

# **Transitions to Democracy among Immigrants to Canada: Democratic Support and Conceptions of Democracy**

Antoine Bilodeau  
Department of Political Science  
Concordia University  
antoine.bilodeau@concordia.ca

and

Neil Nevitte  
Department of Political Science  
University of Toronto  
nnevitte@chass.utoronto.ca

## **Abstract**

This paper investigates democratic support and conceptions of democracy among immigrants from authoritarian regimes who settle in Canada using the 2000 and 2006 Canadian sections of the World Values Survey and their special sample of recent immigrants.

The findings indicate that immigrants who experienced authoritarianism prior coming to Canada are enthusiastic about democracy but simultaneously express stronger support than the rest of the population for forms of political systems are, to different degrees, non-democratic.

Furthermore, immigrants from authoritarian regimes globally express a conception of democracy similar to that of the rest of the population. However, newcomers who support authoritarian forms of political systems do express a different conception of democracy than other immigrants. Overall, these immigrants give less importance to the voice and rights of the people and to the equality between all citizens. This suggests that a significant proportion of immigrants from authoritarian regimes in Canada exhibit greater support for authoritarian forms of political systems and also express weaker support for core characteristics of democracy.

Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association, Saskatoon, May 30-June 2, 2007. We would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Justice Canada for their financial support. We also thank Lauren Skelly for her research assistance on the project.

The importance of socialization into politics, and what impact acquired values and norms have on the political system, are enduring democratic themes that underpin perspectives on the dynamics of regime support (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton and Dennis 1969; Eckstein 1988; Inglehart 1990). Consequently, researchers devote considerable attention to the cultural and political challenge that transitions to democracy present to populations in countries trying to embrace democracy. Analyses of transitions to democracy typically focus on the dynamics of regime change among populations in new democracies. This paper follows previous analysis undertaken by Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji (2007) and explores issues of democratic transition from a different perspective. The focus is on people socialized in non-democratic regimes who migrate to democratic political systems.

Bilodeau et al (2007) found that immigrants who had experienced authoritarianism in their country of origin faced challenges in making their transition to democracy. Even though immigrants who had experienced authoritarianism were supportive of democracy, they were more likely than others to support forms of political systems that were non-democratic. Do immigrants coming from authoritarian regimes face similar difficulties when settling down in Canada? That is the focus of the following analysis.

The first step examines whether Bilodeau et al's findings regarding Australia's newcomers are replicated in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Immigration composition in Canada, even more so than Australia, has changed radically in the last 50 years. In the 1960s, about 20% of Canada's immigrants came from authoritarian regimes. Now that proportion exceeds 75%.<sup>2</sup> Canada not only receives more immigrants than Australia but it receives a higher proportion of immigrants who are encountering democracy for the first time.

The second step of the analysis deepens Bilodeau et al's investigation by examining immigrants' conception and understanding of democracy. Bilodeau et al. have provided evidence regarding weaker democratic commitment among immigrants who experienced authoritarianism but could not explore what democracy meant to newcomers. How do newcomers understand democracy? And further, what are the crucial characteristics of a democratic political system? The second step of this investigation aims to answer these questions and thus highlights whether immigrants' weaker democratic support is trivial or whether it has implications on the way they understand democracy and the political dynamics in Canada.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bilodeau (2004) had provided evidence answering this question; we push further the investigation here using larger samples and more recent data.

<sup>2</sup> See Bilodeau (2004).

This analysis focuses on three questions in particular: Are immigrants who were socialized in authoritarian regimes support Canadian democracy? Second, how deep is their democratic support? And third, what is their conception of democracy? These questions are investigated using the 2006 and 2000 Canadian components of the World Values Survey and their respective boosted samples of recent immigrants.

## **Assessing Immigrants' Democratic Support and Conception of Democracy**

Following Bilodeau et al (2007), we define a successful transition to democracy first and foremost as newcomers support for democracy. According to Linz and Stepan, support for democracy is most profound when democracy becomes the 'only game in town' (Linz and Stepan 1996: 5). As Bratton and Mattes suggest: 'democracy is consolidated when citizens (...) conclude that no alternative form of regime has any greater subjective validity or stronger objective claim to their allegiance' (2001a: 447). Immigrants' support for democracy and rejection of every other authoritarian alternative, in our view provides a useful indication of the depth of their democratic support.

In the Australia setting, immigrants from authoritarian regimes turned out to be quite supportive of democracy, but they were also more supportive of authoritarian alternatives to democracy than the rest of the population (Bilodeau et al, 2007). We have no reason to expect that immigrants from authoritarian regimes in Canada should exhibit a different political outlook to that of newcomers in Australia. Thus, our initial hypothesis is that immigrant from authoritarian regimes will exhibit support for democracy that is less exclusive than that of people socialized in a democratic setting. Additional considerations support this hypothesis.

First, according to the political socialization theory, we expect that immigrants' pre-migration experiences of politics will continue to shape their political in their new setting. Early socialization research challenged the persistence view of political socialization acquired in the early years of life, but more recent research now seems to suggest that political socialization would neither be completely open or closed after the early years of life; it would rather resemble a lifetime cumulative learning process in which an individual political outlook reflects the accumulation of her old and new experiences at that given time (Mishler and Rose 2002; Rose and McAllister 1990; Bilodeau et al. 2007). People seem to remain open to new learning and influences but these new learning experiences would seem to modify accounted experiences rather than displacing them.

