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Canadian immigrants at the polls: the effects of socialisation in the country of origin and resocialisation in Canada on electoral participation

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ABSTRACT

Political socialisation plays a crucial but complex role in determining how immigrants adjust to the political environment of their host country. This study examines the effects of initial political socialisation and resocialisation on immigrants' electoral participation in Canada. It addresses three questions: To what extent does the outlooks that develop from earlier political experiences in the country of origin shape immigrants' subsequent electoral participation in Canada? To what extent, and how, does subsequent experience with politics in Canada affect electoral participation? And finally, how does initial socialisation in the country of origin condition resocialisation in Canada? The results indicate that not only does resocialisation leave a unique and lasting imprint on immigrant electoral participation in the host country, but also that the nature of resocialisation process in the host country is conditioned by the distinctive political outlooks immigrants acquire under different political regimes in their respective countries of origin.

KEYWORDS

Canada; immigrants; voting; political; socialisation

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Introduction

Political socialisation plays a crucial but complex role in determining how immigrants adjust to the political environment of their host country. The deep and relatively enduring predispositions, values and beliefs immigrants develop through political socialisation go on to shape their subsequent attitudes towards politics, and consequently the nature and extent of their political participation, in the host country (Bilodeau 2016). However, with the exception of those who arrive at a very young age and grow up almost entirely in the host country, immigrants' socialisation is distinctive from that of their native-born counterparts because it occurs twice, and in two different settings: first, there is initial political socialisation in the country of origin, and then political resocialisation in the 'host' country. Both of these processes may have a unique and lasting impact on political attitudes and behaviour. Adding to that complexity, the nature of their initial socialisation in the country of origin may affect immigrants' political resocialisation in the host country.

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Canada is a particularly interesting case with respect to the impact of immigrants' origins on their subsequent political behaviour in the host country. Like other traditional immigrant-receiving countries in which a large proportion of the population is foreign-born, Canada's immigrants make up a highly diverse group from many parts of the world. However, even among countries with large immigrant populations, Canada's diversity stands out. Consider, for instance, the composition of immigrant populations in Australia and New Zealand, compared to Canada: the most common country of origin of Canada's immigrants is India (Statistics Canada 2016), representing only 8% of all foreign-born residents; in contrast, nearly one in five foreign-born Australian residents is from the United Kingdom (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016), and more than one in five foreign-born residents of New Zealand is from England alone (Statistics New Zealand 2014). In fact, whereas the 10 most common countries of origin represent 48% of all foreign-born residents of Canada, the corresponding figures for Australia and New Zealand and 58% and 68%, respectively. To the extent that immigrants' origins matter, they are especially important when it comes to understanding Canada's immigrant population.

This study examines the effects of initial political socialisation and subsequent resocialisation on immigrants' electoral participation in Canada. It addresses three questions: To what extent do the outlooks that develop from earlier political experiences in the country of origin shape immigrants' subsequent electoral participation in Canada? To what extent, and how, does subsequent experience with politics in Canada affect electoral participation? And finally, how does initial socialisation in the country of origin condition resocialisation in Canada? The focus is on two particular contextual features of the country of origin and the host country, Canada: the type of political regime in the country of origin (democratic versus autocratic), and levels of electoral mobilisation in the host country during the critical first few years of resocialisation (aggregate voter turnout in the first couple of Canadian elections after migration).

The investigation begins by reviewing the existing research on the development of relatively stable values, beliefs and predispositions before and after migration, and then presenting a series of hypotheses about the long-term effects of the type of political regime under which immigrants were initially socialised, and levels of electoral mobilisation in the host country during the critical first few years of resocialisation. Following a brief description of the data and measures used to test these hypotheses, the study then turns to the evidence. The results indicate that not only does resocialisation leave a unique and lasting imprint on immigrant electoral participation in the host country, but also that the nature of resocialisation process in the host country is conditioned by the distinctive political outlooks immigrants acquire under different political regimes in their respective countries of origin. The study concludes by discussing the implications of the findings.

The political socialisation and resocialisation of immigrants

Theories of political socialisation focus on the process by which individuals acquire deep, enduring political predispositions through their interactions with family, peers, educators and other authorities, and through their exposure to media (Sears and Levy 2003). These general predispositions, which are thought to develop relatively early in life,

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shape the ways in which citizens react to the political stimuli they encounter later in life, including the opinions they form about issues, their attitudes about political parties, leaders and candidates, parties and their views about the political system in general (Sears and Levy 2003).

However, while there is general agreement that early political learning leaves a lasting imprint, political socialisation research is not all of a piece: there is no consensus on what period in life political predispositions solidify, or on how the socialisation process unfolds (Sears and Levy 2003). One view is that predispositions 'crystallise' sometime between childhood and early adolescence (Hyman 1969; Easton and Dennis 1969), while another perspective suggests the process is continues well into adulthood (Jennings and Markus 1984; Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991). Moreover, whereas some see the deepening and strengthening of political predispositions as incremental, others emphasise the importance of periodic, highly salient social, economic and political events in their development (Sears and Valentino 1997).

Understanding the socialisation process and its effects is even more complicated when it comes to immigrants, many of whom have spent a significant part of their lives in another environment. Their earliest political experiences take place in circumstances that are often drastically different from those in the host country. Given the significance of early political learning, research has sought to uncover the ways in which initial socialisation generates systematic attitudinal and behavioural differences between immigrant and native-born populations. In particular, researchers have paid attention to the types of political regimes in which immigrants had their initial encounters with politics. The regime context is a stand-in for the sorts of politically relevant predispositions immigrants may have learned in their early years in the country of origin. If these predispositions are relatively stable and resistant to change, then moving from one kind of regime to another ought to have consequences.

