Introduction  Immigration policies often pursue the explicit aim of stimulating economic growth. This relationship between migration and economy is also reflected in public and media discourse. The media and the use of language have been seen as critical factors in the perpetuation and legitimation of neoliberal policies.1 In this paper, I investigate the media discourse of immigration and immigration policy in light of economic considerations in Canada. The paper offers a perspective that bridges literature on the political economy of immigration,2 immigration discourse,3 and the language-policy nexus.4

Canada has a long history of economic-utility-driven immigration. In recent decades, this country has continued an immigration policy with a substantial focus on selecting immigrants who are economically beneficial.5 Since the 1990s, in particular, Canadian immigration policy has followed a neoliberal agenda, which pursues “a reduced role of government” and “increasing national competitiveness in the context of economic globalization.”6 Correspondingly, the majority of current immigration to Canada falls under the so-called economic class. Other industrialized countries are now seeking to emulate aspects of Canada’s immigration policy that select immigrants on the basis of making national economies more competitive and limiting the costs of immigration.7

The empirical research in this paper examines the contents of newspaper articles that discuss the economic utility of immigration in the context of the recent reform of Canadian immigration law. Of central concern is how
the newsprint media represents the economic role of immigrants and immigration. As a methodology, I apply the dialectical principle to media reporting and interpret media discourse as a series of narratives that articulate opposing viewpoints. Finally, I reconfigure individual narratives and contradictory viewpoints into distinct but internally coherent economic and regulatory paradigms that underlie the media discourse of the economic utility of immigration. The paper illustrates that diverse and complex representations of the economic case of immigration circulate through the press, while public policy on economic immigration has pursued a primarily neoliberal agenda.

**Literature Review** Academic debate has revealed the material underpinnings of migration and immigration. While emigration serves economic interests in the sending countries, immigration has also become a “structural necessity” for many industrialized economies. In a Canadian context, recent research supports this view that the economy is dependent on migrant labour.

Long ago, Karl Marx observed that migrants are in a more vulnerable labour market position than nonmigrants and therefore suffer disproportionately from exploitation. Throughout the era of industrial capitalism, migrant workers remained in this vulnerable position relative to nonmigrant worker. Over the last decade, researchers observed the increasing entanglement between neoliberal practice and immigration. The vilification of immigrants, their cultural exclusion, and the denial of social and economic rights have been associated with the “flexibilization” of their labour. Furthermore, competition between migrant and nonmigrant labour has facilitated the flexibilization of the entire labour market and undermined the welfare state in immigrant-receiving industrialized economies. Immigration is an integrated element in industrialized countries’ recent turn away from a strong regulatory and supportive function of the state towards a neoliberal regime dominated by small government, market ideology, and the competition principle.

The economic utility of immigration is not lost on policymakers. Canadian immigration law and policy has long been aligned with economic
interests. In Canada’s early period of colonization, “manpower needs” shaped immigration and settlement policies. Canada’s immigration policy underwent several important changes in the period from 1962 to 1989. While racial bias towards European immigration was removed from official policy, the 1976 *Immigration Act* (Part 1, Section 3h) made explicit reference to the aim of immigration being to foster economic development. In light of a decline of immigration by qualified European labour due to the postwar economic recovery in Europe, a carefully crafted points system was established in 1967 to attract immigrants who could satisfy particular labour demand in an economy that was still based on import-substitution industrialization and manufacturing. Without undermining the position of the exiting Canadian workforce, immigration aimed to regulate the national labour market by attracting workers to occupations with labour demand.

