examine the representation of immigration in newspapers and public opinion polls conducted in BC. Research that addresses immigration, public opinion polls and media representations is both broad-ranging and erratic in its output (Fleras 1994). However, in our evaluation, we review the methods through which researchers have examined this field and point out similarities among their conclusions. We explain our own methods and then summarize the general findings of various public opinion polls of Canadian attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism conducted throughout the 1990s. We then analyze the content of daily newspapers from Vancouver and Prince George from 1995 to 2000. Finally, we end by suggesting policy recommendations to the Province related to our findings on media representations of immigrants and public opinion in British Columbia.[2]

Drawing on the insight of Douglas Palmer (1997b; 1997c), we hypothesize that what is generally "soft" support for policy levels quickly becomes negative following the catalyst of a negatively portrayed immigration event. We highlight such events throughout this report and observe parallel trends in opinion reflected in polls and in newspaper representations analyzed. This general finding leads us to specific policy implications, outlined at the end of the paper. The next section provides a review of the academic research on the portrayal of immigrants in Canadian media.

II a. Literature review: the portrayal of immigrants in the media

It is often assumed that the media are "neutral" distribution networks, funneling information about immigration to diverse mass public audiences (Fleras and Kunz 2001). Writers, reporters and media workers presumably respond to events and provide unbiased and balanced reportage on stories related to immigration. This model overlooks two components central to the creation of

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[2] This paper was originally written to provide input to the Ministry for Multiculturalism and Immigration in anticipation of the consultation process between the Province of British Columbia and the federal department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

public meaning: the role of the media in narrating immigration-related events and audience expectations, which affect the production of journalistic discourse (Robinson 1995).

In this section, we review studies that analyze the image of the immigrant in Canadian media. Researchers studying the portrayal of immigrants in the media have focused generally on the representation of ethnic minorities in the media. Unfortunately, a limited number of studies pertain directly to explorations of immigrant representation in media reports (although see Ducharme 1986). Thus, we review analyses of the portrayal of ethnic minorities in order to contextualize studies that look specifically at representations of immigrants in the media.

Immigrants and ethnic minorities often argue Fleras 1995; Miller 1994; Ungerleider 1991). Although immigrants are an integral part of the vision of the Canadian cultural mosaic, our work supports research that has shown that media institutions in Canada continue to rely on both negative and stereotypical depictions of immigrants (Media Watch 1994; Fleras 1994; Zolf 1989).

Many scholars illustrate that immigrants are often presented as threats, positioned as "them" (the ethnic minority) in relation to an assumed "us" (the mainstream audience) (Henry and Tator 2000). The cultures of non-white groups, especially in British Columbia, according to Wanning Sun, are often portrayed as mysterious, inscrutable, or incompatible with dominant ways of life (Sun 1997-98). The depiction of the home spaces of immigrants is also important. Print journalists, for example, tend to give voice to native-born resistance to Asian immigrant homes in Vancouver, popularly known as "monster homes" (Sun 1997-98). News narratives employ this phrase frequently, wherein the perception of the "monster home" is "ugly, frightful and ominous… a metaphor of the character of the people living in it, giving a concrete… dimension to the traditional orientalist image of the Chinese" (Sun 1997-98: 147).

Fleras (1994) explains how immigrant and ethnic minority images in Canadian media are consistently stereotypical ones, "steeped in unfounded generalizations that veered towards the comical or grotesque" (Fleras 1994: 273), where the examples of ethnic minorities as "social problems" are routinely employed: namely, as pimps, high-school dropouts, homeless teens or drug pushers. In other words, there is reliance upon sensationalistic or exotic tales about ethnic minorities.

Several news reporters have spoken publicly about their concerns regarding ethnic misrepresentation in the media. Television anchor Irshad Manji voiced concerns about the problematic representation of ethnic minorities and immigration in television. In a speech presented at a conference entitled "Racism in the Media," Manji (1995) addressed the responsibility facing media workers to combat racism. Critiquing a documentary that had aired on

CTV's news and information programme – "W5" – about multiculturalism, Manji explained how the journalists behind the episode were "protected by the common sense of whiteness" by asking the question "does multiculturalism harm?" According to Manji, the appropriate question ought to have been, "does multiculturalism harm 'mainstream' tolerance?" (Manji 1995). In a study of how ethnic minorities and "First Nations" peoples are portrayed in two major Winnipeg papers, a report conducted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (1996) found that ethnic minorities and immigrants are often denied access to the media. The Council also found that information on ethnicity – when included – was often irrelevant to the incident or event.

Many scholars argue that minorities and immigrants are often represented as a social problem or aberration. One such example was the arrival of boats from China, the moment that we identify as a shift in media coverage of immigration to BC. In our analysis of newspapers from 1995 to 2000, we found that the number of articles on immigration nearly doubled between 1998 and 1999, after the arrival of boats carrying migrants smuggled from China. In research focused solely on the BC boat arrivals, Greenberg analyzed coverage of the events in five Canadian English-only print media: the *National Post, Vancouver Sun, Victoria Times-Colonist, Toronto Star,* and *Toronto Sun* (2000). His study reveals important aspects of the relationship between the media, public opinion, and public policy. Greenberg suggests that the Canadian media were overly critical of the federal government's handling of the migrants. Exploring how the newspapers linked this event to a "problem of government," Greenberg tracks several themes in mainstream media responses to the event, which include:

> "poor laws were believed to create the environment which made possible [the arrivals]; a 'weak' response by the federal authorities was perceived to be an offer of admission in the future to other criminal elements; the uncontrolled wave of immigrants likely to precede such inaction was felt to place the integrity of the immigration and refugee systems at risk" (2000: 20).

As Fleras and Kunz note, images of minorities and immigrants often deny, demean and exclude them in the national discourse (2001). There are, however, examples of coverage that counteract those representations, and later in the paper, we analyze this array of representations in order to make policy recommendations regarding communication strategies with the media.

The media serve an important venue for dialogue about immigration. It is important, however, to pull apart the relationship between the media, public opinion, and public policy. We have provided this synopsis in order to set the scene for the discourse analysis that follows. In the next section, we explore how public opinions about immigration are produced.

II b. How are public opinions about immigration formed?

There is a large body of literature that examines the relationship between public opinion and media coverage. In this section, we draw largely from academic research to examine how public opinions about immigration are formed, in order to discuss the ways in which BC residents form opinions about immigration to the Province. We suggest that while public opinions are shaped by a number of factors, media representations in particular hold powerful sway on public opinion. We support this hypothesis with analysis of poll results.

Researchers examining the public opinion process find that the factors influencing public opinion about immigration are complex and cannot be treated tidily as a uni-dimensional sequence. The public opinion process is "kaleidoscopic – a variegated, endlessly changing patterning of individual and collective opinions whose meaning and significance exist in those patterns, and not only in the content of those opinions" (Crespi 1997:161). However, we can discern some general factors that influence public opinion regarding immigration issues. Here, we pay particular attention to the role of media in forming public opinion. Do people infer public opinion from their reading of press content? According to several empirical studies, the answer is a resounding yes. Researchers have concluded that increased media coverage of a political issue helps to construct citizens' perceptions of an issue as an important social problem (Muntz and Soss 1997). Other studies evaluating media impact on public opinion have suggested that the media can substantially influence individuals' perceptions of the nature of their social environment and perceptions of others within their environment (McLeod et al. 1974).

Clearly, media representations influence collective public opinion as well. As Fleras and Kunz (2001) suggest, "media constructions have also proven pivotal in shaping public consciousness over how social differences should be conceptualized or assessed" (Fleras and Kunz 2001:7). In their groundbreaking study of media and minorities, Fleras and Kunz argue that through media representations, people's attitudes are changed without their awareness. Henry and Tator (2000), leading scholars in the Canadian arena of minority representation in the media echo those sentiments: "the power of the media reflect their ability to define and transmit messages [about social issues] that have the intent or effect of swaying public opinion". It has also been suggested that media may play a larger role in affecting public opinion than poll results. Gunther and Christen (1999) argue that in the formation of impressions regarding public opinion, news content about social issues often plays a more significant role than published poll results. These

studies indicate that media coverage assists in guiding citizens' interpretations of an important element of their political environment like immigration.

