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Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

Immigration, Neighbourhood Change, and Racism:

Immigrant Reception in Richmond, B.C.

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Abstract: This paper examines the responses of long-term residents to physical and cultural changes in Richmond, B.C. since 1986. Over the course of the past twelve years, Richmond has received considerable numbers of Asian-origin immigrants, and as a result, the ethnic Chinese population as a proportion of Richmond's total population has increased nearly five-fold since 1986. During this same period of time, Richmond has experienced an absolute population increase, dramatic rises in housing prices, and economic diversification, transforming from a suburban bedroom community of Vancouver to a city and employment centre in its own right. Popular and academic attention in the Greater Vancouver context has focused on critical responses to community change by 'white' residents, interpreting such responses as reinvented and often subtly expressed racist expressions against Chinese immigrants. Drawing from extended interviews with fifty-four established Richmond residents, this paper attempts to provide a more nuanced account of immigrant reception, challenging the empirically reduced representation of residents in analyses of host-community 'racism.' Moreover, the paper questions the analytical and political meaning of 'racism,' and the practice of closing this term off from rigorous scrutiny and debate.

Key words: immigration, racism, social constructionism, whiteness, Richmond, Vancouver

Introduction

Of all the issues that are bound up with the movement of immigrants to Canada, it is perhaps the question of their integration with the receiving society that provokes the highest degree of public, academic, and government interest. Typically, such analyses have centered on immigrant characteristics, be they cultural, linguistic, economic or otherwise, how they impact on integration, and the appropriate policy responses. Much of the research conducted under the aegis of the Metropolis Project has also been concerned with examining the experiences of immigrants and obstacles to their full participation in Canadian society. So too, the most significant immigration-related policy development of the last year has been the formulation and proposal of new guidelines for immigrant selection, which have placed greater emphasis on the ability of immigrants to integrate with Canadian society.

Such studies of immigrant characteristics and policy responses represent significant lines of inquiry, and the information generated is crucial in understanding the process of immigrant integration in Canada. Yet, as important as understanding immigrant experiences may be, there is another constituency that plays a significant role in determining the course of immigrant integration: members of the 'host society.' Unfortunately, comparatively little research has examined the way in which immigrants, and immigration-related changes are being interpreted by existing residents in immigrant-reception areas. Analyses that do exist in the Canadian context have tended to be guided by a strong theoretical position and limited in their empirical breadth. The small body of research on contemporary host-community responses to immigration in Greater Vancouver, for example, has been characterized by its focus on published critical responses to neighbourhood change by Caucasian residents in areas of non-white immigrant settlement, interpreting these responses—even those not making explicit

reference to any racial or ethnic group—as reinvented and often subtly articulated racist expressions (Stanbury et al. 1990; Li 1994; Ray et al. 1997).[1]

Immigration, Racism and Social Constructionism

This emphasis on critical responses to neighbourhood change in examinations of immigrant settlement, and the definition of these expressions as racism, can be understood as the product of a variety of factors including the rise in the number of non-white immigrants to Canada over the last twenty-five years, the ability of many of these immigrants to reside in middle and upper-middle class neighbourhoods not traditionally considered to be areas of immigrant settlement, social justice concerns about barriers to their successful integration to Canada, and the substantial moral weight attached to the term racism itself. However, as the authors of these analyses themselves suggest, local case studies of immigration and racism also signify a broader subjective turn within the social sciences and humanities: the emergence of social constructionism as a major theoretical alignment.[2] Exemplified in ethnic and racial studies by Edward Said's seminal treatise on the representational practices of *Orientalism* (1978), Kay Anderson's examination of *Vancouver's Chinatown* (1991), and the work of social geographer Peter Jackson (Jackson 1985; Jackson and Penrose 1993), social constructionist research examines the *processes* by which categories are created and invoked, rather than the characteristics of the categories themselves. In making this analytical transition, social constructionists have argued that conventional treatments of racial and ethnic groupings as objective 'things' have failed to acknowledge the highly subjective character of their

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[1] A further example of this argument as it applies more generally to the reception of immigrants to Canada is Peter Li's (1995) linkage of racial supremacist ideology to more 'moderate,' mainstream, concerns about immigration and social problems. While examinations of non-white immigrant settlement in Greater Vancouver have been powerfully shaped by this line of theoretical and empirical examination, important exceptions are Katharyne Mitchell's (1993) and David Ley's (1995) multi-dimensional analyses of Hong Kong Chinese immigration to the city's Westside.

[2] See Bonnett (1996a) for a useful mapping of historical perspectives on race and racism within geographic practice, and the emergence of social constructionism as a new, powerful mode of inquiry.

creation, neglected that they are produced by humans located in uneven power relationships, and tacitly accepted their power to legitimize exclusionary treatment.

The shift in perspective represented by social constructionism, from viewing ethnic or racial groups as primordial units of analysis to scrutinizing the discourses that are said to produce them, developed, in part, out of concerns that conventional research which accorded agency to race and ethnicity was complicit in the reproduction of 'racist' ideology (Bourne and Sivandan 1981; Prager 1982) even if people in these fields were motivated by the best of intentions and had eschewed biological for culturalist interpretations of social behaviour. Drawing from this critique, and applying an anti-essentialist framework to the concept of racism, those working from a social constructionist perspective have subsequently linked together the various modes, such as phenotypical appearance, biological type, religion, culture, and nation, through which exclusionary othering can take place. While debate continues among social constructionists as to the kinds of discourses and practices that should be drawn together under the term racism—in other words, how to reconcile their anti-essentialist position with the perceived need for a conceptually unified definition of racism (see, for example, Miles 1989; Goldberg 1993; Rattansi 1994; Wieviorka 1994, 1995)—the general consensus appears to be that racism is a fluid phenomenon that cannot be relegated to the past, nor restricted solely to the scientific racisms of the nineteenth century, which hinged on notions of biological type.

It is hard to argue with the proposition that categorizations are not natural but humanly produced, and there is much to the social constructionist perspective, in my opinion, that merits respect. In highlighting the subjective, contingent character of category formation, social constructionism represents a necessary challenge to the notion of discrete, objective ethnic and racial groups, opening the process of their creation to critical scrutiny and ideological analysis. Furthermore, in de-essentializing racism of a static meaning embedded in the particular historical context of the nineteenth century, the social constructionist perspective on racism enjoys a sweeping historical breadth in its ability to gather seemingly disparate phenomena underneath one theoretical umbrella.

Given these attributes, it is not surprising that social constructionism has attained dominant, if not hegemonic, status in racial and ethnic studies (Bonnett 1996a).

While the anti-essentialist ethos of social constructionism holds out considerable promise for interpretive debate (though at the same time, however, complicating the conditions of its resolution), in practice such perspectives on racism have been marked by two significant, problematic, and essentialized categories, highlighted in two sympathetic critiques by Alastair Bonnett, categories which have been reproduced in contemporary understandings of immigrant reception and racism in Greater Vancouver. As Bonnett (1996b) has argued, and as previously noted, one of the reasons that social constructionism is predicated on the examination of processes of boundary formation is to challenge the objectification and reification of such categories. This sensibility, coupled with the political imperatives of many social constructionists, has led to deconstructionist interventions to destabilize homogenizing racial classifications. Yet Bonnett (1996b, 98-99) points out that this move to interrupt ethnic and racial categorization has been highly selective; namely, that while the categories of 'blackness' are being "disembedded from the monoliths of orthodox anti-racism," their corollary, 'whiteness' has been left unscathed, a static, ahistorical, aspatial 'thing,' set outside social change, something that defines the other but is not itself subject to others' definitions.[3] Local examinations of immigrant settlement and racism, I contend, have exhibited this same failure of social constructionism to come to grips with the demographic category at their centre: thus, we see the extensive and casual use of categories such as 'white' and 'dominant population'—and the elision of both of these with the 'host' population—but little evidence, however, of any substantial questioning of the salience of these categorizations, or engagement with their constituent members that might affirm or unsettle such groupings.

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[3] In a review of Kay Anderson's impressive work on the formation of Vancouver's Chinatown, Katharyne Mitchell (1994) makes a similar point about Anderson's depiction of white Vancouverites, commenting that her analysis "treads perilously close to homogenizing the 'European' attitudes as a type; there is only a fairly rudimentary background sketch of key Canadian politicians and bureaucrats, many of whom come off as little more than mouthpieces for a seemingly universal if disembodied political rhetoric" (p. 254).

While whiteness has been relatively unexamined in social constructionist anti-racist accounts, this has not prevented researchers and activists from ascribing meaning to it. As Bonnett notes, the experience of 'whiteness' has become typified with particular and distinct moral attributes, often including: being racist; not experiencing racism; being an oppressor; not experiencing oppression; silencing; not being silenced (1996b, 100). That whiteness might obtain this mythical, essentialist connotation within the context of a social constructionist agenda that seeks to challenge taken-for-granted meanings seems astonishing, yet in local examinations of immigration and racism, accounts of 'whiteness' have consisted almost exclusively of 'racist' responses, while descriptions of 'racism' have focused only on the attitudes and responses of white residents. Furthermore, Bonnett (1996a) persuasively contends that while the social constructionist position in race and ethnic studies has sought to avoid racial categories and challenge their foundational premises, such scrutiny has not been similarly applied to the concept of racism itself. Although the existence of debates over the meaning of racism suggests an acknowledgment of the subjectivity of its meaning, social constructionists have failed to take this contingency to heart; not fully challenging essentialism, but displacing it from race to racism. Bonnett observes:

> The intellectual strain between constructionist theory and politics encourages the paradigm's adherents to 'ring fence' or 'bracket off' categories deemed to be 'egalitarian' and 'progressive' from rigorous critique. Thus, for example, notions of 'equality,' 'racism,' and 'anti-racism' tend to appear in constructionist work, not as objects for scrutiny, or as explicitly strategic essences, but as taken-for-granted foundations . . . Indeed, constructionists, when not assuming the meaning of such terms to be obvious, will often attempt to communicate their 'real' and single essence by defining them . . . The implication is clear: the racialization process is historically and geographically contingent and contested but the meaning of 'racism,' 'equality' and 'anti-racism' is not (1996a, 878).

This tendency to treat the meaning of racism as an unproblematic essence is manifest in accounts of contemporary responses to immigrant settlement in Richmond and Vancouver, wherein the meaning of racism is assumed and granted foundational status. To quote one group of researchers analyzing immigration and reception in Richmond:

"[understanding racism) demands a conceptualization of racism as a social construction, an ideology, and a fundamental part of culture" (Ray et al. 1997, 76).

In this paper I attempt to address these apparent shortcomings of social constructionist research on immigration and integration in the Greater Vancouver context, relating the summary results of a research project surveying the responses of long-established community members to neighbourhood change and immigration in Richmond, B.C. Richmond, a suburban city of 150,000 people located on the Fraser River delta south of Vancouver, has developed into one of the major immigrant settlement areas in metropolitan Vancouver over the course of the past twenty-five years. In recent years, immigrant settlement has intensified, while at the same time the source countries of immigrants to Richmond have changed considerably. In 1986, for example, immigrants comprised some 31.5% of Richmond's overall population, with the majority of them having arrived from the UK and other European countries between 1946 and 1976; by 1996 the immigrant population had risen to 48.3% of the total, with nearly half of these immigrants arriving between 1991 and 1996. During this time, and reflecting nation-wide immigration trends developing since the late-1960s, the majority of these recent immigrants arrived from Asian countries, notably Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan.   As a result, Richmond's ethno-cultural composition began to change significantly from 1986 onward. The number of ethnic-Chinese residents, 8.3% of Richmond's population in 1986, rose to account for 33.7% of the total by 1996 (Statistics Canada, 1986; B.C. Statistics, 1998). During this same period, Richmond experienced rapid population growth (a trend dating back to Vancouver's suburban expansion from the 1950s onward), economic development and diversification, changes in housing stock from single to multiple-family dwellings, considerable house-price increases, and the encroachment on farmland by urban land uses (Real Estate Board of Vancouver, 1983-1996; City of Richmond, 1997a, 1997b).

Within the contexts of these changes, and social constructionist interpretations of resident responses to community transformations in Vancouver and Richmond, this research project seeks to develop an understanding of the kinds and character of changes residents identified in their community both prior to and during the period in which Richmond began

to receive considerable numbers of Asian immigrants.   In this paper I will attempt to identify those changes considered by residents to be positive and negative, and to examine the role immigration, and immigrants, play in these responses by the host community. Since the topic of racism has served as the interpretive lens through which resident responses have been understood in Greater Vancouver, particular attention is paid to the way in which issues of race, ethnicity, and culture are addressed by the participants in their accounts. Following from this focus on questions of race and racism, I will offer my interpretation of the articulation between seemingly non-racial criticisms of neighbourhood change and ones explicitly involving ethno-cultural categorizations, while examining the analytical and political category of racism itself.

