

Vancouver Centre of Excellence



Research on Immigration and
Integration in the Metropolis

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**RIIM 2003 Research Consultation Retreat July 11, 2003:
Summary of Proceedings**

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RIIM

Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

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**RIIM 2003 Research Consultation Retreat
July 11, 2003, SFU Harbour Centre**

Summary of proceedings

Participants

Eric Bastien	Masumi Mizoguchi
Marci Bearance	Corinne Montgomery
June Beynon	Carl Mosk
Rob Boldt	Eyob Naizghi
Sandra Breitenbach	Sergiy Pivnenko
Bianca Buteri	Neeta Sandhu
Norah Cameron	Kathy Sherrell
Ansar Chan	Yan (Yvonne) Shi
Sherman Chan	Eden Thompson
Evelyn (Yi-Yi) Chung	John Torpey
Don DeVoretz	Thérèse Vermette
Craig Dougherty	Nathalie Walsh
Chris Friesen	Bill Walters
Dan Hiebert	Timothy Welsh
Tom Jensen	Joanne Wilkinson
John Kent	Elvin Wyly
Duy Ai Kien	Deb Zehr
Min-Jung Kwak	Kenny Zhang
David Ley	

Introduction

The meeting began with a note of thanks to Linda Sheldon and Priscilla Wei, who organized the event. Don DeVoretz and Dan Hiebert then welcomed participants and explained the structure of the event. Three panel discussions were staged, the first two by what could be seen as “consumers” of RIIM research, policy makers and representatives of immigrant service organizations, and the last by those who organize the “production” of RIIM research, the coordinators of the 5 research domains.

This report provides a broad summary of the comments made by each speaker and, occasionally, audience members. It is designed to fulfill several purposes: it is a record of the event; it should set benchmarks for RIIM’s success in meeting the needs of the policy and service communities; and it should help researchers understand the information needs of these sectors.

Panel 1: Policy and funding constituencies

Craig Dougherty (CIC-Ottawa)

There are four major themes in the current CIC research plan (available on the web):

- Maximizing the benefits of immigration (specific topics: the economic self-sufficiency of immigrants; concern over rising poverty among immigrants; special issues associated with the working poor and elderly immigrants; transfers from temporary to permanent immigrant status).
- Maintaining Canada's humanitarian tradition (focused research on refugees; special topic of refugee children and unaccompanied minors).
- Promoting the integration of newcomers (appropriate outcome indicators; issue of stressed neighbourhoods and their impact on urban planning and service delivery).
- Managing access to Canada and pre- and post-migration services (health issues; global planning of immigrant numbers; criminality and victimization)

CIC also has a desire for the Metropolis centres to make good use of the LSIC.

Bill Walters (CAWS)

Started with example of an important difference of opinion in the 1990s: the view within the bureaucracy was that there were many services available; the view within the community was that there were large gaps in services to immigrants. Research contracted by what was then MMI caused a "paradigm shift" in understanding the scale of immigrant settlement problems. (at that time RIIM did not have a high profile in this type of work).

Critical issues now:

- Understand everyday interactions between immigrants and the public at large and how this builds to a larger sense of problem and/or progress. This is related to the need to develop a social consensus on immigration.
- Investigate racism
- Examine the disconnect between rhetoric of skills shortage and problems of integrating skilled immigrants in the labour market.
- On the educational side, there are huge issues related to the needs of young immigrants.

Above all there is a need to demonstrate that we are understanding and fixing problems, which will give hope to immigrants. Otherwise, increasingly, prospective immigrants will not choose Canada.

Eric Bastien (SSHRC)

SSHRC, as a "producer" of knowledge, situates Metropolis in its major theme of "citizenship, identity, and culture".

SSHRC is aware that partners to the Metropolis centres have been seeking more meaningful contact and participation. This will be an issue in the upcoming mid-term review of Metropolis (probably in 2004), where the level of satisfaction of partners will be explored.

- Was the Centre able to involve partners through the process?
- Was the Centre able to respond to partner needs?

But, while this is important, the bottom line for SSHRC is academic excellence and the maintenance of peer-review assessment of Metropolis research.

