A RESEARCH AND POLICY AGENDA FOR SECOND GENERATION CANADIANS: INTRODUCTION

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Stories of the second generation are deeply woven into the romantic narratives of every immigrant society: ambitious and starry-eyed Horatio Alger types who rise from "rags to riches," espousing their immigrant parents' Old World values of family, education, and hard work to become model citizens and community leaders. As those who examine social and economic influences in society, social scientists, policy analysts and, of course, community workers are able to understand that such mythology surrounding the second generation is deeply gendered and racialized; it also mythologizes a society in which everyone can make good based on simple hard work and adherence to an equally mythical set of dominant values. The other problem with any national mythology is that it is often "true" to the extent that it represents a realistic course for those for whom the "second-generation-made-good" story is attainable. National narratives socially construct the possibilities and the normative pathways to social inclusion and attainment.

This volume reflects the work of social scientists and policy-research analysts coming to terms with the myths of the second generation. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines – education, geography, health sciences, psychology, sociology, social work – were asked by the national Metropolis Secretariat to report briefly on their ongoing research into the experiences of the second generation, as were policy-research partners from within government departments that examine diversity, immigration and integration. The second generation is a demographic group that includes both children born in Canada to immigrant parents and those (often referred to as the 1.5 generation) who immigrated to Canada as children. The result is an eclectic compilation of accounts of second generation lives. The methodologies vary in scale from the analysis of large national data sets to a qualitative focus on individuals. The findings also vary, showing that the second generation is heterogeneous both within and between ethnocultural groupings, that their circumstances vary geographically by province, city, and even neighbourhood, and that the researchers themselves occupy a wide spectrum of opinion on questions of integration, assimilation, and the normative assumptions that define "Canadian" culture. As Sethi suggests, all of these issues need to be considered in the formation of effective public policy.

These articles show a number of recurring themes. Members of the second generation see themselves and are seen by others as a cultural bridge between their parents' ways of living and a new way of living that is thought of as Canadian. They are agents of sociocultural change, therefore, and a prime locus for understanding the complexities of multicultural society. They are also overwhelmingly from racialized, or "visible," minority backgrounds and unlike many second generations in earlier history, their everyday experiences include racism. It follows that issues of the second generation fundamentally pertain to the dominant society and to its relative failure – or success? – in achieving the aims of multiculturalism policy. Third, it is at the point of transition from youth to adulthood – completion of education, entry into the labour force, formation of new households – that we find the most telling examples of the things that make the second generation distinctive. Analyses of the issues raised in these articles therefore need to take account of the ways in which human experiences are structured through the life course.

Internationally, research on the second generation is relatively recent but growing rapidly. In the United States, as Zhou and Lee illustrate, the trend has been to move away from assumptions of upward mobility and assimilation to recognition of the diverse pathways to inclusion or exclusion and a refashioning of the "American dream." In Europe, where deeply essentialized notions of national/cultural origins still prevail in most countries, Crul argues that the presence of large numbers of second generation youth, particularly of Middle Eastern and North African backgrounds, has led to a turning point in debates over national belonging that are still far from being resolved. Indeed, many of those debates are being played out – in the Netherlands, France, Ireland, and Switzerland to name a few striking examples – in the re-jigging of national constitutions that both reinforce the concept of alien otherness of immigrants and their offspring, and force cultural assimilation, creating in dramatic terms

the paradox of assimilation: that normative visions of culture make it both mandatory and impossible to belong to the ethnocentric nation.

In Canada, it is widely believed that a policy of multiculturalism undercuts both aspirations of cultural conformity and assumptions of ethnonational dominance. But, as recent discussion of multiculturalism, its failures, and its potential demise show, such belief is open to question. Even the language of researchers shows the ambiguity that exists over how to characterize a society undergoing transition through immigration. We still see reference, for example, to "second generation immigrants," an oxymoron when applied to those born in Canada. We still see frequent reference to Canada and other immigrant-receiving societies as "host" countries, as though members of the second generation remain guests in their countries of birth. Just as problematically, the term "Canadian" is sprinkled throughout these pages to indicate that both researchers and the second generation "Canadians" whom they have studied commonly have a normative and monolithic understanding of a dominant Canadian culture regulated by something understood as "Western" values.

