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Individual- and Community-level Determinants of Support for Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Canada *

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For some time, immigrants to Canada have gravitated to the large cities of Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. In response, the federal government has encouraged newcomers to settle in second- and third-tier Canadian cities and also smaller communities. For this initiative to be successful it is important to understand how positive attitudes to cultural diversity are fostered. This paper examines individual- and community-level determinants of support for immigration and cultural diversity, using survey data from a 1998 public opinion survey of 802 randomly selected adults in seven Alberta communities and community-level data from the 1991 and 1996 Canadian Censuses. More educated urban Albertans are found to be more supportive of cultural diversity, as are those who feel more positive about their own communities. Older survey respondents are less supportive, as are those who live in the largest urban centres in the province.

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Introduction

Prior to 1967, more than 80% of immigrants to Canada came from Europe. That proportion has now declined to one in five (Canadian Census, 2001). In fact, since 1979, more than half of all immigrants to Canada (54%) have come from Asia (Li, 2002). Approximately 75% of all newcomers to Canada now go to Canada's three largest urban centres (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver). Thus, current patterns of immigration are enhancing cultural diversity within Canada's largest cities, while accentuating differences in diversity between these three "capitals of immigration" and other Canadian communities. For example, in 2001 visible minorities made up more than one-third (37%) of Toronto's population but only 17% of Calgary's population.

Given the shift in source countries and in immigrants' choice of resettlement communities, we might expect corresponding changes in Canadians' attitudes toward immigration and cultural diversity. Such attitudes are developed within the contexts of family, school, and work, but also in the broader community. Hence, when examining public opinion regarding immigration and cultural diversity it is important to consider not only individual predictors but also how communities might shape opinions. However, most studies of immigration attitudes have largely ignored community-level predictors. This paper addresses this gap by sampling public opinion within a range of quite different communities and by asking how both community and individual attributes might influence immigration attitudes.

Documenting individual- and community-level predictors of attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity is an interesting scholarly exercise in its own right, but it also has important policy implications. Such knowledge can be very useful in choosing immigrants with a high potential for successful integration in a particular community, in preparing immigrants for their resettlement destinations, and in educating community members about immigrants and their needs. These issues are particularly important today when the Canadian government is actively promoting immigration as a solution to labour market shortages in second- and third-tier Canadian communities (Krahn et al., 2003).

Theoretical Perspectives

Four general theoretical perspectives offer explanations of how immigrants are

perceived by the public. Conflict and contact theories provide insight into relationships between groups that might influence attitudes and beliefs, while education theory addresses the influence of learning and the contexts in which it occurs. A fourth community perspective emphasizes how specific community characteristics might shape attitudes and beliefs.

Conflict theory basically views society as comprised of opposing groups with the most powerful groups controlling resources and attempting to maintain their advantaged position (Smelser, 1988; Dahrendorf, 1969). It would predict that the public is generally xenophobic, fearing that immigrants will threaten the advantages of the native-born. Competition (or at least perceived competition) for scarce resources leads to reduced public acceptance of immigrants, especially by those who feel they have the most to lose. Thus, from the perspective of conflict theory, immigrants pose a threat to Canadian-born workers who believe that they will face greater labour market competition. They might also be concerned that, because immigrants will accept jobs that others would not take, increased immigration will lead to worsening labour conditions and lower wages.

Contact theory originates with Gordon Allport (1962) who developed a more general attitude-change theory that considers how experiences change attitudes and, in turn, how new attitudes change subsequent behaviours. From this perspective, those who have the most contact with immigrants will come to know them better, to feel less threatened by them, and to be more likely to accept them as part of their community. Contact theory can also be seen as a variant of *social categorization* theory where, within an "us/them" dichotomy, individuals tend to attribute more favourable qualities to the "us" to which they belong. With additional contact, people shift their group boundaries so that persons previously "them" become "us." As a result, prejudice towards these previous "outsiders" tends to disappear (Ely & Grigor-Suny 1996). Amir (1969) elaborates on this theory, suggesting that outcomes may be both positive and negative depending on the type and conditions of contact.

A third general theory of inter-group relations proposes that *higher education* leads to more accepting attitudes towards immigrants because people learn to think more positively about them (Guimond, Palmer and Begin 1989). However, more highly educated individuals may already have had more positive attitudes toward immigrants prior to their education (Sorenson and Krahn 1996). Another underlying explanation of the impact of higher education on attitudes towards immigration

involves the concept of *symbolic racism*. As abhorrence to overt racism has increased, prejudice may have gone underground (Palmer, 1996; Li, 2001). Thus, more highly educated people may be more attuned to being "politically correct" and thus more adept at cloaking racism behind statements ostensibly in defence of immigration.

A fourth theoretical perspective focuses on how the spatial *community* provides the context within which group interactions take place and attitudes and beliefs are shaped. While this approach has not been explicitly considered in previous research on immigration attitudes, it has been used to study other attitudes and behaviours. For example, Krahn and Lowe (1984) found that community-level attributes affected attitudes towards unions and union membership, independent of individual-level predictors. In the criminology discipline, Agnew's (1992) g*eneral strain theory* proposes that certain community characteristics (e.g., community size, rapid growth, social inequality) can generate (community-level) strain, anti-social orientations and, in turn, higher crime rates. Building on this argument, we might predict that strain (or"anomie" in Durkheim's (1960) language), itself a function of community size and/or rapid growth, could generate negative attitudes towards outsiders, particularly immigrants.

