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Rémy Tremblay^a, Susan Hardwick^a & Jamie O'Neill^a

^a University of Quebec

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Academic Migration at the Canada–US Border

Rémy Tremblay, Susan Hardwick, and Jamie O’Neill

University of Quebec

This article uses data provided by national faculty directories, individual and departmental websites, interviews, and autobiographical essays to engage the literature on academic migration at the Canada–US borderland. Our goal is to analyze the cross-border migration, spatial patterns, and motivational factors shaping the cross-border flows of academic migrants from one selected discipline. Following a foundational discussion of the related political, economic, and sociocultural push–pull factors influencing the migration of university faculty in Canada and the US during the past four decades, we focus on a case study of two comparative groups of academic migrants to compare the numbers, specializations, academic ranks, location patterns, and interrelated factors of North American academic migrants at the borderlands in recent years.

Keywords: academic migration; Canada; US; borderland; geography

Introduction

In academia, we often have little control over where we end up living. For junior scholars, going on the job market is exciting and terrifying, and almost feels like playing roulette. For Canadian scholars, landing that job at “home” can be especially difficult due to the limited number of faculty positions available. (Swanson 2014, 28)

There are currently more Americans residing in Canada and more Canadians living in the US than at any time since the Vietnam War-era (Statistics Canada 2011; US Bureau of the Census 2010).¹ What role have academic migrants played in this increasingly large flow across the Canada–US border and what push–pull factors shaped the decision-making of these mobile academics during the past four decades? To answer this overarching question, this article uses the increasingly large literature on skilled migration—and data gleaned from autobiographical essays, interviews, two national faculty directories, the Association of American Geographers’ (AAG) *Clearinghouse* (2010a), and individual and departmental websites to examine the comparative numbers, patterns, and migration experiences of two groups of cross-border university faculty in one selected discipline—Canadian and American geographers. We assumed at the outset that the earning potential of faculty and other financial benefits of faculty at Canadian universities as compared to colleges and universities in the US as well as the parity of the US and Canadian dollar in recent years may have resulted in a large number of academic migrants from the US in Canada at this particular borderland in recent years. But what other political, economic, and sociocultural factors may also have influenced their cross-border flows northward over the years—and how do the patterns, numbers, and motivations of today’s Canadian and American academic migrants compare?

To address each of these related questions, we focus attention in this article on two groups of migrants: (1) Canadian tenured or tenure track faculty at PhD-granting universities in the US; and (2) tenure or tenure track geographers from the US at PhD-granting institutions in Canada.² To provide a larger context for understanding the cross-border migration of these two comparative groups, the historical and contemporary flows of academic migrants as a whole across the 49th parallel during the past four decades is presented in the next section. We then “place” the more detailed story of academic geographers from Canada and the US within this larger context in the analysis that follows. In the concluding section of the article, we offer a few predictions about the numbers and patterns of academic migrants in North America in the years to come and discuss a number of promising avenues for future research that build on the outcome of our work.

There is currently a growing body of work on global skilled migration (see, for example, the work of Kofman 2011; Ackers 2005; Smith and Favell 2006). Although academic migrants form only a small part of this much larger flow of international highly skilled migrants in many parts of the world today, we limit our analysis to cross-border university faculty in Canada and the US for several reasons. First and foremost is the importance of the locational proximity of these two neighboring nation states. Due to the ease of crossing this shared international border, we expected to find a large number of cross-border faculty in both Canada and the US for this analysis. We likewise assumed that the use of the English language in the majority of universities in these two neighboring nation states would also have encouraged numerous cross-border faculty hires over the years. Third, both Canada and the US are large immigrant receiving nations—with Canada home to the second largest number of international migrants per capita in the world (after Australia), and the US home to the most total foreign-born residents overall (Statistics Canada 2011; US Bureau of the Census 2010). Thus, we also assumed that their shared immigration history would likewise predict a particularly large number of academic migrants in both places. Finally, the open border-crossing policies in place at the 49th parallel (despite increasingly restrictive policies following the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001), would also predict a larger than average number of academic migrants in both the US and Canada today. Only time will tell whether or not these current border-crossing policies that target certain visible ethnic and racial groups (and others who are deemed “suspicious” or “dangerous” by border guards), will increase or decrease the number of borderland migrants in the years to come.

