

The regionalization of immigration in Québec and the professional integration of Colombian immigrants to the Laurentians region

October 4th 2006

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Plan

- 1) objectives of my research
- 2) context
- 3) methodology and conceptual framework.
- 4) Analysis:
 - the subjective dimensions of their economic incorporation, the place of professional identity in every day life and social relationships.
 - focus on the gender dimension – or the ‘family dimension’
 - - how the presence of children at home influenced equally the professional goals and the choice of residential location.

[Research Objectives]

- **General objective : to explore the different perceptions of migrants in conjunction with the loss of status**
 - by observing the fluidity and the flexibility of identities, and the strategies deployed to access the workforce
 - to raise the dimension of reflexivity through the Columbian immigrants' interpretations of their establishment trajectories.
- **Explore how the family responsibility may influenced the professional goals – and how this family dimension (or gender aspect) may be connect either with the choice of residential location.**

[Interest and Context]

- **The politics:**
 - 1) the criteria applied to select potential candidates, giving priority to the university graduated migrants,
 - 2) dispersal policies that aim to regionalize migrants outside of Montreal, where 90% of immigration is concentrated (Gagné, 2003; MRCI, 2002a-b, 2003b-c; Girard et Manègre, 1989).
- **The population:**
 - 6,773 Columbians live in Quebec, (MICC 2005) including about 400 in the Laurentians area.

[The Laurentians]



Population :
475 850
with: 15 000
immigrants (3,5%)
(2 000 newcomers
'96-'01)

Area :
21 587 km²

**Montréal-St-
Jérôme**
45 km

[Theoretical Framework]

- **The feeling to be overqualified for a job**
 - « *disqualification comes with a subjective perception of being out-of-place, and a persistence of reference to other social fates more or less possible or imaginary.* » (Cartier, 2003: 197)

- **Identity:**
 - from a constructivist perspective (Meintel, 2000, 1993), in interaction with other dimensions of life such as social, familial and professional identity.
 - is never granted once and for all; it is characterized by its fluidity
 - « *They are not secure by a lifelong guarantee, that they are eminently negotiable and revocable* » (Bauman 2004 :11).

[Theoretical Framework (2)]

- The loss of employment or the loss of status leads newcomers to reposition themselves in terms of socio-professional identity, and one's place in society.
- Here, social recognition is central.
- Through these transformations, the individual will resituated him or herself and put into place divers strategies. Taking into account this reflexive dimension these immigrants rework their own lived experience. The notion of *trajectories* and the importance of taking into account the *interactive and dynamic process* are centrals.

[Methodology]

- From an anthropological standpoint, these interests were born out of my job as an employment counselor at C.I.E. Laurentides.
- Fieldwork, 2001 to 2006
 - 1) Observations in both formal and informal contexts
 - 2) Position as employment counselor (along side with my research) led me to meet more than 100 immigrants each year, between 2001 and 2005, of which a large proportion were Columbians.
 - 3) In-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 respondents selected for the diversity of their profile,
 - 1) Mostly double interviews (lasting an average of 3.5 hours).
- 5 men et 6 women, in Québec between 2 to 6 years.
 - from Colombia and established in the Laurentides.
 - between 32 and 50 years old, average age 40.
 - Most have children, except for 3 of them (which doesn't exclude them from familial responsibility).

[Analysis]

- Pre-analysis in 2004:
 - All of the university graduated Columbians I met at C.I.E. Laurentides between 2000 and 2003 (n.22/75) went through an initial downward mobility. They put in places strategies and some lived upward mobility.
 - It appear that not everyone want to access again their pre-migratory profession.
- The interviews uncovered the fact:
 - being « overqualified » for a job does not necessarily lead to this feelings.
 - the absence of feelings to be overqualified for a job were often linked to identity reconfiguration, where the migrant can, in different roles, « recreate » him or herself, as much on a professional level as in other aspects.
 - A permanent feeling to be overqualified was more often present in cases of those who we could call « crystallized professional identities ».
 - Different strategies of incorporation are present in relation with pre-migratory professional identities.
 - This consists of schematic simplified categories
 - ***In this presentation, I will develop only the examples linked to the dimension of gender or of family (transformed identity). Also, I will bring to light the cases of family-work reconciliation - where the choice to live outside large city plays a part as well.***

[1. Transformed identity and professional goals]

- The facets of identity are multiple, and the professional identity - the social role - is but one of these aspects
- Professional objectives can be prioritized, or sometimes put on hold, due to other aspects of life.
 - elements outside of the professional trajectory can be prioritized: family, friends, and quality of life
 - In that case: no feeling to be overqualified, there's a satisfaction about their situation
 - *« There are so many factors, it depends on the responsibilities that you have when you arrive. Because if you arrive at 30 years old, single, without responsibility, it's a lot easier to say 'I'm going to take up my career again, I have the possibility to go back to school - and all that, man or woman, it depends, it depends because... age, life goals, responsibilities, someone who arrives with two little children, the panorama is very very different. [...] All these priorities are... it's not just one factor [...] no? » (Mercedes)*

