Citizenship and Attachment Across Borders?

A Transnational and Anthropological Research Agenda

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... identity is always an open, complex, unfinished game – always under construction... it always moves into the future by means of a symbolic detour through the past... It produces new subjects who bear the traces of the specific discourses which not only formed them but enable them to produce themselves anew and differently. (Hall 1993: 362)

Much of the research-based knowledge we have about immigrants to Canada is based on social surveys which reference "immigrants" generically and/or selective named groups of immigrants within homogenous categories. Most commonly, our research labels distinguish immigrants by their countries of birth and mark their difference from other Canadian citizens. But at the same time the labels obscure migration histories and the social complexities that give rise to im/migration trajectories. Such categorization is also presumptive, relying as it does upon constructed similarities and ideas of fixed, stable identities amongst newcomers and other Canadians. For example, immigrants from the country of Somalia might be thought of, correctly or incorrectly, as sharing a perceived ethnicity (as in Somalis), religion (as in Muslim), or generic culture (for example, African). Some immigrants are constituted into groups with reference to the subject's visa status (for example, refugees), others through reference not to their countries of origin but to the continents where the countries are located. For example, African refugees may be unhelpfully used as a descriptor for immigrants coming to Canada from Somalia during the political upheavals of the late 1980s early 1990s (Berns McGowan 1999). Hence immigrants, as newcomers, are portrayed in overly generalized, often reifying, statistical categories that, I will argue here, obscure the diversity, richness and shifting nature of their im/ migration experiences, social identities, and cultural and national loyalties.

As a global process migration produces citizens who have multiple connections and attachments. Im/migrants view the world comparatively through a lens we now describe as transnational (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994) and many live transnational lives in as much as they maintain connections with people in their places of origin and/or transit. They may also seek social alliances with people from that place of origin in their new environments and constitute a diaspora even under conditions where "multi-culturalism" prevails (as official policy and/or lived experience). Thus it may be said that all migrants, potentially at least, hold transnational identities. Such a framework, extending beyond the local to international contexts and global events, is essential to understanding issues of citizenship and identity and how their meanings shift over space and time.

As transnationalism complicates the idea of migration as precipitated in rupture followed by a clean start, so too with citizenship. Citizenship situates im/migrants (with or without documents) legally and politically within a nation where they occupy social, economic, cultural, and often ethnically charged spaces. Beyond formal requirements and various individuals' interpretations about civic participation, there is an invisible elasticity to how citizenship takes form in the lives of newcomers to Canada. For new immigrants the practical and emotional challenges of citizenship are prone to greater complexity as a result of transnational relations that connect people to their countries of origin. This operates in at least three ways: legally in terms of home country policies that regulate the terms of out-migration and the reception of remittances and goods which are frequently shipped home; subjectively in terms of the continuing loyalties, social and cultural attachments that migrants carry with them no matter how eagerly they embrace their new ways of living and locales; and, economically in terms of support provided by immigrants to kin who remain behind.

Sometimes, political loyalties to the countries of origin take the form of displaced (long-distance) nationalism. For example, writing about the migration experiences of Haitians living in the United States, Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001) reveal a cross-border citizenship, underscored by shifting social, political and economic dynamics in both countries and fueled by a relentless, uncompromising, indiscriminate racism. Despite their middle class and professional occupations, some of the subjects in this study remained vulnerable to racist challenges which fan their longing for family and "home" in Haiti. Similarly disappointment about economic opportunities and political struggles in Haiti reverse the feelings of commitment. Such fraught commitments and fragmented loyalties are also apparent in my research with Philippine migrants living abroad and in the Philippines where future potential out-migration remains an ever present topic for conversation (Gardiner Barber 1997).

