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CANADIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION:

Individual and Contextual Influences

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Canadian Attitudes Towards Immigration: *Individual and Contextual Influences*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we make two contributions towards understanding attitudes towards immigration. First, we focus on the individual determinants of attitudes in Canada, a country that has been relatively understudied in the research literature. Second, we consider how changes in economic and political context affect individual attitudes over time. To date, little research has been conducted on how changes in the larger societal context affect attitudes towards immigration. The data for this study comes from sixteen national Gallup

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surveys conducted between 1975 and 2000. We find that at the individual level, while education has a strong linear association with attitudes, this is not the case for economic and political characteristics such as occupation and voting preferences. Contextual results demonstrate that, at the national level, changes in economic conditions (measured by changes in GDP and unemployment over time) matter far more than variation in either political currents or annual levels of in-migration.

Keywords: immigration policy, attitudes, Canada, trends

INTRODUCTION

EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES alike have witnessed dramatic government initiatives designed to curb immigration and placate public concerns about immigrants who “don’t assimilate.” The passing of language laws, the banning of certain types of clothing in schools, and the strengthening of borders through increased patrolling and use of high-tech surveillance equipment are among the most visible of these actions. While some sectors of the public have lauded these efforts, others have responded by demonstrating and lobbying in support of immigrants and their contributions. The disparate nature of these responses suggests that immigration remains one of the most divisive issues on the public agenda.

By providing detailed information about the specific causes and attributes associated with attitudes towards immigration, scholars make an important contribution towards understanding immigration-related issues. Generally speaking, most research suggests that people who hold anti-immigration sentiments do so because they feel economically threatened by immigrants and/or because they have a more conservative and less tolerant political orientation (Citrin et al. 1997; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Nevertheless, as we illustrate below, gaps remain in our understanding of why some people want levels of immigration restricted while others want levels increased.

A first gap results from the relatively narrow geographic spread of research sites; attitudinal studies from the United States (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong 1997; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Scheve and Slaughter 2001) and Europe (Dustmann and Preston 2004; Tucci 2005; Hernes and Knudsen 1992; Gang, Rivera-Batiz, and Yun 2001,

Mayda 2006) dominate the field.² In this paper, we examine the economic and political determinants of attitudes towards immigration in Canada.

Canada has several distinguishing features that merit its inclusion in the general body of literature on attitudes towards immigration and suggest that easy generalizations from US or European studies are likely problematic. Among western industrial countries, Canada currently has a high annual volume of immigrants (in the neighborhood of 250,000 annually on a population base of just over 32 million; OECD, 2004). Thus Canada, with slightly over 18 percent of the population foreign born, ranks just behind Luxembourg (first) and Israel (second) in the proportion of immigrants in the population (the US ranks sixth, with slightly over 10 percent of the population foreign born). Plus, due both to Canada's immigration policies and geographic position, illegal immigration rates are lower than in the US and many European countries. This provides an interesting case study because the focus on immigration attitudes in Canada is principally addressing legal immigration. Furthermore, the well-developed multiculturalism of Canada distinguishes this country from many other immigrant-receiving societies (Bloemraad 2006). Given these characteristics, the Canadian case has much to contribute (except see Palmer 1996; Fortin and Loewen 2004; Hiebert 2003).

A second gap results from the failure of previous studies to adequately examine the role that the larger social context plays in relation to attitudes. That is, what is the relationship between the broader economic and political context within which individual attitudes are developed? Does a strong economy affect attitudes? How about political rhetoric and leadership? What role does the annual intake of immigrants play? These questions are implicit in most

² Two cross-national studies do include Canada as part of a larger project (Mayda 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006), but do not focus specifically on Canada.

theories about attitudes towards immigration, however, most studies cannot answer these questions because their data consists of cross-sectional samples of individuals within countries. Those studies that do consider the larger context typically compare across countries. While this latter approach has yielded important insights into the effect of the larger context, the temporal context within countries is still absent. For this reason, we know little about the association between changes in the economic or political context and attitudes. Taking advantage of a unique Canadian data set with information on attitudes between 1975 and 2000, we not only document the changes in attitudes towards immigration over time, but we also assess which contextual factors are associated with these changes. Before reviewing the literature on attitudes towards immigration, we provide an overview of Canada's immigration history.

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION HISTORY

The ancestral roots of Canadians are clearly steeped in migration. Aboriginal Peoples, making up approximately 3 percent of Canada's current population, trace their lineage to Asia (approximately 13,000 years ago). Europeans, the predominant population block in modern Canada, arrived in North America around 1000, but their permanent settlements only began in the 1600s. As colonizers, the Europeans dictated the early social, political, and economic frameworks that underlie Canadian confederation (Porter 1965), including a British-based system of rule – with accommodations to the Catholic Church that saw the formation of a single French-speaking province (Quebec, originally Lower Canada) – and various colonial initiatives, mostly failed, to assimilate aboriginal peoples. The "British North America Act" created the self-governing Dominion of Canada in 1867. From its inception, and until very recently, the new nation looked almost exclusively to Europe for population growth.