The years from 1989 to 1994 marked a critical period in which Canadian immigration policy was oriented towards a neoliberal agenda. The agenda of competition and small government translated into raising the short-term economic contribution of immigration by selecting immigrants who possessed large amounts of human and/or monetary capital, while recouping some of the costs of administration and settlement through processing fees and reducing government transfer payments to immigrants. During this period, Canada’s policy for attracting professionals and investors followed the country’s self-image as a “sophisticated niche player in a competitive economy.” In addition, the resistance against immigration by labour organizations (which traditionally had a critical view of immigration for flooding the national labour market) declined under the assumption that, in a climate of globalization, an influx of immigrants rich in human and monetary capital will create economic opportunities for all Canadians. During this period, the positions of capital and labour on immigration were converging on the perceived need to remain globally competitive. Although immigration policy had shifted to accommodate the competition principle by the mid-1990s, “the policy transition was incomplete and was complicated by value conflicts in Canadian society and by new immigration pressures in the international system.”
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In light of these complications, the neoliberal immigration policy agenda was consolidated after the mid-1990s. The 2002 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Section 3c) reiterated the contribution of immigration to economic prosperity. The points system was changed and no longer considers applicants’ occupations, but rather assesses their labour market flexibility based on education, language capacity, experience, and age. A prevailing expectation in Canadian immigration policy discourse is that skilled, flexible, and/or capital-rich immigrants will make the Canadian economy globally competitive.\(^{24}\) While the concrete economic impact of immigration has proved difficult to assess, skilled immigration has been discursively constructed as an economic opportunity.\(^ {25}\) Correspondingly, most immigrants to Canada are selected for economic considerations under the so-called economic-class, which constituted 55.5% of all immigration to Canada in 1996 and 56.7% in 2004.\(^ {26}\)

The process through which immigration policy is formed is complex. Although the objectives of Canadian immigration policy may “be much broader and more visionary,”\(^ {27}\) economic interests are mediated and “internalized”\(^ {28}\) by the state and by the manner in which it formulates immigration policy. Furthermore, the interests of businesses, corporations, and labour, which tend to shape government policy, are likely entangled with the viewpoints of a cosmopolitan elite that valorizes internationalism, multiculturalism, and pro-immigration liberalism.\(^ {29}\) Although Canadian immigration policymakers have been relatively successful in limiting the media coverage of immigration policy as a major issue,\(^ {30}\) I nevertheless expect that the economic viewpoints internalized by policy-shaping institutions are represented in the press’s reporting and its use of language.\(^ {31}\)

Language has been a particularly important element in the perpetuation of global neoliberalism.\(^ {32}\) Regarding language in Canadian immigration discourse, researchers have tended to emphasize racial and ethnic prejudice in the media.\(^ {33}\) Some Canadian-based research on media reporting on temporary migration programs illustrates how ideologies of economic gain and representations of citizenship and cultural distinction legitimate the exploitation of migrant labour.\(^ {34}\) This research connects the representations of migrants and migration policy in the media with material economic practices.
Media discourse does not typically present a single opinion or perspective. Rather, it juxtaposes various viewpoints, often expressing contradictory dualisms of pro and con, for and against, or us and them, and mediating between these viewpoints and dualisms. Media discourse thus involves a dialectical movement between perspectives and viewpoints. In the analysis below, I pursue two main research questions related to the media discourse of the economic-utility of immigration. First, how do the media represent the role of economic immigration and immigrants in the period of neoliberal policy consolidation? Second, what are the dialectical dualisms embedded in media reporting and how do these dualisms reflect material practices related to immigration, economy, and policy?

**Method** The analysis focuses on the period from 1 January 1996 to 31 December 2004. These dates mark a period of consolidation of an immigration policy that follows a neoliberal agenda. This period began in 1996, with the release of the report *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration* by the Immigration Legislative Review Advisory Group, and ended after the 2001 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* had been in effect for two years. During this period, media reports frequently focused on the economic-utility aspect of immigration.

Media discourse shapes and is shaped by policies and law. Although immigration policy and law may not always directly respond to public opinion and media reporting, the reform of immigration law situates Canadian immigration discourse between 1996 and 2004 in a concrete and material context. This situation provides the opportunity to gain insights into how economic interests reflected in media discourse may help legitimate immigration policy and law.

The data used for this analysis consists of articles published in the daily Canadian newsprint media. The initial sample frame for data collection consisted of major English-speaking daily newspapers outside of Quebec. An additional requirement was that newspapers are electronically accessible and searchable through the search engine *Canadian Newsstand*, and that identified articles could be converted into a format that enabled coding and word processing. The formats for *The Globe and Mail* and the *Halifax Herald*...
did not meet this requirement; these two newspapers could therefore not be included in the study. The final selection of newspapers consisted of the *Calgary Herald, Ottawa Citizen, National Post,*41 *The Toronto Star,* and *The Vancouver Sun.* All of these newspapers can be considered “reputable” media, but I anticipate that they represent a certain range of opinions and perspectives of immigration: for example, the *National Post* may be inclined to reflect corporate viewpoints, *The Toronto Star* may express a pro-immigrant and multicultural perspective, and the *Calgary Herald* may privilege conservative views. Nevertheless, since daily newspapers that serve smaller and niche markets were not included in the sample, it can be expected that marginalized voices are underrepresented in the sample. In addition, the omission of *The Globe and Mail* and the *Halifax Herald* constitute a limitation to the regional and national representativeness of the sample that needs to be acknowledged.