Consistent with the above theory, a growing body of literature suggests the enduring impact of immigrants' pre-migration experiences. Scholars examining immigrants' political adaptation

have shown that immigrants' attitudes and values (McAllister and Makkai 1992; Gitelman 1981; Harles 1997), and patterns of behaviours (Ramakrishnan 2005; Simpson Bueker, C. 2005, Black 1987) reflect the lasting impact of pre-migration political experiences.

Second, beyond the persistence theory of early learned political orientations, it is also possible that immigrants' transition to democracy may be shaped by their motivations to migrate. Immigrants have many reasons to start up a new life in another country and it is unlikely that an explicit desire to embrace democracy predominates. Some people immigrate to escape repressive regimes, others because of poor economic conditions, natural catastrophes or simply to do business or reunite with family members already in the host-country. Thus, it cannot be taken for granted that immigrants from authoritarian regimes will be easily motivated to adopt the democratic culture of the new host-country.

Finally, to the extent that there is some validity in the parallel between immigrants leaving an authoritarian regime to migrate to a democracy and people living in transitional democracies, the empirical evidence has shown that democratic support in new democracies was often non-exclusive, that is support for the democratic political regime is often strong (Dalton 1994; Finifter and Mickiewicz 1992; Gibson, Duch, and Tedin 1992; Weil 1993) but there are significant proportions of the population who find various authoritarian forms of government to be acceptable and desirable (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998: 111; Lagos 2001; Bratton and Mattes 2001b). The first goal of this analysis is to determine whether newcomers support democracy and rejects its non-democratic alternatives.

In a second step, our study moves on to examine immigrants' actual conception and understanding of democracy. In doing so, we enter into a somewhat uncharted territory. The literature on immigrants' political adaptation reveals no reference to how immigrants settle into Western democracies conceive and understand democracy. Following the work of scholars of transitional democracies (Bratton and Mattes 2001a; Carnaghan 1996; Ottomoeller 1998; Markus, Mease, and Ottomoeller 2001), we begin by investigating the salience of several democratic characteristics to immigrants who experienced authoritarianism. Do immigrants actually have any opinion about what democracy means? For immigrants who do have an understating of what democracy means, we then examine what their conception of democracy entails.

## **Research Design and Data**

Our approach is to assess how immigrants from authoritarian regimes adapt to democracy not in absolute but in relative terms. To do so, we compare levels of democratic support and

political participation between three groups of respondents in Canada: (1) immigrants from authoritarian regimes, (2) immigrants from democratic countries, and (3) the Canadian-born population. Our objective is to examine whether levels of democratic support amongst immigrants from authoritarian regimes differ from those of other respondents socialized in a democratic political system.

Following standard practice (Bilodeau et al.), we rely on the “Freedom in the World Country Rating” published by *Freedom House*. All immigrants in our analysis are classified according to whether they were socialized in a democratic country (rated as ‘free’ by *Freedom House*) or in an authoritarian regime (rated as ‘partly free’ or ‘non-free’). This classification of the democratic status of an immigrant’s country of origin is based on the 15 year period prior to the immigrant’s year of arrival to Canada. For example, if a Chinese immigrant arrived in Canada in 1995, the political status of her country of origin will be based on the data from China between 1985 and 2000. In cases where the political status of a country may have shifted during the fifteen-year period prior to an immigrant’s departure, the socialization experience of the immigrant is determined by calculating the average *Freedom House* scores on both political rights and civil liberties for the entire period. The immigrant’s country of origin is then classified according to whether it qualifies as being ‘free’, ‘partly free’ or ‘non-free’ according to the *Freedom House*. The complete classification listing of the immigrants investigated in this analysis is summarized in Appendix A.

Finally, the data are drawn from the 2006 and 2000 Canadian components of the World Values Survey (WVS) and their respective boosted samples of immigrants in Canada for up to 10 years (New Immigrant Surveys - NIS). The combined 2000/2006 WVS/NIS sample includes 226 immigrants from democratic regimes, 1182 immigrants from authoritarian regimes, and 3403 respondents who were born in Canada .

## **Support for Democracy and Authoritarian Forms of Regimes**

The place to begin is with an examination of the degree to which immigrants from authoritarian regimes support democracy. The 2006/2000 WVS/NIS contain a similar battery of questions which ask respondents about their views on various types of political systems. As the data in Table 1 shows, almost all immigrants from authoritarian regimes (97%) agree that democracy provides a good form of governance. These levels are slightly higher than those found in the Canadian-born population (88%) or immigrants from democratic regimes (94%).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Respondents were asked: “For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country: Having a democratic political system?”

Immigrants from authoritarian regimes thus appear to be more supportive of democracy than the rest of the population. A strong majority of immigrants who make the transition from non-democratic societies to democratic clearly seem enthusiastic about democracy. But how profound is their support for democracy? Do they consider other non-democratic forms of government as also being palatable?

#### INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

To evaluate the depth of immigrants' democratic support, we also examine views toward alternative types of regimes, to different degrees, non-democratic. The WVS surveys also asked respondents if having experts instead of government making decisions according to what they think is good for the country is an acceptable form of political system. Not surprisingly, support for this type of political system is much lower than support for democracy (see Table 1). Significantly, however, while 43% and 37% of respectively the Canadian-born population and immigrants from democratic regimes support this form of political system, a larger proportion of immigrants from authoritarian regimes do so (58%).

Second, the WVS then were asked about their views toward having a strong leader who does not have to bother with the normal mechanisms of ensuring accountability in democratic regimes—parliament and elections.<sup>4</sup> Support for the 'strong leader' regime is, as with support for the 'expert regime', stronger among immigrants who have experienced authoritarianism than among the rest of the population. Some 22% of population born in Canada, and 19% of immigrants from democratic regimes support this form of political system. For immigrants from authoritarian regimes, however, support for this proposition is substantially higher, at 34%.

Finally, immigrants from authoritarian regimes also stand out from other respondents in terms of support for a third and clearly non-democratic form of government, namely, having the army rule.<sup>5</sup> The data indicate that this type of political system is by far the least popular among the respondents from all three groups. That said, support for this option is twice as strong among immigrants from authoritarian regimes (14%) than among either the Canadian-born population (7%) or immigrants from democratic countries (6%).

The evidence from Canada is remarkably similar to that of immigrants in Australia (see Bilodeau et al. 2007). Immigrants from authoritarian regimes exhibit overwhelming support for democracy (even more than that found in Australia), but they also exhibit support for three rival

---

<sup>4</sup> Respondents were asked: "For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country: Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections?"

<sup>5</sup> Respondents were asked: "For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country: Having the army rule?"

non-democratic alternatives to democracy. Immigrants from authoritarian regimes appear less committed to the democratic political system, than other comparable segments of the population.

Not all countries are equally authoritarian or democratic. Some countries rank very high in their degree of authoritarianism whereas others rank as moderately authoritarian according to Freedom House. In the analyses that follow, we account for such differences by developing an indicator that takes into account the degree of authoritarian practices in an immigrant's country of origin. Each immigrant is assigned a score that ranges between 0 and 12. This score is obtained by merging the average *Freedom House* country scores on both civil liberties and political rights for the 15-year period prior immigrants' departure of their country of origin. 0 signifies no authoritarian practices in the country of origin and 12 means strong authoritarian practices. The analyses now investigate the impact of immigrants' intensity of authoritarian experience in the country of origin on the extent to which they support authoritarian forms of regimes. In this case, our hypothesis is that the more authoritarian is an immigrant's experience of politics, the more likely they will be to support forms of political systems that are not democratic.<sup>6</sup>

To ensure that the differences observed genuinely reflect immigrants' experience of authoritarianism, and to rule out alternative explanations, we undertake multivariate analyses. Conventional theories of political participation suggest that variations in socio-economic status matter. (Milbrath, 1965; Verba and Nie, 1972). To the extent that democratic political systems may be more responsive to certain socio-economic groups than others, systematic differences in socio-economic status between immigrants from authoritarian regimes and others may explain why support for democracy among the former is not as exclusive as for the latter. It is also possible that democracy is more appealing to certain types of individuals with specific sets of values. To take these possibilities into account, the analysis controls for socio-economic variables (sex, age, level of education, income, employment, interest in politics) and values (post-materialist values and left-right ideology). Finally, if immigrants' discovery of democracy is a learning experience, then the amount of time that immigrants have spent in Canada may also be related their levels of democratic support. Here, the hypothesis is that the longer immigrants have resided in Canada the less they will support authoritarian forms of regimes.

The results of the OLS analysis, which focus only on immigrant respondents, are reported in Table 2. The dependent variable here is support for all three forms of authoritarian political system. This 10-point scale ranges from 0 to 9 where 9 indicates respondents who support all three forms of authoritarian regimes and 0 indicates respondents who reject all three forms of authoritarian regimes.

---

<sup>6</sup> We do not investigate support for democracy because there is practically no variation at all among immigrants.

## INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The multivariate analysis supports the hypothesis that immigrants who experienced authoritarianism in their country of origin exhibit stronger support than other immigrants for authoritarian forms of political systems, net of their socio-economic factors and economic and political values. Moreover, the analysis supports the hypothesis that the more authoritarian is immigrants' experience of politics, the more they support authoritarian forms of political systems.

Notice that the B coefficient for the 'Authoritarian experience scale' (.047) indicates that the more severe an immigrant's experience with authoritarianism, the more they support authoritarian alternatives to democracy. Experience with authoritarianism is the second strongest predictor of immigrants' support for authoritarian regimes, next to length of residence (Beta = .089). Everything else being equal, this means that there is a .56-point difference in support for authoritarian regimes between immigrants coming from fully authoritarian and fully democratic regimes.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, this result is robust. It remains significant even after controlling for various other factors such as socio-economic status, interest in politics, satisfaction with democracy, values and ideology and even length of residence. Indeed, according to these data, the only other factors that are significant are: education and interest in politics. Immigrants who are educated and interested in politics are less likely than those who are less educated and less interested in politics to support authoritarian forms of governments.