For the early nation builders, such as Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. McDonald, luring settlers to build a prosperous country from the Atlantic to the Pacific was a high priority. But not all potential settlers were welcome. Priority was given to those from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Northern Europe. Free land was offered as an inducement and aggressive advertising campaigns were launched in these markets. Simultaneously, various exclusion measures restricted in-migration from other regions, especially from Asia (e.g., the Chinese Head Tax, various Passenger Acts). Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1910 gave government the authority to exclude from Canada people "belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada" (Section 38). In effect, Canada adopted an Atlantic face that was positive and welcoming, and a Pacific face that was negative and uninviting.

In 1962 Canada became the first major immigrant receiving society to remove *explicitly*³ discriminatory regulations (the U.S. followed in 1965). The introduction of a new Immigration Act based on a point system opened the door for much greater diversity in migrant inflows, an effect particularly important for Asian migrants. While prior to the 1960s leading source countries for Canadian immigrants were the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy (in that order), by 2000 the leading countries were China, India, and Pakistan.

Natural increase (births minus deaths), the principal driver of Canadian population growth through the majority of the last century, has now been supplanted by net migration. Between 1991 and 2001, and for the first time, net migration contributed more to population growth than did natural increase

³ We have italicized the word explicitly to acknowledge the fact that less visible discrimination continues to occur (Li 2003).

(as well as contributing to approximately 70 percent of labour force growth (Bourne and Rose, 2001). Furthermore, with birth rates having declined and the population aging, net migration is forecast to make ever-larger contributions to population growth in the next several decades. From a demographic perspective this makes attitudes toward immigration important if population growth via in-migration is to be maintained as a national priority.

With immigration numbers playing such a key role in population growth, the actual categories used by immigrants to gain Canadian entry has become important. The majority is admitted through the "economic" class, where an individual's contribution to the economy is critical (approximately 130,000-140,000 annual entrants). In sharp contrast to the recent European practice, entry depends upon "points," where prospective new Canadians are awarded scores based mainly upon their education, language skills, occupational training and experience, and age. The "family category" is a second important stream, consisting of mainly spouses/partners (approximately 50,000-55,000 annually). A final category, and one that garners much media attention, has to do with "protected persons" or refugees (approximately 35,000-40,000 per year). In recent years, attempts have been made, somewhat problematically, by the federal government to increase the number of economic and business class immigrants and decrease the number of family and refugee class immigrants. This relatively unique immigration profile also makes the Canadian case an important site for investigations about attitudes towards immigration.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTEXT AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION

Much of the literature on attitudes towards immigration policy relies on survey questions that ask respondents if they would like to see levels of immigration increased, decreased, or stabilized.⁴ Researchers then assess which personal characteristics of the respondents are related to their attitudes (Citrin et al. 1997; Chandler and Tsai 2001, Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Dustmann and Preston 2004; Pantoja 2006). The effects of economic status and political orientation on attitudes are of particular interest. According to economic competition models, the presence of immigrants is believed to displace native workers (due to the willingness of the former to work for lower wages), and this threatens native workers. Hence, those most threatened economically by immigrants are predicted to display the greatest aversion to immigration.

The evidence about which groups will be the most threatened by immigrants is mixed. Some scholars argue that for those who work, those at the bottom of the job hierarchy (the less skilled) will have the strongest aversion to immigration (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2004). For example, blue-collar workers and civil servants are less accepting of immigration than white-collar workers (Tucci 2005). In contrast, the unemployed and the economically inactive, having already lost out, have nothing further to lose by immigration (Gang et al. 2002). Union membership has also been found to increase anti-immigrant attitudes (Scheve and Slaughter 2001), although the precise reason for this has not been specified. Other scholars argue that a person's feelings about where they stand economically are more important than their actual position. Both Chandler and Tsai (2001) and Citrin et al. (1997)

⁴ It is important to note that here we situate our research within the body of literature that examines factors shaping the social organization of attitudes on *immigration policy*, rather than on immigrants per se (see e.g. Quillan 1995 and Semyonov et al 2004 for examples of this latter literature). The two types of attitudes should be treated separately because, as Simon and Lynch (1999:465) argue, "the desire to restrict immigration is not consistently closely related with negative attitudes toward migrants more generally."

find that being pessimistic about the state of the national economy increases anti-immigrant attitudes. Hernes and Knudsen (1992) also find that feelings of economic deprivation are related to anti-immigration attitudes.

Other studies find little evidence to support the idea that economic characteristics matter. Hernes and Knudsen (1992) find that occupation plays an insignificant role in determining attitudes and Citrin et al. (1997) found no significant difference among the views of respondents in various occupations or between union and non-union members. Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) find little to suggest that personal views on the economy affect attitudes.

In addition to economic characteristics, political orientation is also believed to be an important determinant of attitudes. Several studies find that political conservatives want less immigration (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Citrin et al. 1997; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996).⁵ Fortin and Loewen (2004) find that people on the left want more immigration than people on the right or those who are more moderate. Two multi-country studies (Mayda 2006 and O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006) also find that across nations, people who identify as patriotic want less immigration. Others suggest that political orientation is less important. Heath and Tilley (2005) find that patriotism had little effect on attitudes, once other factors were controlled.

