

From mirror to mosaic:
Negotiating a diversifying *Francophonie*
in Canadian linguistic minority
community spaces

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Context

- Francophone minority communities (FMCs) = Francophone communities in Canada, outside Quebec
 - Community vitality
- The Canadian federal government is encouraging Francophone immigration outside of Quebec
 - Research focus on institutional policies, discourses, practices
 - Tensions between demographic purpose and identity/community formation (Farmer 2008; Gallant 2010/2011)
 - Challenges: “minority within a minority” (Madibbo 2006), invisibility of FMCs (Veronis and Huot, 2017, 2019)

Research objectives

- To examine the social participation of French-speaking immigrants in different types of Francophone minority community spaces
 - Understand combined personal & structural factors shaping immigrants' participation in different sites;
 - Examine immigrants' expectations, motivations & agency in processes of engagement, and the role of their participation in their longer-term integration;
 - Attend to the influences of intersectional identity markers in shaping immigrants' participation within particular contexts

Literature review

- Immigrants' social participation
 - Spaces, scales and methodological approaches
 - Francophone minority communities (FMCs)
 - Motivations for social participation
 - Barriers to immigrants' social participation
 - Personal experiences and benefits of social participation
- Spaces of encounter, difference, and intercultural exchange
 - Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2008, 2010; Leitner, 2012; Fincher et al. 2019



Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population	Ottawa CMA	Vancouver CMA
Total population	991,726	2,463,431
% of immigrants	22%	40%
Official language minority (#)	173,050	32,940
Official language minority	17.7%	1.3%

Methodology: critical ethnography

Ottawa	Vancouver
<p>Three partnering community sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Community Center• An Immigrant Association• A Church	<p>Three partnering community sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Provincial Organization• A Community Association• A Church
<p>Methods :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 observations in each site (minimum)• 35 interviews with French -speaking immigrants and refugees recruited in the partnering sites• 3 key informant interviews with 4 representatives of the partnering sites	<p>Methods :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 observations in each site (minimum)• 20 interviews with French -speaking immigrants and refugees recruited in and outside of the partnering sites• Optional go -along interviews (n=13)• 6 key informant interviews with representatives of the partnering sites and other relevant Francophone community sites

Results

- Francophone spaces: A permeable minority
- Navigating different spaces and negotiating identities
- Spaces of encounter, difference, and intercultural exchange

Francophone spaces: A permeable minority

- Francophone spaces are embedded within the mainstream Anglo-dominant society
 - They cannot be considered as hermetic entities
 - Francophone spaces are influenced by the Anglo-dominant surroundings and they can act as a first point of contact for French-speakers to integrate into the broader Canadian society
 - Encounters in these spaces are embedded in **multiscalar power dynamics**

Pastor: ...and the church is bilingual...

Interviewer: Yes [...] how did it go, the choice to be both in French and in English?

Pastor: We, our church, its first connotation, it is first Francophone [...] that is, we had a lot of Quebecois at the time of the church. Then, when – we noticed that people here, it is more English than French. **Really, we wanted to promote French but we noticed that – especially for the immigrants [...] you can allow them to pray in French, but we understood that we could not only give to the immigrants, without giving to people who are local [...] that is, we tried to be bilingual to allow that – even if there is a person who is here, even if it is a person who is outside Canada, who just arrived in Canada, can come together, we tell them ‘you have the opportunity to speak your language when you come with French, and then you have the opportunity too, to learn another language that is English ; so it allows you to be bilingual automatically’.**

(Vancouver key informant 2)

Navigating different spaces and negotiating identities

- French-speaking migrants in minority communities tend to be pluri-lingual
- They perform **different (linguistic) identities in different spaces**
- **Languages are linked to certain spaces, activities, encounters**
- Francophone spaces provide migrants with the opportunity to perform their French-speaking identity in a broader context where it is not always valued
- People's attachment to their French-speaking identity evolves depending on the opportunities to perform this identity in their daily occupations

It's Saturday, I want to speak Lingala.
(Vancouver, Church obs. #17)

Me, I am Tunisian, I eat Tunisian meals, I speak Arabic at home with my daughters, and we should not say 'no, I immigrated to Canada, so my children don't speak their mother tongue, then they are Canadians'. No, because the child cannot integrate like this. Me, I am Tunisian, I often visit my family, and I integrate. **I take the best things from Canadian society and I try to keep the good things from the Tunisian society, to do the best I can.** But I can not exclude my roots and tell my children 'no, it is over, they are not Tunisian', no. Because when they feel they are balanced, then they can better accept another culture.

(Ottawa, Francophone Community Centre, Participant 5)

Spaces of encounter, difference and intercultural exchange

- In Francophone minority community spaces, Francophone immigrants learn about Canadian society
- Francophone communities and community spaces are diversifying
- Building social networks and social capital
 - Social and economic integration
 - Social capital
 - Sense of belonging
 - Community care

...the more time that I spent here with people, the more activities we engaged in together, we went outside, and you could see the way people acted, the way they conduct themselves, the way people speak, and it really helped me a lot. And also, with my wife, we did some camping. We never did camping where we were before. So we go out, you see how people react, how people – what they like, what they don't like. So that really helped me a lot, also the fact of going to school. So that was also a good experience.

(Ottawa church, 1)

Interviewer: What did it bring you to participate in these three sites, which we talked about?

Participant: It brought me, **it opened my mind, I understood, what is Vancouver, how do people think, people behave**, and then I try also of, to approach people, I made quite a lot of knowledge.

(Church participant 1)

It encourages people. They have an event, there is food, there is, they also consider if there are – just – it's – sometimes, it depends, there because they pay more attention. At (community centre), I noticed that, they pay more attention to that. **If there are volunteers who are Muslim, they will give them their own table, they will sit together, their food will be like Halal or vegetarian or something like that.** That group, they don't really neglect things like that.

(Ottawa Community centre 1)

“My experience, what I enjoy is customer service. I like providing service to people. So if I am there, I myself feel good. And I talk to people, I see that people feel good also because they like going out also. They say ‘ah, in winter we stay home, we don’t go out’, so after winter we have to organize activities like the last barbeque. We had from 11:00 – we started at noon, from noon to 6:00pm, and at 6:00pm, people refused to leave. They even said ‘well we’re going to complain, we aren’t ready to leave’.”

(Ottawa Association 2)

“So, different Francophone organizations regardless of the need they seek to address need to integrate all Francophone voices (...), it’s as though we are in the margins, if we disperse further and divide ourselves, we are taking away our strength. So, we have to learn that as Francophones we need to work with other Francophones regardless of where they are from, that’s where, one of the forces that I see here, there are people who come from Vietnam, from Africa, from Maghreb, France, Switzerland, or elsewhere, we are all one family.”

(Ottawa Church 3)

Conclusion

- FS migrants' social participation in diverse Francophone community sites is essential and represents a promising practice for:
 - Their social and economic participation and integration in FMCs and in Canadian society
 - Their sense of belonging and inclusion
 - The development of social, informational and professional networks, and of social capital
 - Uniting members of Francophone communities and for constructing a shared and solid Francophone identity

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