The paper begins with a brief description of the research methodology and the respondents who participated in the project. The majority of the paper is dedicated to summarizing the findings of the research, and proceeds along the same itinerary as the interviews themselves, working from resident perceptions of their community from the 1970s and before through to the present day. In the conclusion I offer some tentative and qualified generalizations on host-community responses based on the interview material, and explore theoretical and policy issues associated with the definition of the term racism itself.

Methodology and Participants

Qualitative data were gathered through a series of semi-structured, extended interviews conducted with fifty-four long-term Richmond residents in 1997 and 1998. For the purposes of the research, the category of 'long-term resident' is defined as an individual who has lived in Richmond since before 1986, though residents need not have had uninterrupted residence in the municipality throughout this time period to participate in the study. The 1986 cut-off date was selected in order to provide a basis for comparison between resident perceptions of their community both before and during the major movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond, which began in the late 1980s. Potential participants meeting these criteria were contacted through a network sampling strategy

utilizing a variety of initial contacts in the community. Interviews were audio-taped, coded for confidentiality and transcribed, and ranged in duration from forty-five minutes to two and one-half hours depending on the number of participants present and the depth of conversation. With three exceptions, all interviews took place in residents' homes, a site chosen to facilitate open discussion by maximizing the comfort and convenience of the participants.[4] The interviews followed a series of questions that surveyed residents' impressions of change in their community, proceeding chronologically from their first thoughts and experiences of Richmond in the pre-1986 period, through the mid-1980s and into the 1990s. While following this schedule of questions, residents were encouraged to expand on themes and issues if they wished to do so.

Of the fifty-four participants in the project, thirty-four were Caucasian in appearance with European ethno-cultural backgrounds.[5] In terms of gender, twenty-two members of this group were female, twelve male; their ages ranging from the mid-twenties to the early sixties. The largest age cohort were in their fifties, with a total of twenty respondents. The next largest group were those in their forties, some five respondents, followed by four participants in their thirties and twenties respectively. One individual was aged in his sixties. Twenty-six of these thirty-four participants were born in Canada, while seven had immigrated to Canada from Europe (three from the Netherlands, three from Germany, and one from England) in the 1950s and 1960s. One resident, in neither the Canadian-born nor immigrant cohorts, was born in England in the 1970s by parents with Canadian citizenship. Occupations included self-employed, clerical and secretarial workers, educators (at the primary and secondary levels), university students, various

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[4] Three interviews took place in private venues at the University of British Columbia, a site that proved more convenient for the participants involved.

[5] It is important to note, however, that like the category 'Asia,' 'Europe' lumps together a diverse range of expressed ancestral homelands, from the British Isles (cited most frequently, by nineteen participants), the Netherlands and Germany, to the Ukraine, Rumania, Sweden and the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, it is significant that the indication of familial ethnic origin by the participants in this study does not alone indicate the *salience* of such heritages—ethnic attachments could be experienced by the participants first-hand (as with immigrants to Canada), or one to four generations removed; maintained as the source of continued linguistic and cultural traditions, or relegated to the past as a personal or family history with little impact on participants' identities or day-to-day lives. It is interesting to note that when asked to identify themselves using an ethnic or nationalistic category, the majority of participants, when given the choice, defined themselves as 'Canadian.'

technical workers (such as medical lab technician, aviation mechanic, and computer technician), business managers, and homemakers. One participant indicated that he was retired.

In addition to the group of Caucasian long-term residents interviewed, two other participant groups were contacted as part of a deliberate strategy to diversify the racial and ethno-cultural composition of the host-community category and provide a basis for further comparison. Nine participants of Chinese ancestry were interviewed, six women and three men. On the whole, this sample of residents was younger than the Caucasian group: six people were aged in their twenties, two in their forties, and one in his fifties. Two members of this group had emigrated from Hong Kong in the 1970s while the remainder were born in Canada, all in British Columbia. With respect to employment status, three members of this group worked as elementary or secondary school teachers, two were college or university students, one an occupational therapist, one a professional engineer, one was employed in a business management position, and one was retired. Although a commonly used identifier by even the participants themselves, the category of 'Chinese' belies this group's more complex family histories, with roots in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Nine residents of Japanese ancestry were also interviewed, six men and three women. Generally speaking, the participants in this group were older than the sample of Chinese long-term residents, but younger than the Caucasian group. The largest number, some seven people, were aged in their forties. One participant was in his twenties, and another in the thirties age group. No member of the Japanese resident group was an immigrant to Canada: eight people were born in Canada and one in Japan, the latter not having immigrant status on account of his father having Canadian citizenship at that time. Three people were employed as elementary or secondary school teachers, two were homemakers, one was employed in a business management position, and one participant was unemployed at the time of the interview.

Two other people were interviewed who did not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. One participant was a man in his twenties, self-employed in the computer

industry, who emigrated from the Philippines to Canada with his family and moved to Richmond in 1983. The other participant was a woman in her twenties, a schoolteacher born and raised in Richmond in the early 1970s, by parents of Japanese and Chinese ethnic backgrounds, respectively.

Early Impressions: Richmond Prior to the Mid-1980s: Moving to the Community

Although Richmond's changing ethno-cultural composition in the post-1986 period has been the focus of popular and academic attention, I think it is instructive to take a step back to examine residents' expressed motives for moving to Richmond, and their perceptions of the community prior to the mid-1980s, as a means of providing further interpretive context.[6] Of the sample of fifty-four long-term residents interviewed, nearly eighty percent, or forty-one people, made a decision to move to Richmond.[7] Significantly, in contrast to an American literature which frequently imputes racial motivations underlying such decisions to move to the suburbs—most sensationally as 'white flight' from the racially heterogeneous core city—the incentive to move to Richmond cited most frequently by Caucasian respondents, by some sixteen of twenty-nine movers, was rather more prosaic: affordable housing. For many of the participants, such as this woman in her fifties who explained her and her husband's decision to move to Richmond in the early 1970s, the redevelopment of Richmond's farmland into residential use during this period offered the opportunity to purchase their first home:

> When we . . . well, we were looking for a house and it was just economics, really, because it was where, at the time, we could afford it. At that time the houses were reasonably priced in Richmond. We looked at North

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[6] In presenting this information and comparing the responses of long-term residents I frequently use the shorthand 'Caucasian,' 'Chinese,' and 'Japanese' to define the different groups of participants. Given that these labels serve to homogenize a diverse array of people, and that residents may not even identify themselves in such terms(though many do), they are, perhaps, absurd. I use them primarily in the interest of economy, as an inroad to more meaningful analysis, and not to imply that there are rigid or natural distinctions between the groups, that behaviour is biologically-determined by phenotypical appearance, or that any of the residents are more or less 'Canadian' than the other.

[7] The remainder of the participants, consisting almost exclusively of those who were in their twenties, had either lived in Richmond all their lives, or were not in a position to influence their move to Richmond.

Van—we really would have liked to have lived in North Van—and we looked around in Burnaby, but we only had so much money. We had a budget, and when we looked, Richmond was the place that fit that budget . . . and in Richmond, our house was new when we bought it. No, it wasn't our first choice, but it seemed to be the place that could get us the house we wanted, reasonable, and it was close to everything and not far from town and so it seemed convenient.

Not very colourful motivations, perhaps, but common ones, not just among those Caucasian residents interviewed, but also for those of Japanese and Chinese descent. Of the four long-term Chinese residents who made the decision to move to Richmond, all mentioned the community's comparatively low housing costs as the primary incentive drawing them there, though perhaps not as bluntly as this man in his fifties who moved from Vancouver to Richmond in the early 1970s and explained the main reasons why:

Price—simple as that. It was the cheapest place for us to buy a house. We didn't want to go to Burnaby because it was expensive, but we didn't want to go all the way out to Surrey or Delta [more distant Vancouver suburbs] because that was too far.

Among the eight Japanese-Canadian residents who had made a decision to move to Richmond, housing price was mentioned by each one as a key factor influencing their choice of location. As with Caucasian and Chinese residents, Richmond's affordability offered Japanese participants the ability to satisfy dreams of home ownership and starting a family, as explained by this man in his thirties who, in conjunction with his wife, decided to build a home in Richmond, having lived most of his life there, but after residing in Vancouver for a number of years:

I'm sure affordability was part of it too. It's much more expensive to live in Vancouver. We wanted to buy a place where we could start a family rather than buying an apartment in Vancouver because it's a little harder to have children in an apartment.

Although a significant factor in determining the choice of residence for all groups of people, Caucasian, Chinese or Japanese, housing affordability was rarely cited as the lone motivation prompting this decision, but rather as one working in concert with other incentives. Some of these associated factors can be seen in the quotations on affordability presented above: the desire to own a first home and start a family and proximity to the

city—but they also appear as important forces in their own right. Within both the Chinese and Japanese groups of residents, proximity to either the city or workplace (or a combination of the two, as with those who worked in Vancouver) were the most frequently cited attributes of Richmond, next to housing prices, that influenced their move. For Japanese residents who had long family histories in and extensive ties to the community, the desire to be close to friends and family was also mentioned as a reason to move to Richmond.[8] Similarly, proximity to work and the city were identified by nine of the twenty-nine Caucasian residents as another of Richmond's features influencing their decision to move there, while twelve commented on the presence of either friends or family as other reasons leading them to live in the community.

More prominent motivations for the Caucasian residents surveyed, however, mentioned by fourteen participants, were ones bound up with Richmond's 'attractiveness,' a catch-all phrase that encompassed a variety of features apart from affordability, proximity, and kinship ties. For many Caucasian residents, this appeal was intimately tied to Richmond's rural or semi-rural character and the associated lifestyle benefits that this was seen to confer: quiet surroundings, a community atmosphere amenable to raising children, less congestion and traffic, and more living space. As the following resident in her forties explained:

> Well, when we came down from Prince George, my husband got a job in Vancouver with a forest company. I think we lived in an apartment building for a while, but we really liked the Richmond area. It wasn't as populated as it is now, and being from a farming area as I was, I didn't like living so close together, and in Richmond you didn't. At that time [the early 1970s] it was spread out.

Although a significant factor influencing a number of residents to move to Richmond, the force of the community's perceived rural character in drawing settlement appeared to be group-specific, mentioned by ten Caucasian residents who had moved to Richmond, but by none of the Chinese or Japanese participants. Furthermore, while four

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[8] This desire to be close to either friends or family was mentioned by seven of eight Japanese movers, but by none of the Chinese participants who had made a decision to move to Richmond, a difference

Caucasian participants cited the availability of amenities such as community centres, schools, and shopping facilities as factors inducing them to move to Richmond, only one resident of Japanese descent mentioned this, and none of the Chinese residents.

Life in Richmond

While there were variations and inter-group differences among the long-term residents interviewed with respect to their motivations in moving to Richmond, participants' recollections of their community prior to the mid-1980s were remarkably consistent. Asked to reflect on the physical appearance of Richmond at this time, its 'feel' socially and culturally, and the changes that were taking place during those years, a recurrent theme expressed by all residents interviewed—young or old, mover or non-mover, Caucasian, Chinese or Japanese—was the evocation of Richmond's rural landscape, as suggested by the following survey of responses:

> At the corner of Number Two Road there was a large field and they always had big tulips [there]. We used to go there as a family. There were no neighbours—you had to walk quite a distance to get to one. Everybody had two acres or five acres. It was very rural and you had to go from Number Two Road to Railway to catch the train, and that's how we got around in those days [the 1950s] . . . when we bought this house in 1968 there were 110 acres here. It was very rural, still, when I bought in '68. This [southwest] corner of Richmond hadn't developed at all.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged fifties

> Richmond was really farm-like [in the 1950s and '60s]. We earned our money picking strawberries and picking blueberries and raspberries and loganberries. We would work in the fish cannery . . . so it was really primary industry.
>
> – Japanese woman, aged forties

> I remember Richmond as lots of farmland—there was a lot of farmland around and a lot more empty space, fields and things—and not as a place with high-rises. We never thought of Richmond as having a 'downtown'—

attributable, perhaps, to the fact that all of the Chinese residents interviewed who moved to Richmond were the first members of their respective families to live in the community.

that's still sort of a weird thought. I guess I remember my old neighbourhood, because it's fairly old now, as being lots of trees, big trees; they've had time to grow.

> – Chinese woman, aged twenties

What I remember about Richmond I think I relate a lot to my backyard. At our old house we had a really large backyard. We used to ride our bikes around all the way through the yard all the time. There were horse stables [there] that I have seen pictures of—I don't think it was there when I was born. We had a large backyard. Our whole neighbourhood had large yards. I used to play with a girl next door and they had a really large backyard. I just remember Richmond being really open and spacious.

