Capabilities, Well-Being and Multiculturalism: A New Framework for Guiding Policy

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Numéro 44, 2011

Americanity, Continentalism and Globalisation
Américanité, continentalité et mondialisation

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1010086ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1010086ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Conseil international d'études canadiennes

ISSN

1180-3991 (imprimé)
1923-5291 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Hodgett, S. & Clark, D. (2011). Capabilities, Well-Being and Multiculturalism: A New Framework for Guiding Policy. *International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, (44), 163–184.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1010086ar>

Résumé de l'article

Cet article élabore un cadre intégré des compétences dans le but d'examiner le bien-être humain dans un contexte multiculturel, explique comment ce cadre peut devenir opérationnel lors du travail sur le terrain et fait valoir sa pertinence pratique et stratégique pour étudier l'immigration, le multiculturalisme et la cohésion sociale au Canada.

***Capabilities, Well-Being and Multiculturalism:
A New Framework for Guiding Policy***³

Abstract

This paper develops an Integrated Capabilities Framework for investigating human well-being in multicultural settings, shows how it can be made operational through fieldwork and argues it has practical and policy relevance for studying immigration, multiculturalism, and social cohesion in Canada.

Résumé

Cet article élabore un cadre intégré des compétences dans le but d'examiner le bien-être humain dans un contexte multiculturel, explique comment ce cadre peut devenir opérationnel lors du travail sur le terrain et fait valoir sa pertinence pratique et stratégique pour étudier l'immigration, le multiculturalisme et la cohésion sociale au Canada.

Introduction

In most first-world countries, issues relating to social exclusion, expanding immigrant and minority communities, and inter-cultural communication have moved to the front of research and policy agendas. In this paper we build on insights from three different perspectives for studying well-being—namely the capability approach (CA), the livelihoods approach, and the chronic poverty approach. The result is a new framework—the Integrated Capabilities Framework (ICF)—that is used to develop fieldwork questions for exploring values, expectations, and actual experiences. In this paper, the ICF is applied through a small number of ethnographic interviews conducted in Ottawa to show how the framework can be made operational. The justification for the ICF is that it provides a richer multidimensional base for thinking about the dynamics of well-being and social integration in Canada than existing approaches concerned with narrower analyses of resources, employment opportunities, and skills at given points in time.

This paper is divided into five main parts that (1) explore the relevance for Canadian policy, (2) introduce multiculturalism and the policy context in Canada, (3) develop the ICF, (4) analyze the main fieldwork findings, and (5) explore the practical relevance of the ICF for multicultural policy generally. A final section concludes.

Relevance for Canadian Policy

The ICF combines a number of unique features that makes it highly relevant for guiding multicultural policy. These features include embracing

multidimensionality (incorporating a broad range of capabilities), allowing for cultural diversity and difference (when exploring values, life chances, and experiences), recognizing that well-being is a dynamic process that evolves over time (as values, opportunities, and priorities change) and requiring practical policies to be applied efficiently and pragmatically. The following paragraphs relate these points to Canadian policy.

In particular, the ICF attaches greater weight to the non-economic aspects of well-being than many existing policy approaches by embracing the full range of capabilities different people and cultures have reason to value. Historically, Canada has traditionally put more emphasis on labour market concerns, on jobs and skill requirements, than on broader issues of social integration. As such, the policies for immigrant selection and integration have focused on national economic requirements and individual employment prospects, rather than on social cohesion. Recent research, including our fieldwork results, point to growing concern about the continued successful integration of some Canadian immigrants (e.g. Reitz; Reitz and Banerjee; Biles and Winnemore). Issues of hate, racism, discriminatory practices in accessing public services, language difficulties, non-recognition of foreign skills and qualifications, social exclusion, lack of civic participation, and cultural segregation are increasingly relevant.

These concerns have prompted one senior official to argue that 'Canadian diversity, multiculturalism and equality policies have been applied timidly' (Dib 144). He observes:

A look at Canada's medium-to-long term future in the light of socio-economic changes and demographic projections is needed... after years of inaction... By 2017, 20-25 percent of all Canadians will be members of visible minority groups, a ratio that is much higher in some major cities (e.g., over 50% of the population in Toronto and Vancouver); by 2011, immigration will be the sole source of net labour-force growth, and almost 90% of these immigrants will be minorities; by the year 2025, immigration will be the source of all population growth (143-44).

Concerns over how such changes impact upon future Canadian society must be seen in the context of a recent government report on the state of multiculturalism in Canada and its future prospects. Here, Will Kymlicka argues that one of the main issues suffusing all regional surveys on multiculturalism is

the emergence of "super-diversity" in which ethnic and religious diversity no longer arises primarily or exclusively from permanently settled citizens, but ... from growing numbers of people with various legal statuses and degrees of attachment and residence, ranging

from highly mobile globe-trotting professionals to unskilled migrant workers on repeat temporary work permits (*The Current State of Multiculturalism*, 29–30).

