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**Offsetting Immigration and Domestic Migration in Gateway Cities:
Canadian and Australian Reflections on an 'American Dilemma'**

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Offsetting Immigration and Domestic Migration in Gateway Cities: Canadian and Australian Reflections on an 'American Dilemma'

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Abstract: This paper examines the off-setting streams of immigrants into gateway cities and the departure of domestic migrants. This regularity was noted in gateway cities in the United States, notably New York, Los Angeles and others, and interpretation has sometimes intimated cultural avoidance, leading to suggestions of ‘demographic balkanisation’ and a new population geography of the nation. Labour market adjustments have, however, been the most common source of explanation. This paper extends the discussion to Toronto and Sydney, the principal gateway cities in Canada and Australia. The same off-setting migration flows are shown to exist. In interpretation, however, more limited roles for labour market issues and cultural avoidance are suggested. Instead attention is directed to the housing markets of gateway cities, and in particular the constraints (and opportunities) of high rents and prices in prompting internal out-migration. Immigrants in turn accept a higher burden of costs and increased crowding to join existing ethno-cultural communities. Finally, the paper refocusses the cultural avoidance thesis into a multicultural framework of (quasi) voluntary congregation.

Key words: Immigration, domestic migration, housing costs, congregation, gateway cities, Toronto, Sydney.

Introduction

This paper re-examines the opposing movements of immigrants and domestic migrants in and out of large gateway cities. This spatial regularity has been observed in metropolitan areas in the United States, but in this essay I wish to move the discussion in two additional directions. First the argument is extended to Toronto and Sydney, the principal gateway cities of Canada and Australia, two other significant immigrant-receiving countries. Second, I plan to enlarge the range of interpretation. As we shall see, American studies of these offsetting flows have shifted between explanations of cultural avoidance and economic rationality. To this I shall add a consideration of the character of the housing market in gateway cities, which we shall see repels certain long-settled sub-markets while still providing accommodation for immigrant families. This paper will seek to be persuasive rather than definitive; part of its evidence is circumstantial and requires further empirical verification.

After briefly reviewing empirical work in the United States, I will develop its findings outside American gateway cities to comparable urban centres in Canada and Australia. Relevant data are introduced that focus discussion and suggest some promising avenues towards the interpretation of a persisting geographical regularity. A final section returns to the thesis of cultural avoidance, but places it within the more benign, though here provocative, frame of multiculturalism.

Countervailing Migration Flows

In a series of important papers, the demographer Bill Frey has observed and analysed divergent migration streams to and from the major immigrant ports of entry of New York and Los Angeles, countervailing flows that are repeated for other gateway cities in the United States (Frey 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1999; Frey and Liaw 1998a, 1998b). Continuing a pattern that became evident in the 1980s, large numbers of immigrant arrivals to these cities are associated with off-setting departures of the native-born through domestic migration, not just from the city but from the metropolitan area. Between 1990 and 1996, for example, the Los Angeles and New York CMSAs both gained over 900,000 immigrants, while *each* lost over 1,300,000 residents through net domestic migration (Frey 1999). In contrast metropolitan areas with substantial domestic migration gains received relatively few immigrants. The top three destinations, Atlanta, Las Vegas and Phoenix together had a net gain of close to 820,000 new residents from internal migration, but between them received an increment of only 112,000 immigrants. Admittedly these are the extreme cases, but even if they were unique the scale of this movement over a short period is staggering. But the phenomenon is more general. While some

cities, for example San Diego, are net beneficiaries of both migrant streams, the top six gateway cities, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami and Washington DC between then received 2.8 million immigrants while losing 3.4 million domestic migrants from 1990 to 1996 (Frey 1999). This persistence of offsetting flows, discernible in the 1980s, encourages Frey to identify a newly emergent population geography of the United States. While some authors properly note that net totals conceal large and continuing domestic in-migration to gateway cities, this observation only draws attention to the extraordinary scale of gross out-migration that is occurring as well. Moreover, there is considerable international evidence that domestic in-migrants and out-migrants are different social cohorts, so that the scale of movement indicates a fairly rapid reconfiguration of the social geography of gateway cities. Net gains through internal migration occur for well-educated young adults, but losses are registered for most other age groups: in terms of socio-economic status, there are gains of wealthier households compared with larger losses of low-income cohorts.

