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# **‘Belonging: Feelings of attachment and acceptance among immigrants in Canada’**

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### **Abstract**

In line with previous research, we argue that belonging is a core dimension of immigrant integration, and that belonging is better conceptualized and measured by distinguishing between immigrants' feeling of being attached and feeling of being accepted. Feeling attached captures immigrants' desire to belong, whereas feeling accepted captures the perception that the community wants them to belong. This study tests this argument using a sample of first- and second-generation immigrants in Canada.

The findings indicate a direct correlation between immigrants' feelings of being attached and accepted and their political integration. Immigrants who feel attached and those who feel accepted are more interested in politics, more likely to vote (and more likely to feel guilty when they don't), more likely to express confidence in Canadian political institutions, and more likely to express the view that they would rather live in Canada than in any other country in the world. Moreover, the study demonstrates that those who neither feel attached nor accepted lag the most behind the rest of the population in their political integration, and that only when both conditions are met (that is, when immigrants feel attached and accepted) do they start engaging in political affairs as much as the rest of the Canadian population. Our findings, we argue, suggest that the dynamics of belonging are best understood when belonging is considered as a two-way process in which both immigrants and the host community express gestures of commitment.



## Introduction

How do immigrants feel about their host community (White et al. 2015)? Are they attached to it (Kazemipur and Nakhaie 2014:627)? Do they identify with it (Fischer-Neumann 2014)? At the core of these questions are the concept of belonging, and the concern that a weak sense of belonging could lead to a lack of engagement with, and commitment to, the host community. In line with previous research, we argue that belonging is a core dimension of immigrant integration, and that the way belonging has often been conceptualized and measured is incomplete or lacks precision.

The concept of belonging may be defined from two perspectives. On one hand, it may mean that immigrants are attached to, care for, or want to be members of the host community. This perspective is most commonly applied in research on immigrant integration. The second perspective, less frequently considered, may define belonging as whether or not immigrants believe that the community wants or recognizes them as full members of that community. We argue that the distinction between these two perspectives is critical to better understand the dynamics of immigrant integration, as they refer to two complementary, yet distinct, relationships of immigrants with their host community.

The two perspectives are echoed to varying degrees in various public policy approaches. On the one hand, the feeling of attachment places the burden of integration in part on the newcomers' shoulders: immigrants have to prove that they care about the host community. A strong attachment to the host community thus becomes a "proof" that immigrants belong. One could argue that this perspective is associated with increasing civic integration requirements (Goodman 2014) where immigrants have to demonstrate their knowledge of the language and culture of the host community and sometimes have to swear allegiance to the values of the host community. Such policies require immigrants to prove their commitment and belonging to the host community.

On the other hand, the feeling of being accepted highlights the role played by the host community in facilitating or impeding immigrants' integration: through policies and the receptivity of the local population, the host community signals to what extent immigrants are welcomed in their new community, which in turn might shape to what extent immigrants feel that they belong. One could



argue that this perspective is associated with policies that aim to facilitate the integration of immigrants through different means, for example by granting voting rights to non-citizens (Munro 2008). This perspective imbues the work of Irene Bloemraad (2006), which demonstrates that policies proactively reaching out to immigrants (such as Canada's multiculturalism policy) provide a symbolic value that encourages and facilitates belonging. Such a perspective also inspires Simonsen's recent work (2016) which highlights that immigrants' sense of belonging tends to be stronger in countries where the host population is most receptive toward immigration, and where a more open definition of who belongs to the nation predominates.

Conceptually, the distinction between the feeling of being attached and the feeling of being accepted offer complementary perspectives that we believe provide rich insights into the dynamics of immigrant integration. It allows, for instance, distinguishing between newcomers who do not really wish to become part of the host community in spite of welcoming gestures (newcomers who have to be pulled in), and newcomers motivated into integrating into the host community but facing a context where they feel they are not welcomed (immigrants who are pushed out). Empirically, are these two perspectives helpful to understand immigrant integration? Are they really both capturing a different part of the story of immigrant integration? In this study, we assess whether (and to what extent) each of these two dimensions helps understand immigrant political integration by examining the case of first- and second-generation immigrants in Canada.

Interestingly, concerns for the consequences of a potential weak sense of belonging among immigrants have not been accompanied by extensive evidence demonstrating the existence of a link between feeling of belonging and immigrant political integration.<sup>1</sup> Most empirical research relating to the concept of belonging has instead focused on identifying the individual characteristics of those who feel they belong (Kazemipur and Nakhaie 2014:627; White et al. 2015; Georgiadis and Manning 2013; Amit and Bar-Lev 2015) and the contexts in which immigrants feel they belong or not (Simonsen, 2016). Accordingly, the contribution of this study is twofold. First, it helps assess whether weak belonging is indeed associated with weaker political integration. Second, it provides

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<sup>1</sup> Heath et al. (2013:200) show that feelings of exclusion are associated with lower levels of satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions.



insights as to whether immigrants' sense of belonging is better understood when looked at both from the perspectives of feeling attached and feeling accepted.

