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Immigration to Vancouver: An Analytical Review

Jamie Winders

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

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Jamie Winders

Department of Geography
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

New Contact address:

Department of Geography
1457 Patterson Office Tower
University of Kentucky
Lexington, K 40502
E-mail: jlwind00@pop.uky.edu

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Abstract: This paper reviews developments in research on immigration to Vancouver since the 1960s. It works to enumerate the general directions in which this literature has gone and is going. Beginning with a broad overview of research into Canadian immigration policy and trends, the paper turns to studies of immigrant participation in Vancouver's labour market. From there, the discussion moves to research focussing on particular immigrant groups, traveling from large-scale ethnic communities to the household or family level. The paper then outlines research into the implications of immigration to the city itself, particularly in reference to urban services and poverty. The essay concludes with a discussion of areas demanding further study for immigration researchers. Throughout this review, it is argued in general that our knowledge of immigrant communities and experiences is clustered around particular topics related to numerically large or geographically concentrated immigrant groups.

Keywords: immigration; Vancouver; labour market; housing; immigrant communities

Introduction: Immigration Studies Past and Present

Today, economic segregation is far more important than any other factor such as language, ethnic origin or cultural background. The most basic trends in Vancouver are towards cultural conformity, assimilation and the dispersal of ethnic concentrations. (Waldhouse 1961)

I hope to interest students of British Columbia history in the sociological and historical problems arising from the presence of a Chinese population and its relations with the other settlers of the province. (Willmott 1970)

These two statements, taken from relatively early studies of immigration to Vancouver, capture important aspects of past approaches to immigration. As Freda Waldhouse points out in the first quotation, immigration in the 1960s was conceptualized as movement toward what was seen as a uniform Canadian society. Social conformity and economic assimilation underlay the trajectory new immigrants were to follow. ‘Different’ upon arrival, immigrants, through economic and cultural assimilation, became the ‘same’ as an unspoken white norm. W. E. Willmott, in the second passage, retains elements of Waldhouse’s approach to immigration, despite writing after drastic changes in Canadian immigration policy. Understanding Chinese immigrants and their involvement in Canadian society to be ‘problems’ in some way, Willmott urged students of British Columbia history to tackle these ‘dilemmas,’ presumably to ‘solve’ them.

These two approaches – of immigrant assimilation and of immigrants themselves as deviations from an accepted ‘norm’ of British Columbian society – stand in sharp contrast to contemporary conceptualizations of immigration. The underlying themes, however, of the relationships between immigrants and the places to and from which they travel *and* between immigrants and the people they encounter remain intrinsic aspects of immigration studies. The epistemological frameworks through which scholars approach immigration have changed, as have the methodologies employed to address issues of immigration. Nonetheless, questions concerning connections between immigrants and ‘host’ communities, between ‘home’ and ‘host’ countries, persist as fundamental aspects of immigration studies.

This paper attempts to outline the developments in immigration research centred on Vancouver since the era of these earlier essays. Examining the various topics immigrants researchers have addressed in reference to Vancouver, it works to enumerate the general directions this literature has been and is going. The essay begins with a discussion of the general patterns and policies of immigration to Canada, a context necessary for analysis of immigration at any scale. From there the review turns to studies focused on the ways immigrants are situated within Vancouver's labour market. It then shifts to examine research focused on particular immigrant groups, traveling from large-scale ethnic communities to the household or family level. After moving through these scales of immigrant activities and experiences in Vancouver, the paper discusses the implications of immigration to the city, particularly in reference to immigrant urban services and poverty. Finally, the essay identifies those immigration topics needing further study.

Before questions surrounding immigration to Vancouver can be addressed, however, a perfunctory understanding of Canadian immigration patterns and policies is needed. Vancouver's transformation from a regional resource-based city intimately connected to its hinterland to a service-oriented city closely tied to the Pacific Rim co-evolved with simultaneous changes in the Pacific Rim's political and economic situations (Barnes et al. 1992, Ley et al. 1992).¹ Wrapped up in this shift in Vancouver's economic *and* geographic orientation was the city's emergence as a popular destination for many immigrants. At the national level, recent shifts in the focus and scale of immigration policy has changed the types and numbers of immigrants entering Canada and, consequently, Vancouver. These transformations of Vancouver itself and of Canadian immigration policy directly influence immigrants' experiences and activities. Thus, this review begins with a brief overview of research on general immigration trends and policy changes, before moving to more specific aspects of immigrant experiences in Vancouver.²

¹ See also Hutton 1997, Hutton 1998, and Davis and Hutton 1994 for discussions of Vancouver's numerous connections to Pacific Rim economies and populations and the policy implications of such associations.

² It should be noted that throughout this paper, I have retained the ethnic and racial 'labels' employed by the author(s) under discussion.

Canadian Immigration Patterns and Policies

As numerous scholars have noted, changes in Canada's immigration policies and procedures have drastically altered the composition of the nation's immigrant communities. Across the twentieth century, the national origins, size, and socioeconomic structures of these communities have shifted, following the ever-dynamic 'goal' of Canadian immigration. Alan Green and David Green (1996) have outlined such changes since the 1870s, stressing that researchers must be familiar with this historical policy evolution to understand contemporary forms of immigration policy. Tracing the constant tension between long-term and short-term goals, they examine the evolution of policy decisions in various time periods and note that the main immigrant selection criterion has changed from the country of origin of prospective immigrants to their level of education and labour-force experience. Throughout the paper, they demarcate the dynamics in immigration policy toward and away from economic goals. Green and Green point out that, in spite of persistently high unemployment in the late 1980s and 1990s, immigration levels have remained high, thus constituting a victory of long-term over short-term goals. These consistently elevated levels of immigration, apparently based on the claim that immigrants generate growth, seem to indicate that immigration policy has become a population-bolstering strategy, although Green and Green question the efficacy of this tactic.

In recent years, immigration to Canada, through such policy changes, has yielded distinct social and economic patterns. With new classifications and potentially faster processing for some immigrants, immigration is changing both the 'face' and pace of economic activity across Canadian cities. John Mercer (1995), highlighting post-1990 trends in immigration to Canada, has noted two such patterns: a polarization of the immigrant labour force and the changing ethnic composition of recent immigration.³ Citing Canada's transition from a bicultural to a multicultural to what he considers a multiracial nation, Mercer emphasizes immigrants' urban destinations and their continuous arrival in recent times of high Canadian unemployment, a situation different from the historical trends of high immigration in

³ See also Mercer 1988 for discussion of the changing ethnic composition of Vancouver specifically.

times of high labour demand. Mercer examines the impacts and effects of immigration in reference to these new patterns for both Canada at large and its cities in particular.