These spatial regularities are not contested, though there is some discussion about their causes. A number of Frey's papers introduce the semantic fields of 'white flight' and 'demographic balkanisation' in their titles and these tend to frame the discussion in the language of the quintessential American dilemma of racial segregation, avoidance and, more broadly, dysfunctional race relations. I want to pause briefly to note the different moments of this vexing semantic field of 'white flight'. There is first the binary, us and them, what Alfred Schutz (1970) would have described as a 'they-relationship' not a 'we-relationship', a relationship shaped by othering, by typification, where the other appears not as a person but as a type. The second moment is that it is a racialised binary, evoking primitive responses and unmistakable allusions to the harshly racialised social spaces of American cities. And, third, it is a conflictual racialised binary, the action of one group forcing a reaction by the other, flight, involuntary departure, evoking the bitter struggles over racial transition that occurred in many American cities in the 1950s and 1960s in particular. This fraught terminology with its twin allusion to 'balkanisation', another semantically charged field, has received critical commentary (Ellis and Wright 1998). Later in this paper, however, I want to consider whether cultural separation *requires* such disturbing connotations.

Countervailing Migration Flows outside the United States

These demographic trends are not another example of American exceptionalism. Similar countervailing migration flows may be observed both in Sydney, Australia's primary immigrant gateway city, and also in Toronto, Canada's principal window on the world, and the site of higher immigration arrivals in recent years than even New York. In each case the relatively high level of immigrant landings since the

1980s has been associated with declining net domestic¹ migration and even net losses. Moreover, there are instances where the same semantic fields of cultural avoidance have been employed to frame the demographic changes. In Australia, Paul Sheehan (1998), a critic of high immigration levels, has made an explicit linkage between the American white flight thesis and population movements in and out of Australian cities. In Western Europe as well, the concentration of minority groups in gateway cities, and their growing separation from the rest of the population, has been widely noted (Champion 1994; Rees and Phillips 1996). Allan Pred (2000: 32), for example, has identified similar countervailing migration flows in Stockholm, and referred to a provocative bumper sticker that appeared in the late 1990s, with the request “Last Swede out please take the flag along with you.” Is this the Swedish version of ‘white flight’?

The rhetoric of cultural avoidance may also be located in Canadian gateway cities. An in-depth feature in *The Globe and Mail*, regarded as Canada’s premier newspaper, positioned population change in suburban Richmond, south of the City of Vancouver, beneath the loaded title, “White flight, Chinese distress” (Cernetig 1995).² The accompanying account discussed substantial in-migration from Hong Kong and Taiwan since 1986 in the rhetoric of a moral panic by the long-time residents, deliberately evoking the American conflictual racialised binary.³ The *Globe*’s story traded on these relationships, as the presence of *visible* minorities, immigrant *sightings*, was a dominant motif, prompting avoidance through out-migration from the ethnoburb of Richmond, it was stated, by the native-born.

The empirical basis of the opposition between net domestic and overseas migration flows in the gateway cities of Australia and Canada is inescapable. In Sydney, the period from 1981-1997 was one of consistent population loss from internal or domestic migration, and gains from immigration. In fact Sydney added 440,000 new residents from net overseas migration between 1976 and 1991, while losing close to 280,000 in net domestic migration (Burnley et al. 1997). Through the 1990s losses from internal migration have continued, but by the end of the decade had declined to some 12,000 a year, in concert with nationally-mandated reductions in immigration levels from the higher levels of the 1980s to 35,000 a year to Sydney at the end of the 1990s (McDonald 2001). In Toronto the correlation between immigration and net internal migration is $r = -0.70$ over the period from 1977-1996, a robust

¹ In Australian and Canadian data, domestic migration can include immigrants from earlier time periods as well as the native-born, though the native-born are the dominant component. For example, among Sydney’s internal migrants, 1991-1996, 79 percent of out-migrants and 80 percent of in-migrants were born in Australia (Birrell 1999).

