

Cultural Challenges of Migration in Canada

2012 ICCS Biennial Conference

SESSIONS

THE 21ST CENTURY MIGRATION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES: IDENTITY FORMATION AND CULTURAL RETENTION

While the intra-national and international migration patterns of Aboriginal peoples mirror those of the non-Aboriginal populations, their impact and motivation differ substantially. It is characterized by movements from rural areas to urban centres as the migrants seek economic and social opportunities. However, it may also be cyclical in nature due to the strong ties between the migrants and their home communities. The objective of this panel is to explore the migration patterns of Aboriginal people in the Americas, in Oceania and elsewhere internationally to highlight the similarities and differences that are found and to examine the impact Aboriginal migration has on their cultural identity (including language retention) and on the community at large. A specific focus will be to compare the international outcomes of these migrations to the observed outcomes in Canada.

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LATINO MIGRATION AND ITS INFLUENCE IN CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM

The Latin American migration has been continuous since mid-1950 until now. At the University of Toronto, the OIES has recognized the four waves of Latino migrants in Canada:

- 1960: Well educated professionals and entrepreneurs from Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela;
- 1970: Political persecuted refugees, well educated, from South America (specially Chile), after Dictatorship;
- 1980-1990: Central America refugee – especially from El Salvador – after the civil war in their own countries;
- 2000 and after: Well educated professionals from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, among other countries, who had passed the immigration process of the Canadian federal agencies, after a rigorous process of selective immigration policy, on the base of the capacities and abilities in order to contribute to the Canadian economic growth.

The panel will examine the different ways the Canadian society includes or excludes these different national groups. The perception - individual and collective- of the success

or failure these groups in relations to their contribution to the Canadian economic, political and cultural growth will also be examined. As well, the affirmation of each national culture within the Canadian mosaic will encourage a more democratic and equal society.

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MIGRATION AND NARRATIVE – NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION

Narrative opens up spaces for negotiating the questions of identity which are entailed by migration. In a world which is continually in process, such spaces are multiple. They are located, as Homi K. Bhabha has emphasized through his concept of the “Third Space”, mainly within the contact zones between cultures. Narratives of migration inevitably deal with these spaces at the intersection of cultures. Accordingly, the chronotope and narrative parameters of these texts are expressive of processes of self-creation and identity transformation. This is why the study of the literature of migration must pay attention to the genres and literary modes employed, and to the textual (and in particular the narrative) strategies which migrant literature has developed to deal with its themes.

The panel will therefore address questions of migration from a narratological perspective, investigating the multiplicity and transitory nature of migrant identities as manifested in (contemporary) Canadian immigrant narratives. Contributions should analyse, on the example of narrative renderings of migration and exile, the transformation and fictionalising of intercultural experience in narrative. They should focus on narrative renderings of the following:

- Cosmopolitanism, cultural hybridity and mixed or fragmented ethnic identities;
- Trans-culturation and the blurring of ethnic and cultural borderlines in the wake of migration;
- The experience of living and writing in exile, as it were, and the exploring of an inter-cultural sphere of literary production and of transitory identities;
- The experience of living with or in between several languages, societies and cultures and the resulting emphasis on the permeability of ethnic and cultural boundaries and on the multiple identities of protagonists;
- The relations between the representation of polyglot and trans-cultural identities and the (often complex) aesthetic structure of works;
- The significance of works as Canadian contributions to an international body of literature on migration.

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MIGRANTS' VIEWS OF AND REFLECTIONS ON THEIR LIFE-PROJECTS: CANADIAN IDENTITY OR IDENTITIES IN A PLURALIST CANADA?

Migrants arrive with broad plans, defined intentions, and – usually – hopes as well as with a personality fully socialized but often in a society with limited options or unsatisfactory and unfair social and economic regimes. While many reflections remain within families, past migrants have published life-writings whether anecdotal memoirs, diaries, letter exchanges with family and friends, or thoughtful autobiographical reflections.