Individual articles were identified through the search terms “immigration act” and “Canada,” then downloaded, read, and included in the analysis if they indeed discussed immigration. Initially, the 490 articles obtained in this way were categorized through *a priori* coding,42 for which I developed so-called recording instructions based on a coding-scheme that was used by Martin Wengeler43 in previous empirical research on discourses of immigration. This coding exercise identified 86 articles that deal directly with the economic utility of immigration in the context of the debate of Canadian immigration reform and that provide the data for a qualitative analysis.44 This analysis was guided by a reiterative process of recoding the text, developing nodes, and extracting distinct narratives. By focusing on the representation of oppositional perspectives — a strategy often used in journalism — I was able to interpret a complex and multidimensional media discourse.45 In the next section, I present various narratives and viewpoints that resulted from this process.

**Results** An overarching idea reflected in the sampled articles is that immigration should produce economic benefits for Canada. For example, a report in *The Vancouver Sun* quotes the 1998 report of the legislative review
committee on immigration, affirming the report’s aim “that immigrants should ‘contribute to Canada’s prosperity.’”\textsuperscript{46} Similarly, an op-ed in the \textit{National Post}, responding to an article by the newspaper’s editor in chief, remarks “we must ensure that [immigration] levels are established in accordance with the economic and demographic needs of the country and that immigrants are selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to the economy.”\textsuperscript{47} While the author opposes the “open-door policy” advocated by the original article, he agrees on the principle that immigration should produce “benefit for the people already here.”\textsuperscript{48} In a comment on the newly passed \textit{Immigration and Refugee Protection Act}, the same author criticizes the aspect of the new law enabling family reunification: “Immigration policies must also take into account the economic interests of the receiving country.”\textsuperscript{49}

The view that immigration should produce economic benefits is also apparent in an article in \textit{The Toronto Star} that presents a historical perspective of immigration. This article quotes York University political scientist Reg Whitaker: “In the long term, [immigration] has been the lifeblood of the country, the engine of economic growth.”\textsuperscript{50} The article further notes that after removing racial bias from Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s, “it was in Canada’s interest to absorb as many immigrants as it could. They are a major contribution to economic growth.”\textsuperscript{51} An editorial in \textit{The Toronto Star} affirms the importance of eager and hard-working immigrants in the past: “[T]his country was built by immigrants who, in their day, wouldn’t have qualified as the brightest and best. They came because Canada was a land of opportunity and they worked hard to build a new life.”\textsuperscript{52}

More than one year later, a front-page article in \textit{The Toronto Star} qualifies this perspective but holds on to the underlying idea that immigration should generate economic growth in Canada:

[Immigration minister] Caplan said some of the mythology about the hard-working, blue collar immigrants who built this country is a thing of the past … ‘Right now, we know that the economic competitive advantage for Canada is that we have a knowledge-based economy here. We are looking to bring people here that will integrate and succeed quickly,’ she said.\textsuperscript{53}
Also in reference to a historical context, an editorial in the *National Post* states: “Immigration can be the lifeblood of a country. For that to be so in Canada’s case, however, it must be based on the needs of our economy.” This editorial compares the historical aims of stopping US military expansion by welcoming United Empire Loyalists and settling the prairies by admitting European farmers with today’s aims of immigration to produce economic benefit: “Those were deliberate policies … . It was Canada’s needs that were pre-eminent. Similarly, today, Canada no longer needs large numbers of uneducated migrants who, if they exceed the number of unskilled jobs, are unable to contribute to society. We need skilled, educated entrepreneurs.”

The idea that immigration should serve Canadian economic interests sets the context for the entire debate of the economic utility of immigration. Within this context, three distinct narratives exist, each expressing opposing viewpoints.

**Narrative I: Realizing Economic Benefits** The surveyed articles present different perspectives of how economic benefits should be realized and how harm to Canadian workers and businesses should be averted. This narrative of “realizing economic benefits” expresses two viewpoints. The first viewpoint assumes that Canada competes for labour with other countries and will suffer economically if it fails to attract young skilled immigrants. The second viewpoint suggests that immigrants constitute labour competition and could harm the domestic labour force if immigration is not tightly controlled.