Data sources, methodologies, and research design

A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data analyzed in this study. We began by compiling a set of baseline quantitative data on the number, location, rank, and academic specializations of all geography faculty in the US and Canada in 2010–11 from faculty listings by department provided in the Association of American Geographer’s *2010–2011 Guide to Geography Programs in the Americas* and the online *Canadian Association of Geographers Directory/L’Annuaire de l’Association Canadienne des Geographes* for this same year. The next step was to develop a list of tenured and tenure track faculty in each department who were Canadian and US-born. Since information on place of birth is often confidential information, national membership directories do not provide this important information for faculty. As a result, we then examined information about place of birth (if available), location where each person’s PhD was completed, and other related information provided on faculty and/or departmental web sites to accurately determine the

national identity of each faculty on our two lists. In some of the most elusive cases, we contacted individual faculty in a follow up e-mail message to inquire about their place of birth to later be used anonymously in this study.

Qualitative information was then compiled from autobiographical narratives submitted for our study by Canadian geographers in US geography departments and American geographers in Canada (although we are well aware that concerns may arise about the objectivity of information compiled and analyzed from qualitative data sources such as autobiographical essays). We, therefore, followed a carefully established plan for selecting our participants for the phase of the research reported on in this article. First, faculty submitting autobiographical essays were selected from our compiled list of all tenure and tenure track faculty from the US who currently teach in geography departments in Canada, and Canadian geographers listed as tenure or tenure track faculty in US geography departments. We then sent personal invitations sent to everyone on these two lists to ascertain their potential interest in contributing an essay for our study.³ Each contributor was encouraged to submit a succinct essay that focused on the following specific migration-related themes: push-pull factors influencing their migration decision-making; role of the department or university's reputation in the decision to migrate; attraction of the physical environment; and personal and professional impacts of the decision to migrate following relocation on the other side of the border. In the end, a total of nine completed essays were submitted—four from American geographers in Canada and five from Canadian geography faculty who reside in the US. To protect their identity, no names are revealed for any of the faculty who submitted autobiographical essays or were contacted for this study. In addition, all of the qualitative data used in the analysis that follows is reported in a discursive narrative style to preclude identification of individual participants, their place of birth, their universities, and all other personal information.

We also supplemented our findings with secondary sources on the impacts of political, economic, and educational change in Canada and the US during the past half century to help contextualize and de-personalize findings from primary data sources. Secondary sources on the current and historical status of geography in higher education in the US and Canada proved especially useful in providing a larger context for our analysis (see, for example, Murphy 2007).

Theoretical underpinnings

A growing body of scholarly work has been accomplished on skilled migration in recent years. In most cases, however, "skilled migrants" are lumped together into one homogenous group of mobile professionals who are on the move in much the same way as capital and trade are in today's rapidly globalizing world (see Castells 2000; Taylor 2004). In the often cited language of Castells (2000) and other related theorists, in fact, "the virtual 'space of flows' on which new global networks of capital and trade are based, must also be peopled by mobile persons, who, it is assumed, are embodied by the world's growing cadre of international highly skilled migrants" (as cited in Smith and Favell 2006, cited in Beaverstock 2002). Analyses of this increasingly large group of global skilled migrants, however, address a diverse variety of kinds of workers including scientists, employees of multinational corporations, technical workers, clerical assistants, nurses, and others who range from global elites to struggling labor migrants and asylum seekers (Hardill and MacDonald 2000; Bhagwati and Hanson 2009). During the past decade or so, one important part of this growing body of work on the migration flows and impacts of what has come to be known as "international skilled migrants" or, by other scholars, as

“global elites,” are analyses of the migration flows and motivations of academic migrants (who are not usually referred to as part of the global elite or migrants at the other end of the spectrum of impoverished skilled laborers).

Due to this often invisible “middle” status, our findings for this project revealed that academic migrants have all too often been overlooked in this larger literature on skilled migration. Of particular note has been the paucity of human-scale work on the migration, settlement, and adjustment experiences of academic migrants at the micro-level. Thus, although important work on professional class skilled migrants has been accomplished by population geographers and demographers, and scholars in other related fields (such as Blumenthal et al. 1996; Dervin 2011; Virwiebe et al. 2010), the majority of this prior work has focused on the macro-scale flows of skilled migrants from and to certain parts of the world such as the countries in the European Union and Australia (see, for example, Cornelius, Esplanshade, and Salehyan 2001; Kofman 2011; Peixoto 2001; Ackers 2005; Scott 2006; Potts 2005; Goss and Lindquist 1995; Iredale 2001; Stahl 1993; Stalker 2000). Published work on skilled professional class, or academic migration in other parts of the world such as the US and Canada, however, is still in short supply.

The analysis presented here on the patterns and motivations of academic migrants across the Canada–US border will help fill this gap. We also hope to draw attention to the importance of micro-scale research, especially the important role of human agency and human preferences in shaping the decision-making of academic migrants. These important “up, close, and personal” migration-shaping factors, along with meso-scale factors (such as participation in educational and/or other professional networks), may then, in turn, be responses to state-based policies and institutions located at the macro-scale. In addition to these interrelated micro-, meso-, and macro-scale factors, as Theobald’s important work on academic migrants points out (2009), individual motivations also result from a long list of personal considerations based on a migrant’s gender, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, and/or prior experience living abroad.