In the present such plan and projects sometimes appear in the press, often in crisis situations – plans cut short by a massive family or personal bouleversement; adjustments – in societal and personal identity dimensions – may be discussed in community groups; scholarly approaches may include interviews and longitudinal studies. Statistic Canada's data also provide overall comparative data on the degree of economic insertion of migrants as well as on “problems.” The other side of the “problems”-approach, less often mentioned, is that the vast majority acculturate to region-specific *Canadian ways*, i.e. a *métissage* of multiple inputs, in a non-problematic negotiated course.

This panel would bring together research on migrant self-writings, self-reflections, self-statements in public with an emphasis on plans and projects all reflecting a socialized flexible mix of pre- and post-migration identity in the frame of a broadly accommodating Canadian frame of reference that is capable of providing room for a range of cultural identities. On an implied theoretical level – or directly if a paper is proposed that panel will question the concept of one national identity – the premise of much of Western political theory. The hypothesis is that national self-views/identities are not fragile, brittle, dogmatic, or fundamentalist that a different self-view contributed by individual migrants or the arrival of larger cultural groups be a threat or even destructive. Methodologically papers may be based on published life-writings, oral history and interviews, or press/media analyses.

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MIGRATION, PARTNERSHIP AND SOCIAL COHESION

This panel will explore the social issues of migration with reference to means and modes of social integration, multi level governance, partnership working and working across sectoral boundaries (between the public, private and third sectors). We welcome papers that address these complex social, cultural and political issues from the point of view of the three sectors and of immigrants themselves.

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CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND INTERACTION: THEIR NATURE, LIMITS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE IMMIGRANT AND CANADA AS HOST SOCIETY

This panel seeks to problematise immigrant interaction with their new host society and its members from a number of perspectives:

- The scope, type and intensity of interactional encounters
- The complex interplay of various factors such as the personal and the social in promoting and defining those encounters
- The limits and boundaries experienced during those encounters such as in relation to cross-linguistic challenges
- Approaches to addressing such challenges in terms of the host society's response to promoting and conditioning interaction with its immigrant communities as well as the contribution of those communities in shaping inter-community exchange of ideas.

The panel will explore such issues through an inter- and multi-disciplinary prism in terms of sociological, linguistic and literary perspectives.

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THE MIGRATORY MIND

For Pierre Ouellet, migratory writers include not only people from different migration streams whose writing reveals the cultural horizon of their country of origin and their country of adoption, but also people born in Canada who have never travelled. The migratory mind, or intellectual nomadism, can be defined as intense intellectual mobility and the sharing of cultural elements from distinct worlds. For intellectual migrants, the trend of authors choosing their intellectual ancestralities is not limited to writers from their own country, but is characterized by border crossings and transcultural transitions. The panel will look for examples of Canadian and Quebec authors whose migratory minds are the starting point for their writing in English or French.

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NEW LOCAL SPACES OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN CANADA

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This panel would look at the wide variety of emerging local spaces that bring together Canadians of different cultural backgrounds. These spaces can be around cultural practices (music, art, theatre, fashion) and cultural mediation, or around public good and social action and how a cultural difference permeates. We encourage presentations that look at these new local spaces in material, but also in discursive, terms. We will prioritize proposals that address any combination of the following:

- Analysis of explicit or implicit negotiations of perspectives emanating from cultural differences;
- Impact (positive or negative) of cultural differences on the objectives pursued by these spaces;
- The interplay between cultural differences and voice.

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LANGUAGE CHALLENGES IN THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

This panel explores a number of issues related to language that arise in the immigration process. These include issues related to policy and practice, such as language requirements for gaining landed immigrant status and citizenship; language testing and teaching; questions of social, economic and linguistic integration; and the maintenance of heritage languages and linkages with the countries of migration. This panel will contribute to an ongoing discussion regarding the challenges of language and immigration in Canada today.

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CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS ON CANADA'S EAST COAST

Canada's east coast has long been a cultural crossroads, from early European contact with Aboriginal peoples to the settlement of Acadian, Black Loyalist, Maroon, and Middle Eastern populations. While the culture of the region is often depicted as predominantly, even monolithically, Celtic, the multiethnic and multicultural history of the region is receiving more attention in contemporary studies. In this emerging cultural history, migration – both past and present, both in and out of the region – has left other cultural trails. This panel invites papers exploring some of these lesser known trails and dispelling myths of cultural insularity on Canada's east coast.