Joanne Wilkinson (Canadian Studies, Canadian Heritage)

Explained the genesis of Canadian Heritage and its interest in several issues related to Metropolis:

- A new branch of CH, International Affairs, wishes to know more about the nature of opinions abroad about Canada, and how they are formed.
- CH is, generally, interested in cultural consumption and its relation to trade and social services.
- Within government generally, and CH specifically, more importance is being placed on accountability, and this usually requires some form of measurement. For example, how effective is Canadian multicultural policy...how would we know this? How can we measure the impact of programs?
- CH is also concerned about the apparent split in Canadian values between those in urban and rural settings. Why is this happening and what does it mean? More generally, how are Canadian values forged?
- CH would also value research on the link between sport and overall socio-political participation.

Finally, CH encourages researchers to use data from the forthcoming Ethnic Diversity Survey.

Deb Zehr (CAWS)

Explained the role of the Immigration Policy and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, which takes a corporate lead in the BC government on all immigration-related issues.

Stressed the importance of linking policy and research but noted that this link is difficult to actualize with issues that arise quickly—but research has a longer-term impact, especially when it replaces anecdotal evidence with sound analysis to support the use of directing resources to new or existing programs.

- Research in areas such as labour market integration, earnings of immigrants, and the colour of work has had a direct impact on the implementation of new policy and programs such as the International Qualifications Program.
- Research that evaluates the effectiveness of current practices, including identifying unintended impacts of existing policy is especially valuable, such as the special decisions made when Kosovar refugees arrived in BC.
- One challenge that government has is working with large, complicated data bases...which can be a capacity issue. Research is especially welcome in this field.
- It is also useful to see research that compares practices in different jurisdictions.

Specific research needs:

- How have policy or program changes in a variety of services/ministries affected immigrants?
- What is the local impact of changes in policy made at the federal level (e.g., “safe third country”, IRPA)?
- What are efficient ways of linking labour market needs with immigrant skills? What role should government play in leading the private sector on this?
- What is the absorptive capacity of BC?
- Regional immigration efforts...are they working; are there success stories to learn from?
- Immigrants and the maintenance/development of francophone communities.

The nub of the issue is knowledge transfer. While policy analysts have a role to play in translating the language of academic analysis and research into the language of public policy decision makers, academics are encouraged to remember the realities of information exchange in government, such as briefing notes, and try to produce work that can be used in such a fashion.

Audience comments from people in policy areas:

Eden Thompson: make sure to keep the issue of credential recognition at the forefront of research...absolutely central to settlement outcomes.

John Kent: added issues important to the regional branch of CIC:

- Engagement of municipalities
- Building strategies to deal with undercurrents of racism, and linking this with regionalization initiatives (e.g., attitudes in smaller centres)
- Understanding the growing role of security in post-9-11 immigration control. How can risk be best managed in a post Sept-11 environment, and how can the disciplines of intelligence be integrated into the organizational mindset in order to meet this objective?

Tom Jensen: the province has provided funding for oversampling in the LSIC (Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants in Canada) to ensure results are valid and useful for B.C. Research and analysis on LSIC is encouraged.

Panel 2: Immigrant services community

Sherman Chan (Mosaic)

Explained the importance of research dealing with issues faced by practitioners.

Used examples of Mosaic initiated research on housing and policing issues.

Principles of engagement between academics and practitioners:

- Partnerships should be meaningful, engaging both sides throughout research process.
- This type of research should be community-oriented, and should be about the relationship between theory and practice.

Specific research issues:

- Demographic change and service needs (geographically sensitive analysis).
- The role of pre-settlement services.
- Studies of immigrant dispersion, and the degree of welcome in smaller centres.
- Studies of racism especially after 9-11.
- Understanding the special issues associated with unaccompanied minor refugees.
How significant is this development?

Chris Friesen (BCISS)

Began with a typical example of insensitive researchers seeking contributions from the immigrant services sector, without any form of return (acknowledgement; compensation; sharing of results).

Stressed the need for a link between research, policy, and practice. Bringing the first two together is a challenge, but the third is often forgotten entirely in Metropolis work.

But there have been positive examples, such as the attempt to develop a Sector-Based Agenda a year ago.

Example of needed research: Are current approaches to help immigrants find work helpful (e.g., job clubs)?

Also, reporting results back to serving sector and immigrants themselves is very important.

Finally, partnership guidelines are necessary, particularly:

- Give NGOs the recognition they deserve.
- The research process should enhance NGO capacity to do research themselves.

Tim Welsh (AMSSA)

Recollection of the Creese project on changing structure of NGOs as a valuable contribution, but RIIM work has been up and down in terms of utility for the sector since then.