The persistence of this idea that there is a dominant Canadian culture that transcends the differences embodied by recent immigrants reflects (at least) one of two assumptions: 1) that those who do not feel, or are not recognized as, part of the dominant culture view this dominant culture as being monolithic and normative and therefore do not recognize the diversity of the society around them; or 2) that Canadian society really is highly normative, assimilationist, and regulated by a set of Eurocentric standards. Either assumption presents problems for the goals of multiculturalism, and challenges Prime Minister Trudeau's statement in 1971 (which he made while announcing the Multiculturalism Policy in Parliament) that Canada has "two official languages, but no official culture."

The collective contribution of these papers would indicate that each assumption, like most national mythologies, is accurate in its way: 1) those who are marginalized, especially racialized minorities, tend to think of a dominant "Canadian" society to which they do not quite belong; and 2) those who belong to the dominant society, although they may support the concept of multiculturalism in principle, have still not gotten over their adherence to Eurocentric norms. These intersecting views show a society that is not quite as multicultural as we might like it to be. The consequences for the second generation are immense. Are they a group in generational limbo, neither fully Canadian nor fully other, living transitional lives on the way to becoming full-fledged citizens? Or do their experiences actually represent a Canada in which *all identities are in flux*, on the way to becoming a multicultural society in which there are no hosts and guests, no Others against which to measure ethnonational authenticity?

As Monica Boyd is careful to point out, we need to be very cautious about making generalizations about the second generation. Not only is this demographic cohort heterogeneous in terms of its ancestral origins (see Jantzen), but it is also varied in terms of gender, residential location, education, and in relation to the contextual issue of social capital. Indeed, the relationship between personal attributes and experiences and social capital is one of the main themes that jumps from these pages as needing much more research.

Ever since sociologist Raymond Breton's path-breaking work on "institutional completeness," Canadian scholars have been interested in the ways in which distinctive ethnocultural groups build social capital as a means both of preserving cultural heritage and of advancing the well-being of its members. An argument in support of multiculturalism would claim that a healthy society is based upon diverse healthy ethnocultural groups providing security and support to its citizens. The opposing argument would follow political scientist Robert Putnam's belief that too much diversity – or too much multiculturalism – diminishes trust, and thus social capital, leading to dissolution of social bonds. While Canadian policy-makers and the general public have until recently strongly favoured Breton's ideal, recent attacks on multiculturalism, including the events that led to the appointment of a commission on "cultural accommodation" (the Bouchard-Taylor Commission) in Quebec, suggest that increasing numbers are following Putnam's theory based on notions of what Jedwab here calls "unmeltable Canadians."

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The key to understanding the tension between these two notions of multiculturalism is often found in the Canadian discourse over "social cohesion." Those who do not melt usually also do not cohere (see McDonald and Quell). But the concept of social cohesion is subject to a range of interpretations. One is the liberal notion that Canada should be one big family of social inclusion to which all newcomers are welcomed as equals. Another is that social cohesion can only occur if the limits to multiculturalism are recognized and immigration policy, tailored to ensure that unassimilable others – including, most recently, those of Muslim background – do not multiply. Of course the actual situation lies somewhere between the ideals of multiculturalism and the extremes of discrimination, and the second generation occupies that uneven territory in a wide variety of ways.

How is that variety expressed in the research gathered here? Are there any common themes among those whom Boyd calls "immigrant offspring?" All of the studies, but especially those of Byers et al. and Gallant, show that members of the second generation are keenly aware of their ethnocultural identities, and of both the potential and the limitations for those identities to change. For many, family relations remain of paramount importance and result in a strong tendency to live at home prior to marriage (Boyd and Park), to rely on traditional forms of partner selection (Lalonde and Giguère, Byers and Tastsoglou), to adopt conservative norms of sexuality (Lalonde and Giguère), or in some cases to carry on family traditions through entrepreneurship (Arcand). A growing proportion of immigrant families also struggle with poverty (Tyyskä), which profoundly influences relations within many immigrant families.

