IMMIGRANT AND MINORITY ENCLAVES IN CANADIAN CITIES

ABSTRACT

Questions abound concerning minority residential concentration in Canada: To what extent do immigrants and minorities live in separate enclaves? Where they do, does this tendency arise out of choice or constraint? Does it even matter? Yes, says the author, enclaves do exist, but definitive evidence of ghettoization does not. Governments should be wary of creating policies designed to reduce concentrated points of settlement where and when they arise.

> *There can be problems assimilating people into our country because we have, in some areas, such sizable populations of some cultural groups that it becomes possible for people to live their lives separate from Canadian culture. (respondent #576)*
>
> *I can't get involved with the Canadian society. The same ethnicity will mix back with the same ethnicity. This means each ethnicity will form a small society in their own social group and the social circle will become smaller in Canada. (respondent #484)*

These quotations are derived from a recent survey of public attitudes about immigration and multiculturalism in Greater Vancouver. Respondents were asked to identify the most important benefits and disadvantages of immigration. On the plus side, the single most prominent view is a widely-held appreciation of diversity among Vancouver residents; in fact, two out of three Canadian-born respondents mentioned this as a benefit associated with immigration. However, this appreciation only goes so far. When asked about the disadvantages of immigration, respondents provide a clear signal that they value diversity but are uncomfortable with most forms of cultural separateness. Frequently, this issue is articulated in geographical terms, with a sense that ethnic enclaves sometimes appear to be exclusive. Places like "Chinatown", therefore, are valued for their representation of Chinese culture, but also raise concern that they might shield residents from participation in the wider Canadian society.

In the 1990s, Canadian researchers began to consider another dimension of immigrant and ethnic enclaves. Intrigued by the conclusions of scholarship on segregation in the US, they wondered whether residential concentrations of immigrants and/or visible minorities are associated with poverty in Canadian cities (as they are south of the border). If so, there could be serious long-term consequences. Unfortunately, the results of this research are mixed and a clear picture has not emerged. On the one hand, for example, Kazemipur and Halli (2000) argue that there is a "new poverty" in Canada that is concentrated in selected neighbourhoods that are often associated with Aboriginal or recently settled immigrant populations. Although they note that this pattern is less prevalent in Canada than the US, they believe that emerging ghettos may precipitate a "culture of poverty", wherein residents see no means of improving their livelihood and instead become passive recipients of the welfare state. Ley and Smith (2000), on the other hand, have adapted methodologies developed in the US to study the relationship between deprivation and immigrant settlement. They find few places in Canadian cities where deep poverty coincides with immigrant enclaves. They speculate that this is the case because immigrants arriving in Canada are heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic status, and that the pervasive trend towards suburbanized immigrant settlement has also played a role in preventing ghettoization. Finally, they argue that the Canadian immigrant experience is characterized more by socio-spatial mobility than it is by inter-generational ghettoization.

Despite the mixed and complex conclusions derived from careful empirical research, recent

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popular commentators have presented a simplistic message that links concentrated immigrant settlement to unsustainable social costs, including expensive service delivery, long-term poverty reproduced from parents to children, and social pathology. These links are implicit in Stoffman (2002), who writes more generally about the geographical impacts of immigration to Canada, situating his comments at the scale of metropolitan areas rather than neighbourhoods. He believes that the tendency for immigrants to settle in the largest cities of Canada is a major problem both economically and politically. The latter point is especially prominent in his analysis. He argues that Canada's relatively high level of immigration is sustained because Liberal and Conservative politicians alike are eager to harvest votes in ridings associated with pronounced immigrant settlement. Moreover, he believes that the problems associated with immigration would be reduced if immigrants would be more widely distributed across the country, though is quick to say that government should not dictate where they should live. His preferred solution is to lower the number admitted to Canada annually by roughly one-third.

Others are more explicit. Collacott (2002, page 29), for example, states: "... there are increasing concentrations of people from the same cultural and linguistic background in [Canadian] metropolitan areas, not infrequently with significant levels of poverty because of their relative lack of marketable skills and of English and French language proficiency." Further, he speculates that these ghettos trap residents and their children into long term poverty and might even lead to social conflict that could culminate in the kind of race riots seen in the US and UK. Diane Francis, similarly, writes that "[e]nclaves of certain ethnic groups, who have taken the most advantage of family reunification rules, have formed in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. These groups have little reason to assimilate. And if they don't assimilate, they cannot achieve. Many don't learn English. Their attitudes are often impediments to social advancement." (2002, page 102). She clearly subscribes to the culture of poverty perspective: "The labour mismatch, and low education levels of most entrants ... is why it is less likely now for the performance of [immigrants'] children to improve in the future. Most will live in economic-ethnic ghettos for generations and remain members of their underclass." (page 101). For Francis, the only solution to this intractable problem is to cut the immigration program back drastically to levels not seen since the 1930s.

