

Vancouver Centre of Excellence



Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

Working Paper Series

#98-15

Immigrant Experiences in Greater Vancouver: Focus Group Narratives

Daniel Hiebert

September 1998

RIIM

Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

The Vancouver Centre is funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Citizenship & Immigration Canada, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. We also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Metropolis partner agencies:

- Health Canada
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Department of the Solicitor General of Canada
- Status of Women Canada
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Correctional Service of Canada
- Immigration & Refugee Board

Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone. For more information contact the Co-Directors of the Centre, Dr. Don DeVoretz, Department of Economics, SFU (e-mail: devoretz@sfu.ca) or Dr. David Ley, Department of Geography, UBC (e-mail: davidley@unixg.ubc.ca).

**IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES IN GREATER VANCOUVER:
FOCUS GROUP NARRATIVES**

Daniel Hiebert, Department of Geography, U.B.C.
Gillian Creese, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, U.B.C.
Isabel Lowe Dyck, School of Rehabilitation Sciences, U.B.C.
Tom Hutton, School of Community and Regional Planning, U.B.C.
David Ley, Department of Geography, U.B.C.
Arlene Tigar McLaren, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, S.F.U.
Geraldine Pratt, Department of Geography, U.B.C.

Acknowledgements

We thank Stella Lai, Wendy Mendes-Crabb, John Rose, Hugh Tan, Ann Vanderbijl, Margaret Walton-Roberts, and Priscilla Wei for their research assistance. We especially wish to thank the focus group participants. Finally, we acknowledge the financial support of the Vancouver RIIM Centre of Excellence.

Correspondence:
dhiebert@geog.ubc.ca

Abstract

We introduce, in this paper, an interdisciplinary, multi-year project on immigrant settlement and integration in Greater Vancouver. Using a variety of methods, the particular dynamics of immigration in five districts of the Vancouver metropolitan area will be examined. Here, results from the first phase of the project—a series of focus groups with immigrants and members of service-providing organizations—are reported, concentrating on three major issues: immigration and the family; immigration and employment; and the engagement between immigrants and Canadian society. We emphasize the importance of the networks within which immigrants negotiate their day-to-day activities, including access to shelter and the labour market. We also highlight the complexity of immigrant experiences that range, for example, from individuals who find it difficult to find meaningful employment to others who worry about the safety of their investments in venture capital funds. Finally, we consider the meaning of multiculturalism to the immigrants who participated in our research as well as the unique position of second-generation immigrants in the integration process.

Key words: community studies, family, focus groups, gender, immigration, integration, labour market, multiculturalism, neighbourhood, networks

Introduction

There have been remarkable changes in the nature of immigrant settlement in Greater Vancouver over the past 25 years. Since the early 1970s, the number of immigrants landing in Vancouver has grown dramatically, the diversity of cultural and economic backgrounds of immigrants has become much more extensive, and the geographic distribution of immigrant communities has become more complex. We know surprisingly little about the agents and effects of these transformations. Apart from media accounts, almost nothing has been published, for example, on the growing Filipino and Vietnamese populations of Vancouver, now numbering approximately 40,000 and 20,000 respectively. Similarly, few have examined the local scale of immigrant settlement—the neighbourhoods and districts where integration actually takes place. These are the places where immigrants are served by the institutions of their adopted society, seek employment, and interact with the people around them. It is interesting to note, for example, how few of the studies are neighbourhood-specific in Kobayashi and Peake's (1997) comprehensive literature review of immigration and urban studies in Canada. One of the problems associated with studies undertaken at the neighbourhood or small-district scale is the perennial difficulty of generalizing from these to larger processes of settlement and integration. Another, of course, is the substantial effort involved in coming to terms with the intricacies of places and gaining the trust of community residents.

In this paper, we introduce the Vancouver Community Studies Project, a multi-year research initiative funded by the Vancouver Centre for Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM), one of four federally funded centres, collectively known as the metropolis project. Our own work has been framed with the lack of locally-based research on immigration in mind. Beyond filling in a significant gap in our knowledge, though, we are pursuing the hypothesis that new *places* of reception are associated with new *forms* of reception and integration, and have set out to investigate

...immigrant experiences

this issue. We also hope to overcome some of the difficulties of single case-study research by looking at a number of residential areas at the same time, and by bringing an interdisciplinary perspective to these places. We explain our methodology in the next section of the paper, and also provide a more detailed description of the five case study districts: East Vancouver, the Kerrisdale-Oakridge-Shaughnessy area of Vancouver's west side, Richmond, North Surrey-Delta, and the Tri-cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody) of the Greater Vancouver region (Figure 1). As explained below, each of these areas plays a distinct role in immigrant reception and they have been selected in order to incorporate as full a range of settlement experiences as possible in our work. In the bulk of the paper, we concentrate on three issues raised in the preliminary phase of our research: immigration and family relationships; immigration and employment; and "engaging" Canada.

Readers will find that the style of this paper is quite different from conventional academic work. In the first place, we have tried to allow immigrants themselves to shape our research agenda by listening to their concerns in focus groups (see below); we have also chosen to quote immigrants frequently throughout our text in order to present their views as directly as possible. Secondly, at this early stage in a long project, we present this paper as an exploration of initial findings; as such, our goal is to outline critical issues more than to resolve them. Finally, we see this paper as part of a public consultation process. In establishing the four Metropolis centres, the Canadian government gave researchers the responsibility to do more than *investigate*; we also are expected to participate in the formation of public policy and to stimulate informed public debate on immigration-related issues. In this spirit, we invite readers to respond to this paper by entering their comments in the "forum" section of the RIIM web-site.¹

Methodology

Our research is based on four interlocking methods that will occur in three separate phases. In the first, we sought the advice of a wide variety of immigrant service-

¹ The forum is called "Riim-chat" and can be found at http://www.riim.metropolis.globalx.net/lists-discussion/index_e.html.

providing professions and immigrants themselves in each of our five study areas. This was done through focus groups held mainly in the first year of the project—and it is the results of these groups that we draw from in the bulk of this paper. Also in this phase, we are drafting a statistical and cartographic portrait of the metropolitan area as a whole and the five study areas to provide another important context for our future work. This material will form the basis of a second working paper, and we draw on it only lightly here (see Hiebert, forthcoming). In the second phase of our research (now well under way), we are planning to interview around 50 families, in depth, once per year during a five-year period. We hope that the process of repetitive interviews will provide us with important insights about integration as a *process* that unfolds over time. We already have found, though, that it is not a linear, irrevocable process, as is so commonly thought. Finally, in the third phase of our project, we plan to conduct a structured questionnaire survey in 2000/01 of a much larger sample of residents in our five areas. We will use information from the statistical, focus group and family interviews to shape our survey, but our general objective will be to investigate the intersection of immigration, employment, family, and residential setting through a representative sample.

The Focus Groups²

In this initial stage of research we have tried to open up issues by carrying out a series of focus groups with people who might have different perspectives on processes of immigration and settlement in each of the five study areas. Overall, we conducted five types of focus groups: with service providers, new immigrants, women-only recent immigrants, members of the ‘host’ community, and young adults who are children of an earlier generation of immigrants. A slightly different configuration of focus groups was conducted in each area reflecting the characteristics of the areas and priorities of the researchers.³ So, for example, there was no focus group conducted with service providers

² There is growing discussion about the methodology of focus groups: see Goss (1996); Stewart and Shamdasani (1992).

³ In the Tri-cities, three focus groups were conducted: two with service providers and another with a group of women who are recent immigrants (including immigrants from Poland, Hong Kong and former Yugoslavia.). In East Vancouver, three focus groups were conducted, one with service providers, another with a group of recent immigrants (from El Salvador, Bangladesh, Germany, and Mexico) and a third with

in Kerrisdale because there are few organizations that specifically address the settlement issues of this group of relatively affluent immigrants.

In the other areas we began the series of focus groups by meeting with service providers. We sought to bring together a broad range of experience and opinion, and included representatives of community-based service organizations, local planners, and representatives from local community centres and schools. The numbers attending these groups ranged from a low of three (in Surrey) to a high of eight (in the Tri-cities and Richmond). The groups with recent immigrants (which had on average eight participants) were assembled by various means, often drawing on the contacts developed with service providers through previous focus groups. In the case of Surrey, for example, the researchers worked in collaboration with members of two service agencies that attended the focus group (Progressive Intercultural Services and Women's Outreach Services). The agencies recruited participants and the focus groups were held at their premises. In other areas, the participants were recruited in more variable ways, and were not connected through a single agency.⁴ The focus groups were held in a variety of places, mostly in rented rooms in local community centres but, on occasion, in the researcher's home.⁵ Participants were paid a nominal sum (\$20) for their time.

The purpose of the focus groups was to let participants tell us about the issues that they judged to be important for recent immigrants in their community. They were

women-only recent immigrants. In Kerrisdale, three focus groups were done: with recent immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong, members of the 'host' community and a group of young Chinese-Canadian adults who have grown up in Vancouver. Richmond focus groups include one with service providers, one with recent Chinese immigrants, and one with young Chinese-Canadian adults who are children of immigrants. In Surrey four focus groups have been carried out: one with service providers, another with Indo-Canadian recent immigrants, a women's group of recent immigrants (including women from Mexico, South Korea, and the Philippines) and a group of Indo-Canadian young adults who have grown up in Greater Vancouver.

⁴ We would like to thank the following agencies for their participation in and help with the focus groups: City of Port Moody Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services; Coquitlam Leisure and Parks Services; Coquitlam School District; Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society; Coquitlam Women's Centre; Greater Coquitlam Volunteer Centre; ISS; LINC; MOSAIC; Multicultural Family Centre; Progressive Intercultural Services; Richmond Police Department; Richmond Planning Department; Richmond Public Library; Richmond School District; Storefront Orientation Services; SUCCESS, Richmond Office; Surrey Delta Immigrant Society; Surrey Planning Department; Vancouver Community College; Vancouver Planning Department.

⁵ Again the distinctiveness of Kerrisdale is evident. The focus group for recent immigrants was held in a room at a private club. This underscores the point that we tried to use space that was neutral but comfortable for the participants. Different venues are comfortable for different participants. It was also

deliberately unstructured and the conversations followed the interests and priorities of members of the group. The service providers were also drawn in as local experts on the research that has been done in their areas and were asked to speculate on the utility, from their perspective, of various research foci. However, in what follows, we rely mostly on the focus groups with recent immigrants to outline the issues that were raised. As noted earlier, some of these issues are unique to specific areas and immigrant groups, while others are common across all focus groups.

Before presenting this thematic discussion, however, we would like to highlight some obvious difficulties and limitations of the data explored here. First, there is an uneven depth to the information collected. Some individuals told personal stories that spoke in profound and intimate ways about their experiences as immigrants, but this was unusual. Focus groups involve bringing a small group of strangers together for an hour or two. As such, they are public performances. There are several issues here. As researchers we are aware of the difficulties of developing rapport with a large group of people in such a short span of time and of a tension around where to draw the boundary between public and private when pursuing issues with individual participants. Is it appropriate, for example, to pursue the circumstances of one woman's child care problems—to ask her to reveal private details in a public forum—or is it more appropriate to simply get the issue of “child care” on the research table?