Most previous Canadian research on attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity has not been shaped by such theoretically-derived hypotheses. Furthermore, previous studies have focused mainly on Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and have included primarily individual-level predictors. This study examines public opinion in seven other medium-sized and (relatively) large Canadian cities, does so within a more systematic theoretical framework, and incorporates both individual- and community-level predictors.

Previous Canadian Research on Attitudes Towards Immigration and Cultural Diversity

Prior to the 1970s, most immigrants to Canada came from Europe. Consequently, debates about cultural diversity focused on acceptance of immigrants from a variety of European cultures. In a comprehensive review of public opinion polls from post WWII to 1975, Tienhaara (1975) found that Canadians generally approved of immigration. But approval tended to be connected to labour market requirements – attitudes were positive only if "immigrants could obtain employment without taking jobs away from Canadians" (p. 2). Tienhaara (1975) also noted that public

opinion was positively influenced by education and income, and varied across time and space. For example, just after WWII western Canadians were most positive about immigration but by the early 1970s they were least positive.

Breton, Reitz and Valentine (1980) explored the link between racism and inter-group contact. They concluded that while overt expressions of racism were becoming increasingly unacceptable in Canada, "racist views are most commonly expressed by less educated, older, and more religious persons, and by housewives" (p. 354). The authors noted some regional variances and attributed them to differences in inter-group contact. For example, German and Ukrainian Canadians were viewed most favourably in western Canada while Italians were most accepted in Ontario.

In *New Faces in the Crowd,* Palmer (1991) observed that Canadians were less positive toward immigrants when unemployment rates were high. Nevertheless, he found no evidence of native Canadians' jobs being lost when immigration levels increased. Palmer noted that younger and female respondents held more negative opinions, perhaps because they saw immigrants as competitors for lower-level service occupations. He also reported indirect evidence supporting "contact" theory, namely, more positive attitudes towards immigration in larger urban centres with more diverse populations such as Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.

In their analysis of Canadian public opinion polls from the 1970s and 1980s, Kalin and Berry (1994) also observed that higher unemployment rates were associated with more negative attitudes toward newcomers. However, when Schissel, Wanner and Frideres (1989) analyzed Berry's 1974 data, they concluded that rapid population growth, rather than high unemployment rates, was correlated with negative attitudes towards immigrants.

Kalin and Berry's (1994) review of Canadian public opinion (1974-1989) noted moderate and continuing support for multiculturalism. However, by 1989 nearly two-thirds of Canadians disagreed that *"Canada would be a better place if ethnic groups would keep their own way of life alive."* The authors concluded that Canadians are willing to accept newcomers on the condition that they adapt to a "Canadian" way of life. They also found that, with the exception of visible minority groups, the larger the immigrant presence in a community the more positive the attitudes towards immigration.

While some research has examined public opinion towards Canada's growing cultural diversity, relatively little has focused on community differences. Most

studies have had an individual-level focus, and even here the findings are not particularly recent nor consistent. Only a few studies have systematically theorized how public opinion towards immigration and cultural diversity are shaped.

Research Methods

Data examined in this paper were obtained from a 1998 public opinion survey of 802 randomly-selected adults resident in seven Alberta cities (Abu-Laban et al. 1999). The survey focused on residents' perceptions of immigrant experiences as well as public awareness of immigrant and resettlement issues. The questionnaire and research design were approved by a University of Alberta Research Ethics Board.

The sampling goal was to complete 150 interviews in each of Edmonton and Calgary and 100 interviews in each of five other mid-sized communities (Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, and Grande Prairie). Quota sampling was used to obtain equal proportions of women and men in each community sample. The target population consisted of persons 18 years of age or older living in non-institutional dwellings. The Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta conducted 802 telephone interviews[1] between October 6 – 27, 1998. For the analyses reported in this paper, the data were weighted to reflect the varying size of the seven communities.

Community Characteristics

The seven cities in this study were selected because refugees had been "destined" to them by Alberta government authorities during the 1990s. These communities varied in size (in 1996) from about 31,000 to more than three-quarters of a million residents (Table 1). The two smallest and most northern cities, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray, are sustained by resource extraction industries. The mid-sized communities of Medicine Hat and Lethbridge in the south of the province, and Red Deer in central Alberta, serve as regional supply centres to smaller agricultural-based communities. Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta's two largest cities, are considerably more diverse in their economies and cultures.

From 1996 to 2001, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray experienced the highest growth rates, although the increase in the absolute size of Calgary's population was the largest (Table 1). Lethbridge experienced the least growth between 1996

Table 1: Population, Population Change, Immigrants and Recent Immigrant Arrival for Selected Communities in Alberta, 1996 and 2001

	Population 1996	% Population Change 1996 to 2001	Immigrant % of Total Population1996	% Immigrants arrived in Canada 1971 to 1996
Edmonton	616,306	8.1	22.3	70
Calgary	768,082	14.4	21.5	71.1
Lethbridge	63,053	6.9	13.9	42.7
Red Deer	60,080	12.7	9.5	60.9
Medicine Hat	46,783	9.5	9.1	47.3
Fort McMurray	35,213	17.8	9.9	77.3
Grande Prairie	31,353	18	7.4	59.6
Alberta	2,696,826	10.3	15	64.9

Note: Data from Calgary and Edmonton data are 'city only' and exclude the larger CMA around these cities.