These views raise a number of questions about the extent and significance of immigrant and visible minority residential concentration in Canada: to what extent do immigrants and minorities live in separate enclaves? does this tendency arise out of choice or constraint? does it *matter*? should anything be done about it? I'll take up each of these questions in turn, using research from Vancouver, for the most part, as my point of departure.

What is the actual pattern of urban residential settlement of immigrants and minority groups in Canada? Does the evidence show widespread distribution within metropolitan areas, enclaves of specific groups, relative segregation, or ghettos in the way that Collacott and Francis assert? Unfortunately, to an important degree, the precise answer to this question depends on the methodological approach used by researchers. Analyses at coarse geographical scales and with heterogeneous ethno-cultural definitions (e.g., municipal boundaries as the spatial unit and "Blacks" as the population group) show very little segregation. Conversely, using the most detailed unit, Enumeration Areas (with about 250 households each) and precisely-defined groups (e.g., Ghanaians), inevitably yields higher segregation indices. Still, the results of studies are generally consistent. While there are a tiny number of areas in Canadian cities that hold just one group, this is exceedingly rare. For example, there were over 2,200 Enumeration Areas in Greater Vancouver in 1996 and only *one* housed a single ethno-cultural population – in this case Chinese-Canadians. Ghettoization simply is not the case (cf. Bauder and Sharpe 2002).

> To say that "most" immigrants live in enclaves is simply wrong. Some groups have not formed enclaves at all. Others contain a mixture of individuals living inside and outside enclaves. There are no groups, in any large Canadian city, where all members live in close proximity.

But what about segregation? (Unlike ghettoization (see Hiebert 2000), there is no single accepted definition of segregation in the large academic literature on the subject. The most common approach to the term is to measure the relative degree of concentration of a group using a statistic called the Index of Segregation (IS). The IS describes the proportion of a group that would have to relocate in order to make its geographic distribution the same as the rest of the population. It ranges from zero for situations where a group is not segregated at all to 100, which would mean complete ghettoization. Very generally, values over 60 indicate a highly concentrated residential pattern, while those under 30 are interpreted as evidence of geographical dispersion.) The term segregation is almost never appropriate in Canada either. Among the large cities, the degree of ethno-cultural concentration is highest in Montréal and lowest in Vancouver. But even in Montréal some groups live in concentrated patterns while others do not. In Vancouver, the two most important trends are: (a) a *small* tendency towards greater levels of ethno-cultural concentration between 1971 and 1996; and (b) widely varying levels of concentration between groups (Hiebert 1999). At the opposite ends of the spectrum, Vietnamese- and Persian-Canadians are clustered (their IS values for 1996 were, respectively, 62 and 57), in the inner city in the

former case and northern suburbs in the latter, while those from Korea, the Philippines, and Scandinavia are widely scattered (IS=33, 33, and 29). To say that "most" immigrants live in enclaves is simply wrong. Some groups have not formed enclaves at all. Others contain a mixture of individuals living inside and outside enclaves. There are no groups, in any large Canadian city, where all members live in close proximity.

Why have these patterns emerged? Is residential concentration caused by exclusion from the mainstream or a conscious choice on the part of ethno-cultural groups to create separate communities (cf. Ray 1998)? A respondent to the Vancouver survey provided an answer that echoes scholarship on this issue:

> *They did not recognize the education of our country. For that matter they do not recognize the education of any of the immigrants. Another disadvantage is that there is no unity; one has to [rely] on his or her own ethnic group or there is no support. (respondent #328)*

In the Vancouver survey, nearly 40 percent of the immigrants who landed in Canada since 1991 stated that they experienced problems entering the labour market. Half that number believe that their difficulties are the result of discrimination. Little wonder that *some* immigrants feel compelled to live near people of their own kind, seeking support and cultural acceptance. But choice is also involved. Over 80 percent of the same group are determined to hold on to their culture in Canada, and 90 percent hope their children retain their heritage language and culture. Unfortunately, no one has devised a methodology to disentangle the structural causes of residential behaviour from those arising from agency.

What are the consequences of living in an ethno-cultural enclave; are their residents helped by in-group solidarity or harmed by cultural isolation (cf. Peach 1996, Dunn 1998)? Surprisingly, after nearly a century of research by urban sociologists and geographers, we don't really know. In the US there have been animated arguments over this issue, prompted first by the pioneering studies of the Chicago school and more recently by Portes and his colleagues (e.g., Portes and Bach 1985), who argued that immigrants benefit from their participation in "ethnic economies". Many have challenged this view and there has been no resolution since. In Vancouver, we have found a high correlation between residential concentration and various indicators of marginalization and social isolation *but only among the Canadian born* (Hiebert and Ley, forthcoming). Statistical relationships between these variables are weak for immigrants themselves. Simply put, the tendency for low-income immigrants to live in residential concentrations, and for higher-income immigrants to live outside them, is not especially strong. However, we must exercise caution in the interpretation of these results. As in most studies of immigrant and minority well-being, they are based on census data, a cross-section taken at a specific moment in time. Yet answering the question about the impact of residential location really requires a dynamic view that would trace both the socio-spatial and socio-economic trajectory of immigrants over time. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, currently under way, will be a vital resource for this type of analysis.