But there is also strong evidence that members of the second generation are refashioning traditional notions in innovative ways. Ramji shows that second generation Muslims reinterpret their faith in a multicultural key. Brooks and Wilkinson describe individuals with a strong, inclusive national vision; Ali describes the remarkable self-confidence of Toronto youth in the face of racism; and Potvin describes the social resources of Haitian youth seeking their own place in Quebec society, showing that it is possible to maintain a sense of ethnocultural identity in new and generationally distinctive ways. All of these expressions of cautious optimism point to the importance of developing social capital around issues of identity.

There is overwhelming evidence in this collection that racism is nonetheless a serious issue for second generation Canadians from racialized minorities, albeit the experience of racism, as well as individual responses to racism, may be diverging from what we have until recently come to understand as racist behaviour (see especially Ali, Arthur et al., Brooks, Potvin). Based both on large survey databases such as Statistics Canada's (2003) *Ethnic Diversity Survey* (EDS), they show that a significant number of young people experience racism and identify racist incidents as having a significant impact on their lives. Some researchers, especially Reitz and Somerville (2004) and Reitz and Banerji (2007), have suggested that the second generation may experience more racism than their parents because their linguistic fluency, educational attainment, and high expectations of the rights that come with citizenship place them in positions where they are more likely to be viewed as a challenge to the dominant group, as well as more likely to identify their experiences as racialized. Taken together, this body of work shows that Canada is far from becoming the post-racist society that many recent pundits have proclaimed, and we need to pay attention to the very specific ways in which people experience racism from different ethnocultural and generational positions. As Potvin suggests, however, we also need to shift the focus from the *experience of racism* on the part of racialized minorities to the recognition that the problem is that of the larger society, including a dominant culture of whiteness and an essentializing exclusion of racialized minorities that leaves members of the second generation feeling rootless and disenfranchised in their place of birth.

Members of the second generation…are capable of interpreting and even re-framing the dominant narrative in a variety of ways to assert their own sense of identity and Canadianness; but they do so in a social context in which the aims of multiculturalism are incomplete, and social exclusion and labour market discrimination are justified by an overarching narrative of whiteness.

Researchers in this volume (especially Boyd, Nunes, Rootham, and Yan et al.) also contribute to the growing body of literature that shows that entry to the job market is a key area in which members of the second generation face difficulties. The time of transition from education to work is also the period during which young people are perhaps most acutely aware of their place in society, their relationship with their families, and their aspirations in life. The consistency of reports showing the precarious position of youth of colour in the Canadian labour market, as well as increasing evidence that their situation varies significantly from group to group, contribute to the urgency for public policy – and even more research – to address labour market discrimination and its causes.

A further dimension of the experiences of the second generation is psychosocial adjustment, taken up in various ways by Ali, Arthur et al., Berry, Hébert and Adams, and Khanlou. Taken together, this work shows that members of the second generation vary considerably in their levels of societal integration, whether measured in terms of labour market participation, subjective sense of belonging, or self-ascribed identity. There is a strong relationship between integration and well-being, whether integration is measured according to measurable socioeconomic variables, or some sense of perceived discrimination. Perhaps this generalization is not surprising. It brings us back, however, to the point that I made at the beginning of this Introduction, that there is a recursive relationship between feeling part of a society (which varies by individual) and the normative structures according to which dominant narratives of a society are reproduced. Members of the second generation have shown that they are capable of interpreting and even re-framing the dominant narrative in a variety of ways to assert their own sense of

identity and Canadianness; but they do so in a social context in which the aims of multiculturalism are incomplete, and social exclusion and labour market discrimination are justified by an overarching narrative of whiteness. Understanding the psychosocial dimensions of this dialectic can tell us a great deal about the extent to which both individuals and broadly defined racialized groups can achieve well-being.

These articles represent a wake-up call to academics, policy-makers, and the general public. Their pages give voice to hundreds of young Canadians who participated in this varied research. We should pay attention to their optimism, their creativity, their ambitions, and their vision of Canada. But we should also pay attention to the fact that for a troubling number, racism is a constant part of everyday life, especially as they complete their education and enter the labour force. And we should use these insights to push a research and public policy agenda for a more complete multicultural nation.

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