> – Caucasian woman, aged twenties

It is unfortunate that the words here do not effectively convey the emotions that seem so palpable during the interview experience; that they cannot capture the sense of nostalgia and attachment that permeate so many of these descriptive accounts of Richmond's landscape. This sense of valuation, however, is more readily apprehended in residents' accounts of social life during this time, accounts which are in many respects linked to these depictions of Richmond's semi-pastoral appearance. When asked to think back to this time period, many residents commented favourably on the sense of community that they enjoyed in the years prior to the mid-1980s, as in the case of this Japanese resident in his thirties who offered the following impression of his time growing up in Richmond:

> I think that a lot of the kids that grew up in our generation in Richmond, it was sort of a suburban story where there was not a lot of traffic. At this time it did not have the problems of a big city. Richmond was basically similar to what Mission [a more distant, semi-rural municipality] is now. It was basically a sort of carefree lifestyle.

His observation was paralleled by this Caucasian woman's recollection of raising her children in Richmond in the 1960s and 1970s:

> Sure, the kids had a ball. I mean in those days the kids could hop on their bikes and they could go for a whole day and you never saw them back until suppertime. You never worried. If something happened, somebody would come and tell you.

Similar was this Chinese woman's memories of her childhood in the 1970s:

> I loved Richmond. I remember going out after school in the summertime and I would just ride my bike from about six—I played with my friends until dusk, about eight or nine [o'clock], just out there roaming on the playground, rid[ing] my bike. It was just the really carefree childhood days that we'd all want to go home to.

For others, such as the four following people (a Caucasian man in his fifties who emigrated from Germany in the 1950s, a Chinese resident in her twenties, a Caucasian woman in her thirties, and a Caucasian man in his fifties) this valued sense of community was largely derived from relationships with their neighbours:

> [commenting on his experiences arriving in Richmond in the 1950s] . . . Oh yeah, we were quite welcomed. We were . . . actually the neighbours, as soon as we arrived—it was the next day. We arrived on a Saturday and the next day on Sunday the neighbours on both sides came over with pies and whatnot, and the people across the street brought their kids over and introduced themselves to us. We didn't know what they were saying, and they didn't know what we were saying, but we were introduced and that started the neighbourhood.

> *We knew a lot of our neighbours. I went to church, the Richmond Chinese Alliance Church . . . actually, that started in Vancouver and then they had sort of a satellite branch in Richmond, so then we started going there. A lot of the people were living in Richmond, too, so there was that community. Everyone lived sort of close together and you could borrow sugar from your neighbour, that sort of thing. I think the neighbours that we had there, they were neighbours that had always been there. Our first house, we lived there for thirteen years. The people around us never seemed to change either.*

> Investigator: Were these neighbours Caucasian?

> *Yeah, there were maybe one or two Chinese, but not a lot—just a mix. They [Caucasian neighbours] were real friendly, and my parents were friends with a number of them.*

> The first apartment building I moved into, the neighbours actually knocked on the door and introduced themselves. Of course, I grew up in Kitsilano [in Vancouver], which was very much a neighbourhood, and in the years where you could walk around at night and not worry and walk down to the beach and back again and not be worried about your safety, so the nice thing about Richmond was that it sort of had that feel to it. It felt kind of small town, and it wasn't a city when I first moved here. It didn't become

a city until a few years later. It was not really rural, essentially, though there were areas of it that were, but it felt kind of small town and peaceful and not too hustly-bustly.

The original area we lived in, we had community activities where we had neighbourhood barbecues. We had special . . . we had a party where one of the couples would find an ethnic restaurant somewhere and would invite the other fifteen to twenty couples in the neighbourhood. We'd go to the restaurant for dinner and then back to the host's for dessert and a drink. We'd do Christmas caroling and stuff like that. There was a whole series of intra-community activities that we did with the neighbours.

In the course of interviewing long-term residents of Asian ethnicity, conversation frequently touched upon themes of race and racism; generally after some prompting on my behalf, but occasionally the topic was broached by the participants themselves. Asked whether they could recollect having been discriminated against on account of their racial affiliation during the time period up to the mid-1980s, most respondents, like this Japanese man in his forties, could not recall any significant acts of discrimination against them, but noted other axes of differentiation apart from physical appearance:[9]

For me, anyway, me and my family . . . hardly any. My dad . . . his best friend at the time was a guy named Jameson who used to own all of the Slumber Lodges out here, and when he [the participant's father] was interned [during World War Two], he stayed with him, so that was pretty good. When we moved to Steveston [an area of Richmond] there was every race you could think of, and when I went to school at Lord Byng here . . . I didn't speak the Japanese language, but you'd find the newer students who had come right from Japan . . . they had a class called new students, language-barrier students, so they had East Indian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etcetera—they were picked-on in school because of the language barrier. That was the only reason. With me speaking English, I didn't experience that. I had Caucasian friends, a lot of Japanese friends, some Chinese friends, a couple of Italians, Germans. That was Steveston: everybody got along.

For some people, perceptions of the relative lack of racial discrimination in the pre-1986 period in Richmond emerged through discussions of the present-day climate in which racial tensions were seen to be worse, as in the recollections of this Filipino resident in his

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[9] Names of individuals and businesses have been changed in this passage to protect the anonymity of the participants.

twenties who commented on the sense of community he enjoyed in Richmond during earlier times:

> The population used to be, if you think about it, like Ladner [part of the outlying suburb of Delta, semi-rural in character, and primarily 'white']. I'm Filipino, and I'm a visible minority, but it was less . . . the Richmond of yesterday is not the Richmond of today. It was much friendlier. There was less . . . you couldn't see the ethnicity of Richmond. We were Filipino, but it wasn't a big deal. You didn't have the problem of stereotypes of Hong Kong immigrants coming and buying up all the houses and having all the nice cars, speeding, etcetera . . .

In a couple of instances, the apparent contrast between the Richmond of yesteryear and the Richmond of today was placed into doubt as participants of Chinese and Japanese ethnicity reflected on their past experiences in light of their present circumstances, wondering, as this Chinese woman in her twenties did, whether there had been racial discrimination in Richmond's near past that had gone unnoticed by her:

> You hear a lot of driving comments [now]: "Oh, female Asian driver." That's the worst stuff. I never noticed it before, but maybe it's just because now I'm older and when I was younger I didn't get it a lot.

Although some questioned the apparent absence of racial discrimination prior to the mid-1980s in Richmond, this Japanese resident in her forties was one of the few to relate stories of exclusion on account of her racial and ethnic background. Recalling her childhood growing up in Steveston shortly after the Second World War when her parents returned from internment in Manitoba, she related the following episode:

> I guess we came back here in 1949 and I remember coming to Mitchell School and there weren't many Japanese and I remember it was quite tough. We didn't know the context of the war and I remember being called 'Jap' and [hearing] "You Japs go back to where you belong." Stuff like that. My parents more or less told us, "turn the other cheek." When we were younger my sister and I, sometimes we would notice if we went to stores . . . if there were two people waiting, even if we were first a lot of the salespeople would go directly to the Caucasians. They'd wait on us only when they were done, you see. I never said anything, but my sister would and then they'd say, "Sorry, we didn't see you." It was always very polite. There was never any overt [discrimination].

Interestingly, her experiences of discrimination while growing up in Richmond were most closely paralleled not by the stories of other Asian participants, but in the recollections of the following Caucasian participant (the same resident, paradoxically, who spoke of the friendliness of his neighbours upon his arrival in Richmond) who had immigrated to Canada from Germany shortly after World War Two:

> I was treated, at times, very badly because . . . perhaps it extends back to the war. They considered me German—I'm not German, but I speak German, so I was put in that category—so I was treated quite badly at the time of my arrival.

Changes in the Community up to 1986

Whether resident recollections of Richmond prior to the mid-1980s were primarily negative or positive—and the latter seems to be the case—marked by self-defined instances of racial discrimination or devoid of such experiences, residents were mostly in agreement when noting how their community was changing during this period. Although a few people, primarily those residents in their twenties, could not think of any changes that occurred in Richmond during this time when asked, most respondents—twenty-two of the thirty-four Caucasian participants, and six of the nine participants in each of the Japanese and Chinese resident groups—responded by citing 'development' of some kind: the creation of public facilities and transportation networks, residential, commercial, or industrial construction, slow or fast-paced. Other, often related, changes mentioned were house price increases (by four Caucasian residents), population growth [by two of the Chinese participants, three of the Japanese participants, and four of the Caucasian participants), and ethno-cultural change as a result of immigration from Pakistan and India. In thinking back to the changes that occurred at this time, and perhaps because their immediacy had been tempered by the passing of time, most interview participants simply offered a chronicling of seemingly inevitable changes, with little value judgment rendered, as in the case of this Caucasian woman in her fifties:

> It was that there were more people, so you get more services, more businesses to move in. What we referred to in those days as Brighouse [an area of Central Richmond] was basically Number Three Road between

Westminster Highway and Granville. One lane of Granville was a railroad from the old inter-urban line that used to go from Marpole [in South Vancouver] to Steveston. That one had stopped by the time I moved in, but the railroad service was still there. Parts of it are still being used on Railway. It used to come all that way down Granville and Garden City and then go north. So changes happen—where are these people going to go? And of course, more businesses, more people work around here. It's inevitable; you deal with it—how else can you do it? You can't stick your head in the sand.

In addition to those people who made similar observations, there were some who viewed these changes as having a positive impact on the community during this time (*"they filled in the ditches, they made the streets safe—four lanes in a lot of areas," "the bus service got better: instead of running once an hour it ran every half-hour"*), but there were also those who expressed misgivings about the direction their community was headed. In some instances negative assessments of change prior to the mid-1980s (registered, incidentally, almost exclusively by Caucasian participants) were associated with specific developments being built close to participants' homes, and the impression that change was being imposed upon them by the city government without due consultation, complaints forwarded by this Caucasian woman in her forties, and the following Caucasian couple in their fifties:

I remember in 1975 they decided to add this shopping centre here. I remember going to a meeting, and we were not too keen on it [the shopping centre], really. We were quite happy with Broadmoor [another, more distant shopping centre]: it had a Safeway and a hardware store. We weren't really too keen on the new shopping centre, really, but it went through anyway. I don't know why they bothered having this public meeting; they didn't listen to anybody.

. . . *when Lansdowne (shopping mall) was built there was a lot of controversy. It (the old property, a horse-racing track) was supposed to be a park and then the City Council allowed a shopping centre to be built, so—*

. . . and then they said that extra part between the mall and Garden City was going to be left open, that there was going to be some open space there, but now there are two apartments there. Now I notice they have the other corner up for development too.

Investigator: What did you think at that time? Did you think that

Lansdowne should have been a park, or did you think that it was okay for a

mall development to be built there, or did you even care?

> I remember being distressed about it, upset about it. I didn't think it was the wishes of the people, and council made this decision even though there had been a promise that there was going to be some park land there, so that sort of got me upset.

While a couple of other residents expressed moderate concern about the diminution of

farmland in Richmond, the most impassioned statement against growth and development

in the pre-1986 period were the conservationist sentiments tendered by this Caucasian

resident in his fifties, in the course of a conversation with his wife during the interview:

> The sixties and seventies to me, the biggest change I've found . . . because I've always been interested in the wildlife and diversity of bird-life in Richmond. That is something that struck me when we moved here, and to me was one of the changes that I didn't like. It didn't matter where you went you had pheasants running across the street. It didn't matter where you went you had tons of pheasants and hawks and owls, a lot of song-birds and mosquitoes and all that. And that . . . especially pheasants . . . the small area my parents had on Cambie Road—almost six acres—we used to see thirty, forty pheasants out there without any problem at all and the same thing . . . let's say down on Number Three Road where you have the McDonald's and Lansdowne and so on; you take the opposite side from Lansdowne across Number Three Road, that used to be a field that was just loaded with wildlife and ducks and geese and you name it. It was just beautiful. That's the biggest change that happened to me in the seventies: it was just the tremendous amount of building going on all of a sudden, and the problem is they just didn't pick one certain area. Developments were going on all over Richmond from Number Five Road on . . .

> Investigator: It was just all spread out?

> It was just spread out everywhere: a pocket here and a pocket there, and it really destroyed Richmond to my way of thinking.

> *Well it changed the meaning . . .*

> . . . the community feeling.

Into the Eighties and Nineties

The force of such statements about community change in the 1970s notwithstanding, if the frequency and variety of responses is any indication, residents' awareness and concern over growth and development intensified in the post-1986 period. All Asian residents and twenty-five of thirty-four Caucasian participants mentioned 'development' in some form as a source of community change since 1986, a theme that several residents indicated in their recollections of transition since the early 1980s and before. Although development in the post-'86 period was identified by some as a "continuation of what's happened earlier," for many other respondents of all ethnic categories there seemed to be a qualitative change in the *pace* of development and growth, and a sense that this current era was witness to a faster, less restrained, series of transformations:

> [describing changes in the post-1986 period] . . . definitely the busy-ness; how many more people have moved here in the last ten years. How I could look down our street, Garden City and Francis, looking down into downtown Richmond, Three Road area, and there was nothing. You couldn't see buildings or anything. Now when I look I always make the comparison: I always say, "It looks like Vancouver," to see all these sky-rises and taller buildings. Before, you couldn't see any of that.
>
> — Chinese woman, aged twenties

> In the last eight to ten years things have gone too fast. Whereas we used to drive down and see green-spaces, now you don't see all of these; you see monster homes and traffic. I think it really has come too fast. There have been too many people brought in too fast. Look at all the schools and all that. Look at all the portables [temporary classroom structures]. We can't compensate for all of the kids that are coming in. People are moving in, but where are they going to go to? There's kids in portables. You know, too fast.
>
> — Caucasian woman, aged forties

> Massive changes. For instance, Terra Nova [a large residential development in West Richmond]—I abhor that. I found it really upsetting when they developed on it. That, and just buildings going up so quickly. Even now. When I first moved here (an apartment tower, her second residence in Richmond) none of these buildings were up, and that was five years ago. You see how quickly they go up. It's amazing, especially in the downtown Richmond area.

