THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS AND MINORITY IDENTITIES:

Where We Are and What We Still Need to Know

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THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS IMPACTS THE IDENTITY OF ETHNOCULTURAL, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITY CANADIANS. THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS REFERS TO THAT OF LANDING (AS IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE) AND SETTLING IN CANADA. ALTHOUGH THE BEGINNING POINT IS WELL-DEFINED, THE END POINT MAY VARY WITH EACH INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP. HOWEVER, SETTLEMENT IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH ADAPTATION, INTEGRATION, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND (SOCIAL) CITIZENSHIP WITH ITS CONCOMITANT IDENTITY FORMATION; ALL OF THESE ARE PROCESSES THAT MAY GO ON FOR LIFE. WHILE ALL CANADIANS, WHETHER IMMIGRANTS, MINORITIES OR OFFICIAL MAJORITIES, ARE CONSTANTLY BEING TOUCHED BY ONGOING IMMIGRATION WHICH CHANGES THE FABRIC OF CANADIAN SOCIETY EVERY DAY, THIS PAPER FOCUSES ONLY ON THOSE MINORITY CANADIANS WHO HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN THROUGH THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS. AS WE GO THROUGH THE DIFFERENT STREAMS OF ACADEMIC LITERATURE FOCUSING ON IDENTITY CHANGE SUBSEQUENT TO THE IMMIGRATION OF ETHNOCULTURAL, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC GROUPS TO CANADA, WE FIND THAT THE BOUNDARIES ARE BOTH BLURRED AND MOBILE OVER TIME. INDEED, THESE CATEGORIES ARE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE IDENTITIES BASED THEREUPON VARY OVER TIME AS A RESULT (TASTSOGLOU, 2001).

Identity may be defined "as the distinctive character belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group" (Rummens 2000). The concept is other-referenced, relational, comparative and contextual. Identities are socially constructed and subject to ongoing negotiation and reconstruction. The identities dealt with in this article are group identities.

ETHNICITY AND RACE

Both concepts of ethnicity and race are products of people migrating and coming into contact with others, under specific historical conditions. "Race," broadly speaking, refers to real (or imagined) phenotypical differences among groups of individuals, differences that have been socially singled out, associated with negative qualities and historically utilized as rationalizations of discrimination against the bearers of these (cf. Bolaria and Li 1988). Conversely, an "ethnic" group is characterized by held-in-common behaviours and cultural traits that are constructed as different and originating in a country other than where they are observed. In a broad definition, ethnic groups include racial groups as well, since race is one of the markers that has been used to separate groups. In a narrower definition, ethnic and racial groups are quite different and cannot be put together. There is an important analytical difference between "culture" and "ethnicity". Although neither culture nor ethnicity are fixed entities, culture refers overall to "a way of life that a group of people develops in order to adapt to a set of external and pre-existing conditions" (Li 1999:10), while ethnicity refers to "the world views, traditions and practices brought by immigrants to Canada, and dynamically reproduced and transformed within the Canadian context" (Stasiulis 1990: 276). The term "racial minority Canadians," a socially constructed term, in a contemporary context refers to the legal term "visible minorities." Members of "visible minorities" in Canada are defined as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (*Employment Equity Act* 1995).



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MODELS OF IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION

Models of immigrant incorporation constitute another outcome of increasing population movements and involve identity-shaping processes for ethnocultural, racial, religious and linguistic minority Canadians. Some of the models have inspired, and are intertwined with, specific immigration and settlement policies (e.g. assimilation), while others are more theoretical (e.g. integration as racialized parity).

When ethnicity is seen in terms of its content and on the level of ethnic identity (individual level), it is logical to inquire about what factors help to maintain such an identity and what forces compel it to change. Driedger (1996) has created a conceptual model in an attempt to both compare / contrast some of the more contemporary theories of ethnic change and persistence (e.g. assimilation, amalgamation, pluralism, modified assimilation, involuntary pluralism) and to synthesize them in order to understand the factors that contribute to ethnic change and persistence. Michel Page (1992) conceives of integration as a non-linear process that depends on the position of various ethnic groups in society, the location and wishes of individuals, and the structure of institutions, creating thereby three ideal types of (primarily cultural) immigrant integration.