Ways forward:

- Ensure accessibility of research output...more than posting a lot of papers on the web.
- Focus on accountability issues, which are becoming very important to government.
How do we measure the outcomes of settlement services (and in so doing isolate other factors from the analysis)?

Raised the CURA initiative as an emerging process that may resolve some of the above issues of partnership.

Ansar Chan (SUCCESS)

SUCCESS has worked with a number of partners on the issue of obstacles to integration (history of collaboration).

Recommended research topics:

- What factors contribute to successful immigrant settlement?
- Which immigrants use social services, and are some falling through gaps in the system?
- How can the importance of service agencies in promoting positive settlement outcomes be measured?
- Related point: which programs are effective?
- What factors are encouraging immigrants to leave BC, either for other Canadian destinations or return migration?

SUCCESS also has concerns about the research process:

- More of RIIM's projects should engage with agencies.
- Steps should be taken to help NGOs learn about findings, such as workshops.
- There may be cultural issues dividing researchers from the NGO community; these should be recognized.

During the lunch break, a special presentation was made by Don DeVoretz, recognizing the vital contributions made by David Ley, who was the Co_Director of RIIM during its first seven years. Don emphasized David's success both in administrative and intellectual sides of the project.

Panel 3: comments from research coordinators

June Beynon (Education domain)

There are important contextual points to acknowledge when thinking about education research, such as the absence of a federal ministry, and major changes in the way the provincial government operates, especially decentralization of functions to school boards. Different school districts therefore have different approaches to immigrant issues and research more generally. But there is a big question uniting all of them: how to provide continuing services in an age of financial reductions from the province.

A summary of Education projects, 1996-2003, was distributed.

Three topics in the morning sessions have engaged with education issues:

- Language acquisition.
- Employment and the credentialization issue.
- Issues of inclusion, citizenship, and racism (schools are critical in these).

In particular, since the last retreat, the new project entitled Pedagogical Models for Inclusion and Equity in Diverse School Communities addresses items # 1 and #3 (Beynon, Bai, Cassidy, Dagenais, Toohey). Item #2 is addressed in a paper which will soon be posted on the web (by Beynon, Ilieva, and Dichupa). Future work on the effectiveness of school district policies on anti-racism, and approaches to language learning for adults and children, are identified as important priorities.

Dan Hiebert (Social domain and Housing & Neighbourhoods domain)

Started with a report on activities since the last retreat.

Social domain:

- New study under way using 2001 data on immigration and the social geography of poverty in Greater Vancouver (Smith and Ley)
- The issue of families and social capital has not been systematically tackled, as was recommended.
- A substantial study on discrimination has been released as a WP.

Housing & Neighbourhoods domain

- The housing issue is finally beginning to be addressed, through an emerging research project with colleagues in Montreal and Toronto.
- There has been a call for more research on immigrant dispersion: this has been a priority and several projects are under way. Roger Andersson was brought from Sweden to discuss the European experience.

Many issues were raised in the morning. No doubt some of these will be taken but it is not possible to cover all of them given RIIM's budget. It would help to have guidelines on what is most important.

The question of knowledge transfer is also vital, as the methods used by RIIM thus far have not been fully adequate. However, the new initiative to hold annual policy workshops may help. Also, it would be helpful if government and NGO personnel would provide more feedback on which WPs work/don't work.

The issue of partnership, so prominent in NGO remarks, needs to be highlighted in RIIM's Calls for proposals.

It might also be time to commission a graduate student to summarize the large range of RIIM results in a way easier to digest for non-academics interested in policy and practice.

Carl Mosk (Economics)

Began by considering the role of economics in immigration, concluding that economic issues are of fundamental importance.

Reminded the group that on the global scale Canada could be seen as in competition with other immigrant-receiving nations, and that given recent developments in Europe, the number of competitors is increasing.

Turned to discuss the nature of economic research within RIIM and made the case that economics as a body of thought and research is different from other disciplines, with a uniquely high degree of specialized techniques and theory.

Spoke about projects funded in 2002-03, on NAFTA and labour mobility, and the self-employment of immigrants. These deal relatively obliquely with the recommendations laid out last year and hopefully there will be a new crop of proposals that will address these issues more forcefully.

