

Comparing Immigrant Settlement Policy in Canada and the United States¹

by
Ron Schmidt, Sr., Professor
Department of Political Science
California State University, Long Beach

Prepared for Presentation at the Conference on
The State of the Canada - U.S. Relationship
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Washington, D.C.
December 14-15, 2006

Comparing Immigrant Settlement Policy in Canada and the United States¹

Ron Schmidt, Sr., Professor
Department of Political Science
California State University, Long Beach

International migration has become a world-wide phenomenon, and appears to be increasing in both size and significance for both sending and receiving countries, and for the larger international system as well (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005). As a consequence, understanding the effects of international migration – and attempts by states to ameliorate, regulate, and/or enhance those effects – becomes ever more important. This paper aims to make a small contribution to this effort by comparing the efforts of two neighboring North American states – Canada and the United States – to help recent migrants successfully “settle” in their new countries.

As used in this paper, the phrase *immigrant settlement policy* is distinguished from *immigration policy*, the primary aim of which is “gate-keeping” – the regulation and control of the flow of migrants into a host country. In contrast, immigrant settlement policy refers to efforts by states to regulate and facilitate the ways in which – and the processes through which – recent migrants become integrated into the host society. The subject is important because in a time of relatively high international migration, the degree to which immigrants are successfully integrated into their new environments has consequences for a number of important public values, including on-going projects of democratization, economic development, harmonious inter-group social relations, and cultural revitalization. The enhancement of these projects is important not only to immigrants themselves and to the host countries as political communities, but they are increasingly recognized as important to the transnational relationships between immigrant “sending” and “receiving” countries as well.

A comparison of immigrant settlement policies in Canada and the United States is especially apt. Both countries have long been known as major immigrant-receiving countries. And for a variety of reasons, both have experienced heightened immigration in the past four decades. Indeed, one recent study found that Canada's population contains the second-highest *percentage* of immigrants among selected high-immigration countries (bested only by Australia), while the United States has the largest *number* of international migrants living in its midst (Migration Policy Institute, 2005).

Further, the social and political contexts of the two countries invite comparison as well. Both countries have Anglophone majorities, yet also have diverse cultural communities originating from both early settlement and conquest, as well as from more recent immigration. At the same time, Canada and the United States have important differences, not only in population size (Canada's total population is smaller than that of the state of California) but in policy approach to cultural difference and in political system. Canada, for example, has had an official policy of bilingualism and multiculturalism for nearly four decades, while the United States has provided little public support for its minority languages and cultures. Still, both countries have had considerable political conflict over these matters for some time.

Similarly, both countries' political systems were strongly influenced by their origins as colonies of the United Kingdom, and both have a federal governmental system (while the UK does not). In contrast, however, the U.S. has a "checks and balances" system of independent executives, legislatures, and courts, while Canada uses a more integrated parliamentary system of governmental organization. In short, this study is premised on the belief that the similarities and differences between Canada and the United States make excellent bases for systematic comparison, having the potential to illuminate our understanding of each country separately.

This paper, then, aims to provide a broad overview comparison of the approaches to immigrant settlement policy being pursued by Canada and the United States. The next section of the paper will outline the framework for comparative analysis used in this study, followed by broad sketches of significant similarities and differences in immigrant settlement policy employed by the two countries. The concluding section will summarize the analysis and articulate important research questions that remain to be addressed in future work on this subject.

Framework for Comparative Settlement Policy Analysis

As noted, this study aims to systematically compare the approaches of the United States and Canada to immigrant settlement policy. It is necessary, therefore, to devise and employ an analytical framework for making such comparisons. Without such a framework, it would be difficult to remain focused on analytically significant points of comparison. The framework employed here has three basic points of comparison: (1) dimensions of immigrant adaptation, (2) the modes of immigrant integration aimed at by the settlement policy, and (3) the modes of policy intervention employed by the state. Each of these points of comparison will be briefly described here.

1. Dimensions of Immigrant Adaptation. As noted above, immigrant settlement policy's basic aim is to facilitate the successful adaptation of international migrants to their new society. The question in focus here is what are the basic dimensions of social life in which adaptation takes place? As conceptualized in this study, immigrant incorporation takes place along four inter-related dimensions: *economic, cultural, social, and political*.

That is, to be "settled" into a new society, international migrants must find ways to: (a) sustain themselves economically; (b) come to terms with the host society's cultural practices (e.g., languages, customs, dress, foods, religions); (c) develop new, or connect to preexisting,

social networks; and (d) develop a relationship with the country's political organizations and institutions. In multiple ways – formal and informal, purposive and accidental – the political institutions and laws of the host country guide and channel, facilitate and/or obstruct immigrants' efforts to make these adaptations to the country in which they now reside. And immigrant settlement policy will necessarily concern itself with one or more of these dimensions of immigrant adaptation. This study, accordingly, aims to systematically describe, compare and critically analyze the immigrant settlement policies of Canada and the United States in relation to these four dimensions of immigrant incorporation. In broad terms, the paper will aim to clarify the degree to which each country has focused its policy efforts in relation to these dimensions of immigrant adaptation.

2. Policy Aims: Modes of Immigrant Integration. The second point of comparison asks about the *aims* of the countries' settlement policies in relation to four different modes of immigrant integration: *segregation*, *assimilation*, *pluralist integration*, and *transnationalism*. An *assimilative* policy approach, for example, would encourage the immigrant to “melt” into the host society as quickly as possible, culturally, economically, socially, and politically. The aim of such a policy, then, would be that after some few years neither native-born citizens of the host country nor the immigrant herself would think that the immigrant's national origins could be used to identify that person, or had any significant relationship to the individual's or society's well-being; it could be relegated to the past.

