Spatial Residential Patterns of Selected Ethnic Groups: Their Significance and Policy Implications

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ABSTRACT

This article investigate the spatial dimension of ethnic integration. The author is interested in the geographical distribution of ethnic groups in Canada, in immigrants' patterns of settlements, as well as in the possible causes, voluntary and involuntary, for the repetition of these patterns. Balakrishnan explores the relationship between ethnic residential segregation and such factors as prejudice and discrimination, social distance, lack of official language, social networks, and economic resources, which help shape the spatial organization of immigrant communities ethnic enclaves.

One of the striking features of contemporary Canadian population is its remarkable ethnic diversity. There are more than 200 ethnic groups identified in the Census who have their origins in the migration of peoples from all over the world to Canada. While western Europeans predominated before 1960, in the 60s and 70s most immigrants were primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe. Since then however, populations from the Third World countries have formed the majority of immigrants. More than half of the immigrants since 1980 were the so-called 'visible minorities' of Blacks, South Asians, and Chinese and Latin and Central Americans. For example, of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 2001, 58% came from Asia, including the Middle East, 20 % from Europe; 11.5 % from the Caribbean, Central and South America; 8% from Africa; and 3% from the United States (Statistics Canada 2003). Given the present immigration policies, there is reason to believe the trends will continue for sometime. Lack of official language facility and social networks, occupational skills, and economic resources may make the immigrants settle in ethnic enclaves, which are often found in the poorer sections of the city. Discrimination against certain immigrant groups in housing and labour markets may also force them into specific areas of the city, and thus increase their spatial concentration and segregation from specific groups, such as the British or other European-origin groups in Canada. Different customs and lifestyles may also be difficult to accept for the host society if the immigrant population of a different ethnic origin increases substantially within a short time. Canada's multiculturalism policies are meant towards achieving integration of various minorities and yet enable them to preserve their heritage. In this article we will investigate one aspect of integration, namely its spatial dimension.

An examination of the geographical distribution of ethnic groups in Canada will show that the there is a wide diversity by regions, provinces, cities and areas within cities. Many of these differences have historical roots in past immigration and settlement patterns. People of British Isles and French Heritage predominate in the four Atlantic Provinces and the French in Quebec. Ontario is most diverse with all European groups and Asians and Blacks. Germans, Ukrainians, Polish and Dutch are over-represented in the Prairies and English most often reported in British Columbia along with Chinese and East Indian. Recent immigrants who are largely visible minorities have their own distinct pattern of settlement. They are overwhelmingly attracted to the large metropolitan areas. In Canada as a whole, the proportion of visible minority population increased from 11.2 percent to 13.4 percent (Statistics Canada 2003). While the proportions in Montreal were similar to the national figures, the attraction of Toronto and Vancouver was overwhelming. In Toronto the proportion of visible minorities which was already high at 31.61 percent in 1996 increased substantially to 38.67 percent in 2001, and in Vancouver from 31.13 percent to 38.71 percent. About two thirds of the minority population is made up of South Asians, Chinese and Blacks.

Concentration of ethnic groups within cities

Residential segregation within cities is often seen as a measure of how well or how poorly a group has integrated into the society at large. The assumption is that a group isolated in a particular area is probably not participating in the housing and labour markets to the fullest extent. It is argued further that living in close proximity to others of the same ethnic or racial background, while increasing interaction within groups, reduces interaction outside the group. Thus while residential segregation maintains ethnic identity, it may reduce integration into the wider society, economically, socially and politically.

Three hypotheses have been advanced and tested to explain the trends and changes in residential segregation (Balakrishnan 1982). The first, called the "social class hypothesis", states that ethnic segregation is largely a reflection of social-class differences among the ethnic groups. Lack of economic and social capital force certain immigrant groups to live in the poorer areas of the

