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## **Does Everyone Cheer? The Politics of Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada**

*Randy Besco and Erin Tolley*

The conventional wisdom is that Canada is a tolerant country, accepting of immigration and at peace with diversity. To be sure, there are occasional problems. But in comparison to other countries, Canada is often regarded as exceptional. Keith Banting made precisely this argument in his 2009 presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, which was entitled "Is there a Progressive's Dilemma in Canada?" Banting noted that in comparison to other OECD countries, Canadians' attitudes toward immigrants are "strikingly positive" (2010, 803). Soroka and colleagues look at Canadian attitudes to multiculturalism policies in their contribution to this volume, and they similarly conclude that there is an element of Canadian exceptionalism.

We complicate this narrative. We present attitudinal data showing that although Canadians are generally supportive of immigration and ethnic diversity, there are some—perhaps as many as one-third—who have clearly negative views. Another third are what we call "conditional multiculturalists": they approve of immigration and ethnic diversity, but only under certain conditions. The era of positive attitudes toward immigration is both recent, dating only to the mid-1990s and, we suggest, is driven by economic factors rather than generalized acceptance. In fact, for much of Canada's recent history, most Canadians have wanted fewer immigrants. Attitudes toward racial diversity are also significantly less positive than those toward immigrants, and arguably have not improved significantly in the last three decades. If anything, this makes Banting's findings about the lack of tension between support for the welfare state and social diversity—the so-called progressive's dilemma—all the more important to understand.

Path dependency plays a role in the policy explanation favoured by Banting. Specifically, the introduction of a points system and increased emphasis on immigrants' economic

contributions cut the link between economic ideology and immigration. In essence, if immigrants are not on welfare, then economic conservatives have no reason to oppose immigration. Similarly, as Banting (2010) argues, Canadian nationalism is tied up with multiculturalism, and this eliminates the potent combination of patriotism and anti-diversity sentiment. This, he suggests, is a product of an extended campaign by the government in shaping the meaning of Canadian nationalism. We agree, but this also requires explanation. Why have governments, which are controlled by political parties, promoted immigration and multiculturalism? Why are issues of racial diversity not polarized between parties, as in so many countries?

In his work, Banting argues that Canada's policy framework has insulating properties that inhibit the development of anti-immigrant sentiment and nativist backlash. In explaining the absence of radical right-wing parties in Canada, Ambrose and Mudde (2015) also emphasize the policy landscape. Those who favour institutional explanations tend to argue that those institutions stymie the very development of negative attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism. We suggest something slightly different. We argue that the raw ingredients for anti-immigrant or anti-multicultural backlash are present in the attitudinal mix, but political institutions inhibit their mobilization. This point is illustrated by Ryan (2010, 2016) who has catalogued an eye-opening set of strongly worded attacks on multiculturalism to demonstrate the depth of dissent against multiculturalism in Canada. Even Mudde (2016, 353) admits he "was honestly surprised by some of the openly Islamophobic critique published in fairly mainstream media outlets."

The lack of political conflict over immigration and multiculturalism in Canada is remarkable, both relative to other countries and given the distribution of public opinion. Canadian governments are quite unyielding to democratic opinion on these issues. It is striking that even Brian Mulroney's right-of-centre government sharply increased immigration rates (Milan 2009), despite some 60–70 percent of Canadians saying they wanted less immigration (Environics Institute 2015). Stephen Harper's Conservative government raised immigration levels to their highest in five decades despite an economic downturn (Milan 2009) and even Ryan, who is critical of the Harper government, admits that they "did not *directly* oppose multiculturalism" (2016, 347). All of the major political parties nominate and elect racial minorities, and in terms of descriptive representation, the presence of racial minorities in the

House of Commons is relatively close to their percentage of the population.<sup>1</sup> In other words, while parties try to politicize these issues to their advantage, rarely does this take the form of openly opposing immigration or advocating anti-diversity positions.

We are thus presented with a puzzle. Canada is a country with a comparatively positive record on immigration and multiculturalism and yet two-thirds of the population either opposes multiculturalism or accepts it only with conditions. Such a situation would seem rife for political exploitation. This is a set of issues that drives a wedge between voters and allows parties to distinguish themselves from their opponents. These are precisely the conditions that have motivated anti-immigrant parties in much of Europe (Ambrose and Mudde 2015). And yet, that is not what has happened in Canada. Instead, as we demonstrate, immigrant and minority politicians occupy key positions in government, immigration and multiculturalism have rarely been central election issues, and opposition to such policies has never propelled a Canadian political party into government.

Picking up on Banting's institutional focus, we point to several political institutions that we argue are central to deciphering this apparent puzzle. Although Banting believes institutions—and the policy framework in particular—inhibit the *development* of anti-immigration and anti-multicultural sentiments, we argue that such sentiments exist, but political institutions inhibit their *mobilization*.<sup>2</sup> So how do institutions stem the onslaught of nativism?

First, since opposition parties have little to no political power, the parliamentary system demands a focus on winning government. This means parties need to appeal to a broad range of voters in as many electoral districts as possible. Moreover, the single-member district plurality electoral system generally discourages the emergence of small (anti-immigrant) parties and thus provides little incentive to parties wishing to promote such goals (for a counterpoint, see Huber 2012).

Second, Canada's electoral geography makes it difficult to win a majority government without the support of immigrant and minority voters, since such voters are concentrated in the

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1. "Racial minorities" refers to "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour," a definition that is consistent with Statistics Canada's use of "visible minority" (Statistics Canada 2007a).

2. We are grateful to Keith Banting who read an earlier draft of this chapter and, in typical fashion, articulated our argument more precisely than we initially had ourselves.

battleground ridings around the country's large urban centres. This creates greater incentives to promote a pro-immigration and pro-multiculturalism stance than to rail against it. In other words, parties have not really pursued voters who explicitly resist immigration and multiculturalism because doing so would close off electoral opportunities in the suburban and exurban ridings that they most need to win. Canada's electoral geography, with its concentration of immigrants and minorities in vote-rich ridings and its distribution of reluctant and opposed multiculturalists across more sparsely populated ridings minimizes the electoral payoff of an anti-immigrant and xenophobic policy platform.