## **Research Design and Data**

The study examines both first and second-generation immigrants. Research on immigrant political integration has proliferated since the 1990s in most Western democracies (Bilodeau 2016); however, the vast majority of these studies focused on first-generation immigrants. Accounts related to the situation of second-generation immigrants remain sparse. Yet, there are reasons to believe that members of the second generation may face different challenges from those faced by members of the first generation. For instance, research on political support and political socialization has long argued that attachment to a political community is most durable when developed early in life during the formative years of one's political socialization (Easton 1975). Accordingly, the strength of feeling attached to and accepted by the host community may be distinct for first- and second-generation immigrants, as well as their connection with political integration.

Because they were born and socialized in a different country, first-generation immigrants are by definition outsiders upon arrival in the host community; one could think that their feeling of belonging to the host community is weaker. Alternatively, since first-generation immigrants made the decision to migrate, their desire to belong to the host community may be quite strong. Available research demonstrates that first-generation immigrants have a strong sense of belonging to Canada (Bilodeau et al. 2015; Wright and Bloemraad 2012).

By contrast, second-generation immigrants are not outsiders to the host community. It is even intrinsically problematic to use the terms "immigrant" and "host community" in reference to this group. Since second-generation immigrants were born and socialized in the host community, the fact remains that "their" country is Canada, even though they might express an attachment to their parents' country of birth. Yet, empirical accounts indicate that challenges of belonging exist for the second generation. In Canada, Reitz and his colleagues (2009:144) indicate a weaker sense of



belonging among immigrants of visible minority background, and especially among the second generation. Banting and Soroka (2012) observe that this pattern is especially acute in Quebec. In the United Kingdom, Heath et al. (2013:198, 195) observe greater feelings of exclusion and lower levels of confidence in political institutions among second-generation immigrants. One explanation for this weaker sense of belonging among members of the second generation could be experiences of discrimination. The argument is not that the second generation is more likely than the first generation to experience discrimination, but rather than the first generation might be more resilient in the face of such negative experiences, in part because of their initial outsider status. For second-generation immigrants born and raised in the host community, experiences of discrimination are likely to be more difficult to accept.

It may therefore be important to examine first and second generations, especially when distinguishing between feeling attached and feeling accepted and assessing their relationship with political integration. On the one hand, we could expect that the feeling of being attached will be especially relevant for first-generation immigrants, as the attachment likely has to be built after the arrival in the host community, often at a relatively late stage in life. On the other hand, we could expect that the feeling of being accepted will be most relevant for second-generation immigrants. Engagement with the host community could be more sensitive to the feeling of not being accepted as full members of the community despite having been born or raised in that community. Accordingly, we investigate the feelings of being attached and accepted, and their relationship with political integration for both first- and second-generation immigrants.

In defining first- and second-generation immigrants, the question arose as to how to categorize the 1.5 generation (those born abroad and who arrived in Canada as children). Because our argument to distinguish between first and second generations centres on the environment in which these individuals were socialized, we made the decision to group the 1.5 generation along with the second generation. Both groups have experienced the totality or a substantial part of their formative political socialization in Canada. Accordingly, we define first-generation immigrants as those born outside Canada and who arrived after the age of 10 years old in Canada. We define second-



generation immigrants as those born in Canada or those born outside Canada but who arrived before or at the age of 10.

We focus on immigrants of visible minority background. An overwhelming proportion of new immigrants in Canada are visible minorities and 96.5 percent of visible minorities in Canada are either first- or second-generation immigrants (Statistics Canada 2011). Moreover, Canada's visible minority population has increased significantly since the 1960s. In 1981, the first year for which we have data, members of visible minorities made up 4.7 percent of the Canadian population; in 2011, the proportion was 19.1 percent (Statistics Canada 2008:12; 2013:14). Accordingly, the visible minority population is not only substantial but is also growing faster than the rest of the Canadian population. It is also documented that the visible minority population is often victim of discrimination (Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Skuterud 2010:878). For these reasons, visible minority immigrants in Canada constitute an interesting case to study feelings of being attached and accepted.

The study relies on data derived from the *Provincial Diversity Project* (PDP), a 25-minute online survey conducted during January and February 2014, and that contains a special sample of visible minority immigrants of at least 400 respondents in each of Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> The special sample includes 891 first-generation immigrants and 736 second-generation immigrants.<sup>3</sup> To streamline the text, we will now refer to visible minority immigrants simply as “immigrants.”