At the same time, it is also important for research on academic migration to consider the perceptions and realities of life abroad and the overall context of the particular community, university, and department that academic migrants will adjust to on a long term basis. This “relational approach” to understanding the complexities of academic migration adds depth and important nuance to our findings on the migration decision-making and experiences of geography faculty in North America as one piece of the much larger flow of skilled migrants in the world today.

Migration at the Canada–US borderlands

As mentioned earlier, there are currently more Americans residing in Canada and more Canadians living in the US than at any time in the last 40 years. Adding to their total numbers was a wave of Americans who left their homeland to migrate to Canada to escape the ultra-conservative policies of the US government during the US presidency of George W. Bush (Kobayashi and Ray 2006; Hardwick and Smith 2011). In more recent years, Americans have continued to leave the US for Canada in a similar search for more liberal social service policies, an efficient universal health care system, supportive legislation for Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, and strict gun control policies north of the border (Baram 2007; Hardwick and Mansfield 2009; Jedwab 2008; Kobayashi and Ray 2006). This ongoing northward flow has long been dominated by white, professional class American migrants (Hardwick and Smith 2011).

At the same time, a counterflow of skilled Canadian workers continued to migrate into the US (Belanger and Belanger 1999; Simpson 2000; Tremblay 2003, 2006; Tremblay and Chicoine 2011). Beginning in the mid-1990s, this surge southward was the direct result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) legislation, since special NAFTA visas made it possible for skilled workers from Canada to relocate to the US in greater numbers than during any prior decade (Hardwick and Smith 2011; Simpson 2000). It is predicted that even larger numbers of Canadian and American cross-border migrants will continue to settle in Canada and the US in the coming years because of the even more open borderland policy agreements put in place in early 2012 after passage of the “US–Canadian Action Plan on Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness” (*Backgrounder* 2012).

The most American-rich places in Canada are the cities of Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, and Halifax. A significant number of Vietnam-era war resisters and their families also cluster in rural places in Canada such as Nelson in the remote Kooteney Mountains in southeastern British Columbia. In the US, Canadians currently reside in large numbers in the Los Angeles area and New York City, and also in second tier cities in border states (such as Seattle and Minneapolis) for permanent residency abroad (Simpson 2000; Cooper and Grieco 2009; Hardwick and Smith 2011). Other temporary migrants from Canada who reside in the US part time each year include winter “snowbirds” who primarily live in the US Sun Belt states such as Florida (Simpson 2000; Tremblay 2006; Hardwick and Smith 2011). Both Anglophone and Francophone Canadians favor Florida and other Sun Belt locations for climatic and economic reasons with Québécois concentrating along the eastern coast of Florida, in a vernacular region Tremblay calls *Floribec*, and English-speaking Canadians more likely to reside in beachside communities located along Florida’s Gulf Coast (Tremblay 2003, 2006; Tremblay and Chicoine 2011).

Along with political refugees, NAFTA job-seekers, retirees, and snowbirds, Canadian–American migration waves during the past four decades have also included a significantly large number of academic migrants. Of particular note were US faculty who sought positions at Canadian universities beginning in the late 1960s (Axelrod 1982; Blumenthal et al. 1996). Faculty in all subject areas was desperately needed during this time period because of the rapid expansion of higher education in Canada in the post–World War II years. This period of unprecedented growth in higher education in Canada created a pressing need to recruit university faculty from abroad to help meet the demands of the large number of post-war undergraduate students interested in earning college degrees. As in the US, the dramatic growth of higher education in Canada was part of the larger wave of overall economic expansion in North America that occurred in the decades after World War II.

Despite this period of dramatic economic growth in the post-war years, however, there were far fewer demands for faculty hires from abroad in the US than in Canada. Several factors limited the need for foreign-born faculty at US institutions at the time. By the mid-1960s, the number of “home-grown” PhDs south of the border far outpaced the demand for faculty needed to staff classrooms for eager students—with a surplus for the first time in US history. Despite the massive growth in the size and numbers of higher education institutions in the US in the 1950s and 1960s (due to overall economic expansion in the post-World War II years and the surge of funding for public universities created by the US government’s concerns about keeping pace for the Soviet Union in math and science during the post-Sputnik years), as discussed in a provocative and timely publication entitled *Academics in Retreat* (Fashing and Deutsch 1971), at the end of a 15-year hiring boom in the early 1970s, most faculty in the US faced limited opportunities to relocate to

other US universities for higher paid or more prestigious academic positions (Thelin 2004, 331).