Drawing on the above literature we propose to test the following hypotheses within the Canadian context:⁶

HE1a) Low socio-economic status will be associated with restrictive attitudes towards immigration. High socio-economic status will be associated with support for increasing immigration.

HE1b) Union members will be more restrictive than non-union members.

⁵ Although Citrin *et al* (1997) find that while ideological identification (liberal vs. conservative) has an effect, party identification (Democrat vs. Republican) has no effect.

⁶ Except see Fortin and Loewen (2004) who use a single year of data.

HP1a) Conservative political orientation will be associated with restrictive attitudes towards immigration.

However, as stated earlier, many studies have failed to include context or, when they do include it, do so only as an afterthought with little explanation. Table 1, where we summarize empirical studies⁷ examining attitudes towards immigration policy, illustrates this point. Very few studies can consider time because most rely on cross-sectional snapshot data. To date, only five studies (Citrin et al. 1997; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Dustmann and Preston 2004, Gang et al. 2001 and Palmer 1996) include measures that vary across time. Of these five, even fewer studies have attempted to explain the relationship between time and attitudes (Citrin et al. 1997; Gang et al. 2001; Palmer, 1996). However, even these studies are limited. Gang et al. (2001) and Citrin et al. (1997) both make the important contribution of looking at changes in the role that individual characteristics play over time.⁸ However, because they only include two time points, and because of the methods they use (both studies are based on analyses of each year separately), they cannot assess whether context (time) has a significant impact in itself on attitudes. Conversely, while Palmer (1996) examines context by comparing pooled data over multiple years, his study does not include the individual occupational or political characteristics that are so key in the literature, nor does he examine alternative explanations for the effect of context.

⁷ We only include those studies which have a dependant variable that asks about increasing or decreasing immigration levels and that use multivariate analysis to look at the factors associated with this variable. Thus, some other important studies on attitudes that use other methods (Diamond 1998, Simon and Lynch 1999) are not included on this list.

⁸ They distinguish between characteristics and coefficient effects. A characteristics effect refers to changes in the characteristics of a population over time – such as more educated people in a population generating more pro-immigration attitudes and a coefficient effect refers to the effect of a particular characteristic on attitudes changing over time – such as education having a larger or smaller effect over time. Gang et al. (2002) find that coefficient effects have a stronger impact than characteristics effects. For example, in 1997 education played a weaker role in reducing anti-immigrant attitudes than it did in 1988.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF HOW CONTEXT IS OPERATIONALIZED

AUTHORS	LOCATION	YEAR	TIME	DATA SET
Citrin et al. (1997)	US	1992, 1994	some	National Election Studies surveys
Scheve and Slaughter (2001)	US	1992, 1994,	modest	National Election Studies surveys
Pantoja (2006)	US	1996	n.a.	National Election Studies survey
Espenshade and Hempstead (1996)	US	1993	n.a.	CBS/NYT poll
Chandler and Tsai (2001)	US	1994	n.a.	General Social Survey
Dustmann and Preston (2004)	UK	1983-1990	not mentioned	British Social Attitudes Survey
Heath and Tilley (2005)	UK	2003	n.a.	British Social Attitudes Survey
Hernes and Knudsen (1992)	Norway	1988	n.a.	Norwegian national survey
O'Rourke and Sinnott (2006)	multiple ¹	1995	n.a.	International Social Survey Program
Facchini and Mayda (2006)	multiple	1995	n.a.	ISSP
Mayda (2006)	Multiple	1995, 1995-1997	n.a.	ISSP, World Values Survey
Gang et al. (2001)	Europe ²	1988, 1997	yes	Eurobarometer
Tucci (2005)	Germany	1998, 2000	n.a.	German Socio-Economic Panel
Palmer (1996)	Canada	1989-1992	yes	Environics
Fortin and Loewen (2001)	Canada	2000	n.a.	Canadian Election Survey

¹ ISSP survey countries included: Australia, West Germany, East Germany, Great Britain, the USA, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, New Zealand, Canada, the Philippines, Japan, Spain, Latvia, Slovakia.

² Eurobarometer survey countries include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

In this paper, we address these gaps by conducting a much more detailed analysis of the role of context than has been conducted in previous studies. First, we evaluate hypotheses about the relationship between economic context and attitudes. Economic arguments posit that anti-immigration sentiments would be higher in years when there are economic downturns (Olzak 1992; Palmer 1996). However, time could also represent changes in the larger political context. That is, who is in power politically in a country could have an overall effect, or reflect a particular national mood about immigration. Yet, to date, there has been no attempt to assess whether the larger political context might be related to attitudes. Given that many studies find that a conservative political orientation is related to attitudes, we might also expect that a conservative government might also affect attitudes about immigration. Indeed, this seems especially relevant in the Canadian context where many conservatives have wanted to reduce levels of immigration. Thus, we propose to examine the following two hypotheses about the role of time:

HE2) Economic downturns will be positively associated with anti-immigration attitudes.

