

**BEYOND THE LIBERAL PARTY:  
IMMIGRANT VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN CANADA**

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**Abstract**

Immigrant voters in Canada are generally regarded as preferring the Liberal party above all others. Why this is the case has not yet been adequately determined. Canadian Election Study data from 2000, 2004 and 2006 are combined in order to assess more carefully the factors that drive voting among immigrants. Findings suggest that although immigrants overall tend to vote more Liberal than Canadian-born voters, the pattern is less predictable when immigrant voters are examined according to country of origin. Whereas immigrants from some parts of the world (i.e., non-Europeans) show higher levels of support for the Liberals, immigrants from other parts of the world (e.g., Britain, Northern Europe) are more likely to prefer the Conservatives. This is explained by looking at other mediating factors related to socialization and attitudes. In particular, immigrants who are more likely to vote Liberal generally exhibit lower levels of political knowledge, and are more favourable of policies that would assist racial minorities and provide more foreign aid to developing countries. In other words, immigrants who are more intricately socialized within Canada's mainstream society are less likely to regard the Liberal party as a default option and more likely to consider other parties.

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## **Introduction**

As a multiethnic and multicultural society, Canada consists of numerous immigrant groups from various parts of the world. By 2001, the foreign-born population of Canada was 18 percent of its total population. Whereas scholars often emphasize the absence of party identification among Canadian voters relative to American voters (LeDuc et al. 1984; Clarke et al. 1991), the strong partisan affiliation of immigrants with the Liberal party has been widely accepted (Blais et al. 2002; Blais 2005). According to the Canadian Election Study of 2006, about 50 percent of foreign-born immigrants voted for the Liberal party (White et al. 2006). While the partisanship of Canadian-born voters is volatile depending on current important issues and other factors, Canadian immigrants appear to stand firmly behind the Liberals.

Despite the fact that Canada is one of the countries that actively welcomes new immigrants, few thorough studies on Canadian immigrants and their partisanship has been conducted. Indeed, the study of political participation and voting behaviour of newly immigrated populations has been largely restricted to the United States. Certainly, there are efforts by some scholars to study the politicization of new immigrants to Canada, but the number is quite restricted (Black 1982; Chui, Curtis and Lambert 1991; Lapp 1999), even if interest in the links between ethnicity and voting dates back to the founding of the Canadian Election Study (Schwartz 1964). Research on the partisanship, voting behaviour and public opinion of Canadian immigrants, for the most part, remains underdeveloped. This study tries to fill this void.

We begin this study by asking one general question: how do immigrants differ from non-immigrants regarding voting behaviour and public opinion? We then delve further into the subject by looking at different immigrant groups. Particularly, our primary concern is the varied degree of support for the Liberal party depending on country of origin.

As for the answer to the first question, we find evidence that Liberal support is, indeed, stronger among immigrants than among the Canadian-born. However, support for the Liberal party comes mainly from “visible minority” immigrants (Blais 2005; Bilodeau, White and Nevitte 2005). British-born Canadians, for example, demonstrate political attitudes much more similar to non-immigrants, attributable to the fact that this group, an older generation of immigrants, has found it relatively easy to adapt to the political system of their new country. This should come as no surprise considering Canada’s political structures are modelled after Britain’s. On the other hand, those from Northern Europe, such as Germany, Sweden or Finland,

distinctively differ from visible minority immigrants. Northern Europeans are more likely than any other immigrant group to support the Conservative party. In sum, while immigrants, as a whole, show greater support for the Liberals, when disaggregated, the story changes considerably.

The differences among immigrants are not restricted to voting behaviour or partisan affiliation. Immigrants are also quite different with respect to their views over federal government policies. As in voting, there are variations among immigrants depending on country of origin.

We offer two perspectives to explain these variations. First, the Liberal party is perceived as being on “our-side” by non-European immigrants on issues that matter to them greatly, but issues that matter only to a limited extent to other immigrant groups. Second, different levels of re-socialization and re-politicization lead them to different voting behaviour. If the Liberal party is an “incumbent” for those who are yet to be socialized and not familiar with Canadian politics, more socialized and politicized immigrants should consider a wider array of options. With longer periods of years spent in Canada, Northern European and British immigrants are in a more comfortable situation than the more recent non-Europeans to enjoy the “luxury of politics” and are therefore more willing to collect information and compare party platforms to determine the best party for their interests. Increased exposure to the Canadian political system explains some recent evidence (see White et al. 2008) that links turnout levels and, to a more limited extent, partisanship among immigrants to the number of years spent living in Canada.

The remainder of the paper consists of the following. We first develop a theoretical framework so as to explain immigrants’ voting behaviour. We then use the Canadian Election Study to examine how truly “Liberal” Canadian immigrants are compared with non-immigrants. After the first general analysis about immigrants’ vote choice, we focus on how non-European immigrants stand out in terms of voting behaviour and elaborate an explanation of their political inclination.