Third, and importantly, the power of party leaders in the Canadian system allows them to enforce a pro-immigration and pro-multiculturalism stance with little threat of rebellion among the party faithful. Leaders can deny a candidate's nomination, threaten to relegate an insurgent to the backbenches or limit the opportunities afforded to candidates and members of parliament (MPs) who do not toe the line. Ambrose and Mudde (2015) suggest that the state works to actively repress anti-immigrant and anti-multicultural dissent, an argument that Ryan (2016) critiques convincingly. Although the anti-discrimination and hate speech laws that Ambrose and Mudde point to send an important signal about the centrality of equality to Canadian discourse and public life, we agree with Ryan that they have not been used to overtly suppress dissent, nor have they created a climate free of opposition to immigration or multiculturalism, as the polling data we present confirm. Instead, this legislative framework has created a climate where opposition exists but, in part because of political institutions, has not yet been successfully mobilized.

Of course, favourable political institutions are not the only explanation. Canada has also benefited from its selective immigration policy and its geography, explanations that have been advanced elsewhere (Ambrose and Mudde 2015; Kymlicka 2004). The country's remote geography means there are very few "illegal migrants," the segment of the immigrant population that most typically raises citizens' ire. This, combined with the country's highly controlled immigration system, has two consequences. First, it all but ensures Canada is the beneficiary of an immigrant population that is well educated and proficient in at least one of the country's official languages. Newcomers to Canada do encounter difficulties, and there is a persistent wage gap between immigrants and the Canadian-born, but relative to migrant populations elsewhere,

the foreign-born in Canada could be considered among the best and the brightest. The second consequence of the country's immigration policy is the signal it sends to Canadians about the importance of immigration and diversity in this country. It says "immigrants are legal and wanted" and they are here because they contribute to the economy and to society (Ambrose and Mudde 2015, 227). Although Canada does not currently accept a sufficient number of immigrants to offset a below-replacement birthrate, the conventional wisdom is that immigration is needed to support the country's aging population and to fulfill important gaps in the labour market. Any political party advocating a more restrictive approach to immigration would have to overcome this perception of immigration as a necessity.

The central argument of this chapter is as follows: Canadians are comparatively open to immigration and multiculturalism, but there is a large proportion of society whose views are more negative or conditional. Canadian institutions not only dampen xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiment, but the structure of our political institutions largely prevents parties and governments from appealing to, and being influenced by, those opinions. Our chapter analyzes Canadians' attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism and then demonstrates the effectiveness of our political institutions in mitigating the potential for extremist politics.

## **Public Opinion on Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Racial Minorities**

### *Current Opinion*

At the outset, we argue that a more nuanced portrait of Canada's storied acceptance of immigration and diversity is needed. We discuss public opinion in three related areas: multiculturalism, immigration, and the acceptance of racial and ethnic minorities. These are tied together, both in the minds of citizens, and as matters of public policy. However, as we show, they are not identical, and can receive quite different levels of public support.

Canada has a reputation for accepting and approving of multiculturalism, and there is a good deal of truth to this. A majority of Canadians has supported multiculturalism, at least since 1989 (Dasko 2003), ranging from a low of 50 percent in 1995, to a high of 70 percent in 2002, when pollsters appear to have stopped asking specifically about support for multiculturalism. More recent data are less clear: some surveys show that 84 percent say that multiculturalism is

one of the best things about Canada (Soroka and Robertson 2010), while others report only about 60 percent think multiculturalism has been good for Canada (Angus Reid 2010, 2012).

Opinion on immigration is also quite positive, at least in the sense that most Canadians are accepting of current levels of immigration. In recent years about 60–70 percent of Canadians think that immigration levels are either about right or should be even higher (EnviroNics Institute 2015; comparable results in the Canadian Election Study). Most Canadians do not see immigrants as a serious economic threat: only 25 percent say that immigrants take away Canadian jobs, and 80 percent say that immigrants are good for the economy.

Views on racial and ethnic minorities are less favourable. Only 48 percent see increasing numbers of visible minority Canadians as a “positive development” (Soroka and Robertson 2010), only 58 percent say that the “growing variety of ethnic and racial groups” is good for Canada (Soroka and Robertson 2010), and 41 percent say that Canada is “changing too quickly because of all the racial minorities we have here now” (Soroka and Robertson 2010). This underscores that Canadians can have positive views of immigration and multiculturalism in the abstract, but that a segment of the population remains suspicious of racial minorities.

### *Global Context*

Canada has a reputation for being an exceptionally tolerant country, and certainly this is true when compared to other countries (Ambrose and Mudde 2015). As Tables 12.1 and 12.2 show, Canada is more tolerant than many countries—by some measures, the most tolerant of those examined here. However, the differences between Canada and its comparators—including Australia, Italy, Norway, Romania, and Spain—is actually quite small. Canadians are a lot like people in many other countries, and certainly not an outlier when it comes to their attitudes about immigration.

[Insert TABLES 12.1 and 12.2 about here]

### *Changing Opinions*

Many believe that societies are becoming more tolerant, and in a *policy* sense, this is evident. For example, drawing on data from the Multiculturalism Policy Index compiled by Banting and his collaborator, Will Kymlicka, Soroka and colleagues (this volume) show that policies toward immigrants and minorities have become more favourable over the past thirty years in nearly all of the countries included in the index. In terms of *attitudes* toward immigrants and minorities, however, the Canadian story is really one of a period of sharp increase in favourable opinion between 1995 and 2005, with long periods of stability before and after (see Figure 12.1). The change was greatest in attitudes towards immigration, with much less change in attitudes toward racial minorities and multiculturalism.