city, often in the city core. As their conditions improve they are able to disperse to more desirable neighbourhoods. With increased integration in the country's occupational and industrial structure, ethnic residential segregation should decrease. This basically human ecological perspective stresses the economic dimensions and puts less emphasis, if any, on cultural and psychological factors in settlement patterns (Clark 1986). The second hypothesis states that ethnic residential segregation is due to the social distance among the ethnic groups. Social distance can be measured by such factors as acceptance of a particular ethnic group as work colleagues, neighbours, close friends or spouses. Greater social distance should be reflected in higher levels of residential segregation. Prejudice and discrimination, strong indices of social distance can be expected to be correlated to residential segregation (Balakrishnan and Hou 1999; Lieberson and Waters 1988). A third hypothesis to explain ethnic residential segregation may be called the "ethnic identity" hypothesis. This is fundamentally different from the two earlier hypotheses which were based on the premise that residential segregation is due to involuntary causes. One's social class and social status determined residential choices and hence intrinsically bad. In contrast, the ethnic-identity hypothesis postulates that persons of the same ethnic ancestry choose to live in proximity so that social interaction can be maximized, and group norms and values can be maintained (Breton 1964; Driedger and Church 1974). Size and concentration provide distinct advantages. Many institutions such as ethnic clubs, churches, heritage language newspapers, stores specializing in ethnic food, clothing etc, require threshold populations concentrated in space. Thus ethnic residential segregation has certain merits, whether or not it is perceived as such by the ethnic group. According to this hypothesis, the greater the self-identity of an ethnic group, the more likely they will be residentially segregated. The level of self-identity among the ethnic groups may vary for several reasons. Apart from historical and political causes, it could be due to the strength of commonly held beliefs and values, kinship networks, and feelings of solidarity. It is not our attempt here to test these hypotheses with rigour. This is hardly possible with the type of macro-level census data we are examining. They do however provide a theoretical framework in interpreting our results. While one cannot separate the effects of social class, social distance or self-identity on residential segregation levels, it is possible to observe the relationship between residential segregation and these underlying factors.

Our analysis will be restricted to the three largest metropolitan areas of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, the gateway cities of Canada. They attract most of the immigrants and are very ethnically diverse metropolitan areas. One simple way of assessing the extent of spatial concentration is by seeing whether a particular ethnic group is over- or under-represented in an area. As the census tracts are supposed to be fairly comparable in overall population size, an idea of concentration can be obtained by comparing the cumulative proportion of census tracts with the cumulative proportion of the ethnic population in those tracts. Census tracts in the three CMAs (Census Metropolitan Areas) were arranged in decreasing order of ethnic population in 2001, and the cumulative proportions calculated. Using the responses to the ethnic origin question, ten broad categories were constructed. One should be aware of the differential impact of multiple origin responses in these categories. Table 1 shows the extent of concentration, by examining the proportion of tracts in which 50 and 90 percent of an ethnic-group population is found.

There is a low concentration of persons of British and French origins in all the three cities. Though the British are a minority in Montreal, they do not show a high level of concentration. Although the French are a much smaller group in Toronto and Vancouver, they show very little concentration. As a matter of fact, they are as dispersed as they are in Montreal. Concentration is also low for the western, central and eastern European groups, though slightly more than for the British. Italians are somewhat more concentrated than the other European groups, probably a function of their more recent migration to Canada. Half the Italians in Montreal live in 12.3 percent of the census tracts, and in Toronto in 13.6 percent of the tracts. The most residentially concentrated minority group in Canada are the Jews. Half of them lived in 2.4 percent of the tracts in Montreal, 3.8 percent of the tracts in Toronto and 14.3 percent of the tracts in Vancouver.

After the Jewish population, visible minorities are the most concentrated groups in the three cities. In Montreal, half the South Asians lived in 4.6 percent of the tracts. Among the visible minorities they were the most concentrated.

Table 1 – Percentage of census tracts in which 50 percent and 90 percent of ethnic populations are concentrated – 2001

Ethnic Group	Montreal	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal	Toronto	Vancouver
	50%			90%		
British	19.7	25.4	29.3	71.4	70	73.3
French	29.8	25.3	28.5	74.7	68.7	72.8
Western Europe	21	24.5	29.3	68.1	68.7	73.6
Central and Eastern Europe	17.8	26	32.4	60.4	72.4	76.7
Italian	12.3	13.6	23.1	55.9	60.6	68.7
Jewish	2.4	3.8	14.3	13.6	26.2	51
South Asian	4.6	13.7	10.4	27.2	50.1	50
Chinese	9.1	10.2	10.6	42.4	50.6	50.3
African origins	14.15	15.9	22.5	50.2	57.4	63
Caribbean origins	11.5	17.4	20.2	44.7	57.5	57.5
Number of tracts	846	924	386	846	924	386

