

EVOLVING REALITIES
AND EMERGING CHALLENGES IN
A POSTNATIONAL WORLD

immigration
canada

AUGIE FLERAS



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PREFACE

CANADIANS AND AMERICANS have historically associated immigration and immigrants with powerful images. On the American side are glowing references to the “tired,” the “poor,” “the wretched” and “huddled masses yearning to breathe free” – the paean from Emma Lazarus’s poem “The New Colossus,” which is affixed to the pedestal supporting the Statue of Liberty. Never mind that historians now dispute whether those who disembarked on Ellis Island were either tired or poor. Most were of working age, healthy enough to survive the trans-Atlantic crossing, full of energy and optimism, and sufficiently solvent to pay for their passage (Gabaccia 2006). The “huddled masses” myth also glosses over the exclusion of the unwanted – such as racialized minorities, homosexuals, the poor, slum dwellers, individuals with physical and mental disabilities, political dissidents, and criminals (Johnson 2003).

On the Canadian side of the border is another myth-making machine. References to Pier 21 in Halifax – the “Gateway to Canada” – portray Canada as a welcoming land of immigrants. Just as New York’s Ellis Island served as a portal for immigrants from 1892 to 1954, Pier 21 was a primary entry point from 1928 to 1971 for over one million immigrants, refugees, and displaced persons (including myself and my family). It also doubled as a departure point for nearly 500,000 military personnel during the Second World War. But like that of Ellis Island, the symbolism of Pier 21 conceals as much as it reveals. The huddled masses imagery commemorates the pluck of newcomers who fled war-ravaged Europe in hopes of striking it rich. The fact that the huddled

masses concept largely excluded racialized minorities speaks volumes. A pattern of selectivity, comparable to that of the United States, prevailed here and was consistent with a long-standing brand of Canada as a white man's country.

Implicit within the huddled masses myths are a number of popular and persistent (mis)perceptions (Gogia and Slade 2011). First, many assumed that the huddled masses were anxious to abandon their home countries for the opportunities and freedoms of their destination. Immigrants uncomplainingly endured "minor" inconveniences such as petty prejudice and overt discrimination, and rarely flinched from menial labour in forestry, farming, and mining, if only to bolster their prospects of acceptance and success. Second, it was tacitly assumed that they would abandon their ancestral roots in transitioning from "there" to "here." Dual loyalties were suspect; accordingly, newcomers were obliged to demonstrate their exclusive commitment to Canada. Third, expectations of achievement were unquestioned. The huddled masses may have been tired and poor, but the land of opportunity beckoned with promises of abundance for those who were willing to work hard, play by the rules, and unconditionally embrace Canada. A litmus test of rags-to-riches stories underscored the heroics of risk taking.

However compelling these perceptions, reality at present is decidedly different (Sears 2008). Instead of a huddled masses motif, Canada more accurately displays a bimodal pattern of immigration (Johnson 2003). Highly skilled and sought-after designer immigrants who are selected for potential success and permanent residence are offset by the less fortunate (from refugees to unskilled temporary foreign workers) who occupy the bottom of the priority list because of their "provisional" status, "peripheral" skills, and "precarious" prospects (Fleras 2010; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2007; Jason Foster 2012). Patterns and flows are no less disjointed. Orthodox notions about immigrants and integration are unravelling in a world where people can take advantage of instantaneous communication, relatively cheap international travel, and sophisticated smuggling rings (Guy Arnold 2011). A transnational orientation has emerged that challenges models of international migration as a linearity of fixed points between finalized locations, with migrants as people who permanently abandon their homeland for life-long residence in another country (Crush et al. 2013). Emerging instead is a model of immigration as processes and discourses involving many actors, at different levels, and across numerous

domains (Simmons 2010). Immigrants themselves are eschewing a fixed and straight line trajectory from “there” to “here” for one that zig-zags back and forth. Their integration no longer reflects the inevitability of a passive absorption into Canada. The marvels of technology and communication enable them to reaffirm their homeland linkages and cultural connections, in the process bending the rules of belonging and identity along transnational and diasporic lines. Clearly, then, contemporary migration neither matches the huddled masses myth nor reflects conventional models of immigration and immigrants. Not surprisingly, both government policy and public perceptions are conflicted and confused by the demands of this changing reality.

The globalization of trade, capital, and talent has also transformed the concept of immigration governance as related to settlement, integration, and citizenship. Transnational flows of goods, investments, and people have increasingly routinized mobility, resulting in migration patterns that intersect and overlap in multiple and sometimes conflicting ways (Nieswand 2011). Even notions of society and statehood are under attack by the border-bending forces of global migration. Nation-states are increasingly experiencing a disruptive shift in their relationship to immigration and immigrants. Their once-uncontested status as a place of physical sovereignty and controlled borders is increasingly yielding ground to societies as a network of postnational nodes of multiple attachments and hybridic identities (Simmons 2010; Freeland 2011). This raises a profoundly unsettling question for society building: In a globalizing world of transmigration and diasporas, does it still make sense to talk about immigration and immigrants within the framework of place-based governance models, from citizenship to multiculturalism, especially when migrant notions of identity and belonging are no longer territorially anchored in national space (Carruthers 2013)? In a so-called borderless world of migrant mobility, how do we explain the proliferation of security walls and the militarization of border controls (Brown 2014; Hansen and Papademetriou 2014)? What is a societal governance to do when immigrants are no longer boxed into a fixed trajectory from starting point to final destination? What is society for when more flexible arrangements encourage immigrants to remain emotionally connected to their homeland? Who benefits when people are neither really here nor there but, more accurately, citizens of everywhere yet nowhere? Confusion and uncertainty of such magnitude have proven unsettling: Governments and national policies are

put in the awkward position of struggling to understand and contain what is largely beyond their control and comprehension (Freeland 2011).