Numerous articles express the idea that Canada is competing internationally for young skilled workers. An article in *The Vancouver Sun* cites the 1998 report of the legislative review committee on immigration, which says “Canada is competing with other industrialized countries to attract the best human capital, [and] that we are not always on the winning side of this competition.” An article in *The Toronto Star* quotes Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan: “Bringing the best and the brightest is in Canada’s interest. We are competing with the rest of the world for those people.” Similarly, the *Ottawa Citizen* published an article suggesting that delays in changes to immigration legislation “are costing Canada the opportunity to draw in top talent.”
Furthermore, an article in the *National Post* argues that young immigrants will make Canada’s economy globally more competitive: “The relatively young populations of Latin America and Indo-Asia could become comparative advantages while industrialized countries with ageing workers, such as Europe and Japan, will compete with Canada for skilled immigrants.”

This argument is echoed by another article in the same newspaper: “The global search for skilled labour is heating up as Canada and other industrialized countries, particularly in Western Europe, confront the double-edged sword of slowing birth rates and ageing populations.”

Some voices in the press lament that Canada’s immigration policies towards attracting skilled workers are not more aggressive. For example:

But while some countries are easing entry restrictions … Canada is making it harder to immigrate. Changes to the immigration act unveiled this month discriminate against both highly skilled white-collar professionals as well as skilled trades, say critics. … ‘The new rules are going to make Canada a lot less competitive than we are now,’ said Mr. Trister [chair of the immigration committee for the Canadian Bar Association]. ‘It puts us in a worse position than before, just when other countries are opening up.’

An editorial in *The Vancouver Sun* concurs with this viewpoint, predicting that “we can expect stiffer competition [for skilled immigrants] from industrial powers in Europe, the United States and Japan” and proposing “a more hospitable tax environment … so we can convince the world’s best and brightest to come here rather than go the US.”

According to some voices in the press, the prospect that immigrants return to their country of origin or move to third countries further intensifies the international competition for immigrant workers. *The Vancouver Sun* published a petition advocating for fewer immigration restrictions, stating that immigrants “will move to greener pastures, taking their brains and profits with them when the occasion arises.” Along similar lines, an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* observes: “Thirty per cent of immigrants are gone after three years, most of them because Canada does not provide the outlet for their skills.”
The opposing viewpoint argues that immigrant workers flood the labour market and thereby diminish the job prospects of nonimmigrants or earlier arrivals. For example, an article in the *National Post* suggests that the skilled labour market segment is already saturated:

It is no secret … that many recent immigrants are suffering because they are being encouraged to come here without good prospects of finding suitable employment. The ones affected most severely by this situation are those already here who are struggling to find work in competition with large numbers of new arrivals in a job market where … Canada will probably have a surplus of skilled workers in general for the remainder of the present decade.\(^6^6\)

In an *Ottawa Citizen* op-ed, the president of the Capital Region Guide Association opposes immigration reform because the:

New laws could further strip highly trained Canadian and Ottawa-based tour guides of their jobs … the recommended changes to the Immigration Act which would give foreigners more freedom to work in Canada and allow them to do so for longer periods of time, will only lead to further unemployment for Ottawa guides.\(^6^7\)

By making reference to historical injustices, an article in *The Vancouver Sun*, however, conveys that this perspective of “job stealing” is outdated:

Not long after [1860], British immigrants were complaining bitterly about more recent immigrants from Asia stealing jobs from decent working men and corrupting the city. … Labor unions that today battle for the rights of minorities were once at the forefront of a bitter struggle to keep Chinese workers out of the coal mines.\(^6^8\)