Based on total responses (those who gave single or multiple)

Table 2 – Segregation indices for selected ethnic groups in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver – 1996-2001

Ethnic Group	Montreal		Toronto		Vancouver	
	1996	2001	1996	2001	1996	2001
British	0.422	0.316	0.298	0.364	0.221	0.29
French	0.213	0.184	0.238	0.272	0.167	0.206
Other western Europeans		0.282		0.292		0.216
Central and Eastern Europeans		0.409		0.303		0.142
Italians	0.437	0.432	0.396	0.402	0.237	0.257
Jewish	0.793	0.777	0.703	0.696	0.437	0.427
South Asian	0.632	0.636	0.432	0.44	0.489	0.517
Chinese	0.542	0.52	0.524	0.509	0.493	0.494
Black	0.47		0.388		0.311	
African		0.426		0.36		0.293
Caribbean		0.464		0.356		0.325

Based on total responses (single and multiple)
Due to changes in the categories used, some indices could not be calculated

They are less concentrated in Toronto and Vancouver, where most of them live. Half the South Asians live in 13.7 percent of the tracts in Toronto and 10.4 percent in Vancouver. Chinese show somewhat lower concentration than the South Asians in Montreal, but in Toronto and Vancouver their concentration is about the same. Half the Chinese live in about a tenth of the tracts in all the three CMAs. The Black population, whether they are of African or Caribbean origins show significantly lower concentration than the other two major visible minorities of Chinese or South Asians, a striking difference from the U.S. residential patterns (Massey and Denton 1987).

Segregation of ethnic groups

When a minority group is concentrated in space, it is also more likely to be segregated from other groups. We will focus on the extent of segregation between the ethnic groups, measured by the index of dissimilarity, which compares the distribution of two different populations over the same set of spatial units (census tracts in our case) in a metropolitan area. It is the sum of either the positive or negative differences between the proportional distributions of two populations. The index has a range from 0 (no segregation) to 1 (complete segregation).

The indices of segregation for selected ethnic groups in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are presented in Table 2. As observed earlier, segregation indices in general seem to be highest in Montreal and lowest in Vancouver. In Montreal, it is not surprising that the French are the least segregated. Their substantial majority in the city and dispersion across the city would explain this phenomenon. The British and western Europeans show relatively low segregation. The British seem to actually show a decline. Central and Eastern European groups and Italians show moderate segregation around .4. Jewish segregation has always been high in Montreal and continues to be so. The visible minorities also exhibit high segregation, but show considerable differences among themselves.

The segregation indices are somewhat lower in Toronto than in Montreal, but show the same pattern. It is remarkable how well the French are spatially integrated outside of Quebec. The other European groups have also low levels of segregation, except Italians, with a moderate index of .402. Jews continue to be the most highly segregated group in Toronto with a segregation index of .696 almost the same as in 1996. The visible minorities are more segregated than the European ethnic groups. Unlike in Montreal, South Asians in Toronto are less segregated than the Chinese. Blacks are noticeably less segregated than the Chinese or South Asians. Vancouver is the least segregated of the three gateway cities in Canada. The Charter groups of British and French and the European groups all show a level of only around .2. Even the Jewish population is less segregated with an index of .427, much less than in Montreal or Toronto. South Asians and Chinese who form the two largest visible minority groups in Vancouver show fairly high segregation with indices around .5. The reasons for this are to be found in the historical development of these groups in the city and their social cohesion. Blacks who form a small minority in Vancouver are fairly dispersed over the city as shown by the indices which are around .3.

Ethnic Segregation and Social Distance

We hypothesized that one of the many factors that cause segregation among the ethnic groups is social distance. While economic resources influence residential location, social distance is also important in explaining ethnic segregation in Canadian cities. Ethnic groups that are culturally similar to each other are less likely to be segregated among themselves compared to other ethnic groups. Though we do not have a well-tested social distance scale of recent construction, based on earlier studies done by others, we venture to classify our ethnic groups in order of increasing distance from the British as follows; British; Northern and Western Europe (French, German, Dutch, Scandinavian etc); Central and Eastern Europe (Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Czech etc); Southern Europe (Italian, Portuguese etc); Visible minorities (South Asians, Chinese, Blacks etc). Though Jews show high segregation we are not able to place them in the social distance scale. They probably are close to Central or Eastern European category.