The politics of immigration remains the issue that rarely speaks its name for fear of unsettling national myths or angering the immigration lobby (from lawyers and consultants to special interest groups) (Francis 2009; Gibson 2009). The range of acceptable discourse on immigration is remarkably narrow; for example, when the environmental activist David Suzuki suggested in a Paris-based publication that Canada was “full” and that its immigration policy was “disgusting,” the immigration minister Jason Kenney criticized his comments as “anti-immigration,” “xenophobic,” and “toxic and irresponsible” (Abma 2013; McCullough 2013). But, however valid or invalid Suzuki’s critique, there is a price to pay for any crippling silence that ensues. Immigration may be one of Canada’s most complicated challenges in reshaping its political and socio-economic landscapes (Geislerova 2007). Nevertheless, public debate on the subject is surprisingly muted. For the most part, Canadians see it as a low-priority item, unlike health or the economy, which have a more immediate impact on their lives. They might be reluctant to broach the topic for fear of exposing their ignorance. Or perhaps they are muzzled by political correctness, the anxiety of being condemned as racist for speaking out on inconvenient truths that masquerade as polite fictions.

Insofar as it exists, the immigration debate focuses on four core issues: (a) *how many* (is the current annual total of about 250,000 newcomers appropriate?); (b) *which kind* (what is the right balance of admissions based on family, economic, or humanitarian class?); (c) *where from* (about 80 percent of immigrants come from non-English-, non-French-speaking sources); and (d) *what for* (on what grounds should immigration be justified?). Doing what is rational, realistic, and right strikes at the heart of these debates (Glennie et al. 2014). Policy makers confront a series of complex migration management imperatives – from attracting the highly skilled to securing borders while separating out unauthorized migrants from those in need of humanitarian protection (Collett 2013). Sorting through these issues boils down to politics and difficult tradeoffs among different priorities and diverse agendas, including national interests and public opinion (Boyd 2013; Mulley 2013). Paradoxically, debates over immigration and asylum are not only about legal status, tradeoffs, or economic impacts but also about membership in a community of value and values (Bridget Anderson 2013).

A number of topical questions must be addressed, preferably as part of a national debate on Canada's immigration policy and program (Siddiqui 2013a; also Rodríguez-García 2010). Is the current immigration model working? Is it the best one for Canada and Canadians? Should the immigration program reflect Canadian values or advance national (and vested) interests (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010)? Does Canada's immigration model need to be revamped in light of twenty-first-century realities? Or can it be put back on track with a bit of tweaking or a dash of additional resources? If immigration is about society building, where do temporary foreign workers fit into the picture? How relevant is Canada's multiculturalism as immigrant governance in a transmigratory world (Mawani 2008; Jedwab 2014)? To what extent does a globalizing world unsettle references to immigration as Canada building (Fleras 2011a)? Should citizenship be based on a one-size-fits-all model? Or should it be customized (differentiated) to render citizenship more palatable for all migrants regardless of status (Bauder 2011)? Answers to these questions are tricky and elusive. Yet they must be actively courted, as they are in this book, if Canada is to retain its lofty position as an immigration society.

Even more perplexing is a seeming reluctance to grapple with the crisis in Canada's refugee determination process (Showler 2006). The numbers are certainly impressive enough. An annual entry of between thirty and forty thousand asylum seekers as refugee claimants was not uncommon, though the totals dropped to about ten thousand in 2013, in addition to some twelve thousand refugees who are sponsored annually by private and government interests. Such numbers provoke a backlash. Critics of the system assert that anyone who makes it to Canada can claim refugee status, no matter how flimsy the claim or how safe their country of origin. How else to explain the following anomaly? Neither the United States nor Canada has required visas for Hungarian tourists, yet only 32 Hungarians applied for refugee status in the United States during 2010, whereas Canada processed 3,200 applicants in 2011, or 14 percent of its overall total (Selley 2011, 2013). Clearly, Canadians should be primed to debate the hot-button topics of (a) who is a refugee, (b) how we find out, (c) whether the current system works, (d) whether it's fair, and (e) what the alternatives are for processing persons who need protection. But a massive indifference dominates instead. Apart from think-tanks such as the Fraser Institute and refugee lobby groups such as the Canadian Council for Refugees,

the silences are deafening. Much of what passes for public input into Canada's immigration agenda consists of a small coterie of drivers: (a) immigrants and their relatives and friends in Canada, (b) the so-called immigration industry, consisting of the lawyers and consultants whose livelihood depends on immigrants, and (c) business sectors in search of relatively cheap and disposable labour (Gibson 2009, 219). Yet the "silences within" cannot persist for much longer, because of the following glitches: (a) the substantial backlog of refugees/asylum seekers, about forty thousand in early 2012, a drop from sixty thousand in mid-2009 (CIC 2012b; Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs 2013), (b) a spate of seemingly frivolous claims that clog the pipeline for "bona fide" refugees, (c) a reluctance to deport failed claimants that hardly inspires confidence in enforcement, and (d) an understaffed Immigration and Refugee Board, whose sometimes risible rulings prompt incredulity or contempt (Rehaag 2009). Even recent government moves to tighten up the refugee system without much public input into rationale and objectives have drawn criticism for heavy-handedness (Siddiqui 2013b; Beiser and Bauder 2014).

The paradox is inescapable: Immigrants and immigration are embraced as a positive solution to the challenges of Canada building (Clarkson 2011; Collier 2013). They helped to create Canada, continue to contribute today in growing the economy, and will undoubtedly do so in the future. However, according to Grubel and Grady (2012) and others (Canadian Centre for Immigration Policy Reform 2010), immigration and immigrants impose a profoundly negative political, economic, social, and cultural impact on Canada. Seemingly unbridgeable stances over migration are known to generate fissions and exacerbate fissures that are at odds with national unity and social cohesion (Markus and Semyonov 2011). Of particular relevance is the governance challenge of securing a cohesive and inclusive Canada at a time when migrants increasingly embrace the transnational loyalties that transcend national/local boundaries (also Castles, Hugo, and Vasta 2013; Carruthers 2013 for Australian context). However critical the need for discussion and debate, politicians have historically shied away from immigration issues because of the complexities involved, the emotional nature of the issues, breaches to those "comforting fictions" that paper over awkward truths, and fear of political fallout from being smeared as anti-immigration (Gibson 2009).