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<sup>2</sup> Visible minorities are defined as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour (Statistics Canada 2011). Respondents pre-identified as members of a visible minority group received an email invitation to participate in the survey. Each invitation email contained a unique invitation link (url) that could only be used once. This ensured that no respondent could answer the survey on more than one occasion, nor share the link with friends. Panelists are rewarded for their participation over time using a series of financial incentives. No specific response rate can be calculated for an online survey because unlike telephone surveys, it is not possible to evaluate whether people refused to participate or did not read or receive the invitation.

<sup>3</sup> Readers should note that the results of the analyses presented below do not change substantially when the 1.5 generation is grouped with the first generation of immigrants (results not presented).



The PDP also provides a general sample of the Canadian population living in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia (n=3933). These respondents were surveyed concurrently with respondents of the visible minority sample and were asked the same questions for most of the survey. We rely on this sample to provide a point of comparison with the immigrant population.

Survey questions asked respondents how much they felt attached to Canada and accepted by Canada, and responses were measured using a scale from 0 to 10, whereas 0 means they feel not attached/accepted at all, and 10 means they feel completely attached/accepted. The questions were asked separately at distinct moments in the survey. As presented in Table 1, feelings of being attached are quite strong among first- (8.1) and second-generation immigrants (8.0), and certainly as strong as those observed among the general sample of the Canadian population (7.9). Feelings of being accepted by Canada also appear quite strong (8.1 and 8.2 respectively for first- and second-generation immigrants). This question was not asked to the general sample of the Canadian population. To the extent that feelings of being attached and accepted measure the sense of belonging, these descriptive data, which is consistent with previous studies (Bilodeau et al. 2015; Wright and Bloemraad 2012), provide evidence of a strong sense of belonging among first- and second-generation immigrants in Canada.

**Table 1. Feelings of being attached and accepted among immigrants in Canada**

	<b>Feeling of being attached to Canada (0 to 10)</b>	<b>Feeling of being accepted by Canada (0 to 10)</b>	<b>Correlation between feeling attached and feeling accepted (Pearson coef.)</b>
First-generation immigrants	8.1	8.1	.47
Second-generation immigrants	8.0	8.2	.39
General sample of Canadian population	7.9	—	—

Source: 2014 Provincial Diversity Project.

The comparable strength in feelings of being attached and being accepted raises the question as to whether (and to what extent) these two indicators measure distinct dimensions of the concept of



belonging. To address this matter, Table 1 also reports the Pearson correlation coefficients between the feeling of being attached and that of being accepted for first- and second-generation immigrants. The coefficients indicate that the two measures are correlated but not as strongly as one would expect. The Pearson coefficient is .47 for first-generation immigrants and .39 for second-generation immigrants. Hence, when respondents mean they feel attached, they do not necessarily feel equally accepted and vice versa. These results suggest that these two dimensions are not only conceptually distinct, but they also empirically capture a distinct reality of immigrants' experiences in the host community.

### **Feeling attached and accepted, and political integration**

The next question is whether the feelings of being attached to and accepted by the host community correlate with immigrant political integration. The analysis focuses on five indicators of political integration: interest in federal politics, confidence in Canadian political institutions, having voted in the previous federal elections, feeling guilty when not voting in a federal election, and whether respondents feel that Canada is the best place for them to live in the world. More information about the construction of the variables is presented in the appendix.

The multivariate analyses presented in Table 2 examine whether immigrants' feelings of being attached to and being accepted by the host community relate to the five indicators of political integration. In order to verify whether the relationship between feeling attached/accepted and political integration is the same for the first and second generations, we include in the model a dummy variable indicating whether respondents are members of the second generation, as well as interactive terms that examine the effect of feeling attached and feeling accepted specifically for members of the second generation. Other respondents who are not first or second generation immigrants are not included in these analyses. The multivariate analyses also include socio-economic variables. We translate the coefficients derived from the multivariate analyses into predicted probabilities to facilitate the interpretation of the effects of feelings attached and accepted. For every instance where we discuss predicted probabilities, we compare the difference



in predicted probabilities when the feeling of being attached or accepted is “weak” (one standard deviation below the mean) and “strong” (one standard deviation above the mean). All other independent variables in the model are held constant at their means in our calculations.