The recent changes in immigration outlined by Mercer and others have been represented and, in some cases, misrepresented by various media. In a review article highlighting some of these immigration misconceptions, David Ley (1999) has endeavoured to dispel the myths of an immigrant ‘underclass’ and ‘overclass.’ To challenge the myth of an immigrant underclass, he notes the strong correlation between occupational and residential segregation. Ley found that spatially isolated immigrants frequently experienced extreme occupational segregation and, importantly, low incomes. Nonetheless, as Ley (1999) points out, low *personal* incomes often disguise higher *household* incomes. Thus, the immigrant ‘underclass’ portrayed in popular media somewhat fades when immigrants are viewed as “having... social identit[ies], as being... member[s] of...distinct communit[ies] that provide... significant social and material assets” (Ley 1999, 13).⁴ To refute the immigrant ‘overclass’ myth, Ley (1999) stresses that “a successful entrepreneur in Asia is not necessarily an entrepreneur at all in Canada” (14). Discussing “asset rich, but earnings poor” immigrants to Canada, he questions the ‘overclass’ representation of recent immigrants, particularly those immigrants from Hong Kong (1999, 14).⁵

Edward Woo (1997), in a more narrowly focused study, has examined the business-immigrant program with which such wealthy Hong Kong immigrants are typically associated. Predicting that ten percent of the 220,000 immigrants to Canada in 1997 would be business-class immigrants or family members of business-class immigrants, Woo outlines the overall business-immigrant program and dominant characteristics of business immigrants themselves. He highlights issues and challenges facing these immigrants, few of whom live where they invest in Canada and many of whom prefer to live *between* Canada and their country of origin. Woo raises questions concerning the use of business immigrants’ skills and experiences,

⁴ See also Ley and Smith 1997, discussed later in this article.

⁵ See also Woo 1997 and Smart 1994.

noting the general feeling of most Honk Kong business immigrants that the program lacks proper guidance.⁶

These studies focussing on national immigration trends and policies give a general indication of Canada's goals for immigration. As Barnes et al. (1992) and others have discussed, however, Vancouver has particular Pacific Rim social and economic connections intrinsically associated with recent immigration to the city. Thus, although studies of immigration and immigrant experiences at a national level provide a broad framework for beginning to address immigrant needs and experiences, studies of immigration to Vancouver specifically are necessary to lay open many trends not necessarily detectable at a macro scale. The remainder of this paper, then, covers such research related primarily to immigrant experiences in Vancouver. Beginning with general economic involvement and labour market participation, the discussion progresses, through geographical scales, from community to neighbourhood to family to immigrant identity formation.⁷

Immigrant Economic Involvement and Labour market Participation

One of the most basic ways that immigrants impact on and are impacted by life in Vancouver revolves around their participation in the city's labour market. As many have noted, recent immigration to Canada has produced a markedly bifurcated immigrant labour pool, a pattern that has influenced economic activity in Vancouver in very real ways. Don DeVoretz (1996a), as part of his on-going effort to determine some of those economic impacts,⁸ has noted that immigration-generated *benefits* to Canadian-born residents are either unknown or highly diffuse, while immigration-generated *costs* are absorbed by a small group of Canadian-born residents. Through this situation, those costs become much more visible whereas determining immigrants' actual economic impact becomes quite difficult. In spite of this ambiguity,

⁶ See also Smart 1994 and Froschauer 1998. For a similar critique of slippage between policy intentions and policy outcomes in reference to multiculturalism in schools, see Wideen and Barnard 1999.

⁷ Obviously, there are numerous connections between divisions, and a number of papers surveyed here could be included in several. For clarity's sake, however, the subheadings form general, if artificial, divisions.

⁸ See also DeVoretz 1995 and 1996b.

DeVoretz attempts to outline immigration's, as well as internal domestic migration's, role in maintaining British Columbia's relatively fast-growing population.⁹

Whereas DeVoretz focuses on immigration's impact on Canada as a whole, Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur (1996) examine the economic impact of immigrating to Canada on immigrants themselves and on Canadian-born ethnic minorities, analyzing earnings differentials between visible-minority groups and 'white' Canadians. Their findings point to large earnings disparities between whites and visible minorities, even for visible minorities born in Canada. Within this broad distinction, however, Pendakur and Pendakur highlight the substantial variation in earnings penalties among ethnic groups, a situation which complicates any binary comparison.

In a subsequent paper, Pendakur and Pendakur (1997) investigate the place of immigrant language knowledge as human capital in the Canadian labour market, noting that "the economic value of language knowledge in Canada has not been... widely researched" (1). Although viewing language knowledge as a skill that should accrue economic benefits, they acknowledge that it can help *and* hinder employment opportunities. Pendakur and Pendakur found that benefits from knowledge of both official languages and non-official languages were, like many other factors associated with immigrant experiences, highly localized. They conclude that "in a broad sense, the Canadian labour market simply does not value language knowledge and the possibilities such knowledge brings" (1997, 28). In Vancouver, however, this instance of 'reverse human capital' was significantly less.

Also examining immigrant economic participation, Daniel Hiebert (1999b) has analyzed labour market segmentation in the cities of Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. Through his study, he found immigrants likely to be in both highly desirable and 'dead-end' jobs, situations which reflect bifurcated national immigration policies. Although this polarized pattern seems to disappear over time for most immigrants, women of colour who enter secondary-sector jobs on arrival, according to Hiebert, do not experience this eventual mobility. Through this finding and others, Hiebert (1999b) stresses the "salience of gender as the fundamental form of division in the labour market" (22). Importantly, he, like Pendakur

⁹See also Green and Green 1996 and Mercer 1995.

and Pendakur (1996), acknowledges the dangers of oversimplified binary distinctions between mainstream and racialized workers, when discussing generalized trends for Vietnamese, Jewish, and Indo-Canadian workers. Thus, although noting a replication of “(t)he experience of marginalized groups, in broad terms... between cities,” he also highlights that “the *particular* forms of marginalization differ between places” (1999b, 25).

