

**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF  
FAMILY-CLASS IMMIGRATION TO CANADA**

**Master's Research Paper**

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Question: Exploring Views of the Family-Class as Non- or Uneconomic**

In the past decade, Canada's government has significantly increased the admission of Economic-Class immigrants (individuals who are selected on the basis of their assets and skills) while decreasing that of Family-Class immigrants (individuals sponsored by a family member in Canada) (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 31). In the mid-1980s, Family-Class immigrants made up nearly half of the yearly flow of immigrants, but they now make up less than 30% of the annual intake (Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 31). This shift is due, in part, to a narrowing of the range of relatives eligible for sponsoring. This, in turn, has been driven by the perception that Family-Class immigrants provide fewer economic benefits for Canada and perform more poorly in the labour market than Economic-Class immigrants (Satzewich, 2006: 172). However, this perception may inaccurately reflect how Family-Class immigrants fare economically in Canada.

Even though the focus on Economic-Class immigration – in preference to Family-Class immigration – is in pursuit of economic goals, this approach has multiple disadvantages, including economic ones. The long-term decline in Economic-Class immigrants' performance in the labor market in recent decades has questioned traditional perceptions of the economic benefits of Economic-Class immigrants (Reitz, 2004: 99). Meanwhile, restrictions on Family-Class immigration produce economic costs. For instance, limiting the annual intake of Family-Class immigrants creates excessive delays to family reunification, which in turn produces

financial hardship and emotional distress for those in Canada who, in the absence of their relatives, may need to turn to public authorities for support (Telegdi, 2006: 95). In addition, while families remain separated, money tends to flow from Canadians to their relatives abroad rather than directly bringing financial benefits to Canada (Telegdi, 2006).

In part to address the long-term decline in labor market performance of Economic-Class immigrants, Canada's government has begun changing immigration policies by, for instance, increasing the number of Temporary Workers (Sorensen, 2013). However, Temporary Worker programs come with their own dilemmas, such as increasing the number of undocumented immigrants in Canada, or enabling the exploitation of migrant workers by Canadian employers (Keung, 2008). In light of these challenges, perhaps perceptions of Family-Class immigration are worth revisiting. Other countries, such as the United States, have a much higher number of Family-Class immigrants (nearly 66% of the annual intake as compared to 23% in Canada in 2010) (Balbuena and Natalova, 2011; Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 31) and do not seem to perceive them as generating less economic benefits than Economic-Class immigrants (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1995; Duleep and Regets, 1996).

The key questions that these patterns raise are, how did Family-Class immigration in Canada come to be seen as uneconomic or costly, how did this Class come to be seen as non-economic or uniquely "humanitarian", and do these two perceptions accurately portray the Family-Class immigration process and its outcomes?

## 1.2 Research Sources

The body of the proposed Master’s Research Paper (MRP) is comprised of a secondary literature review on Family-Class immigration: its history, current immigration policies, and opinions of those who lean either toward favouring or opposing Family-Class immigration. The findings of this review are contrasted and compared in order to grasp an understanding of the economic trends, aspects and outcomes of Family-Class immigration. As this is a multidisciplinary topic, with authors and researchers ranging from sociologists, geographers, economists, journalists, government officials to university scholars, various types of documents were examined for this research: think-tank and other policy-oriented studies, academic research and articles, books, government policies, newspaper articles, statistics and public surveys. The research also includes analysis of “grey literature”, i.e. documents available in the public realm (and often online) related both to immigrants’ performance (in the labour market or in other economic activities in Canada) and to immigrants’ stories – useful when illustrating why people are leaving the country or having trouble remaining in Canada.

Despite the substantial amount of immigration-related research conducted in recent decades, very little research has been undertaken on Family-Class immigration and even less on its economic outcomes. As the Canadian government has focused on strengthening the economy through Economic-Class immigrants, literature has also focused on Economic-Class immigrants. This unintentional cycle has ensured little has been written specifically regarding the value of contributions from Family-Class immigration: policy-oriented research investigates Economic-

Class immigration since that is an identified government priority, and government draws on research to reinforce its prioritization of Economic-Class immigration.

Given the dearth of work specifically on Family-Class immigration, therefore, I began my research by conducting an index or digital keyword search within general sources on immigration (such as: Li, 2003; Reitz, 2004; Green and Green, 2004; Hiebert, 2006; Satzewich, 2006; Walsh, 2008), using search terms like “family”, “family reunification” or “sponsorship”. Through these references, I later found more focused literature on tangential topics such as family immigrants and entrepreneurship, the success of second-generation immigrants in Canada, and similar avenues of inquiry.

Because of the strong assumption that Family-Class immigrants are an economic burden to Canadian society, this MRP purposefully focuses on the economic terms of Family-Class immigration. It is, however, an ethnographically-informed economic analysis, in the sense that ethnographic aspects of immigration are acknowledged throughout the research – as immigration has societal and human values as well. Appendix 1 contains a list of documents consulted but not cited in the research; these served to inspire some of the categories of analysis, such as the comparison between a human capital and social capital approach to immigration.

As my research did not require any interviews, focus groups, or access to information not already available to the public, approval from the University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity was not required.

### **1.3 Positionality**

As a former legal advisor for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) over a seven-year period, I brought to this research an understanding of CRA data, such as the “Notice of Assessment” that CIC requests from the person who intends to sponsor a family member in Canada, as well as the impact of the legal agreement or “undertaking” that the sponsor must sign with the Canadian government when undertaking the responsibility of sponsorship.

Additionally, as a Family-Class immigrant from Canada to the US, living transnationally across four countries in North America and Europe, and being a mother, I know how it feels when someone has the fear of being separated and the hope of being reunited at the earliest possible moment. Although I have two law degrees, am a member of two Canadian Law Societies, and am nearing completion of a Master’s degree, I decided to temporarily postpone my entry into the labor market to take up unpaid, but yet important, responsibilities as a stay-at-home mother. Even though I made such a decision, I know that I do contribute and am not a burden to American society. I support my husband in his career, I take care of the household, I raise our children, and I became involved in the community (volunteering at l’Alliance française in Washington DC).

For these reasons, as well as theoretical ones, I strongly agree with those authors who suggest that more studies should be based on the family unit (and social capital) rather than focusing on the individual. I also agree with those authors who recommend that better indicators should be

developed for measuring the contribution of unpaid labor on the overall economic well-being of the family unit and wider economy (Kustec, 2006; Vanderplaat, 2006).

My experience is like many others cited in such studies: as a Family-Class immigrant, I seek long-term settlement and my husband has been strongly supportive in my integration into American society (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1995). In addition, ethnic networks (the “French mothers in DC” group, to which I gravitated as a French-Canadian) provided answers to many settlement-related questions (Marger, 2001). In summary, I believe my professional and personal experience is a powerful source of first-hand information on the processes – economic and otherwise – of transnationalism and state-based mobility controls such as Family-Class immigration. While these sources of information are not directly harnessed in this paper, they enabled a critical account of the current literature and its strengths, contributions, and outstanding gaps.

#### **1.4 Chapter Overview**

The next chapters are an analysis of the literature confirming that Family-Class immigration has been in decline in the past decades and an immigration priority has been given to Skilled Workers/Professionals, and more recently, to temporary workers, and that decline may be due not only to economic reasons, but also to perceptions and assumptions associated with Family-Class immigration.

Chapter 2 presents the history of immigration in Canada, which allows a better understanding of how these perceptions have been formed from Confederation in 1867 to today. Throughout its history, Canada has adjusted its immigration policy in response to its pressing economic needs by changing either the annual intake of immigrants or the skills needed in immigrants (Walsh, 2008: 794). Until the 1990s, Family-Class immigration was given “special consideration” in Canada even though immigration policies were closely wedded with national economic objectives with an annual intake flow of about 40-50% (Ley, 2003: 426; Daniel, 2005: 683). However, the 1990s marked the end of this “special consideration”. That decade has been characterized as the peak of global competitiveness between countries and Canada’s concern over losing control of its immigration policy (Simmon, 1996: 14-15; Li, 2003: 80). Canada wanted to focus on recruiting highly qualified workers/professionals because it believed that Family-Class immigrants were less likely to contribute toward its economic goals (Dirks, 2012). To support its policy change, the government presented statistics on the poor performance of Family-Class immigrants in the labor market (Li, 2003) even though some other studies or research had different results and presented other perspectives on Family-Class immigration. The brief review in Chapter 2 of the literature and history of Family-Class immigration in Canada draws a direct parallel between perceptions of such immigration as economically ineffective, on the one hand, and the reality of policy contractions of immigrant opportunities in the Family-Class, on the other hand.

Chapter 3 is a literature analysis of how the perceptions of Family-Class immigrants may have led to a mismatch between the goals and outcomes of government immigration policies. First, the government created the point system to help with labor shortages and to benefit the economy;

but literature demonstrates that the point system cannot induce optimal earnings levels from immigrants once in Canada. While the point system can screen human capital to fit labour market shortages, it cannot influence the way that human capital is valued or devalued in the Canadian labor market (Li, 2003: 167). Second, the government sought to measure immigration outcomes through earnings (as demonstrated in various key CIC reports cited in Chapters 2 and 3). Yet this failed to capture the benefits inherent in social capital, which has been proven to be even more crucial in determining long-term success and immigrant retention (De Silva, 1997: 197). Family-Class immigrants can be more stable than Economic-Class immigrants who are sensitive to economic conditions, seek short-term opportunities and leave the country if they cannot find employment in their fields of expertise (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1995; Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 4 Roy, 2012). Relying on earnings to measure outcomes also misses the value of unpaid labour such as care for children and others requiring assistance, housekeeping and food provision, and even the unrecorded labour given in support to the career or enterprise of a spouse, parent, or adult child. Third, the government reinforced the Economic/Non-Economic immigration dichotomy in the 2001 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)*, but these immigration classes are, in fact, intertwined and very similar in their processes. Two-thirds of the Economic-Class might, for example, qualify as Family-Class if they immigrated at a different time from their sponsor.