These findings are in line with research on what is called "the third-person" effect, which suggests that people regularly assume that media content has a substantial effect on others' views (Perloff 1996). The "third person" effect implies that people may infer public opinion from not only their own subjective assessments of media content, but also their assumptions that such content has a substantial effect on others' opinions (European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research 1997). Another major body of research examines the salience of public opinion through the 'Spiral of Silence' theory (Noelle-Neumann 1993). This theory holds that individuals constantly scan mass media for cues to public opinion on various social and political events. The assumption here is that the media reflect the general public's sentiment on an issue. Perceptions of public opinion garnered through these media scans have been thought to influence willingness among citizens to express opinions, particularly in situations dealing with race or immigration, where opinions might lead one to feel socially isolated (McLeod and Hertog 1992).

In summary, public opinion experts and media analysts insist that mass media coverage and poll results have a significant impact on the formation of people's personal opinion on political issues. This reflects a cyclical process, where people's opinions of immigration are affected by what they see and hear in the media, which, in turn, affect polling results. Media play an important role in providing us with the content we believe to be shaping the thoughts, feelings and actions of others (Gunther and Christen 1999). The literature in this area demonstrates that media attentiveness to policy issues like immigration provides citizens with an accessible (though fallible) way of monitoring their political environment (Muntz and Soss 1997). Thus, there is a recursive relationship between media coverage, public opinion, and poll results. Media is reflective of public opinion to some extent, but it also shapes public opinion – and therefore poll results – in powerful ways.

III. Research methods

In this section, we take a closer look at the methods employed among researchers who examine the portrayal of immigrants in the media. In general, research on immigrants in the media has relied on a limited number of methods (Fleras 1994). The field has been dominated methodologically by content analysis. Content (or discourse) analysis is a technique for systematically analysing a document or other cultural product. We have conducted latent content analysis, an assessment of the underlying meaning of terms or phrases circulated in print. This

form of analysis has been used to gauge the ways in which ethnic groups are represented, the sorts of stereotypes drawn upon in newspaper articles, and the evaluative tenor of comments on current affairs television (Henry 1999). Such measures provide indications of the extent of mis- or under-representation of various groups in the media.

Media researchers regularly employ content analysis approaches, and there are several useful examples of this genre, including MacGregor's study of visible minority women in the magazine *MacLeans* over a thirty-year period (MacGregor 1989) and Indra's examination of depictions of minority women in Vancouver newspapers (Indra 1996). Government publications have also relied on content analysis approaches. In a study commissioned by the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, Karim (1989) explored the press perception of multiculturalism and ethnic minority coverage through a discourse analysis of five major Canadian papers. Although these studies are over a decade old, researchers have by no means abandoned this method of research analysis. Indeed, one of the most recent studies of media and minority relations is Henry's 1999 study of the racialization of crime in Toronto's print media, which focused on three major Toronto newspapers to explore how the media construct images of Blacks and Vietnamese (Henry 1999).

We use content analysis while maintaining an awareness of its limitations. Of particular importance is the way the results of content analyses can be over-emphasized, wherein researchers can become somewhat diverted from a focus on the social production of media content. This approach must be tied to important contextual information, including the historical, temporal, geographical, and economic contexts in which media stories are produced (Burgess and Gold 1985). Given these critiques, media researchers have started to direct their attention towards the very processes through which media images of minorities are conceived, structured and presented to audiences. For example, the practices and routines of the newsroom and other sites of cultural production are increasingly being recognized as spaces where ethnographic methods of research can be directed. In the next section, we summarize the general themes included in public opinion polls about immigration. We look at the objectives and methods of polling, as well as the major trends of the 1990s and finally examine regional geographies of opinion.

IV. Polling public opinion of British Columbians towards immigration: retrospective of a decade

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and on one occasion, The Province of British Columbia, have contracted research groups such as Environics, Angus Reid, and Eikos to conduct

opinion polls fairly steadily over the last decade. The polls attempt to gauge attitudes toward immigration to the Province and what is loosely termed "multiculturalism." In their review of several recent polls, Rivers & Associates (2000:i) determined that the polls tended to address the following issues: awareness of policy, views on levels of immigration, perceptions about consequences of immigration, input on policy development and the role of government, attitudes toward multiculturalism and immigration, and the level of contact of respondents with recent immigrants.

We reviewed several of these opinion polls designed to measure the "mood" toward immigration and multiculturalism over the last decade. Most were conducted at a national level and were therefore not specific to British Columbia, although some include a breakdown of regional data. Generally, the polls illustrate that attitudes towards immigration seem most heavily influenced by the geographical location of the respondent and by the state of the national economy. Historically, Canadian attitudes towards immigration have fluctuated closely in relation to the health of the national economy, and the polls reflect this trend with questions about whether respondents perceived immigrants as taking away jobs or rather as having a positive effect on employment. Geography seems, however, to be an equally important determinant of attitudes toward immigration, suggesting that there is a significant regionalism to public opinion, and even more pronounced local geographies within British Columbia, generally divided between larger urban and smaller, more rural locales.

Like the media, polls also record event-driven attitudes. Events such as violence or criminal activity associated with particular ethnic groups turn what Palmer calls very "soft support" for levels policy into anti-immigration attitudes (Palmer 1997). One example of a specific event noted by poll-takers involved an incident of violence in a Sikh temple in January of 1997, which influenced findings of "concern for continued immigration from Asia" by Angus Reid. This is important context towards understanding the relevance of media portrayals – also event-driven – to what appear to be tenuous public views on immigration. It suggests a strong correlation between representations of immigration and anti-immigration attitudes.

IV a. Objectives and methods of opinion polls

Polling methods entail interviews with between approximately 1,000 and 3,000 adults (18 and older) in representative sampling practices. A few of the polls that we reviewed additionally conducted interviews in person with select subgroups of respondents in order to determine the attitudes of specific groups of people.

Researchers agree that polls are dominant in both popular and social scientific conceptions of public opinion (Lemert 1981). Polls provide important information to decision-makers to influence policy frameworks. They also provide politically important information about the opinions of citizens. Public opinion specialists also argue, conversely, that reported opinion polls can affect people's personal attitudes and intended voting patterns (Gunther and Christen 1999). Because of the weight given to polling by politicians and the media, it is crucial to examine both their limitations and assets as conveyors of information. In this section, we address the problematic nature of polls in order to provide a more nuanced picture of polling information.

It is important to keep in mind that none of the data in the polls can be said to provide a comprehensive and detailed picture of Canadian attitudes towards immigration because of problems in the conduct of surveys. Several researchers note that the results of polls are dramatically affected by the wording through which the polling question is asked (Wanta 1997; Crespi 1997; Lemert 1981). Percentages can change radically with apparently minor changes in the wording of questions. A subtle rephrasing of questions may yield dramatically different responses. This is especially important in discussions of immigration policy, which is in no small part influenced by Canadians' general support of multiculturalism. Multicultural policy plays a significant role in polling about immigration issues. For example, the response to the question, "Do you support a more multicultural Canada?" has garnered high percentages of positive responses (Bissoondath 1994). However, responses to questions like "Should we limit the number of immigrants to British Columbia?" versus "Are there too many immigrants in British Columbia?" may yield dramatically different responses. Thus, phrasing is a key component in polling questionnaires and ought to be critically analyzed.

Polling researchers have also indicated that it is possible to answer a fixed-response question like, "Do you support more immigration in Canada?" without ever having thought about the issue before (Lemert 1981). Generally, as researchers have noted, no distinction is made between thoughtful and "top of the head" responses when percentages are aggregated. Finally, pollster analysts have claimed that polls are often a poor indicator of future public support. Lemert claims that polls are notoriously bad indicators of how people might react to political changes that have yet to occur (1981).