Source: 1991 and 2001 Census of Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

and 2001. In Edmonton and Calgary, more than one-fifth of the population were immigrants in 1996 (Table 1). In contrast, in Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie, less than 10% of the residents were immigrants. Furthermore, the majority of the immigrants in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat had arrived prior to 1971 (Table 1). But in Edmonton and Calgary, seven out of ten resident immigrants had arrived in Canada after 1970. Consequently, a higher proportion of the immigrants in these two large cities would be members of visible minority groups.

Table 2 shows substantial differences across cities in the proportion of adults (i.e., age 15 and older) who have less than a high school diploma and in the proportion with a university degree. For example, in 1996, Medicine Hat had a large minority of resident adults (41.9%) with less than high school education, a finding that reflects the many farm retirees who have relocated to this city. Not surprisingly, more residents in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie held trades certificates, while larger proportions of adults in Edmonton and Calgary had university degrees.

In all seven cities, more than two-thirds of the population age 15 and older were in the labour force (employed or seeking employment). The highest proportions of labour force participants were observed in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie (Table 2), reflecting the strong economy and younger population base in these centres. The range of average household incomes varied greatly across communities.

Table 2: Education, Income and Labour Force Activity for Selected Communities in Alberta, 1996

	% of Population					
	Less than High School	Trades Certificate	University Degree	Labour Force Activity	Unemploy-ment Rate	Mean Household Income
Edmonton	31.9%	26.4%	17.6%	69.3%	9.0%	$47,371
Calgary	27.1%	26.5%	20.8%	73.7%	6.7%	$52,152
Lethbridge	31.8%	27.5%	14.3%	67.2%	6.8%	$42,179
Red Deer	35.4%	28.0%	11.4%	73.7%	9.7%	$43,701
Medicine Hat	41.9%	26.1%	9.3%	66.3%	7.7%	$40,034
Grande Prairie	33.9%	29.9%	10.7%	79.9%	7.7%	$46,976
Fort McMurray	30.0%	31.1%	8.8%	79.0%	8.0%	$69,300
Alberta	33.6%	27.1%	15.1%	79.3%	7.2%	$51,118

Note: For Population Aged 15 years and older

Source: Statistics Canada (1998) 1996 Census of Canada: Nations Series

Average household income in Fort McMurray ($69,300), a city where skilled tradespersons working in the heavy oil industry can earn high incomes, was more than one and a half times greater than in Lethbridge ($42,179), and more than $18,000 greater that the provincial average. Calgary, with its much more diversified but equally strong economy in 1996, exhibited the second highest mean household income ($52,152). It also had the lowest unemployment rate (6.7%).

Analytic Model and Measurement

Figure 1 displays the analytic model examined in this paper. Some of the individual-level concepts are measured with single survey items while others (including the dependent variable) are operationalized with multi-item indices constructed from survey data. The five community-level concepts are measured using national Census data. For each of these aggregate measures, a maximum of seven different values are included in the database, one for each city.

Our dependent variable measures *"support for cultural diversity,"* summing responses to four Likert-style statements which sample members

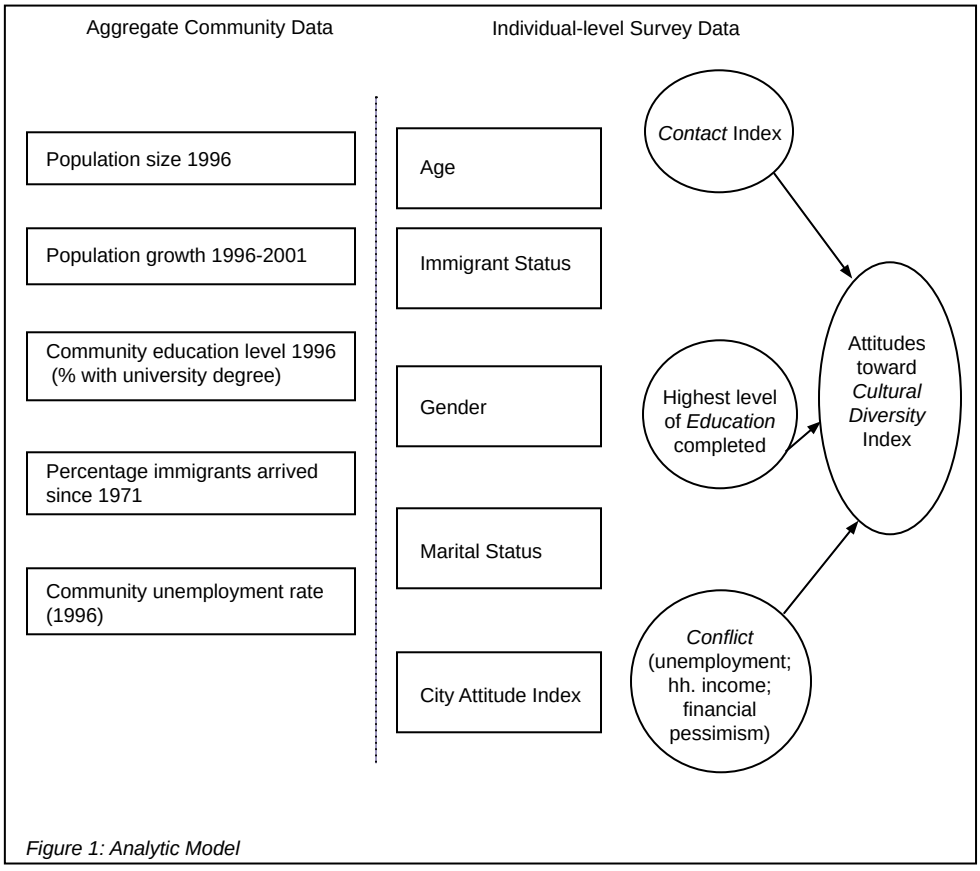

Figure 1: Analytic Model

answered on a five-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree."):