As these quotes suggest, the perceived intensification in the pace and scale of development in Richmond over the past twelve years have not been uniformly well-received by long-term Richmond residents of any ethno-cultural background. When asked to comment on those changes in Richmond since 1986, which they considered to be negative ones, thirty-two out of thirty-four Caucasian residents identified growth and development issues of various kinds as factors reducing their enjoyment of the community. For a handful of Caucasian residents, such changes were opposed because they had erased memories of an older and familiar Richmond. Others had similarly specific complaints: crowding in the school system (mentioned by eight Caucasian participants), loss of farmland or green space (by three), and increased noise (by two). Ten Caucasian participants registered more general concerns about crowding and population growth. Notably, the development of 'monster houses,' so commented upon in the Vancouver context, was specifically mentioned by six Caucasian residents as a negative change in Richmond since 1986. Discussions on the theme of this housing style were heated, and centered on what residents considered to be the houses' excessive bulk, garish design elements, and their impact on the social life of existing neighbourhoods:

> I think Richmond goes from one extreme to the other. We have all of these so-called 'monster houses' that are being put up which look incredibly ugly. I just have to say this. They try to combine Gothic with Roman with New-Age Modern all on the same property and it just doesn't fit. If you have, all of a sudden, this huge house between these older houses it looks really out of place.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged twenties

> It changes the neighbourhood. Working class people don't live in those kinds of homes, so we feel like we're being pushed a little bit. Maybe it's a paranoia, a little bit . . . it's a beautiful street and basically looks the same—nice, quiet street—but the houses are so huge. We just wish they were houses for the working people and not just the rich, because they're not working people that buy those homes. What happens is that Richmond is being taken over by the rich, and the working guy . . . if he can stay, that's fine, but he can't afford to stay.
>
> – Caucasian man, aged fifties

On the whole, within both the Japanese and Chinese long-term resident groups, negative comments on development were more limited and specific than those issued by Caucasian residents. Ruminating on the topic of changes in Richmond over the past twelve years, four Japanese residents mentioned development in general as a negative change, while two participants expressed offence at high-density development in particular. Interestingly, two of the Japanese participants, like their Caucasian counterparts, criticized the construction of 'monster homes' as a negative change in Richmond since 1986:

> I think some of the—in terms of the built form—some of the . . . if you look at the emergence in the last seven or eight years of these not terribly attractive homes. For me, as a builder, I like to build nice homes and I'm not terribly encouraged by what I've seen in terms of the built form of these homes, these large homes that people have built. I don't think they contribute to the street beauty. I built this house and the way this street looks is more my idea of how people should be building homes.
>
> <div align="right">– Japanese man, aged thirties</div>

> Personally, the kinds of houses that are boxes with the pillars at the front entranceway . . . I'm not offended, I just think they're ugly [laughter]. It's typically the home that has had the front yard paved because they have a three-car garage in front of it. The monstrous, monstrous entranceway. A box structure that is two storeys high that goes right to the length of the property. It's just not my style. I think it's ugly and there are so many of them cropping up. I don't know what it is supposed to represent . . . somebody's taste in homes.
>
> <div align="right">– Japanese man, aged forties</div>

Among the Chinese residents interviewed the range of development complaints was even more sharply circumscribed, with development in general mentioned by three residents (with one specifically relating this to concerns over environmental degradation) as a negative change over the past twelve years in Richmond. Among all three groups of residents, however, one growth or development factor was consistently mentioned: the rise in automobile traffic, identified by nine Japanese participants, seven out of nine Chinese participants, and by twenty of the thirty-four Caucasian residents.

When asked to assess what or who was responsible for these unwelcome changes

in their community (or when they offered unsolicited explanations), governments of various levels, but especially municipal governments, were taken to task as entities promoting population growth, failing to consider the consequences of their decisions on established residents, and unresponsive to their concerns. Condemnations of government have appeared in some of the passages previously quoted in this paper, as they do more explicitly in the following citations:

> I think the previous council, and perhaps the present one now, from what they said when they first got in, they have become less and less identified with being interested in slowing development here in the city. They've been actively promoting development here in the city. That's part of the reason why developers have put up the type of housing [multi-family dwellings] that I pointed out earlier. It's your real-estate agents, the market, appealing to perhaps the offshore buyer with the money . . . the developer with the money to change what used to be two adjacent lots with houses into a townhouse.
>
> – Japanese man, aged forties

> I would have to say that in the last ten to twelve years Richmond has tended to grow at all costs. Even though in areas such as Terra Nova people voted, and residents expressed opinions and had petitions (stating) that they didn't want that to become a residential area, city council more-or-less ignored everybody's wishes and developed it anyway. I think in a lot of cases they became masters of what they thought was their own way of doing things rather than listening to the general public. Supposedly there was an Agricultural Land Reserve in place [to restrict redevelopment of farmland], but that didn't seem to make any difference. I think what council did was to react too quickly to removing land from the Agricultural Land Reserve, and taking farmland and strictly developing it. A lot of the land was developed first, and then they built houses on it and people moved in, so it was the opposite way around. People weren't coming out here and begging to build houses. The developers were developing the land and then finding contractors to build the lots and build homes.
>
> – Caucasian man, aged fifties

Perhaps there is nothing particularly unusual in these contemporary concerns about growth and development and the attribution of responsibility to government. Given that anti-growth sentiments, while relatively muted among the participants in the pre-1986 period, were nevertheless present, one can see a continuity between development-focused anxieties both during and before the significant movement of Chinese immigrants into

Richmond. In the present context, however, other elements enter into the equation to make problematic a simple reading of current resident reactions to neighbourhood-level change as a continuing narrative of anti-development and anti-government feelings.

The first intervening factor is rather simple to apprehend: in addition to criticisms of development and government, a considerable number of residents interviewed identified these same forces as producing a variety of positive changes in their community over the past twelve years. A recurrent theme, mentioned by thirty-two out of thirty-four Caucasian residents, eight out of nine Chinese residents, and all the Japanese residents interviewed, was praise for the improvement of local amenities (be they public or private) since 1986, and the role of population growth and civic government in producing these positive changes:

> I think Richmond is a very people-oriented community, and in the midst of all this development they make a point of ensuring there is park land, there is green space, community centres, sports complexes. I can tell you from all the referendums we have—every time we have a civic election they want to borrow money for another aquatic centre or another hockey rink or whatever, so all of that is definitely a plus. There's been a great increase in facilities for seniors, the library complex has expanded: all these sorts of things are great. The increase in the business and industrial sector is wonderful because, of course, it helps keep the tax rates down. So all these things, I think, are positive.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged thirties
>
> I think that the complex that has gone-in down at Number Six Road and Triangle is an excellent amenity. My younger boy was in hockey at the time and sort of went through the transition where there were only two sheets of ice in Richmond to now where there's ten, maybe. We sort of went through that . . . and really needed it. That's really good. That's just one development. Generally speaking, I don't think the industrial parks are bad for Richmond; it has generated a huge tax base which has allowed us to do these things. Property taxes in Richmond aren't particularly high.
>
> – Chinese man, aged forties

Furthermore, while they were admittedly in the minority, a few Caucasian participants praised the changes that population growth was making to Richmond's social atmosphere, generating a cosmopolitan energy and vitality that they saw as being absent before the

mid-1980s:

> I think the quality in Richmond, the quality of life has improved because we have become more cosmopolitan. My wife is from London—I don't know if she likes it or not, but I like it being busy.
>
> – Caucasian man, aged fifties

> The city has a lot of energy. For all that it has gotten crazy in some areas, I think that it is still a reasonably positive, well-balanced place to live.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged thirties

> My husband and I are thrilled to be living in the big city. We would never move out to the boonies. We appreciate every bit of cosmopolitan growth that is here, and wouldn't leave it for the world. We go out and look at other parts, but we're happy to be here where everything is available and it's clean—there's no wild. We don't mind the crowds. One of the most wonderful things to do when you've got nothing to do is watch people. You can do that at any street corner now because they have restaurants which have people . . . instead of being hidden at the back of the restaurant, they're lining people up on benches, like Starbuck's [coffee houses]. You sit at the window and watch people pass. Hey, we've been dreaming about that opportunity for years—it's here now.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged fifties

Additionally, while the idiom of the monster house was generally despised, it was not universally scorned, as a handful of residents—such as the following Caucasian long-term resident in his fifties—expressed an appreciation of the emergent housing style as an improvement over what had been there before:

> On my street they had all these little houses and now they've got all these big houses and they look nice. People say, "oh, look at all these big houses." Well I say if they want to build a big house, let them build a big house, so long as they don't put it in front of my house. But I don't mind at all because it's definitely an improvement . . . [they used to have] a little house and a lot of land, farmland if you like, but now it looks a lot more . . . *civilized*.

The second factor interrupting a simple story of resident anti-growth criticism renders the process of interpretation more complex. As noted at the outset of this paper, since the mid-1980s Richmond has emerged as a preferred destination for immigrants

arriving to the Lower Mainland, particularly those from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. This pattern of settlement was not lost on residents complaining about population growth and development, who attributed many of the negatively perceived changes in their community —including the construction of the reviled monster houses—to Asian immigration:

> My guess is that a lot of the people who live in those houses come from densely developed areas: Hong Kong, Taiwan, wherever. Their living space is quite small, your private yards are quite small, you don't have a lot of living area, so when they come here, in relative terms it's cheap, so why not build as big as you can? The best way to maximize floor-space ratio on a given size lot is to build a box, so that gives you the maximum amount of space. They want to do things like make an impression, so they create the two-storey entry with the big columns and the large windows because it gives a very grand impression. I think the thing is that they come from an area where half-a-million dollars didn't buy you very much, but here about half of that will buy you a very grand home, and that's what they want. I think a lot of that is the expression where, "we can have it, so let's get it."
>
> – Japanese man, aged thirties

A similar, though more judgmental theory on the monster house's origins was expressed by this Caucasian woman in her forties who emphasized the class position of those immigrants she considered responsible for housing-style change detrimental to the community:

> . . . because it's the wealthiest coming out of Hong Kong, they don't care about building the mega-houses, cutting down the trees, changing the neighbourhoods. They didn't come caring about Canada because it's a temporary "wait and see" home. It's not their new home. They didn't come with a—some of them—with a really healthy attitude, either . . . because it's the wealthy that have come over they've not cared what they've done to neighbourhoods.

When asked whether, in light of their association of Asian immigrants with unwelcome changes, such complaints over housing style were merely fronts covering an underlying disdain of having Chinese neighbours, the residents interviewed vehemently denied that this was the case. In rebuttal, participants cited the 'reality' of immigration-related material changes to their neighbourhoods, and claimed that they would be just as upset if they perceived that non-Chinese were responsible for building the construction of

'monster' homes:

> It [whether such concerns should be considered 'racist' or not] depends on how I'm objecting to it. If I'm objecting to the neighbours being there because they're Chinese, I would say it's racism. If you're objecting to the style of the house it's a preference; I wouldn't say it's racism. It depends on the reasons you're objecting. I mean, we drive around Terra Nova and we don't like the feel of that area because when you're driving all you see are pavement and houses. Now we have family and friends who are not Chinese [but who live in Terra Nova] so . . . I can't say it's racism. I don't like the neighbourhood because you're driving and you don't get that sense of neighbourhood where there are yards and trees.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged forties

This difficulty of trying to disentangle, or conceptually separate, issues of housing style from the perceived owners of the property was one acknowledged by the following Caucasian resident in her twenties who, after I questioned her on this point, reflected on whether her expressed opposition to 'monster' housing styles was motivated by the ethnicity of the owners she identified:

> You know, it's hard to say and it's something I question myself. It's tough because you don't want to think you're against the fact that it's Chinese living there. I suppose it's tough to say because really it seems as though it is only the Chinese that are living there. I don't know, and it's something I question myself and wonder if a white person were to decide to build a monster house if . . . yes, I think a part of me would still object to it, you know, if all of a sudden there was this huge house going up that's sort of ugly and out of place, the cutting down of trees . . . Yes, I would still object to it. Whether or not it is more so because of the Chinese people, I cannot say.

A remarkably forthright response, and one that illustrates how difficult it is to tease out implicit meanings that may or may not reside behind apparently non-racial comments on material, neighbourhood-level change, even for those expressing such feelings.