Chapter 4 brings together the findings of the MRP, and returns to the research question of how Family-Class immigration has come to be perceived as (1) non-economic (or “humanitarian”) in its process, and (2) uneconomic (or costly) in its outcomes, and whether these two perceptions are indeed accurate reflections of reality. Following a summary of the MRP’s findings, Chapter 4

contains an analysis of the two key perceptions using a unique avenue of inquiry, namely, through exploring the role of Canada Revenue Agency documents in immigration processes and outcome assessment. Such an exploration has never been done, and the results not only help us understand how our (mis)perceptions have come about, but they also pose a serious challenge to the notion of Family-Class immigration as non- and uneconomic. As mentioned above, I worked for the Canada Revenue Agency for seven years, and therefore this analysis is based on my knowledge of the Agency and its workings through that experience. Chapter 4, as the conclusion to this MRP, brings added insights to the immigration literature that help us not only to see and better understand past policy and its implications, but also how we can respond appropriately in future to make the immigration process and its outcomes genuinely match Canada's goals and values of equity, economy, and human rights.

## **Chapter 2: Devaluing Family-Class Immigration**

The purpose of this chapter is to better understand the history of Family-Class immigration, beginning from the time of Confederation in 1867. This history provides important information on how Family-Class immigration evolved and how the assumptions attached to Family-Class immigration were created over time. Even though Family-Class immigrants might be considered to be an ‘uneconomic’ immigration class, the literature confirms that Family-Class immigration underwent changes according to Canada’s pressing economic needs and that negative assumptions toward Family-Class immigration are not solely based on cost/benefit reasons.

The first section of this chapter demonstrates how Canada depended on immigrants for an interrelated set of nation-building, economic and demographic reasons from Confederation to today. Even though Canada did not originally intend to be discriminatory in its immigration policy, it adopted practises which better suited its economic goals. This section outlines important historical events that affected Canada’s economy and how Family-Class immigration policy was influenced by those events. Until the 1990s, Family-Class immigration continued to receive special attention from policymakers as it was considered to be part of the humanitarian actions that Canada cherished at the time. In the same period, Family-Class Immigration also started to be viewed as going against government’s economic priorities by preventing, in some respects, further economic growth for the country.

The chapter's second section covers the years 1993 to 2001, a time when the Canadian government defends its immigration policies with statistics that portray Family-Class immigration as an unworthy method for growing the economy. This section presents facts and arguments used by the government to convince itself and the public that Economic-Class immigrants or 'selected' immigrants were what Canada needed to boost its economy, help with labour shortages and address demographic issues. This section also demonstrates how the government used these statistics in a way that benefited itself, which did not always portray the reality of the situation.

The final section of this chapter presents the results of a decade of such reliance on statistics to undermine Family-Class immigration as non- or even uneconomic. In 2002, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*<sup>1</sup> (*IRPA*), which represented an antipathy towards Family-Class immigration, was implemented. Literature explains how the government created regulations, legislation and legal structures to make sure that Family-Class immigrants were not a burden or a 'risk' to Canadian society. Paradoxically, the decade since *IRPA* has also drawn the government to realize that Economic-Class immigrants and, especially, Skilled Workers/Professionals are neither the solution to labour shortages nor the answer to achieving government's expectations in the labour market. Despite these realizations, the government has yet to revisit Family-Class immigration as perhaps having some economic benefits, instead continuing in its well-anchored assumptions about the disadvantages of Family-Class immigration. Rather than re-examine Family-Class immigration processes and outcomes, the government now turns to temporary workers as a solution to growing the economy.

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<sup>1</sup> S.C. 2001, c.27.

## 2.1 Eye on the Money: 1867-1992

In 1867, at the time of the formation of the new Canadian federal government, immigration policy became a key economic strategy to respond to the national demand for domestic goods and to stimulate the nation's small manufacturing sector (Satzewich, 2006: 169; Makarenko, 2010). In 1869, the federal government passed the first *Immigration Act*, establishing the basic framework of Canadian immigration policy. In theory, the first *Act* pursued an "open door" policy, providing very few restrictions on who could immigrate to Canada. However, as agricultural development was crucial to exploiting Canadian economic opportunities, early immigration policy was highly discriminatory in practice.

Through its immigration offices, the federal government focused primarily on attracting farmers and labourers, while discouraging urban workers, artisans, and trade people (Makarenko, 2010). Immigrants were recruited primarily to settle vast territories in the West (Reitz, 2004: 100). In the 1880s, the same discrimination practices were adopted when recruiting immigrants for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Reitz, 2004: 100). Immigration for the purpose of family reunification was created in 1908. Two years later, the first enumeration of specific relatives who could benefit from family immigration occurred: wives, children, parents, brothers and sisters were named (DeShaw, 2006: 10).

Three things are notable about these events. First, family reunification policy, like that in parts of Europe until the 1970s, named "wives" not spouses as beneficiaries. Second, immigration to Canada in the early twentieth century was racially restricted, promoting "whiteness" (Walsh,

2008: 795). Third, most of today's international law establishing the right to family unity had yet to be written and enacted (Taitz, 2001: 8). One possible conclusion from these three combined factors is that family reunification policy was created in 1908 not to meet international legal requirements ("humanitarian" reasons), but to increase the white settler population in the newly federated state. These three factors and their potential implications contradict contemporary insinuations (such as Collacott, 2006: 92) that Family-Class immigration is uniquely "humanitarian".

In 1926, family reunification emerged for the first time as a distinct immigration class and, since then, the group eligible for family reunification varied according to the economic needs of the time (DeShaw, 2006:10). For instance, during the post-World War I period and the Great Depression, as immigration was limited because of the economic decline, only wives and children under 18 were eligible (Green and Green, 2004: 110; DeShaw, 2006: 10). However, following World War II, as the biggest economic dilemma facing Canada was an absolute labour shortage, the Family Reunion Class was replaced by an expanded class that would include any relative of any degree. Most immigrants to Canada's cities in this period lacked formal educational qualifications (Collacott, 2006: 90). These workers, like earlier immigrants destined for farm work, entered the Canadian economic hierarchy at its lower levels and progressed from this starting point (Reitz, 2004: 100).

It was calculated that during this period (around the years 1945-1951), for every individual admitted into Canada as an independent immigrant, another 49 gained access through sponsorship (Collacott, 2006: 90). While the brief post-WWII freedoms for family reunification

were for economic purposes, they represent the only six-year period from 1867 to the present in which family members had a relatively unfettered opportunity to apply for reunification. From this point on, the range of eligible relatives would only decrease, never to return to post-WWII levels.

In 1951, due to “administrative problems,” the range of family members eligible for reunification was reduced to only spouses, fiancés, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces (DeShaw, 2006: 10; De Silva, 1997: 183). Despite this representing a reduction from the post-WWII situation, this today is still retrospectively, and perhaps inaccurately, referred to as the “full” range of eligibility. With the view that family reunification was bringing in too many unqualified workers, the government of the time made it clear that Canada was “perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens” (Green and Green, 2004: 112). The government further stated that it was “not a ‘fundamental human right’ of *any* alien to enter Canada, but a privilege [emphasis in original]” (Green and Green, 2004: 112).

Thus continuing with its restrictive strategy in 1952, the federal government passed a new *Immigration Act* that re-established many of the earlier discriminatory practices. The new *Act* set out “preferred classes” of immigrants and provided the federal government with the discretion to exclude or limit immigration of groups for social or economic reasons. Immigration was seen, more than ever, as a tool for economic growth to help with the labour shortage (Reitz, 2004: 100; Makarenko, 2010). As a result, Canada resumed a discriminatory expansionist

immigration policy – limited to those ‘select’, ‘desirable’ and ‘preferred’ immigrants – for the progress of industrialisation (Reitz, 2004: 100).

In 1965-66, the government decided that immigration admissions policy should be more labour market focused and that more foreign workers needed to be recruited to fuel the country’s industrial expansion (Walsh, 2008: 794). However, this was perceived as difficult to implement with the, then, “full” range of eligible relatives in the Family Reunification Class who were still coming to Canada every year. The government proposed a reduction of eligible family members who could be sponsored – cutting out siblings (Collacott, 2006: 90). This initiative encountered severe resistance, and in the regulations of 1967, the full range of relatives who could be sponsored remained. Notwithstanding the resistance, the government did succeed in establishing a differentiation between eligible relatives in the 1967 regulations, creating two distinct family reunification categories. One category, “nominated relatives”, was subject to labour-market requirements as well as sponsorship requirements, while the “sponsored dependents” category was subject only to sponsorship requirements (DeShaw, 2006: 10). The latter was more restrictive in terms of the range of eligible relatives, excluding siblings, children over 21 years of age, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces (De Silva, 1997: 183).

In 1967, Canada introduced the point-based system for selecting Economic-Class immigrants. This Class had already been defined under the *Immigration Act of 1952*, but the selection system had been arbitrary and – as mentioned above – at the discretion of federal government officials. The point-based system was designed to ensure maximum employability of immigrants in an economy in which skilled labour was an emerging priority (Walsh, 2008: 794).

In 1976, the new *Immigration Act* was implemented and created specific immigration classes with different admissions standards and processing priorities (DeShaw, 2006: 10). The classes' definitions may have occasionally changed since then, but three categories are clear: "Economic-Class" (the independent or economic class), "Family-Class" and "Refugee-Class". The main feature of the immigration policy that began in the 1960s, and continues to the present day, is the establishment of a broad regulatory system (Green and Green, 2004: 126). The point-system was being reinforced: it continued to attract applicants made up of individuals who actively sought to resettle in Canada and who had, presumably, prepared themselves for the transition. They were 'selected' by a visa officer who assessed their human capital against criteria designed to maximize the probability that they would succeed in the labour market (CIC, 2000: 11). In order to be selected, applicants had to reach 75 points out of 100. In addition, the selection criteria placed substantial emphasis on educational and occupational qualifications and official languages ability, as well as consideration of the age factor (Green and Green, 2004: 118). Further, under the new *Act*, the more restrictive "sponsored dependents" category was renamed the "Family-Class", and the "nominated relatives" category became the "assisted relatives" category (DeShaw, 2006: 10). Family-Class immigration was solely based on family ties and its objective, as outlined for the first time under 3(c), was "to facilitate the reunion in Canada of Canadian citizens and permanent residents with their close relatives from abroad" (Green and Green, 2004: 126; DeShaw, 2006: 9).