There is also evidence that length of residence is related to immigrants' support for authoritarian regimes; the longer immigrants reside in Canada, the less they support authoritarian forms of political systems. In fact length of residence is the strongest predictor of support for authoritarian regimes (Beta = -.167). The B coefficient (-.025) indicates that, everything else being equal, there is a .50-point difference in support for alternatives to democracy between an immigrant in Canada for 20 years and one in the country for less than a year. Even though

---

<sup>7</sup> Following Bilodeau et al (2007), we also tested a specification of authoritarian experiences that takes into account the age at which immigrants arrived to Canada. We obtained this alternative indicator authoritarian experience by multiplying the level of authoritarian practices in the country of origin (from 0 to 12) by the log of the age at which immigrants left their country of origin to migrate to Canada. We use the log of age at immigration because this function is most consistent with theories of political socialization claiming that political learning generally occurs during the early years of life, and then rapidly decreases in importance throughout the lifecycle (Niemi and Hepburn 1995). The results obtained using this alternative indicator did not differ significantly from using the indicator measuring only the degree of authoritarian practices in the country of origin. Using this alternative indicator did not improve in any way the strength of the relationship or the overall fit of the model. Results not presented. Overall, this suggests that the degree of authoritarian practices is a stronger determinant than the length of time that immigrants were exposed to such practices.

immigrants who experienced authoritarianism in their country of origin exhibit stronger democratic support than other immigrants upon arrival to Canada, their support evidently starts to mimic that of other respondents with the passage of time.

There is thus something in immigrants' experience of authoritarianism, whether it is Canada or Australia, that leads them to see in a more positive way authoritarian forms of political systems than other citizens do. What precisely explains this greater support for authoritarian regimes is yet to be identified. To help us further understand why immigrants who experienced authoritarianism support authoritarian forms of regimes our investigation now turns to examine immigrants' conception of democracy.

## **The Essentials of Democracy**

Respondents to the 2005 segment of the World Values Survey were asked what the essential characteristics of democracy are. For a list of ten characteristics, respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought each one was, on a 1 to 10 scale, an essential characteristic (10) or a non-essential characteristic (1) of democracy.

Table 3 presents the list of the ten characteristics on which respondents were asked to provide their opinions. The list of characteristics is divided between what we call "democratic procedures" focusing on the processes and rules of democracy and "democratic substance" focusing more left-right/liberal-conservative ideological conceptions of democracy.

We begin by comparing the responses of our three groups of respondents to all ten characteristics of democracy. Descriptive data presented in Table 3 indicate that, in most cases, there is little difference in the mean-scores across our three groups of respondents. Notice, however, that there are substantial differences between immigrants from authoritarian regimes and other respondents when it comes to "religious authorities interpret the laws" and "criminals are severely punished". Immigrants from authoritarian countries rate noticeably more supportive of these two characteristics than are the Canadian-born population and immigrants from democratic countries.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

To further unpack the data presented in Table 3, we undertake OLS regression analyses for each of the ten characteristics with all the same independent variables reported in Table 2 (age, sex, education, income, employment status, interest in politics, materialist values, and left-right ideological positioning). Table 4 presents only the results for the variable that is most of interest to us, namely the 0-12 scale of authoritarian experience. These analyses reveal whether there are

more systematic differences between immigrants who did, and who did not, experience authoritarianism.

#### INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Table 4 shows that in the vast majority of cases the experience of authoritarianism exerts no significant impact on immigrants' conception of democracy. Immigrants who have a limited or severe experience with authoritarianism do not perceive democracy in substantially different ways. That finding holds for both characteristics concerning procedures and substantive issues. Surprisingly, the only exceptions observed concerned characteristics different from those identified in the descriptive findings (see Table 3). In the multivariate analyses, the more authoritarian an immigrant's experience of politics prior to migration, the less she perceived "the economy is prospering" and "women have the same rights as men" as two essential characteristics of democracy.

These findings suggest that if immigrants from authoritarian regimes exhibit stronger support for authoritarian forms of political systems than the rest of the population, they understand democracy in terms that are broadly similar to those of people socialized in a democracy. Even our analysis investigating "don't know" responses reveal no significant difference between the three groups of respondents. The implication is that immigrants with little experience of democracy are as likely as other respondents to hold opinions about what democracy is, or should be. As Bratton and Mattes' suggest, (2001a), democracy thus appears to be a salient concept to most newcomers, regardless of their pre-migration experience with democracy and authoritarianism. Furthermore, they appear to have a similar conception of democracy.

But what about these specific immigrants who said they supported authoritarian alternatives to democracy? Do they have a conception of democracy that is similar to that of other immigrants? The final stage of our analysis investigates whether immigrants from authoritarian regimes who said that having experts, a strong leader, or the army to rule the country actually also have a similar or different conception of what are the essential characteristics of democracy. Answering that question helps us to assess whether the answers that immigrants provided to our questions on democracy and its rival alternatives are trivial or whether they have practical consequences for how they conceive democracy.

For this analysis the focus is only on our sample of immigrants from authoritarian regimes. As in Table 4, we perform an OLS regression analysis for each of the ten characteristics of democracy. The dependent variables and control variables replicate those used in Table 4, but our main independent variable here is not the 0-12 scale of authoritarian experience; it is the 0-9 scale of support for authoritarian forms of political systems. The goal is to determine whether

support for authoritarian forms of political systems leads immigrants from authoritarian regimes to conceive democracy differently.