Historically, Canadians' views on immigration have been quite negative. From the 1970s, most Canadians (60–70 percent) said Canada was admitting too many immigrants, and 50 percent said immigrants take jobs from Canadians. Similarly, 60–70 percent said too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values (Environics Institute 2015). A substantial majority of Canadians had negative opinions of immigrants from at least the 1970s through the mid-1990s.

There was a large shift in opinion about immigration over a roughly ten-year period from 1995 and 2005. As is shown in Figure 12.1, during this timeframe, public opinion became dramatically more positive. People who said that there is “too much immigration to Canada,” declined by some twenty points, from about 60 percent to 40 percent, while the number of people who disagreed that “immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians” fell by some twenty points (data not shown).

[Insert FIGURE 12.1 about here]

Conversely, opinion toward multiculturalism and racial minorities shows distinctly less improvement. While there are little data on these questions prior to 1988, attitudes toward multiculturalism were essentially static between 1989 and 1997, followed by an increase of twelve points between 1997 and 2002 (Environics Institute 2015). More recent data (though with

slightly different wording), suggest approval for multiculturalism continued to remain around 60 percent, at least until 2012 (Angus Reid 2010, 2012). Similarly, the proportion of Canadians who think multiculturalism is an important symbol of Canada has increased sharply from 37 percent in 1997, and then remained relatively constant (around 55 percent) from 2000 to 2015 (Environics Institute 2015). Both multiculturalism and immigration feature patterns of change that started in the mid-1990s, followed by more recent stability, but the increase in support for multiculturalism was smaller than that for immigration.

With respect to attitudes toward racial minorities, as Figure 12.2 shows, there is no clear trend. Interestingly, where there are changes, most of the movement is between “less” and “about the same,” while the proportion wanting to do more for racial minorities hardly changes; we find something similar when we look at attitudes toward immigration levels below. For the “feeling thermometer” in which respondents express their level of like/dislike for racial minorities, there is little, if any, change.

[Insert FIGURE 12.2 about here]

Why has Canadian opinion on immigration changed so much during this specific period, but less so on related issues like multiculturalism and attitudes toward racial minorities? The change in opinion on immigration is dramatic and has persisted for many years. This cannot be accounted for by media coverage of a particular event or annual changes in immigration levels, which fluctuated between 1995 and 2005, but stayed within a range of 0.7 to 0.8 percent of the country’s overall population. One possible explanation for the shift in attitudes is economic context. Attitudes toward immigration are strongly influenced by the state of the economy, including unemployment and competition for jobs. Palmer (1996), for example, notes that the aggregate level of support for immigration in Canada is closely correlated with the unemployment rate, and this is consistent with cross-national research (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Mayda 2006). By the mid-1990s, the Canadian economy had recovered from the 1992 recession and experienced an economic boom: unemployment fell more or less steadily from 11.3 percent in 1992 to 6.8 percent in 2007, which was a thirty-two year low (Statistics Canada 2007b).

The economic explanation is supported by data from the Canadian Election Study, which show the 1995–2005 shift in opinion is almost entirely a result of respondents moving from the “less immigration” category to the “about the same as now” category. The number of people saying Canada should admit more immigrants has essentially remained static in this period (Bilodeau, Turgeon, and Karakoç 2012; updated by authors using 2011 and 2015 data, not shown). This is important given that pro-immigration and anti-immigration sentiment is actually quite different (Wilkes and Corrigan-Brown 2011). Specifically, pro-immigration sentiment is driven by (pro-diversity) ideology, while anti-immigration sentiment is driven by economic considerations. Of course, there are those who are anti-immigrant for ideological reasons, but most people accept the immigration status quo when economic times are good and switch to desiring less immigration when economic conditions deteriorate. Conversely, those who say they want more immigrants typically have ideological reasons and desire immigration as a way of expressing their acceptance of diversity. This is quite independent of economic circumstances.

This economic argument and the observation that changes in opinion on multiculturalism and racial minorities have been smaller than opinion shifts on immigration suggests that Canadians have indeed become more accepting of diversity, but less so than the typical narrative would have us believe. If pro-immigration sentiment is a better measure of the underlying non-economic opinion about immigrants, an argument made convincingly by Wilkes and Corrigan-Brown (2011), then Canadian opinion about immigration has not improved at all in the last half-century and is conditional on economic circumstances. Opinion on racial minorities is less clear. There is some evidence that it has become more positive, but not dramatically so. Finally, over the course of the last fifty years, it appears that the proportion of Canadians who accept multiculturalism has climbed by just ten percentage points. These are improvements, but small ones, and at a very slow pace.

### *Conditional Multiculturalists*

We argue that although support for immigration and multiculturalism in a generic sense may be wide, for many Canadians this support is strongly conditional. The people we call “conditional multiculturalists” support immigration, approve of multiculturalism, and have positive opinions toward racial minorities *if, and only if*, certain conditions are met. It is difficult to ascertain people’s true beliefs, and certainly these issues are subject to social desirability effects; to some

degree this might be disguised prejudice. But this only suggests support for immigration and multiculturalism is even lower. We think it is very possible that these are sincere beliefs: people can have well-reasoned limitations or conditions under which they will agree with policies. Importantly, this conditional support means that public opinion might shift dramatically depending on the circumstances at a particular time, or how an issue is portrayed and framed.

Conditional multiculturalists support multiculturalism, but not if it means distinct culture or values: 70–80 percent of Canadians say “ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society,” and 65 percent believe that “too many immigrants are not accepting of Canadian values” (Environics Institute 2015). Notably, this number dropped by 10 percent between 1997 and 2004, but has otherwise remained steady since 1985. Given that only 30 percent of Canadians think that there are too many immigrants, and only 30 percent (depending on the measure) object to multiculturalism, it seems that a large number of people both accept multiculturalism and the current rate of immigration *if* immigrants integrate and blend into Canadian society.

