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Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

Immigration to Canada's Mid-Sized Cities: A Study of Latin Americans and Africans in Victoria, B.C.

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Abstract: This study investigates the integration experiences in Victoria, B.C. of 60 immigrants from Latin America and Africa. Victoria, a mid-sized city in the Canadian urban hierarchy has limited employment opportunities, an expensive housing market, and it lacks ethnic networks able to provide support to recent visible-minority immigrant groups. These immigrants thus face substantial obstacles in establishing themselves in Victoria and being accepted by the greater society. Their main challenge is finding employment that matches their qualifications and skills as local employers rarely recognize degrees earned in developing countries. In housing, no clear pattern of spatial concentration exists. There is evidence of societal and institutional discrimination, especially of Africans, who are likely to migrate to other, larger Canadian cities.

Introduction

This study investigates the integration experiences of immigrants from Latin America and Africa in Victoria, B.C. While, most immigrants in Canada choose to settle in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, a significant number also attempt to settle in mid-sized cities (Statistics Canada 2002). Relatively little research, however, has focused on immigration to Canada's mid-sized cities. The fact that immigrants often choose to settle in large metropolitan areas has biased research efforts towards ethnic minority integration primarily in larger cities (Moore and Rosenberg 1993, Hiebert 2000).

These studies provide valuable insights into the social and spatial impacts of immigration. While some studies emphasize the importance of immigration as a force shaping Canada's urban environment (Hutton 1998, Ray, Halseth and Johnson 1999), others focus on the difficulties faced by immigrants in adapting to Canadian society. The general results are that immigrants of visible ethnic background, especially, experience considerable difficulties in finding employment, housing, and being accepted by the population at large (Kazemipur and Halli 2000). Generally, Canada's recently arrived visible-minority groups have a markedly lower economic status than other more established immigrant groups from Europe and Asia (Kalbach and Kalbach 1999, Darden and Kamel 2000, Jackson 2002).

The concern expressed in this study is that immigrants to Canada's mid-sized and small cities may encounter even more obstacles to their integration than those who choose to settle in large metropolitan areas. These cities offer limited employment opportunities; they often lack ethnic communities to help new immigrants adjust to their host society; and their majority population is generally unused to ethnic and racial diversity. This exploratory qualitative study of Latin Americans and Africans in Victoria sheds lights on the integration process of immigrants who are members of visible-minority groups in Canada's smaller cities.

Background to the study: Research questions

Latin Americans and Africans, like other visible minorities of non-Asian origin, are found in relatively small numbers in Victoria, and they have not been there for long. Most arrived since the early 1980s, pushed by economic and political instability in their home countries and attracted by the

many opportunities that a modern nation like Canada can offer.[1] Like most immigrants to Canada, many went first to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. These three comparatively job-rich large cities contain by far the highest levels of ethnic diversity in the country, and they have absorbed a growing share of immigration in recent years (Statistics Canada 2001).

Yet mid-sized cities such as Victoria have been increasingly able to attract immigrants from all regions of the world, including Latin America and Africa. Some of the people who have chosen to settle in Victoria came directly from their home countries on recommendations from relatives, friends, or Canadian immigration services. Others migrated internally to Victoria from another inland region attracted to the city's unique natural environment and high quality of life. One research question concerns the ability of these migrants to find employment that suits their qualifications and aspirations. Such migration in Canada has been shown to be only partially successful as poorer immigrants often return to large cities in search of employment opportunities (Kazemipur and Halli 2000).

A second, broader research question concerns the ability of small visible minority groups to adapt to a new social environment. Culture and language can act as powerful barriers to social mobility and integration. Although some studies have challenged the notion that immigrants systematically under-perform in Canada's urban economies (Ley 1999), the general research findings are that visible minorities are subjected to external factors of discrimination in employment, housing and social life which act as obstacles to their social mobility (Kazemipur and Halli 2000). The result is that minorities are often highly segregated from the charter group. As a number of studies point out, some visible-minority immigrant groups tend to remain impoverished, and they remain confined to areas of cheap housing in the inner city or suburbs (Davies and Murdie 1993, Dorsett 1998, Murdie 1998, Phillips 1998, Philp 2000).

Visible minority groups who have recently arrived in Canada are faced with especially powerful obstacles to their social and economic integration. This is the case of the Africans, West Indians, and Latin Americans, who experience poverty rates that are considerably higher than the national average.[2] In some Canadian cities, such as Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg, such visible minorities are increasingly being over represented in impoverished neighbourhoods as well as in public housing buildings that are scattered throughout metropolitan areas (Murdie and Teixeira 2000,

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[1] According to the 1996 Census, 610 Africans and 625 from Latin America and the Caribbean lived in Greater Victoria. The total population of the Capital Regional District was 313,605. See Capital Regional District (2002a,b).