There is a very different dynamic in a focus group as compared to an individual interview, and social pressures seem even more intense. In the focus group among recent Indo-Canadian immigrants in Surrey, for example, some participants were reluctant to allow discussions of racism in Canadian society, and the individual who raised this issue was literally shouted down by another participant. Does the fact that parents in this group spoke proudly about their children's success in the Canadian educational system reflect an absence of problems for their children in the school system or a social dynamic of establishing status and prestige among parents? There is also a persistent tendency to re-establish existing social hierarchies, whether they be gender or class based, within the group such that one hears more from some rather than other members of the group.

judged to be more appropriate to compensate the participants of the Kerrisdale group with a gift certificate

The depth of information was in some cases further hindered by language problems and problems of translation. Not wanting to exclude very recent immigrants without a facility in English (their problems may be different and the most intense, and we did not wish to exclude them from the focus groups) we invited several participants with limited English skills. The issue of translation was dealt with differently in different groups. In the case of the recent immigrant focus group in Kerrisdale, one of the facilitators was competent in Mandarin and Cantonese. As this was the case for other participants, the conversation took place in a mix of English, Mandarin and Cantonese and was later translated to English. The circumstances were different and more difficult in other groups, especially multicultural ones when English was the only common language among participants. In these cases, translation was provided by some of the participants themselves. Our sense was that translations were rarely literal. There was a good deal of summarizing and, in some cases, editing and interpretation on the part of the translator. We received less information than we hoped, therefore, from non-English speaking participants.

Further, there are some real limitations to the comparisons that we can make across focus groups. Different researchers facilitated different groups and their priorities undoubtedly shaped the direction of the focus groups. Does the fact that educational issues came up for serious discussion in Richmond, Kerrisdale and Tri-cities, but not in East Vancouver reflect a difference of experience for individuals in these areas, or simply the fact that time ran out in East Vancouver before attention could be directed to this issue? Comparisons are also limited by the small numbers in the groups, and we certainly make no claims about how representative the opinions expressed in these groups are, either in terms of area or immigrant group.

Nevertheless, with all of these caveats and worries, we believe that this phase of our research was sufficiently interesting and informative to produce a set of preliminary working papers. Persistent themes did appear across the focus groups, along with differences in experience that we wish to elaborate for fuller consideration—as well as follow up in much more detail in our ongoing series of personal interviews.

for the University Bookstore rather than cash.

Study areas

We selected five districts of the greater Vancouver region for close scrutiny; each represents a different residential type and has a unique profile in terms of immigrant settlement. Early in our research process, we purchased a special tabulation of 1991 census data for each of our districts (Table 1). While we know that much has changed in the intervening period, we have not yet been able to replicate this information using the 1996 census (though Figure 2 provides basic information on immigrant settlement in 1996). In any case, the general character of the districts was already clear by 1991 and the following brief descriptions remain relevant.

East Vancouver contains most of the city's oldest working class neighbourhoods. Throughout the 20th century, it has been the main reception area for immigrants arriving in Greater Vancouver, first from the United Kingdom, China and Japan, then Italy, Germany, Portugal and China after 1945, and finally a variety of Asian, European and Latin American countries in the recent past. In 1991, over half the residents of this large area were born outside Canada, 45 percent in non-European countries (more than twice the metropolitan average). East Vancouver is distinctive in its variety of cultures. While China is the most significant single country of origin, this area of Vancouver also includes the city's largest Latin American, Vietnamese, and Filipino populations, as well as a significant Indo-Canadian community. Over 40 percent of the population recorded non-European mother tongues in the 1991 census and nearly the same proportion spoke a non-official language at home. Of the areas chosen for detailed analysis, East Vancouver has the highest ratio of lone-parent families, but it also contains approximately the metropolitan average of families with children. Both of these statistics reflect the relatively modest cost of housing in east side neighbourhoods, especially the presence of affordable rental accommodation, including the highest concentration of public and social housing in the CMA. Average individual and household incomes in East Vancouver have always been well below the city and metropolitan average, typical of inner-city areas throughout North America.

Kerrisdale–Oakridge–Shaughnessy (abbreviated as KOS or Kerrisdale) is the

smallest of our case study areas and includes the three identifiable neighbourhoods indicated in the title. Shaughnessy was the first of these to be developed, built in the early 20th century by the CPR to house Vancouver's elite. Kerrisdale followed, in the inter-war years, with ample lots and middle-class homes. Oakridge was mainly built after 1945 for a slightly less wealthy market, though it too was decidedly middle class. While the KOS area is relatively near the commercial core of Vancouver, it retained the character of a middle/upper-income suburb, with large properties, a population mainly comprised of traditional nuclear families, and a distinctly "English" landscape and cultural sensibility. It also housed a sizeable Jewish population. In recent years, there has been a pronounced transformation of KOS: many of the long-term residents have aged in situ, and the area now includes a large retired population, while others have left after selling their properties (frequently at windfall profit) to a clientele that is increasingly dominated by Chinese-Canadians. By 1991, the area held twice the proportion of Chinese-origin residents than the greater Vancouver average, a marked departure from its earlier character. While Chinese-Canadians in KOS reported lower incomes than those of their European-origin neighbours, their incomes were still well above the metropolitan average; many, in fact, entered Canada via the business immigration program.

Richmond, a suburb south of Vancouver and site of the international airport, was first (re)settled by Europeans for agricultural purposes. A fishing village also emerged on the southern shore of the municipality and this was an important centre of Japanese-Canadian settlement in the early 20th century. Richmond's agricultural lands began to be subdivided for residential purposes in the 1930s, a process that accelerated after the war. Initially, the population attracted to Richmond was mainly of European origin (though a small number of Japanese-Canadians returned after their internment) and, even in 1971, over 87 percent of the population reported European origins. The cultural composition of the municipality changed dramatically in the 1980s, however. By 1991, over 40 percent of the population were born outside Canada, and approximately one-sixth claimed Chinese ethnic origin. The growing "Chinese" character of Richmond became fixed in the popular imagination around 1990 when a number of commercial developments were built specifically for the emerging Chinese-origin market. Lost in the debates that ensued

was the fact that Richmond had become home to various immigrant and visible minority groups. In 1991, the proportion of people in Richmond who were born in Latin America, in South Asia and in Southeast Asia was higher than the metropolitan average. Contrary to its popular image, Richmond is one of the most multicultural areas of greater Vancouver. In terms of its demography and income characteristics, Richmond retains a typical suburban character, with the bulk of its population comprising two-parent families and relatively few unattached adults.

Surrey–Delta (SD), includes portions of two large, suburban municipalities. Most of Delta is protected marshland, but the northeast section (included here) is a fairly typical North American suburb. Surrey, since the 1980s one of Canada’s most rapidly growing municipalities, is one of the most distant suburbs of Vancouver and is distinguished by its working-class character. Housing tends to be modest in size and price, and incomes are below average for the metropolitan area. We selected the western portion of the municipality for our study, as this is the principal area of immigrant settlement in Surrey. Of the community study areas, Surrey–Delta is the most family-oriented (it has the highest ratio of couples with children). While the relative number of immigrants living in SD is below the metropolitan average, it is a rapidly expanding population and ethnically distinct. All immigrant groups are under-represented in SD except those of South-Asian origin, who even by 1991 numbered over 20,000. Moreover, Indo-Canadians are highly concentrated in a few neighbourhoods in Surrey–Delta, and have created a substantial landscape of cultural institutions and commercial outlets.

The Tri-cities are a group of three sprawling suburban municipalities in the northeast quadrant of the Vancouver region (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody). Like Surrey–Delta, it is currently experiencing rapid population growth but the Tri-cities have a more middle-class population, with income levels slightly above the metropolitan average. In common with both Richmond and Surrey–Delta, the Tri-cities are mainly populated by families with children. As of 1991, there were relatively few immigrants living in this area: only 12 percent were born outside Canada, the USA or Europe, and English was spoken in well over 90 percent of the area’s homes. We selected this area as a case study for two reasons: first, we thought it important to learn

more about immigrant settlement and integration in an area where immigrants—especially those of non-European cultural heritage—are a relatively small minority; and, secondly, it is widely thought that the Tri-cities will become “the next Richmond,” an extensive Chinese-Canadian settlement area of middle- or higher-incomes.

In the discussion that follows, we present three broad themes that emerged from the focus group narratives of recent immigrants and the children of immigrants: changing family relations; the labour market; and engaging with Canadian society. In analyzing these themes, we found a rich variety of immigrant experiences that challenges linear and unified views about immigrant integration.

Reconstituting the family

The immigrant family has been viewed in two quite different ways, both in academic research and in popular discourse. The dominant view for many years has been to conceive of “the immigrant family” as a naturally bounded, unified whole (Ishwaran 1980). According to this notion, “the immigrant family” is easily constituted through a linear process of migration marching towards “integration,” a process sequentially contained within the two national boundaries of the “home country” and the “new country.” A second way to understand immigrant families, however, is to see the family as a fluid institution that is constantly negotiated and reconstituted both spatially and temporally (Lawson 1998). This view considers the lives of immigrant families as situated in two or more contexts, in the “home country” as well as the “new country” (Hyndman and Walton-Roberts, forthcoming). Moreover, immigrant families (like other families) are heterogeneous and stratified (e.g., by gender, class, race⁶ and age), and do not have the same meaning for all members or in all contexts (Das Gupta 1995). Thus we cannot speak about “the” immigrant family because this denotes a static picture of what is a shifting set of complex social relations.

⁶ We acknowledge the social construction of all categories of ethnicity or race, whether in the census, research or everyday language. Some researchers choose to signify this by using scare quotes around social categories such as ‘Indo-Canadian,’ ‘Chinese’ or White. We have chosen not to do this for consistency and stylistic reasons. The terms used by participants are preserved in quotations.

Our focus groups suggest that this second view of immigrant families, as fluid and heterogeneous, is the more fruitful way to understand migration processes that begin in the country of origin and continue through a web of daily practices connected to housing, neighbourhood, employment, consumption, leisure, health, schooling and so forth. Some immigrants celebrate this fluidity. A Polish immigrant, recently divorced (since coming to Canada) and a mother of a 13-year-old daughter, observed: “The family here looks different.” This woman likes how the family looks in Canada: “For me it’s absolutely right that immigration changes the picture of the family.” In contrast, others voiced deep concern over the reconstitution of family dynamics. For example, a grandfather from India spoke about his disappointment over “the breaking of the family” in Canada. These different views reflect the variety of family, gender and generational issues that emerged as themes from the focus groups and provide preliminary insights into different ways that people negotiate immigration and settlement.