The ICF is well placed to facilitate “futuristic research” on the “evolution of a multicultural Canada” (Dib 146). It can cope with the social and human aspects of multiculturalism as well as economic impacts and appeals to “super-diversity” insofar as it can be applied to first generation immigrants, although it is by no means limited to the study of newcomers who may or may not become permanent residents. More importantly perhaps, the ICF embraces super-diversity in that it is designed to respond to the needs and priorities of different groups, which may well vary. It also recognizes that cultural well-being and integration are dynamic processes by exploring how different people’s opportunities, experiences, and goals change over the long-term. In this respect the ICF is more closely related to the newer paradigms of interpretive policy analysis (e.g. Dryzek; Fischer; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea) than standard forms of policy analyses, which are static (see below).

While the ICF is broad and dynamic in that it embraces all the capabilities that matter to different people and groups over time, it is also practical in the sense that it can be applied pragmatically at the policy level. As Amartya Sen has argued, “[t]o ask how things are going and whether they can be improved is a constant and inescapable part of the pursuit of justice” (*The Idea of Justice*, 86). Instead of trying to tackle injustices across the board, an approach that deals with the most urgent social problems (or “capability failures”) may be preferred. Following Sen’s reasoning, the ICF embraces the view that it may be best to seek to remove un-freedoms one at a time, instead of aiming for a utopian social contract, i.e., “a perfect multicultural policy.” Arguably, this kind of *targeted pragmatism* will be more effective than narrow economic approaches to policy and more efficient than ambitious approaches that aim to promote the full range of capabilities or freedoms.

In a dynamic and rapidly changing democracy like Canada, a sophisticated approach to multicultural policy is required. However, there is not only a case for diversifying multicultural policy, but for targeting these policies effectively. Such a strategy is likely to sit well with the development of Canada’s recently modernized settlement program. The responsible federal government department, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), is committed to providing “appropriate support and services for newcomers to assist in their settlement and long-term integration in Canada, and to help newcomers contribute to Canada’s economic, *social* and *cultural* development” (CIC, *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, 23, emphasis added). CIC also acknowledges that “economic outcomes provide only a partial guide to successful integration” (23) and observes that some groups (notably, refugees) face “more difficulty integrating” than others—especially in areas relating to labour market skills,

language proficiency, access to housing, health concerns and child development issues (37). Nevertheless, Canada's remodelled policies continue to visualize the integration of new arrivals "in a way that maximizes their contribution to the country" (8). Reitz has recently argued that changes in who is selected to enter Canada influence social integration with outcomes depending on the qualifications, experience, and type of employment of the applicant (12). Inequalities that exist at the outset between new arrivals and the challenges they face in terms of the nature and depth of their journey towards integration suggests that Canadian government might usefully consider immigrant *equity* instead of *equality* based policy interventions. Our framework underlines this point and can be used to explore how multicultural and social policies can be developed for, or moulded to, the needs of particular types of immigrants.

Multiculturalism and Social Integration in Canada: A Brief Overview

Parvin has written of the international "concerns about the impact of diversity on national unity, on social cohesion and on the viability of redistributive social justice" (353). Soroka, Johnston, and Banting have outlined the debate between those who argue that multiculturalism concerns the appreciation and support of cultural difference or diversity (e.g. Taylor et al; Kymlicka, *Ethnocultural Diversity* and *The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism?*) and those who fear social disintegration (e.g. Bissoondath; Huntington; Goodhart; Etzioni). The history of multicultural policy in Canada is complicated. Federal government is currently modernizing its integration and citizenship programs (CIC, *Strategic Outcomes*). Such changes need to address newer global migration flows, which are "smaller, transient, more socially stratified, less organized and more legally differentiated" (Vertovec 86). The rapidly changing demographic conditions (rise of super-diversity) and recent efforts to modernize social and multicultural policy accordingly arguably requires a more sophisticated framework for investigating the full range of human values and experiences over time, exploring similarities and differences between cultural groups and targeting interventions more pragmatically.

History and Background

Kymlicka views policies on multiculturalism as a palimpsest of federal laws and policies with layers of new legislation overlaying the old so that

Multicultural... policies for ethnic groups formed by immigration overlie earlier linguistic and territorial accommodations of French Canadians, which overlie earlier historic agreements and settlements with Aboriginal peoples (*Ethnocultural Diversity*, 39).

These differences make Canada one of the most multicultural countries in the world. Historical differences separate the construction of policies for French, Aboriginal, and immigrant Canadians into silos. And policy for immigrant

or ethnic groups coalesce around the 1971 parliamentary statement of multiculturalism, the 1988 *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and section 27 of the 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Multicultural policy for immigrants and visible minorities until recently was managed by the departments of Heritage Canada and by Citizenship and Immigration Canada whose “key concepts include multiculturalism, citizenship, integration, tolerance, ethnicity, diversity and inclusion” (Kymlicka, *Ethnocultural Diversity* 40). Since 2008, the multiculturalism portfolio has resided with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, *Annual Report to Parliament* 6).