The exception to the political mute button is former immigration minister Jason Kenney. In a relatively short time, the minister (also known as the “Minister of Curry in a Hurry” for aggressively courting the ethnic vote) streamlined Canada’s immigration program along neo-liberal lines, consistent with labour market realities (Editorial, *Globe and Mail* 2012). He introduced a range of often controversial initiatives for firming up the immigration program, which toughened laws on human smuggling; reduced interim health services for failed refugee applicants and safe country rejections; curbed applications from parents and grandparents to reunite permanently with their children; reduced a backlog of immigrants who were already in the pipeline; shifted admission to needed skills while imposing a moratorium on skilled worker applicants who lacked arranged employment; expanded the number of temporary foreign workers to about 340,000 by the end of 2012; cracked down on “crooked” immigrant consultants; facilitated the eviction of non-citizen foreign criminals while restricting appeals access for those who offended in Canada; tightened language requirements; redesigned admission to focus on individuals with needed skills; and revamped the citizenship path to better reflect selective aspects of Canadian history and mainstream values (McPartland 2012). These reforms may be impressive and overdue, but criticism invariably accompanied changes that were related to content (the emphasis on short-term labour market needs, a dearth of evidence-based policies, a less welcoming environment for newcomers) and process (the increase in ministerial powers and the use of omnibus legislation to ram home programs [Alboim and Cohl 2012; Yalnizyan 2012]). Ratna Omidvar (2012a, A17), president of the Maytree Foundation, explains how changes to the immigration program may be reshaping Canada’s social landscape, albeit in often unintended ways:

The changes are coming at a furious pace on an almost daily basis. By seeking to eliminate the backlog by expunging those waiting in the queue, we choose efficiency over fairness. By moving to “super visas” and away from permanent residence for our immigrants’ parents and grandparents, we choose transience over inclusion. When employers select workers who will become future citizens with little guidance, we choose head-hunting

over nation-building. When we raise the bar on language, we choose homogeneity over diversity. By streamlining the refugee adjudication process, we may be choosing efficiency over human rights. Finally, when we say to employers, “Pay temporary foreign workers less than you might pay Canadians,” we choose exploitation over fairness.

Reaction in the midst of this upheaval is mixed. For some, Canada’s immigration program is out of control and requires a wholesale overhaul (Sears 2008); for others, it’s under control, albeit in need of additional fine-tuning; and for still others, a degree of trepidation prevails not only in sorting out the positives (benefits) from the negatives (costs), but also in figuring out what’s going on. Questions revolve around the nature of Canada as a society of immigrants, its national identity and terms of belonging, and who should be accepted or not (see also Spoonley and Bedford 2012). Consequences and effects are no less politically slanted (Goldin, Cameron, and Balarajan 2011). They range in scope from concerns about national security and terrorist profiling to domestic issues over education and health care. Then there are those who suggest that the system’s apparent dysfunction is actually a massive government ruse to justify reforming immigration along neoliberal lines (Broadbent 2012). To the extent that dialogue exists, its cacophony is generating more heat than light. Debates over immigration invariably elicit intense and irrational emotions when they (a) challenge conventional notions of state sovereignty, (b) entail complex decisions and tradeoffs, (c) impose unacceptable costs or inconvenience on society members, and (d) expose hypocrisies of governance or commitment (Papademetriou 2003; Harell and Stolle 2010).

This “conspiracy of silence” (Gibson 2009, 213) may strike many as counterintuitive. Sociologically speaking, Canada is one of the few countries whose normative status as an “immigration” society puts it in select company (alongside New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and several others). Unlike countries that are largely ad hoc destinations for asylum seekers or guest workers, Canada has a managed migration model that is constructed along principled lines, geared toward acceptance of immigrants, enriched by their contribution, and defined by their presence (Boyd and Alboim 2012). As a prototype of a normative immigration society (as well as a society of immigrants, used in the descriptive sense), Canada incorporates immigration as

central to its national imaginary. It also has a proactive framework in place to (a) regulate the intake of immigrants, (b) assist their settlement and integration, (c) ensure that they have the same rights as all Canadians, including an expectation of permanent residence and citizenship, and (d) acknowledge their status as Canada-building assets (also Reitz 2012b). Not surprisingly, with a total immigrant intake of nearly 5 million between 1990 and 2010, Canada's annual immigration rate on a per capita basis ranks among the world's highest (Grubel 2009). Nor should anyone be surprised to learn that, with nearly 21 percent of its population as foreign-born, Canada is second only to Australia in the proportion of immigrants to the population (CIC 2013b).

It is within a context of concern and criticism, of progress and stalemate, of conviction and confusion, that this book addresses the politics of rethinking immigration and reframing immigrants through the prism of evolving realities, emerging challenges, and shifting discourses. Mindful of the politics at play over current patterns, contemporary debates, and future trends, *Immigration Canada* provides readers with insights into the rationale and logic behind these transformational challenges and contested changes. The book describes, analyzes, and reassesses immigration in a Canada that is rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, more uncertain, and globally connected. Widely circulating misconceptions about immigration and immigrants are debunked by (a) analyzing debates from multiple perspectives, (b) using playful inversions to expose shibboleths that conceal more than they reveal, (c) problematizing all "comforting fictions" as grounds for critically informed reflections rather than definitive conclusions, and (d) acknowledging the evolving and contested nature of debates over immigration and immigrants. In particular, it addresses how the interplay of transmigration and transnationalism is transforming immigration from a thing (noun) to a process (verb). Finally, though the book generally focuses on Canada, it also contextualizes immigration within the broader framework of global capitalism in (re)aligning flexible labour with surplus capital along neoliberal lines (Wood 2009; Simmons 2010; Bauder 2011).

This endeavour cannot come too soon. Pressure is mounting to rethink both immigration and immigrants (Satzewich and Wong 2006; Geislerova 2007; Karim 2007; Mawani 2008; Simmons 2010). As Goldin, Cameron, and Balarajan (2011, 1) point out in *Exceptional*

People, “We live in a dynamic age of global integration, where the reconnection and mixture of the world’s people is challenging dominant norms and practices in many countries. Disintegration and integration are simultaneous and interwoven. Cultural codes adapt. New economies emerge. Innovation prospers. Social institutions struggle to adapt.” To take advantage of this “exceptionality,” Canada’s immigration policies and priorities are undergoing unprecedented levels of adjustment and reform. The scope of announcements and press releases from the Office of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has proven dizzying for anyone who wishes to make sense of what is going on, and why. The number and range of changes, both real and proposed, make it doubly important to launch a robust debate into the role of immigration and immigrants in crafting the kind of Canada we want (Alboim 2009; Campana 2012). It’s my hope that reframing the topic of immigration and immigrants against the backdrop of evolving realities, emergent challenges, and shifting discourses will stimulate informed insights, both critical and constructive as well as aspirational and inspirational.