The results presented in Table 5 provide a straightforward answer: immigrants who support authoritarian forms of political systems do conceive democracy differently. Significantly, supporting authoritarian forms of regimes impacts on all characteristics that we qualify as “procedural”. Equally significant, it has no impact on any of the “substantive” characteristics of democracy. The more immigrants support authoritarian forms of regimes, the more likely they are to agree that in a democracy 1) “religious authorities should interpret the laws”, and that 2) “the army should take over when the government is incompetent.” Also, the less they are to agree that in a democracy 3) “people should choose their leaders in free elections”, 4) that “civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression”, and that 5) “people can change the laws in referendums.” All this suggests that the greater immigrants support authoritarian forms of regimes the less value they attach to the people’s voice and rights.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

These findings might not be surprising. After all, there are “common sense” reasons to expect people who support authoritarianism to place less value on people’s voice and rights. However, these findings are salient in at least one respect. They converge with the relationship observed in Table 2; immigrants from authoritarian regimes who express support for authoritarian forms of political system consistently express a more authoritarian conception of democracy. The support they express for authoritarianism, it seems reflects a more coherent/consistent view about the way society should be governed.

Significantly, immigrants’ support for authoritarian regimes exerts no impact for the “substantive” characteristics of democracy. Immigrants’ support for authoritarian regimes therefore, is not related to their views about government role about wealth distribution, assistance to the unemployed, and its role in the economy more generally. Nor is it related to views with regards to women’s role in society and how criminals should be treated.

## **Conclusion**

This paper followed a study by Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji (2007) exploring democratic support among immigrants in Australia coming from authoritarian regimes. It examined whether the Australian findings could be replicated among immigrants in Canada. Two questions were investigated in order to replicate Bilodeau et al’s findings. First, we asked whether immigrants who were socialized in authoritarian regimes support Canadian democracy. Second, we examined

the depth of immigrants' democratic support by looking at the support for authoritarian alternatives to democracy. And finally, in a third step, we pushed further Bilodeau et al's paper by exploring immigrants' conception of democracy.

The findings were straightforward. First, as observed among immigrants in Australia, immigrants are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about democracy but for many of them support is not exclusive. A significant proportion of immigrants from authoritarian regimes do not see democracy as the only "game in town", to use Linz and Stepan's expression (1996); a significantly larger proportion of immigrants from authoritarian regimes than of other immigrants from democratic countries perceive authoritarian alternatives to democracy to be acceptable forms of political systems, and the more authoritarian their experience of politics, the greater their support for these non-democratic forms of political systems.

Second, in sharp contrast to the Australian findings, however, we observed that immigrants' support for these authoritarian forms of regimes was declining the longer they resided in Canada; Bilodeau et al did not observe any significant change over length of residence among immigrants in Australia. This leads to the question of why that difference. We cannot explore here the roots of these divergent finding but we propose a few potential explanations. First, we would need to explore more closely the specific origins of immigrants from authoritarian regimes in each country. It is possible that certain groups of immigrants more present in one country than the other adapt to democratic practices more easily than others. The experience of authoritarianism could be weaker (less intense) among Canadian immigrants than Australian ones. Second, the divergent findings with regards to change in immigrants' outlooks with length of residence raise questions about the distinct policies or climate of reception for immigrants in both Canada and Australia. Are Canadians more open to immigrants than Australians? And could it explain the greater facility with which Canadian immigrants' appear to reject authoritarian alternatives? In short, does the climate of reception in the host-country impact on immigrants' integration? These are questions to which we cannot provide answers at the moment and that should be investigated in future research.

Third, our investigations into immigrants' conception of democracy also provided key findings in understanding how immigrants' past experiences with authoritarianism impact on their democratic outlooks once in the host-country. Overall, immigrants who have experienced authoritarianism did not appear to have a different conception of democracy (for most characteristics) than the rest of the population. However, the analyses revealed how structuring immigrants' support for authoritarian forms of political system was on their way of conceiving democracy. The greater was immigrants' support for authoritarian forms of regimes, the more

likely they were to reject characteristics of democracy emphasizing the voice and rights of the people as well as the equality between all citizens.

In short, the analyses suggest that when immigrants from authoritarian regimes indicate that various forms of political system are desirable options to govern Canadian society, they mean it; their conception of democracy, or the list of characteristics of democracy that they see as essentials and non-essential, is consistent with their greater support for authoritarian regimes. Our findings thus support those by Bilodeau et al in Australia in at least two ways. First, immigrants from authoritarian regimes in Canada are more likely than the rest of the population to see acceptable alternatives to democracy. And second, the opinions immigrants provided when answering questions about alternatives to democracy do not appear to be provided randomly or without thinking. The answers that immigrants provide are consistent with what they perceive are essential characteristics for a political system.

