



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Multiculturalism in Canada and its Links to Teacher Education and Minority Teachers



Dr. Clea Schmidt

University of Bremen

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Overview of Presentation



- ✿ Multiculturalism, Teacher Education, and Minority Teachers in Canada
- ✿ Guiding Questions
- ✿ The Case for Immigrant Teacher Integration
- ✿ Some Challenges
- ✿ Two Empirical Studies
- ✿ Implications for Moving Forward

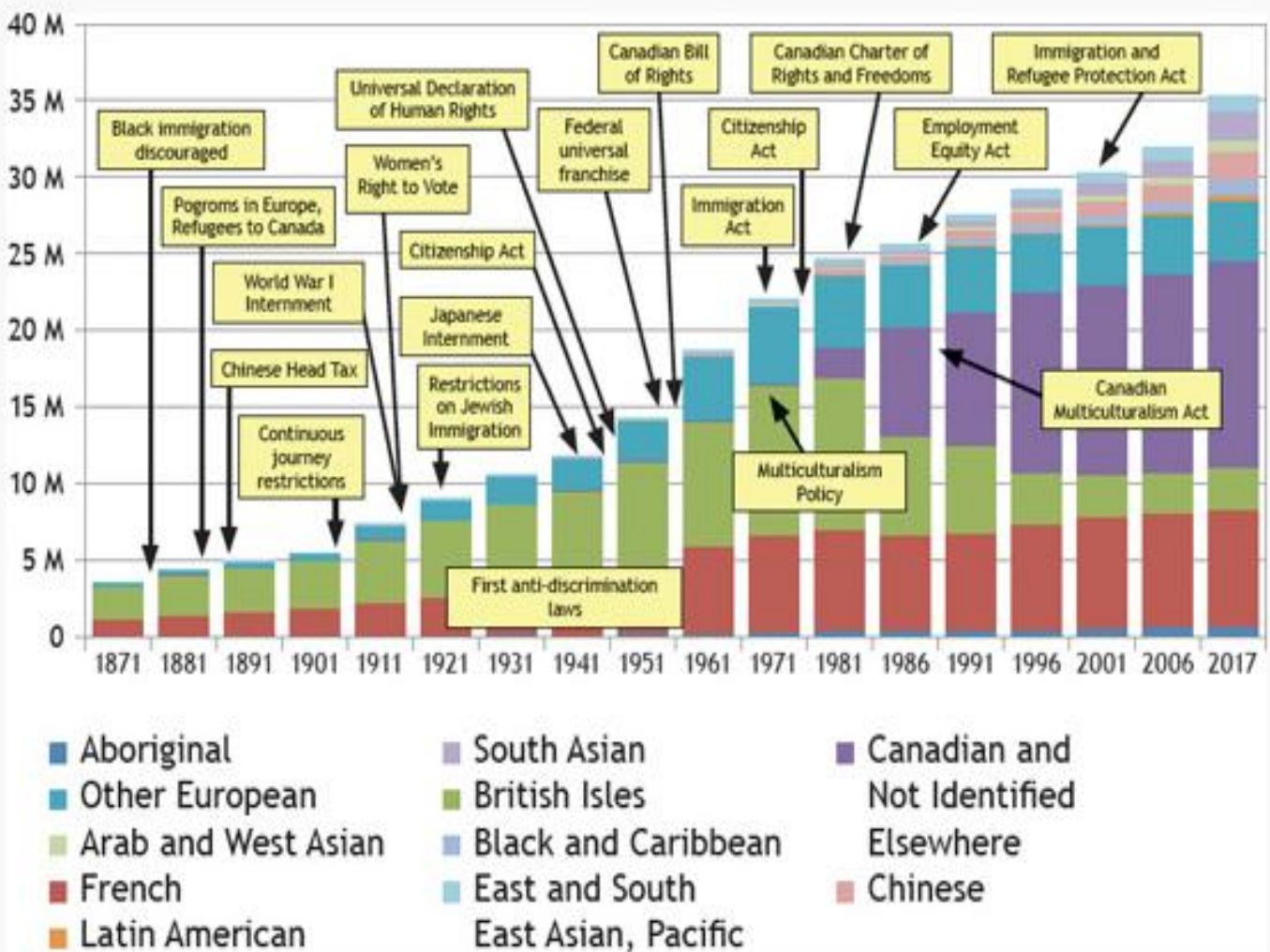
Multiculturalism in Canada

- ✦ 1971: Multicultural policy introduced
- ✦ 1982: Multiculturalism recognized under Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- ✦ 1988: Multiculturalism Act

Equality to all Canadian citizens, rights to Aboriginal/First Nations peoples, official languages policy (English and French)

- ✦ 2015: 280,000 immigrants

Figure 2: Legislative changes concurrent with population shifts, historical events, increased equality, democratization and human rights – 1871 to 2017.

