

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

PETER S. LI, *Destination Canada: Immigration Debates and Issues*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. 2003, 228 p.

This book is similar to many texts written on North American immigration in that it weaves together demographical analysis, historical trends, and theoretical explanations of immigration. It also reflects Li's continued critical analysis of the immigration process and experience in the Canadian context. This is no more apparent than in his chapter on "The Social Construction of Immigrants" where he states that "how immigrants are incorporated into Canadian society also depends on the ideological preference and conceptual bias of long time Canadians" (38). Here Li is placing an important, and often overlooked, emphasis on the role that native born Canadians' perceptions have on the relative success or failure of certain immigrant groups. Li uses bureaucratic, folkloric, and analytical definitions to assess the social constructionist argument. The bureaucratic definition becomes important when considering whether the migrant is "selected" or "admitted." The popular viewpoint is that economic, or "selected," migrants are more desirable than family class or refugee migrants which are "admitted." A less defined, but no less important, dimension is the "folk version" (44) of the concept of immigration which Li says "suggests that despite the official policy of multiculturalism, new immigrants from a different culture are expected to comply with the cultural and normative standards of Canadian society" (49). By all accounts, Li's work, which fuses public discourse on immigration with more traditional bureaucratic and demographic analysis, is quite rare, and is therefore invaluable for understanding the prejudice and discrimination which many "visible" immigrant groups experience.

Destination Canada brings the immigration question within the Canadian context up to date with statistics from the 1996 Canadian Census. The ever changing nature of immigration requires a constant revisiting of timely data, and I think that Peter Li does that quite nicely. The demographic changes inherent in any country whose foreign born population approaches 20% of its population necessitates a continuous critical dialogue. In the current climate of international conflict, poverty and uncertainty in many parts of the world, Canada's role as a receiving nation must continue to have a voice. The academic community has an obligation to generate accurate and well-rounded perceptions of the immigration debate as it relates to Canada and Canadians. *Destination Canada* is a useful text because it combines history, policy, critical social thought, demography, and immigration and racial theory. The diversity of viewpoints Li brings

forth in addressing immigration and racial/ethnic dynamics succinctly reiterates the idea that this inherently demographic activity, the movement of people from one nation to another, is also an important social phenomenon.

For the student of immigration, and migration more generally, the process can become overwhelming; thus a text which brings forth the necessary information in a clear, concise and pertinent manner is invaluable. To this end Li utilises very readable tables and graphs and reserves more bulky data tables for the appendix. Moreover, the student of racial and ethnic relations will find this book informative in their work since it underscores the importance in understanding demographic change through immigration, both historically and currently. Last, those interested in urban sociology in Canada will find Li's Chapter 8 ("Immigrants and the City") to be very informative in highlighting the important trends related to immigrants and urban life. Not only does he present a cohesive demographic picture, but he also exposes readers to the richness of ethnic enclaves present in cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. A particularly interesting section (153-157) addresses challenges that the school system faces in accommodating a large number of children whose mother tongue is neither English or French.

I recommend this book for mid- to upper-level undergraduate courses on the immigration of Canada since it is neither overly technical or jargonistic. Those new to studying immigration will find it useful for the nice overview of historical trends, important concepts, and the longstanding controversies inherent in any study of immigration. The more seasoned immigration reader will not feel alienated either, since Li's inclusion of issues such as immigration and the public discourse, and the experience of the urban Canadian immigrant are well done.

Darcy Hango *The Ohio State University*

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