The challenge of successful integration for Francophone immigrants within minority communities

Suzanne Huot[1] Ph.D., Belinda Dodson[2] Ph.D., Debbie Laliberte Rudman[1,3] Ph.D.

[1] Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (Occupational Science); [2] Department of Geography; [3] School of Occupational Therapy - The University of Western Ontario

Western

suzanne.huot@yahoo.ca

Background & Research Objectives

Background

Francophone minority communities (FMCs) are Canadian Francophone communities located outside of Quebec

Canadian government supports vitality of FMCs through Francophone immigration, leading to increased diversity

Research objectives

Challenge assumptions embedded within the notion of 'successful' integration

Raise awareness of the structural barriers to enacting occupation and negotiating identity in place, particularly according to language, race and gender

Participants: 8 French-speaking immigrants from visible minority groups (stages 1-3); 6 representatives from local government & community organizations (stage 4)

Key Concepts & Interdisciplinary Insights

Key concepts drawn from Goffman (1959) & Bourdieu (1977)

Performance: people perform their identities in social interaction to manage people's impressions of them

Field: a social space characterized by particular norms

Habitus: dispositions acquired by people over time within a particular context

Capital: resources or assets that have different values depending upon the context

Migration studies – addresses modes of incorporation (e.g. assimilation) (Portes & Zhou, 1993), explores places in which, and scales at which, people belong (Silvey, 2004); & considers intersectionality of migrant identities according to varied markers such as race and gender (McDowell et al., 2007)

Occupational Science – addresses how occupation (participation in everyday activities) is related to identity (Laliberte Rudman, 2002), develops concept of 'occupational identity' (Howie, 2003), and explores impact of transitions upon this relationship (Klinger, 2005)

References:

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. London: Cambridge University Press.

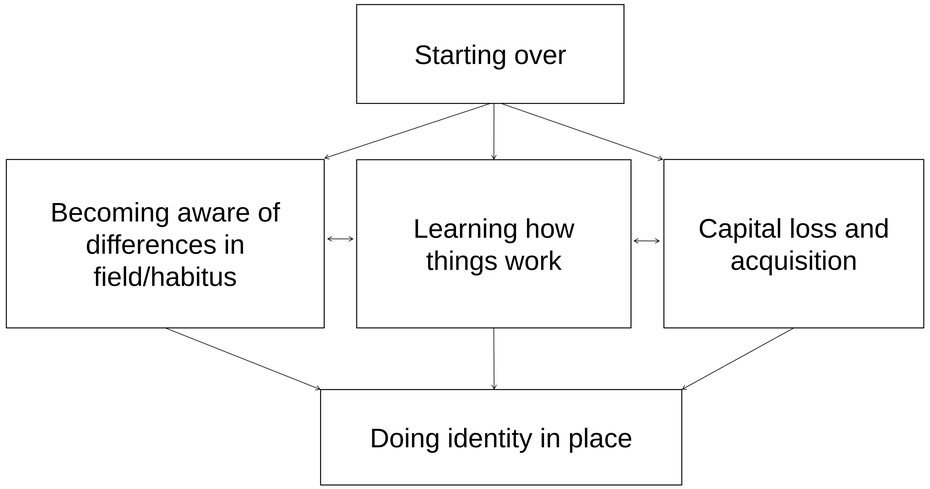
Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Toronto: Doubleday.

Howie, L. (2003). Ritualising in book clubs: Implications for evolving occupational identities. *Journal of Occupational Science, 10*(3), 130-139.

Klinger, L. (2005). Occupational adaptation: Perspectives of people with traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Occupational Science, 12*(1), 9-16.

Critical ethnography conducted in London, ON

Stage	Method
1	Narrative interview (one session)
2	Occupational mapping and participatory occupations (2 sessions)
3	In-depth interviews (2 sessions)
4	Critical review of government documents and in-depth interviews
5	Data analysis and interpretation



"Penetration is putting one's feet on the ground where we are not familiar. That is not ours. That is a foreign soil. Everything is new, the odours, the air, the people, the dress, the cars, all is new. And, integration, integration is [...], it's becoming part of the landscape afterwards. It's to belong to the crowd, [...] And I don't believe that we integrate at the end of five years, it is really long term that we can say we are integrated. And we never, never integrate to 100%. I think that we are never integrated to 100%, because there is always the little accent [...], there is the color of our skin that, that is there. There are, there are also our habits that we don't want to totally abandon. There is not to say, it's a bit also um, ourselves we don't want to abandon that. We don't want to abandon that, it's a little bit denying our family, denying our ancestors, denying where we're from"

Findings

Starting over in host society leading to variety of transitions was a predominant issue raised by all participants

Negotiating many of these transitions involved **becoming aware of differences in field and habitus** characterizing migrants' home and host societies

Engaging in occupation & working toward integration entailed **learning how things work** within Canadian fields of practice

The process of migration entailed **capital** loss & working toward integration entailed reacquiring particular forms of capital

Doing identity in place refers to migrants' occupational engagement within particular places as they perform their identities in social interaction

Because habitus and capital are embodied, newcomers' experiences are influenced not only by how they see themselves, but also by how they are or wish to be seen by others

BUT:

'Successful integration', as constructed within government documents, promotes particular expectations & outcomes that can serve to marginalize newcomers

Discussion & Implications

Process & outcomes of successful integration should be viewed as multidirectional & ongoing - involving the learning of tacit social rules. Hence the need to:

Critique **linear understandings** of the integration process

Emphasize **implicit aspects** of integration

Attend to the **diversity** among & within FMCs

Expand focus upon individuals to include additional scales such as **households** and **communities**

Challenge **processes of exclusion** that hinder newcomers' integration & sense of being and belonging

Consider **intersections of occupation, place & identity** when addressing successful integration

References cont.:

Laliberte Rudman, D. (2002). Linking occupation and identity: Lessons learned through qualitative exploration. *Journal of Occupational Science, 9*(2), 12-19.

McDowell, L., Batnitzky, A., & Dyer, S. (2007). Division, segmentation, and interpellation: The embodied labors of migrant workers in a greater London hotel. *Economic Geography, 83*, 1-25.

Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: segmented assimilation and its variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 530*, 74-96.

Silvey, R. (2004). On the boundaries of a subfield: Social theory's incorporation into population geography. *Population, Space and Place, 10*(4), 303-308.