### **Immigrants and the Development of Party Identification**

As noted above, it is intriguing that there are relatively few studies regarding the partisanship and the voting behaviour of Canadian immigrants. Immigrants, of course, appear as an important variable in Canadian election studies. However, they rarely are a primary subject of

study, but relegated to little more than a control variable. In addition, studies often use the term “visible minority,” which is an ethnically based classification. Since the focus here is strictly on the voting behaviour of Canadian immigrants, we clarify the meaning of “immigrant” as pertaining to those who born outside Canada. Thus, we strictly categorize the sample population according to country of origin, not ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

We also note the necessity to categorize immigrants in more detail, beyond the European vs. others distinction. Clearly, more recent immigrants are from Asia and Africa, which consists of more than 60 percent of all immigrants since 2000. This contrasts with the 1960s, when Europe was the major source of immigration to Canada and accounted for almost 90 percent of immigrants. This change must be taken into account, especially given what we know about non-European immigrant voting preferences. Numerous studies emphasize how non-European immigrants – all virtually visible minorities – tend to vote Liberal more than other fellow Canadians (Johnston et al. 1992; Blais et al. 2002; Blais 2005). But there exist seldom studies on non-European immigrants’ peculiarity in voting *within* immigrant groups. Furthermore, the country of origin of immigrants other than non-European countries were not carefully classified and studied. Our findings offer a much-improved examination of this sub-group of the electorate, a segment whose influence in Canadian electoral politics is likely to grow in the near future.

Numerous scholars warn not to treat immigrants as one voting bloc. The rich body of literature on American immigrants’ politicization demonstrates that European immigrants easily incorporate into the American political environment and the impact of their ethnicity on political decision attenuates. In doing so, socioeconomic factors such as income or education start to play an important role in perceiving political events or a making vote decision (Dahl 1961; Gordon 1964; Desipio 1996; see also Dancygier and Saunders 2006). Thus, it is hardly plausible to consider European immigrants in the same bloc with, for instance, Asian immigrants. The distinction does not only emerge between European and non-Europeans. Cain, Kiewiet and Uhlaner (1991) successfully show how different immigrant groups follow divergent paths of partisanship development. While Latinos become stronger Democrats as the number of years living in the United States increases, Asian Americans, on the other hand, tend to become more Republican. It is also a well known fact that Cuban immigrants who reside largely in Florida have partisan orientations distinctive from other Latinos, such as Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; Uhlaner and Garcia 2005). Nakanishi (1991) also indicates

that there exists great heterogeneity among Asian Americans in terms of socio-demographic elements and party affiliation. Tam (1995) even goes further by noting significant differences among Asian American voters, particularly Chinese, Japanese and Korean Americans. In fact, partisanship among Asian Americans is quite varied. Using the recent Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (2000-2001), Lien and his colleagues demonstrate that Korean Americans and Filipinos are more prone to support the Republican party than other Asian Americans (Lien et al. 2001).

Differences among immigrant groups are also evident in Canada. A brief glance at the 2000, 2004 and 2006 Canadian Election Studies reveals these differences (see Table 1). During these periods, the percentage of Canadian-born voters who have supported the Liberal party is 37 percent. On the other hand, 46 percent of immigrants voted Liberal. Nonetheless, a closer look reveals huge variations among immigrants. The most distinguishing difference occurs between Northern European and non-European immigrants. Less than 30 percent of Northern European immigrants reported to have voted Liberal, compared to 50 percent of non-European immigrants. On the Conservative side, about 45 percent of Canadian-born voters supported the Conservative party during this period.<sup>2</sup> While support for the Conservatives among immigrants as a whole is lower than that of non-immigrants by almost 10 percent, almost 60 percent of Northern European immigrants voted Conservatives, which is substantially higher than any other group. On the contrary, only about 28 percent of non-Europeans voted Conservative. Thus, it is not true that immigrants form a voting bloc that staunchly supports the Liberal party. In fact, there exists huge variation in terms of vote choice *within* immigrants according to their region and country of origin.

[ TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ]

We suggest two perspectives to examine the different voting patterns among immigrants. First, an immigrant group's party support is influenced by intra-group identity. Non-European immigrants may be loyal supporters of the Liberal party, as they perceive the party as being more compassionate with non-European immigrants than the Conservative party. This perception may not have much basis in fact. It has never been declared or there has never been any social movement that might have caused an electoral alignment between non-European immigrants and the Liberal party. Before the 1950s, it is difficult to tell which party was friendlier towards

immigrants. While it was the Conservative government that enacted the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885, an act with language that was unashamedly racial, the Liberal government that followed was no less selective in the criteria it set for admission into Canada (Abu-Laden and Gabriel 2003). However, since the 1950s, during the Conservative government under Diefenbaker, the Liberal party increasingly presented itself as more supportive of immigrants. A set of unfortunate coincidences projected a view of the Conservative party as less tolerant of immigrants, particularly those not from Britain. The Liberals, in turn, capitalized on this view by positioning itself as more open to immigrants.

The first unfortunate coincidence concerns the economy. Diefenbaker in the 1950s and early 1960s presided over slowing economic conditions, one that brought forth a need to re-examine Canada's immigration policy. The Diefenbaker government may have supported immigration to Canada in principle, and saw its value to the continued development of Canada's economy, but also regarded immigration as a challenging issue in light of rising unemployment. This prompted a change in policy, one that elevated employable skills as a criterion of admission. Some saw this as a slight against Southern Europeans (Hawkins 1988).

