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Research Note/Note de recherche

“Significance of Core Family Participation in the St. Patrick’s Day Show (Shannon, Québec)”

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My ongoing research into the Saint Patrick’s Day festivities, in and around Quebec City, has led me to concentrate on its most spectacular expression—the Shannon Show. In the past, I have examined the Show from several angles: as an example of ethnic identity, as a community effort, from the point of view of performance style, and now, branching out from it, I propose eventually to do a community study of the village of Shannon, in the light of recent events surrounding the French-English language issue.

During the winter of 1988, I directed an undergraduate student, Monique Simard, who undertook a brief study of the kinship component of the 1988 show. In order to do this, we evolved a modified “core” family/“peripheral” or “secondary” family concept. I will use the results of this study as a springboard for the study of the ethnic composition of the village over time. The study has already been useful in confirming certain aspects of the research Tess Leblanc is doing for her M.A. thesis on dance events in this same village.

Shannon is located in the semi-rural area 35 km northwest of Quebec City. At the time of its founding in 1821, it was composed mainly of Irish immigrants engaged in farming and logging operations, and was incorporated with Sainte-Catherine de la Jacques-Cartier at that time. In 1946, it separated from Sainte-Catherine and became an independent municipality. Its original territory has been whittled away by two federal expropriations, in 1914 and again in 1965. Its present area is 61.79 sq. km and its present population is 1,157 inhabitants (1987 census), of whom 51% (596) are men and 49% (561) are women. Of this number, about 40% are Irish (anglophones) and 60% are franco-

phones. As recently as 10-15 years ago, according to the mayoress of Shannon, the percentage was as high as 98% Irish as opposed to 2% francophones (we will be looking at these statistics in more detail at a later date). An important English language influence in the area comes from the nearby Valcartier Canadian Forces Base. Participation in the show also includes residents of Sainte-Catherine, St-Gabriel de Valcartier, Loretteville and Stoneham.¹

The statistics for this paper are based on participation in the 1988 Shannon show. At that time, there were roughly 100 persons involved. When Monique's report was finished, it was sent to the three main informants as requested. Since it was in French, however, they seem only to have glanced at it and put it aside. It was only when Tess interviewed them recently that they took it up again and noticed a small number of discrepancies (which they had not caught during Monique's interviews). Thus, one or two persons do not show up in the statistics, or are not quite in the right places, but the errors were not significant when it came to drawing conclusions at this point. The tables shown are those furnished by Monique and I have basically left them as they were.

One of the first categories into which we divided the participants was according to age. The community nature of the show has always favoured a good cross section of age groups, from the youngest "Pride of Shannon" preschoolers, up to the adults and older people in the Shannon Rovers and the Pub. As the table shows (Table 1), the group least well represented is that of the 13-18 year-olds. Tess Leblanc has found that this may be significant both on a social level (teenagers have a greater tendency to opt out of this sort of community effort) and on a linguistic level (anglophone or francophone school attendance).

1. The Irish stepdancing teacher for the children comes down from Montreal. I will not go into a description of the show in detail here, as I have done so in previous papers and anyone not familiar with it may see me later about this. I hope to publish rather extensively within the next year and those details will appear in the publication.

TABLE 1

Groupes d'âge	Nombre de participants
Enfants (12 ans et moins)	31
Adolescents (13 - 18 ans)	17
Adultes (19 ans et plus)	52
TOTAL	100

(Source: Monique Simard)

The next outbreak was into ways people participated, on or off-stage, and gender (Table 2). This shows a significant proportion of men behind the scenes, with women and children more visible onstage and involved in beforehand preparations. The statistical limits of our sample are found in this section, since we decided to retain only the names of those persons mentioned in the programme. One or two persons were forgotten, and many others only marginally involved in the whole event (serving coffee and cakes at intermission, driving children to rehearsal, etc.), were deliberately omitted at this point. We must keep in mind that the whole event is under the patronage of the Catholic Women's League, and without them there would be no show. (In fact, without them there might well be few Saint Patrick's Day celebrations at all, but that is another story.) Their most visible participation in the performance is that of the Shannon Rovers, the group of singers made up of adult women, almost entirely members of the CWL.

TABLE 2

Catégories d'activités	Hommes	Femmes
Chanteurs (ses) et danseurs (ses)	18	52
Musiciens (nes)	6	3
Techniciens	12	—
Autres	4	5
TOTAL DES PARTICIPANTS PAR SEXE	40	60
GRAND TOTAL	100	

(Source: Monique Simard)

The next step was to see how the participants were grouped by residence and kinship affiliation. A first breakdown showed that 79% of the "official" participants resided in Shannon, with the others coming from the surrounding communities mentioned earlier (Table 3). This enabled us to concentrate on other variables, since the importance of community input was rapidly confirmed. As those of you who have ever done a genealogical survey know, the next step was the longest and the most complicated. In fact, a complete genealogical study remains to be done in the future, as the effort involved in simply identifying the 100 participants in the show was extremely time-consuming. This is another area into which one or two errors seem to have crept, but which again do not significantly affect the total.