² There have been few interpretations of the reception of recent immigrants at the urban level in Canada. For an exception see John Rose’s (2001) study of Richmond, which invites comparison with studies of Monterey Park, a similar immigrant suburb of ethnic Chinese in Los Angeles district (Li 1999).

³ Pred (2000) reports many similar examples of polarised media representations of immigrants and the native-born in Stockholm and other large Swedish cities. For Canada-Australia parallels, see Dunn and Mahtani (2001).

inverse relationship (Ley and Tutchener 2001), but it is after 1986 that the divergent trend becomes striking. Between 1986 and 2001, the Toronto CMA had a net loss of 245,000 domestic migrants, while immigration accounted for 78 percent of net population growth in the first five years, 93 percent from 1991 to 1996, and 90 percent from 1996 to 2001. As in Sydney, domestic losses declined significantly over the 1996-2001 period to a net rate of some 9,000 a year (Statistics Canada 2002). But unlike Australia there was no national policy to limit immigration, indeed quite the contrary, and Toronto became the magnet for some 40 percent of new landings in Canada between 1996 and 2001. Consequently new arrivals attained average levels of 75,000 a year, as high as the prolific earlier part of the decade. If cultural avoidance lies behind out-migration we might ask, why was there such a significant decline of households leaving Toronto in the latter half of the 1990s when immigrant numbers remained at a high level?

An Alternate Explanation: The Economic Cycle

Economic factors could also be responsible for partitioning the migration streams, and they comprise the preferred explanation in the American literature (Frey 1999, Frey and Liaw 1998b; Borjas 1999; Walker et al. 1992; Wright et al. 1997). On the one hand, immigration is relatively inattentive to the economic cycle – unless of course government policy intervenes – as immigrants arrive through chain migration with limited sensitivity to short-term economic oscillations (Frey 1996; Waldinger 1996). In Los Angeles and Toronto, for example, foreign arrival levels remained robust during the early 1990s, even though the cities were in severe recession. Immigration prompted through transnational social networks is largely independent of economic fluctuations at the destination, particularly for those who arrive relatively unskilled through family sponsorship, or as undocumented refugees responding to forced migration. In contrast migration of the long-settled is likely to be much more sensitive to regional economic cycles. We might readily expect that people would be motivated to move and look for work elsewhere during periods of high unemployment. Frey and Liaw (1998b), like George Borjas (1999), also introduce a more direct relationship between the two migration streams, seeing competition within the labour markets of gateway cities leading to the displacement of native-born with limited human capital by immigrant groups who are prepared to work for lower returns and who may eventually come to dominate particular economic niches – lower order retailing, the janitorial business, the taxi service, etc. Cross-cutting this cleavage is the continued net in-migration of native-born workers with high levels of education into gateway cities, even as those with lower human capital may be departing.

Other authors have reached varying conclusions on this labour displacement thesis. Stoll et al (2002) did identify negative effects from immigration on native-born workers, as did Card and DiNardo (2000), who estimated a small net reduction of 1-3 percent in wage and employment rates for low-skilled natives. In contrast Kritz and Gurak (2001) found no effects on native state out-migration as a result of immigration. Wright et al (1997) concluded that the net migration loss of native-born workers from large metropolitan areas is more likely the result of industrial restructuring than of competition from immigrants, and in a later study they found limited competition in a Los Angeles study as native-born and immigrant workers tended to occupy different industries (Ellis and Wright 1999). The results of these different studies are inconsistent partly because the authors are analysing different geographies and employ different dependent variables, selected from a family of labour market or migration characteristics. We are led to conclude that any economic effects of immigration on the native-born propensity for out-migration are not robust enough to survive different research designs.