The economic slowdown also had a negative impact among immigrants already in Canada. An immigrant respondent in Schwartz' study (1964) noted: "When I came [to Canada] the Liberals were in Ottawa, the country was rich, and it was easy to find a job. Now you have to take whatever you can find," (267). In addition, immigrants, particularly those from Europe, expected the Canadian state to lighten the burden of the economically dispossessed, as governments in Europe are more apt to do. Yet, the more laissez-faire style of governance in Canada, and the more laissez-faire ideology of the presiding Conservative government, may have left immigrants with a sense of feeling abandoned (Schwartz 1964). Even in more prosperous economic times, immigrants, many of whom occupied lower-paying jobs, struggled to afford services that were otherwise provided publicly in their home countries, such as medical care. And which party brought in medicare in Canada?<sup>3</sup>

Another change to immigration policy was an order-in-council in 1959, which put greater restrictions to those who were sponsored. This change had an adverse affect on Italians wishing to emigrate to Canada. Regardless of whether this was an intended effect, the Liberal party capitalized on this issue. In addition, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the number of Italian immigrants exceeded the number of British immigrants. It is within this context that the Liberals

sought to manipulate changes to immigration policy in their favour by painting the Conservatives as a pro-British and anti-Italian party (Hawkins 1988). One respondent in Schwartz' study (1964) noted: "The government seemed to let in all the Germans that wanted to come, but the Italians had to wait many months," (266).<sup>4</sup> As noted by John W. Pickersgill, a former immigration minister under the Liberal government in 1954: "The clumsy and unsuccessful attempt to restrict Italian immigration helped, of course, to maintain Liberal support in the Italian-Canadian community," (Pickersgill 1994: 529). In the 1962 election, PC incumbents lost their seats in constituencies with large ethnic populations (Schwartz 1964).

The Liberals, once returned to power in 1963, also grappled with the need to address changes in immigration policy. But the Liberals faced other, far more troubling, challenges. Language tensions in Canada and separatism in Quebec were on the rise, and the need to fix that was seen as paramount. As a response to these tensions, the Pearson government launched the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Ethnic groups participated in this process and expressed a sense that they were not being adequately considered, relegated to an outsider status sandwiched between Canada's two quarrelling founding nations. The Royal Commission acknowledged these concerns and recommended that cultural policy reflect Canada's increasing diversity (Hawkins 1988). The Trudeau government adopted these recommendations in the form of multiculturalism policy.<sup>5</sup> Trudeau believed one's tolerance for others would only come about if one's sense of identity is also secured, and this needs a firm policy that sustains cultural diversity (Canada 1971). Multiculturalism also contained an instrumental feature: funding of ethnic groups. Surely, this was not overlooked by ethnic voters.<sup>6</sup> It was also under Trudeau that the Charter of Rights included a clause<sup>7</sup> that recognizes the multicultural nature of Canada.

Since the 1971 policy, all three major parties in Parliament officially supported multiculturalism. No one party stood up against it. But this began to change in the 1980s, with criticism of multiculturalism often tied to criticism of Canada's relatively open immigration policy (Abu-Ladan and Stasiulis 1992). When Mulroney returned the PC to power in 1984, once again, immigration policy was reformed, with the changes not always portrayed as friendly towards immigrants. But again, this had probably more to do with timing than with any particular ideology resident within the PC.

The rise of the Reform party in the Western provinces threatened seats normally thought safe for the PC party. Reform originally advocated a more restrictive view of immigration policy

and multiculturalism, seeing the latter as a waste of taxpayer's money. Reform never intended to pursue discriminatory immigration policy in public. In fact, party officials tried to prevent the party's image to be framed in that way. Nonetheless, incidents that some party activists bluntly attacked visible minority immigrants were not absent (Gidengil et al. 2005).<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, Reform instigated a discourse about immigration the PC government could not ignore. Given that the PC party navigates the same general ideological space with the Reform party, many PC supporters may have felt a need to project some response to this new populist wave. Indeed, the PC party's policy resolutions in 1991 reflected some of the Reform party rhetoric: more restrictive, more hard-line, less supportive of multiculturalism and placing more emphasis on promoting common elements of Canadian society.

Does all this reflect an anti-immigrant ethos within the PC party? Or, was the Conservative party simply a victim of circumstance, whereby it was in office during a time when both the economy began to flounder (early 1990s) and when most Western countries, Canada included, began to grapple with a backlash against immigrants. It is conceivable that a Liberal government might have responded the same way, since both the PC and the Liberal parties win the same way: through loosely weaved national coalitions bound together by vague equivocal positions that seek to offend the least number of people. One must also not forget that budgetary cutbacks under the Liberal government of Chrétien did not spare funding for programs related to multiculturalism. There is even indication that the Liberal party harboured its own opponents to multiculturalism. As noted by Abu-Ladan and Stasiulis (1992), John Nunziata, an Italian from Toronto, was prominent among them (see also Abu-Ladan 1999).