In a study of Vancouver specifically, Peter Sheldon (1997) has examined labour-market participation of both Canadian-born and foreign-born residents. Attempting to ascertain the importance of factors like human capital, family characteristics, and place of birth, he found labour-market participation to be contingent primarily upon place of birth, an association especially important for women. According to Sheldon, Asian-born and Middle-East-born women were more likely to participate in the labour market than their European-born or Caucasian counterparts. Sheldon also considered the role of family for men and women in marriages or common-law partnerships. He noted that the presence of children at home tended to decrease labour-market participation for women, while for men, this factor was not significant in determining their labour-market participation. Sheldon stressed, however, that such influence again was less for Asian-born and Middle-East-born women. These findings concur with national trends and, according to Sheldon (1997), suggest that “the participation decision of residents of Vancouver, is, in the main, influenced by the same economic factors as those applicable to the nation as a whole” (21).

Sheldon’s conclusion that Vancouver is affected by the same economic factors as the rest of Canada is a stance quite different from that of many other researchers. Arti Nanavati (1998), for instance, in her examination of immigrant labour-force outcomes for female Indian immigrants in Vancouver and Toronto, suggests that labour market outcomes are sensitive to the place of *destination* within Canada, rather than place of birth. Although finding that neither South-Asian men nor women ever “catch up to the earnings of the Canadian-born,” Nanavati (1998) notes that for Indian women, the ‘double jeopardy’ of being female and foreign born exacerbates their labour market situation (15). Of these two factors, however, she concludes that “the effect of being foreign born and of being a particular ethnic group is stronger than that of just being a ‘woman,’ “whatever route is adopted” (1998, 17), a finding

which stands in stark contrast to many other studies.¹⁰ This discrepancy, according to Nanavati, arises because most other studies work at a scale too large to detect this pattern.

Throughout these papers, the issue of the scale and context within which research is conducted emerges as a crucial consideration. As several authors have argued, immigrant labour market activities take quite different forms in different places. Although immigration, as a process, is regulated nationally, the particular ways immigration influences and is influenced by the labour market is context dependent. Even within the same geographic context, however, immigrant groups have distinctly different placements within the labour market. Thus, in addition to smaller-scale studies, research within particular immigrant groups is necessary to get at the nuances of immigrants' experiences within Vancouver's economy.

Peter Li (1992), in one such study, considers the case of Richmond, a Vancouver suburb that has experienced rapid ethnic change in its residential *and* economic landscapes. Through his study, he found Chinese entrepreneurs within Richmond to be over-represented in both professional services and service-oriented businesses, such as food retailing. In addition, Li cites a high rate of business turnover, a situation reflecting rapid changes in Richmond's residential composition. Challenging the dualism of the 'blocked mobility thesis,' which cites discrimination and racial barriers as the source of ethnic enterprise, and the 'translated cultural thesis,' which attributes ethnic enterprises to the ascriptive cultural characteristics immigrants bring with them, Li concludes that for Chinese businesses, both theories fail to account for the heterogeneity of and changes within such businesses.

Karl Froschauer (1998), in a broader study, has examined such immigrant involvement in service-sector industries in reference to British Columbia's efforts to augment its manufacturing and industrial base through immigration. His findings suggest that rather than following the province's preference for manufacturing and technology investments, most immigrant entrepreneurs adopted "ethnic business strategies that resulted in coethnic employment practices and reacted to the new economic conditions by devolving their entrepreneurial experience into less desirable service-providing industries" (1998, 2). Noting a discrepancy between provincial expectations and actual immigrant reactions and

¹⁰ Cf. Hiebert 1999b.

experiences, Froschauer cites an additional incongruity between business experience in the source country and in Canada. This incompatibility, often necessitating a change in line of business in the process of migration, typically yields investments, as Li (1992) has shown, in service-sector businesses. According to Froschauer, immigrants frequently rely on family connections rather than ‘traditional’ sources, such as banks, to establish these new businesses.

Margaret Walton (1996), in an examination of Indo-Canadian involvement in Vancouver’s construction industry, has studied such family connections. Tracing the polarized structuralist-agency debates around ethnic enterprises, she, like Li (1992), found both sides of the debate unable to account for the particularities of Indo-Canadian economic activity in Vancouver. Walton (1996) has shown that “co-ethnic labour, more so than co-ethnic clients, plays an essential role in the operation of these enterprises, whether entrepreneurs are immigrants or native born” (ii). Her results reveal the important, although often unacknowledged, role of women in ethnic enterprises and the potentially negative side of financial assistance tied to family and ethnic contacts.¹¹ From her findings, Walton (1996) concludes that the “common western construction of capitalism” is too narrow to capture the nuances of this labour market activity and stresses the need for creative tension between conceptualizations of culture and economy (187).

As several of these authors have argued, the broad-brush frameworks through which immigration and labour-market activities have been theorized gloss over many of the intricacies germane to immigration issues at a smaller scale. In addition to questioning the frameworks through which these processes are envisioned, however, some researchers are scrutinizing the very categories and stereotypes through which immigrants themselves are understood. Geraldine Pratt (1997), in her work on Filipina domestic workers in Vancouver, has analyzed the construction and application of ethnicized and racialized stereotypes of Filipina and British nannies. After outlining general stereotypes of domestic workers circulating among agents who place these workers, Pratt (1997) interrogates ambivalences and inconsistencies within the stereotypes to demonstrate what is “being buried” within them

¹¹See also Walton-Roberts and Hiebert 1997.

and the possibility that the agents themselves “implicitly recognise the instability of their own racial categories” (174).¹²

Economic involvement and labour market participation, while important aspects, form only one facet of immigrant experiences in Vancouver, a facet connected, however, in numerous ways to other factors in immigrant communities and households. As Walton and others have shown, immigrant labour market participation frequently follows the geographic and social contours of specific immigrant groups. Research into these communities, while very rich in places, has tended to focus on particular immigrant and ethnic groups either numerically large or geographically concentrated. Through the next section of this review, both the strengths and weaknesses of this growing body of literature will become apparent, as the paper moves from those topics well represented to those topics all but missing in this emerging literature.

Immigration and Ethnic Communities

Two Vancouver immigrant communities in particular have been studied in great detail. With long histories and fairly large populations, the urban Sikh and Chinese communities in Vancouver have received extensive attention in both historical and contemporary contexts. Using a wide range of methodologies, scholars have interrogated myriad aspects of these communities’ social, economic, religious, and political activity.