[2] In 1991, poverty rates were 39.5% for Africans/Caribbeans and 36.1% for Latin Americans compared to 15.6% for Canadians in general (Kazemipur and Halli 2000: 107).

Murdie 1998). Powerful barriers of racism can prevent the successful incorporation of visible minorities into urban communities (Henry 1994).

Victoria, a relatively affluent mid-sized city, does not have large impoverished neighbourhoods.[3] The city has few visible minorities (8% of the total population according to the 1996 census), and it has a relatively low segregation of ethnic groups (Murdie and Teixeira 2000). There are, however, significant obstacles to successful minority integration. One is the lack of a diversified employment base as the local economy depends largely on government and tourism. Another is the ethnically homogeneous character of Victoria society in general. The absence of ethnic community support and the potential for discrimination by employers and local institutions present a formidable challenge to minority integration.

This study investigates the constraints acting on Victoria's capacity to absorb small visible minority groups in the example of immigrants from Latin America and Africa. It examines the obstacles to finding suitable employment and decent housing, and to integrating harmoniously into the majority population. Exploring the process of ethnic minority integration in British Columbia's Capital Region will provide a better understanding of the immigration process in Canada's mid-sized cities.

The interviews

The research method adopted in this study is essentially qualitative, based on interviewing first-generation immigrants from Latin America and Africa. These people migrated to Canada with or without their families, and they now live in Victoria.

A total of 60 immigrants were interviewed, 28 Latinos and 32 Africans, both males and females.[4] Initially, participants were chosen randomly from lists provided by Victoria's two main non-governmental organizations that deal with immigrants and refugees: the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) and the Intercultural Association (ICA). These respondents, in turn, provided the names of other members of their community, who would be potential respondents. This 'snowball technique' is useful as long as no socio-economic bias is introduced in the sample (Henry 1999: 279-280). To minimize the occurrence of such effects, new respondents were regularly chosen from lists provided by the NGOs.

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[3] There are, however, a number of relatively low-income inner-city neighbourhoods.
[4] The interviews were conducted from April 2001 to August 2001.

Participants were either landed immigrants or they had already become Canadian citizens. In the respondent selection process, no attention was given to the immigrant class used by Canadian officials to grant immigration permits. These people had arrived in Canada as independent immigrants, business people, investors, and refugees, or as the result of family ties. No time frame of arrival was used as a criterion for selecting respondents. In practice, however, since Latin Americans and Africans are recent arrivals in Victoria, most turned had arrived in the 1980s and 1990s.

People were interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire.[5] Questions included education levels, salary range, employment satisfaction, neighbourhood choice, investment priorities, life plans and perceptions of discrimination in housing, employment, or society at large. Questions were often open-ended to allow participants to tell their stories. Information was recorded in-situ in the questionnaire forms and with tape recorders. Life stories were transcribed later.

Immigrant background: skills and education

Our sample of respondents contained a wide variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. Of the 60 respondents, 20 had arrived to Canada as independent immigrants, based on the point system, 16 had been refugees, and 24 had been part of the family class. The 28 Latinos came from 8 different countries and the 32 Africans from 9 countries.

The majority of respondents were found to have been in Victoria for over five years. The average time was 10.8 years, the earliest arrival being a woman from Trinidad in 1973. Africans generally arrived somewhat more recently. The majority of Latin Americans had arrived as refugees as they had fled Latin America's political turmoil of the 1980s. By contrast, most Africans had arrived in Victoria as independent immigrants.

The majority of immigrants in the independent class arrived to Canada relatively young, from their late twenties to the early forties. Most had college degrees. The Latinos had some fluency in English. The Africans were for the most part fluent in English, although they tended to speak with a heavy accent. Most immigrants had also some experience working in their fields in their countries of origins. Professions commonly included teaching, nursing, public administration, law, and engineering. Immigrants thus tended to have skills that are highly marketable in Canada. This is especially true of the Africans who come from former British colonies, where education systems had similarities with Canada. It is worth noting that Victoria has a relatively large community of immigrants from Kenya. Of the 32 people interviewed here, 14 were from Kenya.

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[5] The interviews were conducted by my assistant to this project, Michelle Rainbow Bennett, a graduate student in Geography at the University of Victoria, and myself.