The current Conservative government under Stephen Harper is also not officially opposed to immigration. Although the most recent changes to immigration policy resemble some elements brought forth by Diefenbaker, there are only two reasons why an immigrant voter in the last series of elections would have regarded the Conservatives as unfriendly towards immigrants. First, if one knows nothing more than the fact that the Conservative party is situated on the right of the political spectrum, and if one looks around the world and sees rightwing parties make outrageous and sometimes even blatantly racist pronouncements against immigrants, it is not all that big of a leap for a newcomer to convict the Conservatives as anti-immigrant, if only by association. As noted earlier, while there is no hard evidence to suggest the Conservatives are more anti-immigrant than the Liberals, immigrants perceptive to the anti-immigrant backlash



occurring in places like Western Europe might be left with an impression that implicates the Conservative party as a member of the same movement. Second, the current Conservative party may retain part of the anti-immigrant image of the Reform party and its successor, Alliance. Now that Alliance has become the Conservative party, it is not illogical for many immigrants – particularly those who do not *look* like an “average Canadian” – to hold residual suspicion about this party’s true commitment towards immigrants.

The compassion argument is also relevant with respect to Canadian foreign policy as it relates to an immigrant’s country of origin. As mentioned earlier, Alvarez and Bedolla (2003) demonstrate that whereas most Latinos are emotionally and politically attached to the Democratic party, those from Cuba are attached to the Republican party. They attribute Cuban Americans’ partisanship of to a unique migration history. A tougher foreign-policy stand against the Castro regime asserted by the Republican party attracts Cuban Americans (Bishin, Kaufman and Stevens 2005).<sup>9</sup> In Canada, British immigrants, for similar reasons, can have a distinctive partisan affiliation with the Conservative party. Historically, the Conservative party was envisioned to have tried to maintain a close link with the United Kingdom. The distance from Great Britain during the Suez Crisis of 1956 by the Liberal government could be the one bit of evidence. In addition, an older generation of British-born voters remember the Great Flag debate; the Progressive Conservative party led by Diefenbaker sought to preserve Red Ensign against the Liberal party’s choice of the Maple Leaf. Although the impression has faded over time, the Conservative party still provides the image of being closer to Great Britain (Johnston et al. 1992). While relations with Great Britain could draw British immigrants’ closer to the Conservative party than to the Liberal party, this issue has no resonance for other immigrant groups.

The second perspective focuses on immigrant groups’ different level of socialization and politicization in Canada. Without a doubt, immigrants may well enjoy the “luxury of politics” more readily when they are able to integrate into a new host country without a huge cost. According to Wilson’s survey (Wilson 1973), British immigrants in Australia are more likely than other immigrants to participate politically. He attributes the higher level of political participation of British immigrants in Australia to their “familiarity with the Australian political system,” (Wilson 1973: 15-16; see also Black 1987). From this perspective, immigrants from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States should have less difficulty learning

Canadian politics than other immigrant groups. Institutional similarities and linguistic proficiency allow them to incorporate into Canadian society easier than other immigrant groups. Although they do not share the same language, Northern European immigrants are also distinguished from immigrants from non-European countries or Southern and Eastern European countries in terms of their past experience with democratic institutions.<sup>10</sup> In addition, along with British immigrants, Northern Europeans are a so-called “old generation” of immigrants whose influx was highest before or during the 1960s. As numerous studies show, their substantially longer residence in Canada than other immigrants should have matured the re-socialization process (Cain, Kiewiet and Uhlaner 1991; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; White et al. 2008; Wong 2000).

Provided that Northern European and British immigrant groups are more likely than non-European immigrants to have been incorporated into the political mainstream of Canada, their political behaviour may no longer be influenced by intra-group identity. As many “assimilation” theorists assert, socio-economic class cleavage has replaced ethnic cleavage for these immigrant groups (DeSipio 1996). If so, the policies related to racial minorities and immigrants may not be as important to these older immigrants than to more recent arrivals. Other issues, such as health care, social welfare or national economic conditions would attract their attention, similar to most Canadians.

Matured socialization consequently leads to higher interest in domestic politics. A recent article by Blais et al. (2008) emphasizes the voting gap between politically well-informed voters and less informed voters. They start from Bartels’ analysis of American presidential elections, in which he shows that less-informed electorates are more likely to vote for incumbents because they are a “default option” (Bartels 1996; see also Blais et al. 2008). The same phenomenon appears to take place in Canada. Blais and his colleagues show that less informed voters are prone to vote for the Liberal party and least likely to vote for the NDP. For its omnipresence in Canadian politics, the Liberal party has become the default option for less informed Canadian electorates. Recently arrived immigrants are engaged with settling into the new environment, and hence, are less likely to put much effort into collecting information about political parties and their policies. In addition, another important fact concerns the lack of democratic skills new immigrants may bring with them, given that many originate from authoritarian regimes. As noted by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), political knowledge not only helps people to learn and

interpret what different parties offer, but also helps people to define their political interests. Therefore, less politicized immigrants not only lack knowledge of Canadian politics and party stances on domestic issues, they may not even have given much thought to their own personal interests, leading them to choose the “most visible” Liberal party. If the Liberal party is also even vaguely visible as the “immigrant friendly” party, then its attraction among the least socialized immigrants becomes more obvious. Once an immigrant comfortably incorporates in society and becomes able to enjoy the luxury of politics, she would be able to opt for other parties that better serve her interests. Until then, the Liberal party is the most convenient choice. Thus, less socialized immigrants may tend to vote Liberal, while more socialized immigrants shop around for other options.