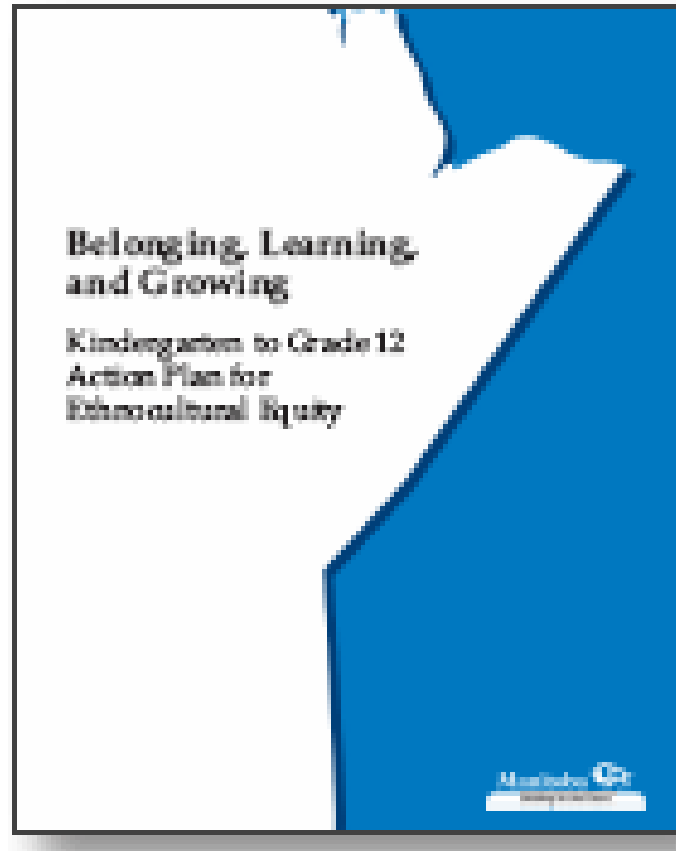


● Multiculturalism and (Teacher) Education

- ✦ Depending on the teacher education program, multiculturalism can be quite an integral focus or a peripheral one
- ✦ Manitoba: Diversity requirement for all newly certifying teachers
 - 2 courses on special needs education
 - 1 course on integrating Aboriginal perspectives
 - 1 course on EAL or cross-cultural education



Multiculturalism and minority teachers





Guiding Questions

- Why is it important to have a teaching force that represents and reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of student populations in K-12 schools?
- How can some of the systemic challenges to integrating immigrant teachers be addressed?

The Case for Immigrant Teacher Integration

- ✿ Immigrant-receiving jurisdictions have a responsibility to facilitate the meaningful contributions of newcomers (Reitz, 2005; Schmidt, Young & Mandzuk, 2010)
- ✿ Immigrant teachers can afford all members of school communities the opportunity to engage with and affirm diversity (Schmidt, 2010)



The Case for Immigrant Teacher Integration (cont' d)



Immigrant teachers can potentially serve as cultural and linguistic liaisons in school communities (Carrier & Cohen, 2005; Schmidt, 2010)

Immigrant teachers can provide much needed academic and professional role models for K-12 learners and other immigrant teachers/professionals (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009)

Some Challenges

- ✚ Lack of data on immigrant teachers
- ✚ Absence of a teacher shortage
- ✚ Systemic discrimination
- ✚ Government immigration and education agendas not well-aligned
- ✚ Mentoring services for immigrant teachers very limited

Study #1: EAL Immigrant Youth and Families

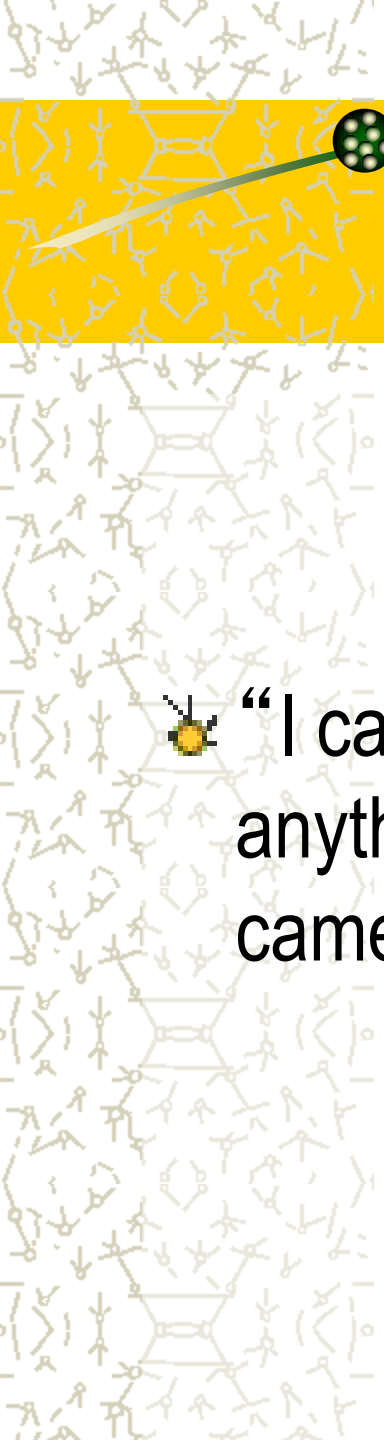
- ✦ Rural school division whose English as an Additional Language (EAL) immigrant population increased substantially with the successful implementation of the Provincial Nominee Program (from 23 EAL learners in 1998 to 1300+ in 2008)
- ✦ Goal: to explore the successes and challenges of EAL learners, parents, and teachers