In this section, we examine the complex ways in which immigrant families are defined and redefined in the migration and settlement process. While any attempt to disentangle this larger issue into component parts is somewhat arbitrary, we have chosen to highlight four themes: families and social networks; the dynamics of gender and generation; settlement geographies, the family, and identity; and negotiating educational and employment opportunities. Throughout, we demonstrate the diversity of family relationships as well as their meanings to individual family members.

Families and social networks

Informal networks are often an important part of settling into a new location, whether used on their own or in conjunction with institutional service provision. Most immigrants are faced with a vast array of information that has to be accessed and processed in the first months of settlement as they attempt to find housing, jobs, schools and negotiate everyday needs. This is often complicated by lack of English language ability, or French for those first settling in Québec. Some immigrants have friends, relatives or other contacts through ethnic affiliation who are able to help, but others have fewer resources in place when they arrive. Networks may range from being densely organized, operating

transnationally, to being thin and confined to the localized context; for some immigrants, they are non-existent.

Often such networks extend, blur, and otherwise bewilder the boundaries and meanings of family. For example, one Indo-Canadian participant from Surrey described a migration process including marriage and extended family reunification. He described how his father with other family members had bought land and built houses together to keep the various family members close. He said, “And that is where we all stayed together just like a network, like support mechanisms and everything, housing, food, set up a job, and those kinds of things. We always move together.”⁷ Reciprocal support within families across generations was important to some. The reunification of families allowed grandparents to support adult children, including those pursuing studies in Canada, through participation in the running of a household or caring for young children. Others from the Punjab mentioned common *village* origin (rather than just blood relatives) as an important dimension of chain migration and available support on arrival in Canada, extending notions of family in the new country.

Another participant, a woman from Poland, demonstrates how family networks can blur into other ones. She first arrived with her husband in Toronto where they relied heavily on family members for help: “They were like the sail boat on this ocean of new information.” Later, after divorcing and moving to British Columbia, where she missed the benefits of the large Polish community in Toronto, she still found housing and health service providers (doctor and dentist) through Polish contacts linking back to Eastern Canada, extending a network that had begun with family connections.

Though these networks are not uniformly available to all immigrants, and some choose to ignore them, they are significant to many—perhaps most—immigrants. As networks come into play, they provide a dynamic that makes elastic the boundaries of the family.

⁷ The family may operate as a socio-spatial unit not only with relatives living close together but also being engaged in paid work together: see below.

The dynamics of gender and generation

Relations *within* immigrant families are also complex and diverse—family members may have widely different experiences according to their gender, their generation, and changing spatial and temporal contexts. The immigration process itself has important consequences for the definition of gender. For example, immigration procedures generally categorize family men as independent applicants and women as their dependants, which may significantly shape access to services, ability to find jobs, vulnerability to abuse, and division of labour in the home (Agnew 1996, Vanderbijl, 1998). Furthermore, the categorization of women as dependants obscures their participation in the labour force and their contributions to the well-being of their families, communities, and Canadian society more generally (Thobani 1998). At the same time, the ways that immigrants are classified according to the rules and procedures of entry may shape changing generational experiences. The focus groups highlight some of these issues as participants talked about multiple ways of understanding femininity, the new dependencies between generations, and shifting notions of identity and “integration.”

In the Kerrisdale and Tri-cities focus groups, for example, participants talked about the position of women in the family as more equal in Canada, with laws that better protect them compared with places of origin in Asia and eastern Europe. Some participants felt that this sense of greater freedom for women may lead to conflict between spouses, and the Tri-cities immigrant group referred obliquely to the sensitive issues of domestic violence and divorce. Participants in the service provider focus group in this neighbourhood suggested that these problems are widespread.

Some focus group participants emphasized that different family members have greater or lesser difficulty adjusting to Canada. Many suggested that parents struggle during migration while children adjust quickly and the second generation integrates more easily than the first. Participants talked about children learning new languages and cultural expectations more easily than adults and their locally attained educational credentials being readily accepted by Canadian employers. Not all agreed, however, that children adjust easily. A Tri-city woman noted that teenaged children often face greater difficulties than adults: “I met a lot of people with children and they weren’t so small

when they came to Canada; they were 16, 17, 14, and they had problems. I see a lot of the newcomers, immigrants, where the children are just sitting at home and they don't know what to do." Another young woman suggested that due to differences in age of arrival and parents' financial security, her older brother had far fewer advantages than she did: "I think my brother had a hard time. He is a smart guy. He would have liked to go to university and stuff but because of my parents' immigration process, I think it was hard for them to put him through university. So he started driving a taxi because my dad had a taxi at the time. He didn't have the same opportunities that me and my sister did."

A Surrey, Indo-Canadian focus group discussed parents' different notions of femininity, dress, hairstyle and other aspects of self-presentation as points of tension between generations, as were different behavioural expectations according to gender, with male children having more freedom than females. For these young adults, experiences of growing up in an immigrant family varied considerably between men and women and across generations.

Settlement geographies, the family, and identity

Changing social geographies also lead to different kinds of family relations. Some focus group participants talked of new dependencies, particularly when living far from the cultural centre of their community, whether it be located in the city or suburb. A young woman from Hong Kong living in the outer suburban area of the Tri-cities, for example, commented on her dependence on her sister and parents to get to school and visit friends until she got her driving license. At the same time, her mother, who lacked confidence and did not speak English, was now dependent on her and her sister to get out. These new dependencies were viewed negatively, with both herself and her mother feeling constrained in their activity. The same young woman expressed the sense of loss accompanying the geographical and social dislocation of immigration: "I felt like I lost my whole life, my own space."

Participants in several focus groups revealed different stories of social integration, depending on the degree to which they lived in cultural enclaves, and how this changed over time. Two focus groups with young adults who grew up in the Lower Mainland—

...immigrant experiences

one Chinese-Canadian in Kerrisdale and the other Indo-Canadian in Surrey—suggested some complex dimensions of this transition in the context of immigration policy, demographic changes and changing local social geographies in the greater Vancouver area. Conversation in these focus groups turned to feelings of being a minority while growing up, often one of only a few Chinese- or Indian-origin children in their schools and neighbourhoods. Some expressed a sense of fragmented identities: “All my friends were White and I thought of myself as White except when I got home I was Chinese. You don’t notice until you look in the mirror that you are different.”

The changing density of the Chinese-Canadian communities, however, made many feel more a part of the mainstream, not so “alone,” and in some cases helped bridge the cultural/generation gap identified between children and parents. “In terms of my relationship with my parents, I can communicate so much better now. I talk to my friends in Chinese a lot now, so I’m a lot more articulate with my Chinese now than before. Plus I have a lot more in common with my parents now because I can do Chinese things that they can do too.”

For some Indo-Canadian participants, in contrast, strong patterns of family chain migration and settlement strategies that included extended families sharing housing or building on adjoining lots produced early residential concentration and strong community ties. This was sometimes double-edged, experienced as strong pressure from the broader Indo-Canadian community monitoring their behaviour, especially the behaviour of girls and women, even when parents were willing to allow them to become more “Western.” In this context the fluid boundaries of family exacted different pressures on young men and women.

Most of the young men and women in these second-generation focus groups expressed an appreciation of their ability to move between cultures, to form, as it were, situational identities. One young woman commented on speaking English at Pacific Centre (a downtown mall) and Chinese in areas of Chinese business concentration. In both cases decisions about language were tied to notions of what was appropriate in a specific place, and possible sanctions for contravening conventions. Similarly a young Indo-Canadian woman from Surrey commented: “We all had a school personality and a

home personality.” At school, they never felt able to talk Punjabi, but it was a place where the girls could joke around, talk to boys, wear shorts; at home, behaviour that was acceptable at school could be subjected to scrutiny by Indo-Canadian neighbours and/or family members. Yet this separation of school and home was not constant. It depended on the community in which the family lived (how White, multicultural or Indo-Canadian it was) and how “liberal” the father was.

To be sure, the negotiation of identity and behaviour within immigrant families is shaped by cultural traditions. Our focus groups suggest, nevertheless, that immigration policy, demographic changes and settlement geographies also shape identity. These shifting contexts ensure a temporal and spatial fluidity in how immigrants reconstitute their family lives.

Negotiating Educational and Employment Opportunities

Immigrant families interact, too, with educational and labour market opportunities, adopting diverse strategies that occur over space and time. Focus group participants talked, for example, about mixed experiences and unintended consequences in the ways their families have had to negotiate opportunities in Canada. For some, opportunities meant promise for a future in Canada; for others, tensions and difficulties, and for still others, a tentative toehold in the country. The disjunction between hopes and actual experiences in schooling and employment often meant a fragile sense of the future and of family settlement in Canada.

Families often, for example, pin their hopes for the future on their children’s education. As a Kerrisdale focus group participant commented, “The most important thing is the children’s future.” Many of the immigrants in our focus groups talked about coming to Canada because of the educational opportunities they thought it promised for their children; most specifically, the schools help children as adults to get jobs and to be socially mobile. As one focus group participant commented, “If children can pursue their education fully, they will have no problems in Canada.”

Several parents of school-aged children settled in specific neighbourhoods because of what they knew about the local school, but the actual experience of settling their children into school, of assessing quality and opportunities of education, were often complex. Participants had mixed opinions about the quality of Canadian schools, usually pointing to how Canadian education is different from their countries of origin. Several felt, for example, that Canadian schools are less rigorous in their teaching of math, science and/or English. In such cases families sometimes drew on their own resources to enrich their children's education. One participant, for example, tutors his niece in math because schools here teach it in an abstract way rather than giving students practice as in India. In contrast, others thought that the quality of Canadian schooling is very good and better for their children because it is less stressful, less rigid and more creative. One mother talked about how her son had initially been homesick, but after a month he was enjoying his studies because he had less homework than in China: "Sometimes I ask him, do you want to go back to Shanghai? 'No!'"

One may take for granted that parents, especially perhaps immigrant parents, should stress the importance of education and the need for scholastic achievement. However, some participants who had gone to school in the Lower Mainland reflected critically upon their parents' emphasis on scholastic achievement and the necessity to excel and work hard at school as a factor that inhibited their "integration" with their White peers. Young Chinese-Canadian men and women in Kerrisdale, for example, mentioned that these family attitudes and expectations around education, such as attendance at Chinese school, limited their opportunities to make friends with White children. One commented: "It was always 'get the highest mark that you can'." The importance of education for this Chinese-Canadian group was further reflected in comments on how the family would support the children through school and university, and how this family life style acted as a source of division between themselves and White students who were not supported in the same way.

Family relations intersected with education in various ways. Some parents with adult children wanting to study in Canada migrated to support their children, in one case to provide child care for grandchildren. In a few families not all members had settled in Vancouver. The spatially fluid nature of families was expressed through parents

maintaining economic and residential ties with their country of origin while their children attended school or university in Canada. In one instance, a young woman who was attending university in Vancouver and pursuing a Master's degree, had come to the realization that this education may not lead to good employment opportunities in Canada. She was considering the possibility of returning to Hong Kong, where her brothers and parents were still living, again pointing to the non-linear nature of immigration and family relations: "I want a job that I can make progress [in] instead of just working as a cashier or helper because I'm young. I don't have a family myself. I want to develop my own career." The importance of having a job is summed up by her comment: "If you don't have a job you cannot see the future."