The results of research on the impact of country of origin regimes have been mixed. Bilodeau, McAllister, and Kanji (2010) find that although immigrants in Australia who are from authoritarian regimes are less likely than others to support democratic principles, they are neither more nor less likely to participate in electoral activities because of their authoritarian countries of origin. Moreover, Bilodeau (2014) shows that immigrants in Canada from partly democratic and non-democratic countries express support for *both* democratic and authoritarian systems. However, some studies have generated less ambiguous evidence. Bueker (2005) shows that immigrant citizens in the United States who are from 'nondemocratic' regimes are less likely than other immigrants to vote, and Ramakrishnan (2005) also provides evidence that turnout rates are relatively low among immigrants from repressive and communist regimes. Bilodeau (2008) shows that Australian immigrants from repressive regimes are less likely than others to participate in protest politics. There is also some evidence that the regime in the country of origin influences values and beliefs in the host country: McAllister and Makkai (1992) find that immigrants in Australia whose countries of origin are 'lacking in democratic traditions' exhibit not only higher levels of political trust, but also more authoritarian values than immigrants from liberal democracies, and Heath et al. (2013) show that immigrants in Britain are more likely to express a sense of duty towards voting when they come from democratic origins.

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Accordingly, the first set of hypotheses concerns the effects of initial socialisation in different political regimes on immigrant electoral participation. Given their initial socialisation in regimes that typically lack competitive and meaningful elections, the expectation is that immigrants from less democratic and more autocratic regimes are relatively unfamiliar with and perhaps unenthusiastic about elections in their host country. Moreover, if initial socialisation is the key explanatory mechanism, then immigrants who have been more fully socialised in less democratic and more autocratic regimes (that is, those who are older when they migrate) should be less likely than others to adapt to competitive elections. The hypotheses are:

H1: Immigrants from autocratic countries of origin have a lower propensity to vote than those from democratic countries of origin.

H2: Immigrants from autocratic countries of origin *who arrived in Canada as adults* have a lower propensity to vote than those from democratic countries of origin.

In contrast to the research on pre-migration influences, studies that take into account political resocialisation in the host country have often focused on the extent to which immigrants take up the dominant political attitudes and patterns of behaviour of the general population – that is, how they become more similar to the native-born counterparts. The critical factor seems to be the length of time that immigrants spend in the host country, which is a stand-in for gradual exposure to the political system, and the development of political knowledge, political loyalties and social ties (Xu 2005; White et al. 2008; Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; Wong 2000). Numerous studies have found a positive relationship between the number of years spent in the host country and the propensity to vote. Most of this research focuses on immigrants in the United States (Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Bueker 2005; Xu 2005; Ramakrishnan 2005). However, studies in Canada (Gidengil et al. 2004; White et al. 2008), Sweden (Bevelander 2015) and the Netherlands (Togeby 1999) have also uncovered this relationship. Consistent with the idea that socialisation is incremental, the process appears to be slow for immigrants: most of the evidence indicates that immigrants' attitudes and behaviours continue to evolve many years, and even decades, after settlement in the host country.

However, a small number of studies presuppose that political events in the host country during the early years after arrival leave their mark on immigrant political outlooks, suggesting that the resocialisation process might not be quite as slow and incremental as most other studies indicate. The intriguing implication is that immigrant resocialisation is very similar to the classical view of political socialisation in which highly salient political events early in life are particularly significant in shaping predispositions. The difference is that the initial years after arrival in the host country, rather than the years of childhood or adolescence, are the 'impressionable years' in which salient, 'formative' events matter for immigrant resocialisation. There have been very few empirical tests of this hypothesis, and supporting evidence is scant. Previous research by McAllister and Makkai (1991), Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner (1991) and Blais (2005) found no evidence of an enduring effect of experiences in the initial years after arrival in the

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host country on the political party preferences of immigrants in Australia, the United States or Canada, respectively.

It is possible, however, that events and experiences in the early years in the host country may have an enduring and discernible impact on some immigrant political attitudes or behaviours, but not others. The focus of these earlier studies on party preferences might partly account for their null findings. In Canada, for instance, party preferences would seem an unlikely candidate for immigrant arrival cohort effects, simply because previous research has shown the partisanship of Canadians in general to be quite flexible over time (Johnston 1992; Clarke et al. 1996). The same cannot be said for voter turnout, for which there is clear evidence of stable, enduring generational differences in Canada (Blais et al. 2004a). Indeed, Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner (2007) suggest that participation in the first two elections for which Canadians are eligible to vote may be critical in determining their long-term voting habits.

Accordingly, this paper takes up the idea that formative events in the host country have a lasting impact by focusing on one particular set of events: elections in the first few years after immigrants arrive in Canada. Certainly, when it comes to citizens in democratic countries more generally, there appears to be something about their early experiences with elections that conditions subsequent behaviour. These early elections are the first major political events in the host country for many immigrants, irrespective of whether they are eligible to vote. Election campaigns, especially federal campaigns, are highly visible political events and opportunities for learning, interpersonal influence and, of course, participation.

Nevertheless, some campaigns capture more public attention and generate higher levels of citizen participation than others; that is, *levels of mobilisation* – whether by parties, leaders, other groups and organisations, or the media – vary from election to election. The two most recent Canadian federal elections are instructive examples. The 2 May 2011 election campaign featured two party leaders in their fourth consecutive contest, including the incumbent Prime Minister, another leader in his sixth campaign, and an unpopular leader of the official opposition (Jeffrey 2011). Observers described it as 'a dull election' (Dornan 2011, 7) and 'a non-event' (Jeffrey 2011, 46). Voter turnout was only 61.1%, one of the lowest participation rates recorded for a federal election. In contrast, the 2015 campaign was a competitive contest between three parties from the outset (Coletto 2016) and included two party leaders in their first campaign. In the period leading up to the election, donations, volunteers and membership numbers in local electoral district associations grew considerably (Cross 2016), and the campaign itself was an unusually long 11 weeks, offering potential voters more opportunities for exposure and learning. Voter turnout jumped to 68.3%, the highest level in more than two decades.

