

# Historicizing Canadian Immigration Officers' Decision-Making Abilities and Use of Advanced Technological Tools from the 1960s-Present

## Abstract

This paper assesses the historical evolution of Canadian immigration officers' decision-making abilities regarding economic immigrant applications from the 1960s to present. Historically, humans have processed these applications. However, states are increasingly experimenting with advanced technological tools in case processing, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and data processing systems (DPS). There is an emerging field of research concerning the use of AI in Canadian migration management. Researchers in this field have focused primarily on the ethical risks that AI in migration management poses. Some scholars, especially in Europe, have studied AI and DPS and consider how the digitization of migration management affects processors' abilities to view, interpret, and manipulate data. A vital contribution to this field would include a historicized analysis of Canadian immigration officers' decision-making abilities, and the laws, policies, and operational guides governing their work. Understanding long-term continuity and change in Canadian policy and practice would enable us to better contextualize present practice and future plans. Many scholars have debated the ethicality of discretionary decision-making by street-level bureaucrats, between those who argue that it is arbitrary and unfair, and those who argue that it is flexible and humanizing. I believe that differing views on discretion has had a cumulative effect on policy and practice, leading to a public policy approach that seeks to expand decision-making powers while simultaneously holding decision-makers accountable to oversight. I doubt whether this is a desirable trend given the costs that such an approach imposes on the state and migrants, and its uncertain efficacy and ethicality.

## Biography of Author

**Nicholas Lee-Scott** is a Master's student in the Immigration and Settlement Studies program at Ryerson University. His research interests focus on Canadian migration governance and management, street-level bureaucracy, and the use of advanced technological tools in case processing and decision-making. He studied History in his undergraduate program at the University of Prince Edward Island, writing his honours thesis about two immigration interpreters in early twentieth century British Columbia and their influence in white and South Asian communities. He is currently working as an administrative assistant with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, and in this capacity hopes to further his understanding of public policy and administration.