Yet perhaps the disclaimers made by residents about their motives in resisting housing-style changes and development trends in their community have some substance, if only because so many of the participants were willing to explicitly cite Richmond's changing ethno-cultural composition as one of the major transformations over the last twelve years. Indeed, when summarizing the changes they perceived in Richmond since

1986, some twenty-one of the thirty-four Caucasian participants commented on Asian immigration and Richmond's increasing ethno-cultural diversity, as did every single Asian long-term resident. Although all the Caucasian participants would offer criticisms when encouraged by me to express their opinions on immigration into Richmond, fourteen members of this group offered unsolicited remarks that identified 'Asian immigration' (as it was most frequently expressed) and associated changes as negative developments of the last twelve years. A significant component of these concerns, especially for parents with children attending school, was the issue of language, and in particular, the demands of providing English as a Second Language programs for immigrant children in the educational system:

> My only concern with ESL is that it is putting a lot of pressure on the education system, which is maybe another downside to the way in which Richmond has been setting itself up with the immigrant population because ESL places huge pressures, money-wise, on our educational system. I just find it odd that the Canadian government, to get into federal politics again, is paying for these kids to learn the language in our own country when if you went to any other country . . . I would never expect anyone to pay for me to learn their language. I think it should be up to you. It should be your role, or your part of the bargain, when you become an immigrant, to learn the language. I don't know if that is exactly right, that we should be paying for them to learn our language.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged twenties

Other language issues were related to the emergence of Chinese-language only signs in Richmond over the last twelve years, the perceived insularity of the Chinese immigrant community, and their 'failure' to integrate into the existing social fabric. Commenting on these themes, this Caucasian man in his fifties expressed a familiar refrain among many Caucasian long-term residents interviewed:

> . . . in general I feel peoples' feelings is that the Chinese, or the Asian population that came here, simply came here as a means of getting away from what they were afraid of someplace else and that they didn't come here to be Canadians, but to continue on with their way of life exactly the same as they were before. We have Asian malls; all the store signs are in Chinese . . . the majority of our people in Richmond are not Asian and can't read the signs.

Judging from the frequency of comments offered in the course of the interviews, this sense of being denied full participation in Richmond's social life on account of linguistic barriers was especially pronounced at these so-called 'Asian-theme malls,' where a number of Caucasian residents additionally described an unfriendly climate that, in conjunction with language differences, made them feel like unwelcome outsiders:

> Right next door to where I work—Yaohan Centre is right next door to where I work—is an Asian mall. It's not strictly for Asians; I mean, you're more than welcome there, but a lot of stuff in Yaohan Centre has Cantonese writing and a lot of Asian people shop there and they speak Cantonese to you at the counter. If you want to speak English they won't speak English to you, so I think language is a big barrier when it comes to the Asian population in Richmond.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged twenties

> Some areas I don't like it [increasing cultural diversity] because I'm at the point of frustration where people come here and bring their old traditions with them—and I have nothing against that, but they try to push their traditions on everybody else and a lot of people are coming here with a lot of money and they seem to be flaunting it in your face. I think this is what bothers me more than anything, going to the different stores now . . . I myself will not set foot in Parker Place because of the attitude. I'm sorry, but I've been in there a few times when I've been treated like sheer garbage.
>
> – Caucasian man, aged fifties

> The one thing I really don't like is all these Chinese shopping malls . . . [it's to] the point where a white person walks into those malls and you feel very, very uncomfortable, even though you have business in that mall. With my work I had to go into those malls, and I usually did my business first thing in the morning; that was when I was in the mall. Those malls were practically empty, but whatever people did happen to be there, they would look at me as if "what the heck is that person doing here?" Hey, I'm doing my business. So basically it was just in and out, and don't bother with it all. I do know of a young lady who went into one of those shops and was told to go to Safeway . . . that's where I draw the line . . .
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged fifties

Although 'Asian' malls were one site of interactions between Caucasian host-society members and recent immigrants from Asia that led to negative impressions of Richmond's

growing cultural diversity among Caucasian participants, a series of residents—especially,

though not exclusively, women—identified the settlement of Asian immigrants as an

erosive force on neighbourhood relations. Commenting on the mores of suburban

neighbourliness, changes in their perception of their community, and the role of Asian

immigration in bringing about unwelcome transformations to the social order, this long-

term resident couple expressed feelings held by many (some fifteen of thirty-four)

Caucasian residents:

> I think the biggest impact in the last—perhaps not ten years, but less than that—has been the Chinese population. That has had a tremendous impact on Richmond.

> *It's very hard to reach out to them as a neighbour.*

> That's the biggest single difference that I think has made Richmond a totally different community to what we have been used to. The Chinese influx has been so strong and so big that we haven't really, as people who have lived here for a long time, we haven't really adjusted to it yet. We're still adjusting to it by going shopping, the kids going to school, the recreation places, church, whatever. It has had a tremendous impact.

> Investigator: What makes it so difficult to get in touch with, or get in
>
> contact with . . . I don't know whether you have any recent immigrant
>
> neighbours, for example . . .

> *I can give you two examples, John. In the first house on our right is a young family, and I think they have a senior in there as well, or a parent. They moved in and I saw them on the street, so I went over and I spoke to them. I said, "Hi, you're new to the neighbourhood," and whatever, and they were very friendly and so on, but very reserved and possibly just tolerated my dialogue. They'll come out into the driveway and never, ever say "Hello." You know, I try to reach out to them. A young woman was walking with a small child, just the week before last, and I was talking to her and I said, "How is your child," and whatever, yet she'll come out, duck the driveway and see me on the road, not acknowledge me and I don't know whether it's . . . culturally in their country . . . And then, across the street, I don't know if I could tell you how many times I've waved and said "Hi." Sometimes they'll acknowledge you, but they will never—they'll see me out there and it doesn't matter how many times I've said "Hello," "That's a nice dog," or something: they never, ever reach out.*

While critical comments on the impact and behaviour of Asian immigrants were widespread among the Caucasian long-term residents interviewed, they were not confined to this ethno-cultural group. Although reluctant to explicitly cite Asian immigration and related changes as negative developments of the last twelve years, every Japanese and Chinese participant in the research project offered at least one critical, immigration-related comment after further questioning by me. Among Japanese-origin respondents, the tenor and theme of objections related to Chinese immigrants in Richmond were similar to those of the Caucasian long-term residents interviewed, emphasizing issues such as ESL pressures, and immigrant-behaviours considered undesirable:

> Part of the problem . . . the problem, if there is one, is in the public school system. English speakers may end up being in the minority and this is already evident in my son's classroom in grade one. It's not as noticeable in other classrooms he could have been in. Within our immediate neighbourhood, for example, we know—we visited the school—that it would have been over 90% ESL and that's a concern because we want our son to be able to enjoy the company of everybody in the class, and not just restricted to those who will be comfortable speaking to him with or without the facility of English . . . so that's one reason.
>
> <div align="right">– Japanese man, aged forties</div>

> . . . It gets pretty frustrating after a while. My best friend is Chinese, but he was born in Canada and he even says they're [recent Chinese immigrants] terrible. I think some of them [Chinese immigrants] have poor attitudes. They pretty much think they own the city or something. It gets pretty frustrating for myself, walking through the mall and you hear them yelling and they don't speak English—they're all speaking Chinese.
>
> <div align="right">– Japanese man, aged twenties</div>

Critical comments about new Chinese migrants to Richmond, if not quite so readily offered, were also registered by long-term Chinese residents who, by their own self-positioning, occupied a 'middle position' between recent immigrants and long-term Caucasian residents. Frequently, established Chinese residents (not to mention Japanese residents) spoke of a rise in racial intolerance as a negative immigration-related development over the past twelve years, citing instances where they had been subject to abuse by Caucasian Richmond residents who believed, on the basis of their appearance, that they were recent immigrants. Significantly, however, in articulating their 'middle'

position, some seven out of nine Chinese participants argued that discrimination could operate in both directions in Richmond; that recent Chinese immigrants could engage in exclusionary acts against long-term Chinese and Caucasian residents. Commenting on Richmond's 'Asian' malls, the following long-term Chinese resident in her twenties related an illuminating experience that altered her perception of long-term Caucasian residents' anxieties about ethno-cultural change:

> A friend of mine said [that he had been treated poorly in an 'Asian' mall] in Grade Twelve, and I couldn't understand him until we went to the mall together and they gave us such dirty looks . . . like me, "what are you doing with that white guy?" sort of look. My brother who is married to a Caucasian woman, they get it all the time. I think it's true, how they [Caucasian residents] feel is true, because they [recent Chinese immigrants] don't make . . . they feel like . . . I'm not saying everyone, but I think this is how they think: "we have enough people to support our business, so if you don't feel comfortable, that's too bad. We're not going to cater to you." That's how they think, whereas the North American culture is more like trying to help people and welcome people.

Other long-term ethnic Chinese residents, such as these two women in their twenties, offered similarly critical assessments of recent migrants (and note their resonance with those complaints made by long-term Caucasian and Japanese residents), highlighting perceived differences in behaviour between immigrants and long-term residents:

> . . . it's cultural and its the perception of what money is for. I think that with older residents a lot of people have worked hard for their homes, their cars and their lives, and I don't see—this is Asian children—I don't see Asian children valuing things as much as the children of long-term residents. You go to any parking lot in a high-school in central Richmond and you can look in the parking lot and you can tell this is staff parking and this is student parking, and it's not the staff parking that has the nice cars. This may be very judgmental, but I've seen in my church alone a very high immigrant population, and the opulence of these new kids is just amazing. It's the mentality of what money is for and how it is spent. That would be one thing in my mind for the younger generation. For the parents, I can't say.

> *I'll take the way newer immigrants act differently than long-term residents. Part of it is just the setting they've been brought up in; there is less regard for neighbours or the sense of other people. I think you're just aware of yourself, and that's it, because you grew up in a city like Hong Kong where there's however million people packed into a place like that.*

> *That [being focused on yourself] is privacy—you don't care what others think. It's such a huge city, whereas here you get to know people and you're just more aware of people. I just think that they don't know that there should be . . . manners might not be the best word . . . just socially appropriate behaviours. I'll give you an example: We have a (Chinese) neighbour across the street. You'll be backing up your car, and the courtesy is that you've started backing up, so you get to go first. She will continue backing up and go her own way and you'll honk at her and she'll like . . . apparently this happened to my neighbour; she gave the finger to her own neighbour. She's been living here for a long time, but she never—they've never—made the attempt to socialize or say "Hi" or be friendly the way you think neighbours should.*

Although there were a few bold souls who made such comments outright, these kinds of criticisms were made cautiously by most long-term Chinese participants, and not without a certain degree of reflexivity and fear of unfair categorization. While discussing the differences she saw between long-term ethnic-Chinese residents and recent Chinese immigrants, one woman in her twenties made a point of offering such comments with a series of caveats and qualifications:

> People my parents' age . . . yeah, I do see differences. I'm thinking about my friend's parents, who I grew up with, and my own parents, and I think they're more blue-collar workers . . . or not even that—I don't want to classify people—whereas I see the people I know who have moved here as more of a business-side of things. [On generalizing] . . . that's been something that I've been really careful of, or try to be, in the sense that I know some of the comments I've made are racist, like I would consider them racist myself, towards my own, but because I'm Chinese I've been excused of it. I don't think it matters. It's one thing to be critical, and then it's another thing to be just rude. I think that I've crossed that line before.

These anxieties over critical comments and categorization expressed by long-term Chinese residents are perhaps understandable given the tug of subject positions as expressed in the quote above—the dilemma of being critical of 'one's own.' Judging from participant responses, this conflict of identity—while present in the past experiences of Chinese residents—heightened with the growth in Richmond's Asian-origin population in the post-1986 period. Commenting on their prior senses of self, recurrent themes expressed by long-term Chinese residents were efforts to fit in with 'white' society, efforts which had a remarkable impact on residents' perceptions of racial and ethnic difference:

> I think what happens is that when you're growing up . . . I never thought I was any different from you. I thought I was basically 'Canadian,' so I grew up with the idea that I would do Canadian things. I just happened to be Chinese, so I'd do a few of those things, but I'm first of all Canadian. Whether I'm Chinese Canadian or Caucasian Canadian, that didn't make any difference to me. Being a teacher, I was in a school with all white teachers, so I thought I was like them. I thought I was white, in my mind, so I thought I was Canadian.
>
> – Chinese man, aged fifties

> *In high school I would want to be seen as 'white.' I tried not to be Chinese. I wouldn't want people to lump me in the same group: F.O.B.— Fresh Off the Boat.*
>
> *– Chinese woman, aged twenties*

Despite this past positioning of themselves as different from newcomers, and their current criticisms of ethno-cultural differences between old and new Chinese Richmond residents, seven Chinese participants expressed an affinity between themselves and recent migrants, a bond arising out of a rekindled sense of Chinese identity wrought by Asian immigration. As the Chinese-Canadian resident in his fifties who had thought he was 'white' noted with respect to recent immigration-related ethno-cultural changes:

> With Richmond becoming very Chinese-y it's actually made it very easy for me, because I feel comfortable moving around in Richmond, rather than if it didn't happen. Now I'm actually becoming more Chinese-y: I practice it [speaking Chinese], I use it, I'm at the ['Asian'] malls a lot, the stores a lot, so I've actually gained a language and a culture out of this, and I'm quite proud of the fact that I'm Chinese, but I'm equally proud of the fact that I'm Canadian.