There is, without doubt, public worry over the tendency for (some) immigrants to create enclaves that appear isolated from the population around them. We found this to be the case in our Vancouver survey, as noted at the outset of this paper; it is also apparent in recent initiatives by the Canadian government to spread immigrant settlement more evenly across the country. However, I am skeptical about these concerns. True, enclaves exist but definitive evidence of ghettoization does not. It is worth noting that urban geographers have also concluded that ghettoization is not occurring in Australia and New Zealand (Burnley 1999; Poulson *et al.* 2000), countries that can be broadly compared with Canada in terms of immigration policy and admission levels. In fact, rather than seeing ethnic enclaves as problems to be solved, I would suggest that they have many beneficial features and, in any case, are to be expected in a multicultural society. Given these points, I see little reason for governments to create policies designed to reduce concentrated points of settlement where and when they arise, with one critical proviso: enclaves *per se* are not problematic as long as they are not associated with economic deprivation.

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Adam article – references (pp. 10-12)

[1] Percentage of visible minority population: Richmond (B.C.) 59.0%, Markham (Ont.) 55.5%, Vancouver (B.C.) 49.0%, Burnaby (B.C.) 48.6%, Greater Vancouver (B.C.) 43.5%, Toronto (Ont.) 42.8%. Statistics Canada (2003) [http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/etoimm/tables/subprovs/topimm.cfm]

[2] Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC). Portraits of Canada 2001. Montreal. http://www.cric.ca/en_html.

[3] Association for Canadian Studies. Canadian Opinion Toward Second Language Knowledge and Education. Montreal.

[4] See http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=165 . The Pew Research Center is an independent opinion research group in Washington, D.C. that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues.

[5] Statistique Canada, 1996 (dans : Commissaire aux langues officielle. 2002. L'immigration et l'épanouissement des communautés de langue officielles au Canada. p. 63.)

[6] Copies can be ordered or downloaded. Please visit www.ocol-clo.gc.ca.

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[1] The opinions and interpretation expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

[2] The IMDB is a longitudinal database of linked immigrant records and subsequent taxfilings. The database is maintained by Statistics Canada on behalf of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and a federal provincial funding consortium. For more information see: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/srr/pdf/res4bi.pdf

[3] To benchmark the entry earning of skilled workers against the Canadian average is not an adequate reflection of the objectives of the program. A more appropriate benchmark, such as similarly skilled Canadian-born individuals entering the labour market at a comparable time, could be taken from the Survey of Consumer Finances/Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics data.

[4] Li, Peter S. "Destination Canada - Immigration Debates and Issues" Oxford University Press 2003

[5] The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and its accompanying regulations (which came into effect on June 28, 2002) introduced changes to the selection criteria for skilled workers, based on earlier research. However, it is too soon to determine whether these have had any impact on the economic performance of skilled workers.

[6] See for example: Reitz, Jeffrey G. 1998 *Warmth of the Welcome: The Social Causes of Economic Success for Immigrants in Different Nations and Cities* Boulder, CO: Westview Press; and Pendakur, Krishna and Ravi Pendakur, 1998 "The Colour of Money: Earnings Differentials among Ethnic Groups in Canada" *Canadian Journal of Economics* 31(3): 519-48.

[7] Waslander, Bert (2002) 'The Falling Earnings of New Immigrant Men in Canada's Large Cities' (forthcoming) presented at the John Deutsch Institute Conference on "Canadian Immigration Policy for the 21st Century October 18-19, 2002; and Green, David and Christopher Worswick (2002) "Earnings of Immigrant Men in Canada: The Roles of Labour Market Entry Effects and Returns to Foreign Experience" (forthcoming)

[8] International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey – the next round of this survey will include a sample of recently arrived immigrants.

Sweetman article – references (pp. 21-22)

[1] Of course, like all social science research, there are questions about Card's analysis. In particular, the sample size is small and the comparison cities may not be ideal. However, if one's prior assumption is that a very large impact should have occurred, then this would be observable.

[2] Though work on the topic has been attempted by, for example, Card (2001), DiNardo and Card (2000), and Borjas, Freeman and Katz (1997).

[3] Some attempts at looking at corners of this issue have been conducted in the Canadian context, but they have been very limited in scope and have not tended to look at provincial programs involving health and education, nor included generations beyond the initial one that is born outside of Canada.

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