Study #1 cont'd

- ✦ Mixed methods informed by critical theory
- ✦ Quantitative data: 3000 EAL student records over a 10-year period
- ✦ Qualitative data: Interviews and focus groups with youth, parents, teachers, school principals, immigrant service providers; policies and documents
- ✦ Data analyzed thematically



Perspective of an EAL Student



“I came to school like a blind man, unable to see anything because I had no English. Nobody came to speak with me.”

Perspective of an EAL Parent

- ✦ “[We’ ve had] next to no contact other than a school event and an attempt to converse with the teacher who did not understand or try to understand us. A challenge we face as immigrants is wanting to express ourselves clearly but not being able to. This makes us more fearful to attempt communication because we do not want to be misunderstood. We fear we would only be further misunderstood by this teacher and so, though we would like to have more contact with her, we feel she is rather unapproachable.”

● Perspective of a Teacher of EAL Learners

- “These kids are coming here with German as a gift...what can the school do to harness this as a gift, instead of a problem that needs to be suppressed and drowned in English? ‘Cause the kids are going to learn English no matter what. When are we going to start having German classes taught by parents or people who have high levels of German?”

Perspective of a School Principal

“It was almost palpable the shift that was occurring, because they were listening, it was in their language and we were explaining things. And after we did all of that, we rang the bell and we brought the kids in and we all ate together in the gym. And I told all of my staff members and I found out who speaks High German and Low German and I said, ‘one of you per table. I don’t want you wasting this resource, you know?’ ”

Study #2: Mentoring for Immigrant Teachers

- Goal: To document the mentoring experiences of certified immigrant teachers
- Critical ethnography involving observations of mentoring workshops, interviews with mentors and immigrant teachers, document collection and analysis

● Perspective of a Mentor (also an IET)

- “Because I was not born in Canada, I went through the same experiences. We can speak kind of the same language, right? Because we went through the same process of immigration, culture shock, all of the stages that we all go through and it’s so relevant for people who understand and they know that they have been in your shoes. I think that makes an impact. But also on the other hand, the experience that I can bring from my real life, right now that I’ m practicing everyday at work, to share insights from different schools and philosophies that I have. I think that’ s very important too, to open their eyes and see that it’ s not actually that bad, to not get discouraged and to try more.”



Perspective of an Immigrant Teacher Mentee



“Since society is multicultural these days, being internationally educated teachers we also bring lots of skills, and since we are already studying here, so we have experience from back home and we know the education system from back home and we know the education system here, so we can put those experiences into our classroom... if now some students are coming and they don't have English skills, so we can help them. [We can talk about] how we improved ourselves, so we can give our own examples. They can see us as being a role model in the classroom and then they'll keep working hard as well. [In terms of] experience dealing with different communities, because we all come from different cultures, we see things from a different perspective, different point of view and we can help students with those questions as well. [We have] lots of knowledge and I think that's a great opportunity for the school divisions if they are going to hire us. “

Perspective of a Mentor

- ✦ I think there's still systemic resistance to hiring people who are different. [IETs] come with so many strengths, and instead of focusing on the strengths they bring, I think school divisions and some of the people who do the hiring, are focusing on things like [their] English and whether they will be seen in the classroom as too different to handle the students. And I think there is some bias in terms of race. I hope that's not out there with everyone, but I still sense that it's there. And it's only now that immigration has increased significantly that many of those in the school divisions are saying we need to have our teaching population reflect the population of our students, which is very diverse, very diverse indeed.



Guiding Questions Re-Visited

- ✦ Merit in the arguments for immigrant teachers as role models and cultural/linguistic liaisons
- ✦ Need to prioritize strategic hiring of diverse staff through policies and practices
- ✦ Mentoring/bridging supports essential; must include systemic advocacy and partnerships in the field

● Moving Forward in Supporting Immigrant Teachers

- ✚ Our experience running small cohorts at the U of M was highly successful
- ✚ Offered both a bridging program for re-certifying IETs and a mentorship program for certified IETs
- ✚ Worked closely with the field to shift hiring practices
- ✚ Active research agenda
- ✚ After four cohorts, 90% employment rate
- ✚ However, funding not sustainable

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