Without doubt, such policy is underpinned by Canada’s constitution and status as a well-established liberal democracy. Indeed, the development of the Canadian multicultural mosaic is often related to international changes in the realm of human rights, for example, the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and the movement towards the removal of racial discrimination. The rise of multicultural policy in Canada can therefore be seen as a direct response to wider global campaigns for the advancement of civil rights. Some perceive it as the rise of “Liberal Canada,” citing Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 House of Commons Speech in support of federal multicultural policy:

... a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is basically the conscious support of individual freedom of choice. We are free to be ourselves. But this cannot be left to chance. It must be fostered and pursued actively. If freedom of choice is in danger for some ethnic groups, it is in danger for all (Trudeau).

The objective of the 1988 *Canadian Multicultural Act* in supporting freedom of the individual is “to make the life that the individual is able and wishes to have” (Kymlicka, *Ethnocultural Diversity* 60). Such aims fit closely with the overarching goal of the CA and ICF—expanding the substantive freedoms people have reason to value (e.g. Sen, *Development As Freedom*). Most Canadians have excelled in this area.⁴

Multicultural Research and Policy

Research on multiculturalism in Canada has demonstrated concerns about social participation and cohesion of *all* citizens but particularly of ethnic and visible minorities. Soroka, Johnston, and Banting note how the evolution in public policy from understanding ethnic diversity as a threat to social order, to policies that viewed it as public recognition of ethnocultural minorities was not seamless. Indeed, they suggest that Canada’s rapid social change has led to growing concerns over social integration and conflict (561). Jeffrey Reitz’s work has explored the social integration of ethnic minorities into Canadian society. In particular, Reitz and Banerjee have examined “the extent to which individual members of a group form relationships with people outside the

group—relationships that help them to achieve individual economic, social or cultural goals” (506–509). By drawing on Statistics Canada’s *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, they explore individuals’ attitudes, their relationships to groups, overall life satisfaction, as well as their level of civic participation. They argue that statistics show “visible minorities appear less integrated” and “[t]he greatest gap between visible minorities and whites is in [their] self-identification as Canadian” (Reitz and Banerjee 507). They conclude that “Whites with greater experience in Canada are better integrated into society than are visible minorities” (521) and further, that this negative integration of visible minorities results directly from “experiences of discrimination and vulnerability” (521). Their argument is that racial barriers *do* exist in Canada being evident in immigration and settlement policy, human rights policy, employment policy (in particular through discrimination against immigrant qualifications and recognition) and in the status of ethnic minorities within public services (523).

The research described above suggests that visible minorities and immigrants are less well integrated in Canada due to forms of discrimination; and that barriers are evident in different types of policy outcomes. CIC (*Integration in Canada*) documents the evolution of multicultural policy in Canada since the 1960s. Until recently, Canadian immigration models focused on the need for “human capital” and labour force requirements. In particular, immigrants were processed under settlement programs covering three classes—economic, family, and refugee. In 2008, Canada merged this system into one “modernized program” with a focus on improved newcomer outcomes (CIC, *Integration in Canada* 11). The federal government acknowledged the need to devolve responsibility for immigration and reached agreements with several provinces. Since 2005, Canada has tripled its investment in settlement programming in the areas of language training, labour market access, and what they called fostering “community connections” to promote social engagement (CIC, *Integration in Canada* 13). Other foci of the modernized settlement program include better needs assessment and referrals along with improved information and orientation for immigrants. Such improvements in policy can be informed by the ICF and are likely to help address some of the criticism of multicultural policy considered above.

Soroka, Johnston, and Banting’s work has suggested that shared values and identity do not hold Canada together; rather it is the engagement and participation of citizens that are the keys to successful social integration (567). In future, the need to engage diverse groups of Canadians in society, and particularly newcomers, proves vital. This glue of social cohesion, through the establishment of social networks and the promotion of individual trust, allows society to function efficiently and peaceably. Further, developing the means to explore the creation of such processes using a tool such as the ICF proves timely and useful.

Toward An Integrated Capabilities Framework

The ICF developed in this paper draws on three different approaches for investigating well-being and disadvantage.

The first of these approaches is the CA developed by Amartya Sen (*Commodities and Capabilities; Development As Freedom; The Idea of Justice*) in a range of publications spanning three decades.⁵ In contrast to traditional economic approaches that focus on utility (happiness, satisfaction) or resources (income, wealth, assets), the CA is primarily concerned with ensuring that different people, cultures, and societies have the capability—or freedom—to achieve the *functionings* (“doings” and “beings”) they have reason to value. Among other things, the CA recognizes that well-being is inherently multi-dimensional and acknowledges that the constituent elements of a “good life” may (or may not) vary among people, cultures, and societies. Sen’s reluctance to endorse a unique or definitive list of capabilities sets his CA apart from Martha Nussbaum’s (*Women and Human Development*) *capabilities approach* and has brought him into conflict with some of his followers (Sen, *Human Rights and Capabilities*; see also Clark, *Capability Approach*). This aspect of his approach, however, resonates strongly with bottom-up participatory approaches for investigating well-being (e.g. Frediani) which can be used to help empower marginalized groups including immigrants new to established nations.⁶

