

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Eric Fong, ed., *Inside the Mosaic*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 280 pp. \$55.00 hardcover (978-0-8020-8834-5)

Over the last two decades, Toronto has become the most ethnically diverse city in North America. Gathering nearly 40 percent of the immigrants living in urban Canada, Toronto is a fascinating mosaic that is often depicted as a major large-scale experiment in the management of ethnic differences. Consequently, it is no surprise that sociologists working on ethnic relations find Toronto particularly interesting. In this edited volume, Eric Fong has gathered sociologists from a number of sub-fields to explore various aspects of ethnic diversity in Toronto. Like Fong, the vast majority of contributors are University of Toronto faculty. As a result, this is a book about Toronto largely written by Torontonians. Yet, because it addresses major theoretical and sociological issues, the book targets a broad Canadian and international readership. Considering the level of analysis of most chapters, this is a book written mainly for an academic audience, especially advanced undergraduate students, graduate students, and university professors. Policymakers may find the book interesting, but the sometimes heavy theoretical and methodological apparatus would probably alienate most general readers and first year undergraduate students. This is not a criticism, as this is exactly the type of book Canadian university presses should publish. Otherwise, no one else would do it.

Although centred on ethnic relations in Toronto, this excellent book covers an impressive number of topics. These include the social bases of intergroup relations, residential segregation of visible minorities, local government, the alleged relationship between immigration and environmental degradation, the effect of Canadian law and social policy on immigrant families, the impact of Canadian immigration policy on the immigrant family, ethnoracial variations in mental health, the social capital-job search nexus and, finally, the transnational ties of immigrants moving in and out of Canada. Although several chapters focus exclusively on visible minorities from Caribbean, African, and/or Asian descent, the book also explores the fate of older and newer European immigrant groups. For example, the chapter on social capital and job search, which is based on data from the late 1970s, deals specifically with the white population (English, German, Italian, Jewish, and Ukrainian).

Besides the fascinating diversity of perspectives it features, *Inside the Mosaic* has a number of outstanding qualities. First, all the chapters are well-written and grounded in a solid knowledge of the relevant sociological literature. Second, the book does provide new insight on issues ranging from mental health to environmental degradation. Although some chapters are more convincing than others, all of them are informative and, to a variable degree, thought provoking. Third, the book offers comparative and international perspectives on many of the issues at stake, which helps to avoid parochialism. Finally, the book offers a fair balance between quantitative and qualitative analysis. Based on interviews and ethnographic work, several qualitative chapters complement nicely the systematic quantitative analysis presented in other parts of the volume.

Despite all these qualities, *Inside the Mosaic* is not without flaws. First, the book lacks a proper conclusion. This means that the reader who actually reads the book from cover to cover may feel frustrated that so little is done to put the pieces of this complex scholarly mosaic together. As for the introduction of the volume, it is overly short and underdeveloped. These are common problems in edited volumes but they are particularly irritating considering the overall quality of the nine substantive chapters. This collection of quality papers needs a bolder introduction and a genuine conclusion to become a truly coherent *book*. Second, it would have been interesting to take a more systematic look at the contrasts and the similarities between Toronto and other large cities in Canada, the US, and Europe. Although a number of chapters bring valuable comparative insights, devoting at least one full chapter to comparative analysis could have furthered our understanding of ethnic relations in Toronto and elsewhere. As it stands, the international and comparative discussion is scattered in different chapters, which is a bit frustrating. Beyond these critical remarks, *Inside the Mosaic* is a significant contribution to our understanding of ethnic relations in Toronto and the rest of Canada. Scholars working on ethnic relations in Canada would benefit from adding this book to their personal library.

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