In sum, we have two possible reasons for variations among immigrant groups with respect to voting behaviour and public opinion; intra-group identity as immigrant or racial minority, and the level of socialization. The next section tests these explanations.

## **Data and Methods**

Data was assembled from the Canadian Election Studies of 2000, 2004 and 2006. Using three waves of surveys increases sample sizes.<sup>11</sup> We first classify immigrants into five separate groups according to country of origin: 1) Northern Europe; 2) Great Britain; 3) other European countries (including Southern Europe and Eastern Europe); 4) the United States, New Zealand and Australia; and 5) non-Europe (i.e., Asia, Africa and Latin America). Immigrants are strictly first generation, born outside of Canada. Our main dependent variable is vote choice of a respondent in each election. We create a discrete dependent variable of Liberal vote choice.

Level of education, income, gender and region are inserted as control variables. Besides these, we also include religious affiliation. Blais notes that Catholics are keystone for the Liberal party’s electoral success (Blais et al. 2002; Blais 2005). In the same vein, Gidengil et al. (2005) indicate Protestants are meaningfully related with the support of Alliance party in 2000. Our data indicates that more than half of Northern European and British immigrants are Protestants and more than 70 percent of Southern Europeans are Catholic. But, still a sizable number of immigrants, particularly those from non-European countries, do not share either religious denomination. Thus, we include both Catholics and Protestants as dummy variables in the analysis. We perform a series of regression models based only on these control variables and the

immigrant group dummies. Then, we add our key independent variables to observe their explanatory power.

A question that asks respondents to identify the party that best represents the interests of racial minorities and immigrants should have been most appropriate for our purpose of analysis. Unfortunately, the CES did not pose such a question. Hence, we select three of the closest proxies: 1) should government do more for racial minorities; 2) should Canada admit more immigrants; and 3) should government spend more on aid to developing countries.<sup>12</sup> The first question directly relates to non-European immigrants who are most likely to be visible minorities.<sup>13</sup> The second question might also have close relations considering the precursor of the Conservative party's covert "air" of anti-immigrant attitudes. As mentioned, the Conservative party never officially expressed anti-immigrant sentiments. However, if the Liberal party is seen as immigrant-friendly to recent arrivals who are largely from non-European countries, this variable might explain to a certain degree why there is a different voting pattern among immigrant groups. Lastly, aid to developing countries relates to increasing the amount for international assistance since 2000, initiated by the Liberal government under Chrétien.<sup>14</sup> Those who are from developing countries, which consist of a large fraction of recent immigrants' source, and have knowledge of the policy are expected to be more likely to support the Liberal party.

When it comes to the second perspective of socialization, we develop two independent variables: the length of residence and the level of political knowledge. The length of residence in Canada is simply calculated by subtracting the year of entrance to Canada from the year of the election survey. The longer an immigrant has lived in Canada, the more likely we expect to detect openness to support parties other than the Liberals. Next, we generate a level of knowledge variable. The CES contains several quiz-type questions to measure level of political knowledge. The type of questions asked can vary from one survey to the next, but one standard battery of questions evaluates a respondent's ability to recall the name of the leader of the main parties. For each item, we assign a score of 0 for the wrong answer<sup>15</sup> and 1 for the correct answer. We then averaged the scores to estimate an overall level of political knowledge. Again, we expect that a more socialized immigrant to be better informed. In turn, among those who are better informed, we expect that the "visibility" of the Liberal party to diminish in influence, which consequently leads to a greater propensity to support other parties.

## Results

We first compare each immigrant group with those born in Canada according to four dimensions: voting behaviour, level of political knowledge, the length of residence and opinions on various issues. Table 1 represents results from a simple tabulation from 2000, 2004 and 2006 CES surveys. As briefly mentioned earlier, the percentage of Liberal vote is quite unequally distributed among immigrant groups. The Liberal party had difficulty gaining votes from immigrants of Northern Europe, with less than a third (29 percent) having supported the Liberals. Nevertheless, the party enjoys strong support from non-European immigrants.

Not surprisingly, the most informed immigrants are those from the United States, New Zealand and Australia, followed by Northern European and British immigrants. As expected, Northern European and British immigrants are the oldest generation of immigration. The average years of residence in Canada for Northern European immigrants is about 44 years and that of British immigrants is 42 years. Immigrants of the United States, New Zealand and Australia are the third oldest immigrant group whose average length of stay in Canada is about 38 years. Certainly, these three immigrant groups are expected to have more comfortably settled in Canadian society given their longer residence, and this is reflected by their higher level of knowledge.

Table 2 reports opinions among immigrant groups on various issues. Regarding the racial minority question, non-European immigrants stand out. Almost 60 percent of non-European immigrants believe more should be done for racial minorities. The largest difference in attitude around this question is between other European and non-European immigrants. One interesting finding is the higher percentage of immigrants from the United States, New Zealand and Australia in the “more” category. With respect to admitting more immigrants to Canada, almost all groups, including non-immigrants, seem satisfied with the current level of immigration. However, non-Europeans demonstrate greater support for Canada to admit more immigrants. Although all immigrant groups favour “more immigrants in Canada” than non-immigrants, the group with the lowest percentage in the “admit more” category is British immigrants.

[ TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE ]

The last question pertains to spending on aid to developing countries. Interestingly, a much higher fraction of immigrants from the United States, New Zealand and Australia than any other group believes Canada should increase financial aid to developing countries.

These three items will help explain varying levels of support for the Liberal party among different immigrant groups. We start with the logit model in Table 3, which is based on all respondents in the survey. The dependent variable is vote choice for the Liberal party. The first column is the regression model when the “immigrant” dummy variable is included, with the result confirming conventional wisdom. Immigrants are, as a whole, more likely to vote Liberal than non-immigrants. Yet, the model in the second column shows that the advantage for the Liberals among immigrants stems mainly from non-Europeans. No other immigrant group differs much from Canadian-born voters.

[ TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE ]

Let’s now turn to exploring variations *within* immigrant groups. As shown in Table 4, Northern European, British and even other European immigrants are significantly less likely to vote Liberal than non-European immigrants,<sup>16</sup> an unsurprising result given the extraordinary support for Liberals by non-Europeans. The next model includes the four other important independent variables: opinion over government’s role for racial minorities, immigration policy, level of political information, and the length of stay in Canada. If these variables turn out to absorb the impact of the immigrant group dummies, we can suggest that the distinctions among different immigrant groups stems from their differing attitudes on racial minorities and immigrant policies, and their differing degrees of politicization.

[ TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE ]

Once these variables are inserted, the story, indeed, changes. Although the signs of the immigrant group dummies remain negative, they cease to be statistically significantly different from non-European immigrants. A respondent who thinks more should be done for racial minorities is significantly more likely to vote Liberal. The sign on whether government should admit more immigrants looks intriguing at first glance, since it was expected to be positively

related to vote choice of Liberals. As a matter of fact, those who think the government should admit more immigrants are NDP supporters, which explains the result.<sup>17</sup> Level of political knowledge is negatively associated with support for the Liberal party. Finally, the length of residence in Canada is not quite related to Liberal vote.

The last column demonstrates analysis with another independent variable: aid to developing countries. Since this item is not included in the 2006 CES survey, analysis is based on only the 2000 and 2004 CES. The difference between non-European immigrants and European immigrant groups fades further. Opinion concerning how much should be done for racial minorities loses its significance, although it is still significant at  $p < .10$ . Instead, opinions concerning aid to developing countries now exert an important explanatory power. In addition, level of political knowledge remains a significant factor. Immigrants who have extensive political knowledge are significantly *less* likely to vote Liberals. In sum, different voting behaviour among immigrant groups relates to two key factors: 1) the Liberal party's policy position, which is recognized by immigrant voters; and 2) the level of socialization, as measured by political knowledge.

A set of simulations is generated based on the last estimates.<sup>18</sup> The simulation is based on the model of the third column in Table 4. We assigned different values to the immigrant group dummies, opinion over policies toward racial minority, aid to developing countries and the level of political knowledge, while setting all other variables to their means. In a simple comparative simulation among immigrant groups, the probability of voting Liberal among non-European immigrants is .46, the highest among immigrant groups. The lowest probability was recorded by other European immigrants, .30. We also examine confidence intervals and  $t$  scores of the difference in probabilities at 95 percent level to see whether these differences are statistically meaningful or not. The 95 percent confidence interval for voting Liberals between non-European immigrants and other European immigrants, however, slightly overlap, and the  $t$  score between two probabilities yield 1.77 which is slightly less than significance level of 1.96.

Believing the government should do more for racial minorities enhances the predicted probability of voting Liberal party by .21 points. Also, those who believe Canada should spend more on aid to developing countries increases the probability from .283 among those who believe spending should decrease to .513 among those wishing to see aid increased. The difference in voting probability for Liberal is about .34 points between less informed and highly

informed immigrants. The 95 percent confidence intervals for these probabilities of voting Liberal party, policy over racial minorities, aid to developing countries and the level of information, slightly overlap at the tail except for the item concerning aid to developing countries. Nevertheless, the policy over racial minorities and the level of information result in statistically significantly different voting probabilities for Liberal party ( $|t| > 2.33$  and  $|t| > 2.46$ , respectively).

Simulations for non-European immigrants, the group that supports the Liberal party most, varies considerably if one assumes different values of political knowledge. An increase in the knowledge level score from the lowest (0) to the highest (1) dramatically cuts the probability of voting Liberal, from .631 to .394. Although the 95 percent confidence intervals of these two probabilities slightly overlap each other, the  $t$  score of the difference in two probabilities is higher than 2.1, which is quite significant. The probability of voting Liberal among well-informed non-Europeans is still considerably higher than other Europeans who are similarly sophisticated. In addition, the probability of voting Liberal is only .31 among those non-European immigrants who believe the government should do less for racial minorities, and .342 if they think Canada should spend less on aid to developing countries. In the former cases, the 95 percent confidence intervals overlap considerably, although the  $t$  scores are high enough to exceed the 95 percent significant threshold being 2.01. With respect to spending on foreign aid, although confidence intervals overlap slightly, the  $t$  score of 2.4 is quite as high, showing significant discrepancy.