The relationship between social distance and residential segregation is examined here with the 2001 data for the three largest metropolitan cities of Canada. There seems to be

support for the social distance hypothesis. The segregation indices between the British and the other groups increase with their social distance. The visible minorities show much higher segregation from the British in all the three cities. Among the visible minorities, South Asians and Chinese exhibit greater segregation from the British than the Blacks, a finding of considerable significance when compared to the U.S. patterns. The pattern for the French is very similar to that of the British, low segregation from the Western European groups, medium segregation from the central and eastern European groups and high segregation from the visible minority groups. Their own size seems to make no difference for the French, as the patterns are similar in all the three cities. Given the cultural affinity of Western European groups to the British, it is not surprising that their segregation patterns are also similar as far as other ethnic groups are concerned. Central and Eastern European groups and Italians are moderately segregated from the charter groups of British and French and somewhat more segregated from the Jews and visible minorities. The Jewish population is the most segregated ethnic group in Canada. They show high segregation from all the other groups irrespective of their origin.

Among the visible minorities, a significant finding is that the segregation indices are relatively high. One would have expected that given their shared experiences of relative deprivation, discrimination and prejudice, perceived or otherwise, the segregation among themselves would be low. Or in other words, we would expect ethnic groups such as the Chinese, South Asians and Blacks would reside in the same areas of the city. Though slightly lower than from the European groups, the segregation indices among the visible minority groups are still high around .5. This would mean that while the visible minority groups are more concentrated, they do not necessarily live in the same neighbourhoods, but rather have their own favoured locations within the cities. The cultural differences among the visible minorities are probably significant enough not to make physical proximity particularly advantageous, in spite of their similar social distance from the European groups. However, though not living in the same census tracts, they are often found in nearby census tracts.

Segregation by Generations

In the early ecological models of urban growth, ethnic residential segregation is seen as a transitory stage dependent on the nature and time of arrival of immigrants to gateway cities. Lacking economic and human resources, new immigrants often have to settle in poorer areas of a city, usually in urban cores. As their social mobility and acculturation to the host society increase, they move to the other areas of the city. Thus one would expect with increased duration, there would be desegregation. Residential segregation among the earlier immigrants should be less than the recent arrivals. By the same logic one would expect the native born to be more assimilated than the foreign born and hence should be found more dispersed spatially.

Segregation indices by generation are presented in Table 3. The classical assimilation pattern, where the successive generations show less residential segregation is found only among the European groups, whose segregation is generally low. Other West Europeans, Central and Eastern Europeans and Italians all show a decline with successive generations. The patterns in Toronto and Vancouver are basically the same, except that the indices in these cities are lower than in Montreal.

For the visible minorities change in segregation indices by generation provide little support for the assimilation hypothesis. Subsequent generations show as much segregation as the first generation of foreign-born. For example in Montreal, the segregation index for the South Asians was .645 for the first generation and .693 for second and later generations. Similarly a small increase in residential segregation can be noticed for the Chinese as well, from .558 for the first generation to .620 for subsequent generations. For the Blacks as well the differences between generations are small. Africans show a slight increase, while the Caribbeans a small decline. In the two other cities of Toronto and Vancouver, there does seem to be a decline in segregation for the South Asians and Chinese. These ethnic groups are larger in size in these two cities and one does not know whether this size has any influence in their lower segregation. In any case it is probably too early to say whether this decline will persist in the future. The finding of persisting segregation among many minority groups has been noted earlier by Kalbach in his studies of Toronto (Kalbach 1990). The most segregated group are those of Jewish origin, who show little change over the generations.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The fact that certain ethnic groups are highly concentrated and segregated from other ethnic groups is an important finding. Is high concentration a characteristic of poor neighbourhoods? This is clearly the case of Blacks in many U.S. cities, but it is less evident in Canadian cities. Jewish neighbourhoods are not poor nor are some Chinese neighbourhoods in Scarborough. At the same time there are many neighbourhoods which are poor showing high concentrations of Blacks, Portuguese, Vietnamese etc. The crucial policy question is whether concentration of an ethnic group can lead to neighbourhood poverty? U.S. studies have shown that as Black concentration increases in an area, the overall socioeconomic status of the area goes down (Massey and Denton1993). In Canada, Kazemipur and Halli report that some studies have suggested that as the Aboriginal population of a neighbourhood increases, the real estate prices fall, and so does the desirability of the neighbourhood. Some real estate agents may direct Natives to certain neighbourhoods and not to others. This can lead to high concentration of Natives in a small number of neighbourhoods in many Canadian cities (Kazemipur and Halli 2000). Whether such discriminatory practices have affected the concentration of other visible minority groups such as the Chinese, South Asians or Blacks is not known, but should be explored.