Any time the rights (or privileges) of immigrants and people born in Canada conflict, conditional multiculturalists tend to side with “Canadians” and against minorities or immigrants. For example, 67 percent say “we should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second,” and 72 percent of Canadians choose “letting the majority decide” over “protecting the needs and rights of minorities.” Moreover, when the issue is who must adapt, most (57 percent) say minority groups should change to be like other Canadians (Gidengil et al. 2008).

The conflict faced by conditional multiculturalists was illustrated neatly in the debate surrounding the wearing of the niqab during citizenship ceremonies. The issue emerged in 2011 when the Conservative government issued a policy directive prohibiting face coverings at citizenship ceremonies. The acquisition of Canadian citizenship requires that applicants take a public oath, meaning that a ban on face coverings would deny citizenship to anyone wearing a niqab. At the time, Jason Kenney, then the minister of citizenship and immigration, referred to the citizenship oath as a “public declaration that you are joining the Canadian family.” He underscored that the niqab ban “is not simply a practical measure. It is a matter of deep principle that goes to the heart of our identity and our values of openness and equality” (Smith 2011, A1). The government framed the issue as one of equality: if some are permitted to cover their faces, then the rules do not apply equally, and this is an affront to the “Canadian family.” After the

courts struck down the original ban, the Conservative government introduced new legislation on the eve of the 2015 federal election and said they would appeal to the Supreme Court if necessary.

The niqab ban was widely supported by Canadians. Polls found that as many as 80 percent of Canadians were in favour of a prohibition on face coverings at citizenship ceremonies, with the proportion even higher in Quebec (Beeby 2015; Loewen 2015). Many Canadians seem to support multiculturalism in the abstract, but reject it in these circumstances. In an interview, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander said that covering one's face is "not the way we do things here" (Ling 2015, online). Even Canadians who are notionally supportive of immigration reject particular multicultural practices.

Conditional multiculturalists think minorities should be treated equally, but not have special treatment. When differential treatment is suggested, there is strong opposition. Fully 85 percent of Canadians reject the idea that "minority groups need special rights" (Soroka and Robertson 2010). Further, only 41 percent of (non-Quebec) Canadians, and 28 percent of Quebecers support "modifying specific laws and norms when they could affect minorities" (Angus Reid 2009). On the other hand, when the issue is framed as equality, opinion is quite different. In such cases, 62 percent of Canadians say "recent immigrants should have an equal say about Canada's future," and only 31 percent agree "it makes me angry when recent immigrants demand the same rights as Canadian citizens" (Soroka and Robertson 2010). Keep in mind that although equal rights for minorities could be seen as obvious and deserving of universal support, this is not the case. One only needs to glance at the opinion pages or social media to find people who think that racial profiling and special measures against Muslims are warranted, or that Black citizens are more likely to commit crimes and therefore extra police investigation is perfectly acceptable. So far as public opinion is concerned, there are thus three possible positions: special rights, equal rights, or less-than-equal rights.

The structure of opinion on diversity issues in Canada thus roughly follows a rule of thirds: one third of Canadians are clearly positive, one third are clearly negative, and one third are "conditional."<sup>3</sup> For example, if 40 percent of Canadians want less immigration and 30

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3. Positivity bias might account for some of this difference. In a survey, respondents might want to appear agreeable, so they would say yes to multiculturalism and yes to limits, rather than to disagree with either. If so, our estimate of

percent oppose it, the middle 30 percent are conditional multiculturalists who approve of immigration but also believe that too many immigrants do not accept Canadian values. On rights for minorities, some 30 percent of Canadians are made angry by minorities demanding equal rights, and at the other end of the spectrum, 15 percent think that minorities should have even more—that is to say, special—rights. Conditional multiculturalists are the middle 55 percent, who accept equal rights but not special rights. On multiculturalism, 30 percent of Canadians disapprove of it, and 30 percent say that ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society. Conditional multiculturalists are the other 40 percent who approve of multiculturalism, but dislike ethnic “separateness.”

These conditional multiculturalists are especially important because they might support or oppose certain policies or decisions based on how they are framed. What counts as special or equal treatment? When is a policy “multiculturalism,” and when is it preserving a separate culture? Should we only accept immigrants who accept Canadian values? Not only will opinion shift depending on how these issues are defined, the balance of opinion—which side has the majority—often changes. Who holds political power and has the ability to frame these messages is important because it can influence whether Canadians regard an activity as a minority right worthy of protection or as an example of a “barbaric cultural practice.” All of this tells us something about Canadians’ openness to immigrants and minorities, but it also sheds light on the mechanisms that might facilitate political inclusion. Are diverse voices included in Canada’s elected institutions? This is the subject to which we turn next.

### **Diversity in Canada’s Elected Institutions**

When he appointed his first Cabinet in 2015, Justin Trudeau boasted it was “a Cabinet that looks like Canada.” Media coverage suggested that the diverse faces of his ministers were emblematic of Canada’s multiculturalism and proof that the country embraces and accepts diversity. That immigrants and minorities have the opportunity to run for office, that voters are willing to elect them, and that the head of government saw fit to entrust them with a portfolio suggests a degree of institutional and attitudinal openness to diversity in politics. Although the Multiculturalism

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conditional multiculturalists is likely high, while our estimates of support for and opposition to multiculturalism are both low.

Policy Index does not include measures related to the election of immigrants and minorities, in some of his other writing, Banting has made reference to this measure as an indicator of political integration (e.g., Banting 2008).