Our respondents lived in Victoria for a variety of reasons. In the sample, 34 of the participants had directly landed in Victoria from their countries of origin. They had chosen to do so as the result of personal ties, including family and prospective marriage. In the case of refugees, this had been a decision of Canadian immigration officials or the result of sponsorship. Another 10 had also migrated to Victoria internally from other parts of Canada as the result of ties. A total of 16 had independently arrived from other parts of Canada, specifically motivated by Victoria's attractive natural environment, mild weather, and high quality of life.

The employment challenge

Finding employment may be the most serious challenge to successful integration. Immigrants come to Canada with high expectations. They left their families and friends and gave up their possessions in their home countries because they are convinced that they will obtain a better life in their country of adoption. Immigrants from Latin America and Africa have little financial capital to invest in Canada's economy. Many landed in Canada on the basis of skills and education, their human capital. Their chance of obtaining a decent livelihood thus largely depends on work rather than investment. As a result, finding employment that suits their skills is key to their success in integrating in Canadian society.

Here lies their main challenge. In Canada's competitive labour market, jobs are characteristically given to applicants who not only are considered to have the most skills and work experience, but also have obtained an education from a recognized institution. This is not specific to Canadian employers. Extensive research has shown that employers in industrialized nations often hold a bias against employing immigrants from developing countries (Piguet and Wilmer 2000, McGown 1999).

Employment patterns and skill recognition

This study confirms the application of this trend in Victoria. Very few participants have been able to find employment in a field related to their qualifications and experience in their home countries (Table 1). Most have endured a significant loss of status as they have been forced to work in low-skill occupations unrelated to their educational background. This is true regardless of the field of expertise—school teaching, law, engineering, nursing. Highly skilled professional are typically employed in house cleaning, home care, food services, and a variety of informal activities. A few, convinced of the hopelessness of their situation, have started to study all over again in a local college or university.

Table 1: Employment Matched to Skills Obtained in Home Country

	match	mismatch	Not applicable
Latin Americans (n = 28)	10	13	5
Africans (n = 32)	11	11	10

A few examples illustrate the situation. A 34-year old man from the Congo who arrived in Victoria in 1995 holding an engineering degree still works as a janitor. His wife obtained a nursing degree in Kenya, but here she cleans private homes. The man reported to be systematically turned down when he applies for an engineering job because of his lack of work experience in Canada. Another reason is his foreign accent, as he was occasionally told.

A 39-year old woman from Nicaragua has a similar story. She came to Victoria in 1997 from Toronto, where she landed ten years earlier, with a degree in business and communication from a college in Nicaragua. She has not been able to find any other work than house cleaning. When she applies for a business job, she is told that she lacks work experience in Canada.

A 41-year old Brazilian woman landed first in Montreal in 1982. She then came to Victoria in 1990, lured by her fiancé and the mild weather. Although she has a school-teacher's diploma from a Brazilian University and her knowledge of English is good, she has worked in several jobs completely unrelated to her training—as a janitor, gardener, then secretary. She blames her lack of success on local bureaucratic hurdles.

A 32-year old man arrived in Victoria from Mexico in 1995 on a fiancé visa. He had a college degree in tourism administration. He became married the same year and obtained a working permit soon afterwards. He repeatedly applied for work in the private tourism industry as well as in the BC government's tourism department, without success. As a result he has been working in food services and housekeeping for the past six years. According to him, local employers are unwilling to recognize the special qualifications of immigrants. This bias against foreign education causes unnecessary hardship to immigrants. At the same time, it restricts opportunities for already established local businesses to expand their operations beyond national borders. In an era of global trade and tourism, immigrants could prove to be a valuable asset to employers through their international links and knowledge of overseas cultures.

Of course, job seekers often have a subjective interpretation of the reasons for failing in job applications. This is true of both immigrants and Canadian citizens, especially in Victoria's highly

competitive labour market. Applicants are not always aware of the many factors that influence employers in hiring. Neither the Nicaraguan woman nor the Mexican presented above, for example, is completely fluent in English. And the Brazilian woman obtained her teaching degree in Brazil almost twenty years ago, making her less and less suitable for formal employment as time goes by. However, the frequency and regularity with which Latin American and African immigrants fail in their job applications point to a systematic behavioural pattern in Victoria' s employers: they are strongly reluctant to hire immigrants with skills obtained in developing countries.

The fact that few immigrants find work that matches their qualifications cannot be attributed to being lazy in searching for employment. The respondents in this study have been searching actively for work. They are highly motivated to do so as they come from relatively poor countries and they have stretched their financial resources to the limit to move to Canada. In some cases, they have borrowed heavily to do so. Finding productive work is almost a life and death matter. It is essential to their well-being as well as that of their families.