It is possible that a great of deal of the concentration and segregation of many minority groups in Canada may be due to voluntary causes rather than due to class differences or social distance. A certain threshold population size may enable a minority group to establish an ethnic neighbourhood with many advantages. Specialized social institutions such as an ethnic community club, ethnic food stores and restaurants, entertainment places, religious institutions such

Table 3 – Segregation Indices by generation for selected ethnic groups : Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver – 2001

	British	French	West Eur	Central & East Eur	Italian	Jewish	South Asian	Chinese	African	Caribbean
Montreal										
First Generation	0.526	0.318	0.406	0.424	0.537	0.781	0.645	0.558	0.448	0.486
Second + generation	0.297	0.184	0.268	0.357	0.372	0.773	0.693	0.620	0.499	0.440
Toronto										
First Generation	0.237	0.325	0.257	0.307	0.478	0.705	0.430	0.522	0.369	0.359
Second+ generation	0.333	0.274	0.274	0.242	0.343	0.686	0.371	0.407	0.381	0.318
Vancouver										
First Generation	0.245	0.326	0.199	0.200	0.379	0.503	0.505	0.483	0.351	0.374
Second+ generation	0.238	0.206	0.203	0.158	0.244	0.449	0.422	0.383	0.435	0.466

as an ethnic church or temple, synagogue etc. become viable in an ethnic enclave. Canada's multiculturalism policy supports such social institutions and encourages one to maintain their cultural heritage. Policy oriented research should examine whether ethnic enclaves enable its inhabitants to develop and enjoy a culturally and socially rich life rather than degenerate into a ghetto with all its negative images of poverty and crime.

Why there is a persistence of segregation in the later generation for many minority groups is a worthwhile area to investigate. We need survey data on attitudes and behaviour to get to the core of this issue. The strong bond between generations involving expectations and obligations vary among the ethnic groups. Similarly if the social distance persists even in the later generations and not only in the first generation, it can partially explain the continuing segregation levels in the second generation.

Another important policy concern is whether residential segregation is a reflection of occupational segregation. New immigrant groups may often be concentrated in certain occupations such as construction, manufacturing, garment making etc. This may be due to their limited skills on arrival, official language facility etc. It is expected that with time they will be able to move into other occupations. Balakrishnan and Hou compared census data for the three years of 1981, 1986 and 1991 and found that while the residential segregation remained about the same during the decade of 1981-1991 for almost all the ethnic groups, occupational segregation decreased significantly (Balakrishnan and Hou 1999b). This would imply that residential segregation has not adversely affected the socio-economic integration of the ethnic groups in the Canadian society. Our findings for 2001 show that residential segregation continues at about the same level as in 1991. This was also a period of high immigration, but many immigrants come to Canada with higher education and job skills than earlier arrivals. With increased economic assimilation, one would have expected residential segregation to decline. This has not happened to date in the case of the visible minority groups to any significant degree. However with longer stay in Canada and increased social mobility it is possible that residential segregation will decrease among the minority groups, though some level of segregation will remain, if only because of discrimination and prejudice, and the desire for some ethnic groups to live in proximity.

The future of ethnic residential segregation is hard to predict. The high level of segregation among some ethnic groups such as the visible minorities has been sustained by many factors such as their size and recency of immigration, lack of official language facility, and cultural differences. It may also have been influenced by discrimination and prejudice experienced by them, actual or perceived, in their interaction with the largely white host society.

With time the impact of these factors on residential location should decrease. Intermarriage between white European groups and the visible minority groups will be a powerful factor in reducing segregation. There is evidence that there is a greater acceptance of ethnically diverse groups by the host society, especially among the young people. Though the Canadian government's policies of multiculturalism may help preserve ethnic identity, over time there is bound to be an erosion of the cultural heritage of many groups. As we try to understand the dynamics of ethnic diversity in Canada, it is clear that their spatial dimension is an integral part of the overall picture.

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