We want to note two more general observations about the content of the Canadian opinion polls that we reviewed, prior to proceeding. First, the polls generally dwell in the area of *perception* about immigration. The interviews are usually conducted briefly over the telephone

and do not involve the provision of accurate information regarding immigration. Indeed, they reveal that when asked, respondents tend to have inaccurate information regarding the actual numbers of people immigrating to Canada annually. Their opinions therefore reflect their *perception* of immigration levels and programs and do not tend to explore the sources of these perceptions. As will be demonstrated in the policy recommendation section, this speaks to the need for government to provide the public with more accurate information about immigration to the Province.

We also add a cautionary note regarding the validity of public opinion polls as a sound marker of some, but not many issues. As Rivers & Associates found, polls are adequate tools to gauge quickly the general attitude of respondents to immigration; but they are not adequate measures of the effects of programs or services provided by the Province (2000). Furthermore, polling reports do little to reflect upon the biases of the polling practices. We question the impact of the language of the research questions on responses and the tendency to tap into underlying assumptions and misperceptions about immigration, and to thus set a research agenda within the interview. Rivers and Associates found, for example, that when several questions about the economy or questions about multiculturalism preceded questions about immigration, this exchange established an agenda on the part of the poll conductor and thus influenced the answers that followed accordingly (2000). They noted that public opinion polls on the views of British Columbians toward immigration are challenging to interpret because they are infrequent, irregular or often one-time polling practices (2000: 13). With these absences in mind, we proceed with a summary of demographic trends found in polls conducted in the last decade.[3]

IV b. The demographics of attitudes towards immigration

Polls conducted among Canadians in the 1990s showed consistently that age, employment and student status, geographical location, level of education, and income all affected attitudes toward immigration. Those factors that seemed to have the most influence were education, age, and income. Consistently, young people tended to support higher levels of immigration, with strongest shows of support from those between the ages of 18 and 24. Conversely, those who were fifty-five and older tended to support lower levels of immigration. Among factors

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[3] In order to provide context for the poll analysis, we have included an appendix that provides more information on the polls analyzed.

contributing to a person's attitude toward immigration, education was determined by Palmer (1997) to be the single most important factor. Indeed, the higher the level of education achieved by the respondent, the more likely he or she was to support higher levels of immigration. Students also tended to favour higher levels of immigration, and poll reports hypothesized that this could be because they had not yet entered the labour market and thus did not yet perceive themselves competing with immigrants for jobs. It is also possible that students had received more accurate information in school regarding the actual numbers and effects of immigration over perceptions of same. Reports hypothesized that men were less likely than women to compete with immigrants in the service sector, and therefore also less likely to perceive competition from immigrants. The measurements of income- and employment-related attitudes toward immigration paralleled national unemployment rates. In other words, the higher a person's income, the more open that person was to immigration. On the other hand, a person who had a lower income or was unemployed was more likely to perceive competition in relation to immigrants in the job market. Furthermore, at times when the unemployment rate was at its highest, so too was anti-immigrant sentiment. Finally, the polls also showed that Canadians living in larger urban centres who were male and members of immigrant communities were most likely to favour immigration (Palmer 1997).

IV c. Major trends of the 1990s

While Canadians and Canadian researchers often pride themselves in comparing Canada's institutionalized multicultural policy to the American "melting pot," we would like to dissect this term more closely. Indeed, Canada does have a multicultural policy and Canadians do generally look upon immigration more favourably than do Americans. They also, however, tend to embrace a melting pot ideology of assimilation. Canadians, therefore, tend to express general appreciation for the makeup of Canada and for what they perceive to be a multicultural society. But they also consistently express the opinion that immigrants should "conform" to and integrate into Canadian society; in short, that they should become "more Canadian" rather than remain separate and retain "ethnicity" and language (Environics 1990).

The Environics poll conducted in early 1990 provides helpful baseline information on the attitudes of British Columbians towards multiculturalism generally. This poll gauged public opinion just prior to what has been identified as a rise in anti-immigration opinions that coincided with a faltering economy in the early 1990s. The Environics poll suggests that 91% of British Columbians viewed BC as a "multicultural society" (1990: 9). While the poll did an extensive job

of asking respondents about their feelings toward the lived realities and programs associated with multiculturalism and particularly the role of the government in promoting them – in voluntary or mandatory fashion – they addressed the actual process of immigration scantily. We can infer from the trends identified in this poll, however, that British Columbians generally embraced the presence of immigrants in BC and efforts to promote their integration into a multicultural society. Responses revealed time and again that British Columbians favoured racial and ethnic diversity, but not "separateness," including the retention of language and cultural traditions. Respondents advocated a more active role in multicultural programs on the part of the provincial government, in terms of promoting the "adjustment and blending of ethnic and immigrant groups into mainstream culture" (e.g., by funding courses in English language and citizenship, community centres, and job training) (Environics 1990: 19). When asked specifically about current levels of immigration, however, 53% of British Columbians polled thought that they were too high, 34% believed them to be "about right," and 8% believed that they were too low (29). But the effects of immigration on BC society were described as moderately positive (30). In 1990, respondents believed that immigrants worked harder than non-immigrants, and only 28% perceived immigrants to be more involved than non-immigrants in crime and delinquency. A majority of respondents were "concerned about continued immigration from Asia" – a relevant finding, given sizeable coverage in newspapers about Asian immigration throughout the 1990s. While vague, the sentiment was negative: "Fifty-six percent agree that more immigration from Asia will cause problems" (Environics 1990).

Six years later, Angus Reid conducted an opinion poll and found that anti-levels policy had indeed risen, with 46% of respondents indicating that there were too many immigrants coming to Canada, and 44% believing that Canada was accepting an adequate number. It is significant, however, that when asked again, the percentage of people indicating that Canada accepts too many immigrants rose to 59%. Findings of the 1996 survey were consistent with demographic trends identified earlier: that older, less educated, and less affluent respondents were more likely to feel that Canada accepts too many immigrants. Additionally, when asked, most respondents tended to underestimate the number of people immigrating to Canada annually. This finding is again indicative of the high levels of inaccuracy about immigration that inform perceptions of immigration levels and subsequent attitudes toward immigration more broadly.

In 1997, Palmer found a gradual recovery of acceptance of immigration levels, compared to very low levels of support in the early 1990s. Once again, roughly equal percentages of Canadians felt that there were either too many immigrants coming, or that the number was "about

right" (both 40%). In 1996 and 1997, a very small percentage of Canadians felt that immigration levels should be increased. While Palmer noted a very gradual trend towards acceptance of immigration levels between 1995 and 1997, he mentioned that "a significant proportion of levels policy support is very soft and can be easily turned into opposition as events occur" (1997). Palmer noted, for example, that the polls took place prior to a violent episode in a Sikh temple in BC in January of 1997 that likely altered views toward immigration. He therefore provided precautionary notes that despite greater levels of support, when pushed, views toward immigration easily turn to opposition as negatively-portrayed events occur. There is, however, always a geography to events, public opinions about them, and media representations of them, to which we now turn.

IV d. Regional geographies of opinion

It is important to understand the views of British Columbians in relation to national geographies of public opinion. Historically, support for immigration has been strongest in the Atlantic and Prairie Provinces, and lowest in British Columbia (Palmer 1997: 19). Dispersion of new immigrants has always been imbalanced throughout Canada, with greatest numbers arriving to larger urban centres (Ley 1999). Vancouver and Toronto, with approximately one-fifth of existing residents of Canada, receive over three fifths of all new immigrants (Palmer 1999: 18). This imbalance has been even more pronounced in recent years (Palmer 1999). Settlement is also imbalanced among provinces. Ontario and British Columbia experience the greatest per capita rates of immigration (Palmer 1999).