A policy promoting *pluralist integration*, on the other hand, encourages immigrants to integrate into the host society while retaining membership in a distinctive ethno-cultural community – e.g., by retaining facility in and practicing the immigrant's original language while also learning the dominant language(s) of the host society, by encouraging the development of

organizations and institutions to maintain immigrant cultural practices and social networks, by organizing economic activities in ethnic enclaves, by becoming politically connected through immigrant ethnic political organizations, etc.

A policy promoting a *segregative* approach, in contrast, encourages or requires immigrants to remain separate from the host society while yet performing certain economic or social functions within the host country – e.g., through a segregated “guest worker” program, through maintaining refugee camps insulated from the host society, through restricting immigrant access to citizenship in the host country, etc. The expectation here is that the immigrant community will not gain full membership in the host society over the long term, and, indeed, is often understood as a temporary and reversible, emergency presence in the host society.

A *transnational* settlement policy, finally, encourages immigrants to function as members of two societies, that is, as continuing members of the country of origin and as new members of the host country as well. Such a policy might involve the facilitation of communication and travel between the two countries, facilitating the development of “sending” country cultural institutions in the “receiving” country, facilitating economic enterprise between the two countries, formal recognition of dual citizenship in the two countries, etc. The aim here is to recognize and support the contemporary realities of international mobility, communication, commercial and economic activity and support, and political contributions and ties of individuals that aim to support the well-being of at least two countries.

3. Modes of Policy Intervention. The third point of comparison in this analysis is on the modes or types of policy intervention by the state. Prior research on this subject suggests four

primary modes of policy intervention used by states in relation to immigrant settlement:

prescriptive, proscriptive, proactive, and laissez-faire.

Prescriptive policies require that certain things *must* be done in prescribed ways – e.g., immigrants must demonstrate gainful employment within a certain time period or face expulsion; immigrants must demonstrate knowledge of the host country language within a specified time period, or to be naturalized as citizens of the host country. A *proscriptive* policy, in contrast, requires that certain things must *not* be done, on penalty of losing one's immigrant visa, or being deported back to the sending country. Examples might include speaking the language of the sending country in public, participating in certain forbidden forms of political engagement, engaging in certain forbidden religious practices, or being convicted of specified crimes.

Proactive policies, on the other hand, aim to encourage or discourage certain adaptations to the host society, but do not require that they be (or not be) done – e.g., a policy may encourage (through the public provision or funding of language education programs) immigrants to learn the dominant language(s) in the host society, but not require that they do so. A proactive policy, moreover, is based on the premise that the immigrant community is expected to participate in the design and implementation of the immigrant settlement policy. That is, the policy is envisioned as the product of a dialogic encounter between the host society's political authorities and representatives of the immigrant community, and not through a top-down pronouncement by the host country's authorities.

A *laissez-faire* policy approach, finally, is one in which the host government leaves the matter of immigrant settlement entirely in private hands, the hands of immigrants and/or host society private citizens and institutions. For example, the host government does nothing to encourage or discourage an immigrant from developing a relationship with the host country's

political system. The expectation in this approach is that immigrants are to find their own way – either individually or collectively through voluntary associations – to successful settlement in the host society. The state's role in immigration, in short, is restricted to the “gate-keeping” function of immigration policy, and not to a planned and authoritative facilitation of immigrant efforts to become settled in the host society. In the pages that follow, these three aspects of immigrant settlement policy will be used to compare the approaches of Canada and the United States to using public policy as an instrument for facilitating immigrant integration into their respective societies.

Canada's Approach to Immigrant Settlement Policy

As noted in the introduction to this paper, Canada is one of the leading immigrant receiving countries in the world, and has conceived of itself as an immigrant-friendly country for many decades (Reitz, 2002). Canada's current approach to immigration policy, begun in 1962, signaled a new willingness on the country's part to welcome international migrants from all over the world.² A series of policy reforms has led to a substantial increase in immigration to Canada, and its immigrants in recent decades have been much more diverse in origin than was true in previous periods of Canadian history (Ray, 2005).

One of the primary motivations for Canada's reforms of its immigration policy in recent decades was a growing perception, stimulated by governmental studies widely discussed in the media, that Canada's age and skills profiles had come to portend economic difficulties in the decades to come (Green, 2003: 34; Ray, 2005). Specifically, the projection was that Canada's middle class had not been producing enough highly skilled off-spring to ensure that middle-aged Canadians would enjoy sufficient economic support for a relatively comfortable life in their (ever-lengthening) old age. Thus, Canada's government decided it needed to find a way to spur

more immigration – particularly among those with the kinds of high-skill, knowledge-based occupational credentials necessary for relative success in the new global economy. Canada's immigration reform was organized to try to maximize the recruitment and settlement of these new migrants in as smooth a fashion as possible. And the policy has been relatively successful, in that large numbers of new immigrants have come to Canada in recent decades, and many of these are relatively well-educated, possessing the kinds of skills given priority in the immigration policy. In general, then, Canada's discourse on immigration is one that is largely immigrant-friendly, with the country's news media (for the most part) portraying immigrants as hard-working, conscientious, and struggling to adapt to their new country.

It is in this context of a generally welcoming public discourse on immigration that Canada's approach to immigrant settlement policy is best understood.³ Canada's governments have made significant efforts to articulate and organize a settlement policy for immigrants that is relatively comprehensive in scope, proactive in mode of intervention, and pluralist integrationist in its aims. Canada's immigrant settlement policy, moreover, is organized to involve four levels of state and NGO agencies, and it involves both formal settlement policy, and more general policies that have specific benefits for immigrant populations.