In contrast, Canada still had far from enough trained faculty to meet the needs of the nation's rapidly expanding colleges and universities during the 1960s and 1970s. The overabundance of new PhDs in the US, and the large number of unfilled faculty positions in Canada, escalated the northward flow of academics up through the early 1980s. There was a greater need for new faculty in Canada at this time due to the slower pace of change in producing enough PhDs at Canadian universities as compared to the number of doctoral level students graduating from institutions in the US (*Spinks Report 1965*, 23–25). According to H.E. Petch, “between 1963 and 1968, Canadian universities awarded PhDs to only 3,741 candidates in all fields, leaving about 7,500 additional academic positions to be filled from other sources (1969, 8–9). D. Brown's book, *The Mobile Professors* (1967), provides additional information on the vast pool of American faculty upon which Canada was soon to draw during this time period. His research focused on 28,000 US professors employed in Canada during academic year 1963–64 (the year that immediately preceded the beginning of the largest flow of academic migrants from the US to Canada in history). Brown found that although only 672 US faculty relocated to Canada in 1964, the number had nearly doubled by only one year later with more than 1,000 new US faculty hired in Canada each year throughout the next decade.

As a result, US citizens made up at least 21 percent of all Humanities faculty, 20 percent of Social Science faculty, and 8 percent of Science faculty in Canada by the late 1960s (Mathews and Steele 1969). American faculty, especially in the “culturally sensitive” disciplines like the Social Sciences and Humanities, were presumed to have the greatest potential to negatively influence Canadian students by inculcating them with American values and pedagogical approaches. In the years to come, these perceived negative impacts of this *Americanization* of Canadian students by US faculty became an issue of grave concern to politicians, educational administrators, Canadian university faculty, and other decision-makers.

It is important to note that almost all of these early academic migrants from the US taught at universities in English Canada due to the challenges of the French language in Québec and other French-speaking universities in Canada (such as the Université de Moncton in New Brunswick). Our findings indicate that this general rule no longer applies in the early years of the twenty-first century (based on our findings discussed later in this article), with geography departments in several Quebec universities today including a number of US-born faculty.

After a number of failed attempts to establish quotas designed to place numerical restrictions on the number of US faculty in Canada, this movement achieved its goal in 1981 when new legislation approved by Canada's Department of Immigration gave preference to hiring Canadian citizens for all university teaching positions in Canada. This newly mandated requirement was seen as a major victory in the national effort to stem the tide of new arrivals from the south (although in rare cases it was possible to go around these requirements when a department was able to present a strong enough case for hiring a foreign scholar) (Gingras 2010). These new “Canada First!” hiring policies also encouraged university administrators and faculty to spread the word about the critical importance of training PhD-level teachers and scholars at home as yet another way of preventing the arrival of more American academics at Canadian universities. As a result, the total number of PhD degrees awarded in Canada in all disciplines increased

significantly up to the end of the 1990s, thereby slowing the need for faculty hires from abroad in Canada in the years that followed.

Despite these successful efforts to hire Canadians to fill open academic positions in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s, there has actually been a significant decrease in the number of Canadian citizens hired for academic positions in Canada during the past decade or so (Cormier 2003). According to a study compiled by Gingras (2010), this decrease is at least partially the result of the dominant university rhetoric today that may be most clearly summarized in the buzzwords *excellence* and *internationalization*. Since this rhetoric often equates excellence with international, according to Gingras, hiring foreign US scholars for faculty positions at Canadian universities has again increased ushering in an era that reverses the earlier anti-American hiring pendulum.

In an effort to codify this most recent shift, the federal government adjusted hiring regulations for Canadian universities again in 2003. However, this time the new rules addressed Canada's favored discourse on internationalization and overall faculty excellence. As a result, Canadian universities are no longer restricted to advertising faculty positions only inside Canada, thereby making it easier for foreigners to become aware of open positions. Adding to this recent move to hire more international scholars in Canada is the parity of the US and Canadian dollar in the post-recession years. This, too, has encouraged economically aware applicants to choose between staying in their homeland or relocating abroad. These financial considerations, along with the new Canada Research Chair program (whose goal is attracting the "best minds" in the world for Canadian universities) and the more open Canadian legislation discussed above, continue to encourage Americans and other foreign-born faculty to apply for positions at universities in Canada in recent years. All of these factors make the findings discussed in the following section related to the unexpectedly small number of academic geographers from the US who now reside in Canada quite surprising.

