ARE GOOD FENCES NECESSARY TO PRESERVE GOOD NEIGHBORS? MIGRATION FLOWS ACROSS THE CANADA-US BORDER AND THE DESIRED PROXIMITY OF CANADIANS TO THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the twentieth century, well over three million Canadians migrated to the United States. A considerably less important number of Americans moved to Canada over the same period. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the American advantage over Canada in migration between the two countries has been substantially reduced. Canadians have a strong affinity for the United States but are more attracted to living there part-time rather than permanently. This essay will look at historic and recent patterns of migration between the two countries and employing survey data explore current attitudes on the part of Canadians to the idea of living in the United States.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the twentieth century, people have been amongst Canada's leading exports to the United States. Between 1870 and 1900 some 820 000 persons migrated from Canada to the United States, between 1900 and 1950 the figure rose to 2.2 million and between 1950 and 2000 over 1.2 million migrated South. According to the 2007 American Community Survey taken together nearly three million Americans reported French Canadian (2 242 476), Canadian (725, 985) and Cajun (114 311) ancestry (American Community Survey, 2008). The historic presence of persons of Canadian ancestry in the United States is highly important. Few studies have examined the overall movement of Canadians and Americans across their respective borders. That which follows will look at the movement of Canadians to the United States, the places they have settled and the extent to which in the year 2009 Canadians have pondered the idea of a move to the United States. That which follows will employ data from Canadian and American Immigration departments, the census of the two countries and public opinion looking at the views of Canadians towards borders and boundaries

with the United States. It is contended that historic and current migratory trends and public opinion are complex and it is difficult to make generalizations about the ties between the two countries.

2. HISTORIC PATTERNS OF MIGRATION

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the number of Canadian migrants to the United States can be estimated at 210 000 persons. As observed below. while that figure is considerably less than the total number of Canadians that migrated to the United States during the 1960's, (approximately 433 000) it is greater than the number of departures that occurred in each of the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Those persons in the United States that report French Canadian and Canadian ancestry are spread across much of the United States. According the 2007 American Community Survey of the US Census Bureau, of the approximately three-quarters of a million reporting Canadian ancestry, the biggest concentrations are in the states of California and Florida. Those Americans reporting Cajun descendants are mainly concentrated in Louisiana and Texas (data for those reporting "Canadian" and "Cajun" ancestry were not provided for 2008). As for Americans of French Canadian ancestry, as observed below, in 2008 the largest number was in Massachusetts, followed by Michigan, New York and California.

TABLE 1. Numbers of persons migrating from Canada to the United States by decennial periods during the period 1900-2009

	000's
1900-1909	123
1910-1919	708
1920-1929	949
1930-1939	163
1940-1949	161
1950-1959	353
1960-1969	433
1970-1979	179
1980-1989	156
1990-1999	195
2000-2009	210 [1]

Sources: Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, United States/Department of Homeland Security

[1] Represents the actual figures provided from the Immigration authorities of the United States for the years 2000-2008 and an estimate for the year 2009 based upon the annual average for the previous 9 years.

TABLE 2. French Canadian total Ancestry tallied for people with one or more ancestry categories (Estimate), 2008

GEOGRAPHY	ANCESTRY FRENCH CANADIAN (ESTIMATE)
Massachusetts	259600
Michigan	168971
New York	128269
California	116528
Florida	111664
New Hampshire	108159
Connecticut	100890
Louisiana	99720
Maine	97812
Texas	73491
Wisconsin	58595
Washington	57225
Minnesota	54161
Rhode Island	51083
Vermont	50774
Illinois	36250
Arizona	35655
North Carolina	34605
Ohio	32957
Virginia	31706
Pennsylvania	31132
Colorado	28286
Oregon	28060
Georgia	25391
New Jersey	25197
Maryland	19771
Indiana	18265
Missouri	16402
Tennessee	15473
South Carolina	15444
Nevada	15058
Iowa	11377
Alabama	10678

3. RECENT PATTERNS OF CANADIAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The number of persons whose last permanent residence was Canada that were admitted to the United States in 2008 remained relatively consistent across the first decade of the twentieth century. The number of

migrants from the United States to Canada has steadily risen since 2002 but not enough to substantially diminish the net migratory gain made by our neighbors to the south.