1. Formal Immigrant Assistance Programs.

The website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Federal government's agency responsible for immigration and immigrant settlement, outlines a series of formal programs to aid in immigrant settlement. Among the most important of these are the following:

(a) Language Training: Canada's Federal government works with provincial governments, school boards, community colleges, and immigrant and community organizations (NGOs), to provide free language training (in English or French, as appropriate to the area)

across the country for adult permanent residents. Funding comes from federal, provincial, and local resources. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006).

(b) Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program: Canada's Federal government funds a wide array of provincial and local government agencies, as well as NGOs, throughout the country to provide a variety of "settlement and adaptation" services. Among the services listed on the CIC website are the following: referrals to economic, social, health, cultural, educational and recreational services; information and tips on banking, shopping, managing a household and other everyday tasks; interpreters or translators, if needed; non-therapeutic counseling; help in preparing "professional-looking" resumes and help in learning job-searching skills (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006).

(c) Host Program: Canada's Federal government also has organized a "host program," in which local NGOs in seven of the country's ten provinces recruit and train Canadian volunteers to become one-on-one hosts for immigrants and their families. These hosts are to provide opportunities for immigrants to practice the local official language, to answer questions and to offer advice on a wide range of issues that confront newcomers in Canada (e.g., getting children enrolled in school, finding housing, using public transportation, finding appropriate recreational activities for children and adults, shopping excursions, etc.) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006).

(d) Refugee Programs and Services: Finally, Canada's Federal government also provides an array of programs and services for immigrants formally designated as refugees. Again operating primarily through local governmental and NGO immigrant assistance agencies, the Federal government provides a resettlement assistance program (e.g., temporary housing, household items, temporary income, help in finding permanent housing, etc.), an immigration

loan program (for transportation to Canada, travel documents, etc.), an interim Federal health program (until permanent resident documentation is obtained), and an urgent protection program for women at risk (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006).

2. General Social Policies Aiding Immigrant Settlement.

In addition to the above immigrant-specific programs operated by Canada's government, the country's relatively robust (in comparison with the U.S.) network of social policies and programs also operates to aid the settlement of immigrants in various ways. That is, in comparison with Americans, Canadians (including immigrants) have relatively more access to universal health care benefits, to public education (including higher education),⁴ to income support for under- and un-employed families, to housing benefits, to employment training and placement, etc. Such a relatively developed network of social programs and benefits, to which most immigrants have access, provides some material platform of support for immigrants trying to settle successfully in their new environment.

Of special significance for immigrants are two additional programs that receive considerable attention from Canada's news media and public officials: the country's program in support of multiculturalism, and its anti-racism efforts. Indeed, these programs are often described by the news media in narratives about immigrants and the issues they face in adjusting to a new life in Canada.

(a) Canada's Multicultural Policy: In contrast to most countries in the world, Canada's embrace of multiculturalism is quite unusual. Since 1971 the country has had an official policy of promoting multiculturalism, and has adopted a vision of itself as a cultural and ethnic "mosaic." The latest iteration of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) declares as its first policy aim that Canada seeks to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism

reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2006).

A Federal government agency, the Department of Canadian Heritage, is responsible for the promotion of the country’s multiculturalism policy, and it coordinates the activities of other Federal departments in promoting greater responsiveness to the multiple cultural communities in the country. While the adoption of this policy predates the recent increase in immigration to the country, new immigrant communities have become a major concern of the multicultural policy and its administrators (see, e.g., Department of Canadian Heritage, 2006). As a result, non-governmental immigrant services agencies in the country’s largest immigrant-receiving cities – i.e., Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal – have been able to draw upon the multicultural programs for support in providing a variety of cultural services, including language preservation classes, cultural festivals and other community-building events and programs. Similar agencies in other locations have also benefited from the programs.

(b) Canada’s Anti-Racism Policy: The Department of Canadian Heritage has also been given responsibility for the country’s policy against racial discrimination and bias, and in 2005 issued an “action plan against racism” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005). Noting that “immigration accounts for 53% of population growth and [that] visible minorities will account for 20% of the population by 2016” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005: 1), the plan highlights immigrants as a central focus for the country’s efforts to combat racism.

One of the key rationales for the action plan is the Federal government’s recognition that recent immigration has dramatically increased the proportion of “visible minorities” in Canada’s population, and increasing statistical evidence that many members of those visible minorities

have not fared as well socially or economically as those from Canada's European-origin social groups (see, e.g., Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005: 14-16; see also Reitz, 2002). Canada's Federal government, then, perceives that racial discrimination may prevent successful settlement of new "visible" immigrants, and that addressing such barriers of race needs to be an important aspect of the country's immigrant settlement policy.

A final aspect of Canada's approach to immigrant settlement concerns steps taken to encourage the *political* integration of immigrants. Here there is little to report, in that the political incorporation of immigrants seems to have received little attention from either governmental policy makers or from Canadian scholars. As McGill University political scientist Jerome Black reported in a 2001 survey of the subject, "... analysts of electoral participation, indeed of Canadian politics in general, have paid marginal attention to immigrants as a distinctive category and have rarely ventured beyond a (British-French) bi-national perspective in the interpretation of ethnic politics . . ." (Black, 2001: 8). One notable exception to this generalization (apart from Black's survey) is a comparative institutional analysis by Bloemraad (2003), finding that Canada's relatively proactive general approach to newcomer settlement facilitates a higher degree of political incorporation of immigrants than does the approach taken in the United States.

(3) Implementation Structure.

Canada's immigrant settlement policies are implemented through a complex federal structure. The overall policy goals – for both formal immigrant assistance programs and for more general social policies – are set by the Federal government in Ottawa. Some of the funds for such programs also come from the Federal government. But the actual implementation of immigrant settlement programs, along with much of the funding, is managed by provincial governments,

operating through municipal government agencies and a two-tiered system of Non-Governmental Organization agencies.