Mobile geography faculty in North America

In 2011, there were 24 geography departments with PhD programs in Canada and 67 PhD level geography departments in the US. Overall, as shown on Tables 1 and 2, the total number of US faculty in geography departments at PhD-granting universities in Canada and Canadian geography faculty in doctoral level institutions in the US is surprisingly small, especially considering our expected findings related to the close proximity and relatively open border crossing policies separating these two neighboring nation states. As shown here, only 14 of the 21 total US departments analyzed for this study and 14 of the 62 PhD-granting geography departments in Canada include faculty from the other side of the Canada–US border. Likewise, the total number of cross-border faculty in all PhD-granting departments in each place features fewer Canadian geographers overall in all US PhD-level departments as compared to the total number of American geography faculty in Canadian departments. As Table 1 indicates, there are only 24 Canadian geographers out of 291 total faculty in all of the doctoral level geography departments in the US analyzed in our study. Similarly, as shown in Table 2, out of a grand total of 335 total faculty in all of the Canadian departments included in this study, only 29 are from the US.

It is especially surprising to note this small number of US faculty in geography departments in Canada since most Canadian departments are larger than their US counterparts. Although there are more PhD-granting departments in the US than in Canada, geography departments north of the border have more faculty overall. In addition, almost all Canadian research universities offer a PhD in geography while this is decidedly not the case in the US. Along with these differences in the size and status of geography in higher

Table 1. Geography Faculty from Canada at Ph.D.-granting Universities in the U.S., 2010–2011.

University	Canadian	PhD in Canada	Total
Univ. of Minnesota, Twin Cities	3	1	20
SUNY, Buffalo	3	0	16
Univ. of N. Carolina, Charlotte	3	0	32
Ohio State University	2	1	24
San Diego State Univ.	2	1	18
Univ. of Hawai'i	2	0	16
Texas A & M Univ.	2	0	24
Univ. of Toledo	1	1	10
Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison	1	1	13
Indiana Univ.	1	0	12
Univ. of Calif., Santa Barbara	1	0	35
Univ. of Colorado	1	0	25
Syracuse	1	0	15
Texas State Univ.	1	0	31
Totals	14	5	291

Source: *Survey of Geography Departments in North America*, Association of American Geographers, 2010–2011.

Table 2. Geography Faculty from the U.S. at Ph.D.-granting Universities in Canada, 2010–2011.

University	U.S.	Ph.D in U.S.	Total
University of Toronto	9	14	50
York University	4	10	30
Univ. of British Columbia	4	11	27
McGill University	2	11	24
Université de Montreal	1	3	13
Univ. of W. Ontario	1	6	29
Univ. of Calgary	1	6	20
Memorial University	1	1	21
Univ. of Ottawa	1	2	17
Queens University	1	9	17
Université Laval	1	1	15
McMaster University	1	3	27
Univ. of Victoria	1	2	23
Simon Fraser University	1	12	22
Totals	29	88	335

Source: *Membership Directory*, Canadian Association of Geographers, 2010–2011.

education in Canada as compared to the US, the discipline is also more important in the grades K-12 curriculum in Canada and in undergraduate programs at colleges and universities. The majority of Canadian universities include geography degree programs, even most Tier 1 (medical) universities.

Specializations

Despite their relatively small numbers, cross-border faculty in North American geography departments come from a wide range of teaching and research specializations. As shown in Table 3 below, although the number of faculty in each of the three academic ranks are

Table 3. 'Can-Am' Cross-Border Geography Faculty at Ph.D.-granting Institutions: Academic Specializations and Ranks, 2010–2011*.

Specialization	Canadian Departments	U.S. Departments
Total Geographers	29	24
Physical Geographers	11	17
Human-Environmental	1	2
Biogeography	3	0
Climate Change	1	0
Political Ecology	1	1
Geomorphology	1	2
Environmental	1	5
Hydrology	0	3
Climate	2	4
Geochemistry	1	0
Human Geographers	16	5
Political	4	1
Regional	0	2
Cultural	3	2
Economic	4	0
Urban	3	0
Globalization	2	0
GIS	2	1
Geospatial Techniques	1	0
GIS	1	1
Ph. D Year	Canadian Departments	U.S. Departments
2000s	10	12
1990s	12	8
1980s	3	1
1970s	1	3
1960s	1	0
Academic Rank	Canadian Dept.	U.S. Dept.
Professor	6	5
Associate Professor	15	11
Assistant Professor	8	8

*Note that the total number of geography faculty shown above does not always add up to the number of Can-Am faculty listed in Tables 3 and 4. This discrepancy is due to a lack of access to data on the specializations and academic ranks of faculty in selected geography departments during our study.