The replication of the Australian findings is crucial. It reinforces the argument that pre-migration experiences with authoritarianism are a determinant factor in immigrants' adaptation, a factor that is likely to apply to immigrants regardless of which Western democracy they settle in. Immigrants' experience of authoritarianism does appear to have an enduring effect (that may or may not weaken with length of residence depending on whether we take the Australian or Canadian findings) and that shapes immigrants' attitudes toward democracy in a very ambivalent way. Immigrants who experienced authoritarianism become democratic citizens who are very enthusiastic about democracy but also not as exclusively committed to democracy as other citizens who never experienced authoritarianism. They like democracy but maintain a conception of the way by which society should be governed that is more authoritarian than what generally people understand and conceive when socialized in a democracy very early in life.

The question we should then now be answering is: are there any other consequences of these experiences with authoritarianism on immigrants' transition to democracy? Bilodeau et al. (2007) showed that it also structured the levels and channels of participation in which immigrants chose to be involved in the host-country. We need now to investigate whether immigrants' experience with authoritarianism also impact on their relationship with government and public officials? How much trust in politicians do they express? And how much confidence do they have in the political process? How do they relate to other citizens? These are other dimensions of immigrants' transition to democracy that we need to explore in order to understand the extent to which pre-migration experiences determine immigrants' adaptation and to identify the specific challenges faced by new waves of immigrants coming increasingly from countries with no or only a limited democratic history.

## References

- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture, Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Bilodeau, Antoine. 2004. Learning Democracy: The Political Resocialization of Immigrants from Authoritarian Regimes in Canada. Doctoral Dissertation (University of Toronto).
- Bilodeau, Antoine, I. McAllister and M. Kanji. 2007. "Transition to Democracy among Immigrants in Australia" Unpublished manuscript.
- Black, J. H. 1987. 'The Practice of Politics in Two Settings: Political Transferability Among Recent Immigrants to Canada', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.20, No.4.
- Bratton, M., and R. Mattes. 2001a. "Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?" *British Journal of Political Science* 31: 447-474.
- Bratton, M. and R. Mattes. 2001b. "Africans' Surprising Universalism." *Journal of Democracy* 12: 107-121.
- Carnaghan, E. 1996. 'Alienation, Apathy or Ambivalence? "Don't Knows" and Democracy in Russia', *Slavic Review*, Vol.55, No.2, pp.325-363.
- Diamond, Larry. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Easton, David, and Jack Dennis. 1969. *Children in the Political System: Origins of Political Legitimacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company).
- Eckstein, H. 1988. "A Cultural Theory of Political Change", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.82, No.3, pp.789-804.
- Finifter, A. W., and E. Mickiewicz. 1992. "Redefining the Political System of the USSR: Mass Support for Political Change." *American Political Science Review* 86: 857-874.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 1982. *Becoming Israelis, Political Resocialisation of Soviet and American Immigrants* (New York: PRAEGER).
- Harles, John C. 1997. 'Integration Before Assimilation: Immigration, Multiculturalism and the Canadian Polity', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 30: 711-736.
- Inglehart, R. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press).
- Lagos, M. 2001. "Between Instability and Crisis in Latin America." *Journal of Democracy* 12: 137-145.

- Linz, J., and A. Stepan. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Marcus, R. R., K. Mease, and D. Ottemoeller. 2001. 'Popular Definitions of Democracy From Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida, U.S.A.', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.36, No.1, pp.113-32.
- McAllister, I., and T. Makkai. 1992. 'Resources and social learning theories of political participation: ethnic patterns in Australia', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, V.25, No.2, pp.269-93.
- Milbrath, L. W. 1965. *Political Participation, How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* (Chicago: Rand McNally).
- Mishler, W. and R. Rose. 2002. "Learning and Re-learning Regime Support: The Dynamics of Post-Communist Regimes." *European Journal of Political Research* 41: 5-36.
- Niemi, R. G., and M. A. Hepburn. 1995. "The Rebirth of Political Socialization." *Perspectives on Political Science* 24: 7-16.
- Ottemoeller, D. 1998. "Popular Perceptions of Democracy, Elections and Attitudes in Uganda." *Comparative Political Studies* 31 (1): 98-124.
- Ramakrishnan, S. K. 2005. *Democracy in Immigrant America, Changing Demographics and Political Participation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rose, R., and I. McAllister. 1990. *The Loyalties of Voters: A Lifetime Learning Model*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Rose, R., W. Mishler, and C. Haerpfer. 1998. *Democracy and its alternatives, Understanding Post-Communist Societies*. Baltimore, Md: John Hopkins University Press.
- Simpson Bueker, C. 2005. "Political Integration among Immigrants from Ten Areas of Origin: The Persistence of Source Country Effects." *International Migration Review* 39 (1): 103-140.
- Verba, S. and N. H. Nie. 1972. *Participation in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Verba, S., K. L. Schlozman, and H. E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality, Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Weil, F. D. 1993. "The Development of Democratic Attitudes in Eastern and Western Germany in a Comparative Perspective." *Research on Democracy and Society* 1: 195-225.