How, then, does Canada fare? Are immigrants and minorities participating in elected institutions at levels that mirror that of white, Canadian-born citizens? Or does the excitement over the appointment of a more diverse Cabinet conceal cracks in the political foundation? Our data suggest that elected institutions more or less mirror the ethnocultural diversity of the Canadian population. For example, following the 2015 federal election, racial minority MPs occupied 14 percent of seats in the House of Commons, which is just shy of the percentage of racial minority citizens in the Canadian population, a number that stands at 15 percent. It was also a significant increase from the 2011 election, when 9 percent of MPs had racial minority backgrounds. There are also forty-five MPs who were born outside of Canada (13 percent), although this proportion is unchanged from 2011 and falls short of the 21 percent of Canadians who were born outside of this country.

In comparative terms, however, Canada's parliament seems more open to immigrants and minorities than legislatures in other countries, even traditional immigration countries like the United States and Australia. While 12 percent of the US population is foreign-born, just 1 percent of members in the 114th Congress were (Gao and Bell 2015). With respect to the representation of minorities, while Latinos make up 15 percent of the US population, they held just 5 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives, whereas Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who make up 5 percent of the population had fewer than 1 percent of the seats (Bloemraad 2013). In Australia, where 10 percent of the population has non-European origins, just 2 percent of the seats in the 2005 House of Representatives were held by individuals with non-European backgrounds (Bloemraad 2013). Meanwhile, 13 percent of members and senators elected in the 44th Parliament were born outside of Australia (Parliament of Australia 2015), compared to 27 percent of the population. In the United Kingdom, a similar pattern of under-representation prevails. For example, while immigrants make up 13 percent of the population, just 3 percent of MPs are foreign-born (Fernandes, Morales, and Saalfeld 2016), and while minorities were 12 percent of the population in 2010, they held just 4 percent of the seats in the House of Commons (Bloemraad 2013).

Maybe this is a story about successful political integration. Through its immigration system, Canada selects individuals with high levels of education and official language fluency, characteristics that are predictive of their success. According to this argument, if immigrants and minorities are succeeding in Canadian politics, we have the policy framework to thank. But other countries with selective immigration policies do not see the high levels of political integration exhibited in Canada. Take Australia, for example. Its framework for selecting immigrants is similar to Canada's; both use a points system and privilege applicants with official language fluency, advanced education, and marketable experience. Moreover, like Canada, Australia has a policy of official multiculturalism and, indeed, scores highest of all the countries included on Banting and Kymlicka's Multicultural Policy Index. Even so, when you look at the proportion of immigrants and minorities elected to federal office, Canada's record is superior. In other words, to the extent that immigrants and minorities are politically integrated in Canada, the policy framework is not the only correlate.

The opportunity to elect immigrant and minority candidates is in part premised on those candidates putting themselves forward for elected office. In that respect, one institutional feature that facilitates political integration is the country's relatively open pathway to citizenship. Foreign-born permanent residents are eligible to apply for citizenship after just four years in Canada, and there are relatively few barriers to acquisition. As a result, immigrants are granted the right to vote and run for office at all levels of government quite soon after arrival in Canada. Moreover, the Canada Elections Act allows for the participation of non-citizens in the nomination of candidates for elected office. This provides a venue for exercising democratic rights even prior to the extension of citizenship. However, it is political parties that typically mobilize these democratic rights, leveraging the voting power of immigrants and minorities. They do this by erecting relatively few barriers to participation. Even non-citizens can vote in nomination contests, and there are few rules about length of membership. Criticisms are raised periodically, often after immigrant or minority candidates win nominations by signing up new members from their co-ethnic communities, but parties for the most part encourage such engagement. Although the citizenship policy framework is important, it is political parties that realize its effects.

## **Politicizing Multiculturalism**

Parties of all stripes have, for decades, considered immigrants and minorities to be an important source of potential political support (Champion 2006). So-called ethnic engagement strategies have ranged from the maintenance of lists of supporters from cultural communities, appearances at multicultural events and places of worship, and the promotion of policies that appeal to immigrant and minority voters.

The Liberals' introduction of a points system for assessing applications from potential immigrants—a policy that reduced the reliance on race-based criteria—as well as their openness to family reunification and the initiation of an official policy on multiculturalism solidified the loyalty of many immigrant and minority voters (Blais 2005). The Liberals are not alone, however. It was the Progressive Conservatives who enshrined multiculturalism in law and, as Abu-Laban (1998, 193) points out, when higher immigration levels were proposed to Brian Mulroney's Cabinet, the argument was that “more immigrants would provide a new source of voters supportive of the Conservative party.” Although the Reform Party called for the abolition of the federal multiculturalism program and caps on annual immigration levels when the unemployment rate exceeded 10 percent, this more restrictionist approach was abandoned by the Canadian Alliance (Tolley 2017).

The Conservative Party recognized the necessity of engaging new blocks of supporters and after the 2004 election when it failed to make inroads in Quebec, they turned their attention to immigrant and minority voters, many of whom they saw as “natural Conservatives” (Tolley 2017). During the 2008 federal election, a leaked document revealed the party's targeting of “very ethnic ridings,” which showed plainly that the Conservatives were intent on chipping away at the Liberals' support among immigrant and minority voters, focusing their outreach and multicultural policy initiative on the groups that they had identified as likely supporters (Griffith 2013). By 2011, the strategy paid off, and the Conservatives formed a majority government, with an Ipsos exit poll suggesting 42 percent of immigrants had voted for the party (Todd 2011).

Nonetheless, analysis of the 2011 election suggests that Conservative support among so-called ethnic voters was segmented. The Conservatives did best among white immigrants, especially those with Italian, Polish and German backgrounds, while the Liberals' support from

racial minority voters remained resilient (Chignall 2015; Harell 2013). Notably, only 12 percent of Muslim Canadians said they supported the Conservatives in 2011 (Todd 2011). Nonetheless, the Conservatives seemed to be encroaching on traditional Liberal strongholds, particularly those with large numbers of immigrant and minority voters, a phenomenon that commentators declared “the big shift” (Bricker and Ibbitson 2013).