**Narrative II: Labour Market Regulation** A second narrative discusses the role of immigration in regulating the labour market. Again, two opposing viewpoints exist: One endorses the ideology of the market, suggesting that the market mechanism will match immigrants with available jobs. Another argues that selective immigration should be used to regulate the labour supply in particular occupations.
Articles that embrace the former viewpoint use general terms, such as “flexible skill sets”\textsuperscript{69} or taking a “broader view of ‘human capital,’”\textsuperscript{70} to identify the characteristics of desired immigrants. An article in \textit{The Vancouver Sun} supports a report by Citizenship and Immigration Canada that proposes to select immigrants with “a wide variety of transferable skills.”\textsuperscript{71} Some articles are explicit about the market ideology that this viewpoint represents. For example, a report in \textit{The Vancouver Sun} is suspicious of the “ability of state planners to predict labour market trends”\textsuperscript{72} represented by the existing immigrant selection system that assesses applicants based on their occupation. Instead, the article supports admitting immigrants based on flexible skills and “[t]hen let buyers and sellers of labour find each other in the market.”\textsuperscript{73} According to this viewpoint, immigrant selection based on flexible skills and education is desirable because it avoids “pigeonholing”\textsuperscript{74} immigrants into occupational categories that are difficult to define.

From this viewpoint, immigration is important to expand the entire skilled and educated segment of the labour force and thereby ensure continuing economic growth. In this context, the media often points out the declining birth rates and aging Canadian population. For example, an article in the \textit{National Post} refers to a ticking “time bomb” that immigration is supposed to help defuse:

\begin{quote}
Ottawa has identified a demographic time bomb ticking under the national economy. The growth rate of the Canadian-born work force is expected to hit zero as early as 2011. … Fearing that a shrinking work force will stifle economic activity, Jane Stewart, the Human Resources minister, will introduce measures this fall to help skilled immigrants qualify quickly for jobs in Canada. … The economy could suffer unless the labour force continues to grow, economists say.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

In contrast to the viewpoint that the market mechanism should match skilled immigrants with jobs, some articles identify particular occupations in which labour demand should be satisfied with immigrants. \textit{The Toronto Star}, for example, suggests that effective immigration policy needs to ensure that selection is closely linked to labour demand in certain occupations, such as computer programming:
Canada needs about 20,000 computer programmers now. But the department takes an average of two to two-and-a-half years to process a qualified applicant. … That partially explains why so many skilled people have no jobs; by the time they come, the demand is long over.\textsuperscript{76}

This article implies that if immigration policy was implemented properly, the short supply of labour in some occupations would be filled with immigrants in a timely manner.

Similarly, an article in *The Vancouver Sun* laments British Columbia’s “critical shortage of nurses”\textsuperscript{77} and suggests using a special agreement between the federal government and the province of British Columbia to “import large numbers of qualified foreign workers to solve labour shortages.”\textsuperscript{78} The article furthermore argues for more effective regulation of matching immigration with labour demand:

\textquote{The General Occupations List used by immigration officials to turn away badly needed doctors and nurses has not been updated in almost four years, federal officials confirmed Tuesday.}

Foreign doctors have received similar [rejection] letters, despite severe shortages of medical personnel in hospitals and clinics around the province.\textsuperscript{79}

Immigrant workers are also needed in “high-tech and specialized manufacturing” industries, according to an article in the *National Post*.\textsuperscript{80}

Another article in the *National Post* criticizes the Canadian government’s intention to raise skill levels of immigrants because workers are needed to do low-skilled and semi-skilled occupations. The article paraphrases a lawyer representing the immigration section of the Canadian Bar Association, who:

\textquote{Believes the proposal [of revising the points system] would put up impossible barriers to less-educated, but still-needed, workers like truck drivers and tool and die makers.}

The Canadian Trucking Association confirmed yesterday there’s an increasingly serious shortage of qualified drivers, more than 2,000 in Quebec alone. … The association has recently approached federal immigration officials to discuss how it can attract foreign drivers.\textsuperscript{81}
Along the same lines, an op-ed in *The Toronto Star* reports on a skilled bricklayer, Michael, from Malta, who was discouraged by immigration officials to immigrate to Canada although he had three Canadian job offers:

Michael was not asked about whether his trade was in demand, or even if he already had a job offer, but whether he spoke English or French fluently and whether he had a university or at least college degree. … [This] story illustrates the challenges that the residential construction industry within the Greater Toronto Area is facing — a chronic shortage of skilled trades. … [H]istorically the need for skilled labour in our industry has been met through immigration. … Immigration when tied to skilled trade shortages is a positive force for our economy that must be supported.82

**Narrative III: Victim and Perpetrator** Media discourse offers a third narrative that identifies victims and perpetrators related to immigration. As in the previous narratives, newspaper reporting reflects two opposing viewpoints. According to one viewpoint, immigrants are the victim of exploitation and deskilling inflicted by Canadian regulators. The other viewpoint reverses the roles of victim and perpetrator, and argues that immigrants threaten the economic well-being of Canadian society. Although both viewpoints imply different causal processes, I discuss these viewpoints in the context of a single narrative because they deploy the same discursive mechanism of constructing a victim and perpetrator.