PART 1

reappraising
migration



TO SAY THAT we live in provocative and perplexing times is (to steal a phrase) an understatement of colossal proportions. Nowhere is this more succinctly expressed than by the politics of immigration in Canada and abroad. References to immigration and immigrants no longer mean what they once did. Whether managed or unregulated, immigration rarely conforms to conventional models, historical trends, or contemporary expectations. It frequently entails a series of moves within and across borders, with far-reaching consequences for sending and receiving countries (Spoonley and Bedford 2012). Immigrants themselves differ in terms of how, why, where, and when. Their reasons for leaving, returning, or circulating have yet to be fully fathomed, although presumably they range from the social to the personal. Not surprisingly, the concepts, theories, and assumptions informing the study of immigration and immigrants have struggled mightily to cope with these facts.

Part 1 of this book reappraises both theoretical and substantive issues related to immigration and immigrants. The first chapter maps out the conceptual terrain by introducing the debates and controversies regarding the topic in Canada and abroad. Immigrants and immigration unsettle conventional notions of unity, identity, and community (Lawlor 2012). They also pose a progressive dilemma (Banting 2010), a tension between respecting differences while integrating minorities as equals, without foreclosing a commitment to the collective and the shared. Chapter 1 unravels core questions with respect to what is going on, how, why, and with what consequences. How are migrants changing the world? Conversely, how are global changes transforming both migrants and migration patterns (Jacobs 2010)? In light of contemporary politics and contested dynamics, how appropriate is Canada's immigration model? What ambiguities inform its immigration program, public attitudes toward immigrants, and immigrant experiences? Responses to these questions are framed around three major themes – topics, perspectives, and discourses – that secure both a distinctive content and an organizational framework.

Chapter 2 reconceptualizes global migration. It acknowledges that the obvious is not always self-evident; as a result, explanatory frameworks are proposed that problematize the movement of people across borders. The chapter begins with an overview of international migration, defines the key terms of reference, briefly surveys theoretical frameworks to explain how and why people migrate, and concludes by acknowledging the value of both neo-push-pull models and global/transnational models of global migration. It also demonstrates how shifting explanatory frameworks reflect changes in analyzing immigrants and immigration. Of particular note are those discursive frames in rethinking immigration, not as a fixed field of location (a thing), but as a networked and vigorous dynamic of multiple flows and cross-border linkages (a process) across the broader contexts of time and space (Simmons 2010).



1

twenty-first-century migration

CANADA IN THE NEW GLOBAL REALITY

THE POLITICS OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION

DESPITE THE PERVASIVENESS of obstacles, costs, and danger, migration is a recurrent component of the human condition (Segal, Mayadas, and Elliott 2006; Castles and Miller 2009; Scheffer 2010). With nearly 215 million people living outside their birthplace, humans appear to be a species on the move in a constant quest to improve lives and life-chances or to escape confining environments, natural disasters, and social turbulence. In the language of conventional push-pull theories, people are “pushed out” from their homeland because of political oppression, ethnic conflicts, demographic pressure, environmental depoliation, and economic stagnation. They are also “pulled into” another country to take advantage of opportunities, freedom, security, and excitement. Some migrate voluntarily in search of fulfillment or challenges; others are compelled to leave because of circumstances beyond their control; and still others go because they can. Lastly, migrants may select a final destination for the long haul, or they may circulate frequently to capitalize on opportunities farther afield.

Admittedly, a different spin is possible. The 215 million individuals who reside outside their homeland account for a minuscule portion of the world’s 7 billion people. That over 97 percent of the world’s inhabitants remain in their country of birth points to humans as a

relatively sedentary lot. Understandably so, since cross-border movements often entail a high level of risk; possession of ample resources, connections, and motivation; and the appropriate qualifications for entry into a new country (Simmons 2010). Whatever the reasons for migration, the movement of people is neither an anomaly to curb nor a problem to control. It represents a normal and routine process because of broader social transformations related to this globalizing era (Pécoud and de Guchteneire 2005; Castles and Miller 2009). The failure of countries to make the most of this potential benefit or to dampen its more costly disruptions is not without consequences (Bitran and Tan 2013). A disservice is done in not rethinking immigration and reframing immigrants at a time of evolving realities, emergent challenges, and shifting discourses. Benefits are also squandered by mishandling the interests of both newcomers and sending/receiving countries.

Virtually every developed country has experienced a dramatic increase in immigration, albeit with numerous ups and downs (Castles and Miller 2009; Segal, Elliott, and Mayadas 2009; OECD 2013, 2014). Popular catchment countries such as Canada and Australia have long endorsed immigration as principle and practice (Jacobs 2010). The collective inclination of immigration societies is geared toward integrating and transforming newcomers into productive citizens (Reitz 2011a), even if the numbers of people who cross borders with or without documentation can prove aggravating at times (Martiniello and Rath 2010). For Europe, the challenge is much different (Lawlor 2012; Triadafilopoulos 2012). European nation-states were rarely defined as immigration countries (Fleras 2009a). They saw themselves as predominantly “complete civilizations” whose primary business as emigrant countries lay in exporting people. Yes, migrants (most of whom consisted of guest workers) could be economically useful. Yet they were never seen as an integral component of national identity or as major contributors to society building. More often than not, they were associated with social problems and security risks, ranging from crime and terrorism to public health issues. Relations between the foreign- and native-born were grounded in tension, mistrust, and fears of invasion by cohorts of the poor or uncultivated. Not surprisingly, as Martiniello and Rath (2010) note, the politics of immigration generated passionate debates and polarizing controversies

in both the public domain (including the media) and the political sector. Concern over the porosity of borders because of globalization and the politics of securitizing society in the post-9/11 era have also exerted pressure for staunching the flow of irregular migrants (van Munster 2010).