**Table 2. Feeling Attached and Accepted: Relationship with Political Integration**

	Interest in federal politics <sup>1</sup>		Confidence in institutions <sup>1</sup>		Feel guilty if not voting <sup>2</sup>		Voted in federal election <sup>3</sup>		Would rather live in Canada <sup>2</sup>	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age	.28	.06a	-.26	.05a	.03	.01a	.05	.01a	.01	.00b
Education	4.85	.91a	2.98	.92b	.24	.06a	.25	.08b	-.05	.08
Women	-6.08	1.51a	.39	1.38	-.18	.11	-.24	.14	.19	.12
Feeling accepted	2.07	.65b	2.71	.53a	.12	.05b	.14	.06c	.16	.05b
Feeling attached	2.59	.60a	1.68	.47a	.19	.04a	.13	.06c	.31	.05a
Second generation	6.61	7.60	-1.94	6.17	2.33	.60a	1.74	.69c	-.24	.62
Interactions for 2 <sup>nd</sup> gen										
Accepted X 2 <sup>nd</sup> gen.	-.37	.92	-.46	.72	-.09	.07	-.06	.08	-.06	.07
Attached X 2 <sup>nd</sup> gen.	-.74	.88	-.37	.66	-.18	.06a	-.06	.07	.10	.07
Province (ref. cat.: ON)										
Quebec	2.68	2.10	-3.67	1.81c	-.04	.16	.51	.20c	-.02	.17
Alberta	-2.10	2.05	-4.51	2.01c	-.29	.15	-.31	.19	-.07	.17
British Columbia	-4.20	2.31	-3.33	1.91	-.33	.16c	.01	.20	-.03	.17
Constant	3.52	6.10	29.60	5.05a	—		-4.43	.64a	—	
/cut1	—		—		2.44	.44	—		.05	.61
/cut2	—		—		3.61	.45	—		2.04	.59
/cut3	—		—		5.19	.46	—		4.31	.60
R-square/pseudo R-square	.15		.16		.04		.11		.10	
N	1513		1293		1402		1313		1463	

Source: 2014 Provincial Diversity Project.

a: p<.001; b: p<.01; c: p<.05;

Entries report unstandardized B coefficients.

1. OLS regression. 2. Ordered logit regression. 3. Binomial logit regression.



First, the results indicate that immigrants who feel attached tend to be more interested in the political affairs of Canada. The analysis predicts that, on a 0 to 10 scale, interest in federal politics will be 1.1 points stronger among first-generation immigrants with a strong attachment to Canada than among those with a weak attachment (6.6 vs. 5.5). Similarly, first-generation immigrants who feel accepted by Canada are more likely to express interest in federal politics, a difference of 0.9 points between those with a strong and weak feeling of being accepted (6.5 vs. 5.6). Second-generation immigrants do not appear different from the first generation. Levels of interest in political affairs are no different, and feelings of being attached or accepted appear to relate to interest in federal politics equally for both first and second-generation immigrants.

Second, feelings of being attached and accepted also appear to be associated with stronger confidence in Canadian political institutions. Once again the relationships hold equally for both first- and second-generation immigrants. On a 0 to 10 scale, those with a strong attachment to Canada express a level of confidence in Canadian political institutions that is 0.6 point higher than those with a weak attachment (5.9 vs. 5.3). Similarly, those with a strong feeling of being accepted by Canada express a level of confidence in Canadian political institutions 1.0 point higher than those with a weak feeling of being accepted (6.1 vs. 5.1).

Third, the relationship between feeling attached or accepted and political integration also holds for voting in federal elections. Immigrants who feel strongly attached are more likely to report having voted, compared to those who feel weakly attached – a difference of 11 points (74% vs. 63%). Similarly, immigrants who feel strongly accepted are more likely to report having voted compared to those who feel weakly accepted – a difference of 12 points (74% vs. 62%). Second-generation immigrants appear substantively more likely to vote than first-generation immigrants (84% vs. 48%), but the interactive terms included in the analyses are not statistically significant. This suggests that the relationships for feeling attached or accepted are of equal strength for first- and second-generation immigrants.

Fourth, feeling attached to Canada correlates with a stronger propensity to feel guilty when not voting. Moreover, in this case, the relationship appears to be weaker for second-generation



immigrants to the point of being non relevant. Among first-generation immigrants, we observe a 12-point difference in the proportion of those who say they “strongly agree” that they would feel guilty if they did not vote (27% vs. 15%) between those with a strong attachment and those with a weak attachment. There is no difference for second-generation immigrants (38% vs. 38%). The relationship between feeling attached and feeling guilty at the idea of not voting is thus only observed for first-generation immigrants. We also observe that those with a strong feeling of being accepted are more likely than those with such weak feelings to say that they would feel guilty if they did not vote (a difference of 10 points), and the relationship is observed equally strongly for both first- and second-generation immigrants.