Theoretical models of integration or ethnic change and persistence frequently fall into a reductionist trap by ignoring gender. Problems of integration encountered by male immigrants are assumed to represent universal problems of immigrants. Yet significant evidence exists to suggest that the integration process is considerably more challenging for women than for men.

While empirical and feminist studies successfully avoid the reductionist trap, they either do not engage the discourse of integration or they take "integration" as a concept for granted. While the anti-racist literature better addresses the concept of integration, the gender dimension is underplayed. In an effort to synthesize feminist and anti-racist perspectives, it has been suggested (Miedema and Tastsoglou 2000) that there is value in seeing integration as a process of seeking / acquiring class, racialized and gender parity.

Beyond the integration model, though not incompatible with this last definition of integration, immigrant incorporation has also been defined as a process of enlarging opportunities for civic engagement. A broad conception of citizenship practices (cf. Stasiulis and

Bakan 1997) that emphasizes practice rather than status is consistent with this approach to civic engagement because of the focus on practice, and not legal status. Formal citizenship is not a requirement for civic engagement, although citizenship or legal status, class and racialization may be important in shaping civic engagement.

A significant body of mostly international literature originating in cultural and post-colonial studies focuses directly on the new types of identities (diasporic, transnational, cosmopolitan, post-national) produced by contemporary trends such as globalization, transnationalism and the development of new geo-political entities such as the EU (Tastsoglou, 2001: 13-15). Overall, globalization has a pluralizing effect on identities, producing a variety of possibilities. To the extent that such a literature is empirical, it is mostly non-Canadian based.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Immigration policies are the institutional part of the immigration process. As a result, they, too, involve identity-shaping processes for minority Canadians. Labour market and demographic considerations, as well as political factors (cf. Hawkins 1989), have historically led Canadian immigration policies. Racism and sexism have been interwoven with assessments. The first control to immigration was introduced through the 1869 Immigration Act, while one major control introduced after 1879 was the legal discrimination in the selection processes of potential immigrants, based on their source countries or the "institutional racism" of the immigration process. This has been applied, at various times, to people of various origins, especially Chinese, South Asian, Jewish and Japanese immigrants.

Institutional discrimination has not only been part of Canada's immigration policies, but also of its citizenship and other immigrant-related policies. As such, it has had an effect on the identities of ethnocultural groups that have either been defined as inferior "races" or as "other" at various times in history.

From 1907 until 1936, deportation was an economic and political tool in the hands of the Canadian state to reduce the numbers of poor, unemployed and politically undesirable. The policies concerning domestic workers constitute another important aspect of immigration policies. Systemic features of such policies have historically been their racial, patriarchal and class biases. Domestic work has been a particularly racialized form of work that is also circumscribed by class and gender criteria (cf. Calliste 1989: 133- 65).

In terms of the overall institutional structures of immigration policy, Canadian policy underwent enormous changes from the early, and openly racist, preferred treatment given to British subjects until 1947. Indeed, it constantly expanded to include other European groups, then "preferred nationalities;" it subsequently opened up immigration through the introduction of a point system in 1967 (cf. Kubat 1993). Shedding the overt racism has resulted, since the 1960s, in a rise of immigration to Canada originating from non-European countries.

Canada's refugee policies are part of the immigration process. As a result, refugee experiences of claiming refugee status can be expected to have an impact on their individual and collective ethnic identities. Overall, although fair protection has been provided to those refugees who gain access to the system, many barriers still prevent genuine refugees from gaining entry to make a claim.

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN RESEARCH ON IMMIGRATION, ETHNOCULTURAL AND RACIAL IDENTITIES, RESEARCH AND POLICY ISSUES

Contemporary empirical research on ethnic identity in Canada concurs for the most part that such identity is socially constructed and thus variable, other-referenced and always in process. More specifically, research findings can be grouped in two categories: those that identify (a) some of the most important factors that contribute to the making of immigrant identities among specific ethnocultural minority groups in Canada and (b) the content and parameters of such identities at specific moments in time in the lives of specific ethnic groups. The first category comprises geo-political developments in the country of origin, ongoing negotiation of ethnic organizations with the Canadian state about particular ethnic identities, ongoing negotiation of more recent arrivals with already existing ethnic communities, adaptation to Canadian culture and laws stage in life, gender, transnational networks and participation in community organizations.