Several participants talked of the transnational mobility and choice they had in employment due to their family resources, and some accounts referred to the phenomenon of the "astronaut family," where the husband in a family goes back to Asia to pursue business. Family costs were attached, however, to this strategy. For example, one Taiwanese woman perceived that such spatial separation of the family was a threat to family cohesion and encouraged marital discord.

Others without the choice to return to their countries of origin talked of stresses, discouragement and little income for family members unable to find paid employment. With restricted employment opportunities themselves, many participants adopted a family strategy of looking to the next generation for greater success because of their locally attained education and potential to speak English fluently. At the same time, the desire of many parents for their children's integration was double-edged, simultaneously wanting it and fearing the loss of cultural identity that might result. Those who explicitly wanted their children to "mix with other races" as one Kerrisdale participant put it, were also poignantly mindful of the many barriers that made this difficult, including living in a cultural enclave where the use of English is unnecessary, and taking ESL classes, which may unintentionally reinforce cultural isolation.

Before we turn to issues of employment and the labour market, we wish to make a few summary comments about the fluid and heterogeneous nature of immigrant families as they are reconstituted in the Canadian context. The focus groups suggest that the

experiences of immigration and concerns of family members vary according to, for example, changing immigration policies, neighbourhood demographic composition, class position, racialized identities, tensions between strongly held cultural values and perceived Canadian values, and expectations about opportunities and their realization. Gender and generation are significant axes of difference in shaping such variations. The use of networks in finding jobs, housing and information about schools and other services appears to be a common, but not universal, strategy. Such networks take many forms that extend or blur the boundaries and meanings of family and disrupt notions of a linear immigration process. Depictions in most texts of the immigrant family are strangely silent on the constitution and reconstitution of family households as part of the process of immigration, yet our data suggest that “the immigrant family” is a problematic term. To stress “the unit of intimate partners,” as do some texts, fails to capture the divisions within immigrant families and the shifting boundaries of their everyday experiences. Further, although most women enter Canada as dependants, their manifold contributions to Canadian society need to be more fully recognized.

Immigration and the labour market

Just as we found in the case of the family, we are struck by the differences between two narratives, in this case about the relationship between immigration and the labour market. The first, articulated in a host of economic studies (e.g. Chiswick and Miller 1988; Bloom and Gunderson 1991; Fagnan 1995), emphasizes the success of immigrants, over time, in finding meaningful and well-paid work. Findings are typically derived from large statistical analyses that show a clear association between labour-market incomes and the length of time immigrants have been in Canada.⁸ Most of these studies have found that immigrants who have been in Canada more than a decade or so actually earn more than their non-immigrant counterparts. Moreover, independent immigrants, especially those who have been assessed using the points system, appear to realize the

⁸ While there appears to be a consensus in the economic literature that there is an “assimilation effect” (i.e. that immigrant earnings progress relative to the average), many authors believe that the changes in Canadian immigration policy in the 1980s led to slower rates of economic “assimilation” among the latest arrivals. See for example, DeVoretz (1995). The rate of income convergence also differs between women and men and between different ethnocultural groups (Fagnan 1995).

most rapid rate of income convergence. A recent examination of the Immigration Data Base, for example, shows that independent, skilled immigrants exceed the average Canadian wage/salary income within just two years of their landing (Figures 3 and 4, Langlois and Dougherty 1997).⁹ Against these positive research findings, immigrants and advocate organizations presented a pervasive narrative of struggle that emphasized unmet expectations, underemployment, and personal stress. More than any other topic, our focus groups were saturated with worry over employment issues, worry that was frequently mixed with anger. In the remainder of this portion of our text, we review the basic points that arose around immigration and employment in our focus groups. These are loosely structured around four themes: barriers to labour market participation; the impacts of these barriers on immigrants; the ways that immigrants have tried to overcome the barriers they face; and the general impact of these barriers on society at large.¹⁰ At the end of our discussion, we offer a few additional thoughts on the gap between statistical analysis and immigrant voices and whether it can be reconciled.

Immigrants spoke about two general types of barriers they face in gaining access to jobs they want. On the one hand, they identified barriers common to all Canadians. These include: the effects of recession and economic restructuring, especially the lack of demand for workers generally and the decline of manual and entry-level jobs in particular; the familiar vicious “no experience, no job” cycle; and the fact that many do not qualify for specific training programs because they are not on E.I. benefits. On the other hand, immigrants face particular barriers beyond those experienced by other Canadians. Language skills loom especially large in this respect, as the ability to communicate effectively is a basic requirement for most work. However, immigrants

⁹ These figures indicate the employment earnings of immigrants in the 1994 tax year by their year of arrival. For example, Figure 3 shows that, on average, immigrants who arrived in 1982 earned slightly more than the Canadian average in 1994, while those who arrived in 1994 earned less than half the national average. Note how quickly, relative to other classes, economic immigrants realize the same level of employment income as the average Canadian who filed a tax return. Figure 4 is more specific and details the earnings performance of *principal applicants* only, within the economic class. As indicated in the graph, those who are assessed under the points system as “skilled workers” reach and exceed average Canadian employment earning levels very quickly.

¹⁰ The logic of this section is similar to that employed in the “Housing experience of new Canadians” project in Toronto, as outlined by David Hulchanski at the Second National Metropolis Conference, Montréal, 1997.

complain that even when they have attained fluency, it is not enough; as an East Vancouver woman, born in Africa, noted (in fluent English):

When you come here, you come from a continent or a country that was originally colonized by the British; you had your education, you were taught by the British, you speak your good English, but somehow they ask you “what colour is your English?”

In this case, the level of language facility demanded—unaccented English—is simply unattainable by immigrants; worse, language competence is apparently filtered through the lens of colour, also presenting immigrants with an impossible situation. Discussion around accreditation was equally animated. As a woman from the Ukraine, living in East Vancouver, put it:

Uh, I have that Doctor of Medicine, but I knew that in Canada I could not work on my special[ity]. Also I have large experience work in my profession. I work as baby sitter and as companion with one old Ukrainian woman. Now, I and several of my friends would like to help work part time, for example [as a] dishwasher, in the hospital, in some restaurants, cafes, also the typical roles. But, now, we cannot find such work..

At another focus group in East Vancouver we found an unexpected level of disappointment about the labour market. A male engineer, a twice-migrant from Bangladesh originally but with additional training in England, repeatedly complained of a lack of meaningful work; a male architect from Mexico stated that his credentials are meaningless here; his wife, a psychologist, made the same point; and on it went. Only two of the eight participants within this particular focus group were sanguine about their experiences looking for work in Vancouver: a middle-aged, male refugee from El Salvador (a survivor of imprisonment and torture) who is a janitor for a religious organization, and a woman twice-migrant, originally from Vietnam, who came to Canada after a long period in Germany and now works as a bilingual counsellor for a local immigrant service NGO. Everyone else around the table felt undervalued, and this was true of many immigrants who attended focus groups in our other neighbourhood areas as well. Participants also raised the issue that the “no experience, no job” problem is compounded for immigrants; that is, applicants who have relevant work experience before they come to Canada find that the general rule becomes “no Canadian experience, no job.” Finally, many complained that they find it difficult to learn the “unwritten” rules

of the Canadian labour market: they believe that people who have grown up in Canada instinctively know how to act at job interviews, how to activate personal networks for certain types of jobs that are rarely advertised, and how to structure an attractive resumé. While they may overestimate the degree of skill of the average non-immigrant job applicant, the fact remains that the social mores surrounding employment relations in a new country are often opaque and can present obstacles to immigrants.

Immigrants spoke movingly about the effects of these barriers on their lives. Many spoke of personal stress and diminished feelings of self-worth. A woman from Eastern Europe living in the Tri-cities explained that:

After a few months, a few years when the language communication becomes better and the barrier of the language disappears, everything gets easier. But in the beginning it's terrible. You probably can't imagine even how difficult it is ... The barrier because you cannot communicate the way you want. I think this is the most difficult barrier and this kind of research that you do should put the stress on this point.

Several, in different focus groups, stated that they were “nothing” in Canada because they could not find employment.

Another effect of the barriers to employment is a pervasive sense of a slippage between the immigration selection system and the Canadian labour market. Many feel duped:

And I'm sure you probably know about this: now they come as independent immigrants, so there is a points system; so you have to score this one point in work area to get into the interview. And what happens is that they score so much for, let's say, a computer programmer or something. They think, oh well, they'll have such a great job. But computer programmer over there and computer programming over here is completely different. And nobody tells them that. Language is different and everything, so they have to start over pretty much all over again, or start as nothing. So the expectations are completely different when people come. [A woman from East Vancouver].

Obstacles in the labour market are also interpreted by some as evidence of systematic racism in Canadian society. For example, several immigrants complained that credentials obtained in the United States or Europe are often more readily accepted than similar credentials achieved in other countries. The fact that most of the people in the former category are of European heritage, while most of the people in the latter category are not

is, of course, widely known and contributes to a belief that the Canadian labour market has deeply-imbedded prejudices.

Given these difficulties, how do immigrants obtain employment? A variety of strategies are initiated. The most prevalent, it seems, is for individuals to reduce their expectations and take whatever job they are offered. For example, an Indo-Canadian man in Surrey noted the large number of taxi drivers (a common occupation among Sikh men) he knows who have Indian engineering degrees. As mentioned earlier, most immigrants that we spoke with felt undervalued in their work. Others opt for additional education, either to augment skills they already have (e.g. by taking special courses, some are able to acquire Canadian credentials), or to learn entirely new skills. Frequently, these two strategies are applied jointly, by taking a poorly paid job and studying in off-hours. Pursuing this arrangement incurs costs, of course, in both financial (tuition) and added stress, especially for those who must juggle child care responsibilities with their spouse. Another common way of finding work is to activate personal and ethnic networks. This is most effective when looking for jobs where employees are allowed to speak languages other than English on the shop floor (e.g. in horticulture, cleaning, garment work, and construction). Many immigrants who attended our meetings were engaged in another strategy—widening their networks and upgrading their skills through volunteer work. As a woman of Vietnamese origin who came to Canada via Germany put it:

So somebody told me, “well you should do volunteer work.” It’s quite new for me; you know in Germany you don’t have that sort of thing, volunteer work. And then I applied for volunteer work—you know you have to apply with resumé and you get a job interview; it is as difficult as getting a real job (*general laughter and agreement*) and you are spending your time, giving your time away!

This woman was rewarded for her effort: after volunteering for a settlement agency she obtained a full-time job as a counsellor helping other Vietnamese immigrants. A few of the immigrants who attended our groups had adopted a more pessimistic strategy to cope with the limited opportunities available—they gave up looking for work. A woman in the Tri-cities, for example, stated: “You are tired all the time looking for a job all the time. For me I just stay at home.” Finally, we were unable to speak with those who chose

the ultimate option, to leave Canada; several of our participants were considering this course of action, however.