The paradoxes, patterns, and politics of immigration are no strangers to Canada. Immigrants have long proven pivotal in building the country, even if Canadians are sometimes indifferent to this accomplishment (Li 2003; Knowles 2007; Kelley and Trebilcock 2011). On the whole, Canada has become a more vibrant society because of immigrants (Ibbitson 2005; Michael Adams 2007; Bitran and Tan 2013). Patterns of immigration to Canada corresponded with the changing requirements of its economy. A pre-First World War concentration on agricultural development and domestication of the West gradually segued into a post-Second World War demand for unskilled labour to extract resources or stimulate industrial growth. More recently, emphasis has shifted toward a reliance on highly skilled immigrants as part of a master plan in transitioning toward a global/knowledge economy (Reitz 2003; Simmons 2010). Furthermore, immigrants continue to drive the Canada-building process (Hiebert and Ley 2003). They provide a possible solution to the problems of (a) an ageing population, (b) shrinking birth rate, (c) diminishing tax base, and (d) the skills shortage in an information-based economy. No less critical is their contribution in re-energizing Canada's economy, thanks to consumer spending habits, optimistic outlook, entrepreneurial spirit, and international connections. In short, a fundamental inversion is at play: intense competition for the brightest and the best creates a new global migration reality, one in which Canada needs immigrants more than they need Canada.

Canadians for the most part have embraced immigration with the kind of civility and open-mindedness that many envy or expect (Michael Adams 2007). Countries from the Netherlands to Australia may have rethought their commitment to immigration in light of post-9/11 security concerns, but Canada retains historically high levels of support for immigration without any sign of an anti-immigrant backlash at political or grassroots levels (Hiebert 2006). According to a major study/survey by Transatlantic Trends (2010), it continues to punch above its weight, having accepted more immigrants in proportion to its population size than any other country during the past 20 years.

For example, Canada admitted nearly 281,000 newcomers in 2010, its highest total in 57 years, at a time when most countries were cutting admission rates.

Canada's pioneering efforts are internationally applauded. Its point system for rationalizing newcomer entry along more open and transparent lines is emulated by countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. Relatively straightforward access to citizenship status has culminated in high naturalization rates, resulting in more spirited levels of newcomer participation in political and social life (Bloemraad 2006). A raft of government-funded services and benefits facilitates active integration and settlement of immigrants into an accommodating host population. Newcomer satisfaction with general settlement services puts Canada at the forefront of countries in successfully integrating newcomers (UNDP 2009; OCASI 2012; Vineberg 2012). Compared to many Europeans and Americans, Canadians appear favourably disposed toward immigrants as a resource and benefit instead of a problem or cost (Transatlantic Trends 2010). National attitudes remain positive because of a proactive immigration program that is both publicly supported and widely (if sometimes begrudgingly) admired. Predictably, perhaps, no political party dares to challenge the status or legitimacy of Canada's immigration program for fear of self-detonating an electoral backlash.

Still, this cheerful picture has a darker side. Canada may be a land of immigrants, yet Canadians remain sharply conflicted over the pros and cons of immigration. Support for immigration comes with strings attached; for example, diversity is seen as good, but newcomers are expected to integrate through immersion in mainstream values (Environics Research Group 2011). Canada's immigration policy is criticized as out of control and out of step, with a corresponding negative impact on society (Bissett 2008). Those on the political right complain that too many of the wrong kind are being admitted (Grubel 2009, 2013); those on the left protest that not enough of the right kind are accepted; and those in the middle may be confused over who or how much or what kind. Particularly vitriolic are attacks on Canada's refugee status determination program. It is perceived as broken beyond repair, as the Achilles heel of the immigration program in general (Collacott 2010b). Admittedly, Canadians are not alone in criticizing immigration and immigrants. People around the world are concerned over the impact of immigrants on the environment, national identity, social

cohesiveness, and core cultural values (Spoonley and Tolley 2012). But Canada's glowing international reputation as one of the world's most welcoming immigration countries (Economist 2010b) puts the program in the crosshairs of criticism. The list of reproaches includes the following:

- > Immigration rules are outdated and increasingly inappropriate in twenty-first-century Canada. The interplay of transmigration and diaspora networks is changing the concept of immigration, along with the mental maps to understand immigrant realities (Mendelsohn 2013).
- > Rules are manipulated to advance crass political considerations rather than national interests. For example, the government persists in admitting large numbers of newcomers, despite an iffy economic situation for both them and Canadian-born workers (Picot and Sweetman 2012). An alternative criticism contends that immigrants no longer serve Canada's interests, but expect Canada to cater to their agendas (Jonas 2011).
- > Newcomers continue to be duped by unscrupulous immigration consultants and opportunistic lawyers, thus jeopardizing the legitimacy of the entire program (Rankin 2007).
- > The system is overburdened and bureaucratically inept (Ibbitson 2005; Thompson 2010). Proof of this is revealed by the backlog of applicants for entry into Canada, which peaked at just under one million, resulting in delays of up to six years just to *begin* the application process (compared to perhaps six months for an applicant to Australia) (Hawthorne 2008).
- > Aspects of the immigration program are sexist and racially discriminatory, not necessarily deliberately, but because their seemingly neutral rules negatively affect the most vulnerable.
- > The process of determining the status of refugees under the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) is too strict or too lenient or too inept. The system's credibility is further decimated by its subjectivity. For example, one IRB member ("DM") rejected all 169 asylum cases between 2007 and 2010, seven other members had a success rate of less than 10 percent, and yet another enjoyed a 100 percent success rate (Keung 2011c; Yang 2011; also Rehaag 2009, 2012).

To put it bluntly, Canadians remain "reluctant hosts" (Avery 1995). They can appear welcoming but can also be obstructionist or even

obfuscatory. Their ambivalence (or antipathy) toward newcomers is camouflaged by a folksy veneer of mealy-mouthed platitudes. Evidence suggests that Canadians are accepting of immigrant differences, provided they are relatively minor and as long as costs and inconvenience are kept to a minimum. But anxieties mount over the ethno-religious immigrants who seem unable to tame their differences or are unwilling to integrate in a specified way (Cramme and Motte 2010). Canadians have also proven to be “confused” hosts, prompting critics to accost Canada for wanting the benefits of a robust immigration program without the attendant costs of immigrant settlement. This ambivalence (“immigration yes, immigrants no”) is compounded by a growing unease over forces and flows beyond the country’s immediate control (see Satzewich and Wong 2006; Castles and Miller 2009; Simmons 2010). Canadians are befuddled by the emergence of transnational immigrants who prefer repeated moves and strong homeland linkages instead of a straight-line trajectory culminating in permanent residency and singular citizenship (also Spoonley 2009). These trans migratory dynamics upset conventional models for studying immigration. They also question whether multiculturalism and citizenship as place-based governance models can do the job of integrating immigrants (Fleras 2011a, 2011b). Not surprisingly, many are frustrated by the absence of constructive dialogue regarding the following points:

- > The displacement of a taps-off, taps-on approach by a sustained economy model of immigration. Congruent with this shift is the selection of skilled immigrants on the basis of a human capital model instead of a labour market needs model. Recent government moves toward a hybrid model acknowledge the value of balancing human capital with labour markets by customizing the selection of immigrants to advance economic interests (CIC 2012a).
- > The welter of new admission paths for immigrants (there are up to 60 entry points at present). Devolutionary moves by the federal government bestow powers of selection on the provinces, employers, and even universities. Despite benefits, many see this decentralization of decision making as fraught with perils (Broadbent and Omidvar 2008).
- > A dramatic spike in the number of temporary foreign workers. At the end of 2012, approximately 338,000 temporary foreign workers resided in Canada, triple the number of a decade ago. This surge poses a dilemma in defining an appropriate model for selecting newcomers:

Should migrants be selected as citizens in the making or as guest workers on the run? A short-term focus caters to immediate labour market needs despite the potential for long-term repercussions. An emphasis on longer-term economic priorities, citizenship frameworks, and Canada-building futures could yield larger returns, even if the payoff is indirect or delayed (Reitz 2011a).

- > An emergent bifurcated and polarized labour market, with well-qualified immigrants offset by unskilled migrants in low-wage employment (Wood 2009). Unlike asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and those under family reunification, highly skilled immigrants are framed as wanted and welcome. Yet they continue to experience deteriorating economic conditions related to employment and earnings (Triadafilopoulos 2013).
- > What about unauthorized migrants who enter Canada without documentation, overstay tourist visas, or disappear into the underground of an informal work economy if permanent residency or refugee status is rejected (Keung 2013c)?
- > Canada may persist in selecting the brightest and the best as an immigration priority. Yet the continued discounting or underutilization of immigrant experiences, skills, and credentials for employment purposes is proving a major embarrassment and an unacceptable waste of talent.
- > Concern over Canada's refugee status determination process is tempered by a general reluctance to debate, for fear of offending refugee-friendly groups, ruffling comforting fictions that paper over awkward facts, or disturbing a national consensus.
- > The seeming dysfunctionality of the refugee determination system under the IRB is upping the ante for constructing a model that is workable and fair.

A number of paradoxes notwithstanding, issues related to immigrant numbers or immigration rarely evoke public discourse, despite or because of their centrality to Canada (Black and Hicks 2008; Went 2010; but see *Globe and Mail* 2012). Much of this reticence reflects the paralyzing effects of (a) political correctness, (b) the lucrative immigration industry, (c) an electoral system that rewards immigration-pumping politicians, (d) a politically neutral language that disguises dislike or concern, and (e) fear of poking a political hornet's nest (Grubel 2009). In short, immigration represents a hot-button issue

with a potency to inflame passions and expose deep fissures. Not unexpectedly, central authorities historically tended to recoil from any comprehensive and principled policy reform, preferring hastily constructed homilies in response to periodic crises (Mamann 2010). But no more, as recent government moves to strengthen and streamline the program by making it fast, flexible, and focused have catapulted immigration to the top of the national agenda.

Failure to constructively debate immigration does a disservice to Canada. But newcomers are no less penalized by the “tyranny of silence,” especially as Canada’s immigration program undergoes unprecedented challenges owing to their numbers, patterns, and demands. For immigrants, getting in is one thing. The liberalization of admission categories along market lines is offset by the securitization of Canadian borders along stricter criteria in defining who enters. Settling down, fitting in, and moving up have proven equally challenging. Immigrants and refugees flock to Canada with the best of intentions for making a positive contribution. But Canada has not always proven the utopia that many had expected. True, both immigrants and refugees possess the rights of citizenship and the multicultural right to inclusiveness. Nevertheless, the *de jure* does not always match the *de facto*; after all, immigrant success depends on achieving attainment in a socially constructed system that neither reflects their lived experiences nor advances their interests. Many newcomers continue to encounter obstacles that not only besmirch Canada’s reputation as an immigrant-friendly country, but also intensify their levels frustration, up to and including violence turned inward (suicide) or outward (domestic abuse) (Biles and Burstein 2003; Scheffer 2010). Formidable barriers flourish in a society whose welcome mat may be yanked out at the slightest provocation. Moreover, Canada’s much-vaunted tolerance has been put to the test in the long-simmering aftermath of 9/11 amid fears that loose immigration regulations and lax enforcement foster a haven for terrorists (Bell 2013b). Growing concerns over securitization have spawned an antipathy toward new Canadians that sometimes borders on the xenophobic, with calls for rigorous screening procedures including DNA testing, immigrant and citizenship tests, and energetic deportation mandates.

Various government commitments and programs facilitate the integration of newcomers (Wayland 2006), including the \$600 million allocated by Ottawa to improve their settlement and the entrenchment

of official multiculturalism as a collective platform for articulating relevant issues (Fleras 2009b). But dangers lurk in excluding both the foreign- and Canadian-born from national dialogue over the why, who, what, and how of immigration in a country whose diversity agenda encompasses Aboriginal politics and Québécois nationalism. Dramatic changes in the immigration environment (both inside and outside the country) exert pressure on reviewing Canada's immigration program (CIC 2011b). Proposed in any review are issues related to goals and objectives, overall numerical targets and selection criteria for admission, as well as those involving adjustment processes to facilitate the settlement, acceptance, and integration of immigrants (Beach, Green, and Reitz 2003). Consider the following blocks of questions pertaining to the politics of getting in, formulating immigrant governance, and assessing immigration.

Getting in:

- > Why should Canada accept immigrants? How many, where from, what kind?
- > What immigration model should prevail – human capital or labour market?
- > How can Canada control its immigration program in a globalizing world?
- > What is the relationship between differing conceptions of Canadian nationhood and immigration patterns (Samers 2010; Simmons 2010; Bauder 2011)?
- > What can be done to improve Canada's refugee status determination system?