In sum, the simulated voting probabilities for the Liberal party are highest among non-European immigrants. Higher levels of political information decrease the probability, while a more compassionate view of racial minorities and developing countries increases it. Also, even non-European immigrants demonstrate great variation in their support for the Liberals, depending on information levels and views of various policies.

## **Discussion**

Although it is widely accepted that Canadian immigrants stand firmly behind the Liberals, voting behaviour of immigrants has not been thoroughly studied. This paper provides a more complete view of voting behaviour among immigrants by taking into account not only how they differ from non-immigrants, but also how they differ with each other. The difference



between immigrants and non-immigrants with respect to voting behaviour turns out mostly to stem from those originating from non-European countries.

We examined two perspectives to explain this distinction between non-European immigrants and other immigrant groups, particularly Northern European and British immigrants. In our analysis, we show that opinions about racial minorities and aid to developing countries partly explain non-European distinction in terms of supporting Liberals among immigrants. Also, just like non-immigrants who do not invest much effort to learning about politics, immigrants who are overwhelmed by challenges in trying to earn a living in a new environment catch the party brand name and use it as voting cue. The Liberal party enjoys its “natural governing party” image not only among Canadian-born voters, but also among immigrant groups.<sup>19</sup>

This study is an initial step for the study of immigrant politics in Canada. Like most studies on immigrant political behaviour, the essential difficulty is the absence of survey data containing sufficient number of immigrants. For this study, we used Canadian Election Study surveys, since it is the most comprehensive data containing important questions. Still, with three election years combined, we could only collect about four hundred respondents. In order to upgrade the quality of research, acquiring a larger sample for Canadian immigrants should have priority.

Another important factor that has not been studied in this research is residential concentration by immigrants. Dancygier and Saunders (2006) find that residential concentration of ethnic minorities is positively related with Labour partisanship in the United Kingdom. The concentration of non-European immigrants is likely to be related with greater mobilization efforts by the Liberal party, which enhances Liberal identification among these immigrants. Even today, among the safest Liberal seats in Canada are those with the highest concentration of immigrants. This is not only true of Toronto, but also true in Montreal, especially when one considers the fact that Liberal brand has dwindled in value all over Quebec.

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Table 1. Comparison between immigrants and Canadian-born

	Vote for Liberal	Vote for Conservative	Level of Political Knowledge	Years in Canada
Canadian-born	.373	.446	.505	-
Immigrant Total	.459	.359	.538	31.578
Northern European	.294	.59	.584	43.779
British	.323	.417	.573	42.263
Other European	.473	.393	.492	33.532
US, NZ and AU	.395	.349	.612	38.328
Non-European	.532	.283	.524	25.452

Source: 2000, 2004 and 2006 Canadian Election Studies.

Table 2. Comparing policy views of Canadian-born and immigrant groups

<i>How much should be done for racial minorities?</i>			
	Less	About the Same	More
Canadian-Born	.135	.409	.456
Northern European Immigrants	.142	.425	.433
British Immigrants	.123	.384	.493
Other European Immigrants	.124	.455	.421
US, NZ and AU	.127	.333	.540
Non-European Immigrants	.093	.324	.583

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<i>Should Canada admit (more, about the same or fewer) immigrants?</i>			
	Less	About the Same	More
Canadian-Born	.334	.523	.144
Northern European Immigrants	.228	.522	.250
British Immigrants	.265	.524	.211
Other European Immigrants	.243	.505	.252
US, NZ and AU	.234	.516	.250
Non-European Immigrants	.153	.536	.311

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<i>Should federal govt. spend (more, about the same or less on aid to developing countries?)</i>			
	Less	About the Same	More
Canadian-Born	.329	.485	.186
Northern European Immigrants	.296	.500	.205
British Immigrants	.325	.456	.219
Other European Immigrants	.322	.469	.210
US, NZ and AU	.231	.333	.436
Non-European Immigrants	.216	.471	.314

Source: 2000, 2004 and 2006 Canadian Election Studies.

Note: The question on aid to developing countries is not included in 2006 CES. Figures for this particular question are based only on 2000 and 2004 CES.

Table 3. Voting for the Liberal Party: Immigrant vs. Canadian-born

Vote for the Liberal Party		
Immigrant	<b>0.274**</b> <b>(0.105)</b>	
Northern European Immigrant		-0.280 (0.286)
British Immigrant		-0.275 (0.272)
Other European Immigrant		-0.019 (0.242)
US, NZ and Australian Immigrant		-0.320 (0.420)
Non-European Immigrant	<b>0.670***</b> <b>(0.143)</b>	
Constant	<b>-0.694***</b> <b>(0.144)</b>	<b>-0.752***</b> <b>(0.146)</b>
Year dummies	yes	yes
Obs.	3347	3342
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.052	0.056
Chi-Square	213.149	226.166
Log-pseudo likelihood	-2061.177	-2047.624

Note: All control variables included but not reported here. Values in parentheses correspond to standard errors.