In an example of early research on British Columbian Sikhs, Michael Ames and Joy Inglis (1973) focused on changes incurred in the Sikh patriarchal system through the act of migrating to Canada. Tracing the history of Sikh immigration and settlement in British Columbia, they, like many subsequent scholars, outlined the *gurdwaras*’ transformation from religious to social centres. In the Sikh family itself, tensions between desired *adjustment* to and undesired *assimilation* into Canadian society created, in the eyes of Ames and Inglis, an unstable mixture. They claimed that the westernization of the Punjabi family, while allowing greater freedom for Punjabi youth, potentially resulted in isolation for Punjabi women. For

¹² See also Pratt 1998 and 1999.

this reason and others, Ames and Inglis located a ‘contemporary’ Punjabi identity somewhere between the extremes of a ‘traditional’ Punjabi identity and a ‘contemporary’ Canadian identity.

James Chadney (1989), in one aspect of his extensive research on Vancouver’s Sikh community, has traced this group’s twentieth-century history, noting a mid-century shift away from overlapping ethnic and religious communities.¹³ Utilizing throughout his work a four-stage model of ethnic adaptation – alteration of the social environment, formation of ethnic boundaries, ethnic competition, and ethnic adaptation – Chadney examines this community in both an historical and contemporary context.¹⁴ Hugh Johnston (1988), also discussing the history of Vancouver’s Punjabi community, has highlighted key factors in the development of the immigrant *and* Canadian-born community. He notes that Punjabi immigrants, primarily through family sponsorship, settled in Vancouver, although recently this settlement has spread to Vancouver’s suburban south. Johnston, like Ames and Inglis (1973) and Chadney (1989), traces the *gurdwaras*’ changing roles for Punjabi immigrants and the periodic doctrinal splits within the temple associations. He points out that the act of identifying as Sikh rather than Punjabi and, thus, relying on a *religious* rather than *regional* identity, holds the potential for changing social relations and self-views for these immigrants.

Verne Dusenbery (1981), too, has detailed the historical evolution of Vancouver’s Sikh community. Examining changing Sikh involvement in and with the *gurdwaras*, he attributes the split, discussed by Johnston (1988), between religious and ethnic institutions to the adoption of “Canadian ideology and public policy” within Vancouver’s Sikh community (1981, 111). As new immigrants arrived, a ‘schism’ between “modernist” and “traditionalist” segments emerged, creating, in essence, two Sikh societies (Dusenbery 1981, 106).¹⁵ According to Dusenbery, by the 1960s, the composition of the ‘East-Indian’ population had changed, and new associations focused less on Sikhism and more on a pan-East-Indian

¹³ For an additional discussion of ethnic adaptation, see Chadney 1980. For an historical analysis of Vancouver’s Sikh community and ethnic concentration, see Chadney 1977. For an analysis of intraethnic diversity, see Chadney 1985.

¹⁴ For extended discussions of the Vancouver Sikh community, see Chadney 1984 and 1976.

¹⁵ For discussions of ethnic involvement in teaching, particularly for Punjabi-Sikh Canadians and Chinese-Canadians, see Beynon and Toohey 1998 and Beynon et al. 1992.

identity emerged. Throughout this transformation, however, he notes that the *gurdwaras* retained their religious significance.

Also noting the changing composition of Vancouver's 'East-Indian' population, Anand Paranjpe (1986) stresses that, despite shifts in both the demographic composition of an 'East-Indian' population and the ways that group was identified, the heterogeneous 'Indian' ethnic community has still generally been known through Sikh stereotypes. Paranjpe views this external imposition of an ethnic religious identity, however, as amplifying group unity under a common identity. He notes that amidst all these changes, the community reached a state of "institutional completeness" in the 1980s, enabling members to remain inside a socially and geographically contained "mini-India" (1986, 77-8).

Vancouver's Chinatown has received as much, if not more, academic scrutiny than has the metropolitan Sikh community. In many cases, this research has built on Kay Anderson's foundational work on the community's historical development. Throughout her work, Anderson (1987) explores Chinatown "as a social construction with a cultural history and a tradition of imagery and institutional practice that has given it a cognitive and material reality in and for the West" (581).¹⁶ According to Anderson (1987), "the study of the Chinese and their turf is also a study of our categories, our practices, and our interests" (581), since 'Chinatown,' as a concept, is a Western construct and a "critical nexus through which a system of racial classification has been continuously constructed" (584).¹⁷ Thus, she stresses that throughout its history and development, Chinatown not only has "reflected the race-definition *process*" but also has provided "a *context* and justification for its reproduction" (1987, 594).

Moving discussions of Chinatown into a contemporary setting, David Ley et al. (1994) focus on community activism within the Chinatown-Strathcona neighbourhood from the 1960s to the 1990s. They link the ideological formation of multiculturalism to earlier constructions of race within Chinatown and note that even the new framing of Chinatown as a

¹⁶ For extended discussions of Chinatown, see Anderson 1986, 1988b, 1991 and Lai 1988. Anderson (1996) returns to Chinatown, foregrounding the element of gender which seemed absent in her earlier work. For a pictorial history of Vancouver's Chinatown, see Yee 1988. For literary discussions and fictional accounts, see Bowering 1989, Chong 1994, Choy 1995, Christy 1997, and Lee 1990.

¹⁷ Cf. Ng 1999 for a different interpretation.

place to be preserved is merely an extension of prior constructions that reinforced a racialized difference. Highlighting links between community organizations and the federal government, Ley et al. reveal strategies through which the municipal government was circumvented and community organizations within Chinatown exercised power and changed policies. They stress, however, that this circumvention should not conceal the state's imposition and exploitation of a racial identity that Chinatown, as a community, received and implemented.¹⁸

Katharyne Mitchell (1998), in a study of Chinatown's community organizations past and present, notes "a dearth of studies focussing on the ramifications [of the impact of large-scale migration] for *pre-existing* immigrant communities" (729, my emphasis). According to Mitchell (1998), foregrounding immigration's impact on *political*, rather than just *economic*, structures "forces recognition of internal community dynamics as heterogeneous and contested" (731). To illustrate her point, Mitchell (1998) traces changing community organizations in Chinatown, arguing that "contemporary immigrants from Hong Kong have been able to position themselves as both insiders and outsiders to the pre-existing community" (735).¹⁹

Outside the extensive work on these two communities, research into Vancouver's other immigrant groups has been fairly isolated, a situation which in part reflects both the smaller size and geographic dispersal of many immigrant groups. In spite of these factors, some research has been directed at these communities. Such studies provide much-needed information about less-visible but equally important immigrant groups. Audrey Kobayashi (1988), for example, in a trans-Pacific study of early Japanese immigrant communities in Canada, has highlighted the particularities of this group. She notes that these immigrants came from a wide range of source regions in Japan and had equally heterogeneous motivations for leaving. Kobayashi contrasts the typical male Japanese immigrant, who eventually returned to Japan to inherit family holdings, with the typical male Chinese immigrant, who generally stayed in Vancouver and sent money to his family in China.²⁰ As

¹⁸ See also Anderson 1988a.