Unlike family reunification, in which domestic law more often trumps international law (Taitz, 2001: 9), the 1976 creation of a separate Refugee-Class in Canada was an instance of

international law being recognized as a state duty to uphold (Green and Green, 2004: 126). Although Family-Class immigration was influenced by humanitarian considerations, few international instruments recognize family reunification as a right. The concept that the family unit should be protected can be inferred from the principles enunciated in some international instruments. For example, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 16* states that the “family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” As another example, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966, Article 10* acknowledges that, “the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society.”<sup>2</sup> The protection of the family unit has been implemented in domestic immigration policies in different ways in different countries (Guimezanes, 2000: 2). By the late 1970s in Canada, Family-Class immigration had become a dominant migrant flow representing 40-50% of total immigration to the country (DeShaw, 2006: 10). Under the new system created by the 1976 *Immigration Act*, and as the system existed until 1993, top processing priority for the Family- and Refugee-Classes was given at the perceived expense of Economic-Class immigrants (Green and Green, 2004: 126).

In summary, as the government has been concerned with the economic and social growth of the country, it has kept its “eye on the money” by constantly implementing and amending its immigration policies, including those related to Family-Class immigration, according to the economic needs of the country. The early history, both of restrictive immigration and of a

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<sup>2</sup> There are more references to family protection in other legal instruments: Article 12 of the *Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers of 24 November 1977* makes provision for family reunion; and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 26 January 1990* stresses the protection of the child’s interests, which in turn relates to family life.

relative absence of relevant international law, belies characterisations of Family-Class immigration as having uniquely “humanitarian” origins. This section demonstrates that throughout the period from 1867 to 1992, economic changes influenced Family-Class immigration in Canada, placing increasing limits on the range of eligible family members. The possible exception is a six-year period after WWII of relative freedom for family reunification, but even that is largely attributed to acute labour shortages. That being said, and despite some concerns regarding the unlikeliest of Family-Class immigrants being able to help with the economic priorities of the government, Family-Class immigration still dominated the annual intake of immigrants coming to Canada until the early 1990s. This was soon to change, however, in the decade of the 1990s, characterized as the peak of global competitiveness between countries (Simmons, 1996: 14-15). Canada decided that its immigration policies would benefit from a radical change to meet its new pressing goals.

## **2.2 (Mis)Guided by Statistics: 1993-2000**

In 1993, the government articulated its concerns over losing control of the immigration flows that were increasingly producing “a squeeze on economic migration” (Li, 2003: 42). To highlight the problem of having too many Family-Class immigrants, the report quoted statistics pertaining only to principal applicants of the Economic-Class, rather than the entire Economic-Class. This is a significant omission, as two-thirds of Economic-Class immigrants are applicants’ spouses and dependants, who are not assessed against the point system if they immigrate together with the applicant (Li, 2003: 80). Emphasizing only the attributes of principal applicants in the

Economic-Class allowed for a false distinction between them and Family-Class immigrants. The motivation for this distinction at the time was to promote recruitment of highly qualified professional and technical workers, in such fields as software engineering and health care (Simmons, 1996: 14-15). To achieve its objectives, in addition to reducing overall program costs, Canada decided to enhance “economic” immigration, and reduce “non-economic” immigration (Reitz, 2004: 101).

In 1994, the government announced a major consultation initiative on immigration which resulted in a strategic framework to guide immigration over the next ten years. In the document produced as a result of these consultations, *Into the 21st Century: A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship*, many divergent views on Family-Class immigration were presented. Some thought that the family should be restricted to spouses and children, while others thought that the current approach of including spouses, children, parents and grandparents was too restrictive – particularly given the exclusion of siblings (DeShaw, 2006: 10). Also, during the consultations, many Canadians asserted that if the country could not afford to provide the services that newcomers might need, greater effort should be made to attract ‘selected immigrants’ who needed fewer services. This assertion was based on the assumption that Family-Class immigrants, because they are not selected, are the biggest drain on services (DeShaw, 2006:10).

Indeed, the long-held perception of Family-Class immigrants as economic liabilities seemed to be supported by the research (Reitz, 2004: 108). Studies argued that Family-Class immigrants earned substantially less than Skilled Workers/Professionals, and had always been at a disadvantage (in terms of earnings) compared to those selected for economic reasons (Campbell,

2000: 53). A 1995 report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration showed that Economic-Class immigrants who arrived in 1985 earned \$45,000 a year and Family-Class immigrants who arrived at the same time earned only \$14,000 a year (Collacott, 2006: 91). Based on the earning levels of each immigration class, the immigration plan of 1995-2000 gave preference to Economic-Class immigrants (DeShaw, 2006: 10). Echoing from the 1950s, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) wrote explicitly in 1995 that family reunification was a privilege and not a right:

When Canadian citizens or permanent residents sponsor family members to immigrate to Canada, they undertake an important responsibility. A sponsored immigrant is permitted to come to Canada because of the family relationship and the sponsor's commitment to support that immigrant. Sponsorship is a privilege, and sponsors have an obligation to look after their families once they arrive here. (quoted in DeShaw, 2006: 11)

That Family-Class immigrants needed “looking after”, rather than having a contribution to make, was a foregone conclusion.

Despite what the government advanced on the potential economic burden of Family-Class immigrants, other statistics in 1995 showed that immigrants, including Family-Class immigrants, were profitable for the treasuries of Canada and Ontario with a surplus of \$578.2 million – the difference between the amounts immigrants paid (income tax) and received (welfare and employment insurance). Even though Family-Class immigrants had a lower surplus than those admitted under the Economic-Class, they still had a surplus (Li, 2003: 87). Family-Class immigrants also had the same earning level as Business-Class immigrants (self-employed

persons and entrepreneurs who were assessed – like the Skilled Workers/Professionals-Class – by a point-system before entering Canada) (Hiebert, 2008: 40-41).

Regardless of these favourable indicators for Family-Class immigrants, the 1996 Annual Report to Parliament by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration still held that “research shows that economic immigration is the component that benefits Canada and Canadians most quickly and to the greatest extent” (Li, 2003, 79). A 1997 government-commissioned report continued on the theme of Family-Class immigrants as a burden, noting that the use of social assistance by sponsored parents and grandparents rose rather than fell over time, and reached rates close to four times that of the general population (Government of Canada, 1997: 46, cited by Collacott, 2006: 91). In the years subsequent to the report, arguments intensified against the sponsorship of parents and grandparents (Campbell, 2000: 53). These included an emphasis on the “retired” status of parents and grandparents, leading to eligibility for “considerable” medical costs and other benefits, while making them “unlikely” to contribute to the tax base (Collacott, 2006: 91). Missing from these arguments and statistics, however, was the fact that sponsorship of parents and grandparents only amounted to about 6-7% of the immigration annual intake (Telegdi, 2006: 96).

In 1998, CIC conducted another major study that would again serve to support its preference for Economic-Class immigrants. This time, the study examined the annual level and incidence of employment earnings, up until and including 1995, of immigrants who landed between 1980 and 1995. CIC divided this Canada Revenue Agency data by immigration class, to show that Family-Class earnings were less than that of Economic-Class immigrants (CIC, 1998, cited by Collacott,

2006: 91). In the report, CIC also made use of Canada Revenue Agency data on the incidence of employment insurance and welfare use, finding this rate to be higher among Family-Class and Refugee-Class immigrants than Skilled Workers/Professionals-Class immigrants, and higher among immigrants in general than among persons born in Canada (CIC, 1998, cited by Hiebert, 2005: 45). Further, it was found that spouses and dependants in the Economic-Class seemed to have lower average rates of social assistance take-up than those in the Family-Class (Sweetman, 2006: 70).

What is most remarkable about this report, however, is not what it included, but what it excluded. No mention was made, for example, of the research described above that – with the same Canada Revenue Agency data – had found a \$578.2 million surplus paid by immigrants, including those in the Family-Class. The 1998 CIC report’s focus on social assistance *incidence* overlooked the fact that immigrants were paying for this social assistance, through their taxes, themselves, again, including those in the Family-Class. Moreover, the report never asked, for example, whether the earnings in the Economic-Class were sustained; other research has since found that immigrant retention in the Economic-Class is a major challenge, and that in this sense, long-term performance is higher in the Family-Class. The 1998 CIC report also suffered from the main problem in measuring immigrant outcomes, which is the grave oversight concerning social capital (the power of networks to help immigrants succeed – dealt with further in Chapter 3 of this MRP) and particularly unpaid labour (caregiving, housekeeping, family businesses, etc.). Finally, the notion that immigrant outcomes could so easily be predicted based on Class – implying that humans could be classified as more or less prone to economic success based on whether they chose to enter Canada as Skilled Workers/Professionals or Family – is complicated

by the fact that a given individual is likely to be eligible in multiple categories. Indeed (as also discussed in Chapter 3 of this MRP), depending on timing, the same individual may come as Economic-Class (if accompanying a principal applicant in that class) or Family-Class (if coming later to Canada). The 1998 CIC report itself acknowledged that, “Economic performance of immigrants cannot be attributed solely to one characteristic” (CIC, 2000: 8), but then nevertheless continued to attribute performance to the sole characteristic of immigration Class.

The intense focus on Economic-Class immigrants and the point system in Canada then started being questioned by other countries: does Economic-Class immigration really bring greater economic benefits to the country? As some groups pressured the government in the United States to allow more entries of ‘employment-based immigrants’ and limit ‘family-based immigrants’, which represent about 70% of immigration (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 30), an American study was conducted to evaluate the earning level of immigrants between the two countries (Canada and the United States). The study found that even though Canada had focused more on Economic-Class immigration, no higher earning profiles had been found than in the United States. It concluded that there was no clear-cut labour market effect from the Canadian admission point-based system. The study also suggested that any efforts to increase ‘skill-based U.S. immigration’ at the expense of ‘family-based immigration’ should be preceded by substantial thought and research, as nothing had yet proven that skill-based immigration systematically brought greater economic benefits to the country (Duleep and Regets, 1996: 586). While acknowledging the initial poor performance of Family-Class immigrants compared to Economic-Class immigrants, the longitudinal study concluded that such initial performance was a temporary condition (Duleep and Regets, 1996: 586). The US study’s findings were later confirmed by further

research showing that Family-Class immigrants are able to “catch up” to the economic achievements of Skilled Workers/Professional immigrants, as reflected in their respective earnings (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 32; Satzewich, 2006: 172; De Silva, 1997: 197).