## APPENDIX A: CLASSIFICATION OF IMMIGRANTS

Scale score	List of Countries (n)	Sample size	% of immigrant sample
<b>0</b>	Britain (39); Italy (18); Netherlands (6); Denmark (2); Belgium (5); United States (48); Canada (8); Japan (2); Australia (3); Norway (1); Sweden (1); Switzerland (3); Puerto Rico (1); Austria (1); Costa Rica (2); New Zealand (1); Barbados (5); Wales (1); Holland (7); Scotland (4); Curacao (1); St. Kitts (1); Montserrat (1)	161	11.4%
<b>1</b>	France (27); Portugal (9); Venezuela (2); Basque (1); Trinidad and Tobago (7)	46	3.2%
<b>2</b>	Ireland (7); Finland (2); Greece (5); Isreal (11); Dominican Republic (4); Saint Lucia (1); Ecuador (4); Saint Vincent (1)	35	2.5%
<b>3</b>	India (88); Columbia (6); Malta (1); Jamaica (10); Ile Maurice (1); Mautitius (1)	107	7.6%
<b>4</b>	Argentina (3); Brazil (4); Peru (2); Thailand (3); Fiji (2); Bolivia (1); Gambia (1); Honduras (1)	17	1.2%
<b>5</b>	Mexico (10); Sri Lanka (40); Nepal (4); Senegal (3); Uruguay (1)	58	4.1%
<b>6</b>	Turkey (2); El Salvador (2); Philippines (50); Malaysia (5)	59	4.2%
<b>7</b>	South Korea (1); Nigeria (8); Bangladesh (31); Singapore (2); Egypt (11); Morocco (33); Lebanon (18); Guyana (9); Korea (17); Syria (5); Guatemala (1); Panama (1)	137	9.7%
<b>8</b>	Hungary (3); Poland (10); Chili (5); Pakistan (43); Taiwan (47); Indonesia (7); Hong Kong (60); Sierra Leone (1); Tunisia (8); Paraguay (2); Bahrain (1); Kuwait (1)	188	13.3%
<b>9</b>	South Africa (4); Ghana (3); Serbia (7); Macedonia (1); Croatia (2); Iran (25); Bosnia (6); Algeria (21); Kyrgyzstan (2); Yugoslavia (16); Sudan (1); Ivory Coast (4); Jordan (1); Algeria (9); Kosovo (1)	103	7.2%
<b>10</b>	China (268); Tanzania (4); Cameroon (5); Cuba (4); Haiti (14); Yemen (1); Togo (5); Rwanda (3); Gabon (1); Macau (1); Tibet (1)	307	21.7%
<b>11</b>	Belarus (3); Romania (38); Estonia (5); Ukraine (26); Russia (42); Moldova (3); Georgia (1); Armenia (10); Azerbaijan (2); Saudi Arabia (3); Uzbekistan (2); Congo (3); Kazakhstan (4); Chad (4); Tibilisi (1); Burundi (3); Moldova (1); Latvia (6); Republic Demo Congo (1); Guinea (1)	159	11.3%
<b>12</b>	Bulgaria (6); Vietnam (7); Albania (9); Iraq (4); Eritrea (1); Afghanistan (8); Angola (1); Indochine (1); Ethiopia (1); Myanmar (1)	39	2.8%
<b>Total</b>		1416	100%

## APPENDIX B: CONSTRUCTION OF VARIABLES

Authoritarian experience	Scale ranging from 0 to 12 indicating the degree of authoritarian practices in the country of origin. The degree of authoritarian practices in the country of origin is based on the average Freedom House scores on civil liberties and political rights for the ten-year period prior immigrants' departure
Support for Democracy	4-point scale indicating respondents' support for the following statement: Would you say it is a very good (3), fairly good (2), fairly bad (1) or very bad way (0) of governing this country to have a democratic political system?
Support for non-democratic forms of governments	A. 4-point scale indicating respondents' support for the following statement: Would you say it is a very good (3), fairly good (2), fairly bad (1) or very bad way (0) of governing this country to have a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and election? B. 4-point scale indicating respondents' support for the following statement: Would you say it is a very good (3), fairly good (2), fairly bad (1) or very bad way (0) of governing this country to have the army? C. 4-point scale indicating respondents' support for the following statement: Would you say it is a very good (3), fairly good (2), fairly bad (1) or very bad way (0) of governing this country to have experts, not government, make decision according to what they think is good for the country?
Satisfaction with democracy	4-point scale from 0 to 3 indicating the extent to which respondents are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, where 3 means the respondent is very satisfied and 0 means that the respondent is not at all satisfied..
Education	Three point scale indicating whether 0) respondents did not finished high school, 1) complete high school, or 2) have any education higher than high school.
Age	Age in years.
Female	1 = female, 0 = male.
Income	1 to 10 scale for household income.
Employed	1 = full time or part time employed, 0 = all others.
Interest in politics	4-point scale from 0 to 1 (0, .33, .67, 1) indicating level of interest in politics, where 1 means a strong interest in politics and 0 means no interest at all.
Materialist values	0 to 6 scale where 6 means strong materialist values and 0 means strong post-materialist values. Based on the following three questions: People sometimes talk about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. Listed below are some of the goals which different people would give top priority. Please indicate which one of these you consider the most important? And which would be the next most important? 1. A. A high level of economic growth, B. Making sure this country has strong defence forces, C. Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities, or D. Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful 2. A. Maintaining order in the nation, B. Giving people more say in important government decisions, C. Fighting rising prices, or D. Protecting freedom of speech 3. A. A stable economy, B. Progress toward a less impersonal and more humane

society, C. Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money, or D. The fight against crime.