These varying mobilisation levels should be consequential for new immigrants, regardless of their eligibility to vote and irrespective of the precise reasons why some elections mobilise voters more than others. Whether citizens are persuaded to head to the polling booth because of the competitiveness of contests, significant political issues of the day, the appeal of leaders or party efforts to 'get out the vote', the salient point is that campaigns which mobilise greater numbers of voters are more likely to foster durable, participatory attitudes among new, receptive immigrants. Accordingly, the

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expectation is that levels of mobilisation during 'formative' election campaigns – the first couple of election campaigns to which immigrants are exposed – can have an enduring effect on immigrants' subsequent electoral participation. For example, immigrants whose first significant encounter with Canadian politics was the 2015 federal election campaign were probably left with a very different impression of the significance of electoral participation in Canada than those whose first encounter was the relatively subdued 2011 federal election:

H3: The higher the level of mobilisation in initial Canadian elections, the greater the propensity to vote.

Additionally, if resocialisation is the mechanism at work, then these formative elections in Canada ought to be particularly consequential for immigrants who arrived later in life. There is no precise period during the life course in which political events like elections serve as catalysts for socialisation (Sears and Valentino 1997), but a logical assumption is that immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults are more susceptible than immigrants who arrive as children to the effects of the first few Canadian election campaigns. Adult immigrants are more likely to have meaningful exposure to these formative elections because they have more opportunities for exposure to political news, contact with campaigns and political discussion with friends, neighbours and coworkers. The hypothesis flowing from this line of reasoning is:

H4: The higher the level of mobilisation in formative Canadian elections, the higher the propensity to vote *among immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults*.

Missing from the existing studies on political socialisation in the country of origin and the host country is any consideration of how resocialisation is shaped by initial socialisation. Research shows that the combination of experiences before and after migration affects political attitudes and behaviour in complex ways. For example, Maxwell (2010) and White, Bilodeau and Nevitte (2015) find that immigrants' comparisons of their social, economic and political experiences in the country of origin with their experiences in the host country have subtle, indirect influences on their political attitudes, and Just and Anderson (2012) show that obtaining citizenship is particularly important to political participation in the host country among immigrants from less democratic countries. It is entirely reasonable, and consistent with what we know about political learning, to suppose that the content of initial socialisation influences the process of resocialisation. One possibility is that immigrants initially socialised in regimes more similar to Canada's adapt quickly to Canadian politics and find that election campaigns in their new host country bear a resemblance to those experienced in their countries of origin. Immigrants from less democratic regimes, on the other hand, face such significant discontinuities that their earliest political experiences in Canada might leave a strong imprint on subsequent behaviour. This may well be the case for immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults and who were more fully socialised in their less democratic countries of origin. This line of reasoning prompts two additional hypotheses about the conditional effects of formative elections:

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H5: The higher the level of mobilisation in formative Canadian elections, the higher the propensity to vote among immigrants from autocratic regimes.

H6: The higher the level of mobilisation in formative Canadian elections, the higher the propensity to vote among immigrants from autocratic regimes *who arrived in Canada as adults*.

With these hypotheses in mind, the investigation turns to the data and measures employed in the empirical tests.

Data and key measures

The analysis relies on individual-level data from 12 Canadian Election Studies (CESs) conducted between 1968 and 2011 (see Appendix for details).[1]

In addition to asking respondents whether or not they voted in the most recent federal election, each of these nationally representative surveys of Canadian citizens includes indicators of each respondent's year of birth, country of birth and, for those born outside Canada, the year of arrival in Canada. The CES sample sizes are typically quite large, and because the surveys are nationally representative and immigrants constitute a significant share of the Canadian population, each survey contains a large number of foreign-born respondents. When multiple surveys are pooled, there is a sufficient number of foreign-born respondents to generate quite reliable estimates of the effects of regime type in the country of origin and the salience of formative elections: the total number of observations available for analysis is 4244. Pooling the surveys also makes it possible to control for the effects of different electoral contexts across time.

To measure the regime type in immigrants' countries of origin, the investigation draws on data from the Polity IV Project (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2016), which codes states according to their 'authority patterns'. More specifically the Polity IV Project's 'polity score' for the country of origin in the year of migration is applied to each immigrant in the CES data. The polity scores, ranging from +10 (strongly democratic) to −10 (strongly autocratic), are distributed unevenly within the CES immigrant sample, with nearly half (45.3%) of all foreign-born respondents originating from countries with a score of 10. Moreover, more than a quarter (27.5%) of the immigrant respondents could not be assigned a polity score, either because the immigrant's country of origin could not be discerned or a polity score was not available. Consequently, the variable for country of origin regime was coded into four groups (see Table 1): immigrants from strongly democratic regimes (polity scores of 10), partly democratic regimes (scores of 1–9), mostly autocratic regimes (scores of −10 to zero) and immigrants from regimes

Table 1. Distribution of immigrant respondents by country of origin regime.

Regime category	% Respondents
Strongly democratic (POLITY measure = 10)	45.3
Mostly democratic (POLITY measure = 1–9)	12.6
Mostly autocratic (POLITY measure = −10 to 0)	14.6
Regime not coded	27.5

that could not be coded. Immigrants from uncodable regimes are incorporated in subsequent analysis because omitting those observations would reduce the sample size dramatically.

The measure of mobilisation in formative elections uses historical data on voter turnout in federal elections (Elections Canada, 2016). This measure is the average percentage turnout in the first two federal elections that occurred after an immigrant arrived in Canada. The variable ranges from a minimum of 61.05 to a maximum of 79.2, with a mean of 73.02 and a standard deviation of 3.54.

Analysis

The analysis begins with an examination of the relationship between immigrants' country of origin regime type and their electoral participation (hypothesis one), and mobilisation in the first pair of Canadian federal elections to which they were exposed and their subsequent electoral participation (hypothesis three). The analysis employs a multivariate estimation procedure, binary logit, to isolate the independent effects of mobilisation levels in formative elections and regime types in the country of origin, while simultaneously controlling for other potentially confounding factors.