The Canadian government seems to have used the portions of studies that were beneficial for supporting its policy decisions. As studies can be conflicting, at times, it is possible for the government to take what works best for itself. Our research has found that the study of economic contributions of immigration is not straightforward, and trying to evaluate the costs/benefits of immigration with precise numbers is nearly impossible for several reasons. First, the cost of immigrants to the resident population, if any, is usually short-term, whereas the benefits of immigrants tend to be long-term (Li, 2003: 83). Second, tracking the costs and benefits over time is complex since an economic impact in one area is likely to produce a chain effect (83). For instance, immigrants who become entrepreneurs in a particular region will directly benefit the economic development of this region and, years later, this activity can become beneficial at a macro-economic level with their tax contributions (Lewis-Watts, 2006).

Third, a complete accounting of costs and benefits requires development of a theoretical framework to capture all relevant items as well as measuring tools to gauge them accurately, which is nearly impossible. For instance, immigrants pay various kinds of taxes and they and their family members receive services and benefits in return. Should the cost of educating immigrants’ children be factored as a cost or benefit (Li, 2003: 84)? Finally, there is no standard way to calculate the economic contributions of immigration. The findings depend on the specific empirical question posed, the method used, and the theoretical interpretation adopted (Li, 2003:

95). For these reasons, studies can produce different and, at times, conflicting conclusions, and it is easy for the government to manipulate studies for its own goals.

Therefore, even though there were reassuring findings on Family-Class immigrants' economic contributions, as illustrated earlier, government members and researchers would spend the next decade continuing to refer to Family-Class immigration as uniquely "humanitarian", even as policy would commodify the Class even further.

### **2.3 The End of Special Considerations for Family-Class Immigration: 2001-2013**

I like to think that our commitment to keeping families together is a good indication of what kind of country we are. We are a country that cares – a country that values compassion and humanitarian values. (Sergio Marchi, quoted in Daniel, 2005: 699)

As stated in the House of Commons by Citizenship and Immigration Canada Minister Sergio Marchi in 1995, Family-Class has always received a fairly special consideration in Canadian immigration. However, this special consideration started fading during the 1990s (Ley, 2003: 426), and, finally, vanished with the *IRPA* implemented in 2002. The new *Act* reflected an antipathy to Family-Class immigration by narrowing the range of family members who fell under the Family-Class definition, by increasing requirements for sponsorship, and by clearly highlighting the importance of Skilled Workers/Professionals and the economic benefits they bring to Canada (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 30; DeShaw, 2006; Satzewich, 2006). The rationale for such policy change was premised on the concern over the rise of Family-Class immigration and

the corresponding decline of Economic-Class immigrants (Li, 2003: 83). It was still believed that Family-Class immigrants were unskilled and unable to catch up with the labour market within a reasonable time period (Dirks, 2012). Consequently, putting undue restrictions on the number of Economic-Class immigrants eligible to come to Canada in order to welcome more Family-Class immigrants would not address skills shortages and other economic demands (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 32). The objective with the new *Act* was to rebalance the immigration program to maximize the human capital content of new immigrants to Canada, while producing economic benefits to the country. (Li, 2003: 81)

To address the concern about the potential burden of Family-Class immigration on the welfare state Family-Class immigrants, the *IRPA* contains clauses such as:

“A foreign national is inadmissible for financial reasons if they are or will be unable or unwilling to support themselves or any other person who is dependent on them, and have not satisfied an officer that adequate arrangements for care and support, other than those that involve social assistance, have been made”; and

“A foreign national is inadmissible on health grounds if their health condition... might reasonably be expected to cause excessive demand on health or social services”

(Sweetman, 2006: 69).

Even though the *IRPA* does not explicitly say that it applies to Family-Class immigrants, it can only apply to Family-Class immigration as immigrants who are admitted as Refugees and Economic-Class immigrants have the same rights as Canadian citizens i.e. they are eligible for the same range of social benefits as Canadian citizens (Satzewich, 2006: 174). Therefore, to alleviate the ‘risk’ associated with Family-Class immigration, the applicant must first

demonstrate that s/he meets the minimum necessary income requirements (MNI) set out in the regulations, meaning that they have, at the time of application, sufficient funds to support their existing family and any family members they wish to sponsor. The MNI requirements are based on Statistics Canada's low income cut off (LICO) figures unless the applicant intends to live in Quebec. For Quebec cases, provincial equivalents of the LICO apply. However, it is possible for some applicants to be exempted from the MNI requirements i.e. when sponsoring spouses. In such cases, the sponsor still needs to satisfy the immigration officer about how s/he intends to support her/his family member once in Canada (DeShaw, 2006: 12). Moreover, this possibility is little-known as the formal application and its checklist still require a Canada Revenue Agency "notice of assessment" as proof of the sponsor's income, and thus of the sponsor's eligibility under the MNI requirements.

In addition to the MNI requirements, in order to be granted the privilege of sponsoring, the sponsor must sign an undertaking, which is considered as a legal contract with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Depending on the type of relationship (spouse, children or parents/grandparents), the sponsor must guarantee that s/he will provide financial support for the sponsored relative for between three to ten years so that the relative will not need to apply for social assistance (Satzewich, 2006: 174). This means that the sponsor agrees to provide for the basic requirements of the sponsored persons – food, shelter, other health needs not provided by public health care, etc. – and must make the promise that his/her family members will not apply for social assistance. Individuals who are sponsored must also "promise to make every effort to become self-supporting".<sup>3</sup> If such persons after arriving in Canada obtain social assistance –

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<sup>3</sup> There is an exception for sponsored immigrants who have been in an abusive relationship. In this special case, they can become eligible for welfare and other forms of public assistance (DeShaw, 2006: 12).

contrary to their sponsor's undertaking of support – the sponsor is deemed to have defaulted on the undertaking and either the provincial or federal government may recover from the sponsor the cost of providing social assistance from the sponsor (DeShaw, 2006: 12). To make sure that Family-Class immigrants do not cost the system, the federal government has been active in establishing programs with provinces to enforce the obligations of the sponsor and to recover sponsorship default debt by strengthening provisions for the collection of money through the garnishing of wages in cases where sponsors default on their obligations (Satzewich, 2006: 174).

In 2003, the Canadian government decreased the passing mark of the point system from 75 to 67 points to be more competitive in attracting highly skilled and educated immigrants among industrial countries (Workpermit, 2003). Since then, the annual intake of Economic-Class immigrants has kept increasing and, in 2011, out of 248,660 immigrants who came to Canada, 156,077 were Economic-Class immigrants (62.8%), and 91,724 (36.9%) of the last number were spouses and dependents. Furthermore, among the Economic-Class immigration categories – Skilled Workers/Professionals, Business Immigrants and those independent immigrants admitted as Provincial or Territorial Nominees – it is the Skilled Workers and Professionals program that attracted the most immigrants (Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 31). In 2011, they represented 56.9% of the annual intake (Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 31). On the other hand, the annual intake of Family-Class immigrants has been constant since the *IRPA*, representing an average 27% of the annual intake (Picot and Sweetman, 2011: 3).

Despite the belief that Economic-Class immigrants are the solution to both economic growth and labour shortages, statistics and studies are starting to prove the poor economic success of

Economic-Class immigrants in Canada. Consequently, the Canadian government has started to look into different alternatives. For example, in a paper published in September 2005 by a senior fellow of the Fraser Institute (Herbert Grubel), it was argued that given recent declining outcomes for immigrants, Canada should only allow immigration for temporary work purposes (DeShaw, 2006: 9). The intake of temporary foreign workers has, therefore, significantly increased in recent years: in 2006, the federal government issued 106,750 temporary foreign worker permits compared to 213,516 permits in 2012 (Keung, 2008; Sorensen, 2013).

Policy analysts and other researchers have begun to document the impact of immigration on the macro-economic balance of government revenues and expenditures; it was, however, an intricate and inexact exercise, as the Canadian tax system and government expenditure are complex. One of the key studies advocating temporary migration was released in 2011, and covered the impact of immigration from 1987 to 2004 on the macro-economic balance of government revenues and expenditures (Grabel & Grady, 2011: 1). Based on estimates inter- and extrapolated from the 2006 Census, the study was an inexact exercise, reflecting the difficulty in tackling the complexity of the Canadian tax system and government expenditure. Yet it purported to precisely calculate that in the fiscal year 2005/06 the immigrants on average received in excess of \$6,051 in benefits over taxes paid. The study then gave an upper (\$23.6 billion) and lower (\$16.3 billion) figure for the “fiscal burden” of immigration in that year – a range of over \$7 billion – depending on assumptions about the number of recent immigrants in Canada (Grabel and Grady, 2011: 1). Finally, the study recommended having more temporary workers, and limiting Skilled Worker/Professional immigrants to only those with employment already in line (Grabel & Grady, 2011: 22). The study omitted Family-Class immigration entirely from its

recommendations for future immigration directions. In that same year, 2011, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney stressed the importance of the Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) program as essential for Canadian businesses. He opposed the TFW program's removal – suggested unsuccessfully at the time by unions and Canada's New Democratic Party – as something that would “punch a dent in the growth of the Canadian economy” (Gandia, 2011).

The assumption that Family-Class immigrants are a burden to Canadian society still stands and was reinforced on June 10, 2011 when the Supreme Court of Canada stated that Canadian citizens or permanent residents who sponsor their family members are responsible for paying back all money when the sponsored family members have received social assistance from the provincial or federal government within the period of the sponsoring agreement (Anderson, 2011). This legal case confirmed that the sponsorship undertaking signed by a sponsor in a Family-Class sponsorship application for Canadian permanent residence status is binding on the sponsor despite any change in the sponsor's circumstances. As characterized by the Court, “Family reunification is based on the essential condition that in exchange for admission to this country the needs of the immigrants will be looked after by the sponsor, not by the public purse” (Sheffman, 2011). Consequently, the myth that Family-Class immigrants go on welfare as soon as they arrive in Canada is nearly impossible to accomplish.