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MULTICULTURALISMS IN THE AMERICAS

First we will distinguish multiculturalism (Taylor, Kymlicka) from cosmopolitanism (Anthony Appiah) and internationalism (Seyla Benhabib). Then we will examine the basics of Kymlicka's Canadian multiculturalism:

- 1) Protection of the minority within the majority, and the individual within the minority; Relationship between equality and difference with regard to group-specific rights;
- 2) Difference between immigrant communities and founding communities;
- 3) Assertion that life is not a zero-sum game and that people can live within several systems at once without necessarily suffering a major loss;
- 4) Difference between the dominant Anglophone society and the Francophone society, which must exert greater control over the introduction of newcomers into interculturalism, as supported by Bill 101.

We will then analyse certain criticisms of multiculturalism, such as the ones raised by Daniel Bonilla Maldonado, from Colombia, where the new 1991 constitution is inspired in part by the theories of Kymlicka and Taylor. Bonilla Maldonado points out that liberal multiculturalism cannot accommodate non-liberal societies, including Aboriginal societies.

We will look at the relationship between multiculturalism and international organizations, as raised by Kymlicka: “Moreover, the particular conception of multiculturalism being promoted by international organizations is, I believe, a morally progressive extension of existing human rights norms¹”. In contrast to the prevailing views after the First World War, when ethnic communities were perceived as problems that could lead to war, today’s European vision of international relations asserts that “the accommodation of ethnic diversity is not only consistent with, but in fact a precondition for, the maintenance of a legitimate international order²”. This means that the ideas of nation and even nationalism are not inherently opposed to multiculturalism, suggesting once again the perspective that life is not a zero-sum game.

We will focus on a few potential problems raised by Kymlicka and those mentioned for other contexts by Bonilla Maldonado, for example:

- 1) The question of belonging: do we belong or are we independent and in what ways?;
- 2) The position of women in multicultural situations (Okin);
- 3) The desire expressed by many newcomers to blend in, integrate and not be visible;
- 4) Work, professional integration and diploma recognition as part of culture;
- 5) Multiculturalism and the issue of work.

With the help of Carlos Sandoval Garcia³, we will conclude that multiculturalism can help redefine research parameters by circumventing the methodological nationalism that has guided and still often guides many studies in the social sciences and humanities.

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¹ Kymlicka, Will. (2007). *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 6

² *Ibid*, p.45

³ (2007) *El mito roto: inmigración y emigración en Costa Rica* (The broken myth: immigration and emigration in Costa Rica). San José: Editorial UCR, p. XV

**FOR A LOVE OF THE HUNT-MOBILITY, FAMILY NETWORKS AND
SOCIAL COHESION IN A PLAINS METIS TRANSNATIONAL BRIGADE,
1840-1890**

Over a short period of time, the Metis developed a distinct society, with its own particular cultural, economic, and social orientation. These are a people who developed a specialized economic niche in a variety of jobs associated with the fur trade and developed complex social structure and cultural system centred around extended family networks that spread throughout central North America. Central to the economic and social development of the Plains Metis was their mobility which saw them move across large geographic expanses as networks of related individuals spread outward and into new regions to work. It was their high degree of mobility that necessitated a cultural complex predicated upon a social, political, and economic alliances with other Plains peoples, nation states, and trade companies. The Metis are relatively new as a distinct people, yet their impact has profoundly impacted how we understand Aboriginal and Canadian history.

The four papers in this panel seek to explore the contours of that distinct society as it emerged and took shape in the nineteenth century in an attempt to redefine the Metis not as a mixed-blood nation but a borderless people whose distinctiveness is rooted not in biology but rather in the traits they held to be central to their sense of self. Through these papers we will explore ideas of mobility, homeland, and kinship which are critical to 19th century Metis identity and history.

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Tim Foran, Chaire d'études métisses, Université d'Ottawa
Brenda McDougall, Chaire d'études métisses, Université d'Ottawa
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