On the other hand, there are also studies that focus on factors that contribute to the preservation of ethnocultural identities, assuming that such identities are rather fixed. Such factors include the following: an educational system which sustains language transmission and religious training; a family embedded in traditional culture; residential segregation; the perception of group discrimination; practical factors such as number of years in Canada, age at arrival and citizenship status; high self-esteem; and collective action as a mobility strategy.

More research is necessary pertaining to Canada's different ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic minority groups and to the impact of the immigration process on their identities. Gender and class are cross-cutting issues that need to be investigated further and, ideally, included as components in every analysis and study. The links and intersections between ethnic identity, gender and class in specific ethnocultural groups need to be further investigated, as they are impacted by the immigration process. The role of gender and gender relations in language retention and in constructing / reproducing ethnoreligious identity also need to be further investigated.

In addition, in terms of ethnic identities specifically, the following are some questions arising from the literature: how the actual processes of ethnic identity formation of specific groups are socially negotiated; how the content of ethnic identity changes over time within a single immigrant generation and over generations; and how political developments in the homeland affect the development of identity. Further research is needed in comparing the ethnic identity construction process and content of various immigrant generations within specific ethnic groups. More research is also needed to better understand the differ-

ences among immigrant ethnic groups in ethnic identity retention and the factors accounting for such differences. How do the particular circumstances of emigration and immigration affect the identities of immigrants to Canada? What is the impact of the institutional aspects of the immigration process on the identities of Canada's diverse minorities? On the other hand, some substantive areas where research and policy gaps may exist include mental health and ethnicity, aging and ethnicity and social mobility for specific ethnic groups and generations.

With modern societies becoming increasingly diverse and often more pluralistic as a result of globalization and transnationalism, new questions arise in the field of transnational, diasporic and post-national identities that remains virtually unexplored in Canada (Tastsoglou, 2001).

THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITY CANADIANS

Linguistic minorities are those who speak as mother tongue a language other than English or French. Linguistic minorities are always ethnocultural (including racialized) and often religious minorities as well. While there is some literature (cf. Reitz 1980) on language as one of a number of ethnic identity factors, most of the ethnicity literature tends to ignore issues of language, while studies of linguistic pluralism in Canada fail to consider issues of ethnicity (de Vries 1990: 231). More recently, research has focused more on this connection of language and ethnicity (cf. Davids 2000).

Besides the gender, class and ethnicity intersection in the formation of linguistic identities, there are several other important questions with respect to the impact of the immigration process on language retention and ethnic identity. Some important questions include: Are ethnic identity and language retention necessarily connected? Can there be ethnocultural identity without linguistic competence? If so, what kind of identity? How will it differ from group to group? To what extent can the symbolic uses of an ethnic language play a role in enhancing identities? What are the effects of immigration on language retention of first-generation immigrants? What is the relationship between their ethnic identity and language shift? What are some of the reasons for the shift? Are there back-and-forth shifts over the lifetime? What are the long-term benefits of heritage language instruction? What are the effects of economic globalization and increased travel and communication on ethnic languages?

THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS AND RELIGIOUS MINORITY CANADIANS

The relationship between religion and ethnicity has been a subject of debate and remains problematic. According to one interpretation, religion is one of the markers of an ethnic group (de Vries 1990). According to another interpretation, religion is one of the four pillars of the "sacred canopy" of a people - the other three being ethnic culture, community and land (Driedger 1989).

More research is needed on religious identities and the impact of the migration process on them. More studies are needed, especially on religion's instrumental use by ethnic groups to build / reproduce their identity as well as their ethnic communities. What may be the role of different religions in the identities of religious and ethnic minority Canadians? Under what conditions and in what ways is religion important for ethnoreligious minority Canadians? There are hardly any studies directly focusing on the importance of religious beliefs and practice among the immigrant generation and their variance over time. What is the impact of Canadian secular multicultural ideology, policy and practice on ethnoreligious groups that tend to view the state and the world in religious terms? Does it limit religious practice? Finally, is there an overall trend toward more pan-ethnic or pan-religious congregations, as the different faith communities become more ethnically diverse? What would the implications of such a phenomenon be for ethnocultural communities and identities?

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