a. *People who come to this city should change their ways to be more like other community members.*
b. *I feel that there are too many immigrants coming to my city.*
c. *A mixture of different lifestyles and cultures makes my city a more attractive place to live.*
d. *I worry that the way of life in my city is being threatened by high levels of immigration.*

The first and third items measure support for an acculturation / assimilation perspective on immigration, while the second and fourth focus on the perceived threat of increasing numbers of (presumably culturally diverse) immigrants. The values for items 'a' , 'b', and 'd' were reflected so that higher values on this index indicate more support for immigration / cultural diversity. The inter-item reliability for this index (with a range of 4-20) is high (Alpha = 0.76).

The three social psychological theories regarding attitudes towards immigrants were tested using survey data. To evaluate conflict theory (i.e., the prediction that feelings of being in competition with immigrants for scarce resources would lead to less welcoming attitudes), we included measures of (respondent's) current unemployment status and total (gross) household income. We also combined responses to two "financial pessimism/optimism" questions to create a third "conflict" measure (range of zero to two; higher values indicating greater pessimism):

1. *Would you say that you (and your family) are better off financially, just about the same, or worse off than you were a year ago?*
2. *Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now you (and your family) will be better off financially, just about the same, or worse off than now?*

Answers to three questions (each coded as a binary measure) asking about type and depth of contact with immigrants were used to construct our contact index.

1. *Do you know of any refugees or immigrants living in your city?*
2. *Do you know if they are refugees who were admitted to Canada because of life threatening problems in their country, or immigrants who applied to come to Canada?*
3. *Do you personally know any immigrants or refugees living in your city?*

With a range of zero to three, this index had a high level of inter-item reliability (Alpha = 0.78). We hypothesized that higher values on this index (i.e., knowing more immigrants and refugees, and knowing them well enough to know their status or to have personal contact with them) would lead to more positive attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity.

A single variable was used test education theory. Respondents were asked to indicate their highest completed level of education ("1" = less than high school; "2" = completed high school; "3" = some post-secondary education' "4" = post-secondary diploma or certificate; "5" = university degree).

As Figure 1 indicates, the contact, education, and conflict measures/indices serve as intervening variables in our analytic model. Individual-level survey data were also used to specify five additional exogenous variables. Binary measures were constructed for immigrant status (immigrant = 1), gender (male = 1), and marital status (married / cohabiting = 1). Age was measured in years. A fifth measure, a "city attitude" index (possible range = 5 to 20; Alpha = 0.74), was constructed by summing responses on a five-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree;" 5 = "strongly agree") to four evaluative statements about one's own community:

a. *My city is a good place in which to live.*
b. *My city is a good place in which to raise a family.*
c. *The people in my city are friendly and welcoming.*
d. *My city is very open to newcomers.*

These four items tap into respondents' satisfaction with their community. While it could be argued that those most content might also be most threatened by change (from increasing immigration), we could also predict that, other things being equal, more positive community attitudes would be associated with more openness to change. Hence, while we began our analysis with clear directional hypotheses for contact, conflict, and education theory, our assessment of the impact of community attitudes was more exploratory.

The community-level variables highlighted in Figure 1 were constructed from Census data. The 1996 population size variable needs no explanation. The population growth indicator measures percentage change in community size between 1996 and 2001. The community education level was indexed with percentage of the adult population (15 and older) with a university degree. Recent immigration was measured with 1996 Census data indicating the percentage of resident immigrants who had arrived since 1971. The fifth community-level variable was the 1996 unemployment rate in each city.

Individual-level Findings

Forty percent of the (weighted) sample agreed (scores of "4" or "5" on the five-point scale) that "*people who come to this city should change their ways to be more like other community members*" while 28% agreed that "*I feel that there are too many immigrants coming to my city.*" Sixty-seven percent agreed that "*a mixture of different lifestyles and cultures makes my city a more attractive place to live*" but 24% agreed that "*I worry that the way of life in my city is being threatened by high levels of immigration.*" Thus, overall, about one-quarter to 40% of the study participants expressed concern about immigration issues or, in other words, were not very supportive of cultural diversity. The average score on the four-item index (with a possible range of 4 to 20) created from responses to these four statements was 13.6, indicating a moderate level of support for immigration / cultural diversity.