Table 4. Vote for the Liberal Party: Among immigrant groups

Vote for the Liberal Party			
Northern European Immigrant	<b>-0.759*</b> (0.309)	-.659 (-.358)	-.404 (-.425)
British Immigrant	<b>-0.766*</b> (0.326)	-.572 (-.362)	-.607 (-.415)
Other European Immigrant	<b>-0.600*</b> (0.305)	-.462 (-.358)	-.555 (-.408)
US, NZ and Australian Immigrant	-0.915 (0.472)	-.669 (-.518)	-.156 (-.605)
Do more for racial minorities		<b>.425***</b> (-.113)	.252 (-.138)
Admit more immigrants		-.241 (-.174)	-.405 (-.210)
Level of political knowledge		<b>-.765*</b> (-.380)	<b>-.989*</b> (-.472)
Length of residence in Canada		.003 (-.008)	.001 (-.010)
More aid to developing countries			<b>.503*</b> (-.198)
Constant	0.283 (0.343)	-.212 (-.670)	.171 (-.794)
Year Dummies	yes	yes	yes
Obs.	499	441	321
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.095	.133	.171
Chi-Sq.	59.432	7.416	58.048
Log-likelihood	-304.723	-257.120	-18.268

Note: All control variables included but not reported here. Values in parentheses correspond to standard errors.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> We do not downplay the relevance of ethnicity in voting. But in Canada, ethnicity in voting research is traditionally used to explain the linguistic cleavage of English and French. The focus here is on the distinctions between the Canadian-born and those born outside of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> The Liberal party support dropped dramatically in 2004 and 2006, due largely to the sponsorship scandal that hurt the Liberals and helped the Conservative party win the 2006 election.

<sup>3</sup> The Liberal party should not be ascribed too much credit for the development of medicare in Canada as the genesis of public healthcare cannot easily be attributed to any one political party. Components of what we now call medicare trace back to initiatives at the provincial level, most notably in Saskatchewan. The federal government, under the Diefenbaker Conservatives, responded by passing the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act in 1957, with parliament voting unanimously in favour. The same government launched the Royal Commission on Health Services, which issued recommendations in 1964 and 1965, when the Liberals were in power. In 1966, the Liberal government, under Pearson, passed the Medical Care Act, which expanded the number of medical services made available to the public.

<sup>4</sup> Schwartz's interviews with immigrants also suggest that the changes Diefenbaker made to immigration policy reflect the PC's loyalist ties. She notes: "[One] respondent felt Mr. Diefenbaker had curtailed immigration during a period of heavy unemployment not for this reason but because 'he's afraid we'll take away the Queen'," (258).

<sup>5</sup> Multiculturalism also sought to curtail assimilationist forces (Roberts and Clifton 1982), be they in Quebec with its increasing demands that all immigrants become part of the francophone society, or in other parts of Canada where some expected immigrants to become more like "ordinary" English-speaking Canadians

<sup>6</sup> There is also some speculation that multiculturalism was used by Trudeau to secure ethnic voters as a potential group of supporters (Hawkins 1988), particularly in places like Montreal, where ethnic voters can feel uneasy when Quebec nationalist forces gain strength. The Liberal party's current base of support now remains mainly in large urban centres, with high concentrations of immigrant voters.

<sup>7</sup> Section 27 of the Charter states: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians."

<sup>8</sup> The Alliance, in its *Declaration of Policy*, asserts "multiculturalism" should not be publicly funded since it should be considered to be a "personal choice." Affirmative action was also the target for the party to exterminate (Gidengil et al. 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Bishin, Kaufman and Stevens (2005) discuss that the current Republican president, George W. Bush, was popular among Cubans because of his stricter regulations on the Castro regime.

<sup>10</sup> Black, however, argues that British immigrants in Canada are just slightly more likely to participate than other immigrant groups. He emphasizes those who are greatly interested in politics tend to participate more than those who are not, and the effect of country of origin does not prevail (Black 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Only respondents from outside of Quebec were examined because of the party system cannot be compared to the rest of Canada. In particular, the main party in Quebec during the analytical time frame, the Bloc Québécois, is unique to the province.

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<sup>12</sup> André Blais' Presidential Address to the CPSA in 2005 specifically mentions these three questions as possible variables to measure non-European ethnic groups' support for the Liberal party (Blais 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Surely, not all immigrants from Northern Europe, for example, are white immigrants. There are some who originate (or whose family originates) from countries outside of Europe. Still, this is not a substantial number.

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/7916-e.htm#bcompositiontxt>

<sup>15</sup> Respondents who did not provide a valid answer (i.e., "don't know" or "refused") were scored a zero, as we consider such replies to indicate lack of knowledge.

<sup>16</sup> We set non-European immigrants as the reference group, since this is the most distinctive in terms of voting behaviour.

<sup>17</sup> A simple tabulation demonstrates that about 36 percent of Conservative identifiers thinks the government should decrease the current influx of immigrants, which is the highest among all partisans. It is lowest among NDP identifiers at 21 percent. On the contrary, about 26 percent of NDP identifiers believes that the government should admit more immigrants, the highest among all partisans. In a logit model with voting for NDP as dependent variable and the same model specification, the variable of "admit more immigrants" becomes positive and almost significant at .05 levels (.053).

<sup>18</sup> Simulations were generated with "Clarify," a Stata macro developed by King and his colleagues (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000; see also Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001).

<sup>19</sup> In an additional regression which is not reported here, we insert an interaction term between non-European immigrants and the level of information. Although not to a significant degree at .05, non-European immigrants become less supportive of the Liberal party as they become more knowledgeable of Canadian politics.