On this sense of ethnic affiliation between long-term and recent immigrant Chinese Richmond residents, this Chinese woman in her twenties explained:

> . . . there's this Chinese-pride thing in which Chinese are very proud of being Chinese. I'm not ashamed of being Chinese. I'm not ashamed of my Chinese culture. It's a very important part of who I am, but I can't . . . you have to *be* Chinese to understand it. I can't explain it . . . it's just who we are.

In addition to its perceived positive impact on long-term Chinese residents' sense of their identity (and it was in response to a question on positive changes since 1986 in Richmond that the above answers were tendered), recent Chinese immigration to Richmond was also cited by Chinese participants as one which opened up possibilities for material advancement for them on behalf of their ethnic identity. For the following Chinese resident in her twenties, this growing sense of Chinese identity—while important to her sense of self—could be played up instrumentally to gain an advantage in the job market:

> I think that with more Asian people [coming to Richmond] that Asian culture has become more close to me, in that I see it more often and I see more people having those same traditions, not just me anymore. So that's positive. In general, maybe the opportunities have opened up for me because I'm—Asians help Asians; not that they don't help other people, but I think in a business sense they help Asian people more. I think I've gotten more opportunities because of that. It's very self-centered, I suppose. In trying to be valuable in the job market, especially in Richmond, now I play up my Asian background more, just because it seems what people want now. I get, "Do you speak another language?" I'm like, "Yes, I do," and they'll go, "Oh!" It's a lot different now. In a way I'm almost using my Asian background to my benefit.

Although Chinese ethnicity could be played up for instrumental advantage, the corollary to this advantageous affiliation—whether consciously emphasized for material gain or thought of as an essential part of identity—was the sense expressed by many Chinese participants of an obligation to stand in defence of recent Chinese immigrants, to close ranks in the face of criticism, sentiments expressed by a woman in her twenties with both Japanese and Chinese ethnic origins:

> For me I think it is a bit of a racial thing, feeling more connected to Asian immigrants, maybe wanting to defend them in a way. I think I have that in me sometimes.

 . . . and this Chinese participant in her twenties who struggled to express the tortured feelings she felt when she heard critical comments of recent Chinese immigrants made by Caucasian Richmond residents:

> When I talk about some of these issues with my Caucasian friends, given their personality and stuff, I am aware of what to say and what not to say, so obviously it depends on the person. If I am talking to somebody, like

talking to a long-time resident such as my ex-boyfriend's father . . . he'd be talking about these 'monster' houses and things, [and] I'd just sort of nod my head and listen quietly, because he was quite adamant. He was your typical Richmond resident who was opposed, totally opposed, to them. To me, being from my background, I almost felt like saying . . . see, that's the thing: sometimes I feel like there's an obligation, like I almost have to defend the Asian immigrants because I'm Chinese myself. I am a Chinese-Canadian, but just because they are saying something about these immigrants doesn't mean that they're saying something about me. It's not a reflection upon me, but I almost take it like that, like I should say something in defence.

Among the Japanese residents interviewed, many expressed similar feelings as their Chinese counterparts, particularly of fears that their 'insider' status as long-term residents was provisional and always subject to question on account of their phenotypical appearance. Yet, while Japanese participants wondered, with regard to Caucasian complaints about Chinese immigration, whether (to quote one woman in her forties) "they're thinking that about me, too," dilemmas over identity did not extend any farther than this. Judging from the interview material, the movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond during the post-1986 period had not inspired any sense of pan-Asian identity or affiliation among Japanese long-term residents as it had for Chinese long-term residents, nor did any Japanese participants—none of whom spoke Chinese—offer any indication that this influx of immigrants had resulted in any particular business opportunities on account of their 'Asian' ethno-cultural background.

Yet if the contradictory tugs of subject positions were not so marked among Japanese long-term residents as they were for Chinese participants, and did not impact on their sense of identity in the same way or to the same extent, this is not to say that Japanese (not to mention Caucasian) residents' impressions of ethno-cultural change and immigration were unidimensional and solely negative in content. Like long-term residents of Chinese ethnicity, participants in both the Japanese and Caucasian resident cohorts (some six and twelve residents, respectively) also commented on Chinese immigration to Richmond as having a host of positive benefits, among these, the opportunity to see a 'new setting' in Richmond in terms of markets, restaurants and stores, and to learn about other cultures and languages ("*If I had the desire to learn Cantonese or another second*

language, I think it would be a lot easier if you were immersed in it, when your neighbours next door speak Cantonese and the people across the street speak Cantonese."). Similarly, a number of Caucasian residents spoke highly of the qualities of their new Chinese immigrant neighbours (*"We always said they were good neighbours because they kept up their property. There are no run-down houses in Asian neighbourhoods in the sense that you get old cars parked in the front street and furniture out in the car-port.")*, and in the following instance, of the impact the presence of immigrants from around the world was having on the social awareness of long-term resident children. As this Caucasian participant in his fifties of Ukrainian ethnic background explained in comparing the current context with his past experiences:

> One of the big things I noticed that I thought was very good was in the schools, in this sense: with our kids they did not define the difference, so it didn't matter whether it was a Chinese [child], an East Indian boy, a Dutch boy, a Ukrainian boy, or a German boy—they were all just boys, or girls, or whatever the case may be. Earlier, in my time, there was quite a strong distinction, like if you were a Ukrainian you weren't as good as an Englishman, and looked down upon. But that was what I noticed with our boys. I can't say that for all boys, but I do know that it was not uncommon to come home and I would see a boy from India in the house with our guys, a black boy from Africa, a boy from Chile, so it was a real mix. I think that part of it was great.

The Contingent Character of Host Attitudes

As the quotes on the preceding pages suggest, participants of various ethno-cultural origins were willing, in the course of the interviews, to comment explicitly on the impact of Chinese immigration to Richmond and the significance of immigrants' ethnic backgrounds. Although there were inter-group variations in the kinds of ethnic characteristics deemed important, and differences in the impacts identified, it is important to note that ethno-cultural transformation was identified as a factor leading to *both* positive and negative effects on community life, by all groups, though with different points of emphasis among them. While acknowledging that varied dimensions of resident response to ethno-cultural change introduce new complexities into accounts of immigrant reception focusing on issues of racism, significant questions remain, however, as to *how*

this ethnic difference—whether seen as a positive or negative contribution to Richmond—is articulated. Commenting on non-white immigrant reception in Britain during the late-1960s and early 1970s, for example, Martin Barker (1981) has contended that discourses of culture, when linked to phenotypical features, can take on a quasi-biological, and 'racist' overtone—rendering the fluid category of culture unchangeable and innate. Similarly, Kay Anderson's (1991) analysis of Vancouver's Chinatown draws links between the seemingly benign discourses of Canadian multiculturalism with the categorizations which legitimated the circumscription of Chinese identity, arguing that positive multicultural discourses of exotic otherness still serve to sustain the notion of rigid, discrete ethnic or 'racial' distinctions.

When asked to speculate as to the source of the differences between long-term residents and recent Chinese immigrants—if distinctions were noted at all—residents overwhelmingly cited 'culture' as the root cause. Indeed, *every* resident identified differences between themselves and recent immigrants as the product of being socialized in different political, social, and geographic milieus. Perhaps these invocations of cultural traits can be considered, *pace* Barker, as smuggling in pseudo-biological notions, but other resident comments on the character of these cultural differences, I believe, give pause to this notion. Like Chinese residents who anxiously questioned their own generalizations and typifications, Japanese and Caucasian participants, while not always demonstrating as strong a reflexive sensibility, frequently acknowledged the partiality of their categorizations.   One way in which residents destabilized their own use of ethno-cultural categorizations was to acknowledge their subjective quality—that value judgments about recent Chinese immigrants, their supposed behavioural characteristics, and the changes they were making in Richmond, were not natural, 'objective' facts, but the product of residents' *own* beliefs and opinions. Furthermore, and as part of this self-questioning process that residents engaged in when invoking cultural difference to explain variations between long-term residents and recent immigrants, participants in the project stressed that that the categories they employed were not monolithic, nor were distinctions between ethno-cultural groups clear-cut. These acknowledgments of partiality on behalf of established residents, suggesting the potential for a change in their views, can be seen in

many of the responses that have appeared thus far, as they also do in the following comments:

> . . . I've talked to a lot of Chinese in Richmond and other areas about integration, just in the hour I spend with them [during the participant's work time], and I get the feeling they'd love to integrate, but they don't know how, or it's too . . . their cultural beliefs are such that they're not as outgoing or extroverted as, say, a non-Asian is . . . you have to be fair here, though [speaking of relations with his Chinese immigrant neighbours]—we didn't make a large effort to know them and I'm sure the reasons were much the same on both sides: the language barrier. You can only smile and nod so many times.
>
> – Caucasian man, aged fifties

> I have a bit of a problem with the drivers out there. I don't like to stereotype and say all Chinese people are bad drivers, but there's a lot of Chinese people in Richmond and I think that's how they get labeled as being bad drivers, but there are quite a few bad Chinese drivers, but there's quite a few bad Caucasian drivers, too [laughter]. It's probably that there are more Chinese people living in Richmond, so you notice them more.
>
> – Caucasian woman, aged twenties

> We have immigrants who are coming to this country because they truly want to live here. Then we have the immigrants who are leaving [their country of origin] because they think maybe their country might have a volatile situation and "We come here and we'll watch. Oh, it's not looking so bad now, so we're going back. Thank you so much for the free ride, and now we're going back." You see, I deal with a different group because the school I work at is out in eastern Richmond. Our school has seventy-three students in it, and out of the seventy-three we have seven Asians—that's it. Three of them are in ESL—they're a brother/sister trio. We had one ESL student last year, so we get a very low-key ESL population. They don't flaunt their wealth: they just bring their lunch to school in a bag just like everybody else does, and I think we just deal with a financially poorer student or [one] more conscious of not showing their wealth.
>
> I wonder if the group my husband deals with on a regular basis [and of which he expressed considerable criticism with regard to behaviour] are the wealthy ones and what their money would buy in Hong Kong buys so much more out here, and so they're still expressing their wealth or they're finding that their money buys a heck of a lot more here, so they're not sure how to act. Or maybe they're the group that's here while they were waiting to see what Hong Kong and China were going to do, and maybe

now they're going to go back, and the families have decided that it is not going to be so bad over there, so they can go back now—they were hedging their bets. Maybe they decided their children were going to get a better education [in Canada] and then bring them back over to Hong Kong where they might get that much more of a better job because they've been taught English and their people skills have gotten a little bit better than what they would be over there. I'm not sure, but my husband works with a different group [of Chinese immigrants].

– Caucasian woman, aged forties

Richmond Futures

An additional series of comments providing insight as to the way in which cultural differences were invoked by long-term residents emerged with questions regarding the future of cultural relations in Richmond as the participants saw it. Questioned as to whether they believed that the gulf—if it existed—between long-term residents and recent Chinese immigrants would become less marked in the future, seven out of nine Chinese participants, eight out of nine Japanese participants, and twenty-eight out of thirty-four Caucasian participants expressed the belief that they would, through a process of assimilation in which immigrants would adopt the customs of the 'host' society, or through a process of integration in which adjustments would be made by both recent immigrants and long-term residents. Although such comments on future relations were usually accompanied by particular qualifications—that the future of cultural relations depended on factors such as the political situation in Hong Kong and China, the willingness of recent immigrants to commit to long-term residency in Richmond and adapt culturally and linguistically, the pace and scale of future Chinese immigration into Richmond, the actions of various governments, and the willingness of long-term residents to make accommodating gestures—the tenor of most resident speculations was optimistic. Referring to the present situation in light of his own family experience, the following Japanese resident in his thirties expressed a confidence held by many about immigrant adaptation and Richmond's long-term future:

I think that in any wave of immigration you always have—it doesn't matter what group: from Europe, from Japan, from any area . . . the first wave is

the parents and there might be some small kids, and because they're new to the country, new to language, new to culture, they tend to stick with their own group and they don't assimilate very well because the parents aren't comfortable with the language or the culture. The kids, on the other hand, are in schools and they are basically immersed in the culture, so I find that it's basically one generation. It was the same way when I think about my grandparents. My grandparents came from Japan in the early part of the century. My grandparents didn't learn English, and most people my age, their grandparents didn't learn English. To this day, the ones that are still alive, they still don't know much English because Steveston, at that time, had Japanese stores, Japanese doctors, Japanese hospitals—you could get everything in Japanese. The same thing is happening now, but on a much larger scale. You have a bank where you can get service in Chinese, Chinese restaurants, Chinese stores, Chinese supermarkets . . . almost exactly the same now as it was with the Japanese in the 1920s, but then one generation later all the children knew English, all the children went to school, they all had friends who were Caucasian and Chinese, and it doesn't matter, and that's what I think is going to happen with this group, this wave that came in the eighties.