The immigrants' willingness to find work in some ways often pays off. In reality, very few immigrants remain unemployed for long periods of time. The problem is that most become active only in low-end occupations, with relatively few opportunities for advancement.

Earning ranges

Earnings realized by Latin American and African immigrants range from very low to relatively high. Most earn low to average incomes by Canadian standards (Table 2).

Table 2: Annual earnings (thousands of dollars)

	< 15	15 to 25	25 to 35	> 35	Unemployed	Unknown or not applicable
Latin Americans (n =28)	5	11	5	4	1	2
Africans (n = 32)	8	7	10	4	0	3

A significant number of immigrants of both Latin American and African origin are active in very low-paying occupations. These immigrants are without skills or their skills are not recognized. They are forced to accept low service jobs that do no match their qualifications. House cleaning, gardening, caring for the elderly and disabled, and helping out in food services are common informal activities that enable visible-minority immigrants to get by. Africans, as a few respondents lamented,

seem to often end up washing dishes in restaurants. Needless to say incomes from such occupations are generally low, with most workers sampled here earning less than $15,000 annually.

Interestingly, more Latin Americans than Africans belong to the next, low-earning category of employment ($15,000 to $25,000). More Africans, however, are found in the average or higher income categories. It seems that the African community largely consists of two groups: (1) a group that has stalled in low-paying menial occupations and (2) a group that has managed to retrain and improve their incomes considerably. One possible explanation for this discrepancy in achievement between Africans and Latin Americans, is that a comparatively large number of African respondents had been independent immigrants, admitted on the basis of the point system, which emphasizes education, work experience and personal attributes in general. More Africans also spoke better English than Latin Americans as they tended to come from former British colonies.

Africans, in fact, show considerable ambition in carving a socio-economic niche in Victoria. Their bitterness at failing at first to be accepted in Victoria's labour market often leads to concerted efforts to increase their skills by studying again. A 34-year old man from Ghana landed in Toronto in 1994 with a law degree. He struggled for two years with Ontario's professional association to have his degree recognized in the province without result. In 1996, he decided to move to Victoria to re-study law, this time at the University of Victoria. He obtained his new degree in 2000, and he now works in the profession. According to him the employment problem faced by most immigrants is due to the 'incongruency between immigration policies and professional association policies.' He comments that 'prospective immigrants should be warned that they may have to start studying again on arrival.'

A 36-year old woman from Nigeria landed in Victoria in 1990. She was a teacher in her home country, and she tried to find teaching work in Victoria, but to no avail. Prospective school employers hinted at her accented English as a potential impediment to effective teaching in Victoria schools. She then started studying again at the University of Victoria from which she obtained a degree in office administration. She now earns a decent regular salary in her job with the federal government. Prospective immigrants, she thinks, should be prepared to start their lives all over again. And an important element of this renewal is to obtain a new formal education.

Re-orientation in career training does not have to be extensive. A 47-year old woman from Nicaragua chose to move to Victoria in 1988 from Edmonton, fully aware of the relatively small job market in Victoria. She managed to upgrade her accounting degree obtained in Nicaragua through a one-year office administration program at Camosun College. She works now as a highly satisfied employee at a pension trust, earning over $40,000 annually. Similarly, a 30-year old man who came

from Kenya in 1991, sponsored by an uncle living in Victoria, succeeded in a two-year business diploma program at Camosun College. Although he had to borrow money to re-study from relatives in Victoria, he now already earns a steady income in the $40,000 range annually. The main obstacle to starting his study program was financial as he was unable to qualify for a bank loan.

Immigrants thus face a number of challenges in their attempt to find employment. Reluctance by employers to hire applicants who have no local work experience or who have not been educated in Canada combines with lack of financial help from local banks to deter even the most enterprising immigrants. Their fate much depends on the quality of advice, financial help, and social support that their community or support organizations may be able to offer. Africans and Latinos, relatively recent arrivals in Victoria, do not have well-established social networks. Their best chance to obtain effective assistance is through non-governmental organizations. In Victoria, two organizations are particularly active in providing support to immigrants. The Intercultural Association (ICA) acts as port-of entry to many visible minorities, offering a range of support services for housing and employment. The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre (VIRCS) has a modern broad-reaching job training program that is increasingly popular among new immigrants.[6]

Housing and neighbourhoods

The housing situation for Latin American and African immigrants in Victoria reflects the lack of regular employment. Although most immigrants who have settled permanently in Victoria desire to own a home of their own, relatively few manage to do so, at least in the first decade after arriving. Of the people sampled in this study, 36% owned a house or a flat while 47% rented privately. Another 14% were living with relatives.