The results of the first stage of the analyses are presented in the columns on the left in Table 2. This model of immigrant electoral participation includes the explanatory variables of interest, mobilisation levels in formative elections and country of origin

Table 2. Predictors of immigrant turnout, all immigrants (binary logit results with robust standard errors (RSE)).

	B	RSE	*B*	RSE
Formative mobilisation	0.07***	0.02	0.05**	0.02
Mostly democratic	−0.38*	0.16	−0.21	0.17
Mostly autocratic	−0.50***	0.15	−0.28	0.16
Regime not coded	−0.19	0.13	0.06	0.14
Year of arrival			−0.01**	0.00
Age			0.02***	0.01
Post-secondary education			0.30*	0.13
Fifth income quintile			0.10	0.16
Fourth income quintile			0.05	0.17
Second income quintile			−0.11	0.17
First income quintile			−1.09***	0.17
Female			−0.04	0.11
1968 election	−0.25	0.22	−0.48	0.30
1974 election	0.11	0.25	−0.09	0.31
1979 election	0.12	0.25	−0.06	0.31
1984 election	−0.20	0.26	−0.32	0.32
1988 election	0.14	0.27	0.21	0.30
1993 election	0.44	0.29	0.68*	0.34
1997 election	−0.53*	0.25	−0.44	0.27
2000 election	−0.46	0.25	−0.33	0.26
2004 election	−0.19	0.25	−0.07	0.27
2006 election	0.49	0.33	0.65*	0.32
2008 election	0.32	0.29	0.43	0.30
Constant	−2.66*	1.15	26.60**	9.95
Nagelkerke R^2	0.04		0.12	
N	4244		4244	

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$

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regime type (with each category entered as a dummy variable and strongly democratic regimes treated as the reference category). To isolate the average effects of those variables across all 12 elections, the model also includes controls for the year of the survey (dummy variables, with the most recent survey, 2011, as the reference category).

The estimates for the first model suggest that there is empirical support for hypotheses one and three. The logit coefficients for partly democratic and mostly autocratic country of origin regimes are negative and statistically significant, indicating that immigrants from these regime types have a systematically lower likelihood of voting than immigrants from strongly democratic regimes. The coefficient for mobilisation levels in formative elections is positive and statistically significant, which suggests that the first couple of federal elections to which immigrants are exposed leave an enduring mark and influence their subsequent electoral participation rates.

The sizes of these effects are easier to appreciate when the logit coefficients are converted into more straightforward changes in the predicted probability of voting. These changes are calculated by varying the values of each explanatory factor while holding all other variables in the model constant at their mean values. The results show that immigrants from partly democratic regimes and mostly autocratic regimes are, respectively, an estimated four and six points less likely to vote than those from strongly democratic regimes. The probability of voting is an estimated 15 points higher when average voter turnout in formative elections is at its highest observed value (61.05) compared to its lowest observed value (79.2).

However, the results in the first model of Table 2 offer only a partial view of the effects of regime type and mobilisation levels in formative elections on electoral participation. There is good reason to think that immigrants from different types of regimes also have distinctive sociodemographic profiles, which may in turn affect their propensity to vote; the potential effects of differences in age, gender, educational attainment and income levels – factors usually linked to political participation – therefore need to be taken into account. By the same token, immigrants whose first Canadian elections had lower mobilisation rates are different from other immigrants in at least one important respect: they are more likely to be recent immigrants, who arrived in Canada at a time when voter turnout has reached historically low levels, and who have less exposure to, and experience with, the Canadian political system. Both of those factors are likely to weaken the propensity to vote. Accordingly, the next stage of the analysis takes these factors into account.

The multivariate results on the right side of Table 2 show that a different picture emerges when sociodemographic controls are introduced. The effect of mobilisation levels in formative elections on the propensity to vote weakens, and the differences between immigrants originating from different regimes are even more diminished and no longer statistically significant. The turnout estimated differences in voter turnout between immigrants from strongly democratic regimes, on the one hand, and those from partly democratic or mostly autocratic regimes, on the other hand, are reduced by about one half: when these effects are translated into predicted probabilities, immigrants from partly democratic regimes are an estimated 2 percentage points less likely to vote than those from strongly democratic regimes, and the corresponding difference between immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes and those from strongly democratic regimes is 3 points. The estimated electoral participation gap between immigrants

who arrive when average voter turnout is at its lowest and highest is reduced by about one-third.

A closer examination of the data (not shown here) reveals that the year in which immigrants arrived in Canada is primarily responsible for the reduced effects of both country of origin regime type and mobilisation levels in formative elections. Taking into account when immigrants arrived in Canada reduces the effects of the mobilisation levels in formative elections and regime type on immigrant electoral participation by nearly the same magnitude as taking into account all other sociodemographic controls.

There is some evidence, then, to support the initial socialisation and resocialisation hypotheses, but it is not entirely convincing. What about the second and fourth hypotheses? If the regime type during initial socialisation and mobilisation levels in elections during resocialisation really do matter, then they should be more consequential for immigrants who were more fully socialised in their countries of origin (hypothesis two) and who are old enough when they arrive in Canada for the first couple of elections to which they are exposed to take on significance (hypothesis four). Accordingly, the next stage of the analysis divides the immigrant respondents into two groups: those who were 18 years of age or older when they came to Canada (the 'adult' group) and those who were under 18 years of age (the 'pre-adult' group).

The results reported in Table 3 reveal important differences between immigrants who arrived in Canada before and after reaching adulthood. Mobilisation levels in formative elections after immigration are consequential for adult immigrants, even when

Table 3. Predictors of immigrant turnout, pre-adult and adult immigrants (binary logit results).