These coping mechanisms have important implications for Canadian society. First, they intensify intra-ethnic networks and, probably, in-group systems of loyalty. While we resist making a value judgement on this point (i.e. implying that ethnic solidarity is undesirable), we note that in-group systems of employment feed the growth of ethnic enclave economies and, in turn, socio-economic fragmentation. Secondly, as a Filipina immigrant in Surrey explained, the inability for immigrants to gain recognition for their credentials results in substantial underutilized human capital:

But here, in the Filipino community most of us came as *professionals*. We were professionals in our own country; there are doctors, lawyers, nurses, doing odd jobs. Imagine what a *waste* of the knowledge and skills! We could have used them here, and Canada should be very grateful that we came with our experience and our knowledge and skills.

Following a point raised earlier, the fact that immigrants settle for jobs well below their abilities leads them to question the legitimacy of the immigration system, and the egalitarian rhetoric of Canadian democracy. As a woman in Surrey indicated, the utility of research is also called into question in this respect:

. . . there is something I have been hearing for the last 24 years; the problems of settlement, the issues that the government has, and there are a lot of task forces and money that is being spent on this kind of research, and the government knows well, *damn well* what the problems are and what grass-roots people have problems with, and it seems that they spend millions of dollars on the investigation and the task forces and nothing ever comes besides the paper, and that really annoys me; it's my pet peeve.

The basic point, then, is that many of our focus group participants articulated a profound disappointment of Canadian society because of their experiences in the labour market.

Before turning to re-examine the discrepancies between statistical analyses and immigrant perceptions, it is worth noting a type of comment that was raised by several participants in our sessions who argued—very much against prevailing wisdom on immigration policy—that independent immigrants have more difficulty adjusting to Canada than those who arrive under family reunification programs. This point was

expressed most fully by an Indo-Canadian twice-migrant, who obtained a Ph.D. in the UK before settling in Surrey where she now works at a settlement NGO:

. . . That means that a person with less education has comparatively . . . they have less frustration, because they can easily find jobs in farms or other sectors you know (*agreement from others*). So the more frustration is with the highly educated and the professional person you know. Because the professional person they find it hard to compromise . . . Because a worker he came from India, and over here he start working in a farm no problem. The problem is with the professionals, they have frustrations . . . Secondly I would say then that a person that comes under [the] independent category, they have to struggle, because they don't have that initial support from their family or relative[s] . . .

These comments help us begin to reconcile the two narratives described at the outset of this section. If these very preliminary results, based on a relatively small number of participants at a dozen or so focus groups, are taken seriously, they suggest that immigrants with muted expectations are quite satisfied with their experience of the Canadian labour market. This is probably especially true when they begin their lives in Canada in a family and kinship network that enables them to find work quickly, even if the rate of pay is well below the Canadian average. Independent immigrants, however, appear to believe that the way their education, skills, and experiences are taken into consideration in the application procedure indicates a society and labour market ready to embrace them for these characteristics. While it is true that prospective immigrants are told their skills may not translate to the Canadian labour market (although some participants were adamant that the extent of non-translation had not been clarified), the exacting procedures of the assessment process imply otherwise (e.g. why would they have to *prove* they have an engineering degree if it is without value in Canada?). A kind of social contract is established (i.e., I proved I was an engineer; because of this I was allowed entry to Canada; my engineering skills are therefore valued—despite statements otherwise in government literature distributed to prospective immigrants). The lack of accreditation after arrival, coupled with the stringent demand for fluency in English, presents greater difficulties than expected, and immigrants cope in the ways described above.¹¹ Apparently, given the weight of statistical evidence, these coping mechanisms

¹¹ It is too early to translate these findings into specific policy recommendations, but two points are sufficiently clear to raise even at this preliminary stage. First, immigrants perceive a contradiction between the operation of the points system and the reality of accreditation. Pamphlets and interviews should be

are successful, especially for skilled independent immigrants who, on average, quickly achieve Canadian income levels. However, this achievement is associated with great personal and family stress, and frequently occurs outside the area of expertise acknowledged in the immigration application process. Immigrants, then, often do act like the “modern pioneers” described in the recent Legislative Review (Advisory Group 1997), but not without questioning the legitimacy of the system that brought them to Canada. With all the caveats required about the nature of our sample of immigrant voices, the key point raised by this preliminary research is the intensity of the struggle in which immigrants must engage in order to achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families in Canada.

Engaging Canada

As we mentioned in the methodological discussion, focus groups do not reach into different facets of immigrant experience with equal success, and relations with the native-born population in Vancouver emerged as a secondary theme in group conversations. There are likely two processes at work to account for this understatement. First, as we have seen, many immigrants, especially those with limited command of English, or who are members of the larger ethnocultural groupings, are highly contained in a network of co-ethnics, friends and relatives who define a culture of significant others. In the early years of settlement, these dense ties form an empowering social world that to a significant degree limits meaningful relations with other Canadians. In the initial household interviews completed with new middle-class immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, for example, few include White Canadians among their good friends.

Second, there is the dynamic of the focus group itself, which may be *held* in the immigrant’s neighbourhood, but is organized and led by representatives of White, middle-class, Canada. Status relations and courtesy constrain individuals from overstepping the bounds of discretion, especially in a social context that some might

even more candid than they already are in explaining the barriers to accreditation in Canada. Second, the many efforts already under way to deal with the accreditation issue are obviously well placed and should be accorded the very highest priority. Reform is in everybody’s interest: for immigrants it would mean an end to a deep sense of frustration and grievance, for Canada an end to a wasteful neglect of valuable human

interpret as a meeting of “hosts” with “guests.” Certainly, the muzzling of one speaker who raised critical comments on racism (noted earlier in a Surrey focus group of Indo-Canadians) suggested that for a number of speakers, racism may have been a no-go topic. Two decades of institutional multiculturalism and anti-racist training also encourage a sense of caution among all Canadians in speaking openly about inter-ethnic relations in public meetings with strangers. There was certainly unease for the first hour of the focus group attended by Canadian-born, White middle-class residents of the Kerrisdale area neighbourhoods, as speakers skirted around the issue of ethnoracial change, preferring to direct discussion into such safe topics as the arrival of a valued Chinese bakery in the district.

Interestingly, less reticence in speaking about inter-group relations and practices was displayed by those who have arguably benefited most from multiculturalism, the in-between second generation, who seem able to move tactically between ethnic and mainstream identities, and are able to offer a distinctive and studied reading of a space that they uniquely occupy. Overall, there is, then, some ambiguity raised by the relative non-salience of immigrant–non-immigrant relations in the focus groups. Are these matters truly of a secondary nature, or is the structure of the method itself a constraining influence in facilitating their discussion?

The Complexity of Inter-Group Relations

Nonetheless, enough themes were raised in conversation to warrant discussion here, though with the caveat that more probing interviews will broaden and deepen our understanding. Several respondents articulated satisfaction with their welcome in Canada: it is a “friendly society” (Kerrisdale area), a place to feel at home (Vancouver east side). The quality of life was generally praised; indeed among Hong Kong residents, there is a familiar saying, “Hong Kong for money, Vancouver for quality of life.” At the same time, some respondents felt less confident of the welcome they had received. A newcomer from El Salvador praised the initial settlement services and the relationships they created, while expressing disappointment at the lack of sympathy for his poor

capital.

English he and others confronted in public interactions. A woman of Vietnamese origin who had lived for thirty years in Germany found Vancouver a more welcoming society, though she wondered whether for some Canadians there was now the sense of “too many Asians.”

While older residents had heard stories of the institutionalised racism in Vancouver society prior to the 1950s, they tended to contrast it with the more comfortable relations of the present. Few speakers had harrowing tales to tell. An Indo-Canadian related being the victim of ethnic slurs downtown, though he chose to equate them with interregional taunts in India, and noted that his experience was mitigated when bystanders on the street observed to him, “Not worth it, he’s drunk.” Is this more positive spin placed on an embarrassing incident a function of the speaker’s comfort, or of the social relations at the focus group? Would the story have been related with just this nuance in a less-guarded moment across his dinner table? A little later in the conversation it was claimed that in Surrey “European people, they move out because the Indians have come here.”

It is important to remember also that in a metropolitan region where more than a third of residents are immigrants, both partners in inter-group experiences may well have been born outside Canada. Far too little attention has been paid to uneasiness, group labelling, and discrimination that takes place among newcomers. An immigrant in East Vancouver expressed his unease with a multicultural neighbourhood:

I was not very much used to being in a place where there’s so many cross-sections of people, you know so many backgrounds of people . . . That’s basically the reason you know, what bothers me you know, to be very honest. So probably I’ll be moving out very soon . . . So that’s basically my opinion you know, not to have too many races all together side by side, you cannot mix them up you know. It is very difficult. The children of children of you know, probably they’ll be able to mix, not me, base generation.

In this context, inter-group labelling readily occurs, even amongst groups perceived as homogenous by outsiders: “I talk to teachers in my old high school and they tell me that the divisions in the west side between kids from Hong Kong and the kids from Taiwan are just as bad as any racial divisions between Chinese kids and White kids.” Another speaker referred to the postwar school fights in Strathcona elementary school. While

fights occurred between White children and Chinese immigrants, there was also more complex boundary-marking:

It started around '49 and it was just after the Communists took over China, and there were a lot of Chinese immigrants who came into Strathcona school. There was a huge division there in the school; there were fights all the time with the Chinese and non-Chinese kids that were born here *versus* the kids that were immigrants.

Labelling is also directed by immigrants toward the receiving society, another complexity of inter-group stereotyping too little acknowledged in the literature. When a group of second generation Chinese-Canadians were asked about any labelling practised by their parents' generation in describing European-Canadians, there was general agreement about certain themes:

Male: "White people are lazy and not very good with money. That's a flat out stereotype that I hear a lot. (Agreement) White people are lazy and charge up their Visa too much."

Female: "They don't take care of their kids." (Agreement)

Male 2: "They always want holidays, or they always want their paid vacations."

But nuance and complexity are also present in inter-group representations. Following the forthright statement of the East Vancouver immigrant concerning his discomfort with ethnocultural mixing, another member of the same focus group spoke who had clearly thrown himself headlong into multiculturalism.

I decide to start doing volunteer work, because I really like community work, and I thought, well, I am going to do my bit and if I am going to start helping anybody I need to learn about all the cultures that are here because we are not alone. So I started joining different groups, volunteering at neighbourhood houses. I have experience [from] India, from Vietnam, Russia, from many countries, and I learn a lot from them.

For this new Canadian, volunteering led to government training and a paid job. But for another, from South Asia, the very concept of a group-centred multiculturalism was fraught with contradiction, no less than a form of ethnic essentialism that should be rejected:

I mean, multicultural, what is it? Multiculturalism is you have made the groups one culture, another culture, it is not the individual actually. Rather than one [culture], it's like the individual, it's like you and me . . . I mean why is it group-

...immigrant experiences

wise, I mean I am asking you that, why? I mean like in schools or anywhere, it's mostly like they treat [us] as groups. Group as in: "OK, tolerate this group, tolerate this group." I mean why not respect the individual; that's the end. No, I don't understand that.