Sources: *Survey of Geography Departments in North America*, Association of American Geographers, 2010–2011; *Membership Directory*, Canadian Association of Geographers, 2010–2011; and interviews with department chairs/heads and departmental and faculty websites.

remarkably similar on both sides of the border, the majority of the Canadian geographers who have relocated to US departments are physical geographers with specializations primarily in the subfields of environmental geography, hydrology, and climatology. In comparison, almost all of the US geographers in Canada's PhD level departments are human geographers. In addition to this human/physical borderland divide, it is important to note the research and teaching specializations in the field that are under-represented as shown in Table 3. Based on data compiled for our study, there were very few cross-border faculty with specializations in GIScience during AY 2010–11 despite the current importance of GIS in almost all North American geography departments.

What factors have shaped these differences and similarities in the specializations of academic migrants in Canada and the US? Interviews with the AAG career advisor indicated that one of the primary reasons why there are so few GIS specialists represented on the list of academic migrants is because such a large number of faculty positions are advertised each year in both the US and in Canada in this subfield of the discipline. These abundant GIS positions have become increasingly available throughout the past decade and a half, making them easy to fill by native-born applicants and/or other geographers hired from the large pool of GIS specialists from China and other Asian countries.

There may be several reasons for the dominance of Canadian physical geographers in US departments. One of the most important factors influencing physical geographers in Canada to seek a faculty position in the US is the larger number of US positions available in environmental geography than at Canadian universities. Thus, since this subfield of the discipline has become increasingly popular in recent years in the US, faculty searches for environmental geographers often attract a significantly large number of Canadian applicants, especially applicants with training in hydrology, climate change, and human-environment interaction as indicated in Table 3. Along with the draw of a good fit for these environmental geography positions may be the added attraction for physical geographers of the lucrative external funding opportunities for faculty research available to physical geographers in the US, especially research projects focusing on global climate change and other environmental concerns. This availability of grant funds from agencies such as the National Science Foundation as well as other internal funding opportunities for faculty whose research agendas focus on current issues such as climate change and natural hazards may also have contributed to the larger than expected number of environmental geographers (especially hydrologists, climatologists, and human-environmental scientists) among Canadian geographers in US departments.

Finally, we suggest that there are two related reasons for the preponderance of human geographers who left the US for faculty positions at Canadian universities. First, all but one of the geography programs at research institutions in Canada specialize in human geography, thereby encouraging human geography applicants for faculty positions there. Second, as discussed earlier, these human-focused departments in Canada are almost all significantly larger than geography departments housed at US universities. This factor also explains why there is a greater need for faculty specializing in political, cultural, economic, urban geography and other subfields of human geography in Canada than a need for physical geographers north of the border.

Location patterns

There are also significant differences in the comparative spatial patterns of North American universities that employ cross-border Canadian and American faculty. As might be assumed, in many cases departments located in closest proximity to the international border are home to the largest number of cross-border hires. South of the border, for example, the University of

Minnesota at Twin Cities and SUNY at Buffalo both have relatively large numbers of Canadian faculty. Since the majority of Canada's population (and therefore most of its cities and educational institutions), are located in close proximity to the US border, it is difficult if not impossible to credit location as the primary reason why certain departments such as the University of Toronto, York, or the University of British Columbia in Vancouver have more American faculty than other schools. Along with these borderland location patterns is the observable bi-national cluster of American and Canadian-rich PhD-granting geography departments located immediately north and south of Lake Ontario in Canada and the US. In this Ontario Can-Am node, universities such as State University of New York, Buffalo, and Syracuse University have Canadian geographers on their faculties, paralleling the host of Canadian universities north of the lake that are home to a significant number of American geographers such as the University of Toronto, York University, University of Ottawa, and McMaster University. However, the total number of US faculty in various departments in Canada also may relate to other factors such as the large size of certain departments overall (thereby encouraging more new hires over the years and thus provides greater opportunities for Americans and other international faculty to be hired over time).

Why leave home?

All faculty who participated in the autobiographical phase of this project reported that they left home primarily due to receiving a job offer at a university in Canada or the US. However, a number of other factors also helped shaped their migration decision-making. These include: (1) Lack of appropriate academic positions advertised at Canadian universities; (2) Attraction of warmer weather and climate in certain parts of the US as compared to Canada; (3) Ease of traveling back and forth to visit family and friends after relocation due to the proximity of the US to former homes in Canada; and (4) some other combination of economic, political, social, and/or cultural factors. Professional networking at regional meetings and conferences also help encourage the cross-border flow of academic migrants. The excerpts below from submitted autobiographical essays of Canadians who now reside in the US provide evidence of each of these factors:

Employment opportunities

As I was completing my dissertation, my search for faculty positions was narrowed to a few options in the United States. This was partly because the subfield of geography education is more developed and better funded in the US than in Canada. For this reason, the opportunities for a young scholar were much better abroad than at home (Huynh 2014, 71–72).