In summary, with the implementation of the *IRPA*, the negative assumptions about Family-Class immigrants became a reality. The new Act puts in place requirements and restrictions necessary to alleviate any ‘risks’ that might be associated with this immigration category, and Economic-Class immigration became the government's priority. However, fact and studies have shown that

Economic-Class immigrants and, especially, Skilled Workers/Professionals are struggling in the labour market and government's expectations are not being met. Nevertheless, this reality has not changed the condemnation about Family-Class immigration and the government continues to pursue the same discourse towards this immigration category. Further, the government has lately considered temporary workers as a better alternative for solving the labour shortage and producing economic benefits. However, temporary workers are a short-term solution and they raise a new set of issues. As the government's discourse on Economic vs. Family-Class immigration was so rigid for such a long period of time and now appears to be inexact, many questions are raised as to where Canada has gone wrong.

## **Chapter 3: Revisiting Immigration Policy**

Immigration policies, especially within the 2002 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, have mainly focused on the economic aspects of immigration and make little of latent values of immigration beyond the economic aspects. This chapter discusses, therefore, three points: analysis of errors made by the government in its policies, integration of alternative policies, and calculation of cost/benefits of immigration in the future. The first section explains the failures in the point-system, which results in the system not working as expected. The main reason is that the point-system focuses primarily on the human capital in immigrants and ignores the economic value of social capital. An economy also relies on social capital for its success and the point-system does not consider the importance of social capital in obtaining a positive economic result.

The second section discusses further the omission of social capital within immigration policies and explains how social capital, in which Family-Class immigrants play an important part, has economic value. It explains that family ties foster economic and social stability in the country, the development of regions or communities and the economic integration of newcomers. Finally, the third section explains why evaluating the cost/benefits of immigrants based on the immigration category that they came through is inaccurate. Likewise, evaluating cost/benefits of each individual based on her/his income level does not reflect the immigrant's economic contribution to the family unit of which s/he is part. Literature suggests other alternatives on how the economic value of immigrants should be calculated, shedding new light on the economic value of Family-Class immigrants.

### **3.1 Is The Point- System Missing a Point?**

About ten years later, the American study by Duleep & Regets (1996) might be revealed to be right. They stated that there is no proof that the point-based system does bring higher earning profiles and, therefore, greater economic gains to the country (571). Indeed, this area of considerable research examines the earnings of immigrants compared with those of native-born workers (Satzewich, 2006: 178). A common technique for such research is to compare gross and net earnings of different ethnic, racial, immigrant and native groups. Gross earnings refer to actual earnings, whereas net earnings refer to earnings that take into account the difference in human capital and other variables. Generally, research in Canada shows that, while immigrants as a whole appear to be doing better than native-born individuals when gross earnings are compared, this is less the case when net earnings are compared, i.e. when their human capital and skills are considered (Satzewich, 2006: 178).

Indeed, over the past decade Canada has brought in about 250,000 immigrants each year. While the largest group is Economic-Class immigrants, only one in four immigrants is able to find employment relevant to their education and experience (Mills, 2011). Consequently, these immigrants experience depression, discrimination and financial hardship. In addition, many immigrants are affected by the gender role switch, as the wife will often take a job to support the family while the husband seeks employment in his field of expertise (Lupick, 2009c). Studies have shown that around 25% of immigrants who arrived under the Skilled Workers/Professionals category leave within the first year after their arrival, and 30% leave four years after landing

(Picot and Sweetman, 2011: 10). In addition, a 2008 study spearheaded by Wendy Cukier, founder of the Diversity Institute in Management and Technology at Ryerson University, showed that 40% of immigrants who entered Canada in the Skilled Workers/Professionals-Class or Business-Class leave Canada within their first ten years (Roy, 2012).

Many Business-Class immigrants who enter Canada through the Entrepreneur-Class Programme (a program to encourage successful international businesspersons to set up a business in Canada) experience great difficulty adapting to the tax regulations. As well, they are unaccustomed to the provincial labour codes and are unsure about the nature of consumer demand (Hiebert, 2008: 45). Many give up and either return to successful businesses overseas or decide to take early retirement (Hiebert, 2008: 45). In both cases, for Skilled Workers/Professionals and Business-Class immigrants, immigration policies assume they will be successful in Canada because they were successful in their home country (Asanin Dean & Wilson, 2009; Hiebert, 2008). However, studies and facts have proven differently and the government has come to understand that the point-based system is not a guarantee of immigrants' success once in Canada (Lupick, 2009b; Asanin Dean & Wilson, 2009; Reitz, 2004: 120). This is well illustrated by the recent focus on bringing in temporary workers to fill labour shortages and help the economy in the short term (Gandia, 2011).

It is no surprise that the point-based system does not bring the expected economic results. It is true that immigrants' earnings can be influenced by their human capital, which is controlled by immigration policies, but the way the human capital is valued or devalued in the economy, the opportunities available to new arrivals, and many other individual and societal features are not –

and some argue cannot – be regulated by the state (Reitz, 2011). In other words, the government uses immigration policy to solve labour shortages or other economic goals. However, the immigration policy can only be effective in influencing the portion of the immigration stream that is subject to selection decisions. Immigration policy alone is insufficient to induce the optimal immigrant earnings outcomes (Li, 2003: 167). As, for example, in the selection criteria, the age and languages skills of the applicants are included because language is one of the most important determinants of the speed and quality of labour market adjustment among entering immigrants to any culture (Picot and Sweetman, 2011). Indeed, immigrants with a greater capacity to communicate in English or French are more likely to be employed in higher skilled jobs; conversely, those with lower levels of proficiency tend to be found in low-wage occupations (Pottie et al., 2008: 509; Jetelina & Mullett, 2011). However, even in circumstances where the immigrants do not speak either English or French when arriving in Canada, they can eventually successfully integrate in the labour market (De Silva, 1997: 197). De Silva's study also suggested that probably other factors could have influenced their integration, such as their abilities to mobilize social capital (197).

Indeed, a major flaw with the point system is that it puts a high value on education and work experience, but gives very little value to social capital in the selection of immigrants (Li, 2003: 168). For instance, neither brothers and sisters over 18 nor adult independent children can be sponsored. However, if they apply to immigrate under the Skilled Workers/Professionals category, they may get extra points for adaptability for having a relative in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (b)). But, even then, out of 100 points, a Skilled Worker/Professional applicant may be granted a maximum of 5 points for a family relationship in Canada (Li, 2003:

198). It is clear that Canada does not recognize that social networks and social capital can be productive in assisting immigrants economically and socially (Li, 2003: 102). In March 2001, during hearings on the proposed immigration bill, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration requested that the government look at including brothers and sisters as part of the immediate family. However, no consensus was reached for expansion of the Family-Class because there were lingering concerns about the ability of brothers and sisters to establish themselves with a degree of success in Canada (DeShaw, 2006: 11). Unfortunately, there is a lack of ingenuity in immigration debates in not being able to recognize many latent values of immigration beyond what the simple economic data shows (Li, 2003: 202). Social capital, in which Family-Class immigration plays a major role, has some important implied economic value.

In summary, the strong discourse about the importance of human capital in immigrants has resulted in the point-system. However, even with high human capital, immigrants are not necessarily successful in the labour market. Studies and facts demonstrate that a high human capital is not a guarantee of success and a lower human capital in immigrants does not translate into an inability to integrate into the labour market either. The point-system has omitted the importance of social capital that provides crucial assistance for the success of any immigrants' integration. Studies show that immigrants, with or without high human capital, can successfully enter into the labour market depending on the social capital available to them. Family-Class immigrants have an advantage over Economic-Class immigrants because, since they are sponsored by a family member, they have first hand access to social capital constructed by family ties.

### **3.2 The Forgotten Economic Value in Social Capital**

In April 2005, arguments presented before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration highlighted the importance of reuniting families as a means of guaranteeing economic success, since family reunification is a particularly important element in attempting to attract and retain immigrants (DeShaw, 2006: 13). Indeed, as Family-Class immigrants seek reunification with family for the long-term, immigration policy should consider that family reunification is highly favorable to attracting and, especially, retaining immigrants. On the other hand, Economic-Class immigrants often seek new opportunities in the short-term and this is why Economic-Class immigrants often tend to be more sensitive to economic conditions. For instance, Economic-Class immigrants are more likely to leave Canada than Family-Class immigrants if they arrived during a recession than during a boom (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1995; Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 4; Duleep & Regets, 1996). The economic instability of Economic-Class immigrants has been well illustrated in the past decades: Canada has been a great champion in attracting highly educated, qualified and experienced immigrants, but has unfortunately failed in retaining them for the long-term. As the benefits of immigration are often seen in the long-term, the short stay of Economic-Class immigrants may do little to the economic stability of the country (Li, 2003: 83).

Immigration policy omits the fact that social capital and family ties are powerful to ensure success in Canada because family enhances the quality of life for new immigrants (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 32). For instance, witnesses heard before the Standing Committee on

Citizenship and Immigration during its cross-Canada hearings in 2005 suggested that a Family-Class immigrant earning \$20,000 a year is likely to be happier and better adjusted than an immigrant earning double that amount who came as a Skilled Worker/Professional and is unable to work in her/his chosen field (Telegdi, 2006: 95). Family helps with integration and the type and quality of family/social networks can be just as important as human capital characteristics in explaining why some immigrants appear to integrate into Canadian society faster, or with fewer difficulties, than others (Bergeron and Potter, 2006: 76). For instance, all key settlement-related goals represent, at different degrees, some challenges to new immigrants, such as employment, healthcare, housing or training, but the highest proportion of immigrants reporting difficulties is consistently found among Skilled Workers/Professionals (Bergeron and Potter, 2006: 78). Family-Class immigrants generally face challenges in proportions that are well below average (Bergeron and Potter, 2006: 78).

In turn, family separation can have devastating emotional impacts, affecting integration of people who are already in Canada (Telegdi, 2006: 95). Being separated from family members is among the most powerful predictors of emotional distress among immigrants. Persons who are adolescent or elderly at the time of immigration and women from traditional cultures are also more likely to experience difficulties (Report of the Canadian Task Force, 1988). Long separations from children and husband can create many problems: marital discord, strained relations between parents and children, and poor occupational prospects for children (Pratt, 2006: 46; Maki, 2003: 35). It is a sad situation that siblings cannot be sponsored because not only could siblings help provide emotional and financial support to their family in Canada, but they could also assist in retaining immigrants in regions of low immigration (Telegdi, 2006: 96). From an

economic perspective, the suffering of being separated from family members deprives Canada of the possible contributions of newcomers, in terms of both successful integration and long-term settlement toward national economic stability (Telegdi, 2006: 95). Even Skilled Workers/Professionals in Canada who can sponsor family members, such as parents, are more likely to settle permanently than Skilled Workers/Professionals who do not have their parents with them (McLaren & Black, 2005: 17).