The second approach—known as the livelihoods approach—views people as vulnerable and attempts to capture the ways in which they make a living (Chambers and Conway; Carney; DFID). In this approach, the focus is on people’s resources and the institutions and policies that enable or prevent them from making a living (see Ellis). Five types of resources (known as “assets”) are normally identified: human capital (health and skills), social capital (networks and personal relationships), natural capital (land, water, forests, livestock, etc), physical capital (basic infrastructure such as transport or housing), and financial capital (income, savings, and loans). Access to these resources (graphically captured by the shape of the “asset pentagon”) is regarded as fundamental and governs the livelihood options available to the poor. In this approach, the emphasis is on “helping the poor to help themselves” through policy interventions that enable them to consolidate and manage their assets. While this approach has been criticized for being too flexible and saying little about the causal relationship and complex interconnections that govern different elements of the approach (Ellis 374), it does draw attention to the economic, social, and environmental factors that allow people to survive and thrive. The CA remains relatively weak in this area, despite efforts to incorporate “means” by appealing to a range of instrumental freedoms (Sen, *Development As Freedom*, ch. 2).⁷

Finally, the chronic poverty approach pioneered by Hulme and Shepherd and associates⁸ sets out the case for incorporating time understood in terms of

duration into the conceptualization and measurement of poverty (see Clark and Hulme). In particular, the chronic poverty approach moves away from the traditional focus on poverty *trends* (which involve comparing poverty headcounts taken at different points in time) in order to incorporate a fuller understanding of the *dynamics* of poverty (which involves charting the performance of the *same* individuals and households over time). The approach is therefore able to analyze the factors that (1) trap some people in persistent poverty, (2) allow others to move in or out of poverty over time, and (3) enable some people to escape poverty indefinitely. Recent conceptual and methodological innovations in this area have attempted to apply the chronic poverty approach in non-income domains, investigate ways of making it genuinely multidimensional and consider how it might be reconciled with the CA (e.g. Baulch and Masset; Hulme and McKay; Addison, Hulme and Kanbur; Clark and Hulme).

The ICF consolidates insights from these three approaches. The constituent elements of this framework include:

- (1) Focusing on the full range of capabilities or freedoms different people and ethnic groups have reason to value—this involves concentrating on capabilities rather than resources or welfare; explicit recognition that human well-being is complex and multidimensional; and eliciting social values in advance which allows for the possibility that they *may* vary between people, cultures, and societies (something some versions of the CA adamantly resist by imposing a predefined list of capabilities to evaluate states of affairs—e.g. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development; Creating Capabilities*).⁹
- (2) Exploring the many different interconnections between the means and ends of well-being—this involves not only investigating the factors that hinder and promote the livelihoods of immigrants but the ways in which different freedoms and capabilities reinforce or conflict with one another (see also Clark, *Sen's Capability Approach*). It also involves taking into account the institutional and policy context that govern capabilities and well-being.
- (3) Exploring how the dynamics of well-being change over time—this involves examining the reasons why some immigrants succeed and others fail to improve their lot in life with reference to specific capabilities, freedoms, and resources.

The ICF is a hybrid framework that inevitably departs from standard versions of the capability, livelihoods, and chronic poverty approaches.¹⁰ To apply the ICF, a set of open-ended questions have been developed that can be applied through different methods and techniques, including qualitative ethnographic interviews and quantitative sample surveys. These questions

(referred to as the “questionnaire” below) draw inspiration from two previous studies conducted in South Africa designed to investigate the dimensions of poverty and well-being (Clark, *Visions of Development*; Clark and Qizilbash), but go further by drawing on insights from the livelihoods and chronic poverty approaches (elements 2 and 3 of the ICF).

In its current form the questionnaire consists of a series of open and closed questions that encourage immigrants to tell us their life stories, their experiences of migration and living in a new country, and their underlying values and expectations of a better life (see Clark and Hodgett, *Perceptions of Well-Being Questionnaire*). The questionnaire begins by asking open-ended questions about human values:

Think about the nature and meaning of ... a “good” form of life (or an “ideal” type of life) from the perspective of a TYPICAL person... What are the most important aspects (or features) of a “good” form of life?

Think about how important each of these aspects of life is... Please give a mark out of ten for each of the aspects of life you have mentioned.

For each of these, think about what kinds of things and how much of each are necessary for a person to live well. Describe the characteristics of [whatever] required for a good form of life. What amount or type of [whatever] is required to live well?

In answering these questions, participants were encouraged to identify and describe multiple aspects of a good form of life, although possible answers were not suggested to them. Participants were then asked to think back to before they first arrived in Canada and to describe what they thought life would be like.¹¹

This was followed by a series of questions designed to explore the actual experience of life in Canada, which relates to the second element of the ICF. Specifically, interviewees were asked to:

Think about the quality of your life since arriving in Canada.

What are the most positive aspects of life in Canada?

Which is the most important aspect of life? Which is the second most important? Which is the third most important? And so on.

Can you describe these aspects of life? What amount or type of [whatever] have you achieved?

What are the most negative aspects of life in Canada?

Which of these aspects of life is the biggest problem? Which is the second biggest problem? Which is the third biggest problem? And so on.

Can you describe these aspects of life? In what ways are they problems?