The 1990 Environics survey asked British Columbian respondents whether they identified more with Canada as a whole or with British Columbia. Fifty-eight percent responded that they felt more Canadian, while only 30% identified as more British Columbian. Despite this outward-looking identity of British Columbians, their views toward immigration tended not to correspond with those of most Canadians. Unlike the 1990 Environics survey that showed Vancouver residents to be significantly more supportive of immigration levels than those in the interior of BC, surveys conducted later in the 1990s showed a shift in this attitude toward more negative views of immigration. Palmer theorized some possible reasons why. He suggested that people who live in locations with higher per capita immigrant receiving concentrations tended to associate particular issues negatively with local immigration programs, including abuse of the refugee determination process, criminality, and failure to fulfill sponsorship obligations (1999: 10). Whereas in 1997, Vancouverites were less likely than others to associate immigrants with

crime, this association increased remarkably in polls in 1999, following extensive media coverage of Central American refugee claimants "abusing" the refugee program. Palmer noted that the effect of strong association with particular issues and local immigration was most pronounced in Vancouver, where concerns about crime and language were prevalent, and negative views were perhaps exacerbated by the downturn in the economy. Palmer's overall findings suggest that higher levels of immigration are resulting in more negative attitudes (1999).

There are notable overall differences in attitude between people living in small communities with fewer immigrants verses those in larger urban centres with many (Palmer 1997). Despite the negative downturn in views toward immigration in Vancouver in very recent years, residents of the city continued to express more support for immigration than their rural counterparts in the interior of BC (Palmer 1997: 19). Interestingly, the reasons for negative views toward immigration varied between Vancouver and the interior of BC. People in smaller, more rural communities tended to express anti-immigration sentiment because they simply associated higher levels of immigration with higher unemployment rates (Palmer 1997). Residents of big cities, on the other hand, expressed attitudes toward levels policy that related more to their perception of the effect of immigration on their community more generally speaking. So in addition to economic arguments, their opinions on immigration were influenced by cultural discourses surrounding immigration.

In sum, opinions about immigration to British Columbia are highly localized. It is therefore important to situate opinions about immigration to BC among British Columbians not only in relation to Canadians located in other provinces, but also in relation to the geography of public opinion and the geography of immigration within British Columbia.

V. Media analysis

In this section, we identify patterns of representations of immigration in BC newspapers. The analysis shows that in 1999, the boat arrivals from Fujian, China sparked the materialization of a trend towards increasingly negative attitudes surrounding immigration and specifically the integrity of the Canadian immigration program. In 2000, Minister Elinor Caplan introduced Bill C-31 to a public that was already attentive to the perceived weaknesses of Canadian immigration policy. We found that the media's tendency to foreground particular news events has profound effects upon people's perceptions of immigration policy more generally. We suggest that the decontextualization of these events exacerbates their influence on public opinion. In other words, what is stated in the news is often as important as that which bears no mention. We identify major

trends, including types of stories, major themes within news articles, and the ways that government policies are represented. We track the coverage of these issues in two distinct locales within British Columbia: Vancouver and Prince George. We begin with analysis of the Vancouver newspapers.

Our analyses of the dailies in Vancouver and Prince George are distinct due to the scale of coverage entailed. Vancouver is a large city with approximately two million residents, with much higher percentages of foreign-born residents than any other locale in British Columbia. Newspaper coverage of immigration is significantly higher in Vancouver than in Prince George. In fact, the number of articles about immigration was higher during each of two years (1999 and 2000) analyzed in Vancouver than the total number of articles printed during the entire five years of coverage in Prince George. In sum, there were five times as many articles on immigration in the Vancouver newspapers as there were in the Prince George paper during the same time period. We therefore present these content analyses with varying degrees of synthesis and detail. Whereas we provide more of a synthesis of content over the five years in Vancouver, we provide more detail of the articles published in Prince George.

V a. Analysis of dailies in Vancouver

Coverage of immigration to British Columbia in the two Vancouver-based newspapers analyzed, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Vancouver Province*, is more extensive than coverage in the *Prince George Citizen* in terms of scale, scope, and substance. *The Sun* tends to conduct more research surrounding its articles on immigration, whereas *The Province* prints more sensational, significantly shorter articles.

Greenberg argues that all five major Canadian dailies articulated exasperation and anger towards government while at the same time shaping resentment toward refugee seekers. In reference to two British Columbia papers (*The Victoria Times-Colonist* and the *Vancouver Sun*), he suggests that the editorials, op-ed pieces and guest columns were "unambiguously critical of the federal government's actions and official position" (Greenberg, 2000: 21). However, he points out that the *Times-Colonist* was more sympathetic than other dailies in providing a balance to the more critical, conventional editorials. Similarly, he found that the *Vancouver Sun* provided a "greater discursive space" for people working in immigration to express their opinions (Greenberg, 2000: 21). While Greenberg's analysis specifically addresses the boat arrivals from China, it does speak more broadly to representations of immigration wherein the media paint negative portraits of immigrant experiences.

Sorcha McGinnis (2001) also analyzed the content of 237 articles on the boat arrivals in four dailies: *The Globe and Mail, The Vancouver Sun, The Province,* and *The Victoria Times-Colonist.* As she reviews the coverage of each paper, she illustrates that news discourse plays a central role in "the maintenance and legitimation of class, power and racial inequality in society" (2001: 3).

We conducted advanced searches on the search engine, "InfoMart," for articles on immigration in each of these papers using the same search formula for each year from 1995 to 2000. The word "immigration" was required to appear anywhere in the story, along with either "British Columbia" or "BC." The number of "hits" for each year are representative of the pattern we have identified, wherein public opinion regarding immigration becomes more pronounced – in both tone and number – surrounding high-profile immigration events. The search yielded the following results:

Year	Vancouver Sun	Vancouver Province	Total
1995	99	24	123
1996	130	51	181
1997	204	86	290
1998	194	63	257
1999	259	212	471
2000	238	106	344
All Years			1666

The numbers in the chart indicate that the media's interest in immigration grew significantly over the time period analyzed. With 471 articles, or nearly four times the number of articles printed in 1995, 1999 was a particularly intense year for media coverage of immigration issues. This was the year that four boats carrying migrants smuggled from China were intercepted off of the west coast of Vancouver Island. This particular movement intensified public debate about, and media coverage of, immigration.

In the "sleepier" period of coverage from 1995 to 1999, prior to highly publicized, concentrated flows to British Columbia, such as the arrival of Kosovars and Chinese, coverage can be grouped into the following categories: (1) the economic implications of immigration for BC, (2) individual human interest stories, (3) the social and health dimensions of immigration, (4) criminal association with immigration, and (5) factually informative articles. We discuss each category in turn.

Most articles printed in the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Vancouver Province* between 1995 and 1999 addressed the economic dimensions of immigration, and more specifically, the implications for the economy of the Province. Coverage discussed both negative and positive economic implications of immigration, usually framed in terms of "contributions" to the Province's economy or "drains" on the Province and its taxpayers. Although immigration from Hong Kong to British Columbia was slowing by 1995, the handover of Hong Kong to China was approaching in 1997. From 1995 to 1997, the majority of the articles explored the economic dimensions of Asian immigration and particularly, the potential implications of the handover. This spurred extensive speculation regarding the housing market in the lower mainland, immigrant entrepreneurial activity and investments, and more generally, whether or not immigrants contributed to the BC economy, and which immigrants contributed more. In 1996, then Premiere Glen Clark traveled to Hong Kong to "pitch" British Columbia to potential investors, and the government offered incentives to business immigrants with the highly publicized immigrant investor fund. These were attempts to stave off the effects of the recession in BC, and many articles in the newspapers speculated as to the potential effects of the handover and the resulting immigration and investment levels on the provincial economy.

In 1996, the papers began to signal the failure of this strategy and introduced stronger language that was more critical of immigration policy to BC and Canada more generally ("Slow immigrant flow, *Province* 26/11/96). Articles shifted from more optimistic views of the potential contributions of immigration from Asia ("Growth hinges on immigration," *Vancouver Sun* 12/7/96) to a more pessimistic view of potential contributions. Unemployment was high in BC, and immigration showed "diminishing returns" ("Immigration policies show a rate of diminishing returns, *Vancouver Sun* 20/11/96). One article identified Canada as a "sucker country" on immigration (*Province* 20/9/96). Around this time, the Liberals government froze immigration levels because of what some identified as misperceptions about immigration (that immigrants were taking jobs and draining the economy). Accordingly, coverage in the papers criticized the costs of immigration with heated articles about expenditures on English-as-a-second-language programs and settlement services ("One solution to the ESL quandary: make the user pay," *Vancouver Sun* 9/11/96). Discussion of the costs of immigration to the Province often touched on a key provincial/federal irritant at the heart of policy discussions: that the Province had neither sufficient control over levels to BC nor a sufficient share of funds from Ottawa to cover the costs of the immigration services that it provided.