HP2) Anti-immigration attitudes will be higher in years when the conservative political party is in power than in other years (when the liberal party is in power).

DATA

Data for this paper comes from multiple datasets collected by the Gallup polling organization in sixteen separate surveys spanning a twenty-five year interval from 1975 to 2000.⁹ These surveys are ideal because they contained an identical question on immigration policy as well as the important inde-

⁹ The data from 2005 included in Figure 1 had too many key variables, such as voting preference, missing to be included in the analysis.

pendent variables for our study (see below). Samples of approximately 1000 people, representative of the non-institutionalized Canadian population, were surveyed each time. We merged these surveys to create a pooled dataset with a final sample size of 15,096 (after cases with missing data were omitted). While the immigration question had exactly the same wording and almost exactly the same response categories from year to year,¹⁰ this was not the case for some of our independent variables. Although the major categories did not change from year to year,¹¹ in some cases more detailed information had to be collapsed to ensure continuity over time.

MEASURES

Respondents were asked whether they thought immigration should increase, stay the same, or decrease. Wording and response categories for this question were identical to those used elsewhere (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Mayda 2004; Tucci 2005). A small number of "don't know" responses (4-5 percent in most years) were recoded as missing.

The economic variables included labor union membership (counted if either the respondent and/or the respondent's spouse was a union member), and labour force activity (professional, business, sales, clerical, skilled labor, unskilled labor, homemaker, retired, student, and unemployed). The political variables are a series of dummy variables indicating whether a respondent stated that they would vote for (at the time of the survey) Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic Party or other party. During some of the years under

¹⁰ The question was worded as follows: "If it were your job to plan an immigration policy for Canada at this time, would you be inclined to increase immigration, decrease immigration, or keep the number of immigrants at about the current level?" The response categories, which were not read to respondents, were typically coded as "increase," "decrease," "same level," and "don't know."

¹¹ Typically an explicit "don't know" category was included, but on a few occasions this category was not explicitly mentioned to respondents.

consideration two major political parties were established in Canada: the right wing Reform Party (est. 1987) emerged in the Western provinces and the separatist Bloc Quebecois (est. 1990) emerged in Quebec. We re-coded voting for the Reform Party as Conservative and voting for the Bloc as part of voting for other parties.

All models also included controls for various demographic characteristics including sex, age, marital status, first language (English, French, other languages), religion (Protestant, Catholic, other religions), and education.¹² Although no measures of whether the respondent was an immigrant were available, we believe that the majority of those who speak other languages as a first language are likely immigrants.¹³ With the exception of age, all other variables are dummy-coded. We also include a series of dummy variables indicating the provincial region where the respondents live. Table 2 presents the percentage of respondents who want levels of immigration to decrease, stay the same, and increase, for each of the variables included in our study.

Finally, we included a variety of measures of context. First, we include a continuous measure of year (time) coded as a 1 for 1975, 5 for 1980, 7 for 1982, etc. The years included in our study are 1975, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Second, in order to measure economic competition, we collected data on the annual unemployment rates, GDP, and immigration levels. The GDP data comes from Heston et al. (2002) and the Canadian unemployment and immigration data were obtained through CANSIM (Canadian Socioeconomic Information Management Database). We also coded which political party was

¹² In this paper we follow Citrin et al (1997) and consider education as a demographic characteristic, although others (e.g. Scheve and Slaughter 2001) consider education as an economic characteristic.

¹³ With some slippage for immigrants who spoke English and French first, and for Aboriginal People who may have learned an Aboriginal language first.

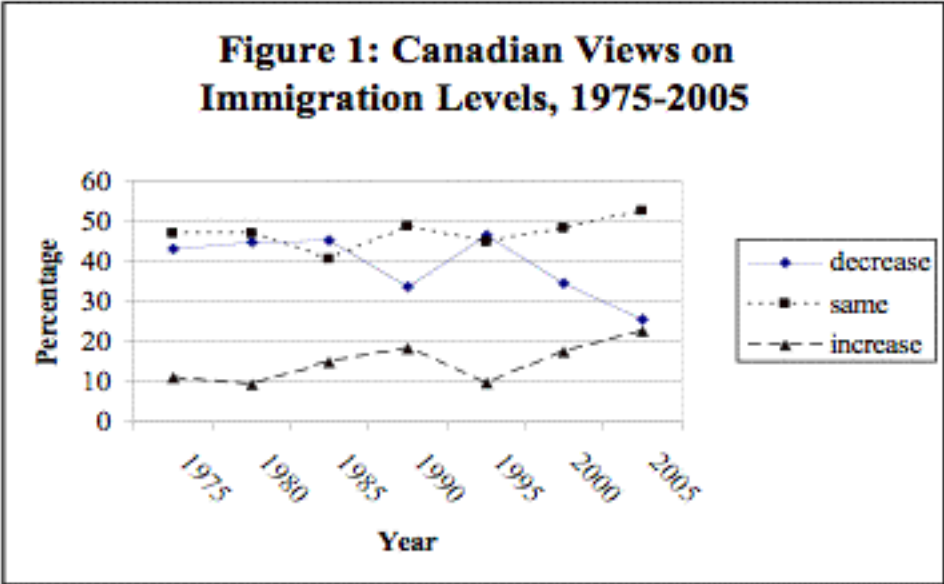
TABLE 2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION OVER TIME, 1975-2005