The former viewpoint is represented by a *National Post* article with the headline “Illegals used as cheap labour.” This article reports on “fortune-seekers from China’s Fujian” who arrived on British Columbia’s shores via boat: “[T]hey work for low wages to send money to their families in China. ‘They take jobs that you and I would not take,’ Joanne Lau, a Metro Toronto South East Asian Legal Clinic lawyer, says.”83 In reference to the same events, another article in the *National Post* quotes University of Toronto professor Mike Szonyi: “There is a huge demand for unregulated cheap labour in North America …. The only way to stop the smugglers is to stop the demand.”84 This demand-side perspective puts the blame for the migrant’s exploitation on Canadian regulators who fail to curb informal employment.

The victimization of immigrants also resonates in reporting of the nonrecognition of foreign credentials and the devaluation of immigrants’
skills. A series of articles in The Vancouver Sun addresses this issue by quoting experts such as Toronto immigration lawyer Peter Rekai: “If you were a bank manager in Istanbul, you're not going to be a bank manager in Toronto … A lot of these people are selling stereos at Future Shop.”85 Similarly, Leah Diana, a spokeswoman for the Filipino Nurses Support Network, was quoted: “There are thousands of Filipino women working as domestic workers who are trained in their home country as nurses … But they are trapped in this cycle of being domestic workers because Immigration won't recognize their credentials.”86 Simon Fraser University professor Don DeVoretz was quoted as saying: “The problem with [government policy seeking to attract educated immigrant] is they're ending up as taxi drivers.”87

In an editorial, The Vancouver Sun identifies the Canadian government and professional regulatory bodies as perpetrators and asks when the government will “stop professional bodies — doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, accountants among others — from erecting unnecessary barriers that hinder qualified people from working in their fields.”88

The viewpoint that immigrants threaten the economic well-being of Canadian society is represented in a series of articles in the National Post. One article opens with Milton Friedman’s well-known quote: “It's just obvious that you can't have free immigration and a welfare state.”89 This article elaborates:

An unprecedented three million people have been allowed into this country since 1986 and two million were not screened under the economic or educational point system. That's why too many newcomers are a net burden on our economy. … Welfare is only part of the cost. Newcomers impose untold medical, legal, educational and housing costs.90

Another article concurs that immigrants who are not selected under economic considerations are a burden:

The priority we have given to welcoming extended family members has resulted in a dramatic fall in the economic performance of immigrants over the past two decades … among the various categories of immigrants, family-class members alone show an increase in the use of welfare the longer they stay in Canada.91
In the same vein, a *National Post* editorial compares the failures of European immigration policies to the potential effect of immigration in Canada: “Europe has learned what Canada soon will: Poor, uneducated labourers are not the solution to a staggering welfare state.”

Some reporting links the viewpoint that immigrants threaten the welfare state to the notion that educated and flexible immigrants offer greater benefits to Canada. For example, an article in the *National Post* remarks that “immigrants with university degrees pay more income tax and rely less on welfare than less-educated newcomers.” Similarly, an editorial in *The Toronto Star* acknowledges that the immigration “minister’s insistence on attracting the ‘best and brightest’ immigrants … will be popular with taxpayers who want newcomers who don’t put any strain on the public purse.” Such a perspective bridges the viewpoint of immigrants as perpetrators with the viewpoint that only skilled immigrants are flexible and adaptable to the needs of the labour market (see Narrative II).

**Discussion** The selected newspaper articles followed an overarching perspective that immigration should bring economic benefits to Canada and its population. The viewpoint that immigration should be generally restricted to protect the Canadian labour market was absent in the sampled newspaper articles. The singular perspective of economic gain associated with immigration should not suggest that media reporting on immigration is concerned only with the economic. Rather, the sampling procedure used for this research selected articles on the basis that they focus on the economic utility of immigration in the first place. The overall discourse of immigration is complex, and the theme of economic utility coexists with other themes, such as danger and humanitarianism. The economic-utility theme, however, is important because it addresses an aspect of immigration, based on which a majority of immigrants to Canada are selected. According to the current proportion of economic-class immigration (vis-à-vis family-class and refugees), economic-utility defines a dominant material practice of immigrant selection in Canada.