The media often portray Albertans as having conservative attitudes on social issues, including cultural diversity and immigration. However, when we compare our survey findings with results from a 1994 national public opinion survey that included several similar questions (Peters, 1995), we note that Albertans, or at least urban Albertans, appear to be no less accepting of immigration and cultural diversity than are Canadians in total.[2]

As for community differences within Alberta, it is interesting that residents of Lethbridge (average score = 15.3) and Fort McMurray (average score = 15.1), communities with relatively low proportions of recent (i.e., primarily visible minority) immigrants (see Table l), are the most positive in their responses to immigration / cultural diversity. Conversely, residents of Calgary and Edmonton, larger cities with a high proportion of recent immigrants, are noticeably less positive in their responses (average scores of 13.3 and 13.6, respectively).

Turning to the intervening variables in our model, the average score on the "contact with immigrants" index (possible range of 0 to 3) was 2.5 for the total sample, with relatively little variation across communities. Survey respondents from Calgary and Edmonton were the most educated with 29% and 22% holding university degrees. The unemployment rate within our sample also varied considerably, from zero in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie (i.e., none of the sample members from these two cities were unemployed when interviewed) to around 6% in Edmonton and Red Deer. The percentage of low income respondents (i.e., household incomes under $20,000) also varied noticeably, from 6% in Grande Prairie to 22% in Medicine Hat. Not surprisingly, the

most financial pessimism (a score of 0.44 on the 0-2 scale) was also reported by Medicine Hat respondents. Calgary respondents were least pessimistic (average score of 0.14).

As for the exogenous (survey data) variables in our model, the proportion of immigrant respondents was largest in Edmonton at 31% and Calgary at 28%. In contrast, less than 10% of Red Deer respondents were immigrants. The proportion of married respondents and the average age varied somewhat across communities, but differences were not statistically significant. The most positive community attitudes were reported in Medicine Hat (average score of 17.3) and the least in Edmonton (16.4), but these differences also were not significant.

Determinants of Support for Cultural Diversity

Table 3 contains a correlation matrix highlighting the bivariate relationships among the variables described above. Only a few of the intervening and exogenous variables are strongly (and significantly) related to our "support for cultural diversity" index. Specifically, more educated survey respondents were more supportive of diversity (r = 0.315), and older sample members were less supportive (r = -0.296). In addition, those who reported more contact with newcomers were more positive, but this relationship was not as strong (r = 0.130).

Turning to the aggregate measures, living in a community with a higher proportion of immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1970 is associated with less support for cultural diversity (r = -0.077). But this relationship, although statistically significant, is very weak. We observe a somewhat stronger, but also negative relationship, between support for diversity and community size (r = -0.119). The larger the city, the less support for immigration and cultural diversity. We also note that living in a community with a higher proportion of residents with university degrees is associated with less support for diversity (r = -0.107). This is perhaps the most surprising finding, given that we also found a strong positive relationship between education and support for diversity using individual-level survey data (r = 0.315).

Table 3 also reveals a number of moderate strength relationships among independent variables, including some which are significantly associated with our dependent variable (e.g., education and household income; age and education). This, in addition to the contradictory findings for education (when comparing

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent Variables

	Diversity	Contact	Educ.	Hsehld Income	Unemp.	Financ. Pess.	City Attitude	Age	Married	Immi-grant	Male	Com. Size	Com. Growth	Com. Univ	Com. Immig	Com. Unemp.
Diversity	1.000															
Contact	.130**	1.000														
Education	.315**	.225**	1.000													
Hsehld Income	.046	.162**	.320**	1.000												
Unemployment	.038	.018	-.029	-.136**	1.000											
Financial Pess.	-.055	-.084*	-.090*	-.180**	.104**	1.000										
City Attitude	.055	-.003	-.076*	.112**	.044	-.072*	1.000									
Age	-.296**	-.121**	-.242**	-.084*	-.055	.144**	.154**	1.000								
Married	-.049	-.042	.072*	.386**	-.079*	-.053	.143**	.128**	1.000							
Immigrant	-.024	-.104**	.023	.022	-.023	-.026	.120**	.111**	.098**	1.000						
Male	-.067	.077*	.176**	.199**	-.082*	.050	-.053	-.040	.133**	.043	1.000					
Com. Size	-.119**	.057	.095**	.041	-.045	-.105**	.026	.016	.022	.110**	.003	1.000				
Com. Growth	-.011	.092**	.082*	.213**	-.087*	-.179**	.131**	-.040	.058	-.035	.005	.208**	1.000			
Com. Univ Degree	-.107**	.069	.104**	.053	-.056	-.123**	.042	.004	.019	.101**	.004	.971**	.261**	1.000		
Com. Immigrant	-.077*	.049	.086*	.115**	-.037	-.107**	.008	-.019	.046	.074*	.003	.709**	.445**	.632**	1.000	
Com. Unemp	.021	-.107**	-.093**	-.169**	.101**	.169**	-.140**	.018	-.039	.000	-.006	-.363**	-.738**	-.495**	-.165**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Weighted survey data

individual and aggregate measures), makes it necessary to introduce a multi-variate analysis to test our hypotheses. However, the extremely high correlations among some aggregate measures (e.g., r = 0.971 between community size and percent of adult population with university degrees) highlight the distinct possibility of multicolinearity problems if all the aggregate measures are used simultaneously.

Following the analytic logic diagrammed in Figure 1, our multivariate analysis was conducted in five stages, using multiple regression equations that introduced additional or alternative sets of predictor variables (Table 4). The first equation includes the five independent variables that directly test the three individual-level theoretical perspectives (conflict, contact, and education). The second equation builds upon the first by adding five exogenous individual-level variables (age, marital status, immigrant status, gender, and the community attitude index). The third equation is a "fine-tuning" step that checks to see if the results change significantly when household income is removed from the analysis, thus increasing the sample size by 106 cases. Having determined that the findings do not change substantially, household income is omitted from the fourth and fifth equations that add different sets of community-level predictors.