Similar questions were asked about the quality of life in the participant's neighbourhood or community and about the quality of life in Canada generally, i.e. for "ordinary" Canadians as a whole.

A third battery of questions attempt to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to well-being over time by exploring the reasons why some immigrants enjoy a measure of success in their new lives while others are less fortunate. These questions combine insights from the second and third elements of ICF and draw on SWOT analysis (DFID, section 4.11):

I am going to ask you some more detailed questions about the aspects of life you have mentioned.

On the whole, how satisfied are you with [aspect x]? Would you say you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with [aspect x]?

What things prevent you from achieving [aspect x] (list and describe)?

What things help you achieve [aspect x]? (list and describe)?

On the whole, has life in terms of [aspect x] improved in the last five years? Would you say life in terms of [aspect x] is much better, better, worse, or much worse than five years ago?

Why? In what ways? (list and describe)

On the whole, has life in terms of [aspect x] improved since arriving in Canada? Would you say life in terms of [aspect x] is much better, better, worse, or much worse since arriving in Canada?¹²

Why? In what ways? (list and describe)

A series of related questions about needs and goals, future aspirations and expectations, sources of support, and details of help offered to others were also asked.¹³

The questionnaire was divided into three parts consisting of open-ended questions (described above), comparable questions relating to predefined capabilities and needs (if not spontaneously mentioned in part 1), and standard questions to collect personal details and background information on living standards. The practice of dividing the questionnaire into three distinct parts follows the method developed by Clark (*Visions of Development*), which allows

researchers to avoid influencing initial responses (by asking open ended questions at the outset), investigate “missing” components of well-being and look for consensus (by asking participants to consider predefined aspects of life), and test for inconsistencies (by comparing the answers to open and closed questions and considering if these vary with personal circumstance) which might reflect values or aspirations that are ill-informed or have adapted to personal circumstances.¹⁴

Fieldwork

The framework and questionnaire were administered in Canada in July 2007. Twelve qualitative interviews were undertaken within a housing association situated in South Ottawa.¹⁵ Due to a shortage of time and resources, participants were identified in advance by local contacts using self-selection. Interviews were conducted in English and transcribed in the field rather than taped, to allow people to be unconstrained in their comments.¹⁶ Ethical issues were foremost in our minds given the possible imbalance in power, as well as in social and human capital, between the interviewer and the interviewees. The consideration of change over time in immigrant experience allowed us to encourage participants to engage in reflexive practice; this was duly recorded in the second section of the survey.

Participants have been fitted into four distinct ethnic groups for illustrative purposes. There were three East Africans (originally from Eritrea), four Eastern Europeans (from different Eastern bloc countries), four Western Europeans (originating from Britain, although one had Jamaican origins), and one East Asian (from Sri Lanka). Three of our participants were men (two from East Africa and one from Eastern Europe) and all were first generation immigrants. Participants were aged between 42 and 62.

The following discussion is not intended to imply that participants adequately represent ethnic groups. Clearly, this is not the case as participants are too few in number. Moreover, they are too diverse in some ways (gender, age) and not diverse enough in other respects (national origin). The ethnic labels assigned above are arbitrary and merely intended to help illustrate the analytical power of our framework.

*Results and Analysis*¹⁷

The following commentary draws on the fieldwork questions derived from the ICF. The ICF is also used to guide the analysis of the fieldwork results, which takes the form of comparing values, expectations, and actual experiences over time.

A wide range of values was expressed during interviews, although the responses to pre-defined questions indicated a broad agreement about the significance of most capabilities. Immigrants from Eritrea emphasized the

importance of peace, physical and economic security, freedom of choice (including freedom from unwarranted interference in an individual's life), and easy access to public services. Those from Eastern bloc countries prioritized family life and friendship—especially marriage and genuine partnerships based on honesty, equality, peaceful co-existence, and effective communication. Most Eastern European immigrants flagged the importance of health and mental health facilities, which may reflect the value of leaving behind a culture of fear. Those from the U.K. typically mentioned the importance of a good rapport with people (especially loving and trusting relationships), happiness and satisfaction with their personal life, and achieving a sense of belonging in Canada. Immigrants reported a range of expectations of life in Canada prior to arrival, including better education and employment opportunities, greater personal freedoms, free health care, incorporation into a multicultural society, being with family and friends, new opportunities to forge personal relationships, economic prosperity, and frank admissions of “no idea of what to expect.”

Our findings on the actual experiences of immigrants in Canada reinforce earlier research and point to the need for mechanisms to promote immigrant *social* integration as well as traditional economic and political integration. Striking in the interviews conducted in Ottawa was the fact that even when émigrés had been in Canada many years there remained a feeling of not being a *full* member of society, of not being *truly* Canadian. The frustration of one Eastern European participant was tangible

the feeling of [being] second class. [You] never feel ...you are the same level as other people Canadian born. [It is] hard to find the “I’m home” feeling. [You are] always catching up.