Within the aspect of the economic-utility of immigration, newspaper reporting reflects a dialectical movement presenting multiple narratives that
contain opposing viewpoints. To a certain degree, different newspapers present different viewpoints. For example, *The Vancouver Sun* tended to focus on immigrant deskilling, while the *National Post* was more concerned with the negative effect of immigration on the welfare state (Narrative III). In the reporting of other narratives, however, this association between individual newspapers and the representation of a certain viewpoints was not clearly discernable. Based on the data sample used for this study, clear and consistent ideological perspectives could not be attributed to individual newspapers.

In this final section, I reconfigure the various narratives and oppositional viewpoints presented in the sample in a manner that represents two clashing but internally coherent ideological perspectives. On one hand, media reporting involves a neoliberal paradigm that endorses the competition principle and market ideology, and that seeks to reduce costs to the Canadian public associated with immigration. On the other hand, media reporting presents a regulatory paradigm that focuses on the rejection of the competition principle, favours occupational regulation, and expresses solidarity with immigrants.

The neoliberal paradigm is represented by the viewpoint that Canada competes internationally for young skilled labour. This viewpoint endorses the competition principle and proposes that a proactive and aggressive immigration policy to compete successfully for international labour enables Canada to realize the economic benefits of immigration. The neoliberal paradigm also embraces the ideology of the market as the ideal mechanism for matching immigrant labour with jobs. Immigrants should have flexible skills sets that enable them to be matched with the jobs the market provides. A third aspect of this neoliberal paradigm is that immigrants threaten the welfare state. Although neoliberal policies usually seek to demolish rather than defend the welfare systems, this aspect is consistent with other neoliberal labour strategies, such as rendering immigrants vulnerable and exploitable. When migrants are seen as a threat to the welfare state, the neoliberal response is not to stop needed immigrant labour, but rather to select immigrants who will be less likely to enter the welfare system, and deny welfare rights and unemployment benefits to newly arriving immigrants.
The regulatory paradigm suggests that immigrants constitute labour competition for nonmigrant workers. In contrast to the neoliberal paradigm, it sees competition as destructive. Competition between immigrants and non-immigrants will lead to unemployment and lower wages for all. The role of the state, therefore, is to protect the national labour market through policies that control immigration. Only in occupations in which labour is in demand should the supply of labour be regulated through selective immigration. The rejection of the competition principle also resonates with the viewpoint that immigrants are victims of deskilling and exploitation in the labour market. If immigrants work for low wages, unfavourable working conditions, and below their skill levels, then they undermine the wage and labour standards of the entire labour market.

The two paradigms embedded in the media discourse of the economic utility of immigration reflect different models of Canadian immigration policy. The regulatory model was more prominent in the past. For example, for most of the twentieth century immigration levels were coordinated with the business cycle; they increased during the economic boom years and decreased in the recessions of the 1930s, 1970s, and early 1980s. In addition, the initial points system assessed immigration applications based on a detailed list of occupations in which labour was in demand. This regulatory model, however, has been increasingly replaced by a neoliberal model, which focuses on attracting immigrants with so-called flexible skill sets who compete across the entire job market.

Despite the shift from regulatory to neoliberal immigration policies, media discourse still juxtaposes both models. The media neither blindly follows the neoliberal paradigm nor does it cover immigration in a one-sided manner that suits the neoliberal agenda of current policymaking. Rather, the influence of a neoliberal agenda on media discourse is balanced with interests that favour a more stringently regulated labour market. However, this balance in media reporting has not translated into immigration policy, which shifted disproportionately towards the neoliberal paradigm. Apparently, the cosmopolitan and elite interests that are reflected and produced in media discourse are detached from the political process through which immigration policy and law are formed. On one hand, media
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discourse may simply lag behind in the manner in which it incorporates the language and discursive models normalized by neoliberal practice. It is also possible that future immigration policy will incorporate aspects of the regulatory paradigm. As this article goes to press, the Conservative government is contemplating limiting acceptance of skilled immigrants to 38 occupations. On the other hand, the disconnection between media discourse and public policy is not unusual in respect to immigration. The above analysis suggests that the neoliberal paradigm has been incorporated in the recent shift in immigration policy, while the regulatory paradigm, equally circulated through the press, has been rejected. Depending on the future direction of Canadian Immigration policy, the prospect of disconnected public discourse and policy may raise serious questions regarding the role of the media and the use of language in the process of immigration policy formation and the link between discourse and material practice towards immigration.