YEAR	IMMIGRATION LEVELS			N
	DECREASE	INCREASE	STAY THE SAME	
1975	42.76	10.71	46.53	980
1980	43.79	9.28	46.92	991
1982	56.58	7.06	36.36	1034
1985	45.17	14.48	40.35	974
1987	43.12	12.94	43.94	974
1988	41.87	14.76	43.37	1003
1989	34.86	15.14	50	958
1990	33.67	18.48	47.85	1001
1991	46.35	14.59	39.06	1001
1992	48.08	13.31	38.61	992
1993	46.91	11.31	41.78	955
1995	46.96	9.39	43.65	969
1996	43.96	10.05	45.99	935
1997	44.54	9.87	45.59	952
1998	37.68	11.38	50.94	958
1999	30.94	16.7	52.36	976
2000	34.15	17.28	48.57	978
2005	24.38	23.02	52.6	1981

in power in a given year. Given that in some years a new party was elected, we selected the party that was in power at the time the survey was administered. Only two parties have ever been in power federally in Canada – the Liberals and the Conservatives.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

In the first part of our analysis, we consider the role of individual factors on attitudes. Our primary dependant variable has three ordered categories (decrease, stay the same, and increase). The convention in the literature is to use the ordered probit model (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Mayda 2004; Tucci 2005). However, this model assumes that the logits are equal across categories of the dependant variable. For example, this would mean that the size and significance level of the logits for union membership (and all other variables) are the same whether one wants less, the same, or more immigration (called the proportional odds assumption). In order to satisfy this assumption, the score test for the proportional odds assumption has to be non-significant. However, our initial tests indicated that the score test was statistically significant. Thus, we fit a multinomial logit model, which provides separate logits for successive contrasts of the dependant variable (Fortin and Loewen 2004 and Fong and Oka 2006). All equations were weighted using the weight variable provided in each of the yearly datasets (except 1975). Each



Caption Needed

respondent's weight was standardized by Gallup to match national gender and age distributions. All equations also include a series of time dummy variables. We conducted separate analyses at the national level tracking the relationship between attitudes and the annual contextual variables.

Figure 1 presents Canadian views on immigration at five-year intervals between 1975 and 2005.¹⁴ We make three general points based on the evidence provided in this figure. First, there is no evidence of a hardening of Canadian attitudes, at least in recent years. Second, there is reasonable stability among the Canadian public in the percentage of respondents feeling that immigration levels should remain the same. Third, in the last decade there is increasing support for higher levels of immigration and correspondingly less support for a decrease in immigration levels. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, sentiment for decreasing immigration ran at least twice as high as support for increased immigration, by 2005 these positions were virtually deadlocked (with a majority wanting levels to remain the same).

Pooling the data from all years, Table 3 shows the bivariate relations between each of the independent variables and attitudes towards immigration. Education level shows the strongest association with individual attitudes; people with university educations are twice as likely as those with only elementary education to want more immigration (21.6 percent vs. 9.1 percent). Conversely, people with only elementary or high school education are among those wanting less immigration (48.3 percent and 48.4 percent respectively). Among those wanting to see more immigration are those whose first language is neither English nor French and those whose religion is neither Catholic nor Protestant (22.6 percent in both cases, the highest percentages among sub-

¹⁴ Although we were able to obtain 1975-2005 data for attitudes, our subsequent multivariate analyses are limited to 1975-2000 due to missing data on key variables for 2005.

groups wanting to see greater in-migration). Notice that the economic and political measures have only modest levels of association with attitudes.

Table 4 presents the results from the multinomial logit models predicting the association between individual characteristics and attitudes. A variety of the demographic characteristics are associated with wanting lower levels of immigration (compared to staying the same). This includes being female, speaking English or French as a first language, being Catholic or Protestant, and having lower levels of education. Conversely, speaking a language other than English or French, belonging to a religion other than Protestant, and having a university degree are all associated with wanting to increase immigration levels (compared to staying the same).