In 1997, economic insecurities continued to preoccupy the media. Stories offered fluctuating predictions that Canada could and would attract "the best and the brightest from Asia" (*Province* 4/11/97) or, conversely, that after all the hype, the handover would prove quiet for BC and Hong Kong and might even result in return migration (*Province* 27/7/97).

Consistently throughout the time period analyzed, from 1995 to 2000, both *The Province* and *The Sun* printed a significant number of individual human interest stories. Unlike the more speculative and economically-driven articles, these stories often portrayed the plights of individuals or individual families who tended to already be playing important roles in the communities where they lived (for example, "Couple wins immigrant award," *Vancouver Sun* 28/11/95). These stories generally portrayed immigration and its social impact on British Columbian communities positively, while often criticizing the federal government when it threatened to deport individuals. In 1996, for example, people in Vancouver rallied around a Salvadoran family that had been given deportation orders but had taken sanctuary in a Kitsilano church ("Children first: two refugee cases pit compassion against policy," *Vancouver Sun* 9/11/96). Similarly, a Bayview community rallied around a Russian family attempting to stay in Canada ("Problem with papers delays deportation: Concerned BC residents have flooded the immigration minister's office with calls," *Vancouver Sun* 29/11/96).

Numerous other individual human interest stories were more negative and called attention to the legal experiences of people with criminal records who had been allowed to stay in Canada. The criminal act may have been committed in Canada or in the place of origin. There was, for example, extensive coverage of Canada's pursuit of Nazi war criminals. These articles provided insight into the strengths, loopholes, and complexities of Canadian immigration law. Unfortunately, however, they did little to contextualize the experiences of some refugee claimants and immigrants with criminal records, and therefore tended to conflate immigration writ large with criminality.

Coverage of the social and public health dimensions of immigration revolved largely around the impact of immigration on British Columbian communities. Sometimes immigration movements were pitted against social and environmental strains placed on British Columbia (*Sun* 17/4/97, *Sun* 22/11/97) and Vancouver in particular, but many articles provide a counter-balance to this division. More positive articles tended to offer in-depth, comprehensive coverage of particular issues, such as the challenges and changes to cultural and religious traditions that immigration posed to particular communities (*Sun* 10/10/95), the political achievements of immigrant communities (*Province* 23/1/95), the impact of immigration on schools (*Sun*

15/11/96), such as students forming anti-racist educational groups (*Sun* 2/11/96), challenges to families leading transnational lives divided among nations, and struggles over language instruction (*Sun* 3/4/97). Journalists also covered positive community-oriented events, such as a walk organized by SUCCESS, one of the largest immigrant service agencies in Vancouver, to raise funds for immigrant services (*Sun* 17/7/95). The stories also covered complex social changes and tensions related to immigration such as interactions among different groups within geographically-defined communities (e.g., those members of First Nations groups who live in cities but hold anti-immigration views) (*Sun* 14/9/95).

An important category of articles with, unfortunately, fewer recurrences but, we argue, even more importance than the others are those that are factually informative. These articles often cover the release of poll results on the part of Citizenship and Immigration Canada or Statistics Canada, and infuse important statistical context into the opinion-driven debates of the moment (see *Sun 5/*11/97, 6/10/97, 7/10/97, 7/11/97; *Province* 5/11/97).

Both newspapers paid significant attention to what could be categorized as criminal associations with immigration. The newspapers frequently contributed to a collective criminalization of refugee applicants in particular. This criminalization occurred through the linking of racialized groups to categories of crime. Two recurring examples include the association of Asian immigrants with gang-related crime (*Sun* 2/12/96) and of Latino immigrants with drug-related crime. The following headline provides one such example: "Hispanic role in drug trade growing, police say" (*Sun* 9/11/97). This association also extended to smuggling rings, the sex trade (*Sun* 12/9/97), terrorists, and transnational connections (*Province 7/*8/97). Such stories often culminated in calls for the deportation of criminals from Canada, accompanied by accusations of loopholes in the immigration system (*Province 5/*9/97). The category of articles that conflated criminality with immigration in Vancouver increased in 1998 and set the stage for attacks on the refugee program that reached a shrill pitch with the boat arrivals carrying Chinese migrants in the summer and fall of 1999.

The articles about the Kosovar refugees focused on the success of the government's response to the refugees, as witnessed through articles like: "B.C. rolls out welcome mat: Teen who lost parents among first arrivals" (*Province* 13/6/99). They told of a Canadian success story and exhibited pride in the extension of the humanitarian acceptance of refugees in BC. The tone changed dramatically, however, with the arrival of four boats characterized as "irregular migration" from China to the west coast of British Columbia in 1999. The media generated the impression of a crisis surrounding this particular transnational movement (Clarkson 2000). As

Clarkson argued, coverage generally exaggerated the numbers of certain groups of immigrants arriving by not providing a more comprehensive numerical portrait of immigration to British Columbia (2000). The media portrayed the boat arrivals as "the last straw," with particularly notable headlines in the Province, such as "ENOUGH ALREADY" (*Province* 1/9/99).[4] The number of migrants, 599, was actually small relative to the number of migrants who arrive to British Columbia by other means of transportation and without legal status. The number was also small compared to the Kosovar movement to Canada during the months prior, and compared to the number of people who claimed refugee status on a regular basis in British Columbia in the late 1990s. This numerical misrepresentation, however, exacerbated the notion that immigrants would potentially "flood" Canadian cities. This anxiety was embodied in media coverage with the use of particular metaphors of immigration, including invasion, waves, and flooding (Ellis and Wright 1998), which evoked the same panic surrounding natural catastrophes (Greenberg 2000). The media tended not to portray important contextual information, but rather placed into the foreground aspects of the arrivals that generated attention and anxiety among the public. For example, newspapers placed public health concerns related to the boat arrivals on their front pages. One notable example in *The Province* showed a picture of the migrants on the boat with the enormous caption, "Quarantined" underneath (*Province* 21/7/99).

Increasingly in 1999 and 2000, the newspapers drew concrete lines between "genuine" and "bogus refugees," and thus once again associated refugee claimants with criminal activity. These associations were suggestive in some articles, and more blatant in others where images, for example, portrayed Chinese refugee applicants in handcuffs and prison uniforms (see, "Handcuffed children ask Canada for asylum" *Globe and Mail* 20/8/99). A language of criminality ("illegal aliens") not previously associated with immigration to Canada accompanied media representations of the boat arrivals saturated with headlines such as "Detained aliens investigated" (*Sun* 22/7/99). This language pitted a Canadian "us" against a foreign "them," as in the headline, "Beware, illegal immigrants. We Canadians can be pretty ruthless" (*Province* 13/8/99). The migrants came to be associated with the transportation by which they arrived, an image indelibly recorded for the public with countless pictures of old, rusty ships carrying "boat migrants." Despite the distinctiveness and small scale of this movement compared to others, the media conflated critiques of particular migrant movements such as the boat arrivals with more general anti-immigrant sentiment.

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[4] See McGinnis for an interesting dialogue with reporters of *The Province* regarding inflammatory headlines (2001: 6-8).

As before, the media still portrayed a preoccupation with rising expenditures by government on immigration and refugee programs. Again emphasizing economies of migration, countless attacks on spending were exacerbated by the portrayal of inadequate, slow, and "soft" or "abused" refugee determination processes. The Canadian nation-state was thus portrayed as vulnerable to invasion through seemingly porous borders, thus rendering its expenditures and programs ineffective. Government departments and programs were portrayed as weak and unable to control immigration. Government budgets on immigration were contrasted with perceived spending on a non-immigrant or native population. These trends were consistent with backlash against the due process granted refugee applicants, or a movement to consider "Canadians first," one which was building momentum in Vancouver throughout the late 1990s and exploded with the arrivals of the boats from China.