The search for this “I’m home” feeling is pervasive; and the lack of achievement of this feeling is a source of concern. Feelings of social exclusion cohere around a number of fundamental issues, some of which might be easily addressed by governments. Our fieldwork shows that problems experienced include financial poverty and a relatively poor standard of living, lack of access to social welfare, problems regarding unclear and confusing jurisdictional responsibilities, lack of information (especially upon arrival), a paucity of social networks, over expensive housing and education, and difficulties with work including low pay, non-recognition of qualifications, experience, and skills and long working hours. Participants outlined numerous difficulties with work or finding work.

Not all our participants had experienced such difficulties. Those who came to Canada in the 1950s or 1960s found the processes of finding and keeping employment easier. This appears particularly true for those from an English background where their language advantage was bolstered by the Anglophile nature of the country at that time. However, other British participants did report some difficulties with employment relating to the arrival of post-industrial

society, the increasingly casualized nature of work, and the relocation of companies. Others were disappointed with their career progress. This was mirrored by limited earning power leading to dissatisfaction with their standard of living demonstrated by their desire, but inability to own their homes. Other interviewees reported the diminishing of their initial hopes of life in Canada.

Despite the relatively easy and successful experience of relocation to Canada of some migrants, others talked about the enormous challenges individuals and families face in moving countries and cultures. One East African reported difficulties in finding out how the Canadian system worked and on gaining credit on arrival. Facing up to extensive cultural differences he concluded that you do not get the job you wanted, just whatever job you could get. Difficulties with language, not speaking French, and not being aware of educational opportunities were paramount. Despite holding a Canadian degree, his employment as a technician did not fulfill his expectations. His Canadian experience led him to believe that the private sector discriminated against ethnic minorities. After leading over half his life in North America, he declared his disappointment that Canada was different from the inside than it appeared from without. He described a

[s]ubtle [form of] discrimination. They don't show it, but it exists. From the lowest job to the highest they have to ask you for Canadian experience, it is a homogeneous society. You need Canadian experience even when you are starting from scratch with a low job like cleaning.

One Eritrean participant reinforced this experience describing his shock and frustration at not being able to find a job despite having a Middle Eastern degree. He felt his "third world degree was of no use" and that the "the job-related difficulties were worse than anticipated." Consequently, "instead of a job related to education, he needed a job to pay the rent." Despite his computing background, he was discouraged to have to take a job as a cleaner in a gas station. Eventually, he "learned the only way to get a job was to get connections." He tried hard to get to know *people*. Through offering to work in a voluntary capacity, he got experience working for a small IT company, which became paid employment. A further East African commented that Canadian welfare support was crucial on arrival but could actually prove a disincentive to work once immigrants became more established.

Reitz and Banerjee's research has shown that racial minorities face obstacles in the labour market as their skills are often discounted by employers. They also argue that "obstacles to immigrant success appear to have increased" and that immigrants from visible minorities typically have lower earnings and higher poverty rates than those of European origin (492–94). Such deficiencies become

urgent, given the increase in the stock of immigrants since the 1960s, which now account for roughly a quarter of Canada's total population.¹⁸

The transformation of the global economy has changed the type and number of jobs available. The increasing importance of credentials has meant that immigrants with reduced access to education and social networks in Canada are often unable to break into the closely guarded professional classes. For example, one East African woman told how her husband, engaged in medical doctor training in Africa, ended up working in Canada as a nurse's aide when his qualifications were not recognized as equivalent to a nurse. Reflecting on her own inability to achieve a secure job, she criticized the lack of information on educational opportunities for immigrants. Trained in accountancy in Africa, and in Canada, she took a job as an Educational Support Worker to provide for her children. She remained concerned by the paucity of educational opportunities open to her because of lack of further funding, which she believed affected her future employment prospects and quality of life. Since coming to Canada, she believed that her health had deteriorated physically and mentally. She felt strongly that her family had fewer opportunities than native-born Canadians.

Immigrants who were not visible minorities within our study also told of struggles particularly with officialdom, credential recognition, and the world of work. One former Central European schoolteacher found herself unable to teach in Canada, so retrained as a Kindergarten teacher, but felt age discrimination damaged her employment prospects. She resorted to voluntary work to get the much-needed "Canadian experience" and ended up working in an IT company. There, in mid life, her career ended abruptly due to what she described as poor working practices.

Even in Canada, a country known for its pursuit of equality policy in relation to gender, our findings tentatively suggest that women have a particularly challenging immigration experience. Some female participants in our fieldwork encountered problems. One Sri Lankan participant recounted her disappointment at finding racism alive and well in Canada making it difficult for her to "fit in." Such were the demands upon some female participants that they would have returned to their country of origin had it not been for their children.

Despite difficulties, many in our interviews told of the ways in which they had been assisted to integrate successfully into Canada. Several people found churches helped in acclimating and in finding work. Others talked of how civic associations played an important role, like the Catholic Immigration Centre and Big Brother, Big Sister. Overwhelmingly, for all ethnic groups, the role of the Co-operative Movement was fundamental during their transitions. Virtually every interviewee remarked on the substantial contribution to their integration the movement had made. The impact of the co-op was more than practical (provision of housing units), it was a great source of support, social

engagement, and trust. Participants told how they had experienced important help in difficult personal situations, for example, post divorce or bereavement, or at times of crisis. One person revealed “the co-op gives hope back to people who are poor, and [provided encouragement] not to see the world as what I can get out of you.” In short, the co-op (and its residents) promoted immigrant trust.