The results for the effects of individual economic and political characteristics are especially interesting once controls for other factors are entered. First, among Canadians, individual-level political and economic measures are unrelated to support for decreases in immigration. That is, union membership, occupation, and voting intention are uncorrelated with support for decreases in immigration levels (versus levels staying the same). Second, there are some modest associations at the individual-level among political and economic measures and attitudes supporting enhanced immigration levels. When other factors are eliminated, including time trends, those who intend to vote Liberal want to see more immigration. Similarly, those in professional occupations as opposed to those working in clerical or skilled jobs want to see more immigration. In contrast, students are significantly more likely to want immigration levels increased than are professionals. In sum, these findings suggest that although economic position and political orientation do have some marginal influences on attitudes, their role remains secondary to that of education and first language. Finally, it is worth noting that many of the time dummy vari-

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF EACH GROUP WHO WANT GIVEN LEVELS OF IMMIGRATION, 1975-2000

	% of Sample	Less	Same	More
Male	49.54	41.6	43.6	14.8
Female	50.46	43.2	46.4	10.4
Single	23.46	38.4	47.6	14.1
Divorced/widowed	16.1	46.4	43.4	10.2
Married	60.45	43.0	44.4	12.6
English	61.49	46.0	42.5	11.6
French	26.82	40.5	48.9	10.6
Other languages	11.69	28.4	48.0	22.6
Catholic	43.87	40.7	47.6	11.7
Protestant	35.33	47.6	42.3	10.1
Other Religions	19.9	32.8	44.6	22.6
Elementary school	12.1	48.4	42.5	9.1
High school	41.48	48.3	42.7	9.1
College/trades	23.07	41.1	47.3	11.6
University	23.27	30.3	48.1	21.6
Union member	28.24	44.4	44.3	11.3
Non-union member	71.76	41.7	45.3	13.1
Retired	13.38	43.1	43.8	13.1
Student	6.22	29.1	52.8	18.1
Homemaker	14.5	46.2	44.4	9.4
Professional	13.65	33.6	48.7	17.7
Business	10.28	40.4	44.9	14.7
Sales	4.48	43.7	45.1	11.2
Clerical	8.67	46.1	42.9	11.0
Skilled Labor	14.39	48.2	42.4	9.5
Unskilled Labor	9.72	45.8	43.3	10.9
Unemployed	4.3	44.3	44.8	11.0
New Democratic Party	13.08	43.6	41.7	14.7
Low/other politics	32.53	43.8	45.2	11.0
Atlantic	8.6	42.8	46.9	10.4
Quebec	26.75	37.2	50.1	12.7

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF EACH GROUP WHO WANT GIVEN LEVELS OF IMMIGRATION, 1975-2000 (CONT.)

	% of Sample	Less	Same	More
Ontario	36.11	44.4	42.5	13.1
Manitoba	4.23	35.3	49.6	15.1
Saskatchewan	3.83	40.4	45.9	13.7
Alberta	8.88	44.0	43.5	12.6
British Columbia	11.62	50.1	38.7	11.1

TABLE 4. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES (VERSUS STAY THE SAME)

	DECREASE IMMIGRATION LEVELS			INCREASE IMMIGRATION LEVELS		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Intercept1	0.645	1.06		-2.978	0.58	***
Male	-0.205	0.03	***	-0.020	0.02	
Age	0.004	0.00		-0.005	0.00	**
<i>Marital Status (vs Married)</i>						
Single	0.014	0.04		0.040	0.03	
Div/sep/wid	0.036	0.04		-0.072	0.03	**
<i>First Language (vs English/French)</i>						
Other language	-0.249	0.04	***	0.305	0.03	***
<i>Religion (vs Catholic/Protestant)</i>						
Other religion	-0.206	0.05	***	0.092	0.05	
<i>Education (vs University)</i>						
Elementary school	0.425	0.05	***	-0.312	0.04	***
High school	0.347	0.04	***	-0.247	0.03	***
College/trades	0.267	0.04	***	-0.121	0.03	***
<i>Union member</i>						
Union member	0.056	0.03		-0.042	0.02	
<i>Occupation (vs. Professional)</i>						
Homemaker	-0.002	0.06		-0.074	0.04	
Unemployed	0.046	0.08		-0.057	0.05	
Business	0.019	0.05		-0.050	0.04	
Sales	0.100	0.07		-0.069	0.05	
Clerical	0.013	0.06		-0.116	0.04	**

TABLE 4. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODEL ESTIMATES PREDICTING IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES (VERSUS STAY THE SAME)

	DECREASE IMMIGRATION LEVELS			INCREASE IMMIGRATION LEVELS		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Skilled Labor	0.104	0.05		-0.103	0.04	**
Unskilled Labor	-0.009	0.06		-0.078	0.04	
Retired	-0.010	0.06		-0.088	0.04	
Student	-0.040	0.06		0.161	0.05	**
Vote today (vs. Liberal)						
Conservative	0.009	0.04		-0.160	0.03	***
New Democratic Party	-0.109	0.04		-0.091	0.03	**
Other/low politics	0.037	0.03		-0.094	0.02	***
Region (vs. Ontario)						
Atlantic	0.064	0.05		0.133	0.03	***
Quebec	0.008	0.03		0.212	0.02	***
Manitoba	0.016	0.06		0.212	0.05	***
Saskatchewan	0.007	0.07		0.125	0.05	
Alberta	-0.004	0.05		0.057	0.03	
British Columbia	0.042	0.05		-0.087	0.03	**
Year (vs 1982)						
1975	-0.139	0.09		0.268	0.05	***
1980	-0.043	0.09		0.246	0.05	***
1985	-0.323	0.09	***	0.162	0.05	**
1987	-0.216	0.09		0.215	0.05	***
1988	-0.301	0.09	***	0.218	0.05	***
1989	-0.228	0.09	**	0.376	0.05	***
1990	-0.338	0.08	***	0.348	0.05	***
1991	-0.333	0.09	***	0.097	0.05	
1992	-0.243	0.09	**	0.079	0.05	
1993	-0.109	0.09		0.087	0.05	
1995	-0.025	0.09		0.119	0.05	
1996	-0.032	0.09		0.194	0.05	***
1997	-0.034	0.09		0.176	0.05	***
1998	-0.085	0.09		0.325	0.05	***
1999	-0.255	0.09	**	0.420	0.05	***
2000	-0.319	0.09	***	0.318	0.05	***