In summary, from 1995 to 1999, the coverage in the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Vancouver Province* fit roughly into five categories: (1) the economic implications of immigration for BC, (2) individual human interest stories, (3) the social and health dimensions of immigration, (4) criminal association with immigration, and (5) factually informative articles. While the economic dimensions of immigration persisted as a theme underlying articles throughout the time period, it was used in very different ways; sometimes to advocate higher levels, and at other times, lower levels of immigration to BC. Articles that associated immigration with criminal activity rose significantly in scale and pitch over the time period analyzed and culminated with the boat arrivals in 1999. They also changed in scope, from discussion of criminal activity committed previously in the country of origin to transnational criminal activities such as gangs and smuggling networks. This increase in the association of immigration with criminality was accompanied by a shift in Vancouver coverage to stronger anti-immigration sentiments and associated language. Conversely, the number of human interest stories and factually informative articles with the potential to counter the more negative narratives of immigration to British Columbia decreased over the time period analyzed. These patterns were similar, although localized distinctly, in Prince George.

V b. Analysis of *The Prince George Citizen*

As in the Vancouver paper search, we conducted a survey of the daily, *The Prince George Citizen* from 1995-2000, using the key word "immigration." We did not utilize "InfoMart" because the paper was not on-line until August 17, 1999. Thus, we employed a manual search

from 1995 until August 17, 1999, whereupon we employed "InfoMart." The search yielded the following results:

Year	Prince George Citizen Total
1995	17
1996	18
1997	26
1998	28
1999	108
2000	117
All years	**324**

It is important to note that many of the stories about immigration in the *Prince George Citizen* are in fact Canadian Press (CP) stories derived from the wire services. Therefore, many of its articles on immigration were taken directly from the mainstream media. Most of these articles also appeared in the Vancouver papers. As one Prince George staff member explained in an interview, "We are largely understaffed, with each of us covering two or three stories per day." This made it difficult for the reporters in Prince George to cover immigration stories that were making headlines through press conferences in either Vancouver or Victoria that same day; hence, there was a reliance upon the CP wires. This had a direct impact on coverage of immigration stories in the *Prince George Citizen*. Therefore, in order to provide more of a sense of the local response to immigration, we also scanned opinion pieces (letters to the editor, personal opinion columns) and editorial pages of the *Prince George Citizen*. Stories about immigration in the *Citizen* appeared with greater frequency in the late 1990s. The numbers more than tripled between 1998 and 1999. The following analysis addresses the themes that emerged each year.

In 1995, there were very few articles about immigration. Instead, there was a general celebration of the multicultural nature of Prince George. This year yielded the fewest stories about immigration, and there were more articles related to the themes of multiculturalism and "anti-racism" than in the years that followed. The articles provided a mixed view of immigration patterns to the area. Letters to the Editor were vehemently anti-immigration, while stories focused on the importance of attracting immigrants to the region in order to generate greater capital and to bring more skilled labour to Canada.

There was one front-page story devoted to immigration (the only one between 1995 and 1998). The article, entitled, "Immigration into B.C. Grows" (11/02/95) stated that "immigrants

are pouring into BC in ever-increasing numbers."[5] Letters to the *Prince George Citizen* tended to critique the immigration and refugee programs. One incensed reader, angered by the news that a criminal was granted refugee status, stated that such an incident provided "yet another example of entrenched bleeding heart liberalism in our country" (01/12/95). Another letter argued, "the immigration system is eroding the Canadian way of life" (06/04/95).

However, there were several articles that examined the federal government's attempts to recruit larger numbers of immigrants to Canada after a January 3rd story entitled "Reduced Pace of Immigration to Hurt Canada." This article emphasized "an expected slower pace of immigration for the rest of the decade and beyond will cost Canada economically" (01/03/1995). Two articles followed focusing on "wooing" immigrants to British Columbia. One article entitled "Banks Wooing Immigrants" (12/06/95) explored "the rapidly growing, lucrative business of new Chinese immigrants coming to Canada." Another article, entitled "Info Highway Used to Woo Well-Educated Immigrants," told the story of Canadian immigration official Donald Cameron, who explained in an interview that he "turns on his personal computer to lure some of the world's brightest brains to Canada" and stated that some other immigration officials were "already in Asia interviewing potential immigrants he's identified via the Internet" (8/02/95). There were 13 articles in 1995 that examined anti-racist, multicultural events taking place in the Prince George area, including celebrations like Passover (12/04/95) Chinese New Year (26/01/95) and Prince George's City Council's inauguration of a new multicultural policy (11/01/95). Two stories examined the efforts of Prince George students to build homes in Mexico (15/04/95). The number of stories celebrating the multicultural nature of Prince George's population dropped dramatically after 1995.

The following year, 1996, witnessed an increase in the number of articles with anti-immigrant sentiment. Seven articles, or one-third of all articles about immigration, focused on recurring characterizations of immigration to British Columbia, such as increasing concerns about the costs of immigration to the Canadian taxpayer (e.g., "Immigration Wants Fine Backlog Paid," 01/06/96). In stories related to British Columbia's immigrant investor fund, immigrants to BC were seen as largely affluent and Asian. One example includes a cartoon where an immigration official asks a potential Asian immigrant if he would be providing "cash or cheque" in order to expedite his application ("Wealthy Asians Would Flee Canada Over Taxes," 26/09/96). There

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[5] As we have mentioned earlier in regards to the Vancouver paper search, the language employed to describe immigration patterns is rarely neutral. As Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Greenberg (2000) emphasize, the term "pouring" (similar to invasion, flood and wave) to describe immigration patterns, tend to categorize patterns of immigration in the same vein as natural catastrophes.

was also a general criminalization of immigrants ("Killer Faced Deportation," 31/05/96) and a growing tendency to portray immigrants as people who did not integrate quickly enough into the Anglo-Canadian fabric (demonstrated by an opinion editorial piece entitled "Note to Wealthy Immigrants: Be Canadians All the Way" (05/10/96). A column supplied by Reform MP for Prince George/Bulkley Valley, Dick Harris, explained that "new guidelines will make our immigration system even more lax, possibly exposing Canadians to dangerous newcomers…this is an immigration system riddled with inefficiency and abuses" (10/10/96). One full-page article entitled "What's Happening to Lotus Land?" questioned the reasons behind the changing face of British Columbian landscapes, proposing that increased immigration may be partially responsible for pollution and overcrowding: "Asian immigration over the past decade has changed the Province enormously…we have to look at how we absorb new immigrants without them absorbing us" (08/11/96).

In contrast to these negative portrayals of immigration, there were a few articles celebrating Multicultural Week in March. Two articles relayed the experiences of immigrants in the Prince George area. The Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society invited students in the Prince George school district to write an essay on multiculturalism and racism, and the two winning essays were printed in the March 7th issue of the Prince George Citizen. Another full-page Commentary piece provided the point of view of students training in an ESL class at the College of New Caledonia ("It's a Difficult Adjustment for Our Immigrants," 01/03/96).

The number of articles related to immigration increased from 18 to 26 in 1997. Most of these stories focused on financial returns and the "importance of strong economic and social ties between Prince George and the Pacific Rim," witnessed through a special series highlighting the expected financial gains through such an approach ("Prince George Fits Well to the Asian Connection," 04/10/97; "BC Has Much to Learn about Pacific Rim Countries, and Much To Offer," 15/10/97). An Editorial even exclaimed, "the potential is huge - let's go for it!" (Op Ed Column, 04/10/97). Other articles related to immigration included a story on the growing interest in Chinese and Japanese language classes at UNBC ("Oriental Anyone?" 06/10/97).