John Torpey (Citizenship & culture)

Similar to the previous speaker, noted that some projects with high academic merit will not necessarily speak easily to the policy and service providing communities. It is worth remembering that up to half of RIIM research is entitled to be purely curiosity-driven.

It might help to have a designated “interlocutor” between RIIM and these communities.

On the topic of Citizenship and culture, there may be a process of development going on, towards a more pre-defined research direction. This would probably involve pan-Canadian research.

Projects under way already look at:

- Media representation
- Sri Lankan Tamil community
- Rethinking Canadian multiculturalism
- Claims for reparation for past injustices associated with racism

Other issues worth considering:

- Citizenship and naturalization
- Immigrant smuggling
- The meaning of Canadian-ness
- Cultural consumption and participation

RIIM research priorities and policies

On July 11th, 2003, RIIM held a retreat to consult with the public on research priorities for the coming year or two. Most of those who attended the retreat deal with immigrant issues on a day-to-day basis, either with a federal ministry, the BC government, Vancouver-based settlement service organizations, or in public schools. This document summarizes the key issues raised during the day. Participants in the retreat identified issues that have not been sufficiently addressed by research (items A and B, below), and also considered the type of research that is most useful (item C) and the way that research involving partnerships should be conducted (item D). Please note that these locally-derived priorities do not supplant those defined by the consortium of funding agencies that supports the Metropolis Project, which can be found at www.riim.metropolis.net and follow the links from Research and Policy to Research Grants, “Federal Policy Priorities.” Both sets of priorities are important to RIIM.

A. Issues related to settlement

1. Many recent studies show a rise in poverty among immigrants. Why is this happening? Is it geographically specific and, if so, are we seeing the emergence of multiple-stressed neighbourhoods? What impacts are these having on urban planning and social service delivery?
2. Canada accepts a large number of temporary immigrants each year. Increasingly, more of these people are applying for permanent residence. How well is the transition from temporary to permanent residence working?
3. How well are refugees faring? What about their children? What about unaccompanied minors...is this a significant issue in terms of numbers and outcomes?
4. What is the state of public opinion about immigration in Canada? How are opinions formed (e.g., everyday interaction vs. media representation)? Is there a pronounced split between rural and urban attitudes on this issue? What about in smaller urban centres; are they ready to welcome immigrants (given the current interest in the regionalization of settlement)?
5. We know that the recognition of educational credentials obtained abroad is a basic issue in Canada. Several steps are being implemented to address this problem...are they effective? More generally, how can we better integrate skilled immigrants into the labour market?
6. What are the particular needs of immigrant youth? Creating inclusive, anti-racist schools and responding to issues of language and citizenship are of particular concern.
7. As regionalization efforts increase, what lessons can be learned from already-existing settlement in smaller urban centres?
8. Are immigrants leaving BC in large numbers? If so, why, and where are they going?
9. What is the settlement picture of francophone immigrants in BC...is there a possibility that they will bolster the already-existing francophone community?
10. What forms do racism take in BC, and what are its impacts on immigrant settlement?
11. In general, research has found a link between participation in sport activities and participation more generally in society (volunteerism, politics, etc). Is this also the case for immigrants? If not, why not?

12. How is immigration reshaping broad patterns of cultural consumption? How is this related to trade and the development of the service economy?

B. Issues related to programs and services

1. How effective is Canadian multicultural policy...how would we know this? More generally, how can we measure the impact of broad social policies like multiculturalism?
2. A number of changes have occurred in the way that immigration ministries (federal and provincial) are organized. How have they affected settlement outcomes for immigrants? Can we identify local effects of national policy and program changes?
3. How are emerging security concerns affecting immigrant selection and the settlement process?
4. What roles do municipalities and schools play in immigrant settlement? How can these be more closely integrated with provincial and federal programs?
5. Given the demographic changes occurring in Canada, how are service needs (especially for immigrants) being redefined?
6. How important is the role of settlement service agencies (NGOs)? How effective are the services they provide? Who uses these services and who does not? Why?
7. More specifically, are current approaches to help immigrants enter the labour market (such as job-finding clubs) working?

C. Methods and resources

The following types of research are deemed especially important:

- Research that compares and evaluates practices in different jurisdictions.
- Research using new sources of information, including the Immigration Database (IMDB), the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC).
- Research that reveals links between theory, policies, and practices (i.e., programs and regulations).
- Research that evaluates the effectiveness of programs.