¹⁹ See also Johnson 1994.

²⁰ Kobayashi (1988) notes that for the small number of Japanese women who came to Canada, their immigration was in large part determined by their life-cycle stage (358).

she points out, the minority of Japanese immigrants who did remain in Canada became the basis for Vancouver's Japanese-Canadian urban community.²¹

In one of the few contemporary studies of European immigrants in Vancouver, Laura Beattie (1998) has examined the ethnic church's changing roles in Vancouver's German community. She notes that "(c)onsideration of the significance of religious institutions in the experience of immigrant settlement is, at best, marginalized in immigration and church history literature" (1998, ii). Beattie traces the historical development and transformation of various South Vancouver German churches, interrogating the connections among religion, ethnicity, and migration. As she notes, German immigration, peaking in the 1950s, shifted to Vancouver's suburbs by the 1960s, a movement which left South Vancouver communities 'empty' by 1991.²² Beattie stresses, however, that despite this migration, the church remained important through both formal and informal programs and services, especially for newly arrived immigrants. In addition to aiding the social integration of new immigrants, churches also helped preserve German culture through language and ritual, though, according to Beattie, few churches today retain those vestiges. She concludes that as the ethnic composition of surrounding neighbourhoods has changed, many churches have turned to South-Asian and East-Asian immigrants who are moving into the neighbourhoods and, thus, have changed their focus to meet the needs of this new community.²³

Among recent work on smaller minority groups, Jennifer Hyndman and Margaret Walton-Roberts (1998 and 1999), in their research on Vancouver's community of Burmese refugees, use transnationalism as a way to problematize the traditional view of immigration as a one-way journey from source to host country. They argue that analyzing immigration from a strictly national context fails to capture the transnational nature of refugee experiences. Noting that "globally dispersed groups [often] create their identities and communities outside the territory of the nation-state" (7), Hyndman and Walton-Roberts (1999) underline the need to view borders as fluid zones rather than rigid lines. In tandem with their examination of Burmese refugees as transnationals, they explore the politics of refugee-group research.

²¹ See also Kobayashi 1992. For discussions of historical associations between Vancouver's Japanese-Canadian community and the saw-mill industry, see Kobayashi and Jackson 1994.

²² See also Geib 1981 for discussions of Vancouver's German community.

Hyndman and Walton-Roberts (1999) endeavour to unsettle their own research methodologies and epistemologies, understanding the process as “contested social[ly] and cultural[ly] . . . [and] imbued with unequal power relations” (21).

These immigration studies at the level of the community provide important insight into immigrant experiences across Vancouver. In many cases, however, a finer-grained analysis is needed to access the inner dynamics of immigration and immigrant lives. Thus, studies that examine immigrant residential patterns and experiences within particular communities and neighbourhoods enrich our understandings of community formation and function for both immigrant and Canadian-born residents.

Immigration, Neighbourhood, and Housing

The presence and material manifestations of immigrants in Vancouver’s residential neighbourhoods have triggered relatively rapid changes in the city’s housing market, economically and socially. Research into these changes has grappled with issues ranging from segregation to market competition and price increases to racism²⁴ and racialization. These works provide insight into the perception *and* reception of immigrants in particular Vancouver places, as well as general reception and placement of immigrants across Canada.

In a study of residential segregation, T. R. Balakrishnan and John Kralt (1987) analyzed ten groups of visible minorities in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Although positing that over time ethnic groups assimilate to mainstream culture and, consequently, that residential segregation decreases, they actually found a much more varied relationship for Vancouver, where some groups, such as Jews and Portuguese, had high levels of residential segregation, while others, such as Chinese and Indo-Pakistani, exhibited significantly lower levels. For the “considerable residential segregation... among many... minorities from Southern Europe” (156), Balakrishnan and Kralt (1987) cited voluntary segregation and

²³ See also Tsang 1990.

²⁴ The studies discussed here examine racism expressed through media representations of the ‘monster-house’ debate. Few studies have examined other forms of racism or racial/ethnic conflict. One exception is Robson and Breems (1985), who survey and interview both Indo-Canadians and “majority society members in South Vancouver” about their experiences with “racial incidents.”

advantages of cultural proximity as the main reasons for such ethnic concentration in Vancouver. In a more recent study of ethnic residential patterns, Daniel Hiebert (1999a) has provided an overview of “late twentieth-century immigration and its impact on the social geography of Greater Vancouver” since the 1960s (35). He stresses that “the degree of ethnocultural concentration [in Vancouver] appears to have *increased* over time” (1999a, 68), in some cases resulting in suburban concentrations of various ethnic groups such as Chinese-Canadians and Indo-Canadians.²⁵ In addition, Hiebert (1999a) notes an “ethnocultural sorting” that has emerged in a contemporary setting, as a “somewhat more segmented multicultural metropolis” takes form (77).