During the 2015 campaign, the Conservative position changed substantially, both compared to 2011 and throughout the campaign. The rhetoric became perceptibly less pro-diversity. The Conservatives promised to ban niqabs from citizenship ceremonies and mused about doing so in the federal public service, while also proposing a tip line so that Canadians could report “barbaric cultural practices.” They emphasized security concerns and said they would only accept 10,000 Syrian refugees. The Liberals took aim at the Conservatives’ refugee policy, which they argued was not in keeping with Canada’s humanitarian tradition. They proposed to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees by year’s end, a promise that dwarfed the Conservatives’ proposal. Canadians were largely ambivalent until they were confronted with the image of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old boy who had drowned while attempting to flee Syria (Lawlor and Tolley 2017; Wallace 2018). With that, immigration had become a major election issue. The New Democrats also came out strongly against what they framed as the Conservatives’ anti-Islamic sentiment, a decision that would ultimately hurt the NDP’s electoral prospects in Quebec where attitudes against the niqab are more hardened (Radwanski 2015; Tasker 2016).

The 2015 election revealed that immigration and multiculturalism can be polarized between parties. This is not the only time a right-wing party appealed to anti-immigrant or anti-multicultural attitudes: recall the Reform Party’s position twenty years before. Yet, these episodes are few and far between, and generally conservative parties in Canada have been relatively positive on diversity issues. Certainly, they have avoided making immigration and multiculturalism an object of polarization between the parties. In their study of the relationship between immigration and electoral politics in Canada, Black and Hicks (2008) note that there is a fairly broad consensus on immigration among political elites. It might be tempting to explain this in terms of public opinion, but as shown earlier, it is not at all clear that Canadians are uniformly positive. In fact, a majority of Canadians supported restrictive positions (Forum Research 2016).

## **Public Opinion and Political Institutions**

If a majority of Canadians supports restrictive positions on many diversity-related issues, why does no party take this position on a regular basis? Throughout his work, Banting has called attention to institutional factors that tamp down the development of anti-immigrant and anti-multicultural sentiment in Canada. We add to this explanation by focusing specifically on two political institutions, namely the electoral system and the party system. Although we agree that Canadians' attitudes are more positive than those in some countries, there still seems to be enough dissent to reward anti-immigrant or anti-multicultural political appeals. However, we argue that institutional structures limit the rewards associated with straying too far to the electoral or policy margins. As a result, parties can ignore the demands of supporters who are more negatively or conditionally predisposed toward immigration and multiculturalism: political institutions prevent the mobilization of these attitudes.

Canada's system of government is parliamentary and relies on a single-member district plural system of election and, in the first place, this might contribute to the election of members of parliament with immigrant and minority backgrounds. In noting the apparent absence of voter bias against racial minority politicians, scholars typically point out the relative unimportance of local candidates to vote choice in Canada. The political system is leader- and party-centric, so it would not be surprising for voters to pay less attention to local candidates than they do in other systems (Carey and Shugart 1995). Moreover, party nomination processes allow local party members considerable autonomy in the selection of their riding's candidate. Because most local riding associations are made up of just a few hundred members, individuals can win their party's nomination through the mobilization of a fairly small number of community members. Even in ridings that are largely white, prospective immigrant and minority candidates who are well organized and able to call on a strong network of supporters have a good chance at winning a party's nomination. This, coupled with the apparent absence of voter bias in general elections against racial minority candidates (Black and Erickson 2006), may contribute to the comparatively large proportion of members of parliament with minority backgrounds.

Canada's electoral system often produces majority governments, but even when it does not, minority governments generally govern alone with ad hoc support rather than entering into formal (or even informal) coalitions. In this kind of system, the governing party essentially has

all the political power, and opposition parties have little or no influence on government policy. As Johnston (2008) has argued, this “winner take all” system produces very strong incentives to win government and, in addition, punishes small parties. Party supporters are caught between two conflicting desires: to have their party express their true preferences and to have their party win, and the parliamentary system tilts towards a desire to win. Similarly, the electoral system punishes small parties, especially those that are geographically dispersed (Johnston 2008). This helps explain why—unlike many European countries—no party has emerged to represent the significant numbers of Canadians who want fewer immigrants and dislike racial diversity. Any such party would be unable to win government, and would disappear or merge with other parties. This is precisely what happened with the Reform Party, a populist movement that espoused caps on immigration and the abolition of Canada’s multiculturalism policy. It never formed a government and eventually merged to form the Conservative Party.

Canada’s electoral geography plays a crucial role. Specifically, racial minority voters are concentrated in swing ridings in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and parts of British Columbia (Marwah, Triadafilopoulous, and White 2013). Taking just one example, there is a higher proportion of racial minorities in the suburban areas of Richmond (70.4 percent), Burnaby (59.5 percent) than the city of Vancouver itself (51.8 percent; Statistics Canada 2013). Not only are many immigration and racial minority MPs elected from these areas, but these are the ridings that decide elections. In 2011, the ratio of minority residents to total voters was a full 26 percent higher in ridings decided by less than 5 percent than in the rest of the country (analysis by authors using census and Elections Canada data, not shown). As Taylor, Triadafilopoulos, and Cochrane (2012) further note, of the twenty-eight seats in the GTA that the Conservatives gained from the Liberals between 2004 and 2011, eighteen of these had an immigrant population of more than 40 percent (Taylor et al. 2012). Changing riding boundaries make comparisons to 2015 difficult, but the Conservatives lost all but two of their seats in the GTA while the Liberals won twenty-four, solidifying their majority government. This distribution of immigrant and minority voters in swing ridings magnifies their electoral importance, and their number will only grow in the future. Parties generally avoid politicizing immigration and multiculturalism in part because they are competing for immigrants’ and minorities’ votes in suburban and exurban ridings around metropolitan centres. The result is that it is difficult for any party to win

government with an anti-immigrant or anti-multicultural message. Indeed, none have done so, at least not since the Second World War.