While all of Canada's ten provinces are involved in immigrant settlement activities and programs, three metropolitan areas (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver) in three provinces (Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia) are homes for more than 80% of Canada's foreign-born population. It is these provinces and municipalities that are most intensely involved in the implementation of immigrant settlement policy, though the Federal government and other provinces have made efforts at a more even geographic distribution of immigrants (Andrew, 2002).

In any case, while there are variations among the provinces, most of the "street-level" implementation programs are operated – with a mixture of funds from Federal, Provincial, and third-sector sources – by a two-tiered system of NGO's. The top tier of these organizations are general purpose non-governmental social services agencies that secure Federal and provincial government, as well as private, funds, and are responsible to their funding sources for oversight and coordination of immigrant services. These top-tier agencies, in turn, contract out the actual provision of "face-to-face" services to immigrants through more specialized (and often ethnically-based) service agency NGO's (see, e.g., Sadiq, 2005, for an insightful analysis of the operation of Toronto's two-tiered immigrant settlement programs).

(4) Characterization of Canada's Approach to Immigrant Settlement Policy.

Given the above descriptions of Canada's approach to immigrant settlement policy, how is that approach best characterized in relation to the analytical points of comparison introduced above? It would seem that Canada's immigrant settlement policy is best characterized as relatively *comprehensive* in scope, *proactive*, and aiming for a *pluralistic integration* of immigrants. By "relatively comprehensive" is meant that Canada's Federal and provincial

governments have articulated a relatively broad range of settlement services, from economic, to social, to cultural services, by-passing only a direct focus on political integration. However, even though the approach is relatively comprehensive in scope, it must be pointed out that immigrant advocates, as well as workers for immigrant services NGO agencies, have complained in recent years that the funds for such programs have been consistently cut and that the funding levels are woefully inadequate to meet the need. As will be seen, nevertheless, in comparison with the United States, Canada's policies have a relatively broad scope of focus in relation to the various aspects of immigrant settlement.

By "proactive" is meant that Canada's approach to immigrant settlement policy provides means for interaction and dialogue between immigrant communities and the agencies responsible for formulating and implementing the policies and programs under its rubric. One manifestation of this phenomenon is the relatively large number of ethnically-based NGOs contracted to implement immigrant settlement services, particularly in the Toronto and Vancouver metropolitan areas. There, literally hundreds of relatively small NGOs interact with, and engage in critical dialogue with, immigrant community members and their upper-tier NGO funders, as well as provincial and Federal government officials.

Though making somewhat less use of small NGOs to implement its settlement policies, Quebec's approach to immigrant settlement is explicitly proactive, engaging a "moral contract" between immigrants and Quebec as a political community and "distinct society." There, immigrants are asked (1) to accept French as the public language of the province, and to learn the language, so that they can (2) participate in the joint project of developing Quebec as a "democratic" and "pluralistic" society that engages all members and respects the cultural differences of its increasingly diverse population (see, e.g., Carens, 2000, Chapter 5).

No doubt this relatively interactive, proactive relationship between immigrant communities and government officials is facilitated by the relatively small size (in comparison with the U.S.) of Canada's population. Still, an analysis of the language employed by Canadian government web-sites and other public documents shows a stance toward immigrants that is relatively "warm" and inviting of dialogue, again in comparison with similar web-sites and government documents in the United States.

Finally, Canada's approach to immigrant settlement policy is explicitly aimed at creating a culturally "pluralistic" society, one in which immigrants are not asked to shed their cultural identities, but are encouraged to help develop Canada as a "multicultural" and "bilingual" country. The Federal government policies supporting multiculturalism and seeking to extirpate racism from Canadian society make clear that Canada seeks to proactively include immigrants in the development and realization of these country-wide aims. Moreover, provincial government policies – particularly in the three provinces with the largest number of immigrants – are also aimed explicitly at these same goals of pluralistic integration and racial equality.

The United States Approach to Immigrant Settlement Policy

Like Canada, the United States has experienced a very substantial increase in its immigrant population over the past forty years. Indeed, the 2000 U.S. Census found more foreign born persons living in the country than at any time in its history. By 2005, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) found that 12.4% of the U.S. population had been born in another country (35.7 million people), and several large cities had foreign-born populations in excess of one-third (e.g., Los Angeles, 40.3%; San Jose, 37.9%; New York City, 36.6%)(U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). At the same time, the 2005 ACS found a continuation of a trend first noticed in the 2000 census: a growing number of immigrants were by-passing traditional

immigrant-receiving states and cities to settle in areas with few previous immigrants. Among these were the South (a trend that started before 2000), the upper Mid-West, New England, and the Rocky Mountain region. As noted by the New York Times in its report on the 2005 ACS: “[Since the 2000 census,] Indiana saw a 34 percent increase in the number of immigrants; South Dakota saw a 44 percent rise; Delaware 32 percent; Missouri 31 percent; Colorado 28 percent; and New Hampshire 26 percent” (Lyman, 2006).

Even more than in Canada, U.S. immigration in the past four decades has been overwhelmingly from regions other than Europe. Since a 1965 immigration reform law that removed barriers to migration from non-European countries, some 80% of immigrants have come from regions other than Europe, principally Latin America and Asia, but also the Middle-East and (increasingly) sub-Saharan Africa. As many commentators have noted, this post-1965 immigration has significantly altered the ethno-racial composition of the United States population, so that by the 2005 ACS, the “white, non-Hispanic” population made up only two-thirds (66.9%) of the U.S. population. Latinos/Hispanics, a group that had surpassed African Americans as the country’s largest ethno-racial minority group in the 2000 census, made up 14.4% of the U.S. population in 2005, followed by Blacks at 13.4%, and Asian Americans at 4.9% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, Table 3). Several demographers have predicted that by the middle of the present century, in 2050, the European-origin population will have dropped below one-half of the country’s people.