	Pre-adult				Adult			
	B	RSE	*B*	RSE	*B*	RSE	*B*	RSE
Formative mobilisation	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.10***	0.02	0.07***	0.02
Mostly democratic	−0.60*	0.24	−0.38	0.25	−0.22	0.22	−0.03	0.25
Mostly autocratic	−0.36	0.24	−0.12	0.25	−0.59**	0.19	−0.39	0.20
Regime not coded	−0.29	0.21	0.08	0.22	−0.16	0.18	0.05	0.19
Year of arrival			0.00	0.02			−0.03***	0.01
Age			0.04*	0.02			0.01	0.01
Post-secondary education			0.39*	0.19			0.26	0.17
Fifth income quintile			0.23	0.25			0.02	0.21
Fourth income quintile			0.29	0.25			−0.18	0.22
Second income quintile			0.06	0.27			−0.24	0.22
First income quintile			−1.08***	0.27			−1.11***	0.22
Female			0.09	0.17			−0.16	0.14
1968 election	−0.42	0.41	−0.48	0.79	−0.30	0.28	−0.87	0.45
1974 election	−0.14	0.43	−0.08	0.70	0.09	0.32	−0.44	0.46
1979 election	−0.40	0.43	−0.30	0.66	0.37	0.35	−0.14	0.46
1984 election	−0.40	0.43	−0.19	0.60	−0.24	0.34	−0.73	0.47
1988 election	−0.04	0.44	0.28	0.56	0.12	0.36	−0.14	0.43
1993 election	0.15	0.44	0.66	0.55	0.59	0.43	0.45	0.49
1997 election	−0.91*	0.41	−0.68	0.47	−0.38	0.34	−0.46	0.39
2000 election	−0.80*	0.40	−0.69	0.45	−0.31	0.34	−0.22	0.37
2004 election	−0.44	0.43	−0.24	0.45	−0.13	0.32	−0.14	0.34
2006 election	0.16	0.60	0.44	0.57	0.59	0.39	0.70	0.39
2008 election	−0.18	0.47	0.05	0.47	0.61	0.38	0.61	0.39
Constant	1.64	2.09	8.04	31.05	−5.24***	1.44	51.15**	17.41
Nagelkerke R^2	0.04		0.14		0.06		0.12	
N	1732		1732		2512		2512	

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$

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sociodemographic factors are controlled, but they have no discernible impact on the electoral participation of pre-adult immigrants. Among the adult immigrant group, the coefficient for mobilisation levels in formative elections is positive and statistically significant, with and without sociodemographic factors controlled. Among the pre-adult group, the corresponding coefficients are positive but much weaker and not significant. The effects of country of origin regime type also vary according to how old immigrants were when they arrived in Canada, but these differences are not statistically significant when sociodemographic factors are taken into account.

The analysis thus far of the effects of country of origin regime type and mobilisation levels in formative elections is summarised in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. These figures illustrate the changes in the predicted probability of voting associated with changes in regime type and changes in mobilisation levels in formative elections. As Figure 1 shows, there is no clear evidence that differences in country of origin regime type have any impact on immigrant turnout, independent of other sociodemographic factors. This is the case irrespective of whether immigrants arrived in Canada before or after reaching adulthood.[2] Figure 2, by way of contrast, shows that mobilisation levels in the first couple of Canadian elections to which immigrants are exposed do influence their subsequent electoral participation, and that these formative elections leave their mark exclusively on the voting behaviour of immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults. The evidence thus far supports the empirical expectations concerning resocialisation, but there is less support for the idea that initial socialisation in less democratic regimes matters when it comes to turnout.

However, the final pair of hypotheses supposes that initial political socialisation in the country of origin influences immigrant behaviour in the host country in a less direct way, by conditioning newcomers' resocialisation. To test this possibility, interaction terms for country of origin regime type and mobilisation levels in formative elections are

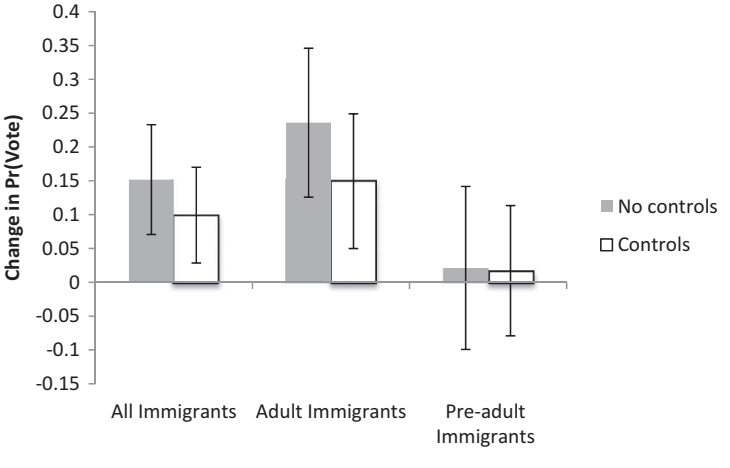

Figure 1. Estimated effects of formative mobilisation after arrival in Canada*.