The preferred destinations of the Canadian-born population that moved to the United States between 2005 and 2008 were California, Florida, New York and Texas. Despite declines in the total numbers of the Canadian-born settling in the US over that period, the numbers moving to California and New York have remained relatively stable.

TABLE 3. Immigrants Admitted from Canada to the United States and Americans to Canada by country of last permanent residence 1991-2008

	NUMBERS OF CANADIANS ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES	NUMBERS OF AMERICANS ADMITTED TO CANADA	NET LOSS TO CANADA
2008	22 366	11 216	11 150
2007	20 324	10 449	9 875
2006	23 913	10 943	12 970
2005	29 930	9 263	20 667
2004	22 439	7 507	14 932
2003	16 447	5 990	10 437
2002	27 142	5 288	21 854
2001	29 991	5 902	24 089
2000	21 289	5 809	15 480
1999	12 948	5 578	7 370
1998	14 295	4 773	9 522
1997	15 788	5 043	10 745
1996	21 751	5 789	15 962
1995	18 117	5 185	12 932
1994	22 243	6 234	16 009
1993	23 898	8 014	15 884

Sources: Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, United States/Department of Homeland Security and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1991-2008

4. CANADIAN MIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES: MANY CONTEMPLATE, FEW DEPART

Between 2006 and 2008, Gallup surveys conducted in over 80 countries revealed that at least one in four people around the Globe would choose to relocate in another country if the option were available to them (the specific question was "…if you had the opportunity, would you like to move permanently to another country or would you prefer to continue living in the same country"). There was considerable variation globally in terms of people saying they would like to migrate. Majorities in some of the world's poorer nations expressed a desire to migrate (i.e. Sierra Leone, Guyana, Congo (Kinshasa), and Nigeria). Few expressed a desire to leave in such countries as Saudi Arabia, Australia, Thailand, and South Africa. But the desire to migrate was not only limited to some of the world's poorer nations as people in such countries as the United Kingdom (27%), Germany (27%) and France (18%) expressed a preference for living abroad. The Gallup poll also asked respondents across Latin America that wished to leave to what country they would like to relocate. The United States was the single most popular choice, selected by a third (33%, average) of respondents across the region. In Mexico, some 45% cited the US as their preferred destination. Others cited Spain and several South American countries.

A recent analysis of Gallup surveys on international migration revealed that: ``…16% of the world's adults would like to move to another country permanently if they had the chance. This translates to roughly

TABLE 4. Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status for State by Country of Birth, Canada, 2005-2008

	2008	2007	2006	2005
Total	15 109	15 495	18 207	21 878
Arizona	423	441	570	769
California	2 259	2 468	2 291	2 670
Colorado	293	248	281	432
Connecticut	189	218	303	335
Florida	1 340	1 444	2 205	2 181
Georgia	362	457	568	791
Illinois	467	429	539	802
Massachusetts	530	724	495	695
Michigan	752	271	772	946
Minnesota	213	206	323	433
New Jersey	531	509	528	578
New York	1 326	1 293	1 561	1 361
North Carolina	361	424	631	742
Ohio	321	365	450	580
Pennsylvania	385	386	462	650
Texas	1 181	990	1 220	1 929
Virginia	366	285	422	372
Washington	885	1 146	895	1 145
Other	2 671	2 481	3 165	3 884

Source: Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, United States/Department of Homeland Security, 2005-2008

700 million worldwide—more than the entire adult population of North and South America combined. As to their preferred destination it is the United States where nearly one-quarter (24%) or roughly 165 million adults would like to relocate permanently. With an additional estimated 45 million saying they would like to move to Canada, Northern America is one of the world's two most desired regions (Esipova and Ray, 2009).

While, it is difficult to say how many Canadians would like to live in another country, in a survey conducted in November 2007 by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, some 17% of Canadians said that they had considered moving to the United States, some 67% of Canadians said that they never considered moving to the United States, some 29% of Canadians said, "I would like to live in the United States part of the year" A majority of Canadians recognize that there are important obstacles to making such a move, as some 59% say, "It is too complex to move to the U.S." Another concern of 55% of Canadians surveyed is that: "Those people who move to the US will lose the benefits of being Canadian". In a similar survey conducted in 2009 some one in four Canadians said they have considered moving to the United States (an increase of 8 points over the 2007 survey). Additional insight into this perspective emanates from the finding that more than one in three Canadians would like to live in the United States part of the year. Those Canadians who like the idea of being "part-time Americans" are most likely to reside in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It might be argued that since the survey places no conditions on residing part time in the US it is not surprising that such an important share of Canadians express a desire to live there. In this regard, it is worth bearing in mind that the principal destinations that Canadians have chosen when settling south of the border. As noted previously, some four in ten of the Canadian-born that moved to the US in 2008 chose the states of California, Florida, Texas and New York.