A few recent studies have focused on the connections between immigration and Vancouver’s housing market. These works attempt to untangle the knot of relationships involving Vancouver and its property market, levels of immigration, and Pacific Rim migration and economic activity. David Ley and Judith Tutchener (1999), in one such study, examine the relationship between housing prices and immigration to Canada. Focussing on eight cities, they highlight the housing market’s heterogeneity, as some sectors flourish, while others stagnate. Stressing Vancouver’s connection to the Asian economy, they note that, like other aspects of the city’s economy, Vancouver’s housing market incurred little damage from the national recession of the early 1990s but was strongly affected by the subsequent Asian economic crisis. This trend, according to Ley and Tutchener (1999), reinforces the trend toward distinct, uncoupled “metropolitan and hinterland economies” and problematizes national generalizations (23). They also discuss the correlation between post-1986 housing price increases and the simultaneous growth in immigration levels, stating that “(n)et immigration is a strong predictor of the state of the Vancouver housing market... while the growth of overseas visitors is almost a perfect match of price trends” (1999, 19).²⁶

In one of the few other studies of immigration and the housing market, Samuel Laryea (1999) has endeavoured to capture immigrant assimilation into the housing market, through

²⁵ Although some ethnic groups are exhibiting increasing residential concentration, Hiebert (1999a) also highlights widely scattered ethnic groups, such as Filipino immigrants, and the subsequent difficulties of providing services for these communities.

²⁶ This finding stands in direct conflict with Schwann (1989), discussed later in this paper.

an investigation of 1991 immigrant housing tenure. He found that on average, the foreign-born population reached the rate of housing tenure exhibited by the Canadian-born population in six to eight years, although he stressed the always-important element of immigrant heterogeneity. Laryea noted that in Vancouver, immigrants of African or Caribbean descent had the lowest predicted rate of home ownership²⁷ and that Asian immigrants had the highest. In addition, according to Laryea, Vancouver's 1991 immigrant population already exhibited a higher rate of home ownership than did the Canadian-born population. Based on these findings, Laryea urged that policies be put into place to assist particular immigrants groups in owning their own homes.

Adding the element of globalization to these discussions of immigration and housing in Vancouver, David Ley and Kristopher Olds (1999) have explored immigration's role in housing-market dynamics, citing again Vancouver's strong link to the Pacific Rim. Although noting the economic influence of recent wealthy Honk Kong immigrants, they simultaneously call for research on "the needs and housing strategies of newcomers at the bottom end of the market" (1999, 4). Importantly, Ley and Olds urge a rethinking of traditional local-national binary framings of property markets to include globalization's influence, in a move similar to Hyndman and Walton-Roberts's demand for an inclusion of a transnational perspective when studying migration.

In contrast to most other studies around these topics, Gregory Schwann (1989), in his study of migration and migrants, claims that immigration to Vancouver has a relatively small impact on the city's housing market. Examining four types of migrants – international immigrants, interprovincial migrants, intraprovincial migrants, and intraurban movers – Schwann (1989) concludes that *intraurban* moves, "as a percentage... dominate... the Vancouver housing market" (55). In his view, immigration forms "just one component" of movement and "in present day Canada, not a very large component" (1989, 1), although he notes the need for more research in this area.²⁸

²⁷ This trend applies to Toronto and Montreal as well.

²⁸ Cf. Ley 1997 and Ley and Olds 1999, who critique the Laurier Institution, which funded Schwann's research.

These aggregate-scale analyses of immigrant home ownership and influence on the housing market give a general overview of the connections between immigration and Vancouver's housing market. Within the broad group of immigrants to Vancouver, however, extreme variation exists in both economic status and residential preferences. Thus, smaller-scale investigations into these issues are necessary to begin to lay open the intricate interactions between and among immigration, ethnicity, and urban residence in Vancouver. Interestingly, these more narrowly focused studies have, almost without exception, coagulated around particular issues in Vancouver's housing market. One such topic has been what the media dubbed "the monster-house debate." Numerous scholars have analyzed this issue and the public discourse surrounding it, positing various 'explanations' for the observed resistance to aesthetic changes in the cultural landscapes of Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Niall Majury (1990 and 1994), examining the development of Kerrisdale, an upper-middle-class Vancouver neighbourhood, and its changing ethnic composition, has noted what he considers to be a "racial subtext... interwoven with the issue of landscape aesthetics" (92). Citing the significance of the power to define a landscape's meaning, Majury (1990) links current critiques of new Kerrisdale homes built by Chinese immigrants to a "reservoir of racist imagery" from British Columbia's past (92). Such racialized aesthetic debates, according to Majury (1990), "illustrate the unstable terrain upon which the benign myth of multiculturalism rests" (125).

Peter Li (1994), in his take on the 'monster-house' debate, posits that a segment of the Canadian public has depicted Chinese immigrants, despite their great economic accomplishments and occupational mobility, as "socially undesirable without *explicitly* resorting to the notion of 'race'" (18, my emphasis). Noting the changing physical appearance and ethnic composition of various Vancouver neighbourhoods, Li highlights a discursive slippage between critiques of the houses and critiques of the homeowners. He suggests that the myth of Chinese 'foreignness' carries greater weight than the material facade of the houses. To Li (1994), although "(t)he racialization of 'monster homes' is camouflaged in a

language that appears to be devoid of racial reference,” a racialized meaning is unmistakable (30).²⁹

Brian Ray et al. (1997) follow a similar approach, examining “the ways in which a discourse of race, revolving around issues of phenotypic and cultural difference, is shaping spatial relations and the meaning of place in Richmond,” a Vancouver suburb (75). In analyzing the ideological construction of the ‘suburbs,’ they note that not much research has focused on a suburban immigrant presence. Within Richmond, they contend, historical images of Chinese enclaves and a ‘naturalized’ view of the area as both suburban and white have crystallized issues of racism and difference. In this context, housing becomes a metaphor for ethnic changes within neighbourhoods; and, thus, in their eyes, critiques of housing can be read as critiques of the changing ethnicity in the neighbourhoods.

Richard Cavell (1997), taking a somewhat different approach, examines the “‘raced’ discourse of *monstrosity*” in Vancouver’s post-1980 domestic architecture (39). He highlights the frequent elision of race by class, though pointing out that by 1993, the debate had become “fully racialized” (1997, 40). Seeking the “epistemology of the monster house,” Cavell (1997) examines the historical association of the concepts of ‘house’ and ‘monster’ through “a discourse of origins,” in which the “monstrous emerges as a sign of ‘race’” (44). Through this discussion, he works to problematize the ‘originary’ status of neo-Tudor mansions razed and replaced by so-called ‘monster houses.’ In his view, ‘monster houses’ are ‘othered’ in an effort to present the neo-Tudor mansions as somehow more ‘original.’ Thus, criticisms of new Chinese residents’ houses become a way to solidify the position of earlier houses as ‘authentic,’ despite their simulacral status.