In responses as varied as these, we see the complexity of inter-group representations, challenging the imputations that are sometimes thrown too simplistically and one-dimensionally over these relationships (Li 1994; Ley 1995; Ray et al. 1997).

"Fitting In"

What about the issues of integration, of "fitting in" to the society that the newcomer confronts upon arrival? Not many respondents offered opinions, but the pressure to conform was clearly there, not least for children exposed at school to a much broader Canada than they are allowed to experience at home. Especially among adolescents there is a desire for conformity in dress, appearance and other forms of self-presentation with the Canada they find in the classroom. Within many Indo-Canadian families, especially Sikhs, there is a tussle between parents and children over the issue of cutting hair.

Female 1: Nine of the kids [at our school] in the past year had arrived with turbans, very confident they were going to keep them . . . But every single one, except one, has cut their hair now because it's just too much pressure . . .

Female 2: I was just thinking, these kids, they can't learn the language in three months but to fit in they can cut their hair and wear the Adidas jacket.

At another focus group in Surrey, an Indo-Canadian complained that it was always the immigrant who had to do the adjusting:

I agree because I have come here I have to change to this society, right? But no one in this society is accepting the people from outside, what are they doing to accept us? Are they changing a little? I mean if you expect me to change 90 percent or 80 percent, are you changing 20 percent back to me?

Other newcomers, west side business immigrants, had more specific expectations for adjustments by Canadian society:

Male 1: The education world is very important to us. I do think that the school is too White, as for Eric Hamber High School, 90 percent of them are Chinese children. But most of the teachers over there, [only] a few are Chinese or come from China . . .

Male 2: Children are Chinese origin and teachers are all White, too White.

Male 1: All White.

Researcher: Do other people agree with that statement?

Female 1 [in Mandarin]: Teachers are all Caucasians!

But this position was not unanimous, and encouraged a lengthy intervention by a woman in the same focus group:

I came from Hong Kong. I think we have to realize one thing. We are immigrant, we came to Canada, and in Canada, English is the language. So what's wrong if you have native speakers teaching your own children English? I mean, an academic person myself, previously before I entered into business, I have been a teacher at a tertiary school. But I really realize that, as a Chinese learning English our English is never as good as those native speakers; it's not the same . . . I don't think we should change the local population to suit our Chinese taste or Chinese expectations. I think this is wrong . . . I think we should adapt ourselves to the present situation, to me I'm happy with Vancouver.

Canada *qua* Institution

It was this focus group of predominantly business immigrants that offered the most critical view of the Canada they had engaged, though it was a criticism that was directed not at individuals, nor groups, but at institutions. The commentary noted above about schooling (and discussed more fully earlier in this paper) was only the most sustained of a multifaceted set of expressed difficulties they had with a range of Canadian institutions and also the regulatory power of government (cf. Smart 1994; Woo 1998).

Language we don't think is the first problem. It's not the first priority to us, but the law is. We are not familiar with the law. Every time that we have different opinions with local Canadians, it's the law. That's the law; everything is the law.

Or again:

The labour cost is already very high; taxes are high; unions are so rigid. That all adds up to the cost of doing business here. And then you add the capital tax when you are losing money.

Complaints extend to education, the foreign asset disclosure legislation, the police, and zoning: "I think they are poking their noses into others' business. I should have absolute authority of my property." In such a wide-ranging sense of grievance, one senses a

testiness that adds up to a fragile toehold in Canada. One more disappointment may prise these immigrants loose.

The proposal to declare worldwide assets would make it very difficult for those who have investment abroad to continue to stay in Canada, to remain residents. There's a price for everything. What's the price to stay in Canada? In our case, a number of my family members already, for tax purposes, become non-residents.

Other, less-wealthy immigrants, particularly those who had been unable to transfer professional skills into the Canadian labour market, frequently felt mistreated by government. They sensed that they had been misled by immigration officials about job prospects in Canada; their disaffection continued with job-related programmes that they felt had few real labour market payoffs.

Perspectives of the Second Generation

It is the second-generation that offers far more reflection on position and their relationship both to their ethnic origins and the broader Canadian society they have been born and socialised into. Some see themselves as cultural mediators, as “a bridge.” “For the newer immigrants who came here, I can help them out too, and then I can help like, Caucasian people, right? Like help them mix together.” Discussion showed that a good deal of the time of the second generation is spent negotiating what is for some a dual identity, both minority and mainstream, with different languages, practices, and obligations as they flexibly make the change from one identity to another. The recent growth of Chinese-origin newcomers has encouraged the second generation to re-examine their own Westernization. “The only time I’m reminded that I’m Chinese is when I get older and go into Richmond now, and here there’s all Chinese people, and then the reminder, of course, is that you really are Chinese.” It is the same for long-established South Asians in Surrey, where new immigration “got me involved more into our culture and that sort of thing. Before I was totally into listening to Caucasian music . . . Not involved in my culture at all . . . and then . . . the new wave of immigrants . . . they just totally got us involved into our own culture a lot I think.”

For most respondents, this switching is accomplished fairly readily; for others it invokes some tensions, more usually associated with the constraints of their origins rather

than barriers in entering the mainstream. Many of these respondents had been children in schools where there were few others of Asian-origin. Some children had known no prejudicial experiences; for others it had taken the form of schoolyard ribbing. None made reference to more serious racial incidents, though the families long-established in Canada had known racially-inspired barriers to the labour market in earlier generations. “They wouldn’t hire Chinese, and they would not allow Chinese in to become chartered accountants—various cultural oppressions. You see, those were the kinds of things that were . . . that occurred in those days that don’t occur now, and there’s a lot of difference.”

The second generation young adults that we spoke with in Kerrisdale, Richmond and Surrey seem to have passed successfully through higher education and move freely among friends of different cultures, though several noted that through university Chinese-origin or South Asian friendships had become more important to them. The Chinese-Canadian participants noted, too, the wide range of university Chinese groups, each of them corresponding with a somewhat different relation between Asian origins and a Canadian present. But their overall assessment of their in-betweenness is positive: “It’s a great advantage to have the best of both worlds, from any standpoint, whether it be economic or anything.”

With their life-time of experience, these groups also noticed shifts in inter-group relations in recent years. In the past, they suggest that there was more intermarriage or at least more socializing, but now the size of the Chinese and South Asian communities encourages more enclosure of members within it: as a second generation Chinese-Canadian put it: “It’s too convenient for the newcomers, so they don’t want to learn (English).” A Canadian-born resident of Chinese parents, who has lived in suburban Richmond for almost 30 years, reflects on recent changes:

When I started working in Surrey I was the only Chinese person there. I think I was very well accepted – there wasn’t any discrimination. I think there was more talk about discrimination against the Chinese people after Richmond became a large area of Chinese, so I think what happens is that because there are so many more people who are Chinese, I think people who are not Chinese feel a bit threatened, and so, in turn the discrimination starts happening.

But as this participant continued, for the generation in-between, rejection as well as opportunities may be encountered on both sides. Inter-group relations are never one-directional:

[My son] looks Chinese, but he can't speak it. When he was at school, he was . . . (with) a lot of Caucasian kids, because he fit in with them in terms of the language. He didn't fit in with the Hong Kong kids because he didn't speak Chinese and there was . . . like there were comments made in the fact that he could not speak Chinese, like "what's wrong with him?" But of course it wasn't his fault, right? So this is where you first feel a little bit of discrimination, you know, against your own kid, and for very unusual reasons.

Conclusions

What have we learned from this series of focus groups? Undoubtedly, some pre-existing knowledge or at least hunches have been reinforced. We have seen, for example, the remarkable reach of social support networks among immigrant communities, perhaps densest for South Asians, but pervasive for all minorities attending the focus groups. We heard of the difficulties of entry into the labour market, of the profound trials and tribulations of the early years that are perhaps too easily glossed over. We were told about the evolution of family life, of genders and generations, as they settle into Canadian norms, a process often resisted by the older generation. Over and over we learned of the salience of employment and education, as the two sites of huge effort and deep anxieties. About discrimination we heard little; indeed for recent immigrants, relations with the Canadian mainstream are at the edge of their life-world. But for the second generation it is a different story, and among these eloquent and self-conscious accounts we heard a good deal about a fascinating negotiation of identities, back and forth and in-between. Moreover, the accounts of the second generation to date have been a story of attainment, although we must recognize the selective nature of our second-generation focus groups.

We are perhaps clearest about research questions that have been opened (and in no way resolved) by this first phase of research. While the focus groups have provided preliminary insights into how immigrant families negotiate living in Canada, much more needs to be explored. It would be useful in further research to examine how networks form and what other types of information, goods and services are generated and

transmitted through both local and transnational networks. The stresses and potential isolation attending immigration, with implications for family relationships across generations, is a further area to explore. What was barely hinted at in the focus groups was the potential and the dilemmas posed for children who act as “bridges” to the White community (Castaneda, 1996), or the nucleus of women’s networks that can be converted into information, practical support and child-minding resources, as has been found in other research (e.g., Dyck, 1996; Hanson and Pratt, 1995). Issues of family conflict and violence, discussed in one focus group with service providers, also need further careful investigation. Moreover, the focus groups point to the inadequacy of normative views of nuclear and extended families, with examples of households with fluid and fluctuating social boundaries and whose physical boundaries may span several single-family dwellings, and indeed, national borders. We need to be cautious about endorsing stereotypes about supportive family networks without further investigation of the internal dynamics of gender, age, and generation. These suggest complex changing dependencies and renegotiations of family life that may also include conflict and stress as families experience dislocation and resettlement. The focus groups raised fascinating questions about the interdependency between voluntary and more formal sectors of employment. Assumptions about the relative success that highly trained, as compared to less- educated, immigrants may have in integrating quickly and successfully were thrown into question by the deep dissatisfactions expressed by professionals who could not achieve accreditation and hence find employment in their professions.

There were intriguing geographical variations between the districts where our focus groups were held. These were most clear when we spoke about economic issues. Concerns about accreditation and access to the labour market were expressed most vocally in Surrey and East Vancouver. In Kerrisdale, conversely, immigrants who entered Canada under the auspices of the business program had quite a different set of concerns that were related to the security of their investments in venture capital funds (a requirement of their immigration) and the cost of conducting business in Canada. The quality of the school system was also a major topic of conversation in some areas and not others (notably East Vancouver). Finally, the optimism expressed by second-generation

immigrants was most obvious in Richmond and Kerrisdale, and somewhat muted in Surrey.

Perhaps the most striking outcome of the focus groups, then, was the repeated evidence of variation and complexity: within families, between immigrant groups, between first- and second-generation immigrants, between residential settings, and in the encounter with a wider Canadian society. The rich variety of immigrant experiences challenges us to incorporate a recognition of diversity into our research process as we enter the next phases of our project, and to be aware of this issue in policy debates. Above all, acknowledging complexity forces us to exercise caution in generalizing about the immigrant experience.