The role of racial minority voters in Canada suggests a different version of Huber's (2012) argument that parties will appeal to minority voters if those voters are believed to be pivotal, even in majoritarian parliamentary systems. Huber uses the United States as one example of minority voters' pivotality, observing that the Democrats could not win without African American support. But African Americans are a rock-solid base of support for the Democratic party; they are not swing voters who decide election outcomes. Conversely, in Canada, it is difficult for any party to win a majority government without a reasonable level of support from minority voters. The key distinction here is whether it is possible for at least *one* party to win without support of minority voters. This is the case in the United States, which results in polarization along minority issues. But if *all* parties need support from minority voters, as they do in Canada, there will be competition for minority votes, and (perhaps paradoxically) ethnicity will be less salient to vote choice. Determining pivotality is complex, but in recent years it is clear that in Canada all parties *believe* minority voters are pivotal and will rebel against an anti-immigrant and anti-multicultural platform. Parties behave accordingly. They do not want to alienate voters whose support they believe they need to win.

These features of the Canadian system incentivize parties to avoid anti-immigrant and anti-multicultural messaging, while strong leaders and strong party discipline allow party leaders to enforce a pro-immigration and pro-multicultural position. Ambrose and Mudde (2015) suggest that Canada's anti-discrimination and hate speech laws are what suppress this dissent, but as Ryan (2016) demonstrates in his rebuttal, there is no shortage of inflammatory speech. However, there is a norm within political parties to clamp down on candidates who stray too far from a pro-immigration and pro-multicultural message. Party leaders can refuse to sign the nomination papers of local candidates, and they can effectively expel members of parliament from the caucus and party. These mechanisms can be used to contain those who are opposed to immigration or to minorities, which leaders will employ in order to maintain the appearance of a moderate stance on diversity issues. Finally, the election of party leaders by members, rather than caucus as in other parliamentary systems, gives the leader legitimacy and independent authority. This sharply limits the opportunity for "insurgent" candidates like in US primaries, or

the emergence of party factions like the Tea Party. These institutional control mechanisms reduce the potential pay-off of going rogue.

## **Conclusion**

Keith Banting's scholarship reminds us of the importance of institutions, and this institutional focus extended through his research on federalism, social policy, and the welfare state. In his later work on immigration and multiculturalism, he extended his reach, collaborating with researchers who demonstrated the importance of public opinion to the policy framework. Because of Banting's comparative focus, his work often presents Canada in a fairly positive light when it comes to the acceptance of immigration and multiculturalism. We do not disagree, but in shifting the focus inward, we have shown that public opinion is complex, and there are points of fragility. Indeed, it appears that only about one-third of Canadians espouse a multiculturalist orientation that comes without any strings attached. Other Canadians are more circumspect, a finding that contradicts some of the mythology around our acceptance of diversity. If we were to look only at the opinion data, we might expect the presence of anti-immigrant parties or divisive policy appeals. This is because, as the data show, there is a segment of Canadians who could quite easily be persuaded by messaging that appeals to xenophobic tendencies. Happily, from our perspective, this is not what has happened in Canada, and the credit goes partly to our political institutions.

That said, there are examples within Canada and abroad that stray from our tidy institutional explanation. If political institutions incentivize a pro-immigration and pro-multicultural position, why did the Parti Quebecois politicize the issue with its proposal for a Charter of Values? The institutional arrangement is similar to that in the rest of Canada, and yet political discourse in Quebec differs. One possibility is the attitudinal mix, which is arguably different in Quebec (Bilodeau et al. 2012). Nativism may flourish more readily in a province like Quebec where the threat of cultural and linguistic colonization is a central axis of citizens' identity. Moreover, the electoral geography is different, with the concentration of immigrants and minorities not being significant enough to make such voters pivotal as they are in some other ridings in Canada. As Soroka and colleagues conclude in their chapter examining the link between multiculturalism and attitudes toward redistribution, we need to look at both process and

salience. Political processes are similar (but not identical) in Quebec and the rest of Canada, but the salience of the issues at hand is quite different. What about Britain? This is a country upon which Canada's political institutions are modelled and yet anti-immigrant rhetoric prevailed in the Brexit referendum, while the UK Independence Party boasted a strong showing in the 2015 British election, partly on the basis of its nativist orientation. Why has xenophobia gained a toehold in Britain, but not Canada? Again, the attitudinal mix and the country's electoral geography are important, but so is the policy framework, which according to the Multiculturalism Policy Index is somewhat less hospitable to immigrants and minorities than is the case in Canada. As a result, the potential for anti-immigrant sentiment to even develop is higher in Britain than in Canada. Political institutions can have a dampening effect, but may not insulate the political community completely, particularly in the face of strong populist anti-immigrant anxiety.

Fortunately, even when there is a segment of the population that objects to immigration and multiculturalism, the configuration of Canada's political institutions weakens the potential payoff of mobilizing those extremist positions and increases the incentives of espousing policies that appeal broadly to immigrants, minorities and the committed multiculturalists. This is why we see fairly high numbers of immigrants and minorities holding public office and, in addition, why no modern Canadian political party has ever gained office on the strength of an anti-immigrant or anti-diversity message. The positive outcomes that we observed are not because negative sentiment simply does not exist. As we have shown, when it comes to immigration and multiculturalism, not everyone in Canada cheers, but our political institutions buffer the potential for public backlash.