Equation 1 explains only 7% of the variation in responses to the "support for cultural diversity" index. Only one of the five independent variables has a significant net effect – more educated respondents are more supportive of cultural diversity (beta = 0.266). There is no support for our hypotheses that conflict (operationalized with household income, unemployment, and the financial pessimism index) and contact measures will affect support for cultural diversity. While the conflict measures did not have statistically significant bivariate effects (Table 3), the contact measure did. However, once education is added to the analysis (Equation 2), the "contact" effect shrinks, indicating that it may be a function of education (i.e., more highly educated respondents report more contact with immigrants and refugees.)

Education continues to have a strong positive effect (beta = 0.245) when the additional exogenous variables are added to the analysis (Equation 2). The contact and conflict measures remain statistically non-significant. However, we now observe that older respondents are considerably less supportive of cultural diversity (beta = -0.229), controlling on the other predictor variables. In addition, sample members who evaluated their own community more positively were also more supportive of cultural diversity (beta = 0.133). This is an interesting finding since

Table 4: Diversity by Education, Conflict, Contact and Control Variables.

	Equation #1		Equation #2		Equation #3		Equation #4		Equation #5	
Independent Variable	Beta		Beta		Beta		Beta		Beta	
Contact Index	.066		.047		.029		.037		.037	
Education	.266	**	.245	**	.273	**	.285	**	.286	**
Household Income	-.046		-.058							
Unemployment	.063		.047		.027		.020		.021	
Financial Pessimism	-.028		-.002		-.002		-.018		-.018	
Community Attitude Index			.133	**	.117	**	.124	**	.122	**
Respondent Age			-.229	**	-.223	**	-.220	**	-.219	**
Married			-.028		-.072	*	-.072	*	-.071	*
Immigrant			-.004		-.002		.010		.011	
Male			.008		-.025		.023		.023	
Community University Degrees							-.132	**		
Community Population Growth							-.019		-.024	
Community Size									-.137	**
Adjusted R2	.074		.131		.160		.176		.179	
N	690		685		791		791		791	

Weighted Survey data

we did not observe a statistically significant bivariate effect (Table 3). Additional diagnostic analyses (results not shown) reveal that the "community attitude" effect is suppressed until education, age, and marital status are controlled in the multivariate analysis. With the addition of these statistically significant predictors, the equation now accounts for 13% of the variation in the dependent variable index.

Deletion of the household income variable in Equation 3 increases our subsample size, but has little effect on the pattern of findings. The variables that had significant net effects in Equation 2 (education, age, community attitudes) continue to influence attitudes towards cultural diversity. In addition, the small negative effect of marital status now becomes statistically significant (beta = -0.072) since this variable now includes some of the (weak) effects of income observed in Equation 2 (i.e., married respondents have higher household incomes; see Table 3).

Recognizing that the very high correlations among aggregate measures (see Table 3) would create multicolinearity problems, we engaged in a number of exploratory analyses that added different combinations of these aggregate measures to the multiple regression equation. Essentially, our problem was that the larger cities in our study were also characterized by more educated respondents and more immigrants, while the cities with the highest growth rates also had the lowest unemployment rates. Consequently we could not include all of these aggregate measures in the same equation. Since community size and community growth are the only unique aggregate measures in our set of possible predictors (i.e., unlike unemployment rates, education levels, or immigration rates, these community characteristics cannot be estimated from individual-level survey data), we ultimately chose them for our final analysis (Equation 5).

Before discussing the final equation, we draw attention to the unusual findings in Equation 4 which includes "percent with university degrees" instead of "community size" as an aggregate predictor. The individual-level net effect of education is positive (beta = 0.285) while the aggregate level net effect of education is negative (beta = -0.132). The explanation is really quite simple – the larger the city, the higher the percentage of adult residents with university degrees. Consequently, the aggregate education effect in Equation 4 is really demonstrating the impact of community size. This set of apparently contradictory findings demonstrates the interpretive dilemmas that accompany multi-level analyses of this sort. If we were to conclude from the aggregate education coefficient (beta = -0.132) that more education means less

support for cultural diversity, we would be committing the ecological fallacy. In other words, we would be erroneously concluding that the more educated residents of larger cities are less positive in their attitudes towards immigration. Fortunately, we can also examine individual-level effects to see that, as predicted, the higher the education of survey respondents, the more they support cultural diversity (beta = 0.285).

The final multiple regression equation in Table 6 accounts for 18% of the variation in attitudes towards cultural diversity. It shows that, in addition to the positive individual-level effects of education and community attitudes and the negative effect of age, community size has a significant negative effect (beta = -0. 137) on support for cultural diversity. In other words, controlling on the characteristics of city residents, we find that attitudes towards immigrants and cultural diversity are less welcoming in the larger Alberta cities in our study. Thus, along with the individual-level findings already observed in the earlier equations, we find a robust effect of one community-level predictor. Not surprisingly, given the very high correlation between community size and the percentage of immigrants in the community (Table 5), when we substituted "percentage immigrant" for "community size" in this equation (results not shown), we observed a very similar (but slightly weaker) effect.