References

- Advisory Group. 1997. *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- Agnew, V. 1996. *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bloom, D. E., and M. Gunderson. 1991. "An Analysis of the Earnings of Canadian Immigrants." In J. Abowd and R. Freeman, eds., *Immigration, Trade and the Labor Market*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Castaneda, A. 1996. "Language and Other Lethal Weapons: Cultural Politics and the Rites of Children as Translators of Culture." In A. Gordon and C. Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multi-Culturalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Chiswick, B. R., and P. W. Miller. 1988. "Earnings in Canada: The Role of Immigrant Generation, French Ethnicity, and Language." In T. P. Schultz, ed., *Research in Population Economics*. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 183–228.
- Das Gupta, T. 1995. "Families of Native Peoples, Immigrants, and People of Colour." In N. Mandell, and A. Duffy, eds., *Canadian Families: Diversity, Conflict and Change*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, 141–174.
- DeVoretz, D. 1995. "New Issues, New Evidence, and New Immigration Policies for the Twenty-First century." In D. DeVoretz, ed., *Diminishing Returns: The Economics of Canada's Recent Immigration Policy*. Toronto: The C. D. Howe Institute, and Vancouver: The Laurier Institution, 1–30.
- Dyck, I. 1996. "Mother or Worker? Women's Support Networks, Local Knowledge and Informal Child Care Strategies." In K. England, ed., *Who Will Mind the Baby? Geographies of Child Care and Working Mothers*. London: Routledge, 123–140.
- Fagnan, S. 1995. "Canadian Immigrant Earnings, 1971-1986." In D. DeVoretz, ed., *Diminishing Returns: The Economics of Canada's Recent Immigration Policy*. Toronto: The C. D. Howe Institute, and Vancouver: The Laurier Institution, 166–208.
- Goss, J., ed. 1996. Special Issue on Focus Group Methodology. *Area* 28, 113–149.
- Hanson, S., and G. Pratt. 1995. *Women, Work and Space*. London: Routledge.
- Hyndman, J., and M. Walton-Roberts. "Migration and Nation: Working with Burmese Refugees in Vancouver." Vancouver RIIM Discussion paper. Forthcoming.
- Ishwaran, K., ed. 1980. *Canadian Families: Ethnic Variations*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Lawson, V.A. 1998. "Hierarchical Households and Gendered Migration in Latin America: Feminist Extensions to Migration Research." *Progress in Human Geography* 22, 39–53.

- Ley, D. 1995. Between Europe and Asia: The Case of the Missing Sequoias. *Ecumene* 2, 185–210.
- Li, P. 1994. “Unneighbourly Houses or Unwelcome Chinese: The Social Construction of Race in the Battle over ‘Monster Homes’ in Vancouver, Canada.” *International Journal of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies* 1, 14–33.
- Kobayashi, A., and L. Peake. 1997. “Urban Studies Research on Immigrants and Immigration in Canadian Cities.” Prepared for Strategic Policy, Planning and Research, and Metropolis Project, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Langlois, C., and C. Dougherty. 1997. “Disentangling Effects: A Glimpse of the Power of the IMDB.” Paper presented at the CERF-CIC Conference on Immigration, Employment and the Economy, Richmond.
- Ng, R. 1988. *The Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and the State*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Ray, B., G. Halseth, and B. Johnson. 1997. “The Changing ‘Face’ of the Suburbs: Issues of Ethnicity and Residential Change in Suburban Vancouver.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21, 75–99.
- Smart, J. 1994. “Business Immigration to Canada: Deception and Exploitation.” In R. Skelton, ed., *Reluctant Exiles? Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Stewart, D. W., and P. N. Shamdasani. 1992. *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Thobani, S. 1998. “Nationalizing Citizens, Bordering Immigrant Women: Globalization and the Racialization of Citizenship in Late 20th Century Canada.” Ph.D. diss., Simon Fraser University.
- Vanderbijl, A. E. 1998. “The ‘Immigrant Family’.” Paper presented at the Western Association of Sociology and Anthropology Meetings, Vancouver, BC, 15–16 May.
- Woo, E. 1998. “The New Entrepreneurs and Investors from Hong Kong: An Assessment of the Business Program.” In E. Laquian, A. Laquian, and T. McGee, eds., *The Silent Debate: Asian Immigration and Racism in Canada*. Vancouver, B.C.: Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia.

(Copyeditor: S. Sydney Preston)

Table 1

Greater Vancouver Community Studies: Summary Data, 1991						
Individuals	CMA	Kerrisdale	East Vancouver	Surrey-Delta	Tri-cities	Richmond
Population 15+	1,286,230	30,705	195,765	168,650	106,730	100,415
Immigrants (%)	35.0	40.4	57.6	31.9	26.6	40.6
Place of Birth (%)						
Canada	63.1	55.8	40.6	67.0	72.0	57.6
Europe/US	16.9	16.0	13.9	14.8	15.7	14.9
Non-Europe/US	20.0	28.2	45.5	18.2	12.4	27.5
Latin America	0.9	0.4	1.9	0.7	0.7	1.0
China	3.9	6.9	15.3	0.7	1.3	4.0
Hong Kong	3.3	7.7	7.3	0.8	2.4	7.7
Taiwan	0.5	3.5	0.6	0.1	0.3	1.0
South Asia	3.0	0.8	5.1	8.9	1.1	3.4
Southeast Asia	3.7	3.8	10.1	2.9	2.4	4.6
Ethnic origin (%single)						
European	51.2	50.1	32.0	50.9	54.9	47.1
British	34.9	35.5	16.8	33.4	37.7	32.6
Italian	2.2	1.3	4.5	1.2	2.1	0.9
Jewish	0.7	6.6	0.2	0.1	0.2	1.5
Non-European	19.7	29.9	47.2	17.0	11.2	27.7
Chinese	10.5	23.1	30.8	2.5	5.6	15.9
Filipino	1.6	1.8	3.5	1.5	1.1	2.1
South Asian	4.3	1.3	7.0	10.7	2.1	5.8
Vietnamese	0.5	0.2	2.3	0.4	0.1	0.1
Others (s/m)	28.5	20.0	19.1	31.6	33.6	25.0
First language (%)						
English	68.6	64.0	39.0	70.6	77.1	63.8
European	7.0	4.4	10.9	6.1	6.1	5.5
Non-European	15.9	24.5	41.8	14.7	8.2	22.6
Chinese	9.2	20.2	28.3	2.1	4.7	14.1
Tagalog	1.1	1.4	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.7
Vietnamese	0.5	0.2	2.3	0.4	0.1	0.1
Hindi	0.7	0.1	1.9	1.3	0.4	1.0
Punjabi	2.6	0.4	4.5	8.6	0.9	3.0
Home language (%)						
Non-official	15.3	20.1	40.4	13.5	7.6	19.6
Level of education (%)						
< Grade 9	8.0	4.3	18.0	8.8	5.1	6.0
Gr 9-13 w/o cert.	22.2	16.1	22.9	27.7	23.4	22.6
High school cert.	13.9	10.5	13.4	16.1	16.3	14.9
>HS, no cert.	14.7	15.4	14.2	13.3	14.6	14.8
>HS, with cert.	27.0	21.4	21.1	27.1	30.5	27.4
University degree	14.4	32.3	10.5	7.1	10.1	14.2
Income (index)						
Both sexes	100	145	73	92	104	103
Men	125	195	85	117	133	131
Women	74	103	60	64	72	76
HL Official	104	153	78	94	105	109
HL Non-official	74	106	65	71	82	79
Households						
Number	609,430	14,020	85,385	72,750	48,240	44,455
Persons per household	2.6	2.6	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.8
Family structure (%)						
Non-family household	33.6	37.8	36.3	19.1	20.9	24.5
Couples w/o children	24.4	23.9	17.7	23.8	25.2	25.4
Couple with children	32.0	30.7	30.9	44.3	43.4	39.0

Lone parents	7.9	5.8	10.0	9.6	9.2	8.5
Multiple families	2.2	1.7	5.1	3.3	1.4	2.6
Household income Index	100	149	77	99	109	110
Low income (%)	20.2	15.9	33.7	18.6	15.2	15.9
Dwelling value Index	100	235	97	75	80	94
Tenure						
Owned (%)	57.6	60.2	48.6	69.1	70.5	65.6
Mortgage > 30%	9.9	8.3	8.1	13.5	12.1	11.4
Rented (%)	42.4	39.8	51.4	30.9	29.5	34.4
Rent > 30%	17.4	18.7	22.6	13.3	10.4	12.5

Note: Income indices are calibrated to the CMA average for both sexes (or for total households when applicable)