Unlike Canada’s experience, the large increase in the U.S. immigrant population in the past four decades is not the result of a political consensus among the country’s policymakers and opinion leaders. Most analysts believe the immigration reform law of 1965, that removed important constraints on non-European origin international migration as noted above, played a

significant role in the increase in migration since that date.⁵ At the same time, however, international migration has been on the rise throughout the world since the 1960s, so a change in U.S. policy cannot be the only reason for immigration's increase in that one country. In any case, by most accounts, U.S. policymakers were surprised when the 1965 law was soon followed by a significant increase in immigration to the country (see, e.g., Glazer, 1985; Skrentny, 2002). And the reality of high levels of immigration has been politically controversial since the significant increase of the 1960s and thereafter became widely noticed.

Another key difference between U.S. and Canadian immigration is that a significant percentage of the foreign-born living in the United States is made up of unauthorized migrants. A recent analysis of U.S. Census data by a senior research associate at the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that in 2004 about 29% (10.3 million people) of the foreign-born population in the United States were unauthorized migrants (Passel, 2005). Canada has an unauthorized immigrant population that is dramatically less than this proportion, and this difference must account, in part, for the comparatively “chilly climate” for immigrants in the United States. In sum, then, the United States has a very large population of immigrants in its midst, but the political orientation of the country toward its immigrants is much less “warm” and welcoming than that in Canada. It is within this context that the U.S. approach to immigrant settlement policy must be understood.

1. Immigrant Settlement Policy in the United States.

In contrast with Canada, the United States national government has virtually no formal policies regarding immigrant settlement. Nearly all the attention given to immigrants in U.S. politics and government is focused on the “gate-keeping” questions of immigration policy, and not toward facilitating their successful integration into U.S. society.⁶ A visit to the web-site of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S., the agency responsible for implementing

immigration and citizenship policy) yields no information about programs and policies aimed at immigrant settlement.⁷ The U.S.C.I.S. does have a bureau, the Office of Citizenship, which provides some useful information to new immigrants and to immigrants seeking to naturalize as U.S. citizens. For example, there is a pamphlet (available in eleven languages) on the bureau's website titled "Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants" (U.S. Office of Citizenship, 2006a), with information that is useful to individuals and families trying to get situated in the country (e.g., information on obtaining a Social Security Card, paying taxes, purchasing health insurance, finding an apartment, finding a job, enrolling children in school, securing a library card, etc.). And the bureau also has information helpful to those about to take exams on the English language and U.S. history and government, pre-requisites for naturalization as U.S. citizens (U.S. Office of Citizenship, 2006b).

In addition to these useful informational items, the Office of Citizenship has issued a brief report on services provided to immigrants by the country's local libraries (U.S. Office of Citizenship, 2006c), and has also reported on a series of seven community focus groups, organized to discuss approaches to immigrant integration services in the U.S., and important gaps that remain in those services (U.S. Office of Citizenship, 2004). The focus groups included representatives from Office of Citizenship local offices, from state and local government agencies, and with faith-based and community-based NGOs working with immigrants. Apart from this one bureau, and its relatively thin offering of information and networking among a few immigrant servicing agencies, however, the U.S. government is virtually bereft of an organized immigrant settlement policy. In that sense, and despite the fact that over 35 million people living in the U.S. are immigrants, it must be said that the U.S. national government's dominant approach to immigrant settlement policy is one of *laissez-faire*. That is, from the perspective of

the U.S. national government, immigrants are expected to find their own way to successful integration into the U.S. society, economy, culture and political community.⁸

2. Immigrants and General Social Policies in the United States.

As in Canada, general social policies (i.e., not immigrant-focused) in the U.S. also contribute to the context within which immigrant settlement takes place, and for the most part these policies may be said to contribute to the *laissez-faire* policy context outlined above. This is so in that social policy in the U.S. is generally less robust than in Canada (and than in most other Western industrial democracies as well). Thus, funding of social programs is less generous, and the scope of social policy is less comprehensive. U.S. health care policy, for example, is restricted for the most part to the poor (Medicaid) and the elderly (Medicare), so that an increasingly large proportion of the U.S. population (including a disproportionate share of immigrants) lives without health insurance. Similarly, housing assistance for low-income persons has never reached more than a small fraction of those otherwise eligible, and even that has been significantly reduced in the last several decades.

Perhaps the most important shift in general social policy affecting immigrants in recent years were the changes in federal policy adopted in Title IV of the 1996 welfare reform law, the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.” That law substantially restricted access to a range of social welfare policies, including “welfare” (i.e., Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF) and food stamps. Summarizing the effects of the law, a study of immigrant use of social welfare policies by the Urban Institute, using data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Surveys, 1995 to 2000, reported: “There were substantial declines between 1994 and 1999 in legal immigrants’ use of all major benefit programs: TANF (-60 percent), food stamps (-48 percent), SSI (-32 percent), and Medicaid (-15

percent)”(Fix and Passel, 2002, p. 2). Though many states chose to use their own funds to supply social welfare benefits to immigrants, and immigrant access to federal food stamps was restored in 2002, it appears that immigrants’ support through social policies has nevertheless been reduced substantially in the past decade. And emphasizing the *laissez-faire* intentions of the act’s authors, the 1996 welfare reform law declared that “self-sufficiency has been a basic principle of United States immigration policy” (quoted in Fix and Passel, 2002, p. 4).