Re-entering the ‘monster-house’ debate,³⁰ David Ley (1997) has endeavoured to re-contextualize this extended discussion within “a longer established and more widely-based anti-growth movement of which race is neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause” (342). In an effort to open debate in an area dominated by one particular view, Ley (1997) notes the importance of challenging “influential streams of popular and intellectual culture around . . .

²⁹ It should be noted that Li relies on data from David Baxter, a researcher funded by the Laurier Institution.

³⁰ See Ley 1995.

representations of racism” (331), stressing that “the issue of neighbourhood change has not typically been engaged in economic terms” (338). Through this discussion, Ley questions the conclusion that this issue can be distilled to covert racism.

John Rose (1999), addressing Ray et al.’s claim that little is known of immigrant reception in the suburbs, shifts the discussion of immigrant and neighbourhood aesthetics to both a different geographic place *and* a somewhat different social context, through his exploration of long-term residents’ responses to “physical and cultural changes in Richmond, B.C., since 1986” (2). Noting that comparatively little research has centered on the “ways in which immigrants and immigration-related changes are being interpreted by existing residents in immigrant-reception areas” (3), Rose (1999) endeavours to examine the *process* of creating racial categories, rather than just the insertion of race into a particular debate. Through an interrogation of ethnicity’s role in critiques of Richmond’s changing aesthetics, Rose works to ‘unpack’ monolithic terms and problematize the rubric of ‘racism’ to discern what are socially acceptable critiques within a context such as Richmond.

These examinations of immigrant housing issues have explored the experiences and representations of immigrants in various sectors of Vancouver’s housing market. Working across immigrant groups and across the city’s urban landscape, they have highlighted important areas of current, and spaces for future, research into housing issues, although some areas, such as housing stress for immigrants, remain unaddressed. Other research has moved to an even finer-scale analysis and looked within actual households. This research focused on the family level provides a crucial counterpart to the work already discussed. Work in this area has problematized any monolithic view of families, stressing the heterogeneity of immigrant families and the connotations they hold.

Immigration, Family, and Identity

Any discussion of immigrant families, without doubt, bleeds into various other aspects of immigrant experiences in Vancouver. For many immigrants, familial relations both enabled them to immigrate in the first place and became the basis for their employment in Canada.

Across sectors of the city's economy, then, concepts of family, business, and immigrant identities blend as immigrants exploit these connections for social and economic benefits.

Margaret Walton-Roberts and Daniel Hiebert (1997), in their research on Indo-Canadian immigrants in Vancouver, have traced the polarized debate around ethnic enterprise. To the discussion, however, they add the important, though often overlooked, element of family, both nuclear and extended. Walton-Roberts and Hiebert note that understanding the role of extended family *and* of spousal support is crucial to any consideration of ethnic enterprise, as is an awareness of the opportunities and limitations that these familial structures impose. They examine the conduciveness of Vancouver's residential construction industry to immigrant involvement through its role as training ground for new immigrants, its dependency on the barely acknowledged efforts of women, and its problematic family entanglements. Revealing both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic difficulties and benefits, Walton-Roberts and Hiebert problematize any simplistic account of or accounting for ethnic enterprises and call for additional research into the relationship between family-class immigration and entrepreneurship.

In a study of Honk Kong Chinese immigrants and their investment in Vancouver's real estate through the late 1980s, Katharyne Mitchell (1995) traces the role of family relations in business interactions.³¹ Positing capitalism's variability in local scenarios, Mitchell interrogates the economism-embeddedness debate through an examination of Vancouver's Expo-Land development. She reveals the "social embeddedness of economic practice within elite Honk Kong Chinese business society" (1995, 379), problematizing an economic representation or analysis of capitalism. In a similar way, Kristopher Olds (1996), in a study of Vancouver's real estate development focused on Pacific Place, examines the imbrication of socio-cultural relations between Hong Kong and Vancouver in relation to economic practices.³² These trans-Pacific connections, according to Olds, along with other aspects of Vancouver, positioned the city as a prime investment location for young Honk Kong entrepreneur Victor Li to build his business reputation in a "supportive socio-cultural atmosphere" (23). Through

³¹ See also Yee (1984) for an historical examination of Chinese business practices.

³² See also Olds (1998). For a discussion of urban space and globalization in reference to the Pacific-Place development, see Olds (1995).

this case study, Olds (1996) emphasizes the “power of networks harnessed and structured in a specific way by key overseas Chinese actors” (28) and the fundamental role of immigration flows from Hong Kong to Vancouver “in underlying the urban (re)development process” (30).³³

In addition to examining the economic functions of immigrant familial relations, some research has focused on changes and alterations families incur through the act of migrating to Canada. Highlighting the multiple ways families function for immigrants, these studies stress the heterogeneity of those families. Gillian Creese et al. (1999), in their study of Vancouver immigrant families, for instance, have attempted to “illustrate ways in which immigrant families are heterogeneous, fluid and constantly being negotiated and reconstituted both spatially and temporally,” in contrast to previous conceptualizations of *the* immigrant family (2). They note the heterogeneity of social networks employed by immigrant families and call for additional research on the formation of these networks.³⁴ In their examination of gender, Creese et al. contrast the classification of most immigrant women as dependents and their new-found independence in Canada, noting, however, the potential spousal conflict and abuse this freedom can produce. In addition, they highlight generational differences in the adjustment process, as second-generation family members act as cultural and social conduits for first-generation members circumscribed by language barriers.

Through a more narrowly focused study of Chinese immigrant women in Toronto and Vancouver, Guida Man (1996) has shown that employment opportunities for these women are hindered by institutionalized processes. Man, in stressing that they possess unrecognized credentials and support potentially double and triple workloads in Canada, attempts to dispel any myth of unbridled success for highly educated Chinese women and to highlight the heterogeneity of experiences for these women and their families.³⁵ May Yee (1992), too, in her study of Chinese-Canadian women, notes the “doubly invisible and doubly silenced” position of Chinese-Canadian women, socially, politically, historically and economically (233).

³³ See also Mitchell 1993 and 1996 for discussions of Vancouver’s urban development.

³⁴ See also Hiebert et al. 1998.

³⁵ See also Ley 1999.

Discussing these women's experiences and their shame about being Chinese, Yee goes on to stress the internal strengthening that can emerge from such oppressive situations.

