

## Culture

# Robert A. STEBBINS, *The Franco-Calgarians. French Language, Leisure, and Linguistic Lifestyle in an Anglophone City*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994, 152 pages



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[See table of contents](#)

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Weaver turns the focus to Australian Aborigines. She argues that the Australian nation-state, by taking a strong interventionist role in associations that are supposed to be political organs for Aboriginal peoples, has rendered these ineffectual for both Aboriginal and government purposes, thus reversing the cause of self-determination for Fourth World peoples in Australia.

Several case studies deal with the manipulation of cultural symbols and invention of the past in constructing ethnic identities, as well as the shifting nature of ethnic boundaries. In Malaysia the dominant group privileges itself through official sanctioning of Malay identity which is based in part on a presumed status as "sons of the soil." Nagata also shows, however, that certain ethnic markers such as language and religion induce attempts at "conversion" to Malay identity by others seeking the same privileged status. Levin's discussion of Nigeria, commonly portrayed as a nation of three major ethnic groups – Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani – shows how national identity was constructed around the manipulation of symbols that allowed 200 ethnic groups to be symbolically reduced to three, while the ethnic tensions that led to the Nigerian civil war were not as easily dismissed.

The volume as a whole addresses a wide range of issues showing the complexities and contradictions surrounding ethnicity, aboriginality and desires for ethnonationalism. The studies show that while ethnonationalist claims question the very validity of existing states, these states are a major factor in creating, defining and understanding struggles toward ethnonationalism. The volume does have a message regarding the challenge of ethnonationalism in the modern world, which is that governments must be able to reassess their histories and extend their cultural definitions of citizenship. As expressed by Levin: "It is clear that the state, if accommodating, if not tied to a narrow nationalism, may open a society to cultural diversity" (p. 177).

Robert A. STEBBINS, *The Franco-Calgarians. French Language, Leisure, and Linguistic Lifestyle in an Anglophone City*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994, 152 pages.

By Louis-Jacques Dorais

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Stebbins' book aims at understanding the reasons why francophones living in the big Canadian cities wish to preserve their language, and what means are used to reach that goal. He takes Calgary as an example. In 1991, this metropolitan area of some 600,000 inhabitants had 10,535 residents whose first language was French, plus 3,955 more who claimed French as one of their two or three mother tongues. In this way, Calgary was typical of modern French Canada (outside Québec, eastern Ontario, and northern New Brunswick, that is), whose original rural communities had been almost completely replaced by French speaking urban dwellers, living in the country's major metropolises.

The author's main argument is that the linguistic goals of the Canadian francophones are fourfold: language maintenance; transmission of the language to their children; individual growth through the use of French; development of the francophone collectivity. Extended fieldwork in Calgary shows that these goals are principally reached thanks to leisure activities, that is, all those undertakings that are not defined as being primarily utilitarian (like domestic tasks) and/or obligatory (like work). With the collapse of the rural and semi-rural communities, where most activities were conducted in French, it is mainly through leisure that the modern Canadian francophones can develop a linguistic life-style within which their mother tongue plays an important part.

Stebbins' book describes various aspects of this life-style: running francophone schools; helping with the children's activities; using French in one's own social life; taking part in the francophone community organizations; being present at special events; etc. The author concludes that for most francophones, the French environment "consists in interaction in French at home, at school, at church and in the clubs and organizations, much of which is essentially a leisure environment" (p. 120). The foundation of the urban *francophonie* is a spontaneous informal world, that will not fall if the formal world (best exemplified by the federal pro-

grams for French minorities) shuts down. Fieldwork shows that such an informal francophone world can even survive within mixed Anglo-French families. Stebbins thus concludes that the future of French in anglophone Canadian cities is less endangered than is usually thought.

The book is interesting and clearly written. Except for a very few sections (for example the digression on the various types of leisure activities (pp. 54-58), which is too long and not really useful), I really enjoyed reading it. The description of the four goals of the Canadian *francophonie* seems sound enough, although a discussion of the underlying social foundations of these goals (what social and cultural phenomena motivate them?), one drawing on ethnicity and identity theories, would have been appreciated.

Stebbins breaks new ground in the study of Canadian francophones. Current research appears to confirm his findings. For instance, an ongoing M.A. study (by Stéphane Cloutier, Université Laval) of the francophone community in Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay), the "metropolis" (with 3,500 inhabitants!) of the Canadian Eastern Arctic, shows that leisure activities play a crucial part in maintaining this tiny *francophonie* well alive. Another M.A. thesis (submitted to Université Laval by Michel Bouchard in 1993) outlines the demise of the rural francophone communities in the Peace River area (northern Alberta), and their replacement, in a new semi-urbanized setting, by various types of individual French or bilingual identities. Stebbins' book thus exemplifies a new type of exciting studies on modern Canadian francophones.

Stanley R. BARRETT, *Paradise. Class, Commuters, and Ethnicity in Rural Ontario*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994, 315 pages.

By Augie Fleras

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Ethnographies are best when they "grapple" with commonly held misconceptions about the nature of social life. This study by Stanley Barrett of a rural Ontario community near Toronto falls into that envied category, and confirms again that riveting styles of field research – as exotic and bizarre as anywhere in the world – can be conducted in our own backyards.

In general, the ethnography addresses the nature and meaning of "community" in a changing and diverse world. More specifically, the research focuses on the dynamics of social change when filtered through the variables of stratification, migration, and ethnicity, and their collective impact on a small community that Barrett calls "Paradise." The magnitude of these transformations is revealed through a "controlled" comparison of Paradise during the 1950s decade with that of the 1980s. Particular emphasis is directed at how power shifted from a handful of established families to that of an outside bureaucracy, with a new breed of merchants to complicate matters; how the flow of migration was reversed as people from the city moved to Paradise (and back again) for various reasons; and how the Anglo-dominated elite – however reluctantly – had to move over and make space for racial and ethnic minorities. Three themes anchor this "before-and-after" ethnography. The first, entitled "Paradise Lost" delves into the demise of Paradise from the perspectives of the "natives." Conceptual issues pertaining to stratification and social class are introduced, then applied to prevailing patterns of inequality in Paradise. The second part called "Paradise Found" explores the often ambiguous experiences encountered by "newcomers." Efforts by commuters to balance the demands of "community" with pull of the "city" are analyzed and discussed. The third and last part, "Perfect Strangers," revolves about the ethnicization of Paradise. Minority viewpoints are contrasted with majority perceptions, in the process exposing prejudicial discrepancies and barely concealed dislikes.

Barrett takes considerable delight in debunking several myths about rural living. Romantic notions of a quaint folk, both honest and generous, do not hold up to scrutiny. Instead of a bucolic and tranquil community, Paradise then and now is pervaded by a rigid stratification, with undercurrents of hostility that pit elites against the poor, natives against newcomers, British against non-British, women against men, and young against old. Commuters are shown to have chosen Paradise not because of an anticipated improvement in the quality of life, but to enhance domestic purchasing power or to escape big city problems. Indifference towards outsiders is not what many would expect in rural community; curiously enough, newcomers tend to outpoint the natives in demonstrating dislike of certain racial and ethnic minorities. Even the distinction between rural and