Another important shift in general social policy affecting immigrants was the adoption, in 2002, of President George W. Bush’s education reform bill, known as “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). This law created federal government testing standards for elementary and secondary schools receiving federal funds, and tied the receipt of federal funds for low-performing schools to increases in student test scores over time. The law purports to provide incentives to local school staffs for operationally “achieving results” in testable improvements in their students’ learning by penalizing those that do not do so.

A little remarked feature of the new law, in addition, was a step-up of incentives for local schools to emphasize an “immersion” approach to teaching English to students whose native language is not English. Thus, the testing program set up by NCLB provides for language tests only in English, and the new law also substantially undermined federal support for bilingual education. Symbolizing this fact, the new law included a name change for Title VII, formerly the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, now renamed the “English Language Acquisition Act.” The law also resulted in the reorganization and renaming of the administrative unit responsible for implementing education programs for non-English speaking students (from “Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs” to “Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited-English-Proficient

Students”)(Crawford, 2002). Unlike the social welfare policy changes noted above, then, this education reform bill is best characterized as *prescriptive* in form, in that it prescribes an *assimilationist* aim for the language education of non-English speaking students.

3. Other Immigrant Settlement Programs.

Though several state governments have small and very specialized programs of immigrant services (e.g., the California Attorney General’s office; the Illinois State Department of Health and Human Services), nearly all service programs for immigrant settlement in the United States are operated by local government agencies or by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both community-based and faith-based. It is very difficult to generalize about these programs at this stage of the research project. However, it can be said that there are two basic types of programs that work to help settle immigrants in the U.S. – (1) educational, and (2) service support. Most of the *educational programs* are English language classes for immigrant adults, and these are operated by local school district adult schools, community colleges, and a plethora of NGOs in communities all over the country. The most accurate generalization about these English learning programs is that they are consistently unable to fill the need for classes, as they are chronically under-funded and under-staffed (see, e.g., U.S. Office of Citizenship, 2004). Some classes are also available for immigrants preparing for naturalization as U.S. citizens, in which students learn the essentials of U.S. history and government in preparation for the civic education exam that is given as part of the naturalization process.

In addition, a number of immigrant-focused NGO social services agencies operate in communities all over the country, providing a variety of forms of assistance, such as assistance in finding temporary housing, assistance in job hunting, assistance in seeking out public social benefits, etc. Once again, however, the most accurate generalization that can be made about these

programs at this stage of the research project is that they are chronically under-funded and understaffed, complaining of being unable to meet even a small fraction of the need in their communities.

4. Characterizing the U.S. Approach to Immigrant Settlement.

As noted above, the U.S. national government has no explicit immigrant settlement policy. Accordingly, its degree of *comprehensiveness* in relation to the *dimensions* of immigrant settlement policy – i.e., economic, social, cultural and political – is very thin, to say the least. Federal aid to public education does provide some measure of support for the cultural integration of the children of immigrants, and there are still other federal social programs that may be said to provide social assistance (e.g., Medicaid). The Office of Citizenship, moreover, does provide useful information to immigrants seeking to naturalize as U.S. citizens, so that might be said to provide some support for the political integration of immigrants. Apart from these, however, and in comparison with Canada, the U.S. approach toward immigrant settlement is very minimalist.

With respect to the *mode* of policy intervention, it has been emphasized throughout this discussion that the U.S. approach is overwhelmingly one of *laissez-faire*. That is, the U.S. government (and most state governments as well) expect that immigrants will find their own ways to integrate into U.S. society. The U.S. government wants immigrants to be “self-sufficient” individuals from the beginning, and its approach to immigrant settlement policy provides the incentives to immigrants for such behavior by providing as little support for economic, social, cultural, and political integration as possible. While thousands of NGOs in the U.S. do provide various forms of immigrant settlement support, these cannot be said to result from government policy.

Finally, U.S. policy toward the *aims* of immigrant integration is overwhelmingly *assimilationist* in orientation. Federal education policy, as noted above, has removed most support for bilingual education for immigrant children, and has adopted a testing scheme that provides incentives to teachers to have their students focusing only on speedy and effective adoption of English as their dominant language. Most state governments have followed suit, so that little remains of the bilingual education programs that generated such controversy in the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Schmidt, 2000). Moreover, unlike the policies of Canada, in the U.S. there is virtually no governmental support for programs aimed at preserving the heritage languages and cultures of the country's immigrant (and non-immigrant) cultural communities.

And it should be noted as well that the *laissez-faire* immigrant settlement policy regime in the U.S. plays a subtle, yet strong role in supporting cultural assimilation on the part of the country's immigrants. That is, the highly competitive and individualistic ethos of U.S. culture, along with the overwhelming dominance of English as the language of power in the country, results in strong pressures on immigrants to "blend in" to the culture as quickly as possible. Economic, social, and cultural incentives abound for individuals to assimilate within such a social environment. And this lesson is not lost on immigrants or their children, as demonstrated by recent studies showing a more rapid shift toward monolingual English language usage among recent immigrants and their children than during any previous period of U.S. history. Indeed, despite the seeming ubiquity of the Spanish language in the civil society domains of Southern California, research shows that only 7% of third-generation Mexican Americans in the area can speak Spanish (see, e.g., Rumbaut, et.al., 2006).

Canada and the U.S. Compared: Toward Explanations

As the discussion above has demonstrated, Canada's approach to immigrant settlement policy is substantially different than that of the United States. Canada's policy approach for settling immigrants is relatively *comprehensive* in scope, is *proactive* in mode of policy intervention, and aims toward a *pluralistic integration* of immigrants, while that of the United States is very "thin" in depth and scope, is *laissez-faire* in its mode of policy intervention, and is *assimilationist* its aims for the integration of immigrants. How can we account for these substantial differences in approach between two countries that appear to share so much in culture and politics?