D. Research conduct

It is expected that many of the proposals for Metropolis research will involve partnership, either with government agencies, NGOs, or others. Proposals that demonstrate active and responsible partnerships will be given priority. The following features are important:

- Partnerships should “begin at the beginning” of the research process, when issues and approaches are first outlined. Partners should be involved throughout all of the other steps of the research process as well.
- Partners should be fully acknowledged in all outputs derived from research.
- Results should be fully shared with partners, as well as the subjects of research.

Commentary Series

Number	Author (s)	Title	Date
96-01	Don J. DeVoretz	SFU-UBC Centre for Excellence for the Study of Immigration and Integration: Some Remarks	04/96
96-02	Don J. DeVoretz	The Political Economy of Canadian Immigration Debate: A Crumbling Consensus?	04/96
96-03	Don J. DeVoretz	Immigration to Vancouver: Economic Windfall or Downfall?	11/96
97-01	Don J. DeVoretz	RIIM: Research, Structure and Dissemination in 1996-97	03/97
97-01F	Don J. DeVoretz	RIIM: recherche, structure et dissémination en 1996-97	03/97
97-02	Don J. DeVoretz	Ethics, Economics and Canada's Immigration Policy	03/97
97-03	David Ley	Annual Report of the Vancouver Centre of Excellence	03/97
97-04	Alec McGillivray	Canada in the Asia Pacific Economy: The People Dimension. Report on RIIM Conference, 21-23 August.	06/97
97-05	Don J. DeVoretz	Canada's Independent Immigrant Selection Procedure: Quo Vadis?	10/97
97-06	Don J. DeVoretz & Samuel Laryea	Canadian Immigration Experience: Any Lessons for Europe?	11/97
98-01	Don J. DeVoretz & Samuel Laryea	<i>Canada's Immigration-Labour Market Experience</i> . OECD Seminar on Migration, Free Trade and Regional Integration in North America.	01/98
98-02	Fernando Mata & Ravi Pendakur	Patterns of Ethnic Identity and the "Canadian" Response	03/98
98-03	David Ley	RIIM Annual Report, 1997-1998	04/98
98-03F	David Ley	Rapport annuel du RIIM, 1997-1998	04/98
98-04	Heather A. Smith	Spatial Concentration: Residential Patterns and Marginalization	07/98
98-05	Samuel A. Laryea	Economic Participation: Unemployment and Labour Displacement	07/98
98-06	Don J. DeVoretz	The Brain Drain or Gain?	10/98
98-07	Don J. DeVoretz	International Metropolis Seminar on Barriers to Employment: Some Conclusions	11/98
99-01	Don J. DeVoretz	Canada's Brain Drain: Gain or Exchange? Policy Options	07/99
99-02	Klaus F. Zimmermann	Ethnic German Migration after 1989: Balance and Perspectives	07/99
00-01	David Ley	RIIM Annual Report, 1999-2000	03/00
00-01F	David Ley	Rapport annuel du RIIM, 1999-2000	03/00
00-02	Don J. DeVoretz	<i>A Canadian Evaluation Model for Unskilled Temporary Immigration</i> . Roundtable sponsored by HRDC, Ottawa, 16 June 2000.	06/00

Number	Author (s)	Title	Date
00-02F	Don J. DeVoretz	Un modèle canadien d'évaluation de l'immigration des travailleurs temporaires non qualifiés. (Aperçu)	06/00
01-01	Don J. DeVoretz and Chona Iturralde	Why Do Highly Skilled Canadians Stay in Canada?	01/01
02-01	Don J. DeVoretz	RIIM Summary of Activities 2000-2001	03/02
02-02	David Ley	RIIM Annual Report, 2001-2002	04/02
02-03	Carl Mosk	Economic Assimilation of Japanese Immigrants in North America: The Importance of Country of Origin as well as Country of Destination	09/02
02-04	Don J. DeVoretz	A Model of Optimal Canadian Temporary Immigration	10/02
03-01	Don J. DeVoretz	Canadian Regional Immigration Initiatives in the 21 st Century: A Candle in the Wind?	01/03
03-02	Don J. DeVoretz	RIIM Summary of Activities: 2002-03. One Year after Renewal: A Critical Retrospective	05/03
03-03	Daniel Hiebert	RIIM 2003 Research Consultation Research July 11, 2003: Summary of Proceedings	07/03

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