Climatic factors

Given that my job offer arrived close to the shortest day of the year [in my former home], when there are fewer than seven hours of daylight, diffused through low, thick clouds, my decision was not a difficult one (Swanson 2014, 29).

Proximity to friends and family at home

Several appealing factors were evident that would strengthen my interest and comfort level with this potential location for my career and personal life. First, its location meant that there would be a reasonable travel distance involved to maintain my personal and professional contacts [in Canada] and for my wife to have the ability to continue to visit her extended family (Lawrence 2014, 57).

American geography faculty in Canada also were attracted north primarily by job offers at Canadian universities. However, these other political, social, and environmental push–pull factors also helped encourage these Americans to move to Canada: more supportive social and economic policies (e.g. universal health care, strict gun control laws, supportive policies for gays and lesbians); perception of Canada as a global society with national policies supporting peacemaking efforts abroad (as opposed to the more militaristic policies of the US government); and attraction of other environmental and social amenities north of the border such as open space, wilderness, and low crime rates. The following insights into each of these motivational factors were provided in autobiographical essays written by geography faculty from the US who now reside in Canada.

Political and social factors

My move from the US to Canada was entirely typical in one respect. Like many Americans of my generation, my decision to settle in Canada was not motivated by economic considerations, but by a life-style choice grounded in my perception of Canada as a socially just, less violent, and generally more civilized society. (Polese 2014, 83)

Social factors

Put simply, I find Canada less homophobic than the US, both in terms of state policy and public perception. This is not to say that there is no homophobia in Canada—there certainly is. Nonetheless, attempts to limit the rights of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) folks do not occupy a pivotal space within national policy, legislative and popular debate and practice. . . (Lunstrum 2014, 110)

First, I was in active pursuit of a tenure track position, and this was a good job. . . . The decision was made, nonetheless, for personal reasons, as well. . . . Later on I discovered the importance of paid maternity leave—a right that was not questioned and did not have to be negotiated. (Martin 2014, 134)

As each of the quotes above illustrate, Can–Am migrants choose to leave home for new lives on the other side of the Canada–US border for a variety of different reasons. While most decide where to live based on where the jobs are (determined in any given year, of course, by the hiring needs of universities and departments, the outcome of local administrative approval processes, etc.), as evidenced by the quotes above, political and economic factors such as more liberal social and political policies in Canada as compared to the US also act as powerful attractions for job applicants. In contrast, Canadian migrants tend to be attracted southward primarily for economic or climatic reasons. These differences in the motivations of the American and Canadian migrants are in keeping with the findings of prior studies of migrants as a whole discussed earlier. A combination of employment opportunities and the draw of warm weather have attracted Canadian migrants to places such as the Sun Belt. Likewise, the primary factors involved in attracting many of the American geographers in Canada mirror the larger story of US immigrants in Canada. While most were motivated initially by employment opportunities, for some, permanent residency in Canada also served as an escape from more conservative US government policies and the perceived benefits of Canada’s universal health care, more supportive LGBTQ policies, and better funded social safety net.

Summary and conclusions

This comparative analysis of the numbers, patterns, motivations, and academic specializations and ranks of two groups of international faculty in one selected discipline revealed that a complex list of factors shaped both their decision to migrate north or south and the resultant contours of their current lives. These include economic factors such as the availability or lack of faculty jobs and comparative pay differentials at Canadian and US universities; political decisions such as federal preferences for hiring “Canadians First!” in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s (and later, the subsequent repeal of this policy a decade later); and personal decisions based on individual and family considerations and other micro-scale factors.

One of the most unexpected findings of this study is the small number of cross-border geographers in PhD-granting departments in both Canada and the US. This is particularly surprising given the much larger total population of other Can–Am migrants residing on both sides of the border. Also of note related to this unexpected finding is the overall spurt in the migration of Can–Am borderland migrants during the past decade.

Why have so few geography departments hired faculty from the other side of the 49th parallel in recent years despite more open hiring policies in Canada and the large size of cross-border flows into both Canada and the US during this same time period? Is this scarcity of Can–Am geography faculty in North American universities typical of hiring trends in other disciplines—or a trend that is unique to the discipline of geography? And how might the hiring trends of research universities in the US and Canada differ from the number and patterns of hires in teaching institutions north and south of the border? Further research on these and other related questions about foreign-born faculty at universities in Canada, the US, and elsewhere in the world is long overdue, especially for faculty hired during and immediately after the global recession (when dramatic cutbacks in university funding greatly hindered the growth of departments and new programs).