***p<.001, **p< .01

ables are significant in that they indicate that controlling for individual characteristics, differences over time also matter. In the next part of our analysis we focus further on the role of time.

In addressing how trends in attitudes might alter through time, we first investigated whether there were any trends in public sentiment toward immigration and annual changes in economic (GNP, unemployment levels) or political (party in power federally) factors. We found no robust associations when making comparisons over time. Likewise, we found that the actual number of immigrants entering the country was unrelated to trends in public attitudes.

However, we found different patterns in the data when we switched from looking at annualized data to looking at the consequences of a sharp contextual disjuncture, especially a disjuncture of an economic nature. Table 5 presents the full results from our analyses of the relationship between contextual factors and attitudes towards immigration. We present each variable in several ways. In addition to the annual counts for each year, we also present the contextual variables as change variables (Olzak 1992), calculating the change in the variable from the preceding year (for ease of presentation some of the preceding years' data are not shown). For GDP, we also calculated a smoothed three-year average (Semyonov et al. 2006). The data in Table 5 leads us to make two primary conclusions about attitudes over time. First, on average, attitudes only go up or down a few percent from year to year. For example, between 1995 and 1996, the percentage of people who wanted levels of immigration to decrease changed by 3 percent. Similarly, between 1996 and 1997, this percentage changed by just of 1 percent. We believe the differences in these values are small enough to suggest a relatively negligible effect of context within those time periods. That is, if there is very little difference in attitudes between time periods, then any difference can largely be explained by

TABLE 5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION, AND YEARLY CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES, CANADA 1975-2000

IMMIGRATION LEVELS					GDP				IMMIGRANTS			PARTY IN POWER	
Year	Less	More	Same	N	Total	3 years	1 year Change	Total	Change	N	Change	% Change	
1975	42.76	10.71	46.53	980	16,709	16,533	480	6.9		187,881	-30,584	-15.70	Liberal
1980	43.79	9.28	46.92	991	19,022	18,795	728	7.5	0.00	143,432	31,339	21.85	Liberal
1982	56.58	7.06	36.36	1034	18,428	18,053	-595	11.0	3.40	121,253	-7,388	-6.09	Liberal/Cons
1985	45.17	14.48	40.35	974	20,704	19,385	2,276	10.6	-0.70	84,335	-3,936	-4.67	Conservative
1987	43.12	12.94	43.94	974	21,719	20,284	1,016	8.8	-0.90	152,009	52,663	34.64	Conservative
1988	41.87	14.76	43.37	1003	22,595	21,673	876	7.8	-1.00	161,500	9,491	5.87	Conservative
1989	34.86	15.14	50.00	958	22,788	22,368	193	7.6	-0.20	191,497	29,997	15.66	Conservative
1990	33.67	18.48	47.85	1001	22,333	22,572	-455	8.2	0.60	216,398	24,901	11.51	Conservative
1991	46.35	14.59	39.06	1001	21,450	22,191	-883	10.3	2.10	232,751	16,353	7.03	Conservative
1992	48.08	13.31	38.61	992	21,318	21,701	-132	11.2	0.90	254,820	22,069	8.66	Conservative
1993	46.91	11.31	41.78	955	21,613	21,461	295	11.4	0.20	256,759	1,939	0.76	Liberal
1995	46.96	9.39	43.65	969	22,944	21,959	1,331	9.6	-0.80	212,860	-43,899	-5.41	Liberal
1996	43.96	10.05	45.99	935	23,091	22,549	147	9.7	0.10	226,044	13,184	5.83	Liberal
1997	44.54	9.87	45.59	952	24,080	23,372	989	9.2	-0.50	216,024	-10,020	-4.64	Liberal
1998	37.68	11.38	50.94	958	24,792	23,988	712	8.4	-0.80	174,162	-41,862	-24.00	Liberal
1999	30.94	16.70	52.36	976	25,900	24,924	1,109	7.6	-0.80	189,911	15,749	8.29	Liberal
2000	34.15	17.28	48.57	978	26,922	25,871	1,022	6.8	-0.80	227,209	37,298	16.42	Liberal

NB. Data for years used for some change variables not shown, GDP adjusted to 1992 levels

differences in the characteristics of individuals within the samples as opposed to suggesting that the larger context has an effect. Second, there were only two time points where there were very sharp changes in attitudes (more than 10 percent change): between 1980 and 1982 and between 1990 and 1991. We believe that it is these sharp changes in attitudes that highlight where context matters.