These numbers do not portray a situation of systematic unfair treatment of Latino or African immigrants by landlords and real estate institutions in Victoria. Like the rest of the population, the ability to own a home strongly depends on the ability to make mortgage payments each month. Immigrants are subjected to the same routines of financial scrutiny as other applicants. It is, nevertheless, somewhat harder for immigrants to integrate themselves in the Victoria housing markets than other citizens. In this study, a few respondents reported having had their rental application

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[6] In 2001 the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre received 2,200 visitors of about 50 different nationalities (10% increase each year). The job coach program trained about 550 people, 70% of whom find employment upon completion of the program. It is a non-governmental organization with funding from the federal government, the B.C. government and private sponsors.

rejected right away without explanation. A few others reported having had to turn to their Canadian spouse to apply for a housing loan from a local lending institution (Table 3)

Table 3: Perceived Discrimination in Renting or Obtaining a Bank Loan

Experienced resistance from property owner or lending institution	No of respondents (total = 60)
Yes	3
Husband had to apply for loan	3
None	12
Unknown	42

Regarding neighbourhoods of settlement, immigrants follow patterns that are largely the same as the general population. While a minority chooses housing in stable neighbourhoods in the inner-city, the majority opts to live in Victoria's outer suburbs (Table 4). None of these data points to real spatial patterns of congregation for ethnic minorities in Victoria. Noticeably, the neighbourhoods of Esquimalt, Tillicum and Burnside, where residents have a somewhat lower social and economic status, have not attracted large numbers of immigrants. On the other hand, outer-suburbs are places of choice for half of the immigrants sampled. Interestingly, all immigrants who have settled in the comfortable mainstream suburbs of Colwood and Langford are of African origin. Pull effects based on ethnic affiliation are likely to operate for immigrants coming from Africa. Nevertheless, the very small densities of ethnic minority populations in these communities preclude true spatial congregation.

Table 4: Neighbourhood of Settlement

Neighbourhood	No of respondents (total = 60)
Inner city	
Downtown	2
James Bay	5
Fairfield / Rockland	3
Fernwood / Jubilee	4
Cedar Hill / Hillside	4
Inner suburbs	
Esquimalt / Tillicum / Burnside	4

Oak Bay	1
Outer suburbs	
Gordon Head / Saanich	14
Colwood / Langford	15
Other	8

Social Integration: Minority Views

The views of immigrants on social integration in Victoria emphasize their serious difficulties in adapting to the dominant society. Whether Latin American or African in origin, most immigrants express concerns about being victims of prejudice by the society at large (Table 5).

Table 5: Perception of Social Prejudice

	At least some	None	Unsure
Latin Americans (n = 28)	19	5	4
Africans (n = 32)	26	4	2

By and large, the most common complaint is that employment qualifications and educational degrees obtained in home countries are rarely recognized (Table 6). Language skills are closely related to employment skills. Latin Americans are rarely fluent in English when they arrive in Canada. Their perception that a lack of good English is a basis for discrimination in employment search, housing, or other endeavour is much stronger than for Africans, who for the most part come from former British colonies.

Table 6: Areas of Discrimination

	language	skills and education	housing	racial stereotypes
Latin Americans (n = 28)	8	11	3	7
Africans (n = 32)	2	17	3	12

Immigrants also report being victims of racial stereotypes in a variety of social situations. Clearly, the experience of discrimination is subjective and the factors involved are prone to

misinterpretation. Nevertheless, collectively, the stories given by individual respondents point to attitudinal patterns by certain groups and institutions in Victoria that raise concerns about a lack of tolerance of visible-minority immigrants.

Latin American viewpoints

Latin Americans express a general feeling of not being completely accepted by a society that, they regret, lacks cultural diversity. Some specific complaints concern employment. They express the suspicion of being arbitrarily refused employment on the basis, not only of lack of English skills, but also of racial appearance. The following example encapsulates those feelings.

A 37-year old woman from Brazil came to Victoria from Toronto in 1989, attracted by its 'green environment.' She reports having had to work extremely hard to adjust to life in Victoria. As her teaching degree from Brazil was not recognized, she had to accept menial jobs to survive. In her opinion, the worst aspect of her immigration experience is the loss of social status, which is so important in Latin American societies. In her view, the refusal of local employers to provide her with employment that is compatible with her skills reflects stereotypes based on race and culture. South Americans, in her analysis of the situation, are often perceived as being too lazy, easy-going, and unwilling to learn to be productive workers.