Further, there is a predominant assumption that immigrant communities, within which family networks play an important role, promote exclusionary behavior or preclude long-term economic and social integration (Collacott, 2006: 92; Lewis-Watts, 2006: 83-84). However, it is the presence of these communities and networks that can assist newcomers to settle into the larger society, especially in the absence of formal immigrant settlement services (Lewis-Watts, 2006: 83). Like family, these ethnic communities provide immigrants with a support system that assists with initial settlement issues (Marger, 2001: 440-441). For immigrants, particularly those who are markedly different from the host society's dominant group in physical or cultural characteristics, these ethnic communities help with adversities that arise from the immigration experience (Marger, 2001: 440). Ethnic communities provide solidarity and ethnic identity serves as social capital (Marger, 2001: 440; Sanders & Nee, 1996: 237; Siqueira, 2007: 43).

As an example, a study of the Filipino community in Guelph, Ontario spoke of the importance of social ties within the workplace and in the neighborhoods. Through family networks and common acquaintances, these ties have formed the basis of friendships that provided emotional support and companionship during initial settlement and beyond, permitting a sense of "social

embeddedness” within the host community (Lewis-Watts, 2006: 83). In this study, many participants reported an eagerness to sponsor other family members to immigrate to Guelph, in order to reunite the family within a ‘pleasant community’ that had been formed over the past several years (Lewis-Watts, 2006: 83). Over time, this social embeddedness constructs the feeling of being ‘home’ and the shift in the place’s identity significantly accounts for the likelihood of longer-term settlement (83). The case of the Filipino community in Guelph is also a perfect example demonstrating that family ties and ethnic communities can also assist in retaining immigrants in regions of low immigration, which economically benefits those regions (83).

Furthermore, as the immigration discourse is always concerned with the economic integration of immigrants into the labour market, there is a lack of recognition that social capital does play a major role in such integration. Jasso and Rosenzweig’s study (1996), which compared the economic performance of “skilled” immigrants and “family reunification” immigrants in the United States, suggests that access to family networks probably explains why Family-Class immigrants were able to upgrade their occupational performance over time (1995). In addition, De Silva found that immigrants’ attributes recorded at the time of landing – such as the country of last permanent residence, immigrant class, education, official language proficiency, intended occupation, destination, etc. – account for only a small portion of the earnings differentials that exist among the various classes. It was implied that factors such as the ability of immigrants to mobilize kinship and ethnic networks resulted in them improving economic outcomes in the labour market (De Silva, 1997: 197). Further, the study conducted in Guelph, Ontario among the Filipino community demonstrated that family and communities provides connections to find

employment for others and play a vital role in the economic strategies of migrants (Lewis-Watt, 2006: 83).

Finally, even in the case of educated and skilled immigrants, many immigrants are often faced with limited employment opportunities and, therefore, self-employment becomes an important factor in the economic advancement of immigrants (Sanders and Nee, 1996: 231). Immigrants establish small businesses such as restaurants, laundries, neighborhood shops, cabs, domestic care, and other services (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 32). These services could not be offered as cheaply as they are without a constant stream of immigrants entering these industries as workers and entrepreneurs (Hiebert, 2006: 46). As Canadians enjoy having access to cheap and accessible global standard goods and services, these businesses and services are more than welcome as they contribute to this prosperity (Hiebert, 2006: 46). However, endeavours such as operating a business are difficult without the help of family.

During the past decades, attention has been paid to the relationship between immigrants' self-employment and family-based social capital. Family is often the main social organization supporting the establishment and operation of small business objectives (Sanders & Nee, 1996: 237; Siqueira, 2007: 43). Indeed, facts have demonstrated that persons who are married and live with their spouses are more likely to own a business than those who have other types of relationships. The family often provides initial financing, encouragement and the solidarity that influences entrepreneurship or supplies critical information regarding business operations (Siqueira, 2007: 43; Marger, 2001: 443). In addition, as many of the small-business owners face a chronic shortage of capital, forcing them to operate on a shoestring budget, family labour

becomes essential to the survival of the business (Sanders and Nee, 1996: 236). In fact, it is often primarily through the opportunity to utilize family and kin as workers that immigrant entrepreneurs are able to maintain a competitive advantage over native business owners (Marger, 2001: 443). In summary, immigrants' small businesses provide services and goods that benefit the economy and are enjoyed by Canadians, but these businesses could not be operational without the possibility of mobilizing social capital.

Literature shows that the lack of recognition of the economic value of social capital within immigration policy costs Canada. An important number of studies demonstrate how social capital is crucial for the economic and social stability of the country and how family reunification plays an important part in this stability. Family ties help to attract and retain immigrants, which is essential for long-term economic and social benefits for the country. These ties are also important in assisting immigrants with initial settlement questions/issues, in helping with development of regions and in enabling newcomers to integrate into the labour market successfully or to become a successful self-employed business person. Recognizing the economic value of social capital in the immigration discourse would lift some negative assumptions about Family-Class immigrants and attribute economic value to each individual and to the dynamic of the family unit of which s/he is part, regardless of his/her immigration class. Unfortunately, this recognition is slow in coming, and the contrasting perceptions of Family- and Economic-Classes persist, as discussed below.

### 3.3 Two Distinct Administrative Classes Intertwined

The 2002 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* imposes a strict dichotomy in its objectives: Economic-Class immigration addresses the economic growth objective, while Family-Class addresses reunification. However, this dichotomy does not exist in reality. Even though these two classes are presented as complementary in official discourse and perceived as rivals in political discussions, they are, in fact, interdependent (Daniel, 2005: 699). The actual processing of immigrants as either Economic or Family-Class is dependent on their time of application, not their human capital. Members of a family who immigrate to Canada with the principal applicant processed as an Economic-Class immigrant are automatically classified as Economic-Class immigrants as well, even though they are not assessed by the point system. Yet were the same family members to apply to come to Canada *after* the principal applicant immigrates, they would be processed as Family-Class immigrants (Sweetman, 2006: 70).

Indeed, for the five-year period between 1996 and 2000, over half of those admitted under the Family-Class were a spouse or fiancé, and another 7 per cent were a son or daughter of an Economic-Class immigrant. Thus, about 60-70% of those admitted as Family-Class immigrants between 1996 and 2000 could have been Economic-Class immigrants, had they accompanied rather than followed the principal applicant (Li, 2003: 43). Furthermore, some immigration applicants to Canada with the requisite education and skills to succeed in the Economic-Class may nevertheless choose to apply for admission under the Family-Class, for practical reasons, such as the processing speed (43).

In addition to these blurred lines between classes, there are similarities in the class processes. First, both classes involve a selection process according to economic and financial criteria. For Family-Class, the sponsor must pass the test of these criteria, and for Economic-Class, the prospective immigrant must do so. The precise criteria may differ, but they have in common the aim to economically and socially benefit the country. Economic-Class immigrants are selected according to their suitability to the labour market; they must have education, work experience, employment in line, and/or the minimum required funds (CICa). Likewise, Family-Class immigrants are selected if their sponsor proves that s/he has been economically successful enough to meet the financial requirements imposed by the government.

Second, when spouses accompany a principal applicant, the system treats their human capital in a minimal way. The principal applicant might receive at most 10 points out of 100 for the human capital of his or her spouse. There is no question as to how the spouses intend to contribute to Canadian society or the labour market because it is suggested that the principal applicant is the sponsor and the “risks” are alleviated (Sweetman, 2006: 70). Likewise, Family-Class immigrants are not asked about their human capital because all risks should be borne by the sponsor who is carefully selected on an economic basis. In both classes, only the principal applicant and the sponsor’s economic condition matter for screening families coming to Canada. Consequently, given its economic aspects in its process and similarities with the Skilled Workers/Professionals process, Family-Class immigration is not as non-economic as we presume.

Consequently, given the fact that the two immigration categories are, in fact, intertwined and very similar in their administrative processes, they cannot be treated -- as they have been to date

– as two discrete entities when evaluating immigrants’ potential contributions to the Canadian economy and society (Li, 2003: 43). In fact, the dichotomy of the two classes in the *IRPA* has misdirected the research that has focused on the economic performance of individuals and immigration class. In 2000, CIC released a paper to verify the truth about the assumption that there are differences in economic outcomes among the various immigration classes. It found that principal applicants in the Economic-Class have, on average, very good labour market earnings, while the spouses and dependents that accompany them and Family-Class immigrants all have remarkably similar earnings – markedly lower (Sweetman, 2006: 70; Picot & Sweetman, 2012: 31). Therefore, from that viewpoint, Economic-Class immigrants (other than the principal applicant) and Family-Class immigrants have similar outcomes in the labour market. This result was expected as, according to CIC, the Economic-Class spouses and dependants and the Family-Class immigrants often have a “weaker labour force attachment” than the principal applicants/sponsor because “most of them are not household heads” (CIC, 2000: 14). Such cryptic referrals do little to acknowledge the major problem here, i.e. CIC does not value the unpaid labour of spouses and other family members, nor the fact that many women shape their lives around the priorities of their spouses and children.

The point of this paper is important as it implied that more research should focus on the study of the economic performance of the family as a whole rather than on individuals (Kustec, 2006; Bailie and Denis, 2006). The study of the family as an economic unit would implicitly put some economic value to the unpaid labour that contributes to the overall well-being of the family. For example, sponsored women may postpone or forego entry into the labour force to take on unpaid and yet critically important familial responsibilities (Vanderplaat, 2006: 4). Or, likewise, some

parents and grandparents have financial resources that can help the head of household when struggling to establish her/himself, or they can provide daycare and take care of the household needs while both parents are working (Telegdi, 2006: 96). This unpaid contribution can contribute favorably to the economic performance of the family.