Fifth, the feelings of being attached and accepted relate to the view that immigrants would rather live in Canada than in any other country in the world. Those with a strong attachment to Canada are 29 points more likely than those with a weak attachment to strongly agree with the statement (64% vs. 35%). Similarly, those with a strong feeling of being accepted by Canada are 16 points more likely than those with a weak feeling to strongly agree with the statement (58% vs. 42%). No difference is observed between first and second-generation immigrants.

As expected, we observe that immigrants who feel attached – as well as those who feel accepted – are more likely to be engaged with Canada and its political affairs. Both the feeling of being attached and the feeling of being accepted appear relevant to understand immigrant political integration. If our reasoning is accurate that attachment refers more to immigrants’ proactive desire to belong, whereas accepted refers more to the signals given by the host community in welcoming newcomers, then our findings suggest that the dynamics of belonging is a two-way process in which both immigrants and the host community have to express gestures of commitment.

Contrary to our expectations, however, we did not observe differences between first- and second-generation immigrants. Levels of political integration tend to be similar for both groups. Most importantly, the relationship between feelings of being attached/accepted and political integration appears to be broadly equivalent for first- and second-generation immigrants. Only for one of the five indicators (feeling guilty when not voting) do we observe that the feeling of being attached



seems to be more weakly correlated for the second generation. This is consistent with our expectations that feeling attached should matter more for first-generation immigrants. Overall, however, feeling attached and feeling accepted appear equally important for first- and second-generation immigrants’ political integration.

**Feeling attached and accepted: Any added value in terms of explanatory power?**

The preceding analyses demonstrate a relationship between feeling attached and accepted and immigrant political integration. However, to what extent do these help account for immigrant political integration? Are we explaining any additional variance when we take into account the feelings of being attached and accepted? To answer these questions, Table 3 reports the R-square and pseudo R-square derived from the analyses in Table 2 for each of the five measures of political integration. The first line reports the variance explained when only the socio-demographic variables are included in the analyses (age, sex, education, and province of residence). The other lines report the variance explained when either only the feeling of being attached, only the feeling of being accepted, or both, are inserted in the model. In parentheses, we present the change in the variance explained with a basic socio-demographic model as the point of comparison.

**Table 3. Feeling Attached and Accepted: Explanatory Power of Political Integration**

	<b>Interest in federal politics<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Confidence in institutions<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Feel guilty if not voting<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Voted in federal election<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Would rather live in Canada<sup>2</sup></b>
Only with socio-demographic variables	.085	.065	.030	.086	.012
With feeling attached only	.131 (+.046)	.119 (+.054)	.042 (+.012)	.100 (+.014)	.091 (+.079)
With feeling accepted only	.122 (+.037)	.141 (+.076)	.038 (+.008)	.100 (+.014)	.046 (+.034)
With both feeling attached and accepted	.145 (+.060)	.158 (+.093)	.045 (+.015)	.105 (+.019)	.098 (+.086)

Entries report R-square/pseudo R-square based on analyses presented in Table 2.

Entries in parentheses report change in value in R-square/pseudo R-square with model of reference including only socio-demographic variables.



A few key findings emerge from Table 3. First, both the feeling of being attached and that of being accepted explain a significant portion of the variance for each of the five indicators. Second, neither feeling is systematically more important than the other in explaining political integration. For one indicator (would rather live in Canada), feeling attached appears to explain substantively more variance than feeling accepted (+.079 vs. +.034). For one indicator (confidence in political institutions), feeling accepted appears to explain substantively more variance than feeling attached (+.076 vs. +.054). And for the other three indicators, the amount of variance explained by either feeling appears broadly comparable. Third, for the most part, feeling attached and feeling accepted each contributes to explaining a unique part of the variance in the model as demonstrated by the fact that the model with both feelings always explain significantly more variance than either model with only one of the two feelings included. Fourth, the combined added explanatory power of the two feelings varies across the five indicators. It appears stronger for confidence in institutions (+.093), would rather live in Canada (+.086), and interest in federal politics (+.060), and weaker for the two voting-related indicators: feeling guilty when not voting (+.015) and having voted in the previous election (+.019).

### **A typology of belonging to better understand integration challenges**

Feeling attached and feeling accepted appear equally important for assessing immigrants' level of political integration. However, to what extent does this capture real integration challenges faced by immigrants? Do immigrants who do not feel attached or do not feel accepted really lag behind the rest of the population in their engagement with political affairs? In order to answer these questions, we propose a typology of belonging among immigrants that combines immigrants' feeling of being attached and feeling of being accepted. Table 4 presents a two-by-two classification of immigrants based on whether they have a "strong" (7–10) or "weak" (0–6) feeling of being attached and a "strong" (7–10) or "weak" (0–6) feeling of being accepted.