Other Latin American immigrants confirm these views. They report similar experiences of discrimination in employment, and social life, which they attribute to aloofness, racism and general intolerance of foreign cultures in the Euro-Canadian population.

Victoria's mainstream society expresses its resistance to accepting new immigrant groups in a variety of ways. One particularly sensitive issue for immigrants from Latin America is the frequent disputes in community soccer. Playing soccer is an important element of cohesion for the Latin American community. It is a sport that most Latin Americans play, and it is an increasingly popular sport in Victoria in general. It is not uncommon for Latin American teams to clash with others on soccer fields. A few respondents, who originally came from Brazil, report having been said more than once to 'go back to Brazil' in the middle of a game.

Of course, tempers are known to flare at sporting events in all countries of the world. It is also common for different ethnic groups to express rivalries by associating strongly with sports teams. Disputes between Anglo-Canadian soccer teams and ethnic-minority teams on Victoria's soccer fields cannot be simply analyzed in terms of racism. Nevertheless, the frequency and the intensity of the disputes point to the severe difficulties that visible-minority groups experience in their attempts to be accepted by an urban society which, until relatively recently, has not been exposed to significant

immigration of visible minorities. A 45 year-old Bolivian immigrant who came to Victoria from Montreal in 1985 commented that integration problems were much more common in Victoria than in Montreal, a city with a traditionally fuller cultural diversity.

African viewpoints

The experiences of Africans in social integration in Victoria more than confirm those views. Africans report that they have to work much harder than ordinary citizens to survive in Victoria. They receive the least attractive jobs of all: as they express humorously, washing dishes in restaurants (being the 'dish-pig'), has become an African specialty. Wherever they work, they are rarely given any form of promotion, no matter how long they remain employed. Africans report being the victims of many cultural stereotypes. They are subjected to all sorts of harassment, such as insults on the soccer field, bullying in schools, refused entry at nightclubs, not being served in department stores and being stopped and checked randomly by the police.

Africans report experiencing similar troubles as Latin Americans on soccer fields. Some African respondents even report having had members of their teams physically threatened and entire teams forced off the field.

More serious yet is that some young respondents report being frequently harassed in schools by other students and even by teachers. A 43-year old woman from Namibia, for example, complains that her daughter is regularly singled out at school for smoking or causing trouble, when in fact she is known in the family as very studious and well-behaved. The daughter has adopted tolerance and broadmindedness as a coping mechanism in the face of discrimination. She interprets her teacher's attitude as not really a case of racism, but of misunderstanding about cultural behaviour. In another example, a 34-year old man who arrived in Victoria from Ghana reports having had an overwhelmingly negative experience at a Victoria college. He tells how a new female teacher in the school systematically decreased his grades for apparently no reason. After filing a complaint with the college authorities, he was transferred to Edmonton, where his grades improved again considerably.

There seems to be a spatial-economic component to discrimination in schools and neighbourhoods. Older inner-city neighbourhoods, which have long been settled by working-class white immigrants, such as Esquimalt, seem to be more reluctant to integrate coloured people than more affluent and more educated middle-class suburbs. A case in point is the social experience of a 23-year old man who arrived from Kenya in 1993. He lived in Esquimalt during his school years, where he reports having been often harassed at school and in various social settings. His life became considerably better after moving to the outer suburb of Colwood. Generally, the respondents who live

in Victoria's outer suburbs seem to be less concerned about social discrimination than those who live in the inner city. To confirm the validity of this generalization, however, would require a larger sample of respondents and a more systematic study of associations between discrimination and neighbourhood types.

The plight of young African men

What seems certain is that young African men are more the victims of racial stereotyping than African women. Most young Black men interviewed in this study, for example, deplore being refused entry to downtown clubs, where they are seen as potential troublemakers simply because they are Black. These young men have adopted coping mechanisms to deal with the situation. They attribute these prejudices to the poor behaviour of African American navy servicemen, who routinely frequent downtown areas during weekend leaves of duty.

The most serious complaints, however, relate to police harassment. In this study, five respondents (who were not acquainted) report being routinely stopped by police officers when walking in the streets and being detained for questioning during long periods of time without any apparent justification. According to the respondents, these police interventions are completely unprovoked. The victims are, as one of them puts it simply, 'guilty of walking down the street.'