Formulating immigrant governance:

- > How much and what kind of diversity can immigrants bring with them without corrupting Canada?
- > What is the best way of integrating immigrants – by respecting their differences or emphasizing our commonalities?
- > How relevant is multiculturalism as a governance model for facilitating the settlement and integration of immigrants, especially when their notions of settlement and integration are increasingly decoupled from a singular space (Fleras 2011b), while relatively static concepts such as immigrant communities are eroded by more fluid notions of global networks (Bitran and Tan 2013)?

- > Does national citizenship still make sense in a world of constant movement, rootless identities, and splintered loyalties (Carruthers 2013)?

Assessing immigration:

- > Is there a disconnect between public attitudes toward immigration and those of politicians and policy makers?
- > How has the threat of terror, both imported and homegrown, altered both people's perceptions of immigrants and government handling of the immigration portfolio?
- > Can assessment of immigration and immigrants be framed along the lines of costs or/and benefits?
- > How do immigrants contribute to or detract from Canada building?

These questions cannot be left unanswered if a mutually beneficial immigration agenda is to be pursued. Yet responses (if they are forthcoming) elicit intense emotions that often defy rational discussion or crystallize into rigid polarities. The topic can generate hysteria, even hostility, especially when cherished notions of Canada and Canadianness are contested. Nevertheless, a level of deliberation is required that transcends political slogans or ideological posturing (see also Swain 2007). Constructive debate over immigration is more relevant than ever (Alboim 2009; Grubel 2013). Conventional notions of immigration are increasingly out of step with actual behaviour and practical commitments (also Spoonley 2009). National narratives about the subject have shifted as well in response to controversies sparked by each successive wave of immigrants, government moves to modify its policies and programs, and media preoccupation with immigrants as problem people. The conclusion is inescapable: Now is the time for a balanced, critically informed, and multi-perspectival debate over immigration issues.

Problem or solution? Cost or benefit? Good, bad, or in between (see Chomsky 2007; Swain 2007)? A sense of balance is critical in assessing immigration as a solution to twenty-first-century challenges, resulting in tradeoffs that entail compromise and accommodation. The economic, social, and demographic benefits of immigrants are unmistakable, but so too are costs and downsides. Those who obsess over the negative are no less ideologically myopic than those who rhapsodize about the positives (Castles and Miller 2009). Nor should the assessment be based entirely on utilitarian terms of liability or asset

(Alboim and Cohl 2012). The importance of immigration to Canada goes beyond demography or economy. Issues of Canada building are involved as well (Ibbitson 2005). As former immigration minister Sergio Marchi (1994, iii) once commented in connecting immigration with national identity, “Immigration is fundamentally about nation-building – about deciding who we are as Canadians and who we want to become. We need a clear and practical vision of the kind of nation we want to build.”

Immigration has transformed the very concept of Canada. It has re-configured the demographic contours of Canada’s once monocultural landscape and historical dualities into a cosmopolitan kaleidoscope of cultures, colours, and connections, with striking implications for national unity and societal identity. In announcing the establishment of a National Museum of Immigration in the March 2010 Throne Speech, the Harper government confirmed the reciprocal link between immigration and Canada building: “Our identities are bound up in the stories of ancestors from hundreds of lands” (*Toronto Star* 2010; also Madokoro 2010). Brave words indeed, but a different narrative voices concern over the immigration program’s ability to deliver the goods. Are current levels of immigration appropriate in light of relatively high unemployment (approximately 7.5 percent) (Siddiqui 2013a)? Is Canada taking advantage of the talents associated with highly skilled and educated newcomers (Bitran and Tan 2013)? Is decentralizing admissions to provinces a good idea? Is the booming influx of temporary foreign workers a short-term gain with long-term costs? Of particular concern is a leaky refugee status determination process that critics believe relegates Canada to a global patsy and international laughingstock. It is within the context of celebration and criticism, of progress and stalemate, of conviction and confusion, that an incursion into the politics of recent immigration reform is justified.

RECASTING THE STUDY OF IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION: THE BOOK

Few political challenges are as pressing as immigration and immigrants. But debates on the topic tend to be narrow in scope, including a domestic-only focus on entry, policy, or outcomes. Issues related to the broader context are glossed over, from global economics to pre-migration preparation and post-migration transnationality. Both the media and conservative think-tanks routinely associate immigrants

1 OBSERVATION

Remaking Canada: The Jason Kenney Revolution

POLITICAL LEGACIES COME and go. But it's quite possible that in years to come, the Conservative government's lasting legacy may well be the changes made by Immigration Minister Jason Kenney. Approve or disapprove, like him or loathe him, there is little question of Kenney's formidable status as one of the more influential ministers in modern Canadian public life (Editorial, *National Post* 2013). Canada under Kenney experienced more unprecedented changes in transforming immigration and citizenship than at any other time in its history, according to an expert panel (including Naomi Alboim and Monica Boyd) at the 15th annual National Metropolis Conference (Radia 2012; Zilio 2013; also Suhasini 2012). His tough-love measures to remake the country by remaking immigration expose him as a target for both criticism and praise (Selley 2013). Yet the initiatives and changes to immigration and the refugee system are unparalleled in a portfolio that is better known for playing it safe, mouthing platitudes, and decision making by lobby-capture.

Both Kenney and Stephen Harper have made it clear that the purpose of immigration reform is to transform a passive, rigid, and non-responsive system to one that is proactive, fast, flexible, and focused on driving the Canadian economy. Chris Alexander, the successor to Jason Kenney as citizenship and immigration minister, put it aptly: "The Government of Canada's number one priority remains economic growth and job creation. Immigration plays a key role in Canada's long-term prosperity and we are committed to seeing newcomers succeed across the country" (Canada News Centre 2014, 3). Consistent with this commitment are moves to (a) actively recruit economic migrants for Canada's labour market needs; (b) protect the integrity of its borders by rooting out abuses, either by dissuading migrants from entering the country or by removing those who are here "illegally" (jumping the queue or overstaying); and (c) replace existing programs at odds with public confidence with new initiatives resulting

in quicker processing times and mutually beneficial economic prosperity (Radia 2012). In 2012 alone, Ottawa proposed or passed the following initiatives with respect to immigration, refugee determination, and citizenship (Black and Keung 2012).