**Table 4. A Typology of Belonging**

		<b>Attachment to host community</b>	
		Weakly attached	Strongly attached
<b>Accepted by host community</b>	Weakly accepted	Alienated (9% / 9%)	Excluded (10% / 8%)
	Strongly accepted	Ambivalent (11% / 12%)	Belong (70% / 70%)

Numbers in parentheses refer respectively to proportion within first- and second-generation immigrants.  
Source: 2014 Provincial Diversity Project.

The lower right cell, “belong”, represents immigrants who really feel at home in the host community; they feel attached to and accepted by the host community. In our sample, 70% of first- and second-generation immigrants fall in that category. The upper-right cell, the “excluded”, represents immigrants who express the desire to be part of the host community but feel they are pushed back; they feel excluded despite their desire to be part of the host community. This represents respectively 10% and 8% of first- and second-generation immigrants in our sample. The lower-left cell captures the situation of those we call the “ambivalent”. Although they perceive positive signals from the host community that there is a place for them in the group, their sense of belonging is held back because of their own ambivalence to join the group. About 11% and 12% of respectively first- and second-generation immigrants fall into this category. Finally, the upper left cell captures the situation of those that we qualify as the “alienated” – those for which belonging is a failure. Not only do they perceive that they are not welcomed in the host community, but they are also uncertain as to whether they want to join this host community. This represents 9% of first- and second-generation immigrants.

The analyses presented in Table 5 assess whether (and to what extent) immigrants in each of these categories lag behind the rest of the population in terms of political integration. The analyses bring in a general sample of the Canadian population to serve as comparative benchmark to assess immigrants’ political integration. Because first- and second-generation immigrants equally fall in each category of the proposed typology, and because the relationship between feeling attached/accepted was similar for first- and second-generation immigrants for four of the five



political integration indicators, we do not distinguish between first- and second-generation immigrants in the analyses below. Only a dummy variable indicating whether immigrants belong to the second generation is included.

**Table 5. Political Integration by Type of Belonging**

	Interest in federal politics <sup>1</sup>		Confidence in institutions <sup>1</sup>		Feel guilty if not voting <sup>2</sup>		Voted in federal election <sup>3</sup>		Would rather live in Canada <sup>2</sup>	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age	.39	.03a	-.05	.03	.03	.01a	.06	.01a	.02	.00a
Education	5.23	.52a	3.33	.46a	.24	.04a	.42	.06a	-.16	.04a
Women	-6.82	.94a	2.24	.83b	.03	.07	-.19	.10	.43	.07a
Belonging (ref. Can. Pop.)										
Alienated	-15.98	2.53a	1.05	2.19	-.75	.21a	-2.08	.30a	-1.99	.28a
Excluded	-10.46	2.94a	1.36	2.44	-.43	.19c	-1.48	.29a	-.71	.23b
Ambivalent	-6.89	2.86a	3.40	2.34	-.34	.21	-1.30	.28a	-.96	.22a
Belong	1.10	1.49	14.70	1.29a	-.19	.10	-.97	.15a	-.04	.12
Second generation	-1.40	1.90	-6.48	1.78a	.13	.13	.89	.18a	.17	.14
Province (ref. cat.: ON)										
Quebec	-4.42	1.15a	-3.06	1.01b	-.22	.08b	.85	.13a	-.80	.09a
Alberta	-1.05	1.16	-3.36	1.04b	.04	.09	.08	.12	.05	.10
British Columbia	-3.96	1.29b	-4.32	1.08a	-.16	.09	-.13	.13	-.08	.10
Constant	38.59	2.33	42.65	1.99a	—		-2.07	.25a	—	
/cut1	—		—		.05	.17	—		-3.61	.23
/cut2	—		—		1.08	.17	—		-1.76	.19
/cut3	—		—		2.43	.17	—		.16	.19
R-square/pseudo R-square	.12		.10		.04		.18		.06	
N	4519		4007		4336		4284		4410	

Source: 2014 Provincial Diversity Project.

a: p<.001; b: p<.01; c: p<.05;