Notes

This research was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I thank Gillian Creese and Alan Simmons for excellent comments on an earlier version of the paper, and James Christison, Sophia Lowe, Genevieve Gilbert, and Jennifer Herne for outstanding research assistance.


International Migration and Immigration Policy in the Americas (Miami, FL: North-South Center Press, 1999), p. 53.


18. Although the gendered language was removed in later policy documents and public debates, implicit gendered assumptions of male immigrants as economic actors and female immigrants as “unproductive” domestic labour remains deeply embedded in contemporary law, policy, and public debate (for example, see Thomas Spijkerboer and Sarah Van Walsum, (eds.), *Women And Immigration Law: New Variations on Classical Feminist Themes* (London: Routledge-Cavendish Pub. Ltd, 2007). It is important to acknowledge these gender assumptions here, but it is beyond the scope of the paper to empirically or theoretically unpack these assumptions in greater detail.


20. Simmons, “Economic Integration and Designer Immigrants”; Simmons, “Immigration Policy: Imagined Futures.”


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24. See, for example, Li, Destination Canada, p. 79.


27. Li, Destination Canada, p. 79.


30. See, for example, Simmons and Keohane, “Canadian Immigration Policy,” p. 446.


36. It also focused on other aspects of immigration, such as the dangers of immigration or humanitarianism (Bauder, forthcoming).


39. van Dijk, Communicating Racism and Racism and the Press.

40. Quebec embraces a considerably different “imagined future” (Simmons 199b, p. 49 in respect to immigration. I therefore anticipated that the discourse of immigration would be distinct from the rest of Canada. For reasons of methodological and analytical clarity, I chose to omit this province from the sample.

41. The National Post was called Financial Post prior to 1998. For the sake of consistency, I use only the current name, National Post, in the text.


Other viewpoints on how immigration can produce economic benefits for Canada were also present. For example, nonracial immigration policy can create international business networks that result in foreign investment from Asia and broaden exports (L. Martin, “But Not Because of the Centennial,” *Ottawa Citizen* (27 April 1999), p. A13; J. Samuel, *Australia’s Treatment of Natives Holds Some Lessons for Canada*, *The Toronto Star* (28 July 1998), p. 1). Or, immigration is a “key component [of] the purchasing power of our consumer base” (*The Toronto Star*, “A Mismanaged Immigration Department,” (12 August 1999), p. 1) and stimulates growth in particular industries, such as language education (*The Vancouver Sun*, “Provinces Must Co-Operate on Private Language Schools,” (30 January 2004), p. A14.). These viewpoints, however, occurred with much lower frequency (typically only once in the analyzed articles) than the two main viewpoints discussed in this section.

65. Martin, “But Not Because of the Centennial.”
70. Coyne, “Those Hordes at the Gates.”
72. Coyne, “Those Hordes at the Gates.”
73. Coyne, “Those Hordes at the Gates.”
75. L. Chwialkowska, “Ottawa Fears Labour Time Bomb.”
76. *The Toronto Star*, “A Mismanaged Immigration Department.”
78. Lee and McInnes, “B.C. Ignores Agreement.”
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79. Lee and McInnes, "B.C. Ignores Agreement."
80. Mandel-Campbell, "New Laws."
85. Skelton, "Sweeping Changes Planned."
86. Lee and McInnes, "B.C. Ignores Agreement."
87. Skelton, "Sweeping Changes Planned."
88. The Vancouver Sun, "Send an SOS."
90. Francis, "A $150 Million-a-Year Deadbeat Dilemma."
91. Collacott, "More Workers, Not More Voters."
92. National Post, "Human Cargo."
93. Duffy, "Immigration Targets Unrealistic."
94. The Toronto Star, "Immigration Reforms Strike Right Balance."
95. Bauder, "Immigration Debate in Canada."
96. For example, Peck, Workfare States.
97. For example, Bauder, Labor Movement; Nevins, Operation Gatekeeper.
98. Simmons, "Economic Integration and Designer Immigrants."
99. For example, Green and Green, "The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy"; Simmons, "Economic Integration and Designer Immigrants."
101. Bauder, "Immigration Debate in Canada."