Left-right self-placement 1 to 10 scale where 10 means respondents consider themselves as being on the far right of the political spectrum and 1 means respondents consider themselves on the far left.

Length of residence Number of years spent in Australia.

## TABLES

**Table 1: Support for Democracy and Its Alternatives**

Percent saying it is a good thing to have these forms of governments:	Canadian-born Population	Immigrants from countries:	
		Democratic	Authoritarian
Democratic Political System	88	94	97
Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country	43	37	58
A strong leader who does not have to bother with elections are parliament	23	19	34
The army run the country	7	6	14
N <sup>1</sup>	<b>3,146</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>1,133</b>

Canadian component of the 2006 World Values Survey and its over-sample sample of recent immigrants.

1. Number of cases varies for each item. Numbers do not go below those reported.

**Table 2: Support for Authoritarian Regimes Among Immigrants**

	Support for Authoritarian Regimes (0-9)		
	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>
<b>Authoritarian experience scale (0-12)</b>	.047	.020*	.089
Length of residence	-.025	.007**	-.167
Age	-.005	.006	-.033
Female	-.149	.126	-.038
Education	-.412	.162*	-.086
Income	-.027	.025	-.037
Employed	-.063	.136	-.016
Interest in politics	-.450	.217*	-.067
2005 Interview	-.047	.133	-.012
Satisfaction with democracy	.001	.097	.000
Left-right self placement	.060	.035	.055
Materialist values	.066	.056	.038
Constant	4.042	.625***	
N		950	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.072	

Canadian component of the 2006 World Values Survey and its over-sample sample of recent immigrants.

Entries report unstandardized OLS regression B coefficients and Beta coefficients.

\*\*\*: p-value<.001; \*\*: p-value<.01; \*: p-value<.05.

**Table 3: Conception of Democracy**

Characteristics of Democracy (Mean Scores 1-10)	Canadian-born Population	Immigrants from countries:	
		Democratic	Authoritarian
# of Don't Know Responses (0-10)	.430	.240	.378
Religious authorities interpret the laws.	2.992	2.767	3.675
People choose their leaders in free elections.	8.661	8.958	8.792
The army takes over when government is incompetent.	3.984	3.533	3.804
Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.	8.047	8.081	8.229
People can change the laws in referendums.	7.377	7.342	7.666
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	6.187	6.00	6.433
People receive government assistance for unemployment.	7.573	7.598	7.611
The economy is prospering.	7.228	7.108	7.476
Criminals are severely punished.	6.973	6.935	7.524
Women have the same rights as men.	9.116	9.485	9.205
<b>N<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>631</b>

Canadian component of the 2006 World Values Survey and its over-sample sample of recent immigrants.

1. Number of cases varies for each item. Numbers do not go below those reported.

**Table 5: Conception of Democracy: The Impact of Authoritarian Experience**

	Impact of Authoritarian Experience (0-12)				
	B	SE	Significance Probability	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	N
Don't Know Responses (0-10)	.017	.010	.105	.041	562
Religious authorities interpret the laws.	.052	.032	.113	.034	553
People choose their leaders in free elections.	-.015	.023	.504	.002	557
The army takes over when government is incompetent.	-.032	.037	.380	.029	547
Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.	-.003	.025	.917	.050	550
People can change the laws in referendums.	.027	.032	.401	.022	545
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	-.028	.032	.373	.020	559
People receive government assistance for unemployment.	.015	.028	.603	.029	559
The economy is prospering.	-.079	.031*	.012	.038	552
Criminals are severely punished.	-.050	.036	.158	.041	552
Women have the same rights as men	-.042	.019*	.027	.011	556

Sources: Canadian component of the 2006 World Values Survey and its over-sample of recent immigrants. Entries report unstandardized OLS regression with the independent variables: age, income, employment status, education, female, length of residence, interest in politics, materialist values and left-right self placement  
 \*\*\*: p-value<.001; \*\*: p-value<.01; \*: p-value<.05.

**Table 6: Support for Authoritarian Regimes and Conceptions of Democracy**

	Impact of Authoritarian Experience (0-12)				
	B	SE	Significance Probability	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	N
Don't Know Responses (0-10)	.007	.013	.602	.037	415
Religious authorities interpret the laws.	.225	.064***	.000	.032	410
People choose their leaders in free elections.	-.117	.046*	.010	.006	414
The army takes over when government is incompetent.	.376	.068***	.000	.064	407
Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.	-.174	.044***	.000	.055	410
People can change the laws in referendums.	-.171	.059**	.004	.028	407
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	.108	.062	.081	.015	414
People receive government assistance for unemployment.	-.058	.057	.309	.033	414
The economy is prospering.	-.010	.062	.870	.009	408
Criminals are severely punished.	.060	.069	.379	.021	410
Women have the same rights as men	-.030	.037	.425	-.008	414

Sources: Canadian component of the 2006 World Values Survey and its over-sample of recent immigrants.

Entries report unstandardized OLS regression with the independent variables: age, income, employment status, education, female, length of residence, interest in politics, materialist values and left-right self placement

\*\*\*: p-value<.001; \*\*: p-value<.01; \*: p-value<.05.