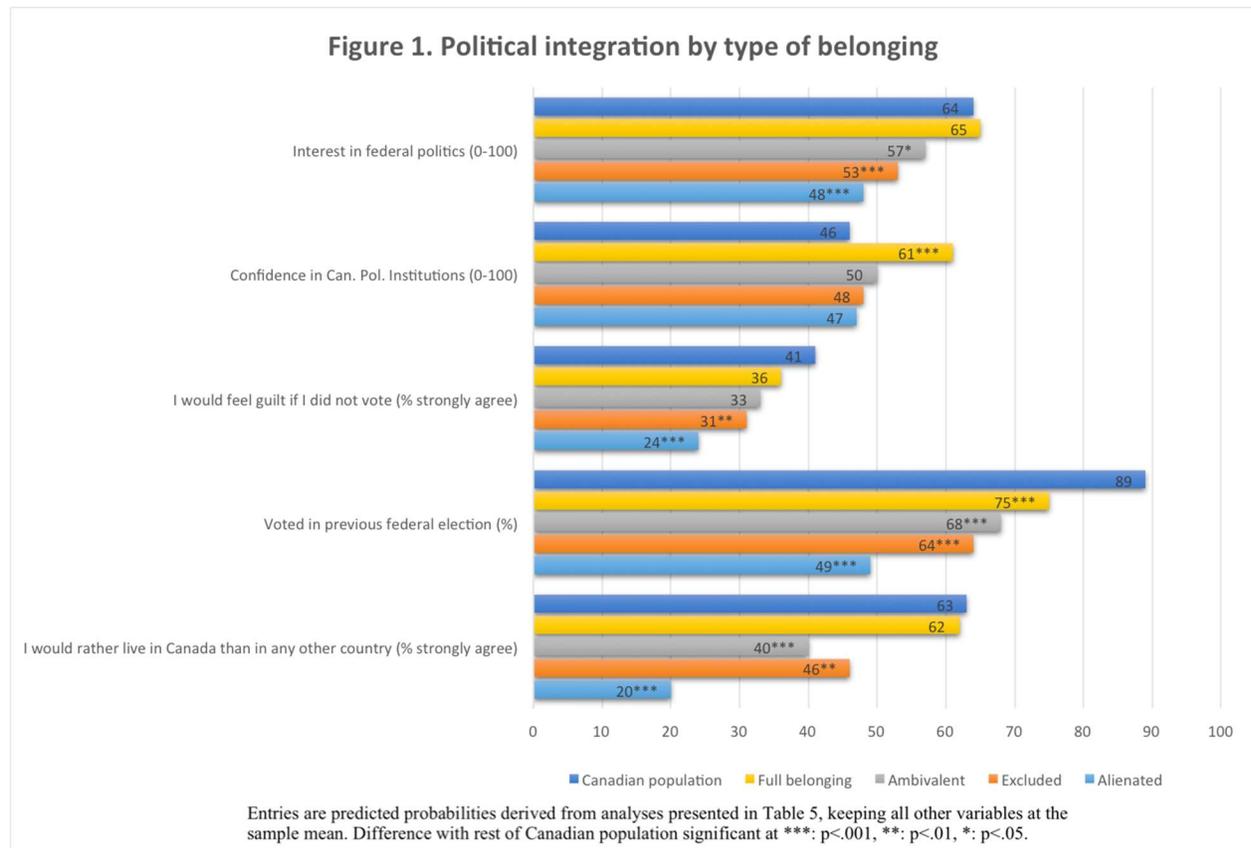
Entries report unstandardized B coefficients.

1. OLS regression. 2. Ordered logit regression. 3. Binomial logit regression.

The analyses indicate that the proposed categories of belonging relate to integration challenges in the host community. Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities for each of the four groups of the typology of belonging and for the rest of the population. The integration challenges are especially acute for immigrants that we qualified as “alienated” – those who both feel weakly attached and accepted. The predicted probabilities indicate that this group of immigrants expresses a lower interest in politics than the rest of the population (-16 points), is less likely to feel guilty at the idea



of not voting (-17 points), is less likely to vote (-40 points), and perhaps not surprisingly, is substantively less likely to express the view that they would rather live in Canada than in any other country (-43 points). The only indicator for which this category of immigrants is not different from the rest of the population is confidence in political institutions.



The same pattern of difference holds for immigrants that that we qualified as the “excluded” (who feel attached but not accepted). Their level of political integration is lower than that of the rest of the population on the same four of the five indicators as the “alienated,” although the gaps do not appear to be as large as for the alienated. However, their level of confidence in political institution is comparable to that of the rest of the population. These findings confirm the crucial importance of feelings of being accepted. The group of “ambivalent” immigrants (who feel accepted but who are not certain than they feel attached to Canada) exhibits a weaker political integration than the rest of the population for three of the five indicators. Their predicted level of



interest in politics is 7 points lower than that of the rest of the population, their propensity to vote is 21 points lower, and their likelihood to say that they would rather live in Canada than in any other country is 23 points lower than that of the rest of the population.