Alternatively, there are ways of speaking about immigrants from particular countries and regions which hyphenates their Canadian/ness and marks it as both secondary and provisional (as in Chinese-Canadians). This could be a practice which is done to members of a particular group in a racialized cultural politic which operates on an ideological level to legitimate discriminatory practices (for British examples see Avtar Brah 1996). But, hyphenation can also constitute an affirmative

identity claim when deliberately inserted by immigrants in an effort to mark their previous cultural heritage. Much has been written about the cultural and social politics of hyphenation and hybridity, nowhere so eloquently as in the writings of widely influential post-colonial scholars such as Homi Bbabha (1994) and Stuart Hall (for example, 2000). Similarly, anthropologist Lisa Lowe (1996) writes against the idea that Asian Americans be considered as an amorphous collectivity. For my purposes here, I simply want to indicate that the use of the hyphen reads as if birthplace indicates a common personal history and produces a sameness of experience in Canada. Qualitative research reveals this is decidedly not the case; immigrants (regardless of their visa status) have distinctive personal histories and are as socially, economically, and politically differentiated as more longstanding Canadians. They also maintain varied and shifting relations with their countries of origin which are subject to change in accord with events in those countries and here in Canada. Likewise, and with particular acuteness in the recent debates over border security, it is commonplace that religion is often conflated with ethnicity, culture, or geographic point of origin Sometimes all elements are at play simultaneously; for example in the widespread yet profoundly mis-informed assumption that people from middle eastern states share a pan-Arab culture and are Muslims - as noted in Edward Said's pioneering work *Orientalism (1978)*. What is shared and not shared, along with questions of faith and their meaning in everyday life, is more properly the subject for qualitative research.

Having pointed out the complexities which underlie how immigrants are profiled and socially and politically responded to, it needs to be stated that clearly, there are valid and useful applications for many kinds of statistical profiles about immigration scenarios and how and where immigrants locate themselves in Canadian labour markets, communities, and social, political and religious institutions. Planning and policy depend upon such measures. There are also groups and circumstances where homogeneity of immigrant experience and history seems more real than the forms of reification outlined above. Beside statistical information, what other kinds of knowledge about immigrant experience may inform our understandings of citizenship and attachment?

Here I want to reverse the lens, to convert immigrants from the objects to the subjects of immigration by proposing the need to consider immigrant experience in a qualitative and processual manner. Simply put, I argue for a focus upon the lived experience of immigrants and for research that sets out to capture the transnational complexity that is typically the end result of the im/migration process. I also propose that we look to anthropological studies (such as Lowe's, and Glick Schiller and Fouron's mentioned above) for theoretical and methodological guidance in producing such knowledge. As a research focus, migration should compel researchers to consider conditions in multiple nation states and, increasingly to raise the kinds of post-structural questions about migrant identities and agency that I am laying a case for here. And yet, paradoxically, much migration research remains bound to theoretical conventions of "methodological nationalism"; migrants and migration flows are considered from the vantage points and/or confines of particular nation-states. This parallels but disguises earlier research conventions premised on migration as a radical break or rupture in the lives of migrants. Alternatively, some new approaches appeal discursively to a globalizing world and celebrate supposedly novel flows (of people, cultural practices, and currencies). Aside from the ahistorical nature of many such arguments there is also cause for suspicion when claims about an homogenizing global culture remain ungrounded in the lived experiences of migrants. Anthropologists, based on their field-based ethnographic studies, have been arguing that the opposite is occurring; that so-called globalization, evidenced in market and price fluctuations, changing property relations and, most well described in western press, the presence of western commodities and popular culture, does not straightforwardly produce "westernization". Equally possible is retrenchment, rejection, and renewed commitment to local ways of living (see contributions to Inda and Rosaldo 2002).