When research focuses on the family as a whole rather than on the individuals, more favorable results are obtained regarding the Family-Class's economic contributions (Hiebert, 2008). In 2004, a study demonstrated that when research compares immigrants' economic contributions against the contributions of persons born in Canadian, and the focus is on "family economic contributions" rather than "individual income", different results can be achieved (Hiebert, 2005: 45). The 2004 study examined a wide range of social services – based on intricate family income and expenditure during the 1989 to 1997 period. Notwithstanding several constraints in the data, the finding was that Canadian-born "heads of households" contributed, on average, C\$87,300 more in taxes than they received over their lifetime. The figure for foreign-born "heads of households" was lower, but not exceptionally so, at C\$73,440 (DeVoretz & Pivnenko 2004, Table 3 cited by Hiebert, 2005: 45). The difference was not the result of a greater reliance upon social services by immigrants, but was due to their lower incomes and, therefore, lower contributions in the form of taxes. The key point of that study was that immigrants, including Family-Class immigrants, economically contribute to the country through their respective incomes (Hiebert, 2006: 45). This new form of calculating earnings acknowledged family members who, through their unpaid work, contribute to the success of the family.

In summary, the two distinct immigration classes - Economic and Family Classes – cannot logically constitute social groupings capable of reflecting the immigrants’ potential contributions to the Canadian economy and society. Indeed, the same individual could be either classified as Economic-Class if s/he comes at the same moment as the Skilled Workers/Professional applicant or as a Family-Class immigrant if s/he comes after that moment. Likewise, an individual can elect to come as a Family-Class immigrant for convenience because s/he has a family member who can sponsor her/him and not because of a lack of skills and work experience on her/his part. In addition, the two administrative processes, for the Skilled Workers/Professionals and family reunification programs, are very similar as they are both based on economic value and the previous success of the applicant or sponsor. Both processes have a strong economic aspect, which is often ignored when Family-Class immigration is under discussion.

For these reasons, the strict dichotomy in the IRPA’s objective regarding these two immigrant classes has misguided government’s studies and statistics. There is a pressing need for future research to focus on the dynamics of immigrant families and the impact the family has on various immigration outcomes (Bailie & Denis, 2006: 21). Studying Economic- and Family-Class’ economic contribution based on the immigration class that they came to Canada through and their income level seems inaccurate and denies the implied benefits of each individual and/or family unit. This brings us back to the initial question of this Master’s Research Paper, to be discussed in the following final chapter: how did Family-Class immigration come to be seen as non- or even uneconomic, and is this indeed the case?

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

### **4.1 Exploring Perceptions of Family-Class Immigration**

From Confederation in 1867 to today, immigration in Canada has been used as a national and population building strategy: the self-interest of the country has been taken for granted and the merits of immigration have been mainly evaluated in light of the demographic and economic needs of Canadian society (Li, 2003: 7). Consequently, immigration debates have been based on assessing whether immigrants bring benefits to the resident population and immigrants are mainly viewed as economic agents who should contribute certain skills, talents and/or resources to the economy and/or labour force (Li, 2003: 78; Satzewich, 2006: 169). The immigration discourse has developed two main assumptions over time: first, immigrants are deemed unworthy unless they can generate an obvious gain to the existing population and such gains are typically gauged in economic terms; second, the higher the human capital of immigrants, the more they are considered to be productive and, thus, the greater the capacity to contribute to the society (Li, 2003: 79).

In the past decades, immigration policies have, therefore, become a form of human resource management bringing in immigrants whose average educational levels exceeded that of the general population (Reitz, 2004: 101). The immigration discourse also implies that Family-Class immigrants are unworthy and a burden to Canadian society since they are not ‘selected’ for their human capital (Satzewich, 2006: 172). These assumptions are powerful as they have influenced

immigration policy for the past decades and, especially, the *IRPA* that has been in place since 2002. Through the literature, we verified that Family-Class immigration has, indeed, been in decline in the past decades and that an immigration priority has been given to Skilled Workers/Professionals and, more recently, to temporary workers (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 31; Keung, 2008; Sorensen, 2013). In addition, the analysis of the literature provides a better understanding of that decline, which may not only be due to economic reasons, but also to perceptions and assumptions associated with Family-Class immigration.

To justify its immigration policies, the Canadian government mainly used statistics based on income level/tax contributions of immigrants in each immigration class. These statistics show that Economic-Class immigrants integrate into the labour market faster, have higher income levels, contribute more in taxes and use less social services than Family-Class immigrants (Campbell, 2000: 53; Collacott, 2006: 91). However, the literature also suggests that the Canadian government omitted important information in their statistics, such as, omitting the spouses and dependents of the Skilled Workers/Professionals' applicants. These spouses and dependents are categorized as Economic-Class immigrants but are not assessed by the point-system and might not fare as well in the labour market; by excluding them from the statistics, the statistics are thus misleadingly transformed to show Family-Class immigration in a poorer economic light (Li, 2003: 80). Immigrants' worth has been evaluated with income data: the lower the earnings of immigrants, the lower their imputed values, and the less they are seen to contribute to Canada. The worth of immigrants has been put in pure economic terms, which are captured in a narrowly defined measurement (Li, 2003: 167).

The government does not seem to consider studies demonstrating that, even though Family-Class immigrants might have a lower earning level at first, they are usually able to “catch up” with the Economic-Class immigrants (Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 32; Satzewich, 2006: 172; De Silva, 1997: 197; Duleep & Reget, 1996). Neither do they consider the fact that Family-Class immigrants also contribute to the building of the society in ways that directly or indirectly bring economic measurements, in such areas as entrepreneurship, family values, work ethics, and social capital, in addition to raising and socializing children for Canada’s future generations (Li, 2003: 167). As a result, a couple of decades after the creation of the point-system, the focus on Economic-Class immigrants has proven not to be the best approach to optimizing Canada’s economy: significant number of highly educated and business experienced immigrants have come to Canada to find themselves unemployed, underemployed or unsuccessful and, subsequently, leave the country (Reitz, 2011; Lupick, 2009; Hiebert, 2008). In addition, since the immigration selection policy only applies to a small portion of the immigrants being admitted – about one quarter of the immigrant population because spouses and children coming with the principal applicant of Skilled Workers/Professionals are not assessed – selection immigration policy cannot have a significant impact on the economy (Hiebert, 2006: 42).

One important aspect of the Canadian immigration policy is the high value put on human capital and the lack of interest in social capital (Li, 2003: 168). Literature demonstrates that social capital, in which family networks play an important part, has economic value. Indeed, no economic benefits are possible if Canada is unable to retain immigrants, and social capital is crucial for retaining immigrants. Studies and facts have demonstrated that social capital is as important as human capital for the economic and social integration of immigrants. Family

reunification is the best integration support an individual can receive when arriving to a new country. Family provides critical information and help for the sponsored newcomer to adjust to his/her new environment. Some experience language and culture shock, discrimination, challenges in the labour market, etc.; family provides emotional support to help with those challenges. As well, when there is a lack of job opportunities, family networks develop strategies, such as supporting the operation of a small business (Baker and Benjamin, 1997; Siqueira, 2007; Bergeron and Potter, 2006; Sander and Nee, 1996). Because family helps with settlement and integration, Family-Class immigrants tend to settle for the long-term and be more stable than Economic-Class immigrants (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1995; Picot and Sweetman, 2012: 4 Roy, 2012). Further, the long-term settlement of Family-Class immigrants has proven to be beneficial for the development of regions or small communities (Lewis-Watts, 2006: 83; Marger, 2001). Therefore, this strong aspect of Family-Class immigration – social capital constructed by family ties – should be further considered when evaluating economic gains for Canada.

Finally, through our study of the immigration policy, we found that the strict dichotomy in the objectives of the *IRPA*, which states that Economic-Class immigration addresses economic growth while Family Class immigration addresses reunification, is untrue because these immigration classes are, in fact, intertwined and very similar in their processes. Indeed, the bureaucratic categories may be useful for understanding how immigrants are processed, but they do not necessarily translate into logically constituted social groupings that meaningfully reflect immigrants' potential contributions to the Canadian economy and society (Li, 2003: 43). Literature demonstrates that the actual processing of immigrants in either the Economic Class or

Family-Class can be arbitrary and, as a result, evaluating the economic contributions of immigrants based on the immigration class that they came to Canada through is inaccurate and denies the implied benefits of each individual. The unpaid domestic work carried out by sponsored wives or parents/grandparents can significantly contribute to the economic well-being of the family and the community/region where they live (Hiebert, 2005: 45; Kustec, 2006; Vanderplaat, 2006: 4; Telegdi, 2006: 96). Other alternatives should be considered when evaluating economic benefits/contributions of immigrants, such as evaluating families as a unit. This would be the least we could do as Canadians concerned for the genuine wellbeing not only of our economy but our society. Our focus to date on human capital has its merits, such as in reducing the overt discrimination of the past, but it can also be augmented with an appreciation for social capital and for individuals who come to Canada in all Classes.

#### **4.2 The Family-Class Immigration Process: Economic or Non-Economic?**

The economic argument remains a powerful discourse against the value of Family-Class immigration (Vanderplaat, 2006: 3).

Throughout history, and across the world, a dichotomy has been established between “economic” and “humanitarian” immigration, with family reunification falling in the latter category. This dichotomy is promoted by both antagonists and protagonists of family reunification: the former to detract from family reunification as non-economic or uneconomic, and the latter to emphasise the intrinsic value of non-economic contributions. While such value is not disputed here in this paper, and indeed is confirmed, this is not the focus of this paper. What we instead argue is that

the characterization of family reunification as uniquely humanitarian is historically and currently inaccurate in the case of Canada's Family-Class immigration policy. In Canada's early years, restrictive immigration and a relative absence of relevant international law suggest that Family-Class' origins are not uniquely "humanitarian" but rather reflect recognition of the economic contribution of unpaid family labour. This recognition, however, decreased over time, and economic contribution came to be measured through an instrument rarely given attention in the literature on immigration in general, and immigration to Canada in particular: the national tax agency, which in Canada has taken the names "Department of Inland Revenue" (1867-1917), "Department of Customs and Inland Revenue" (1918-1927), "Department of National Revenue" or "Revenue Canada" (1927-1999), "Canada Customs and Revenue Agency" (1999-2003), and the "Canada Revenue Agency" (2003-present).