A few individual experiences illustrate the situation. A 30-year old man from Kenya who has been living in Victoria for ten years reports having had his car stopped by the police, then being held handcuffed for one hour, when he was questioned about his activities in the evenings. The man approached Victoria's Intercultural Association (ICA) regarding the matter, which was told by the police that their reason for doing these random checks is that 'many Africans in Victoria are gangsters.' One 28-year old man who arrived in Africa with his family ten years ago directly from Togo reports having had a similar experience. He laments that these police checks discourage him to socialize with other Africans in Victoria for 'fear of looking even more suspicious' in the eyes of the police force.

A 22-year old man from Rwanda who grew up in Victoria for the last eight years comments that police was prejudiced in 'consistently associating Blacks with drugs.' He reports having 'never done drugs' in his life, and yet the police asked him on two occasions whether he had a criminal record. The man from Rwanda intends to teach his children the martial art of capoeira so they can defend themselves in a society that he perceives to be aggressive toward the Black minority.

A 19-year old African man recommends that young Blacks in Victoria not dress as rappers or rockers for fear of provoking the police. He was stopped when driving by a policewoman who told

him that 'his car looks suspicious and he himself looks suspicious.' He laments that discrimination of Blacks by Victoria's institutions is common. One example is the failure of his claim to ICBC (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia) for damage done to his car as a result of a 'hit and run' collision. ICBC dismissed the claim as an attempt to obtain money for vehicle damage caused by the claimant himself.

Gender is an important component of discrimination against Blacks. No female in this study reported having been harassed publicly although they do report discrimination in employment.

There is also an age component to the experience of discrimination by immigrants. Most older people of African origin report having had no problem integrating in the Victoria community. Some blame the influence of American television for spreading stereotypes about young Black men, who are often portrayed as criminals in U.S.-made programs. Others blame U.S. servicemen on leave in Victoria for leaving a trail of 'bad behaviour' that influences police and other local institutions negatively towards young Black men.

Older people generally take a more philosophical approach to social integration problems than younger ones. They consider that there is a price to pay for immigrants to be accepted by the people of Victoria. Foreign-born immigrants must simply work hard to adjust to their host society and earn acceptance through exemplary behaviour. They believe that most people in Victoria are 'nice' and willing to help, and that this is the real side of Victoria. In their view, young Africans expect too much from a society that is willing to give them a chance to become part of a modern and wealthy nation.

The debate within the African community on the willingness of white people in Victoria to accept Africans goes on. The views tend to be polarized with younger immigrants generally unhappy about their situation and older people calling for patience, tolerance and hard work. There seems to be no doubt that all immigrants participating in this study would be happy to be in Victoria if they were convinced that they were treated fairly and respectfully by the community at large.

Here lies the dilemma: Africans wish to be integrated in Victoria and, indeed, in Canadian society in general. At the same time, however, many want to continue to carry the distinctiveness of their African cultural and ethnic heritage. The strength of their claim to African roots may seem to be somewhat surprising, considering that most have been in Canada longer than they ever were in Africa. Some, in fact, have never been to Africa, as they were born to African immigrants. Those should not be incompatible goals. In Canada's multiethnic society, many Canadians enjoy the benefit of living in a modernized and affluent society, while preserving their attachment to their root

countries. The problem for Africans is that the lack of an established African community in Victoria deprives them of much needed support in their challenge to adjust to an entirely new society.

Future plans

In the face of their difficulties in finding work and integrating smoothly in the Victoria community, many Latin American and African immigrants would like to move to another, preferably larger city (Table 7).

Table 7: Deciding Between Staying in or Leaving Victoria

	desire to leave Victoria	desire to stay in Victoria	unknown
Latin Americans	9	16	3
Africans	17	12	3

The wish to leave Victoria is less pronounced in the Latin American community. Most Latin Americans prefer to stay. Victoria's high quality of life and its lush natural environment overwhelm any temptation to move to a different place. Those who express the wish to leave the city are split almost equally between moving to a larger city in Canada (especially Vancouver), moving to a city in the USA, or going back to their home country. In all cases, their main desire is to be part of a larger Spanish-speaking community. Most of those who plan to go back to their home country are motivated by the ambition to help their communities and assist the development process in their country. Most of these people also regularly send remittances to the families they left behind. The lesson here is that emigration from a developing country to a wealthy nation like Canada can help the development process in the world's periphery.