As Man and others have revealed, economic success prior to immigration does not always guarantee financial or even social ease upon arrival. Some immigrants experience difficulty, socially, economically, and even physically in Canada, as urban services, such as medical care, available to them may or may not provide the assistance they require. Recent studies have examined such immigrant services, highlighting areas for additional research as well as areas currently unable to meet immigrants' needs. Additionally, higher levels of poverty among immigrants raise questions about the broader social welfare systems in place to aid immigrants.

Immigration, Urban Services, and Poverty

Isabel Dyck (1990) has examined the experiences of immigrant clients in Canada's health-care system. She notes that the "dominant framework of western scientific medicine, the biomedical model... is unhelpful in dealing with the 'problem' of culture in health care" (1990, 339). Dyck stresses the need to reconceptualize 'culture' as something other than a 'quantifiable' entity and calls for more qualitative studies of immigrant experiences with health-care systems and professionals. Joan Anderson (1992), in a similar study, has focused specifically on immigrant women's well-being and the health-care system's ideological structures. In reference to women's mental well-being, Anderson, like Dyck, interprets the lack of treatment and therapy available to immigrant women as a reflection of a culturally insensitive health-care system, rather than the fault of the women doubly impacted by gendered and racialized ideologies.

Several recent studies have interrogated immigrant experiences with poverty. Coming from both academic and governmental sources, these studies highlight areas of need for immigrants and their families. In a study of an immigrant 'underclass,' David Ley and Heather Smith (1997), pose the question, "Is there an immigrant 'underclass' in Canadian cities?", tracing the underclass debate through the United States, Great Britain, and Europe. Although *the* defining narrative of contemporary urban poverty, particularly in the United States, the

'underclass' debate has not, according to Ley and Smith, emerged very strongly in Canada. Employing data from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, they analyze the "spatial coincidence between immigrant populations and the location of designated underclass and multiply deprived communities" (1997, 22). From this analysis, they conclude that a lack of overlap of the four main characteristics of an 'underclass' – extreme poverty, multiple deprivation, crime, and non-market housing – makes defining Canadian urban settings as such problematic. When considering these cities in the early 1970s however, Ley and Smith found both Toronto and Vancouver to be much closer to exhibiting an urban underclass at that time. In contemporary Canada, though, especially Vancouver, the current immigrant population is not strongly associated with deprivation according to Ley and Smith, partly because of the business-class immigrants' influence. From these findings, they conclude that the underclass concept has little purchase in Vancouver; for over the last twenty years, Canadian cities and sites of deprivation have shown a "shallowing out," in contrast to an American model of "deepening" urban poverty (1997, 41-2). These different historical trajectories highlight the need for more research, both quantitative and qualitative, on this topic within Canada.

Susanna Lui-Gurr (1995) has examined immigrant welfare dependency. She found that "foreign-born status does not affect the probability of being on welfare in British Columbia" (1995, 128). The *duration* of welfare dependency, however, is generally longer for the foreign-born population. Exploring possible explanations for this trend, Lui-Gurr used 1989 data to determine the role of birth status. She notes that within British Columbia's foreign-born population, refugees and immigrants entering under family reunification had a greater likelihood of long-term welfare dependency. Relying on more recent data, a report produced for the Working Group on Poverty (Martin Spigelman Research Associates 1998) notes that among immigrants in British Columbia, 25 percent of all immigrant/refugee families live in poverty, as do 51 percent of immigrants that arrived between 1991 and 1996, compared to 11.2 percent of non-immigrant families in British Columbia (i). In addition, "immigrant and refugees receive less in government transfer payments than do Canadian-born families" (MSRA 1998, i). Outlining important aspects of the experience of poverty, the report concludes that the primary causes of poverty among immigrants and refugees are economic decisions of governments across Canada. The report urges that immigrants be

provided better information about the difficulties of employment and pressures of resettlement *before* they emigrate and that barriers to recognition of immigrant credentials be removed. In addition, they propose better coordination between government and community agencies as a solution to high rates of poverty among immigrants and refugees.³⁶

Conclusion: Immigration Studies of the Future

As this last work discussed shows, issues of immigration to Vancouver affect people's lives in very palpable ways. The policies put in place – policies based, in some cases, on what we as researchers have learned of immigrant communities – impact both immigrants and Canadian-born residents across the city. This review began with examples of our past conceptualizations of immigration and immigrants themselves as problems to be solved and groups to be assimilated. While the studies presented here continue to converge around the questions that perplexed Waldhouse and Willmott thirty years ago concerning the ways immigrants manage connections between geographically separate regions and often socially distinct communities, scholars now focus on the problems immigrants *themselves* face in adjusting to their new settings and employ a range of methodological techniques from aggregate statistical analyses to in-depth qualitative research. In these examinations, 'the immigrant' has been transformed from *being* the 'problem' to *experiencing* 'problems,' as well as pleasures, in their Canadian destinations.

Daniel Hiebert et al. (1998), in an synopsis of their focus-group research, note that "(w)e know surprisingly little about the agents and effects of... transformations" in immigrant settlement in Greater Vancouver (3). Pursuing "the hypothesis that new *places* of reception are associated with new *forms* of reception and integration" (1998, 3), they endeavour to outline critical immigrant issues in families and social networks, the dynamics of gender and generation, settlement geographies, family, and identity, and the negotiation of educational and employment opportunities. Much of the research reviewed in this essay has begun to address, at least on some level, these areas of inquiry around immigrant communities in

³⁶ See also Immigrant Services Society of B.C. (1993) for additional policy suggestions to improve immigrant experiences and integration into Canadian society.

Vancouver. As Hiebert et al. emphasize, however, much remains to be known about the formation of immigrant networks and the information they transmit. Throughout this review, other areas demanding future research have become clear as well. While particular immigrant groups, such as Vancouver's Indo-Canadian and Chinese communities, have been thoroughly researched, smaller immigrant groups have received less attention. In addition, as several scholars have noted, more research into policy implications for economically struggling immigrants is a pressing need.

What we as researchers know of the problems and pleasures immigrants experience is somewhat patchy but continuing to grow. While some immigrant groups and particular sectors of immigrant lives have produced a rich literature, other equally important immigrant issues, particularly those not associated with numerically large or geographically concentrated groups, have received only cursory treatment. Future research into such topics can greatly enrich and sharpen the knowledge of these currently under-researched groups, enabling scholars to guide and suggest policies most useful for these and other immigrants to Vancouver.

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