Immigrants who “belong” (who feel both attached and accepted) lag behind the rest of the population only in terms of voting (-14 points). This could in effect be a reflection of the short length of residence of a significant proportion of the first-generation immigrants in the sample (32%). Bilodeau and Turgeon (2015) observe that immigrants who have been in Canada for less than 10 years are substantially less likely to vote than the rest of the population, but they quickly catch up. Most importantly, immigrants who “belong” exhibit the same political attitudes and behaviours as the rest of the population on three of the five indicators (interest in politics, feeling guilty when not voting, and would rather live in Canada). On these three indicators, it is the only group of immigrants who successfully reach parity with the rest of the population. Finally, immigrants who “belong” are also unique in that they are the only group that surpasses the rest of the population on one indicator. While immigrants in the three other categories express levels of confidence in political institutions as high as that of the rest of the population, immigrants who “belong” express higher levels of confidence (+15).

## **Conclusion**

In this study, we advanced the argument that belonging is a two-way process, composed of attachment and acceptance, in which both immigrants and the host community have to express gestures of commitment. On the one hand, attachment refers to immigrants’ proactive desire to belong. On the other hand, acceptance refers to the signals given by the host community in welcoming newcomers, and how these signals are perceived. Our analyses lend support to the analytical value of conceptualizing belonging in such a way. Both the feeling of being attached and the feeling of being accepted are relevant to understand immigrant political integration in the host community. Whereas previous studies tended to operationalize feelings of belonging through measures of attachment to the host country, our study demonstrates the added value of investigating the feeling of acceptance when exploring immigrants’ feeling of belonging.



Just as importantly, our study demonstrates that only when both conditions of feeling attached and feeling accepted are met do we observe that immigrants start engaging in the host community as full members (that is at levels as high or almost as high as the rest of the population).<sup>4</sup> At the other extreme, those who feel neither attached nor accepted exhibit a much weaker political integration. In light of the growing focus on integration policy and public rhetoric that often insists on immigrants' responsibility to demonstrate their commitment to the host community, our analysis shows that such rhetoric and accompanying policies might ultimately only have a limited impact on immigrants' political integration if they do not feel accepted by the majority. As such, our findings show the importance of developing public policies that contribute to feelings of being accepted by the host community.

Our study also provides some ground for optimism when it comes to the belonging of immigrants in Canada. First, an overwhelming proportion of first- and second-generation immigrants feel both attached to Canada and accepted by Canada. The proportion of immigrants that feel neither attached nor accepted in Canada is relatively small (9%). However, those findings should not lead us into complacency. The impact of feelings of alienation for this small group of immigrants is considerable as they are significantly more likely to be politically disengaged. Second, contrary to what others have observed in Canada and elsewhere, we do not observe that second-generation immigrants are suffering from weaker belonging or weaker political integration in comparison to the first generation. Moreover, contrary to our expectations, feelings of being attached and accepted appear equally important for both first- and second-generation immigrants.

This study looks at the relationship between immigrants' sense of belonging and their political integration in Canada. It indirectly contributes to the debate on the sources of radicalization by

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, our study cannot directly address the question of causality. We work with the assumption the belonging comes first and then favors greater engagement with society, but it is also possible that the relationship works the other way around (that is engagement with society favours the development of a stronger sense of belonging) or that the relationship works both ways (that is belonging favouring greater engagement which in turn further reinforces belonging).



establishing a link between a weak sense of belonging and a disengagement with society – especially when immigrants fall into the category that we qualified as “alienated”. The study thus provides evidence consistent with the perspective that links radicalization with the search for a lost identity or with the quest for belonging (see Dalgaard-Nielson, 2010; Doosie et al., 2013 Lyons-Padilla et al. 2015). Of course, moving from being disengaged to being radicalized is quite a leap that very few might or will follow, but our study nevertheless highlights the potential negative consequences of a weak sense of belonging to the community, defined here as feeling weakly attached and weakly accepted.



### Appendix. Construction of variables

Age	Age in years
Women	1=female, 0=male
Education	0= completed high school; 1=completed CEGEP (college); 2=completed undergraduate degree; 4=completed post-graduate degree
Province of residence	Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia Ontario is the reference category
Feeling attached	0 to 10 scale, where 10 means strong attached to Canada and 0 means not attached at all
Feeling accepted	0 to 10 scale, where 10 means strong accepted by Canada and 0 means not accepted at all by Canada
Interest in federal politics	0 to 10 scale, where 10 means great deal of interest in federal politics and 0 means no interest at all
Confidence in political institutions	0 to 10 scale, where 10 means a great deal of confidence in political institutions, and 0 means no confidence at all Scale composed of confidence in three different political institutions: House of Commons, Senate, Supreme Court of Canada (Cronbach alpha=.76)
Feeling guilty when not voting	“I would feel guilty if I did not vote in a federal election” 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree
Voted in previous federal election	1= respondent has voted in previous (2011) federal elections 0 = respondent did not vote Note. Respondents who were not eligible to vote were not retained for the analyses.
I would rather live in Canada than in any other country	“I would rather live in Canada than in any other country” 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree



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