The challenge of successful integration for Francophone immigrants within minority communities

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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

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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.

Key Concepts & Interdisciplinary Insights


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).

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.

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

References cont.:


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, theodours, 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