1. Transformed identity and professional goals (2)

- Aspect of familial responsibilities intensified the job search for men, but diminished for women (Van Ham & al. 2001) :
 - Question: motivations for women to stay at home = cause or consequence?
- « Transformed identity » : mothers who have been professionals : re-orient their trajectories due to their family priorities
 - the value placed on work can be transformed according to personal circumstances and context, and can influence the development of the professional career (Mauro 2004)
 - *« So, it's... it changes completely... my vision of the time up until now. It's really - professional... But I have other things, frankly, it's not just my profession... I have other responsibilities that are not just psychology » (Sarah, psychologist, in Quebec have a contract as social worker in a NGO).*

1. Transformed identity and professional goals (3)

- But:
 - a limited network of support for child care and limited access to public daycares can also influence the decision to consecrate more to the family : « less expensive » or « more advantageous » to stay at home
 - *« It's difficult, for a woman it's not easy and even if I am already used to going to work, but in Columbia it's different, because in Columbia I had all my family so if my mother wasn't there, my cousin was there, my aunt, the neighbor, the other, a good friend, grandpa, great grandpa, a cousin, husband... » (Margreth, kindergarten teacher, on welfare for the moment, after a contract of 3 weeks in her profession).*

2. Fathers are equally concerned : family responsibility

- a greater acceptance of « survival jobs » for fathers, where finding a job that will assure the family's material well-being is central
 - « *Listen, I'm 46 years old... and ok, I still have energy, and I deal well enough, but 4-5 years from now, I would like to have a job that would be more... [...] more technical and less physically challenging. I really like machines and tools and all that [...] Because I'm going to need more money as well, I'm going to have two children in university! (laught) » (Alberto, electrical engineer, in Quebec electro technician after a technical training).*

3. work-family reconciliation and choice of residential location

- Life outside the metropolitan center is chosen for specific motives, even if this implies concessions from time to time.
- The underlined reasons are similar to those that have been revealed by other research
 - Quality of life and tranquility, children, family or friends, possibility of buying a house at an affordable price.
 - « *We stayed here, also, because the children started school here, they started making friends » (Alberto).*

3. work-family reconciliation and choice of residential location

- Choice to stay in the Laurentides is high
 - Columbians who came through the C.I.E. Laurentides (2000 and 2006)
 - 132 persons:
 - A dozen adults moved out / three of them returned.
 - According to available data, only two people moved to Montreal for studies (young people without children).
 - Other destinations are small cities (Longueuil, Laval and Sherbrooke).
 - Being a family seems central
 - « *single people are more inclined to move to the largest cities than are families* » (CIC, 2001: iii)

3. work-family reconciliation and choice of residential location (2)

- The choice to live in the Laurentians can imply concessions or choices on a professional level
- The decision must take into account different aspects of her life; the professional side will perhaps need to adjust itself to the other dimensions.
 - For ex.: Sarah who maybe will choose a profession more in demand in the area... to stay with her family
 - « *So, it's really... like... « What am I doing? I take my professional side and I develop it... then maybe I'll be happy later on in life [laughs]. Or I develop another side, maybe it won't give me anything... then I'm going to be happy. » I don't know. [...] It's a decision to make. [...] But it's difficult because I can't only think of myself... I have to think about my husband, I have to think about my daughter, ... about my mother, my sister, my family [laughs]. Yes, well, pretty much the whole family... » (Sarah)*

3. work-family reconciliation and choice of residential location (3)

- Once established, **stability** is a priority (mainly for the children)
- The choice of residential location is reflected upon and discussed, for the children, the kinds of jobs available, the price of housing...
- To live in the area **implies both pros and cons** that are taken into account. It is clear that the Laurentians don't have certain advantages that the large metropolitan center offer, but ultimately, it can turn out to be an attractive choice for families.
- « *It's one of the difficulties that one has, being in the Laurentians. Here you have a car or else you can't do anything because... in Montreal you can go anywhere. But it's a disadvantage that is compensated by many other things that you can't find in Montreal. For example, here you will find people who really want to help you, [...] you find help from all sides, but in Montreal you don't find much help at all. [...] Here, you know that it's quieter, it's safer for the children, so a sacrifice, a sacrifice for your well-being* » (Federico, electrical engineer, today technical consultant in engineering).

Discussion / Conclusion

- The importance of taking into account the **familial referent**, the «we» (Vatz-Laaroussi & al. 1999, 2000).
- **Gender, familial responsibilities and the state of being « a family »** (or a couple) influence choices and strategies of socio-professional integration.
- In the core of this relativity that surrounds the perception of loss of professional status : the **importance of choice**, and the **belief that it is possible to realize it** (the hope)
 - Two elements must be combined : the incorporation goals must be positive and the subject must feel he or she has power over the course of events— at this moment, he or she will act (Fournier, 2002).
 - « *Regaining control over one's life and a feeling that one can plan for the future seems to be one of the best predictors of a generally positive outlook* » (Colic Peisker, 2003: 13)

[Discussion / Conclusion (2)]

- **Control of these choices** (residential or professional) seems to be at the center of the relativity of their perceptions and can signify a **strong optimism despite of the difficulties** that are at times experienced (cf. Sarrible 2003).
- Understanding the difficulties allows us to shed new light on the « **strategies** these migrants use to deal with obstacles » (Cardu et Sanschagrín, 202 :88).
- *NB: a discussion of the subjective aspects of loss of social and professional status not aim to vulgarize the difficulties experience through the course of the establishment process*

[Thanks! Mj.blain@umontreal.ca]

