INTRODUCTION

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In a society such as Canada, which places the permanent settlement of immigrants at the heart of its development, it is essential to assess the degree to which education contributes to the integration of young people. Indeed, if inclusion in the labour market is the priority of adult immigrants, the very success of the migration project often relies on the quality of the long-term relationship that their children are able to establish with the school system and, above all, on the benefits they derive from it. Despite this stance, the research done on the outcomes and the academic progress of students from immigrant families in various Canadian provinces was limited until the mid-2000s, both in government and academic circles. In recent years, however, in the context of increasing diversity among immigrants in terms of language, culture, "race", and socio-economic characteristics, we have come to realize the importance of moving beyond general observations to study the profiles of risk and academic failure for various target groups within the immigrant population, as well as their most important distinguishing factors.

Beyond its social relevance, the study of factors influencing the academic success of children from immigrant families, in Canada and internationally, as well as the identification of successful policies, practices and institutional dynamics are also relevant, at least theoretically, to the fields of sociology of education and sociology of ethnic relations. Indeed, unlike other social categories such as gender or social class, ethnicity, as measured through various markers such as immigration status, national origin, "race" or even religion, does not have a unidirectional, easy to predict relationship to academic success. The national and international literature reflects the variety of profiles and educational experiences that can be associated with various subgroups defined by each of these markers. Moreover, if factors such as class, cultural and linguistic capital, or the specific reaction of the educational system often apply to the entire school population, their impact and their relationship among immigrant origin students are often also different.

Among the departments responsible for education in Canada, the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport (MELS) has been one of the most active in this field Since 2003, the *Direction des Services aux communautés culturelles* (DSCC), one of the partners who initiated this special issue on *The Academic Achievement of Immigrant Origin Students* has either led or has contributed a significant body of work on this issue.

Some of this work is quantitative in nature and focuses on the progression and graduation of students from immigrant families as a whole or of various subgroups such as French as a second language (FSL) or visible minority students. The research also focuses on the impact of specific student and school characteristics.

Qualitative research efforts look at the roles families and institutions play in the academic progression of students or assess innovative experiments conducted in schools. These efforts were recently highlighted with the creation of the Research Group on Immigration, Equity and Schooling (GRIES), supported by the *Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture* (FQRSC), which brings together various academic and government partners. Wider dissemination of this very interesting and enlightening data set is required in a time when the issue of academic dropouts among young Quebecers returns to the forefront of public debate.

The Quebec research results and their implications for policy development and for the educational community at large will be greatly enhanced if they are compared with the conclusions of studies on academic success carried in societies whose migration patterns are similar to ours or, conversely, entirely different. This is the type of comparative analysis that we undertake in this special issue, which features fourteen contributions by authors from Quebec, the rest of Canada and from abroad. The articles in this special issue stem from presentations given at the symposium entitled *"La réussite scolaire des élèves issus de l'immigration"*, which was jointly organized, in November 2009 in Montreal, by the DSCC (MELS), the Canada Research Chair on Education and Ethnic Relations of the University of Montreal and the pole Discrimination and Insertion of the *Centre d'études ethniques des universités montréalaises.*

To encourage broader dissemination, we have chosen a unique bilingual format wherein each article is accompanied by a 1000 word executive summary in the other

Canadian official language. This special issue presents the quantitative and qualitative work of 25 Canadian and international experts. It has three objectives: 1) to provide an active appropriation by key stakeholders in the field of research results on the academic success of students from immigrant families and on the factors influencing this success 2) to allow readers to analyze the situation in Quebec from a comparative perspective with other immigration contexts in North America, Europe and Israel, 3) to identify action strategies and encourage the mobilization of various communities to these ends. All articles share a common thread, which is to identify the factors explaining the differences in educational achievement of young people from immigrant families and/or to contribute to the understanding of the difficulties faced by certain ethnic groups or, conversely, of their sometimes paradoxical successes.

The first five papers in this publication focus on the issue of academic success and perseverance in Quebec schools. Claire Chamberland (DSCC-MELS) and Marie Mc Andrew (Université de Montréal) recount the origin of the commitment of the MELS in the field of immigrant student retention and present three recent researches on this theme and their subsequent impact on policies. The main results of one of these projects form the basis of an article by Jacques Ledent (INRS), Jake Murdoch and Marie Mc Andrew (Université de Montréal). Here, three factors that significantly influence the academic achievements of 1st and 2nd generation students who attend French secondary schools are highlighted.

While Michèle Vatz Laaroussi (Université de Sherbrooke) asks, in the third article, whether immigration to outlying regions presents an added value or an additional obstacle to the success of young immigrants in Quebec, Zita De Koninck (Université Laval) and Françoise Armand (Université de Montréal) critically describe the service models introduced in Quebec public schools for welcoming and integrating newly arrived or immigrant origin students. In the fifth article, Maryse Potvin and Jean-Baptiste Leclercq (Université du Québec à Montréal) present the results of a qualitative study, the first in Quebec to develop a «diagnosis» of social and academic trajectories of immigrant youths aged 16 to 24.

The four following articles, all based on quantitative research, extend the focus to the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia and cover the academic progress of post-secondary students from immigrant families, the aspirations and involvement of their parents and in the academic progress of the children, as well as the graduation rates of allophone students of immigrant origin. Here, Paul Anisef (York University) Robert Brown (Toronto District School Board) and Robert Sweet (Lakehead University) demonstrate the importance of socioeconomic status, individual differences and cultural factors in pursuing post-secondary education among youth in the Toronto District School Board. Next, Garnett Bruce and Cheryl Aman (UBC) present the partial results (Greater Vancouver) of a comparative pancanadian study (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver), and show a particular interest in the academic progress of allophone students of immigrant origins who are studying English. Henda Ben Salah (Université de Montréal) identifies the factors that determine the formulation of strong family expectations for the academic success of immigrant youths in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. In a study also related to educational aspirations of parents, Robert Sweet (Lakehead University) examines the link between the stress of doing homework within immigrant families and parenting practices, taking into account the socioeconomic status of the family, the characteristics of the children and their academic results.

The last five articles present the results of quantitative and qualitative research on academic successes or failures experienced in various host societies abroad. Gayle Christensen (University of Pennsylvania), Michael Segeritz (New York University) and Petra Stanat (Humboldt-Universitat zu Berlin) are interested in the data produced by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) vis-à-vis the skills of immigrant students in 16 host countries, taking into account their socioeconomic status, their language, their motivations and their academic aspirations. Carola Suarez-Orozco (New York University) examines the influence of individual, familial and academic variables on the academic trajectories of immigrant students in the United States. By analyzing the experiences of students of Chinese and Moroccan origin and their parents, Sarah Braeye and Philip Hermans (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) try to understand the significant differences observed in the academic achievement of these two ethnic groups. Josep Palaudariàs and Carlos Serra (Universitat de Girona) examine how, in Catalonia, immigrant students of different nationalities show significantly different processes when either continuing their studies or dropping out of school. Finally, Svetlana Bolotin-Chachashvili (Ruppin Academic Center) analyses the educational performance of immigrant youths in Israel recently arrived from the former USSR and emphasizes the impact of the educational level attained by their parents and the socioeconomic status of their families.

This special issue illustrates the relevance of research on the educational attainment of immigrant origin students in defining the means necessary to develop pluralistic and inclusive societies. We hope the following

articles will interest a wide array of readers, including researchers, policy makers and practitioners in Quebec, Canada and abroad, as well as encourage future collaborations arising from the issues herein.

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Happy reading to you all.