To conclude, the acquisition and awarding of citizenship is not best imagined as a means end relationship; nor is it about moving people from one "national container" to another. Rather immigration and the acquisition of citizenship is a contingent process where loyalties and attachments to countries new and old are structured by social, cultural and other forms of otherness so fundamental to the migration process. Newcomers compare their present lives against their memories of other lives and their projections for the future. The comparative terrain – transnational for the way it straddles borders – shifts in concert with events in both places. Arjun Appardurai (1991) offers the concept of ethnoscape to refer to new configurations of identity made possible by the forces and flows of contemporary globalization. He proposes a transnational anthropology which can reveal how migrants and other displaced groups frame their identities in terms of common historically and politically situated perspectives, even as they also experience socio-spatial-cultural dislocation, de-territorialization and perhaps disjunction. This means that for migrants we cannot read off their identities in simplifying bi-polar hyphenated terms (for example, in my own research on Philippine migrants, as Filipino-Canadians). Instead, Appardurai envisions migrants' identities as composed of several deeply meaningful, fluid attachments akin to landscapes. Shared ethnoscapes constitute social formations connecting people (actually or potentially) living in different parts of the world, regardless of the actual location of the places called "home". Ethnoscapes become the building blocks of "imagined worlds" – spread around the globe. Moreover, ethnoscapes can have an unprecedented effect upon the politics of (and between) nations as has been the case with Philippine efforts to facilitate safer conditions for Filipinos working abroad. My caution about the idea of ethnoscapes is, however, to the point of my overall argument; this is a matter for qualitative research not assumption and projection. We cannot assume citizenship induces similar commitments from immigrants, nor more established Canadians for that matter. Canadian/ness suggests a multiplicity of attachments and practices, and for im/migrants there can remain a cross-border set of contingencies but this is for the research to describe.

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Nurse text – endnotes

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2. David Laycock, The New Right and Democracy in Canada (Don Mills, ON: 2002).
3. Naomi Klein, No Logo (Toronto: 2000).
4. For an extensive review of work on identity in Canada, see Joanna Rummens, "Canadian Identities: An Interdisciplinary Overview of Canadian Research on Identity" (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2000).
5. Pierre Trudeau, "The Values of a Just Society" in Pierre Trudeau and Tom Axworthy, eds., Towards a Just Society (Markham: 1990), 363.
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7. George de Benedetti, "Reflections on the Tenth Anniversary of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement: What Has the FTA Meant for Canada?" in Michael J. Tucker, Raymond B. Blake, and P.E. Bryden, eds., Canada and the New World Order (Toronto: 2000), esp. 156-7; and 160.
8. Leo Driedger, Race and Ethnicity 2nd ed. (Toronto: 2003), ch. 4.
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1. By recording and measuring the distribution of teacher attention, the use of gender-specific examples (in textbook illustrations, for example), gender stereotypes, outright put-downs as well as a host of other overt and more discrete vehicles of learning, Myra and David Sadker (Sadker & Sadker, 1994) attempt to demonstrate that students learn that males and their concerns are more important. While "cheating" or short-changing girls, these practices – and the values they communicate – also make up the "miseducation" of boys. Naturally, these claims are disputed. For example, Christina Hoff Sommers (Sommers, 2001 <2000>) argues that boys in fact are poorly served by the education system, a fact borne out in their lower scores and higher drop-out rates.
2. Policy considerations aside, individual students and student groups also resist the dominant culture of the education system. One example is the creation of Muslim Student Associations by Muslims high school students to fight against discrimination, to enjoy mutual support, and to lobby the administration for consideration of specific religious needs (an unused classroom for prayer, for example) (Zine, 2000).
3. James Banks, perhaps the most prolific author on multicultural education, lists the five dimensions of multicultural education: 1. Content Integration (including information about women or minority cultures in history classes for example); 2. Knowledge Construction (teaching students how knowledge is created and how it reflects bias of the creator's social class, race, gender, etc.); 3. Prejudice Reduction (programs to combat racism); 4. Equity Pedagogy (introducing teaching techniques and methods of assessment that ensure equality for all students); and 5. An Empowering School Culture (changing grouping practices, student labeling, the social climate of school, and staff expectations so that all students feel equal and empowered) (Banks 1995, 4-10).
4. Canadian debates on inclusive schooling and multicultural education follow those in the United States and the United Kingdom (Moodley, 1995). However, there are debates on similar issues in every pluralist society.
5. For an example involving Muslim students, see Zine 2001.

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