Discussion and Conclusions

Canadian communities are becoming increasingly diverse, particularly with respect to ethnicity and culture. An uneven disbursement of immigrants across Canadian communities serves to increase such diversity. In turn, community differences can shape attitudes towards immigrants and cultural diversity. However, most of the previous research has focused on individual-level predictors of such attitudes. In this paper, we have broadened the analytic scope to include both individual and community-level predictors in our multivariate analysis of the determinants of support for cultural diversity.

The relevant theoretical literature suggested that contact between long-term residents and newcomers (contact theory), the potential for long-term residents to feel threatened economically by newcomers (conflict theory), and higher education (education theory) might all influence attitudes towards cultural diversity. However, our analysis revealed support only for education theory at the individual level of analysis. Controlling on all other relevant variables,

more educated sample members were more supportive of cultural diversity, but the individual-level contact and conflict measures had non-significant effects.

At the core of *education theory* lies the assumption that at least some of the curriculum-based learning that takes place within post-secondary institutions changes the attitudes of post-secondary participants. However, previous research has shown that there may be some self-selection of individuals with more positive attitudes into the post-secondary system (Sorenson and Krahn 1996). Furthermore, it is also likely that increased contact with individuals from a wider range of ethnic and cultural groups takes place during the post-secondary experience. In addition, there may be a "political correctness" effect involved (i.e., more educated individuals may be less willing to admit to negative attitudes). Thus, there is clearly need for more research on the "education" effect, both to determine what underlies it as well as to find ways of increasing the positive impact of education on support for immigration and cultural diversity.

As for *contact theory*, it is widely assumed that contact between long-term residents and newcomers plays a positive role in shaping attitudes towards immigrants and cultural diversity. However, questions pertaining to contact are seldom included in public opinion surveys and, if they are, the findings reported typically do not take account of the shared effects of education and contact. Our study fails to find a significant individual-level effect of contact on attitudes towards cultural diversity, controlling on other variables (particularly education). It may be, of course, that our measure of contact is too crude, since it has been argued that contact can have both positive and negative impacts on attitudes towards cultural diversity, depending on the type of contact and the conditions under which it takes place (Amir 1969). Consequently, future research needs to identify and then test the effects of such contingencies (Fetzer, 2000).

Responses to open-ended questions in our survey suggest that negative attitudes towards immigrants and cultural diversity are often shaped less by contact than by hearsay and through the media. For example, the well-publicized 1996 challenge to RCMP dress-codes by a Sikh officer seeking permission to wear a turban on the job was mentioned by several of our respondents. One individual commented that: *I feel they should adapt to our laws and rules rather than change ours to theirs. What really irritates me is the Mounties changed their rules about the hats and the turbans. As far as I'm concerned they should just stay home if they're not willing to change.* Opinions were often grounded in misinformation, sometimes a lot of misinformation, as in this

respondent's belief that: "*Policy should be tightened up, we're becoming overpopulated. Also the crime rate is going up and I think that is due to the amount of immigrants that we're letting in. They are more inclined to commit killing crimes because of the way they live.*" Another sample member opined that: *"I am fed up with them coming into the country and taking our jobs. They also do not have to pay their student loans."*

Those respondents who identified a specific ethnic group as the target for their comments focused exclusively on Asians and, more specifically, East Indians. Again, their comments generally appeared to be based on hearsay or on media reports rather than direct experience, as in this opinion: "*The East Indians do not get stopped for not driving with seat belts in B.C.*" Another study participant observed that: *"If they want to live here they can abide by our laws and our cultures. I don't think it's right that some people like the Pakistanis have taken over some businesses like the taxis at the airport. I am a little prejudiced against these people.*

Even so, as our statistical analysis demonstrated, the majority of the respondents in our survey were quite positive about immigrants and cultural diversity. One sample member commented that: *"I think Canada is made up of refugees and immigrants and they make Canada what it is today. Without them, we'd probably be gobbled up by the U.S. They've kept their own cultures and also integrated well with society in general."* A number of study participants drew attention to immigrants' strong work ethic, including the individual who observed that: *"I find most of the immigrants that I have known are very willing to work and bend over backwards to please their employers. They have incredible good work ethics. They are very agreeable people."*

Returning to our individual-level analysis, we failed to find evidence supporting *conflict theory* predictions. But even though sample members in more precarious financial / employment circumstances were <u>not</u> significantly more likely to oppose immigration / cultural diversity, a review of responses to our open-ended questions revealed some concerns about immigrants as competitors in the labour market. For example, one individual argued that: "*I do not think that they should let them in. Too many are coming and are taking the jobs away from us.*" Another commented that: *"I feel that immigration laws should be linked to the unemployment levels. When the unemployment rate is high, the rate of immigration should be lowered."*

Nevertheless, most survey participants responded positively to our questions about immigration. Some commented on Canada's need for immigrants: "*I think Canada should*

extend the limits for the amount of people allowed into the country. We're getting older and we don't have enough population to look after the older population. There will be more people collecting pension than contributing." Another said that: *"Generally we have to keep letting refugees and immigrants in, so we can grow. And immigrants create jobs, they don't take away jobs."*

Our analysis also revealed that older respondents had significantly less positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. Since we were statistically controlling on education, contact, and the conflict measures, we may be seeing a generational effect, with older respondents reacting negatively towards more culturally diverse newcomers on the basis of attitudes shaped much earlier in their lives. Alternatively, it is possible that as people get older they become less accepting of "outsiders," particularly if the newcomers are "different" in terms of race and ethnicity. While the "age effect" was not part of our initial theoretical discussion, there is clearly room for more research on the underlying meaning of this statistical relationship.