**Table 1. Would Not Like to Have as Neighbours**

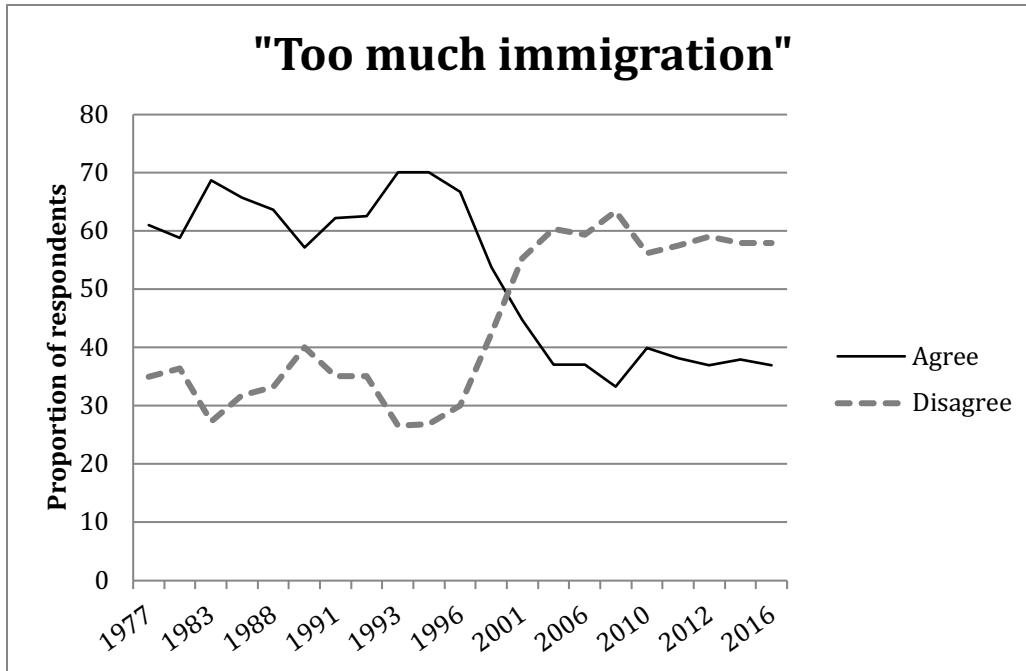
	Different Race	Country's Difference from Canada	Immigrant	Country's Difference from Canada
<b>Australia</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Canada	2%		4%	
Finland	11%	9%	16%	12%
Germany	7%	5%	13%	9%
Italy	11%	9%	14%	10%
South Korea	36%	34%	38%	34%
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Poland	12%	10%	14%	10%
Romania	18%	16%	16%	12%
Russia	17%	15%	32%	28%
Slovenia	15%	13%	18%	14%
<b>Spain</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Ukraine	12%	10%	19%	15%
United Kingdom	5%	3%	14%	10%
United States	4%	2%	13%	9%

Data from 2005-2009 World Values Survey, questions not available for all countries. Countries within 5% of Canada bolded.

**Table 2. Attitudes about Immigration Policy**

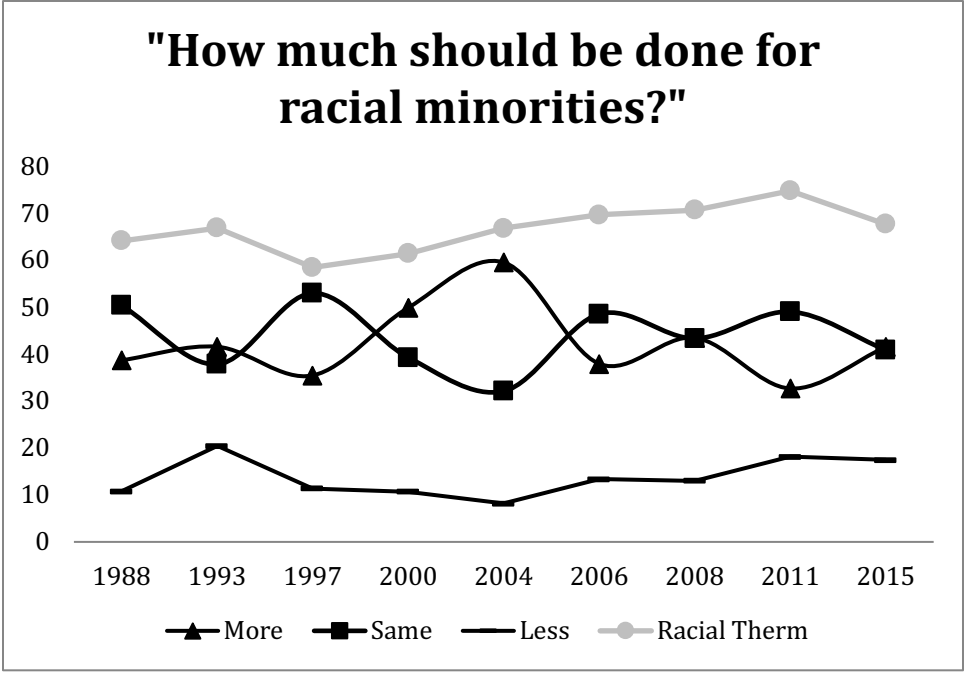
	Permissive	Restrictive	Country's Difference from Canada
<b>Australia</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>-2%</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>40%</b>	
Finland	48%	50%	-9%
Germany	47%	47%	-10%
<b>Italy</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>-2%</b>
Japan	42%	50%	-15%
<b>Norway</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>-1%</b>
Poland	45%	49%	-12%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>South Korea</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>-3%</b>
United States	42%	55%	-15%

Data from the 2005-2009 World Values Survey, not available for all countries. *Permissive* combines "Let anyone come" and "As long as there are jobs." *Restrictive* combines "Strict limits" and "Prohibit people coming." *Difference from Canada* is country permissive score minus Canada's: negative is more permissive. Countries within 5% of Canada bolded.

**Figure 1. Attitudes Toward Immigration**

EnviroNics Focus Canada surveys. All respondents included.

Figure 2: Attitudes Toward Racial Minorities



Canadian Election Study Data. The 2015 data are drawn exclusively from the telephone version of the survey. White non-immigrant respondents only. The racial thermometer (i.e., “How do you feel about racial minorities” on a 0-100 scale) is mean score.

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