To investigate how context might matter, we examine annual immigration levels, the political party in power, and economic indicators in turn. Both levels of immigration and the political party in power show little association with trends in immigration attitudes, especially trends associated with sharp changes in public sentiments. For example, in 1982, the year when attitudes had changed dramatically from previous periods, immigration levels were extremely low and had decreased from the year before. Although the early 1980s did see a change in the federal government party in power, the same was not true in the early 1990s when another sharp change in attitudes occurred. In contrast, the data on economic conditions paints an entirely different picture about the relationship between context and attitudes.

The data are consistent with the suggestion that economic shocks have a strong association with attitudes towards immigration. That is, it is not aggregate GDP levels or annualized trends in unemployment rates that impact attitudes, but significant changes in GDP and unemployment between years; it is not the level of unemployment that triggers change in attitudes toward immigration, but the change from the preceding period that produces change in people's attitudes. The unemployment rate in 1982 was 11 percent, a touch lower than in 1992 and 1993 (11.2 and 11.4 percent respectively), however, in these latter years attitudes were considerably more favorable to immigration than in 1982. The strong anti-immigration sentiment of 1982 seems not to be

due to the level of unemployment that year, but rather to the change in unemployment from the previous year. In 1982, there was a 46 percent increase in the rate of unemployment (from 7.5 to 11 percent), whereas between 1992 and 1993 the rate barely changed, even though it was very high. A similar story emerges if we look at the relationship between GDP and attitudes. The years where there was the largest decrease in GDP (irrespective of its actual size) are the years in which attitudes abruptly changed as well.

In sum, the findings presented in this paper suggest variable support for the five hypotheses presented at the outset of this paper. Table 6 summarizes the level of support for each hypothesis. At the individual level, all three hypotheses about the impact of economic characteristics and political orientation are supported. At the contextual level, there is support for the hypotheses about the effect of economic competition, but not for the hypotheses about the role of political context or immigration numbers.

TABLE 6: LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR SIX SPECIFIC HYPOTHESES REGARDING IMMIGRATION RECEPTIVITY

HYPOTHESES	LEVEL OF SUPPORT
Individual	
Economic: Attitudes less favorable among low skilled	partial
Political: Attitudes less favorable among political Conservatives	partial
Contextual	
Economic: Economic downturns increases anti-immigration attitudes	full
Economic: The number of immigrants increases anti-immigration attitudes	none
Political: Conservative leadership associated with anti-immigration attitudes	none

* Partial support indicates matters for one set of comparisons (e.g., stay the same versus increase), full support indicates matters for all comparisons.

CONCLUSION

The first major objective of this paper was to determine how individual characteristics affect Canadian attitudes on immigration. We found that education and language are the only individual characteristics that have a linear relationship with attitudes. As education levels increase, so too does the willingness to increase levels of immigration. Those people whose first language is something other than English or French are also much more likely to want immigration levels to be increased (or less likely to want them to be cut).

Our study also suggests that the relationship between most other characteristics emphasized in the literature may have been over-stated, at least in the Canadian case. While previous studies have used statistical analysis methods that treat attitudes towards immigration as a continuum (from decrease, to stay the same, to increase), we treated these as distinct and separate categories (Fortin and Loewen 2004). In doing so, we were able to demonstrate that the relationship between many individual characteristics, such as occupational status and political preferences, is non-linear. That is, while certain measures of occupation and voting preferences can distinguish those who want levels increased from those who want levels to stay the same, they do not distinguish between those who want levels to stay the same and those who want levels decreased. This means that the existing theories may be more helpful in terms of identifying supporters as opposed to opponents of immigration.

The second major objective in this paper was to examine the effect of context on attitudes. We argued that individual sentiments are influenced not only by one's affiliations (e.g., language group) and achievements (e.g., education), but also by a social context wherein attitudes can be altered depending upon larger societal issues. However, because most studies are based

on cross-sectional data, they have been unable to fully examine the role that context plays (except by conducting cross-national comparisons). In the research presented in this paper, we were able to take advantage of a unique dataset with information on attitudes in Canada between 1975 and 2000. To date, no study has been able to document attitudes towards immigration over such an extended time period, and examine contextual shifts, while also controlling for the individual factors that may affect these attitudes.

The research shows that context, and in particular economic context, matters. In years when the economy changed dramatically (for the worse) from the previous year, people were much more likely to want to restrict immigration. In contrast to the existing practice, which is to measure economic context using annual or smoothed unemployment rates or GDP, our study suggests that far greater attention needs to be paid to *sharp relative changes* or economic shocks. An annual unemployment rate of 7 percent implies either a positive or negative economic context, depending on whether the rate in the previous year was 6 percent or 8 percent, but what matters most is when the change is dramatic (in the neighbourhood of a 50 percent increase in our data).

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