* Data derived from the logit estimates in Tables 2 and 3. The bars represent changes in the predicted probability of voting as formative mobilisation increases from minimum to maximum observed values, when all other variables in the models are held constant. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

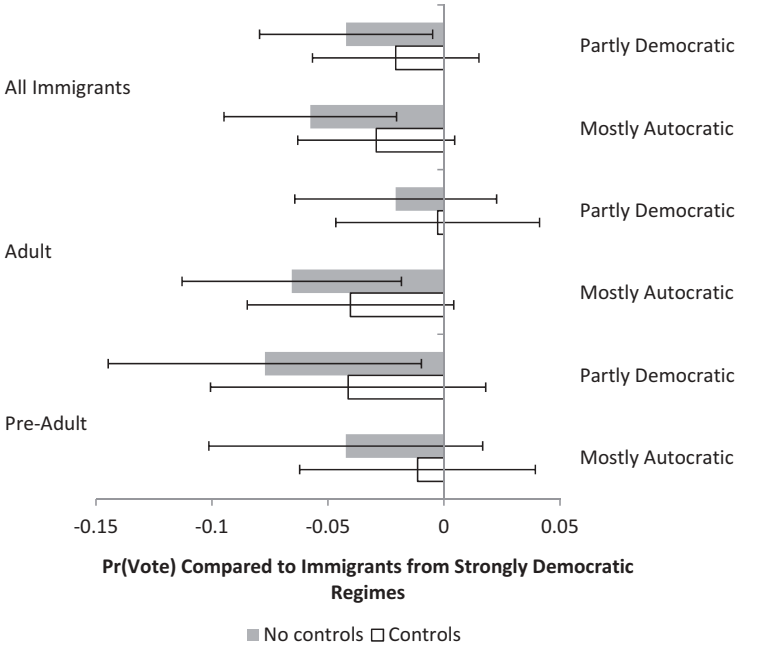

Figure 2. Estimated effects of country of origin regime type*.
* Data derived from the logit estimates in Tables 2 and 3. The bars represent the difference in the predicted probability of voting when all other variables in the models are held constant. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

introduced to the turnout model. If the political context from which immigrants originated moderates the impact of formative elections, then these interactions ought to be significant.

The multivariate results for the full immigrant sample, presented on the left in Table 4, lend strong support to hypothesis five. These estimates confirm that whether or not the first couple of elections after immigration really are 'formative' depends on the type of regime from which immigrants originate. In this interaction model, the 'formative mobilisation' coefficient represents the effect of higher aggregate levels of voter participation in the first couple of elections to which immigrants were exposed on turnout among immigrants from strongly democratic regimes (that is, the effect of formative elections when all other regime categories are at zero). That coefficient is effectively zero, and, when transformed into changes in the probability of voting, immigrants from strongly democratic regimes whose initial Canadian elections were at the highest observed level of mobilisation are a mere half a percentage point more likely to vote than their counterparts whose initial elections were at the lowest observed level of mobilisation (Figure 3). In contrast, the coefficient for the interaction between mobilisation levels in formative elections and immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes ('formative mobilisation × mostly autocratic') is in the anticipated positive direction and is statistically significant; more importantly, the *joint* statistical significance of both the 'main effect' and the interaction – the appropriate test of whether mobilisation levels in formative elections have a significant effect on turnout among those from

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Table 4. Predictors of immigrant turnout with interactions (binary logit results).

	All		Pre-adult		Adult	
	B	RSE	*B*	RSE	*B*	RSE
Formative mobilisation	0.00	0.02	−0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03
Mostly democratic	−2.16	3.09	−2.38	5.90	−0.31	3.80
Mostly autocratic	−8.22**	2.90	−3.89	4.66	−7.21*	3.60
Regime not coded	−5.28	2.94	−6.53	4.67	−3.25	3.83
Formative mobilisation × mostly democratic	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.05
Formative mobilisation × mostly autocratic	0.11**	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.09	0.05
Formative mobilisation × regime not coded	0.07	0.04	0.09	0.06	0.00	0.05
Year of arrival	−0.01**	0.00	0.00	0.02	−0.03**	0.01
Age	0.02***	0.01	0.04*	0.02	0.01	0.01
Post-secondary education	0.30*	0.13	0.39*	0.19	0.26	0.17
Fifth income quintile	0.11	0.16	0.23	0.25	0.03	0.22
Fourth income quintile	0.05	0.17	0.28	0.25	−0.17	0.23
Second income quintile	−0.10	0.17	0.06	0.27	−0.22	0.22
First income quintile	−1.06***	0.17	−1.05***	0.26	−1.09***	0.22
Female	−0.04	0.11	0.08	0.17	−0.17	0.14
1968 election	−0.50	0.30	−0.41	0.79	−0.90*	0.45
1974 election	−0.13	0.31	−0.05	0.70	−0.48	0.46
1979 election	−0.09	0.31	−0.27	0.65	−0.17	0.46
1984 election	−0.36	0.32	−0.18	0.61	−0.76	0.47
1988 election	0.17	0.31	0.32	0.57	−0.17	0.43
1993 election	0.63	0.34	0.67	0.55	0.39	0.50
1997 election	−0.49	0.28	−0.66	0.47	−0.52	0.40
2000 election	−0.37	0.27	−0.69	0.45	−0.26	0.37
2004 election	−0.10	0.27	−0.21	0.46	−0.16	0.36
2006 election	0.63*	0.32	0.47	0.56	0.68	0.40
2008 election	0.42	0.30	0.09	0.47	0.59	0.40
Constant	27.97**	9.87	7.17	30.89	52.05**	17.13
Nagelkerke R^2	0.12		0.14		0.13	
N	4244		1732		2512	

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

mostly autocratic regimes – is $p < .0004$. In fact, among immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes, the estimated turnout gap between those whose formative elections were at the highest and lowest observed levels of mobilisation is 29 points.

Once again, however, when the same interaction model is applied to adult and pre-adult immigrants separately, the results indicate that the conditional effect of regime type and formative elections is limited to immigrants who arrived in Canada in adulthood (hypothesis six). In the results of the models for these separated samples, also shown in Table 4, none of the coefficients for the variables of primary interest achieve conventionally acceptable levels of statistical significance. But among adult immigrants, the interaction is in the expected direction, and the joint statistical significance of both the 'main effect' and the interaction between mobilisation levels in formative elections and mostly autocratic countries of origin is $p < .0003$. Consistent with the final hypothesis, the positive impact of high-mobilising formative elections on turnout is not only stronger among immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes, but also particularly strong among those who are most likely to have been completely socialised in their countries of origin before arriving in Canada.