However, October 1997 saw a shift towards stories that examined the downward trend in the Asian economy, or what came to be known as the "Asian Crisis" ("BC Will Feel Asian Tremors Most," 25/11/97). In contrast to the previous years, there was an increasing number of stories about the Sikh population in Prince George ("Fight Erupts at Sikh Temple," 13/1/97; "Sikh Threatened," 7/05/97; "Time to Look At Other Side of Sikhs in Canada," 21/01/97). Finally, several articles foreshadowed the Hong Kong handover to China ("Hong Kong Back to

China - After 156 Years of British Rule," 02/07/97) while focusing on the impact of the handover on British Columbia ("Canadians Upbeat About Handover," 30/06/97; "Canadians Working to Keep Ties Intact," (02/07/97).

In contrast to the articles in 1996, there were fewer articles that displayed anti-immigrant sentiment. Instead, there was an increase in the number of articles about the preponderance of racism and discrimination ("Discrimination Report Damns Health Canada," 20/03/97; "Supreme Court Looks At Racism," 10/03/97; a column about racism and stupidity; 07/04/97; "Anti-Racism Protest," 08/10/97). A half-page article entitled "Growth in Canada? Look West" focused on the "exploding" population on Canada's West Coast and insisted that "in BC, there will be increased social turmoil…the animosity shown towards Asian immigrants so far is just the tip of the iceberg" (16/04/97). Articles like this one picked up on public discourse where it was believed that British Columbia's "exploding" immigrant population was worsening the economic problems in the Province (see Greenberg 2000).

In 1998, stories related to immigration continued to examine the impact of the downward economic turn in Asia on British Columbia, explaining that Canada would receive fewer immigrants as a result ("Asian Crisis Hits Immigration," 8/10/98). In July alone, there were several articles on this theme, including a full-page spread about the worsening economic situation in China and Hong Kong ("Financial Crisis Brings Wave of Political Change," 06/07/98; "Troubles Half a World Away Hurt NorthWest Farmers," 06/07/98; and "Don't Turn Back on Japan - Ambassador," 06/07/98). Stories also examined changes to immigration policy after public hearings on immigration ("Immigration Law Discussed," 06/11/98; "Immigration Hearings End," 12/03/98; "Immigration Changes Would Toughen Policy," 07/01/98). One article entitled, "Sick Child Gets By Immigration" particularly caught our attention, as the headline insinuates that an Australian girl suffering from cystic fibrosis somehow managed to "sneak by" immigration officials in order to visit Canada (06/07/98).

The *Prince George Citizen* published an editorial that dismissed the recommendation of an advisory group on immigration policy that suggested that prospective immigrants be subject to a language test in English or French ("Unwarranted Shift in Policy," 10/01/98). The editorial responded, "The advisory panel argues that the economic integration of immigrants depends heavily on language skills. But try telling that to the people of British Columbia…now that the flow of moneyed Chinese immigrants has slowed, so has the BC economy." The first article during this period to reveal poll figures in relation to support of immigration issues appeared this year, in an articled entitled "Language An Issue in Immigration - Poll" (14/05/98) which

examined a MarkTrend poll of 600 residents in British Columbia. The majority of those polled showed "overwhelming support" for a proposal that would require newcomers to have a basic knowledge of English or French.

A story in October echoed an article in 1995 which insisted that "Immigration is Needed to Support System" (19/10/98), one of the few articles that were pro-immigration during this time. Lastly, articles in 1998 included discussions about the rise in refugee smuggling ("Smuggling People Lucrative Trade," 13/04/98; "Reform Raps Rep of Refugee Heaven," 21/05/98).

The first six months of 1999 continued the trend of reportage on stories related to the economic downturn in Asia and its effect in British Columbia (see "Business Immigrant Drop Hurts *Province*" 13/01/99). There was an increase in the number of stories about multicultural awareness, with articles that celebrated the Chinese New Year ("February 1st: The Year of the Rabbit," 01/02/99; "Eateries Hopping for Chinese New Year," 15//02/99; "Chinese Celebrate at CNC," 25/02/99) and other multicultural events ("Black History Month Events Set At College," 03/02/99).

However, articles about immigration in the second half of 1999 were dominated by two major stories: the arrival of the Kosovar refugees and the arrival of the Chinese migrants by boat. The articles focusing on the Kosovars were generally favourable. They examined reactions to the refugees in Prince George, which included the collection of donated food and clothing ("Family Collects for Kosovars," 01/06/99) and the welcoming of the Kosovars ("Kosovars Welcome Canadians With Joy," 14/06/99; "Refugees Find Comfort and Warmth," 15/05/99). The paper also ran a story entitled, "City Unlikely to Attract Kosovar Refugees" (17/05/99). As in the Vancouver papers, the arrival of the Kosovars and subsequent negotiations with immigration officials were portrayed as positive.

In contrast to the Kosovar stories, the articles about the Chinese migrants focused on the failure of government officials to adequately address the "problematic" nature of the migrants' arrivals; the threat of the migrants to national security; and the migrants' unsafe and treacherous living conditions on the boats (see Greenberg 2000). Stories emphasized the "decrepit" and "garbage strewn" nature of the freighters ("Chinese Community Embarrassed," 07/08/99; "Several Refugee Claimants Heading to Vancouver," 10/08/99; "Immigration Seeks Detention for 123 Chinese Immigrants," 26/07/99). This characterization of the conditions on the boats as "decrepit" over-dramatized the stereotype of the migrant as bringing disease and carrying danger into the country, posing a threat to "legitimate" Canadians. The cartoons during this period

focused on the Chinese migrants as demanding and greedy, or burdens on the Canadian taxpayers. In one cartoon, the Chinese migrant is seen lounging on a pillow marked "X-tra Komfy," glibly turning down a bottle of wine proffered by an immigration official. His interpreter translates for the official: "He says it's an '87, and haven't they suffered enough already?" (05/08/99). Another cartoon described the following exchange: "Captain, Immigration officials have spotted us!" The Captain replies, "Jackpot!" (13/08/99). These two cartoons revealed the cartoonists' portrayal of the Chinese migrants as selfish, perpetuating an image of the migrant as taking advantage of the too-Liberal immigration system. The op-ed pieces during this period emphasized the importance of stopping the "flow" of migrants to Prince George ("Enough is Enough," 04/09/99), a sentiment that was echoed in letters to the Editor ("Change Immigrant Laws," (21/10/99; "Send Migrants to Victoria," 23/10/99; "Immigration Line-Jumpers Not Welcome," 29/10/99) and articles about their relocation to Prince George ("Migrants Here Next Week," a story on the front page of the Prince George Citizen, 17/09/99; "New Detention Facilities Await Potential Migrants," 17/09/99). Articles also emphasized the increasing cost of the migrant to the Canadian taxpayer ("False Sense of Economy: Huge Taxpayer Costs Connected to Migrants," 08/09/99; "Costs Mounting for Chinese Migrants: BC Responsible for Monthly Welfare Payments of about $600 per person," 18/08/99).

Articles in 2000 continued to focus on the perceived threat of the Chinese migrants as "problem people" (a term coined by Henry 1999) to the general populace. The Op/Ed pieces in the Prince George Citizen emphasized the importance of deporting the Chinese migrants ("No to General Amnesty," 17/05/00; "A Real Threat," 12/08/00). Concerns were raised as to whether more migrants would arrive in Prince George ("Will City Get More Migrants?" 4/05/00) in light of stories where it was emphasized that more migrants were on their way ("Officials Bracing for Migrant Wave," 02/05/00). Other stories focused on the supposedly deceitful nature of the migrants in articles like "Fake Relative Used to Post Bonds to Free Illegal Migrants" (22/08/00) which perpetrated the image of the Asian as an inscrutable and mysterious ethnicity (Sun 1997-98). Several stories examined the costs of the migrants to the Province ("Flight Cost $700,000," a front page piece that explored the cost of a charter plane to send the migrants to Shanghai (28/07/00). There were few stories about the ways in which migrants might be beneficial to British Columbia.