Perhaps because of this optimism about the course of Richmond's cultural relations, based on past experiences with immigration, residents were relatively sanguine about Richmond as a community to live in, both in the present and the future. When asked about their future residency plans, eighteen of thirty-four Caucasian residents, six of nine Japanese residents, and three of the nine Chinese residents interviewed, stated that they intended to remain in Richmond. Four Caucasian participants, however, expressed plans to move out of the city (an additional two were in the process of moving from the municipality), while similar plans were intimated by two of the nine Japanese participants and three of nine Chinese participants. For many residents, however, this question as to their future residency plans was too difficult to warrant a straightforward answer. Ten Caucasian residents, one Japanese resident, two Chinese residents, and both of the other ethnic-Asian residents responded that they were unsure as to their future plans. As with residents who had decided whether they intended to stay in or move from Richmond, those who had not made definitive plans cited a number of factors that would influence such a decision.

While the presence of Chinese immigrants might enter into these considerations, most residents did not explicitly mention this as a factor; much more prominent were circumstances related to personal life plans, and dissatisfaction with Richmond's

increasing urbanity. Many of those planning to move, and those who were undecided, commented on Richmond's busy-ness, and expressed a desire to move to a place where they could enjoy a quieter way of life, as in the case of the following Caucasian resident in her twenties:

> I don't think I'm going to stay in Richmond. At the age that I am now I will be done university in a year. I think, looking ahead, because I like the freedom, I like the open space, that I would like to live in a place that is a little bit smaller with maybe a little bit more room, a little more land to live on. As far as the future, and me having a family, I think that I would like to bring up my children in a place that wasn't so hectic, so fast-paced. I just feel boxed-in sometimes in Richmond. I don't know if it is just the city life, or just the way Richmond is, but I have dreams and hopes of moving out of Richmond. Whether it's five years or ten years down the road, and where I will go, I don't know, but if I do get the opportunity to move out I think it will be right out of the Lower Mainland to somewhere smaller. Definitely somewhere smaller that has more open space and more of a rural setting rather than a busy city like Richmond.

A further consideration in moving plans apart from the aesthetics of Richmond's transition from semi-rural suburb to edge city, and one that was important for young respondents of various ethno-cultural backgrounds who stated that they could not afford to buy a home in Richmond, was the rise in housing prices that had attended population growth in Richmond. Yet, as important as this factor was in influencing the decisions of younger participants, concerns about living expenses also were expressed by older residents who, like this Caucasian participant in his fifties, were troubled by rising tax burdens:

> Well, it probably isn't going to be in the near future, but down the road we'll [the respondent and his wife] will probably move out of Richmond. Basically, in my opinion, right now it's just too expensive to retire in Richmond, so I would look at a place that was less expensive, where the cost of living . . . where the cost of housing—particularly taxes—and so on, was less expensive.

While dissatisfaction with Richmond's increasing population size and density illustrated that physical changes were significant enough to motivate established residents to consider moving, the role played by rising living costs, as noted above, in determining future living plans was more complex. The impression given by many participants who cited such factors was that they were satisfied with life in the community in most respects, and

regretted that they would no longer find it economically viable to live there. This cost/benefit dilemma, resolved in favour of moving by some participants, in favour of staying by others, becomes clear in the accounts of those struggling with the decision to move, as in the case of the following Caucasian resident in her fifties. Note, in this passage, the variety of factors to be considered, the careful inventory of potential future places of residence, and the commentary on immigration as a factor at the end of the quotation:

> I think it's too difficult to predict, particularly with personal circumstances, but I like to think we can stay here, hopefully in this house, for as long as possible. I like Richmond. I have thought about the possibility of if I had to move, where would I want to move? I certainly wouldn't want to move to Surrey or Langley—there's just no way. Possibly, if I could afford it, maybe back into Vancouver. Kerrisdale is a very nice area. The West End? —probably not. We've lived there before, but I think that's for a younger community now. South Granville is very nice, but again, the houses are probably terrifically expensive. But I wouldn't [want to move] . . . I love my garden, there's still some open space in Richmond, we still have Garry Point Park, which is a little gem. We still have some ocean that we can get to easily, and I'd be really lost without the ocean. So yes, I hope to stay here a long time. So I don't know . . . whether they [recent Chinese immigrants] stay or go or come or do whatever, that's fine. I just hope that they will mix in and we can all live in reasonable harmony.

Conclusion: Rethinking Interpretations of Social Relations in Richmond (and Elsewhere)

1. General Impressions of Resident Experiences

The difficulty long-term residents experienced in providing firm answers to questions about their future residency plans is, I think, not unusual; indeed, it speaks to the frustration that attends efforts to impose a rigid guideline on the contingent character of everyday life. Furthermore, it is difficult to discern the role of immigration in residents' expressed plans to move from the community—while the resident quoted at the close of the last section alluded to how immigration did (or did not) enter into her deliberations, most other residents did not cite immigration as a motivation in their responses, commenting on other factors such as development, living costs, and lifestyle preferences.

How are these to be considered: as factors in their own right, or as metaphors for 'unacceptable' concerns about ethno-cultural change? Similar problems of interpretation and categorization complicate the task of providing closure in a concluding section that seeks to encapsulate how Richmond residents have conceived of change in their community over the past twelve years and before, and any such summary must be prefaced by a series of qualifications.

First and foremost, considerable caution must be exercised in extrapolating from the results of a research project involving fifty-four participants to comment on the responses of Richmond residents as a whole. While extended interviews were the primary method of inquiry, producing a depth of interpretive information unattainable by most other research methods, the demands of locating participants, conducting interviews, and coding and transcribing them imposed significant constraints on the number of people that could be surveyed in this project, thus limiting the scope of conclusions that can be drawn from the research. Additionally, and following from this observation on the sample size of residents interviewed, it must be acknowledged that despite the efforts made to diversify the long-term resident category in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, most (if not all) participants were generally of middle-class economic status; it is conceivable that residents of other class positions may have different views than the participants of this study. Moreover, for the purposes of comparing their responses over time, only residents who had lived in the community before the major movement of Chinese immigrants were interviewed, and those with shorter lengths of residence in Richmond might respond differently to contemporary changes.

The interview questions in this research project, furthermore, surveyed peoples' *expressed* representations and opinions on neighbourhood change and immigration, and the interview process—no matter how open and honest the participants are—cannot fail but shape the character of the responses. We must, as always, consider such accounts cautiously—not as unproblematic, transparent accounts of 'reality,' but as the introspective products of actors with the capacity for creative thought. On a final note, it is also important to note that the resulting data are not a measure of resident actions; they do not conclusively indicate whether residents' day-to-day experiences and attitudes

correspond with the representations and opinions expressed.

Given the complexity of resident interview responses, generalization *within* the results presents its own difficulties of interpretation. However, while the diversity of participants' responses renders impossible an unimpeachable, all-encompassing assessment of residents' reception of neighbourhood change in Richmond, it is possible to note themes and trends within the array of anecdotes. Following the accounts offered by the residents interviewed, and set against a literature which has often imputed a racialized motive behind the choice to live in the suburbs, residents chose to live in the community for a variety of reasons that had nothing explicitly to do with race. For long-term residents of Chinese-origin, affordability of housing and proximity to work were the primary considerations. Among ethnic-Japanese residents, in addition to the factors cited by Chinese residents, the desire to be close to family was another motivation. For Caucasian residents, all these factors entered into their decisions to move to Richmond. Significantly, however, Caucasian participants also indicated that the 'rural' character of Richmond, and its perceived associated benefits, played a part in spurring their move. Richmond's rurality prior to the mid-1980s was commented upon by almost every resident, whether young or old, male or female, a mover or non-mover, Caucasian, Chinese and Japanese, and was valued by many participants—not just Caucasian residents. Given this attribution of value to Richmond's rural (or semi-rural) setting, it is not surprising that growth and development in the community during the 1970s and before, not to mention the late-1980s and early 1990s, were not universally well-received by the participants interviewed. While improvements in amenities such as roads, street lighting and shopping facilities were regarded as welcome changes during this time, some concern was expressed—particularly by Caucasian residents—about the effects that development and population growth were having on the preservation of farmland, green space, and their quality of life.

However, if my interpretation of resident responses is indicative of how they were feeling at the time, development and growth were not particularly significant concerns for most of the participants in this study prior to1986, and for the most part, residents appeared content with the way their community looked and felt during this era. Judging

from the frequency and character of responses, though, in the post-1986 period growth and development issues began to assume greater prominence as concerns in the minds of the long-term residents who participated in this research. Almost every single Caucasian resident mentioned development of some pace and type as being a negative change since 1986, and while these kinds of concerns were relatively muted among residents with Chinese and Japanese ethnic backgrounds, they were still present, particularly in criticisms of Richmond's increasing automobile traffic.

Alongside, and occasionally intersecting with these criticisms of development—particularly in the case of 'monster home' construction—were concerns expressed about Richmond's changing ethno-cultural climate and the impacts this was perceived to have on the community. Mentioned as a change by every Asian long-term resident, and by the majority of Caucasian participants, the increase in Richmond's Chinese population over the past twelve years as a result of immigration elicited a variety of responses. The most explicitly critical comments were made by Caucasian residents, with fourteen of thirty-four participants stating outright that changes associated with this movement (such as the rise in English as a Second Language student population in schools, Chinese language signs, and the perceived loss of a sense of community) were negative developments of the last twelve years. Many more within this group, when prompted by me to express their feelings on these subjects, expressed similar reservations. Among the Japanese-origin participants, ethno-cultural changes were not specifically mentioned as negative developments since 1986, though, as in the case of Caucasian residents, concerns about changes related to the movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond emerged with further questioning. This was also the case with the sample of ethnic Chinese residents, who were often reticent to volunteer criticisms of recent immigration patterns and associated impacts.

In addition to their critical responses to various changes in their community, it is important to recognize that the long-term residents interviewed also had highly favourable comments to offer about Richmond's transforming landscape. When asked to indicate those changes since 1986 which they viewed as positive, for example, every Japanese resident interviewed, eight out of nine Chinese residents, and thirty-two of thirty-four

Caucasian residents indicated development of some kind, primarily improvements in the quantity, quality and variety of amenities, as welcome changes of the past twelve years. Similarly, a significant number of residents explicitly cited the influx of Chinese immigrants into Richmond since 1986, and the perceived associated impacts, as positive developments during this time. This approval of ethno-cultural change was, understandably perhaps, most prevalent among ethnic-Chinese members of the host society. For many of these participants, the growing presence of Chinese immigrants had served to rekindle their own, often consciously submerged, feelings of Chinese identity. For others, particularly those who spoke a Chinese language and were well positioned to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this influx, the growing Chinese presence in Richmond as a result of immigration was welcomed as a potential source of material advancement. Among Japanese and Caucasian participants, positive changes associated with Chinese immigration were an increase in Richmond's cultural diversity—and more specifically, the increased variety of restaurants, greater opportunity for personal development through the learning of different languages and cultural practices, and the contribution that immigration was making to their children's social awareness.

2. Resident Ambivalence and the Location of Racism

As the varied nature of resident responses to material and ethno-cultural changes in their community suggests, arriving at a definitive term to describe their character is an exercise fraught with difficulty. Considering resident responses to development and ethno-cultural transformations on the whole, the impression given by the interview material in this research project is not that of a rigid alignment in favour of or in opposition to these changes, but rather an *ambivalent* stance whereby members of the host society considered particular transformations to have both positive and negative dimensions. As an analytical term and on its own, 'ambivalence' is perhaps not very instructive, and in the course of the previous section, I have tried to tease out the specific components of residents' reactions to change. Yet, in the context of interpretations of immigrant reception that have focused on criticisms of immigrants by established white residents, I believe that

there is something productive to be gained by including the complexity of resident responses into research on immigrant reception. Commenting on the utility of introducing the concept of ambivalence into a postmodern conception of racism, Ali Rattansi (1994) contends that contextually sensitive research on identity has illustrated its fragmented character; that identity is marked by a multiplicity of subject positions in which racist and anti-racist attitudes co-exist. De-essentializing the 'racist' subject, Rattansi argues, and accounting for the variety of subject positions adopted by people, introduces crucial nuances into accounts that represent contemporary acts of racialization and racism as a seamless process, "as all-encompassing and monolithic, smoothly reproducing racialized stereotypes and practices of discrimination" (p. 60).