Figure 4 illustrates the magnitude of these interactions as changes in predicted probabilities. With the exception of adult immigrants from mostly autocratic countries, the effects of mobilisation formative elections on the propensity to vote are modest and statistically insignificant, ranging from an estimated four-point decrease to an eight-

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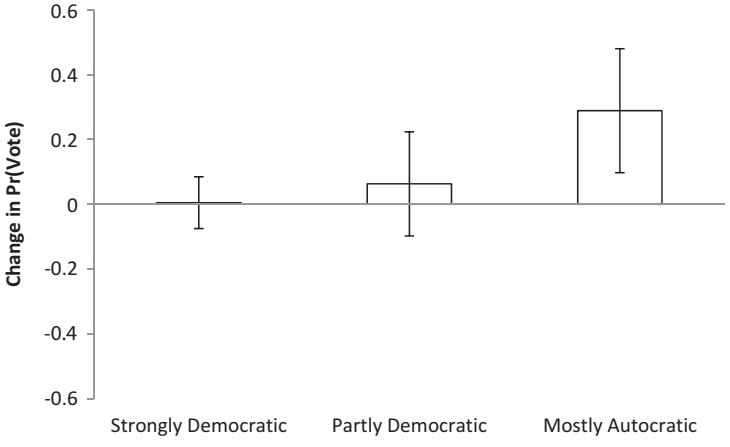

Figure 3. Estimated effects of formative mobilisation after arrival in Canada, by country of origin regime type*.
* Data derived from the logit estimates in Table 4. The bars represent changes in the predicted probability of voting as formative mobilisation increases from minimum to maximum observed values, when all other variables in the models are held constant. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

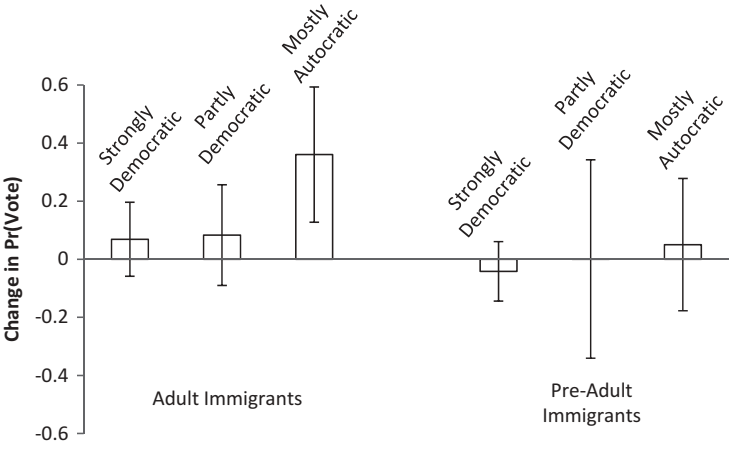

Figure 4. Estimated effects of formative mobilisation after arrival in Canada, by country of origin regime type and age at arrival*.
* Data derived from the logit estimates in Table 4. The bars represent changes in the predicted probability of voting as formative mobilisation increases from minimum to maximum observed values, when all other variables in the models are held constant. The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

point increase in turnout. When it comes to adult immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes, the propensity to vote is a striking 36 points higher among those whose formative elections were at the highest observed level of mobilisation when compared to those at the lowest observed level. This evidence is consistent with the hypothesis six.

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Conclusions

The challenges when it comes to understanding immigrant adaptation to politics in a new setting, and perhaps especially in Canada, are numerous. Shared early political experiences, many of which might reasonably be taken for granted by many scholars who study the political behaviour of mass publics, cannot be assumed for immigrant populations. Unpacking the immigrant political experience in Canada and elsewhere necessitates taking into account their early political experiences in different contexts, while also bearing in mind that their exposure to politics in the host country varies considerably, depending on how long they have been in their new setting. The profile of Canada's immigrants suggests an even greater challenge: even among the small subset of countries with large immigrant populations, Canadian immigrants have particularly diverse origins.

This study tested several empirical expectations about the impact of Canadian immigrants' experiences in their old setting, their experiences in Canada and the interplay between both on electoral participation in Canada. The investigation was structured around four empirical expectations: first, initial political socialisation in the country of origin can have a lasting impact on the political behaviour of immigrants; second, in the process of their political resocialisation in Canada, immigrants' earliest impressions can also leave an imprint on their subsequent political behaviour; third, prior political socialisation in the country of origin can affect the way in which immigrants are later resocialised in Canada; and fourth, the impact of initial socialisation, resocialisation and their interplay ought to be more evident among immigrants who are more fully socialised in their countries of origin before they arrive in Canada. Each of these was tested in a specific domain: electoral politics.

The results of these tests underscore the complex effects of immigrants' initial political socialisation and subsequent resocialisation. There is unambiguous evidence of the lasting impact of resocialisation, and it is consistent with at least one classical view of political socialisation which emphasises the importance of early, 'formative' events on the development of political predispositions. Voter turnout in the first two federal elections to which immigrants were exposed is systematically related to immigrants' own likelihood of voting, irrespective of how long ago those 'formative' elections took place. Indeed, it is worth noting that the mean number of years spent in Canada among immigrants who arrived as adults is 25.9 years, suggesting that the impact of formative elections is quite durable. Although previous studies considered but did not uncover formative resocialisation effects, it is possible that these effects are limited to only some kinds of immigrants. It is also possible that the effects are domain-specific and limited to electoral participation.

However, it is unclear whether initial socialisation in different political regimes has any independent effect on political behaviour in Canada. Immigrants' propensity to vote is unquestionably related to the type of regime in which they were initially socialised. But those turnout differences evidently have more to do with other characteristics of immigrants, especially *when* they came to Canada, rather than their socialisation in different political regimes in their countries of origin. This finding is consistent with mixed evidence from Canada and other settings on the role of the political context in immigrants' countries of origin in shaping political attitudes and behaviour in the host

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country. The results of this study, which demonstrate the impact of other sociodemographic factors on the relationship between country of origin regime and host country participation, suggest that immigrant selection effects might be crucial in understanding why initial political socialisation does not always appear to influence the host country outlooks and actions of immigrants. In the Canadian case, this could be a mix of both self-selection and host country-selection effects: Canada selects immigrants largely on the basis of education and labour market skills, and it increasingly relies on these criteria to choose newcomers (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010).

Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this study also shows that the effects of resocialisation are more limited than they appear on the surface, while the effects of initial socialisation in the country of origin are deeper than they seem at first blush.

As anticipated, it turns out that whether 'formative' election experiences in Canada have a lasting impact depends on a couple of things: the stage in life at which immigrants arrive in Canada and the regime type in the country of origin. The implication is that initial political socialisation in a different setting shapes the way in which immigrants later adjust to politics in Canada. For immigrants from mostly autocratic regimes who came to Canada as adults, the earliest Canadian elections that they experience are highly influential; for other immigrants, those early elections leave no discernible imprint on their subsequent behaviour.

These effects are perhaps best illustrated by returning to the examples of the two most recent Canadian federal elections. Two *adult* immigrants from China, an *autocratic* country of origin, one whose first experience with a national election in Canada was the low-turnout 2011 contest, and the other whose initial experience was with the higher-turnout 2015 election, are likely to exhibit discernibly different levels of electoral engagement over the long haul: the former is less likely than the latter to vote in subsequent elections. By way of contrast, when it comes to other new immigrants – those who come from an autocratic regime like China, but who arrive in Canada before adulthood, or those who come to Canada from a democratic regime like Great Britain or Germany at any age – neither the 2011 nor 2015 election is likely to leave any lasting mark on their future electoral participation.

These findings have two important practical implications with respect to immigrant political adaption in Canada. The first relates to concerns about newcomers' backgrounds, and in particular whether those from vastly different cultural and political systems can adjust to democratic life. An underlying fear of some critics seems to be that newcomers from autocratic regimes will not sufficiently adjust to democratic politics. Voting is an important act of citizenship, and for many it is one of their only formal political acts. The outcome of this investigation suggests that, at least when it comes to voting, fears about insufficient adaptation and integration are unfounded: adult immigrants from autocratic regimes are the only group for which there is clear evidence of political learning in Canada, and that group is presumably the one critics believe need to learn the most.

The second implication concerns the crucial function of immigrants' experiences in the early years after their arrival in Canada and the role of the Canadian state and society in fostering political integration. If the electoral environment – in this case, voter enthusiasm specifically – can have a lasting influence on immigrants' political

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participation, then other aspects of the early years in Canada may well be equally critical. This suggests that public officials, political parties and leaders, as well as other agents of political mobilisation, may be able to effectively nurture lifelong engagement with politics in the host country by targeting their efforts at newcomers.

Notes

1. Meisel (1969), Clarke et al. (1982), Lambert et al. (1988), Johnston et al. (1992b, 1995); Blais et al. (2000, 2004b, 2007), Gidengil et al. (2009) and Fournier et al. (2011). Data from the 1980 Canadian National Election Study are excluded, because that panel study re-interviewed the same respondents from the 1979 election survey. The 1979 Canadian National Election Study and the 2006 and 2008 CES also included panel components in which respondents from previous studies were re-interviewed. These panel respondents have been excluded from the analysis. Data from the 1997, 2000, 2004, 2006 and 2008 CESs were provided by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), York University. The 2004, 2006 and 2008 surveys were funded by Elections Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The 1988, 1993, 1997 and 2000 surveys were funded by SSHRC. Neither the original collectors of these data, Elections Canada, SSHRC, ISR, nor the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.
2. In additional analyses, partly democratic and mostly autocratic regime types were merged to investigate the possibility that a larger number of cases and greater statistical power would reveal statistically significant differences. This was not the case.

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Stephen White is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University. His research focuses on Canadian and comparative public opinion and political behaviour, and immigrant political incorporation. He is a co-editor of Comparing Canada: Methods and Perspectives on Canadian Politics, and has contributed articles and chapters on North American political cultures, attitudes towards immigration, and immigrant political engagement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Appendix: The Canadian Election Studies

Survey year	Sampling universe	Sampling procedure	Interview method	Total number of cases	Survey period
2011	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	Random digit dialling (RDD)	Telephone	3458	Spring 2011
2008	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	3257 (campaign period); 2451 (post-election)	Fall 2008
2006	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	2059 (campaign period); 1562 (post-election)	Campaign period (30 November 2005–22 January 2006); post-election (24 January 2006–27 March 2006)
2004	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	4323 (campaign period); 3138 (post-election)	Campaign period (23 May 2004–27 June 2004); post-election (5 July 2004–19 September 2004)
2000	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	3651 (campaign period); 2870 (post-election)	Campaign period (24 October 2000–26 November 2000); post-election (November 2000–April 2001)
1997	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	3949 (campaign period); 3170 (post-election)	Campaign period (27 April 1997–1 June 1997); post-election (June 1997–July 1997)
1993	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	3775 (campaign period); 3340 (post-election)	Campaign period (10 September 1993–24 October 1993); post-election (27 October 1993–21 November 1993)
1988	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	Telephone	3609 (campaign period); 2922 (post-election)	Campaign period (4 October 1988–20 November 1988); post-election (November 1988–January 1989)
1984	Population of Canada aged 18 years and over	Multistage stratified cluster (MSC)	Face-to-face	3377	Post-election (October 1984–February 1985)
1979	Canadian electorate in 1974	MSC	Face-to-face	1375 new respondents; 1295 respondents from 1974 survey	Post-election (1979)
1974	Canadian electorate	MSC	Face-to-face	2562	Post-election (4 August 1974–21 December 1974)
1968	Canadian electorate	MSC	Face-to-face	2767	Post-election (July 1968–January 1969)

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