Whether Family-Class immigration is or is not uniquely humanitarian can be seen through an analysis of the relationship between immigration and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), as mediated by immigration policymakers, officials, and researchers alike. Such a perspective has never before been taken, and enables a re-examination and focusing of the findings in the previous three chapters of this Major Research Paper. Beginning with the historical background to family reunification in Canada, a major turning point was in 2001 when Citizenship and Immigration Canada began to require proof of the "minimum necessary income" (MNI), in addition to the already-entrenched system of "undertakings" binding sponsors as financial guarantors of their sponsored relatives. From that point on officially, and perhaps earlier in practice, the Canada Revenue Agency came to play a key role in immigrant selection: proof of the MNI came from the CRA's Notice of Assessment, or similar document, such as the "Option

C-Printout” (e.g. *Pospelova v. Canada*, 2013). Citizenship and Immigration Canada policymaker Rell DeShaw describes how sponsors, for at least quarter of a century of immigration policy history, have been bound to an “undertaking” or oath that they will meet all financial needs of each family member coming to Canada, for up to ten years (2006: 12). When CIC wishes to verify a sponsor’s capacity to uphold the undertaking, CIC requests from the potential sponsor evidence from the CRA, thus making the CRA's documents crucial intermediaries in the process of immigrant selection.

Contrary to government and researcher publications, Family-Class immigrants will never be a burden because they have a guarantor – the sponsor undertakes all of the possible economic ‘risks’ that might be associated with Family-Class immigrants coming to Canada. Evidence of government satisfaction with this guarantor model is the recent Bill C-566, which intends to amend the *IRPA* by allowing Canadian citizens or permanent residents to sponsor, once in their lifetime, “one foreign national who is a relative but is not a member of the Family-Class” (Parliament of Canada). This expansion further demonstrates that the sponsorship program has proven to be – in the government’s eyes – economically “safer” even than the “economically-selective” point-system.

The role of CRA in sponsorship and immigrant selection is rarely mentioned amid an overwhelming emphasis on family ties as the basis for selection in Family-Class immigration. While family ties are indeed a government requirement, they have not been the sole requirement for decades. Understating the role of the CRA has served to strengthen the perception that Family-Class immigration is non-economic in its selection process and uneconomic or costly in

its outcomes. The notion of a non-economic selection process is forefronted by proponents of Family-Class immigration, not only opponents:

Sponsored family members are not selected explicitly for their potential contribution to the economy... (Vanderplaat, 2006: 3)

DeShaw refers to Family-Class immigration as “immigration based solely on family relationship” (2006: 9). Numerous researchers use the word “select” (selects, selected, etc.) to refer to Economic- but not Family-Class immigrants (e.g. Triadafilopoulos, 2006: 31; McLaren, 2006: 34), despite the rigorous sponsorship process described above. As the quote in Chapter 2 (2.3) from former Citizenship and Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi illustrates, Family-Class immigration is seen as Canada’s “humanitarian” side. Yet the perception of Family-Class as somehow “unfiltered” on an economic basis could not be further from the truth: the 40,000 employees of the CRA can be thanked for precise dollar assessments, down to the nickels and dimes, of the net worth of each sponsor.

### **4.3 Family-Class Immigration Outcomes: Economic or Uneconomic?**

Beyond selection, the economic monitoring of Family-Class immigration is ongoing even after the family member’s arrival. Neither the sponsor nor the sponsored family member can be in receipt of social assistance – a point verifiable, again, by the CRA. More so than Economic-Class immigrants, then, the Family-Class immigrant is under constant economic surveillance, while the Family-Class sponsor is held constantly financially accountable for up to ten years per sponsored family member. While CIC is the agency that brings such matters to court, CRA is the key agency (among others) that facilitates the surveillance. In addition to this ongoing monitoring of

individuals, the CIC and researchers conduct studies on Family-Class immigrants as a group, using their tax information.

The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) is a database that links immigration and taxation records. It currently covers the immigration landing years 1980 to 2003 and is updated with tax information annually. (Bailie and Denis, 2006: 23)

The IMDB is the source for much of the research cited in Chapter 2 of this paper, particularly the government's 1998 survey of immigrant income (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000) that served as the run-up to the 2002 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. The report's use of tax data presupposed its conclusions, citing incidence rather than amount of social assistance, and concentrating on a relatively short-term period subsequent to each immigrant's arrival. As shown in Chapter 2, the same data was found in another study to support opposite conclusions, i.e. Family-Class immigrants provide a surplus of revenue to the Canadian government (Li, 2003: 87). Meanwhile, as seen in section 2.2 of this paper, the dramatic rates of social assistance uptake cited in one study (Government of Canada, 1997: 46, cited by Collacott, 2006: 91) are put quickly into perspective in another study that explains that these supposedly highly dependent sponsored family members constitute no more than 6-7% of annual immigration (Telegdi, 2006: 96). The bottom line here is that the CRA serves as the data reservoir (thanks to self-reporting by Canadians, both immigrant and Canada-born) for assessments of immigrant performance, which CIC then divides by immigrant Class as the basis for subsequent policy. CRA data prior to, and now in the IMDB (administered by Statistics Canada for a CIC-led consortium of government agencies) is the source cited for tropes that the Family-Class is uneconomic or costly. While this data can be used to demonstrate the contrary, that is not the point. The point is that CRA data serves as a factual, unassailable, fundamentally Canadian (CRA dates back to Confederation),

impartial and objective source of economic performance. When it is used selectively to highlight certain aspects while overshadowing others, the conclusions that only partly reflect the full truth are nevertheless taken with the same degree of seriousness that CRA commands in the Canadian government and public mindset.

A major problem with this devotion to CRA data, especially elements such as income and social assistance, is not what it does include, but what it does not include, namely, any recognition of unpaid labour. Unlike the early days after Confederation, when family was recognized as a crucial source of labour in the colonial imperative to “settle” land expropriated from First Nations, today’s accounting of economic contributions excludes measurement and thus recognition of labour that is not accorded a wage or salary. This is where the findings of Chapter 3 in this paper come into play. Much has been made of the unmeasured yet highly significant value of social capital in immigrant performance and outcomes. How much of this social capital is paid? Unrecognized in the statistics are the welcoming of others to a community, the helping hand in times of need, the childcare, the housekeeping, the introductions and hosting of networking social events, the volunteer community work, the care for elderly or others requiring assistance, the hours spent in moral support and informal counseling (comfort), the food acquisition and preparation, the shuttling of children and others from place to place, and the unrecorded labour given in support to the career or enterprise of a spouse, parent, or adult child. Indeed, rather than recognizing this unpaid labour, various officials and publications refer unthinkingly to the need to “look after” family members, as seen in section 2.2 (quoting CIC, 1995). The gender discrimination and ageism that underlies discussions on the burden of Family-

Class immigration is conveniently masked in CRA statistics that measure none of this “social” capital.

Our beautiful break with a shameful history of discrimination, the point-system that succeeded in granting equal value to human capital irrespective of race, class or gender, still suffers one important failure: it does not take into account how human capital will or will not transfer and be valued in Canada (as it was valued overseas and by our immigration process). It does not take into account how this transferral depends on factors like social capital, as research is coming to prove increasingly in recent years. One of the most striking findings cited in Chapter 3 is that immigrants will succeed with or without human capital if they have social capital (De Silva, 1997: 197). Our reliance on the CRA to measure for us the value of our sponsors, but worse, the value of economic contributions of immigrants, or to quote the government’s above-cited 1998 report title, “*The Economic Performance of Immigrants, [in] Immigration Category Perspective,*” has caused us to devalue and in the end to misinterpret the *economic* reality (let alone the larger reality beyond economics) of Family-Class immigration impacts on Canada and Canadians.

#### **4.4 Implications and Ways Forward**

The implications are profound. We now have the “supervisa” for parents and grandparents, effectively discouraging Family-Class applications for these members. Parents and grandparents can be provided with a 10-year visa to come and live in Canada as long as they pay for their own health care (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (f)). We have “temporary” migration, often a

misnomer for the long-term commitments given by employees in return for very little commitment on the part of Canada and the employer. We have reductions in Family-Class “quotas” and caps on the proportion of Family-Class applicants among the other Classes of immigration. We have public statements and opinion polls on the need for immigrants to be “selected” (as if Family-Class immigrants are not), and to “contribute” (as if Family-Class immigrants do not). For example, a recent study found that Canadians believe the government must or Canadians expect the government to be strategic and selective (Nanos, 2008: 32). More Canadians think that it is important to select immigrants whose skills meet the needs of Canada’s workforce (Nanos, 2008: 30). Canadians consider immigration to be a partnership in nation building and expect immigration to serve the needs of Canada (Nanos, 2008: 30). The prevailing discourse that Family-Class immigration is solely “humanitarian” rather than “economic” is now present not only in government documents or the research papers of pro- and anti-immigration advocates, but also in everyday exchanges in Canada’s streets, shops, homes, universities, and other workplaces.

This perception of Family-Class as non-economic and uneconomic, combined with the drive to “harness” immigration for the economy, means the Family-Class is an early target in dealing with antipathy toward immigration in general. The benefits of Family-Class immigration and its contributions toward immigrant integration and social acceptance should be (but are not) obvious: if economic success is a prerequisite to satisfactory social participation, then the converse is also true: lack of social acceptance inhibits economic progress (Reitz, 2004: 121). Yet research has demonstrated that, whether immigrants fail or succeed economically and socially, immigration and immigrants are often perceived negatively by both the government and

the public (Esses & al., 2001: 391). To date, the government's mechanism for accommodating such negative attitudes has been to claim it is favouring "selective" immigration, i.e. temporary migration and a point-system (for landed immigrants) designed to fill particular labour shortages.

A more appropriate response, however, would be to acknowledge our own deficits in recognising, acknowledging, sharing, and communicating the contributions of all immigrants, irrespective of their Class of immigration. It would be to express honesty in our statistics, such as including in our comparisons (against Family-Class immigrants) the two thirds of Economic-Class immigrants who represent family members of principal applicants. It would be to recognise the surplus revenue all immigrants bring, in each Class, rather than misleadingly mentioning social assistance "incidence" to the exclusion of the taxes immigrants contribute. It would be to consider the long-term, as the benefits in terms of tax revenues (to date our principal form of assessing benefits, using tax data to monitor income earnings) are sometimes not evident until the second generation of immigrants (Boyd & Grieco, 1998). It would be to accede that our reliance on CRA data to "measure up" our immigrants is insufficient to those women, elderly, infirm, and other individuals whose contributions remain outside the "database", and that therefore we must find ways to reduce such reliance. And finally, a more appropriate response would be to cease our harmful characterisations of Family-Class immigration as non-economic and uneconomic, not only because they are harmful, but also because they are untrue.

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