V c. Discussion

We discern some key patterns in print media representation over the time period of 1995 to 2000. Between 1995 and 1997, our research demonstrates an economic framing of immigration issues wherein much coverage focused on the perceived costs and benefits of immigration to the Province. Much of this discussion revolved around the Hong Kong handover to China and the economic opportunities therein. Between 1999 and 2000, when the Chinese migrants arrived in British Columbia by boat, there was a shift in representation. This resulted quantitatively in a doubling of stories related to immigration in both the Vancouver papers and the *Prince George Citizen,* and qualitatively, in a shift in content, tone, and language.

There are other patterns that are worthy to note. As Henry (1999) suggested in her analysis of the racialization of crime, the media employ simple triggers and lines with which to attack government and provoke public sympathy. During the short time period that we analyzed, particular groups were racialized and effectively criminalized in the media. Our analysis of the portrayal of immigration issues resonates with Henry's comments. The articles and cartoons in 1999 and 2000 characterized Chinese refugee claimants as "bogus" and "illegal," whereas Kosovar refugees were constructed as deserving. In particular, the Chinese migrants were treated as "illegal aliens" whose motivation to come to Canada did not necessarily stem from political persecution in their home country, but rather from the desire to pursue upward mobility (Greenberg, 2000). Clearly, Canadian immigration officials are looked upon favourably in the media when welcoming Kosovar refugees. We suggest that Canadians felt good about themselves vis-à-vis the press, the actions of government, and the contributions of citizens through that immigration event. Months later, however, Canadian immigration officials came under attack for their treatment of the Chinese migrant boat crisis. The media scripted Canadians as irate citizens with a government constructed as "soft:" letting people in through the "back door."

We were surprised to find little coverage of the introduction of Bill C-31, and later Bill C-11, to Parliament in spring of 2000, shortly following the boat arrivals. A search of *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* from November 1, 1999, to December 31, 2000 uncovered only two stories that mentioned C-31 anywhere ("Impermanent residents: The aliens can't land," *Vancouver Sun* 5/26/00; "Appeal backlog lets criminals stay for years," *Province* 7/3/00). There were no stories about either bill in the *Prince George Citizen*. We wondered why important changes to immigration policy were not a bigger story from their inception. This affirms our suggestion that government needs to be more proactive in educating the public and disseminating information about immigration policies, programs, and statistics.

We observed a recurring interest in stories that related immigration to the economy, yet few such stories with facts about immigration. Finally, the articles about the positive impacts of immigration were few and far between, with the greatest number of articles printed before the 1999 boat arrivals. While coverage was at times localized in Prince George and Vancouver, the patterns in coverage between the two were similar, with the most marked distinction being the scale of coverage. This relates both to the scale of the media industry in Vancouver and to the scale of immigration to Vancouver, compared to the media industry in and immigration to Prince George. In both places, however, representations of immigration to British Columbia became more negative during the short time period analyzed, from 1995 to 2000. We believe that this shift occurred for many reasons, but the one that emerged most poignantly in the media content analyzed was the conflation of immigration with criminality, and namely with human smuggling.

VI. Policy recommendations to the Province

1. The Province needs to do a better job of communicating with media about immigration to British Columbia. Particularly, there is a need to contextualize events with a more comprehensive picture of immigration to British Columbia. Statistically rich articles about immigration can help counter stereotypes. The Province could provide these statistics to the various papers. For example, one of the few positive perspectives on the Chinese migrants in the *Prince George Citizen* was an article bolstered by statistics about the actual number of migrants who entered Canada, provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

2. There is also a need to communicate with the media more consistently and proactively; in other words, not only when there are crises or news-grabbing events, but when there are positive events happening in relation to immigration. We suggest a need to develop closer contact with mainstream newspaper reporters in order to ensure that more positive stories about immigration are told. One method may be to produce a "one page" summary of recent statistics every month regarding immigration figures to mainstream media organizations. We also suggest that the Province work closely with multicultural organizations to generate story ideas about the various contributions of recent immigrants to Canada in various regions. Prince George's provincial office of Multiculturalism has been very proactive on that front, as witnessed by stories in the *Prince George Citizen* about the experiences of recent immigrants to the region.

3. The Province also may need to find ways to balance what tends to be negative, event-driven coverage in the print media with alternative modes of communication of positive information about immigration to British Columbia. This may include educational programs that utilize mixed

media, including web site development. We suggest that government officials consider circulating positive social narratives about immigrants, such as more in-depth, humanitarian stories about particular immigrant families and communities.

4. The Province needs to carry out their own polls on the views of British Columbians towards immigration because national polls provide scant information about the diversity of opinion within the Province. Furthermore, it may need to re-think and re-phrase polling questions, which may in turn generate unexpected and different responses.

5. The Province should proactively intervene in the media's framing of immigration as something which has been attributed market value. There is more to immigration than the cost of each immigrant – and each immigration program – to the Province.

6. The Province could investigate potential ways in which support for multicultural policy might be harnessed to raise levels of support for immigration. As Fleras and Kunz note, Canadians remain relatively proud of their status as a multicultural nation (2001: 26). Stories which continue to reflect Canada's multiculturalism may combat negative representations of immigration.

7. The Province should take advantage of moments of heightened attention to migration issues, such as the movements from Kosovo and China, to provide a fuller picture of all immigration movements and programs to BC, while the media and the public are looking for information.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF POLLS ANALYZED

Environics 1990: Attitudes towards Multiculturalism in BC: Interviewed 1028 BC adults by phone and additionally, 200 Chinese and South Asian respondents

October 1996: "Public Opinion about Immigration and its impact on culture & employment" - Angus Reid group. Commissioned by CIC to look at attitudes towards levels and effects of immigration on Canadian culture and employment. Tracked results of a previous 1996 survey. 1516 interviews by telephone in 1996 of Canadian adults 18 and older.

February 17, 1997: "Public attitudes at Year-end, 1996: EKOS and Environics surveys, Initial Report." This is a D. Palmer preliminary findings short report of EKOS: a telephone survey of 2380 adult respondents from 10/29/96 to 12/1/96. Environics: in-person interviews with 2000 adult respondents from 12/18/96 - 1/15/97.

June 16, 1997: "Canadians' attitudes toward immigration: November and December 1996, and February 1997 surveys." Another report submitted to CIC by D. Palmer, summarizing 3 surveys. The two listed above in the initial report, plus a third done by Angus Reid in Feb. 1997: a telephone survey with 1516 adults, February 24-28, 1997.

October 14, 1997: "Survey Results, Summer 1997: Perceived Costs Matter More than Perceived Benefits and Looking Beyond the First Generation." D. Palmer reporting on the results of a June 17-23 1997 poll with 1512 adult Canadians.

March 1998: "Canadians' Attitudes Toward Immigration" Angus Reid Group to CIC. They did a national telephone survey (these are all always adults 18 and older), this time from 1510 Canadians from Jan 21-27 1998.

June 1998: "A Detailed Regional Analysis of Perceptions of Immigration in Canada," from D. Palmer to CIC. Analyzes data from 12 national surveys from 1989-1998: six by Environics from 1989-1996 and six by Angus Reid from 1996-1998.

August 1998: "Attitudes Toward Immigration in Vancouver," by D. Palmer. This is a synthesis drawing on various reports with more analysis of polling practices and results.

August 1999: "Canadian Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Immigration: Relations with Regional per capita immigration and other contextual factors."   This is a large study of data compiled from two series of national surveys: twelve conducted by Environics from 1981 to 1998 that included face-to-face interviews with approximately 2000 respondents, totaling over 24,000; as well as twenty-two telephone surveys conducted from 1988 to 1998 by various research groups.

2000: Public Opinion Survey: Dr. Angus Reid. A four-page article in *Pioneers 2000*, reporting on an opinion survey of 1500 Canadians and 1000 Americans on immigration and refugee-related issues.

September 2000: "Prejudice Reduction Research and Implications." This is a report on different strategies regarding multicultural education.

September 2000: "Opinion Polls as Baseline Measures, A Discussion Paper." By Rivers and Associates. This is helpful for learning the strengths and weaknesses of polling, but it does not include poll results.

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