In assessing immigrant well-being, we asked about the numbers of close friends inside and outside of Canada. Results were closely balanced. Four participants, all female, had more friends in Canada than elsewhere, while seven had fewer friends in Canada and more overseas. Only one person had equal numbers of close friends in both places. Soroka, Johnston, and Banting found that the length of time spent in Canada can affect the sense of pride in being Canadian and so a sense of belonging. After 49 years in Canada one British immigrant felt that *she did belong* and that she “talked Canadian” (572). It is this *sense of belonging*, so evasive and so evocative, which is crucial.

Strengthening these feelings of *belonging* for immigrants in Canada remains an enormous challenge for governments, both federal and provincial. Policy intervention must address, in particular, the urgent needs of migrants, especially those of women and visible minorities. What Darroch has dubbed “mobility traps” for minorities must be removed if Canada is to address labour shortages and maintain social cohesion. Our research indicates that immigrants in Ottawa are, in the main, glad to be in Canada, that they value the country and its people, its peace, and its democracy, its freedom and its opportunities. Yet rather too many of them feel that they are not equal to “ordinary” Canadians.

Practical Relevance of the ICF

A chief advantage of the ICF is that it is able to capture the complexity of human well-being and social integration across various spheres of life with reference to different people, ethnic groups, and cultures. It also facilitates the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to well-being and social cohesion and is capable of analyzing the factors that govern the relative fortunes (or misfortunes) of different people and groups over time. In this respect, the ICF provides a more holistic way of thinking about inequity, disadvantage, and well-being than mainstream approaches (which typically concern themselves with income, resources, or livelihoods) or more innovative approaches (which focus *exclusively* on capabilities or the persistence of poverty).

When fully developed and applied to specific problems and concrete situations, the ICF should be a useful starting point for formulating social and multicultural policy. Three distinct advantages are worth mentioning. First, our framework recognizes that while different people and groups share many values and experiences, they often have different priorities, goals, and needs. For example, the East Africans were especially concerned with peace and physical security (due to ongoing instability in Eritrea and a series of

wars and border disputes with Ethiopia, Sudan, and Yemen) and continued to emphasize the value of these basic freedoms after years in Canada. In contrast, lack of appropriate information and access to financial services were an issue for Eastern European immigrants. In terms of civil and political rights, Eastern Europeans were more likely to talk about democracy and freedom from government interference or oppression while East Africans stressed the importance of freedom of expression, information, and travel.

Second, our framework recognizes that in cases where different people and groups have similar values, goals, and needs, the problems, opportunities, and challenges they face may differ. For example, in terms of jobs, East Africans typically referred to lack of social capital and finance for retraining. In contrast, Eastern Europeans mentioned age discrimination in the labour market and barriers to government jobs, although they did indicate that training programs are accessible. In terms of health and social protection, Eastern Europeans mentioned problems with obtaining adequate information and finding health services. Although the East Africans valued the welfare system, a notable concern was that it might create a “culture of dependency.” Language difficulties were more of a problem for some groups than for others—those from East Africa in particular reported struggling due to their lack of proficiency in French. Such contrasts suggest a pragmatic approach to social and multicultural policy is required.

Finally, our framework recognizes that well-being and social integration are dynamic processes governed by a range of complex mechanisms, structures, and institutions that evolve and change over time. In this respect, our framework can help us think about the reasons why particular immigrants and ethnic groups succeed or fail to achieve key objectives over the course of their new “lives” in the adopted country.

The discussion so far indicates that the ICF is capable of generating a lot of relevant information for analyzing Canada’s so-called “wicked problems” and exploring possible solutions from a relatively small number of low-cost qualitative interviews.¹⁹ Further applications of the ICF may involve conducting small-scale qualitative interviews along well-defined ethnographic lines or developing larger-scale survey instruments that combine qualitative open-ended questions with quantitative methods. The analysis illustrated in this paper can be extended to cover First Nation minorities, those entering Canada under old style programs (for economic and family reasons or as refugees) as well as those ethnic groups with longer histories in Canada.²⁰ It can also be broken down by age and gender.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has developed a theoretical framework (known as the ICF) and a research instrument for thinking about multiculturalism and social cohesion

in Canada. It combines elements of the capability, livelihoods, and chronic poverty approaches to shed light on issues relating to well-being, inequity, and disadvantage. The ICF is capable of exploring social values, expectations of life prior to arrival, actual experiences of a new life, and the opportunities, challenges, and threats that confront immigrants over time.

So far, the framework and questionnaire has been applied to a small group of first generation immigrants in Ottawa. However, the framework could easily be applied to other minority groups or in other localities. The findings generated by the ICF are likely to be of interest to local communities, practitioners, and policymakers. The fieldwork results capture the complexity of well-being and disadvantage across ethnic groups and illustrate the need for a more sophisticated, comprehensive, and pragmatic approach to inform multicultural policy in Canada.