The final statistically significant individual-level effect observed in our multivariate analysis was that of community attitudes. Specifically, those who evaluated their own community more positively were more supportive of cultural diversity, other things being equal. While we cannot uncover the underlying factors involved, we can speculate about this interesting finding and recommend further research. Perhaps this finding reflects an underlying personality orientation. Or, perhaps the relationship between positive community attitudes and support for immigration and cultural diversity reflects a sense of security within the community that, in turn, translates into a less xenophobic response to newcomers.

We observed only one statistically significant community-level effect. Controlling on all relevant individual-level variables, we found that residents of Alberta's larger cities are less supportive of immigration / cultural diversity. Despite the higher education levels, on average, of big city residents, and despite the greater opportunity for contact with diverse ethnic and cultural groups in larger cities, there is more concern expressed about immigration in these larger centres.

There are two possible explanations for this finding. The first focuses on smaller cities in our sample. We noted earlier that the most supportive attitudes were observed in Fort McMurray and Lethbridge. It may be that these smaller Alberta cities are unique, exceptions to the pattern whereby more positive attitudes are found in larger cities. Fort McMurray has grown rapidly over the past three decades with the development of

the local oil sands industry. Consequently, virtually all of the city residents come from elsewhere in Canada or from other countries. A local joke based on the large number of internal migrants from Newfoundland observes that Fort McMurray is the second largest Newfoundland city in Canada. In a city of newcomers, perhaps it is easier to be supportive of cultural diversity and immigration. But this explanation would not account for the relatively positive attitudes of Lethbridge residents. This city has not been growing rapidly, and does not contain large proportions of internal and external migrants.

A second explanation focuses on the largest urban centres – Edmonton and Calgary – and relies on the arguments of strain theory that we briefly introduced earlier in this paper. These larger cities contain much higher proportions of immigrants (see Table 1), many of whom have arrived quite recently from non-traditional source countries. But the higher proportion of immigrants does not necessarily translate into more direct contact. In fact, more frequent arms-length exposure, along with misinformation about immigrants and media preoccupation with provocative but not necessarily typical immigration stories, could lead to less supportive attitudes towards cultural diversity. Residents of larger, more ethnically diverse cities could come to feel that *"things are just changing too quickly around here."* Our findings suggest that this might be the case.

This conclusion is at odds with earlier findings that attitudes towards immigration were more positive in Canada's largest cities, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Palmer, 1991). However, over a decade ago, Angus Reid (1990) reported focus group findings showing residents of the same three cities expressing concern about too many immigrants settling in their communities rather than in other parts of Canada. In the years since that study was completed, many more visible minority immigrants have settled in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, as well as in some of Canada's other large cities, and anxiety about immigration may well have increased in these centres. However, further nation-wide research including both individual- and community-level predictors is needed to test our hypothesis that the once positive relationship between city size and support for cultural diversity and immigration has reversed direction.

Policy Implications

Immigration will continue to be important for Canada as declining birth rates and an aging population lead to increased demands for skilled workers. Canadian cultural

diversity will consequently continue to increase. If immigrants are to successfully settle and integrate into their new Canadian communities, initiatives to foster acceptance, understanding, and assistance are imperative. Based on the individual- and community-level findings from this study, we can see opportunities to foster positive attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity. The positive effects of both education and the community attitude index suggest that engaging the citizenry via community-based public education could strengthen a sense of community and, in turn, foster acceptance of newcomers. Further informing and educating Canadians about how immigration benefits Canada could also generate increased support for diversity. For example, prior to and during the 1999 influx of Kosovar refugees, Canadian politicians publicly asked Canadians to accept and assist these newcomers. Media coverage of this effort (*Operation Parasol*) was both positive and extensive, and led to high public awareness and support (Abu-Laban et al, 2001).

When promoting specific Canadian communities to immigrants, or when choosing destinations for government-sponsored refugees, Citizenship and Immigration should take community characteristics into account. In addition to the availability of housing, services, and employment, community size and the rate of population growth should also be considered. Settling large numbers of immigrants in centres already experiencing rapid population growth and highly competitive labour and housing markets might foster negative attitudes towards newcomers and the policies that allowed them to immigrate to Canada. Initiatives that inform newcomers about communities with a more stable population base where their particular skill-sets might be in greater demand could encourage settlement in (and internal migration to) a wider range of Canadian communities (Krahn et al., 2003). Even so, such initiatives would still have to determine whether an adequate range of services for newcomers was available since, in their absence, successful resettlement would be less likely.

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Footnotes

[1] Interviews were conducted by trained and supervised interviewers using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system to call randomly selected telephone numbers.

[2] For example, the 1994 EKOS survey included the identically-worded statement: *"A mixture of different lifestyles and cultures makes my city a more attractive place to live."* but employed a seven-point rather than a five-point scale (Peters, 1995: 137). When we standardize the findings to make them directly comparable, we find virtually the same level of agreement in the two studies (Abu-Laban et al., 1999: 87).

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