Immigration and immigrants:

- > The government proposed a new program, titled An Expression of Interest System, in which employers would choose candidates from a new pool of pre-screened skilled workers.
- > The point system would be adjusted accordingly to emphasize language skills and younger migrants, and steps were taken to improve the vetting of professional credentials to ensure their Canadian equivalency.
- > A new direction in the Federal Skilled Worker Program was announced, involving the promise of permanent residency to skilled trade workers (from pipefitters to heavy-equipment operators), to relieve labour shortages in the construction and gas/oil exploration business. Immigrants under the program will have their education abroad assessed against a Canadian educational standard.
- > Bill C-43 (still before Parliament) provides the government with sweeping powers to bar entry for “public policy considerations.” The detention of “irregular arrivals” will be at the discretion of the minister of public safety. As well, Ottawa proposes to deport permanent residents who are sentenced to six months or more for committing a crime.
- > The tightening of rules regarding spousal sponsorship hoped to plug loopholes and abuses. Foreigners who are sponsored as spouses must remain in a relationship for two years before being granted permanent residency. Otherwise, they are deported. This rule does not apply to those who find themselves in situations of abuse or neglect.
- > Proposals to pay temporary foreign workers between 5 and 15 percent less than the prevailing local wage did not sit well with various stakeholders and were subsequently rescinded.
- > Immigration consultants must register with the government to ensure that their services meet standards of disclosure and accounting (Grubel 2013).

- > For foreign migrant workers under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, Ottawa eliminated the special parental benefit (from sick or parental leave to benefits for newborn or sick children).
- > The immigration backlog will be reduced by 40 percent, from more than a million to about 616,000 (Canadian Press 2013a).

Refugees:

- > The government compiled a list of 29 safe countries (now 37 countries capable of providing state protection for citizens), on the basis of combined rates of rejection, withdrawal, and abandonment (75 percent; only a 60 percent threshold was required for abandoned or withdrawn cases). Claimants from safe countries will be processed more quickly, unable to appeal their decision except to the Federal Court on matters of law, and deported from Canada within a year. Other claimants will have their cases heard within 60 days of referral to the Immigration and Refugee Board (Bissett 2013).
- > In response to the highly publicized arrival of Tamil asylum seekers on the BC coast in 2009 and 2010, certain groups of refugees were designated as “irregular arrivals.” The law equips the state with powers of mandatory arrest and detention for up to one year, while banning even successful asylum seekers from applying for permanent residence, family reunification, or a travel document for five years.
- > Initiatives were introduced in which fairness for asylum seekers whose claims were plausible was balanced with strictness for those whose claims were plausibly false. To ensure quick and credible results, Kenney introduced new divisions in the refugee category (Simpson 2013): (a) sponsored abroad as individuals in vulnerable situations, (b) landed in Canada as refugee claimants, (c) those from designated (safe) countries of origin, and (d) massed (irregular) arrivals.
- > Ottawa announced that it would cut supplementary health benefits (vision, dental, medical) for failed refugee claimants and claimants from safe countries unless they posed an emergency or a health risk to Canadians.
- > Under the Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act, biometric measures (fingerprints and photos) were introduced for applicants

from 29 countries. These data will be used to cross-check those who were previously deported or have criminal records.

Citizenship:

- > Prospective Canadian citizens between the ages of 18 and 54 must provide proof of proficiency in either French or English.
- > Citizenship was revoked for more than three thousand people who falsified their admission/application forms or had failed to reside in Canada for three of the four years prior to applying for citizenship.

Changes carried over into the first half of 2013. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, they include (a) a drastic decline in the number of asylum claims with the introduction of stricter refugee assessments, (b) an increase in the number of international students to over 100,000 as proof of Canada's success in attracting the brightest and the best, (c) an additional nine thousand highly skilled workers under the Canadian Experience Class (Editorial, *National Post* 2013), and (d) tightening up the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (to remove the 15 percent wage disparity, increase application fees, confer authority to revoke work permits, and improve the Labour Market Opinion strategy [Deveau 2013]). Reforms to this program aim to solidify its use as originally intended: that is, to fill acute skills shortages on a temporary basis rather than by supplying cheap and pliant labour at the expense of jobs or training for Canadians (Gross 2014; Grant, Curry, and Chase 2013).

The conclusion is difficult to avoid. As "Jason Kenney's Canada" (Editorial, *National Post* 2013) remarked, even if Kenney were to quit tomorrow (in fact, he was shuffled off to the Employment and Social Development portfolio in mid-July 2013 but remained as minister of multiculturalism), his legacy in remaking Canada by remaking immigration was all but assured. This whirlwind of changes is bound to have a direct impact on Canadians and what Canada will look like in the future (Suhasini 2012; Zilio 2013). Reaction to this assessment depends on where one stands on the political spectrum. For some, Kenney did a disservice to Canada's humanitarian tradition (see Dauvergne 2013), in part by manipulating anxieties over security or

fraud as a smokescreen to promote draconian change (see Radia 2012). Haroon Siddiqui (2013b) challenged Kenney's reforms as unpopular, needlessly ideological, unworkable, unhelpful to both the economy and newcomers, and an attack on Canadian values. For others, his initiatives bode well for Canada building by addressing a key twenty-first-century challenge: finding jobs for workers, and workers for jobs, in an era of chronic labour shortages and high unemployment (Ibbitson 2013). The fact that UN Watch, a Geneva-based human rights group, presented Kenney with its Moral Courage Award in 2014 for speaking up for the victims of tyranny around the world will surely add to his lustre (Clarke 2014b). One thing is certain, however (Suhasini 2012): Kenney has left an indelible imprint in remaking Canada's immigration program, while remaking Canada in the process.

with illegality, security risks, and social problems, thereby skewering any balanced understanding (Fryberg et al. 2012). Narratives that go beyond a simplistic reference to bad/good, costs/benefit, problem/solution, and wrong/right are often excluded (Fleras 2011b). In hopes of contesting conventional narratives, this book is committed to the goal of rethinking Canadian immigration and reframing immigrants within a globalizing context of developing realities, nascent challenges, and fluid discourses.

Both emergent dynamics and contested realities make it clear that though Canada may well qualify as a quintessential immigration society, it cannot be divorced from global developments that complicate a business-as-usual mindset (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Malloch-Brown 2011). There is a pressing need to rethink the conceptual frameworks for understanding contemporary immigration (including policies, assumptions, and programs) and the relational status of immigrants/refugees (from settlement to citizenship). A globalizing world marked by acceleration, differentiation, and integration provides a brand new