Research comparing the total number of native-born “diversity hires” as compared to foreign-born faculty building on the outcome of the foundational study reported on in this article are also needed. There is also a need to compile and analyze data on the number, patterns, and challenges of hiring “inbred” faculty in geography departments. A peripheral outcome of our research was learning that some departments in Canada and the US seem to favor hiring their own PhDs for faculty positions while other departments do not. This finding is a reminder that it is important to not only learn more about the impact of various faculty hiring trends in assessing the long-term health and growth of departments, it is also essential to analyze the ways that departmental and university policies relate to inbred hires as compared to policies shaping faculty hires from abroad.

There is also an overdue need to conduct a more in-depth study of the academic ranks of foreign faculty in various fields. As 1970s-era American faculty hired by Canadian universities prior to passage of “Canada First!” legislation enter retirement, how might the numbers of domestic hires as compared to the number of international faculty potentially change the cultures and hiring practices of departments in the years to come? Will Canadian universities continue to look to the US as the largest and closest source of foreign-born faculty—or will a preference for hiring Canadian citizens again take precedence in the decades to come?

Finally, the findings of our foundational study indicate that more work is needed on the post-migration adjustment experiences and return migration rates of cross-border faculty in North America and beyond. Despite the many shared linguistic, cultural, and economic systems linking Canada and the US, what are some of the challenges new faculty face following their relocation to the other side of the border? Evidence from prior research indicates that the majority of Canadians who leave their homeland for permanent

residency in the US have a strong desire to return to Canada with many returning home as quickly as possible if job opportunities north of the border arise. This finding is in stark contrast with the perceptions and experiences of many Americans in Canada who prefer to remain north of the border for a long period of time or even permanently. Little has been accomplished to date, however, on whether or not these same preferences and perceptions also hold true for academic migrants as for Can–Am migrants overall.

We hope that the outcome of this analysis of academic geographers who have migrated across the Canadian–US border lays a firm foundation for understanding the larger story of North American and other ongoing borderland flows, especially the motivations, patterns, and challenges faced by academic migrants at the borderland. Our findings point the way for other more in depth, micro-scale studies of this group of international highly skilled migrants in other disciplines in North America and beyond.

Notes

1. In this article, the terms “US” migrant and “American” migrants are used synonymously. We acknowledge that the term “American” encompasses all residents of the Americas, including Latin America. However, because people from the US who reside in Canada are referred to locally as “Americans,” we use this term to refer only to people from the US and not to all residents of both North and South America (due to its popular usage as such).
2. The term “Can–Am migrant” is also used in this article to refer to a combined group that includes: (a) all US immigrants who reside in or visit Canada; and (b) Canadian migrants who live in or visit the US. The use of this composite term describing migrant flows both north and south at the Canada–US border was first used in a book chapter entitled “Crossing the 49th Parallel: American Immigrants in Canada and Canadians in the U.S.” published in *Immigrants in Canadian and American Cities*, edited by C. Teixeira, W. Li and A. Kobayashi, 288–310. Oxford University Press Canada, 2011.
3. A manuscript for an edited volume featuring the complete text of each of the autobiographical essays quoted in this article is planned for future submission for publication.

Notes on contributors

Rémy Tremblay is associate professor of geography at TÉLUQ, the distance campus of the Université du Québec network. Between 2005 and 2010 he was a junior Canada Research Chair on the quality of life of knowledge cities. Professor Tremblay’s research focuses on attraction and retention of “talents” to Canadian cities, and Ottawa in particular, as well as Québec residents’ migration to Florida. He has authored or co-edited books on the geography of Canada (Peter Lang, 2013), the creative class (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), and “The Little Québec of Miami” (Presses de l’Université of Ottawa/University of Ottawa Press). He also published many articles on these topics.

Susan W. Hardwick, PhD, is a Professor Emerita in the department of geography at the University of Oregon. She is a past president of the National Council for Geographic Education and also served as coordinator of the Canadian Studies Consortium at the University of Oregon for many years. Professor Hardwick’s research focuses on the geography of immigration in the North American context. She has authored or co-edited 12 academic books and monographs and a long list of refereed journal articles and book chapters on the experiences, patterns, and incorporation of immigrants and refugees in Canada and the United States. Her most recent book (co-edited with Rémy Tremblay), is *Transnational Borders, Transnational Lives: Academic Mobility at the Borderlands* published by the University of Quebec Press in early 2014.

Jamie O’Neill is an advanced undergraduate student in the Geography Department at the University of Oregon. He served as the lead research assistant for this article. He also provided research assistance for a study of the migration, settlement, and incorporation of US-born immigrants in Montreal. He has lived in Europe and traveled widely in Canada and many other parts of the world.

Mr. O'Neill is currently working on a research project documenting and analyzing immigrant contributions to the Alaskan fishing industry.

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