Considering the literature that examines immigration in the Greater Vancouver context, then, if we view current criticisms of ethno-cultural changes by established Caucasian residents to be "reinventions of old racist concepts" (Ray et al. 1997, 75), acknowledging the complexity of participants' responses requires us to see these kinds of comments as not describing the *totality* of their experiences, but as one position among the many adopted by residents. The fragmented character of the category 'long-term resident' and the ambivalence of individual responses challenges the temptation to reduce the problem of racism to that of 'whiteness'—for ethno-cultural criticisms were expressed not only by Caucasian residents, but also by those of Asian ethnicity—and to limiting accounts of reception in general to racism.[10] Furthermore, though cleavages within the various participant ethno-cultural groups could only be alluded to here, fuller examination of the diversity of responses within these categories works against the common representation of them as monolithic entities. Breaking down and closely examining the responses of people defined as 'Chinese,' 'Japanese' and 'Caucasian' suggests that other

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[10] A way to reconcile this semantically, to maintain the category of whiteness while accounting for long-term Asian-origin residents' criticisms of recent Chinese immigrants could be to include these residents within this category—ie. to see them as 'honourary' or 'conditional' whites. Given that these residents expressed feelings of ethnic-affiliation with non-whites, however, to fold them into this category of 'whiteness' would appear to be an unwarranted imposition of identity. If we recognize, however, that non-whites are capable of ethno-cultural critique, discrimination, or 'racism,' it seems to me that the elision of 'racism' with the condition of 'whiteness' needs to be rethought, or abandoned altogether for a less essentialist conception.

factors—such as age, gender, length of tenure and aesthetic tastes and lifestyle preferences—also impact on the reception of material and ethno-cultural changes in Richmond, and operate across ethnic lines. Moreover, residents' accounts of feeling like outsiders at 'Asian' theme malls in Richmond also indicate that understandings of 'racism' need to be broadened out from what has hitherto been a focus on actions of the 'host' community; that 'racism' should be conceived not as a simple, uni-directional process from the 'host' community to immigrants, but one in which immigrants too—especially given their growing numbers and economic power—can actively participate.

 3. Development Concerns in the Post-1986 Period: Metaphors for 'Racist' Sentiments?

As implied above, there is an important ethical issue of representation to this acknowledgment of the various ways—both positive and negative—that long-term Caucasian, Chinese, and Japanese Richmond residents have responded to the reorganization of their community over the past twelve years. While analyses of 'racism' and immigration that focus exclusively on the negative reception of community changes by white residents do not *necessarily* imply that this is the only way in which they (and they alone) view these transformations, I am concerned that this outcome is their effect. In focusing so narrowly on 'racism' in resident responses, the aforementioned analyses of immigration and reception in the local context have paid scant attention to positive impressions of change, ethno-cultural or otherwise, giving the unfortunate impression of the 'host' community as uni-dimensional and monochromatic—propositions most researchers and activists would oppose, I believe, were they to be applied to immigrant groups themselves.

Yet as Robert Miles (1989, 56-61) notes, the issues raised by defining expressions and actions through the lens of racism are not only those involving the morality of representation and typification, but also ones of empirical accuracy. Writing of the factors leading to comparatively higher rates of unemployment among people of Asian and Caribbean origin in Britain, Miles argues that those who would define all of these as racism because of their differential effects run the risk of presenting a simplistic and mono-causal interpretation of exclusionary practices. While Miles' argument is directed at those

advocating a conception of institutional racism—whereby the uneven outcomes of seemingly non-racial discourses are considered racist, even if differential 'racial' exclusion is not the intention of actors in these institutions—his observations, I believe, find purchase with interpretations of critical reactions to physical neighbourhood change in the Greater Vancouver context. While local commentators have shied away from a more radical definition of racism as any discourse which *legitimizes* marginalization—in the broad sense of producing differential racial outcomes, however 'races' are defined—they have forwarded the argument that complaints over physical changes at the community level, particularly housing style, represent *legitimating* discourses that act as socially acceptable metaphors for underlying 'racist' fears about Greater Vancouver's changing racial and ethno-cultural population as a result of immigration.

Again, as with so many other aspects of resident reactions to change, the process of interpretation here is complicated. Influencing the responses, to some extent, through the use of the interview format, and deprived of the clairvoyant powers that would enable me to uncover what residents' 'true' feelings are (not that this is transparent to the residents themselves, either), it is impossible to discern conclusively whether ethno-cultural or racial anxieties lie behind seemingly benign criticisms of physical community change. Certainly, considerable criticisms of development and population growth *were* advanced by the participants in this study, and many of these criticisms, such as the construction of 'monster' homes, were linked to the presence of Chinese immigrants. Perhaps, then, it is not unreasonable to assume that while residents vehemently contended that their criticisms lay with the materiality of such changes, anxiety over physical transformations in the community was influenced, to some extent, by the ethnicity of those considered responsible for them. Participants did not, for example, seem overly engrossed with issues of development and growth in the pre-1986 period, while since then—and coincidentally, during the period of significant Chinese immigration into Richmond—such issues emerged as major resident preoccupations.

In expressing potential agreement with this thesis purporting to uncover the causes underlying resident responses, however, I think it is important to note that I have considerable hesitations about the ascription of all anti-development sentiment to concerns

about ethno-cultural change. While there seems to be a correlation between the intensification of development concerns and growing Chinese immigration into Richmond, and even explicit linkage of the two by some residents, correlation does not necessarily impute causation, and there appear to be enough 'reasonable doubts' about the motivating reasons for protest to place this causal relationship into question. In light of the fact that many residents, Caucasians in particular, cherished what they described as Richmond's semi-rural landscape in the pre-1986 period—and even cited this attribute as a reason they moved to the community—it does not seem unreasonable that continued growth, development and urbanization in Richmond during the post-1986 were viewed with significant concern. Had the participants *not* experienced a quieter, more rural Richmond, nor cited Richmond's relatively quiet, suburban character as a reason drawing them to live in the community, contemporary criticisms about development might seem less plausible.

Moreover, it is important to note that such anti-development and growth anxieties have a broader horizon in Richmond and cannot be seen as simply derivative of the Chinese immigrant presence without omitting or downplaying significant contexts. Although comparatively muted, anti-development concerns were expressed by some residents in their recollections of the pre-1986 period, while the late-1980s were witness to the largest anti-development controversy in Richmond's history—the construction of houses on West Richmond's Terra Nova lands, previously zoned for farming—which can hardly be said to have any 'racial' dimension.[11] Furthermore, while established residents

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[11]The Terra Nova lands, 129.5 hectares of which were protected from rezoning to urban use by the Provincial Government's Agricultural Land Reserve Act of 1972, were eyed by the municipal development as a site for 2400 residential units until public protest scuttled the plans in 1978. In 1986, by an order of the Provincial Government Cabinet, the Terra Nova lands were withdrawn from the ALR and rezoned for residential use. This decision, and the formulation of development plans by local businessman Milan Ilich and his Progressive Construction, unleashed a three-year torrent of protest without precedent in Richmond's history. In the opening stages of the debate 10,000 people signed a petition opposing the redevelopment of Terra Nova, while in the spring and fall of 1988 residents packed two public civic zoning meetings, extending their duration from days into weeks. In the Vancouver media various figures, from Musqueam Indian Band representatives to environmentalists, expressed persistent opposition to the development, while in 1988 and 1990 the Save Richmond Farmland Society mounted two court challenges to the plan, taking their case, in the end, to the Supreme Court of Canada, but to no avail. Credited with the ejection from office of the incumbent municipal R.I.V.A. party in the elections of 1990, public protest over Terra Nova's redevelopment, while acrimonious, made no reference to the

often linked development changes with the movement of Chinese residents, they claimed that this was just to identify who they saw responsible for negative community transformations, changes that they would object to regardless of who was responsible; while we can submit this claim to critical scrutiny, it is very difficult to prove in the Richmond context whether their statements about anti-development motivations are 'true' or not. Adding additional doubts to the interpretation of anti-development criticisms as metaphors for racial/ethno-cultural anxieties is the presence in resident accounts of comments explicitly critical of the behaviour of Chinese immigrants; given the presence of these statements, one wonders why residents would feel it necessary to use anti-growth and development concerns as a socially acceptable front. When taken together, these factors, I contend, give pause to the notion that resident concerns about growth and development in their community should be viewed with suspicion, as racial and ethno-cultural concerns in other guises. While it is possible that development criticisms represent a stalking horse for residents' fears and anxieties about immigration-related changes that are considered 'unacceptable' in public discourse, development concerns have a life of their own and should not be diminished to the status of a 'front' for racist expressions.

4. Ethno-cultural Critique, Racism, and a Multicultural Society: Ethical and Policy Issues

While the status of 'racism' within residents' complaints about growth and development, particularly the 'monster' home dispute, is unclear to discern, the meaning of participants' explicitly negative comments on Chinese immigration would appear to be transparent. Even if, drawing upon Rattansi's invocation to view identity as fragmented, consisting of a variety of subject positions, we consider these as just one component of established residents' reception of community change and immigration, surely critical responses to the Chinese-immigrant presence in Richmond must be construed as racist expressions. Following social constructionist perspectives on racism which gather under this term *various* ways in which people are defined as distinct, marginalized, and subjected to abuse,

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ethnicity of developer Ilich (of Yugoslavian descent), nor was there any return trade in accusations of

it would be hard not to consider the kinds of critical responses to Chinese immigrants' behaviour and impact on Richmond as anything but racism: after all, the participants in this research project generalize to define a phenotypically visible group as culturally different from themselves, and moreover, identify these cultural differences as having a host of undesirable impacts on their community. However, it is important to note that the definition of racism offered by social constructionist theorists, while perhaps linking different kinds of expressions in useful ways, is not 'natural,' innate, nor immutable. As Alastair Bonnett has noted, while social constructionists have tended to view their conceptions of racism as foundational objects of analysis, bracketing them off from rigourous critique, by extending the social constructionist project further to the term racism itself we can see it as a subjective, contingent creation. As the presence of alternative conceptions of racism attest—particularly those which emphasize the development of scientific racism in the nineteenth century as its definitive form, and which stress, as a basic requirement for a definition of racism, an explicit reference to immutable biological factors (for example, Banton, 1970)—the analytical meaning of racism is not an innate thing, but the site and product of a contested process of definition.

Frequently, however, discourses around the meaning of race and racism fail to consider their own subjective quality, resulting in competing claims to know the 'truth' of racism—whether this consists of assertions that with the general demise of biological determinism and legislation explicitly excluding groups of people on the basis of their skin colour, racism is effectively 'dead' as an ideology, or whether it consists of claims that racism is a process woven into every aspect of everyday life. Too often, such debates about the meaning of racism devolve into shouting matches with little meaningful interactive engagement, contests in which truth positions are staked out and bitterly defended. Drawing from the deconstructionist agenda of social constructionism, conceiving of racism's meanings, like the categories of race, as subjective creations of social actors, offers the potential to open them up to political discussion, scrutiny and productive debate: What phenomena, analytically, should racism include and exclude?

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racism. See Ross (1989).

What is to be gained by conceiving of racism in a particular way, and what is to be lost?

Questions like these take on an added importance when applied not just to racism's analytical content, but to its political and evaluative meaning—an issue perhaps more decisive than the semantics of racism as an analytical category. Extending the de-essentializing tendencies of social constructionism further to the political meaning of racism, we are drawn into a more explicit engagement with the questions of ethics and morals, rather than using the term 'racism' as a repository for a host of implicit value judgments. Thinking through the responses of Richmond residents to the physical and social changes occurring in their community, then, we not only might ask whether such comments *are* racist expressions or not racist expressions, but more importantly, whether these responses are politically and morally objectionable, and why or why not. Should we consider the association of Chinese immigrants with unwelcome community changes, for example, socially acceptable? Are cultural differences legitimate subjects of social criticism, or should ethno-cultural or racial identities be protected in some way? Is there a way of acknowledging and commenting on cultural difference without implying that such comments are objective truths, or suggesting that distinctions between groups are rigid and discrete? Does it matter whether criticisms are registered from within 'racial' groups, or by people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds? Are there circumstances where other social goals, such as environmental protection or the encouragement of national cohesion, should take precedence over protecting ethno-cultural groups from criticism?

These are just a few of the host of questions that arise from a move to de-essentialize racism's seemingly innate negative connotations—to progress from loose empiricist mappings of racism's absence or presence to a more meaningful engagement and debate with its meanings. While I have neither the time nor space to offer my thoughts on these issues here, the shift in emphasis of official Canadian multiculturalism from the celebration of cultural diversity to anti-racist measures (Kobayashi 1993) opens up philosophical questions of what 'respect' entails in a culturally plural and officially multicultural society (Taylor 1994), and policy issues such as the question of how to

measure intercultural harmony.[12] Questions such as these must be addressed as openly,

frankly, and critically as possible if we are to ever engage meaningfully with the concerns

of both recent immigrants and established residents in Canada.

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[12] I am indebted to Tom Hutton of the School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, for bringing to my attention the significant policy questions that the measurement of intercultural harmony entails.

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