African immigrants take a more extreme position on the suitability of Victoria as a locale for settlement. Clearly, the majority of Africans would prefer to live in another city. The two main reasons are that Victoria has limited employment opportunities and that it is generally 'too white.' Most of them regret the lack of an established African community in the city. 'Africanness' is a powerful feeling to which many Africans subscribe. The fact that over one-third of the immigrants sampled express the intention to return to Africa to assist their home communities shows how Africans remain deeply attached to their roots. At the same time, they have accepted Canada as a host society to which they can contribute through their traditional knowledge and culture—an aspect of immigration that they regret is not entirely realized by the host population. They yearn for the

establishment of a multiracial society in Canada that would provide the bridge needed for assistance in their home country. Victoria, at this point, is unable to cater to their needs or keep their hopes alive.

Conclusion

Immigrants from Latin America and Africa face considerable difficulties in integrating in Victoria. Their main challenge is to find employment that corresponds to their skills and education. One factor may be the nature of Victoria's labour market, in which the industrial sector is relatively weak[7]. More generally, as has been shown in various immigration studies in Canada (Quell 2002; Jedwab 2002), two factors work directly against the employability of immigrants in Victoria. One is the tendency for employers to disregard degrees provided by universities and colleges in developing countries. The other is a marked preference for hiring workers who speak fluent and non-accented English. Lack of fluency in English affects Latin American immigrants more than Africans, who, for the most part came from former British colonies. However, as has been shown for the African community in Vancouver (Creese and Kambere 2002), African accents also represent a handicap in finding employment in Victoria.

The housing situation is closely linked to employment. Latin Americans and Africans have incomes that are generally lower than average. Even after having been in Victoria for over ten years, most are unable to buy a house or even an apartment. Regarding neighbourhoods of settlement, little spatial concentration has occurred. Immigrants choose to rent their homes in neighbourhoods that are dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. Over half of the immigrants sampled in this study live in Victoria's outer-suburbs. Relatively few live in the poorer inner-city neighbourhoods. This is in agreement with other findings that ethnocultural characteristics may be less important than socio-economic variables (male unemployment, government transfer, female-headed families and lack of high-school diploma) in spatial associations of poverty in urban areas (Ley and Smith 1997). It also lends weight to the view that the high rates of immigration of visible minorities to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s have not led to greater segregation. The two main reasons are that recently arrived minorities represent a wide spectrum of socio-economic status due to the immigration selection

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[7] Victoria's economy depends largely on tourism, government, and retiree-oriented services. Industry is largely limited to the construction sector and small, although growing steadily, information and high-tech sectors (Capital Regional District 2002b). Although employment rates in Victoria tend to be somewhat higher than in the rest of the province, some economic sectors like tourism and government may carry a bias towards employing local residents.

process put in place since the 1970s and that modern transportation presents individuals with more choices concerning where to live than in earlier decades of immigration (Balakrishnan 2000).

Regarding social discrimination, most members in both immigrant groups report being victims of racial stereotypes in employment and daily life. They detect aloofness towards visible-minority immigrants in the overall population, which they attribute to a lack of contact experience with ethnic groups in general. In their view, Victoria's population is too ethnically homogeneous to be easily conducive to the integration of new visible-minority groups. Those who came to Victoria from large cities such as Toronto and Montreal miss the lack of cultural diversity that characterizes those metropolitan areas.

It would be premature to conclude from this study that societal discrimination towards ethnic minorities is entrenched in all population sectors in Victoria since perceptions of discrimination, by nature, tend to be biased (Mogghadam et al. 2000). There is, however, factual evidence of institutional discrimination as Africans, especially young men, report being victims of frequent harassment by the police. Given also the well-documented report of institutional discrimination towards visible minorities in large metropolitan areas such as Toronto (Henry 1994, Calliste 2000), it seems safe to conclude that this phenomenon is likely to be found at other levels of the Canadian urban hierarchy.

These personal experiences of discrimination affect the prospects and life plans of immigrants of Latin American and African origins in Victoria. Africans, especially, often express the desire to move to one of Canada's largest cities, as it is likely to have more employment opportunities and larger ethnic networks. Community support and extensive social interactions with other Africans are important aspects of quality of life in a society that remains to a large degree alien to them. The trend thus is likely to be for members of recently arrived minorities to eventually migrate from Victoria to larger cities. The fact that no area of low-income visible minority concentration exists in Victoria supports the finding that 'poor immigrants move to large cities, leaving behind those who already have reasonably successful careers and living conditions' (Kazemipur and Halli 2000: 106).

Many immigrants, whether from Africa or Latin America, also express the wish to visit their home countries and help not only their families and friends, but also the development process in general. This study, like many others, reaffirms the fact that while immigration is an important aspect of population policy in core countries such as Canada, it is also likely to have significant consequences for development in the world's peripheral regions (Solimano 2001, *The longest journey: A survey of migration,* The Economist, 2 November 2002).

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