While this project requires much more research before reaching solid conclusions, I want to propose two suggested lines of inquiry that may help us understand why such major differences exist between the two countries' approaches to immigrant settlement policy. First, it is very important that the political culture of the United States is more individualistic and *laissez-faire* than is that of Canada, and has been so for a very long time (see, e.g., Lipset, 1990). Accordingly, all individuals in the U.S., including immigrants, are trained by the dominant political culture to believe that they, and they alone, are responsible for the outcomes of their efforts to succeed in the economy, society, and political world. While fortune deals differing hands to people in the great "card-game of life," it is up to each individual to play those cards as best she can so as to realize her aspirations for a "good life." Defenders of the U.S. *laissez-faire* approach to immigrant settlement, then, could argue that such an approach is precisely appropriate in providing incentives to international migrants for adapting to the ways of life most likely to be successful in the country's social setting. Moreover, the same justification is given for the country's *assimilationist* aims with respect to immigrant integration. That is, the

economic, social, cultural, and political systems reward those who seek to most closely resemble the most successful individuals in the society, and these are typically fluently English-speaking, individualistic in their cultural and economic orientation, persons who strongly value material success and social prestige, and who smoothly blend in with the social mores of the community.

Canada, in contrast, has inherited from both its British and its French colonial pasts a more corporatist and communitarian understanding of the relationships between civil society, community life, and the flourishing of individuals. Accordingly, while Canadians work within a market economy and a federal political system very similar to those of the United States, the cultural ethos in which Canadians are taught urges a greater sense of responsibility for the well-being of others, and teaches that individuals are more likely to flourish in a community of mutuality and interdependence. It is not surprising that this communitarian ethos is reflected in the aims of the country's immigrant settlement policies. Further, Canada's government adopted a policy of official bilingualism and multiculturalism over three decades ago, in part to help distinguish the country's collective identity from that of its colossal neighbor to the south, the United States. Accordingly, while these policies have generated considerable criticism and conflict within the country, Canada's cultural and linguistic pluralism does seem to have become solidified as a core component of the Canadian national identity, and there is little likelihood of its political reversal in the foreseeable future. That being the case, it is once again unsurprising that Canada's approach to immigrant settlement would be one of pluralistic integration, rather than assimilation. In short, the immigrant settlement policies of both countries seem to match the dominant political culture of each country.

My second suggested line of inquiry is that the relatively small number of unauthorized immigrants in Canada, and their relatively large numbers in the United States, may help to

account for the differing orientations toward immigrants and their “settlement” in the two countries. That is, Canadians can more easily see the positive benefits of immigration, generating a relatively more hospitable and welcoming orientation toward them, because most of the country’s immigrants are invited to migrate to fill prescribed and controlled roles in the country’s evolving political economy. Both the number, and the attributes, of immigrants in Canada are relatively well-controlled through the country’s immigration policy.

The United States, in contrast, shares its southern border with a country – Mexico – which has a much higher degree of poverty than is true in the U.S. Moreover, a well-functioning “system” exists, despite being unofficial and clandestine for the most part, that enables persons from Mexico and other countries to gain entry to the U.S. and to find gainful employment that is the basis for an increase in the migrants’ standard of living, and of their families back home who receive substantial amounts material aid in the form of remittances. While many Americans are implicated, directly and indirectly, in providing the incentives and opportunities for this clandestine system of migration to function, the “illegality” of these unauthorized migrants creates an aura of condemnation and hostility toward immigrants that is largely absent in Canada. Given this aura, it seems very possible that the hostility of many Americans toward any expansion of general social benefits and programs – e.g., educational opportunity, health care, income supports, job training – can be traced to the widely held perception that the “need” for any such expansion is due to the “unwanted” presence of so many “illegal” immigrants. This hostility, moreover, may go far to account for the relative absence of even *proposals* for a more proactive, focused and structured immigrant settlement policy in the United States.

Conclusion

This paper has compared the approaches to immigrant settlement policy in two adjoining North American countries, both of which are known – to themselves and to others – as being large-scale immigrant receiving countries. It has been demonstrated that Canada and the United States have very divergent approaches to immigrant settlement policy. And several lines of inquiry have been suggested for explaining these two divergent approaches to this policy issue. Further research and analysis will aim to critically examine the degree to which these two differing approaches contribute to the “success” of immigrant integration, along with explanations for any differences in success that are discovered in that research.

Endnotes

¹This paper is part of an on-going research project and presents preliminary results that will be more fully developed in future reports. For indispensable support in conducting the research reported herein, the author thanks the Fulbright Program in the United States (CIES), the Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program, the Enders Foundation, the Center for International Studies at the Université de Montréal (CERIUM), and California State University, Long Beach.

²Prior to this reform, Canada’s immigration policy favored migrants from Northern Europe (especially the United Kingdom and Ireland), and was highly racialized in its exclusions (see, e.g., Li, 2003).

³This generalization should not be read to imply, however, that Canada’s relatively positive orientation to immigration is not politically controversial. It is, and there are opponents who decry the effects of immigration on Canada’s society.

⁴It should be noted, however, that Canada’s Federal government has played little role in developing immigrant integration efforts in the realm of education, a situation that has prompted the recent organization of a Canadian Coalition for Immigrant Children and Youth. See, e.g., Birjandian, 2005, for an overview.

⁵It may be ironic that the primary rationale for the change in policy was centered in “cold war” conflict with the Soviet Union. American Congressional leaders, along with President Lyndon Johnson, had come to believe that the racially biased immigration law was harming U.S. efforts to win the “hearts and minds” of Third World peoples (see, e.g., Glazer, 1985).