TABLE 3

Lieu de résidence	Nombre de participants
Ste-Catherine de la Jacques-Cartier	2
St-Gabriel de Valcartier	2
Base militaire de Valcartier	4
Loretteville	1
Stoneham	1
Montréal	1
TOTAL	11

(Source: Monique Simard)

The first arbitrary regrouping according to patrilineal surnames allowed us to identify and interview two key informants, as they were apparently able to identify the basic relationships linking the different participants. As a result, we found that members of five families, their immediate spouses, children and grandchildren, accounted for 62% of the participants, with two of these families actually furnishing one third. They also showed up in all categories of participants (Table 4). Of these five families, three were among the founding families of Shannon, as archival research showed. We tentatively classified these families as our "core" families, because their involvement in various other aspects of community life directly or indirectly related to the show came out during the interviews.

TABLE 4

Catégories d'activités	Familles du centre					Fam. de la périphérie
	K 1	N 1	K 2	K 3	M 1	
Chanteurs (ses)	3-H	3-H	4-H		2-H	
Danseurs (ses)	8-F	4-F	6-F	5-F	2-F	34*
Musiciens (nes)	1-H	1-H	1-H	3-F		2-H
Techniciens	4-H	2-H		2-H	1-H	
Autres	1-H 2-F	1-H 3-F	1-F	2-F	1-F	1-F
Total des participants per famille	19	14	12	10	7	38
Total des familles du centre	62					
GRAND TOTAL	62 + 38 = 100					

A look at the general makeup of these families (Table 5), shows the genealogies crossing (K 1 married to K 3 and N 1; various Ca 1) in several places. We decided to treat the largest grouping, K 1 and 3, as a single "family tree", in particular because one key informant, member of K 3, was the spouse of a member of K 1 (the largest group), while at least two others also showed up in both through intermarriage. By looking at the participants from this point of view, we were able to locate most participants over and above their actual surnames, and to clarify the participation of persons from outside Shannon. These turned out to be relatives, within one or two direct generations, of one of the five core families. On the other hand (Table 6), those families for whom we could find no link, however tenuous, to the core families, were *all* residents of Shannon. The two exceptions were the dance teacher from Montreal and the well-known traditional fiddler, who happens to be living in Stoneham (see map). We thus find family coming first and community second as a basis for participation in the show.

TABLE 5
CORE FAMILIES AND AFFINES

Core Family		Spouse	No. of Participants
K 1	Christine	Roy D	2
	Charlotte	1	
	Clive	Shirley A (fr)	4
	Dale	Frank F jr	4
	Karen	Peter N 2	2
	King	Patricia Ca 1	1
	Patrick	Patricia Co 3	2
	Louisa	(daughter Ena Mu)	2
K 2	Donald	Doreen Sa	3
	Rosita	Jim Ke	4
	Shirley	William L	2
	Terrence	Kathy J	2
	Kathleen	Earl Co 3	
K 3	Allan	Rose Co 2	3
	Jim	Theresa Ca 1	6
	Michael	Sherril K 1	1
	Effie	John K 1 (+)	1
N 1	Betty		1
	Danny	Elaine K 1	4
	Dave	Karen McK	1
	Jack	Kathy B (fr)	2
	Michael	Mona Co 2	1
	Terrence	Marcelle Ca 2 (fr)	5
M 1	Roy (+)	Maureen Co 1	2
	Diane	Douglas H	3
[Co 1	Martin	Mary Ca 1	2]

TOTAL: 5 Core families with a total of 60 participants (with one affine plus 2 = 62)

(Source: Monique Simard)

TABLE 6
SECONDARY FAMILIES

Residence	Families	Language	No. of Participants
Shannon	8	French	9
Shannon	10	English	27
Montreal	Dance Teacher	English	1
Stoneham	Fiddler	English	1

TOTAL: 18 Secondary families with a total of 36 participants (2+ outsiders = 38)

(Source: Monique Simard)

In conclusion, I shall return to the linguistic factor. Within the core families, we find 3 francophone spouses as participants, while 9 other francophone participants are drawn from the community, giving a total proportion of 88/12 in favour of anglophone participation. We noted at the beginning of this paper that the present linguistic composition of the village is roughly 60/40 in favour of the francophone element. Our past research has shown that francophone audience participation is also heavily biased in favour of family members or friends as reasons for attendance, even when the person is unable to understand spoken English (jokes, announcements, etc.). Thus, the Shannon show may be said to represent a continuing effort to maintain the cohesion of the anglophone population in the face of an increasing francophone presence. Tess Leblanc, in her research, is finding certain correlations between the choice of the language of education and of work, and the acquisition of different performance skills. Our future research will look further into the importance of family and community interaction for the survival of traditional anglophone and Irish culture in the Shannon area.

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