Source: Statistics Canada special tabulation

Figure 1: Greater Vancouver

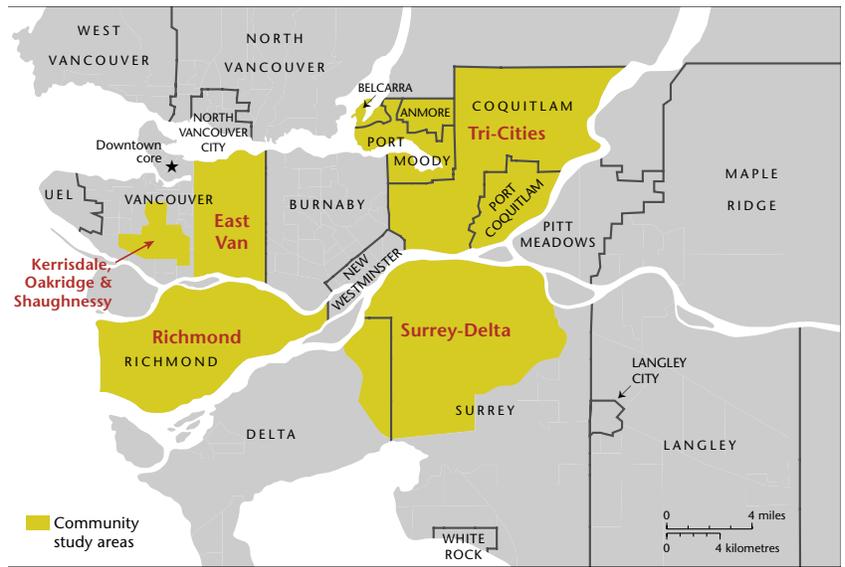
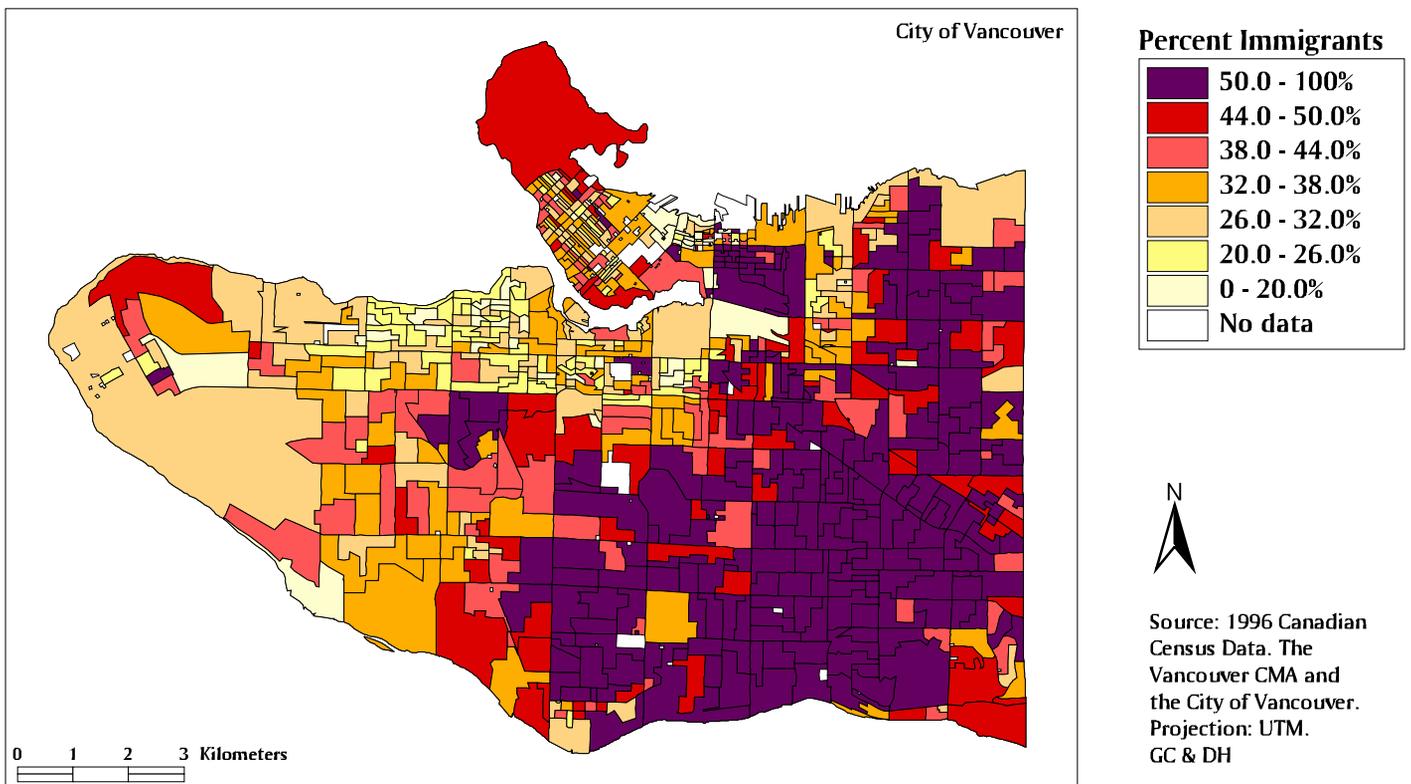
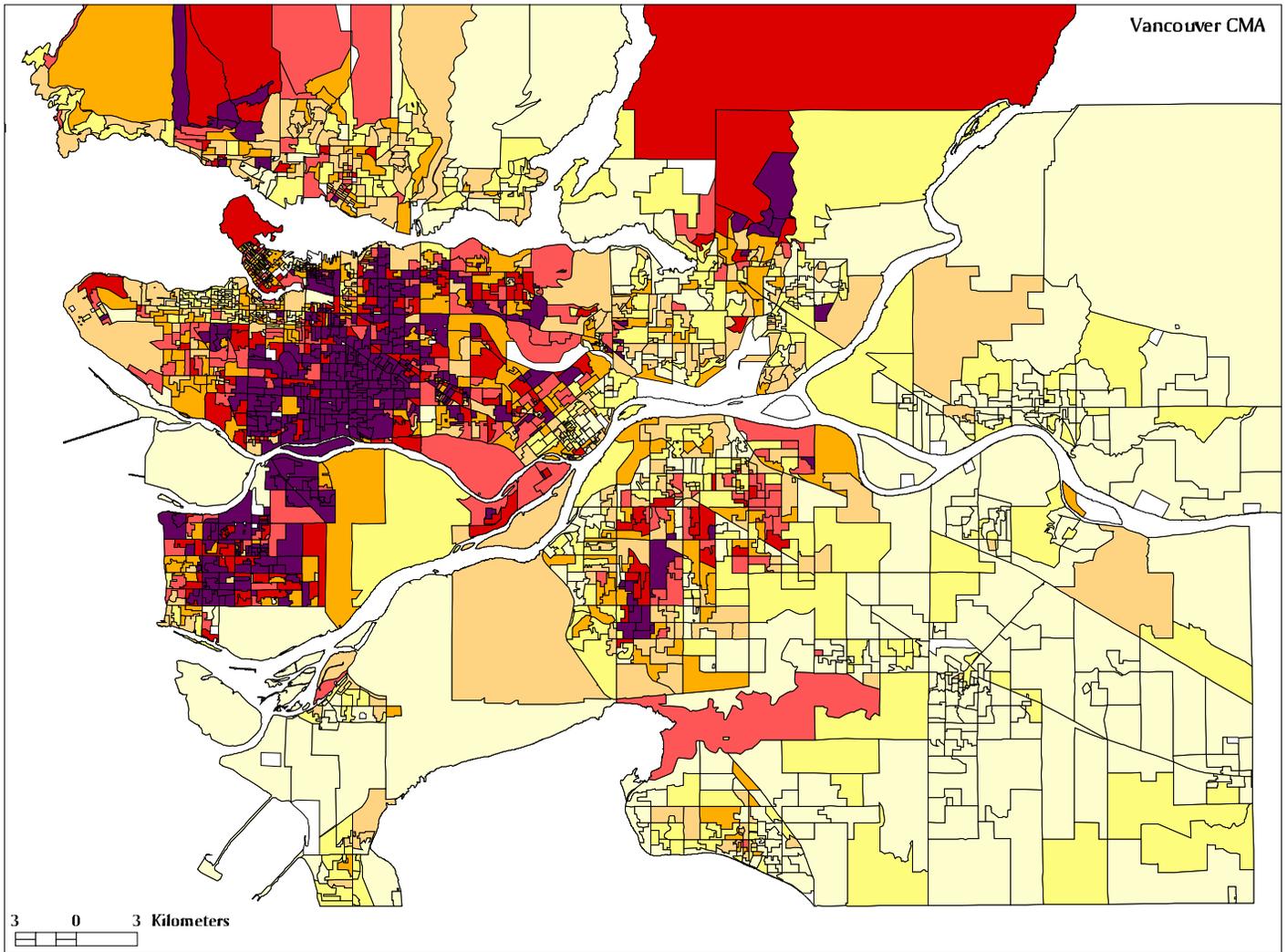


Figure 2: Total immigrant population, Vancouver CMA, 1996

Base population: total 1996 population



Working paper series
(back issues)

Number	Author(s)	Title	Date
96-01	James W. Dean & Don J. DeVoretz	The Economic Performance of Jewish Immigrants to Canada: A Case of Double Jeopardy?	5/96
96-02	Kris Olds	Developing the Trans-Pacific Property Market: Tales from Vancouver via Hong Kong	8/96
96-03	Krishna Pendakur & Ravi Pendakur	The Colour of Money: Earnings Differentials Among Ethnic Groups in Canada	4/96
96-04	Alan Green David Green	The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy, Past and Present	
97-01	John E. Hayfron	Language Training, Language Proficiency and Earnings of Immigrants: Lessons from Norway	2/97
97-02	Daniel Hiebert	The Colour of Work: Labour Market Segmentation in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, 1991	3/97
97-03	Abul Shamsuddin & Don J. DeVoretz	Wealth Accumulation of Canadian and Foreign-Born Households in Canada	6/97
97-04	Abul Shamsuddin	The Double-Negative Effect on the Earnings of Foreign-Born Females in Canada	6/97
97-05	Abul F. M. Shamsuddin	Savings, Tax Contributions and Australian Immigration	6/97
97-06	Peter Sheldon	Estimation of Labour Market Participation Rates for Canadian-Born and Foreign-born Families Resident in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area Circa 1991	8/97
97-07	John E. Hayfron	Estimating Immigrants' Occupational Choice and Occupational Wages with Selectivity Bias	9/97
97-08	David Ley & Heather Smith	Is there an immigrant "underclass" in Canadian cities?	10/97
97-09	Dominique Gross	Immigration Flows and Regional Labour Market Dynamics	10/97
97-10	Krishna Pendakur & Ravi Pendakur	Speak and Ye Shall Receive: Language Knowledge as Human Capital	11/97

Working paper series

Number	Author (s)	Title	Date
98-01	Karl Froschauer	East Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Vancouver: Provincial Preference and Ethnic Strategy	01/98
98-02	June Beynon & Kelleen Toohey	Careers in Teaching: Participation Rates and Perceptions of Two Minority Groups in British Columbia	01/98
98-03	Iris Geva-May	Immigration to Israel: Any Lessons for Canada?	01/98
98-04	Rebeca Raijman & Moshe Semyonov	Best of Times, Worst of Times, and Occupational Mobility: The Case of Russian Immigrants in Israel	02/98
98-05	Fernando Mata & Ravi Pendakur	Immigration, Labour Force Integration and the Pursuit of Self-employment	02/98
98-06	Samuel A. Laryea	The Impact of Foreign-born Labor on Canadian Wages: A Panel Analysis	02/98
98-07	Gordon Dicks & Arthur Sweetman	Education and Ethnicity in Canada: An Intergenerational Perspective	02/98
98-08	Steven Globerman	Immigration and Health Care Utilization Patterns in Canada	03/98
98-09	Samuel A. Laryea	The Substitutability and Complementarity of Canadian and Foreign-born Labour : Circa 1990	04/98
98-10	John E. Hayfron	Panel Estimates of the Gender Gap in Norway: Do Female Immigrants Experience A Double Earnings Penalty ?	04/98
98-11	Thomas Bauer and Klaus F. Zimmermann	Occupational Mobility of Ethnic Migrants	07/98
98-12	Gillian Creese	Government Restructuring and Immigrant/Refugee Settlement Work: Bringing Advocacy Back In	07/98
98-13	Abul Shamsuddin	Labour Supply of Immigrant Women in Australia	07/98
98-14	Yitchak Haberfeld, Moshe Semyonov and Yinon Cohen	Ethnicity and Labor Market Performance among Recent Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union to Israel	08/98
98-15	Daniel Hiebert	Immigrant Experiences in Greater Vancouver: Focus Group Narratives	09/98
98-16	Daniel Hiebert	The Changing Social Geography of Immigrant Settlement in Vancouver	09/98

Back issues of working papers are available for \$5 from

Vancouver Centre of Excellence: Immigration, WMX4653, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, B.C, Canada V5A 1S6. Tel: (604) 291-4575 Fax: (604) 291-5336

E-mail: riim@sfu.ca

<http://www.riim.metropolis.globalx.net/>