⁶A partial exception to this generalization concerns refugee populations. Various populations of refugees, particularly those that have fled Communist regimes (e.g., Cubans, Vietnamese, Cambodians), have received some degree of support from the U.S. government.

Other refugee populations from non-Communist countries (e.g., Haitians) have received much less.

⁷The agency's url: <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>.

⁸There are prescriptive and proscriptive aspects to U.S. policy, but these are more properly described as part of naturalization policy (i.e., the prescriptive requirement that candidates for naturalization must pass a test in the English language) or immigration policy (i.e., the proscription on felony convictions, under penalty of expulsion from the country), rather than as part of an immigrant settlement policy.

Sources Cited

Andrew, Blake. 2002. "Demagnetizing Canadian Immigration: Exploring the Cluster Appeal of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver," research paper for Political Science 619, McGill University.

Birjandian, Fariborz. 2005. "Absent Policies: Canadian Strategies for the Education and Integration of Immigrant Children and Youth," in Philippa Strum and David Biette, eds., Education and Immigrant Integration in the United States and Canada (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars).

Black, Jerome. 2001. "Immigrants and Ethnoracial Minorities in Canada: A Review of Their Participation in Federal Electoral Politics," 3:1 (January) Electoral Insight, pp. 8-13.

Bloemraad, Irene. 2003. Achieving Full Citizenship: An Institutional Approach to the Political Incorporation of Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada (Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology, Harvard University).

Carens, Joseph H. 2000. Culture, Citizenship, and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness (New York: Oxford University Press).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2006. "Programs for Newcomers." Accessed on-line, September 12, 2006: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/menu-programs.html>

Crawford, James. 2002. "Obituary: The Bilingual Education Act, 1968 – 2002." Accessed on-line (April 2, 2002) at: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/T7obit.htm>.

Department of Canadian Heritage. 2005. A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism. (Gatineau, QC: Department of Canadian Heritage).

Department of Canadian Heritage. 2006. Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 2004-2005. (Gatineau, QC: Department of Canadian Heritage).

- Fix, Michael, and Jeffrey Passel. 2002. "The Scope and Impact of Welfare Reform's Immigrant Provisions," a Discussion Paper in the Assessing New Federalism Project. (Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute), accessed on-line: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410412_discussion02-03.pdf.
- Glazer, Nathan, ed. 1985. Clamor at the Gates: The New American Immigration (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press).
- Global Commission on International Migration. 2005 (October). Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action (Report of the Global Commission on International Migration). Accessed through the Commission's website: www.gcim.org.
- Green, Alan G. 2003. "What is the Role of Immigration in Canada's Future?", in Charles M. Beach, Alan G. Green, and Jeffrey G. Reitz, eds., Canadian Immigration Policy for the 21st Century (Kingston, Ontario: John Deutsch Institute for the Study of Economic Policy, Queen's University), pp. 33-45.
- Li, Peter. 2003. "The Place of Immigrants: The Politics of Difference in Territorial and Social Space," Canadian Ethnic Studies 35:2. Pp. 1-13.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1990. Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of The United States and Canada (New York: Routledge).
- Lyman, Rick. 2006. "Census Shows Growth of Immigrants," New York Times (August 15), on-line edition.
- Migration Policy Institute. 2005. "Data Tools: Selected Charts and Tables." Washington D.C., Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute. Accessed on-line (09-05-2006): <http://www.migrationinformation.org/GlobalData/charts1.cfm>.
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/GlobalData/charts/1.1.shtml>.
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/GlobalData/charts/5.1.shtml>.
- Passel, Jeffrey. 2005. "Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics; Background Briefing Prepared for Task Force on Immigration and America's Future." Washington, D.C.: The Pew Hispanic Center.
- Ray, Brian. 2005 (November). "Canada: Policy Changes and Integration Challenges in an Increasingly Diverse Society." Washington, D.C.: Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute. Accessed on-line, September 18, 2006: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=348>
- Reitz, Jeffrey. 2002. "Immigration and Canadian Nation-Building in the Transition to a Knowledge-Based Economy," paper prepared for publication in Wayne Cornelius, et.al., Controlling Immigration: a Global Perspective, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

- Rumbaut, Rubèn G., Douglas S. Massey, and Frank D. Bean. 2006. "Linguistic Life Expectancies: Immigrant Language Retention in Southern California," Population and Development Review 32:3 (September), pp. 447-460).
- Sadiq, Kareem D. 2005 (September). "The Two-Tier Settlement System: A Review of Current Newcomer Settlement Services in Canada," Policy Matters 20 (Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto).
- Schmidt, Ronald Sr. 2000. Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).
- Skrentny, John D. 2002. The Minority Rights Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Strum, Philippa, and David Biette, eds. 2005. Education and Immigrant Integration in the United States and Canada, Proceedings of a Conference held on April 25, 2005. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars).
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2006. "Census Bureau Data Shows Key Population Changes Across Nation." Press release: August 15.
- U.S. Office of Citizenship. 2004. "Helping Immigrants Become Americans: Communities Discuss the Issues." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Citizenship and Information Services, Department of Homeland Security), accessed on-line at <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/focusgroup.pdf>.
- U.S. Office of Citizenship. 2006a. "Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Citizenship and Information Services, Department of Homeland Security), accessed on-line at <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/welcomeguide/index.htm>.
- U.S. Office of Citizenship. 2006b. U.S. Citizenship and Information Services, Department of Homeland Security), Web-site home page: <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/index.htm>.
- U.S. Office of Citizenship. 2006c. "Library Services for Immigrants: A Report on Current Practices." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Citizenship and Information Services, Department of Homeland Security), accessed on-line at http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/Library_Services_Report.pdf.