The ACS Leger Marketing survey reveals that: Some 62% of Canadians report that they have travelled to the United States over the past few years with British Columbians (76%) most likely to report doing so and Quebecers least likely to have done so (49%).

In fact, over one in three Canadians report frequently travelling to the United States. British Columbians (43.7%) and Atlantic Canadians (42.1%) are most likely to report that they frequently travel south of the border while Quebecers (28%) are least likely to report doing so.

Yet another telling statistic is the percentage of Canadians that would favor eliminating the border with the United States. In 2009 (26.5%) and in 2007 (23%), some one in four Canadians agreed that we should get rid of the border with our neighbor. The idea is especially popular in the Prairies (31.5%) and Quebec (31.7%) and is least popular in Ontario (21.6%). Age plays an important factor in the degree to which Canadians feel we should get rid of the border as some one in five under the age of 45 in favor compared with one in three over that age that would endorse the proposal.

TABLE 5. Canadians agreeing (strongly and somewhat) that they have "considered moving to the United States" and "would like to live in the United States part of the year".

	I HAVE CONSIDERED MOVING TO THE UNITED STATES.	I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES PART OF THE YEAR.
Canada	24.9%	35.3%
Atlantic	24.7%	35.6%
Quebec	20.0%	32.3%
Ontario	24.1%	35.0%
Manitoba/ Saskatchewan	31.1%	45.5%
Alberta	31.4%	37.4%
British Columbia	27.9%	35.0%

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, August, 2009

A narrow majority of Canadians (54%) agree that the United States is our best friend in the world. Albertans (72.4%) and Prairie residents (59%) are most likely to feel that way, while Quebecers (48%) and British Columbians (41.6%) are least likely to think so. On the basis of age, the youngest are least likely to agree that the United States is our best friend with forty percent between 18 and 44 holding that view compared with sixty percent of those aged 45 to 64 and over seventy percent of respondents over the age of 65.

Not surprisingly, those Canadians that are most likely to have considered a move to the United States strongly agree that they would like to live there part of the year. They are also more inclined to agree that we should get rid of the border, are more likely to have travelled to the United States, and are more likely to think that the United States is our best friend. Whether or not Canadians have considered moving to the United States, the majority also seem to think it is good for our dollar to rise against the American currency.

5. CONCLUSION

As observed above, an important percentage of Canadians have considered moving to the United States. But there is a big gap between thinking about such a move and actually making it as revealed in the data on the actual number of Canadian migrants to the United States. In the first half of the twentieth century, large waves of

such migration were made in challenging economic conditions with many hoping to improve their circumstances. More recent migration to the United States often generates debate about "brain drain" that is the extent to which the US attracts some of Canada's most educated people. But that cuts both ways as the more recent migrants going to the United States and those coming to Canada tend to be more educated than the overall population in each country.

TABLE 6. Agreement over whether Canadians have considered moving to the United States correlated over selected statements pertaining to the relationship with the United States, 2009

	I HAVE CONSIDERED MOVING TO THE UNITED STATES			
AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I would like to live in the United States part of the year. (2)	66.7	11.1	12.4	2.8
We should get rid of the border with the United States.	53.3	30.1	34.6	19.1
I frequently travel to the United States.	68.6	56.0	43.1	26.4
The United States is our best friend in the world.	73.4	61.7	60.7	47.2
I think that it is good that the Canadian dollar rises against the US dollar.	75.7	71.9	76.8	64.2

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, August, 2009

What the numbers and the survey data above reveal is that making broad generalizations about Canadian's views on the United States and their relationship to the country likely fails to capture the complex pattern of thinking on the part of the population when it comes to our neighbor. Regional differences, age and the degree of travel to the United States have an important impact on Canadian views on the United States and on the northern side of the divide there are differences of opinion on various matters. Future research will need to think carefully about the variation in opinion amongst Canadians rather than attempt to offer broad generalizations designed to capture the Canadian perspective on the United States.

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