We have tried to show that the ICF and research questions developed in this paper can offer one such approach. In keeping with the CA, our framework can tackle the full range of capabilities and freedoms that different people, cultures, and societies have reason to value and recognizes that they often differ in their capacity to achieve certain ends. Like the livelihoods approach, our framework acknowledges the factors and institutions that help or hinder the capacity to live well and extends “livelihoods” type analysis to other dimensions of well-being. And following the chronic poverty approach, our framework can be used to help identify the factors that enable some immigrants to succeed while others fail to achieve key capabilities and freedoms over the course of their new lives.

While the ICF is broader and more comprehensive than existing approaches, it can be applied pragmatically. As comparative analyses of our fieldwork findings show, different people and groups have different priorities and problems. Thus, instead of attempting to promote well-being across the board, there is a strong case in practice (as well as in theory as Sen suggests) for tackling un-freedoms one at a time. This is true in Canada today where multiculturalism “has been adopted as a state project” (Modood 86) and where “reports of multiculturalism’s death are very much exaggerated” (Kymlicka, *The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism* 104).

Notes

1. Senior Lecturer, School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies and Institute for Research in Social Science, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK and, Associate Fellow, Institute for the Study of the Americas, School of Advanced Study, University of London.
2. Research Associate, Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester, UK; and Visiting Scholar, Development Studies, University of Cambridge, UK.
3. Acknowledgments: Thanks to David Hulme and Melanie Walker for helpful comments and Carol Evoy for assistance with fieldwork. Susan Hodgett

- acknowledges support from Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada and The Foundation for Canadian Studies UK.
4. Canada has consistently improved its human development index (HDI) score and has remained at or near the top of the league table since the indicator was first published in 1980 (UNDP Table G). No attempt has been made to develop an ethnicity adjusted HDI.
  5. There is now a rapidly expanding literature of the CA. See Alkire; Clark (*Visions of Development*); Comim, Qizilbash, and Alkire; Chiappero-Martinetti; Deneulin and Shahani; Brighouse and Robeyns; and Nussbaum (*Creating Capabilities*), as well as the *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*.
  6. The CA has been explicitly related to culture and identity in the context of exploring social values and promoting reason and dialogue between different cultures and societies. See, for example, Nussbaum and Sen; Nussbaum and Glover; and Sen (*Development As Freedom; Other People; The Argumentative Indian*).
  7. The CA can at least claim to be concerned with means and ends (even if the emphasis seems a little one-sided sometimes). In contrast, the livelihoods approach's single-minded concern with assets is a serious limitation. In the end, people and their assets are treated as expendable resources to be invested and consumed in the production process irrespective of the ensuing consequences for human well-being.
  8. See CPRC (*The Chronic Poverty Report 2004/5; The Chronic Poverty Report 2008/9*) and Hulme.
  9. Clark (*Visions of Development; Concepts and Perceptions of Human Well-Being; Sen's Capability Approach*) and Okin have both shown that "bottom up" perceptions of poverty and well-being can differ in several crucial respects from the abstract lists of capabilities or needs found in the philosophical literature on well-being.
  10. Several points of departure are implied above. See also Clark and Hodgett (*The Integrated Capabilities Framework*) who compare and contrast the ICF with the CA's emphasis on deliberative democracy, inter alia.
  11. Comparing the values, expectations (prior to arrival) and actual experiences of immigrants has the potential to provide useful insights into multicultural well-being and social cohesion (see Hodgett and Clark).
  12. All fieldwork participants had lived in Canada for more than five years.
  13. It has only been possible to paraphrase a selection of the core questions included in our questionnaire. There is inevitably some overlap in the responses to the vast array of questions asked. However, it was necessary to construct the questionnaire in this way in order to pilot and test research questions and avoid missing potentially useful information. A streamlined version of the questionnaire was produced in 2010.
  14. On adaptation see Clark (*Adaptation, Poverty and Well-Being; Adaptation, Poverty and Development*).
  15. The name of the housing association has been withheld in order to guarantee the anonymity of participants.
  16. All those interviewed were reasonably proficient in English and none preferred to be interviewed in French. It was not always possible to offer interviewees the

- opportunity to be interviewed in their first language. Interviews lasted up to two hours with breaks as required.
17. For a more detailed discussion of the fieldwork findings, see Hodgett and Clark.
  18. Authors' calculation based on statistics for 2010 from UNDP (Tables A, L).
  19. The ICF is a descriptive tool in the sense that it allows us to gather and *select* relevant information for guiding policy (see Sen, *Description*). Like the capability approach, the ICF it is not a prescriptive tool (Deneulin and Shahani 52), although it does offer a way of generating *prospective* recommendations for improving human capabilities and well-being (Comim, Qizilbash, and Alkire 32). Its contribution lies in empowering local people to identify their values and priorities, analyze the factors that govern their well-being and have a greater input into prescriptive policy recommendations.
  20. Over 200 distinct ethnic groups were captured in the 2006 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada, *Ethnic Diversity and Immigration*).

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