Part of the difficulty is inconsistency in the selection of geographical scale. In Canada, it is a long-established rule that inter-provincial migration follows regional economic cycles (Edmonston 2002); as Courchene (1974: 148) observed from an analysis of inter-provincial migration in the 1960s “to a very substantial degree, internal migration can be interpreted as being economically motivated”. But inter-provincial migration is only a small subset of migration that has typically affected gateway cities in recent years. In the City of Toronto,⁴ net inter-provincial movement accounted for less than 2 percent of losses in the 1992-97 period, while in the larger Greater Toronto region the net inter-provincial loss (of a much smaller base) rose to 5 percent (Bourne 2000). Furthermore more than 80 percent of net losses from Greater Toronto were attributable to metropolitan spread effects, movements to adjacent counties beyond metropolitan jurisdictions. Since at least 1981 there has been significant net out-migration from Toronto to proximate rural districts, towns, and smaller metropolitan areas, notably Oshawa and Hamilton (Statistics Canada 2002; Bourne 2000; Bourne and Flowers 1999). If the lion’s share of the net population loss through internal migration has been to destinations within the same regional labour market, it becomes difficult to argue that they have been precipitated by job seeking.

This conclusion is consolidated by a second finding. Over the period from 1971 to 1996 there was a negligible correlation of -0.10 between net internal migration in the Toronto metropolitan area and unemployment. In other words there was no record of accelerated out-migration during periods of

⁴ This entity was formed by the amalgamation of the old City of Toronto and five suburban municipalities in 1998. Their 1996 population of 2.4 million accounted for just over half the population of Greater Toronto.

high unemployment; indeed the relationship was in the opposite direction, with a slight tendency to declining in-migration during periods of *low* unemployment. This tendency was particularly strong during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Net out-migration in the Toronto metropolitan area reached its highest levels in 1988-1990, at the same time as provincial unemployment fell to its lowest point in 15 years (Bourne 2000, Ley and Tutchener 2001). So too, rising unemployment in the recession of the early 1990s coincided with rising levels of net in-migration. This relationship is the opposite of what would be predicted. If internal migration out of gateway cities is primarily driven by labour market concerns we would not expect to find declining unemployment associated with tendencies toward greater out-migration.

The same counter-intuitive interactions seem to hold in Sydney, where unemployment reached its lowest levels in 1989-1990, precisely the years of most sustained out-migration (Murphy, Burnley and Fagan 1997). So counter-intuitive is this relationship that the data are misread by McDonald (2001). He observes that the peak years of out-migration from Sydney since 1971 have been 1974, 1981, and 1990, and adds “(t)hese are all recession years”. But in fact each of these years represented a *fall* in unemployment, and in 1989-90 a steep decline, prior to recession and a spike in unemployment a year or two later. What we find is not that out-migration is associated with economic downturn, but rather that it is negatively aligned with growth. Domestic migration into Toronto from 1977 to 1996 was associated with provincial GDP ($r = -0.57$), population growth (-0.59) and inflation (-0.52). People leaving Toronto are growth-averse. Fielding (1998: 47) has observed exactly the same trend in Britain where during the peaks in the economic cycle in the early 1970s and late 1980s “the South-east region [dominated by Greater London] experiences not net migration gain but net migration loss. Conversely when the national economy is in recession, the South-east region experiences net migration balance, or even a small net migration gain”. The same general regularity holds in the United States, where “periods of expansion are associated with high migration rates while recessions tend to dampen migration” (Pandit 1997).

Further work is needed to untie the precise pattern of relationships here, but two set of linkages are most informative. During the 1977-96 period, growing unemployment in Ontario was *positively* correlated with provincial GDP ($r = 0.54$); as GDP grew, so did unemployment. But at the same time GDP was also positively correlated (0.83) with the growing and heavily urbanised quaternary (professional-managerial) share of the labour market. In other words, growing unemployment has become a structural component of the economy since the 1970s, and is also positively associated with the rise of quaternary employment (0.65). Here is evidence of the growing polarisation of the labour market in the past generation with the growth of the quaternary work-force associated with rising

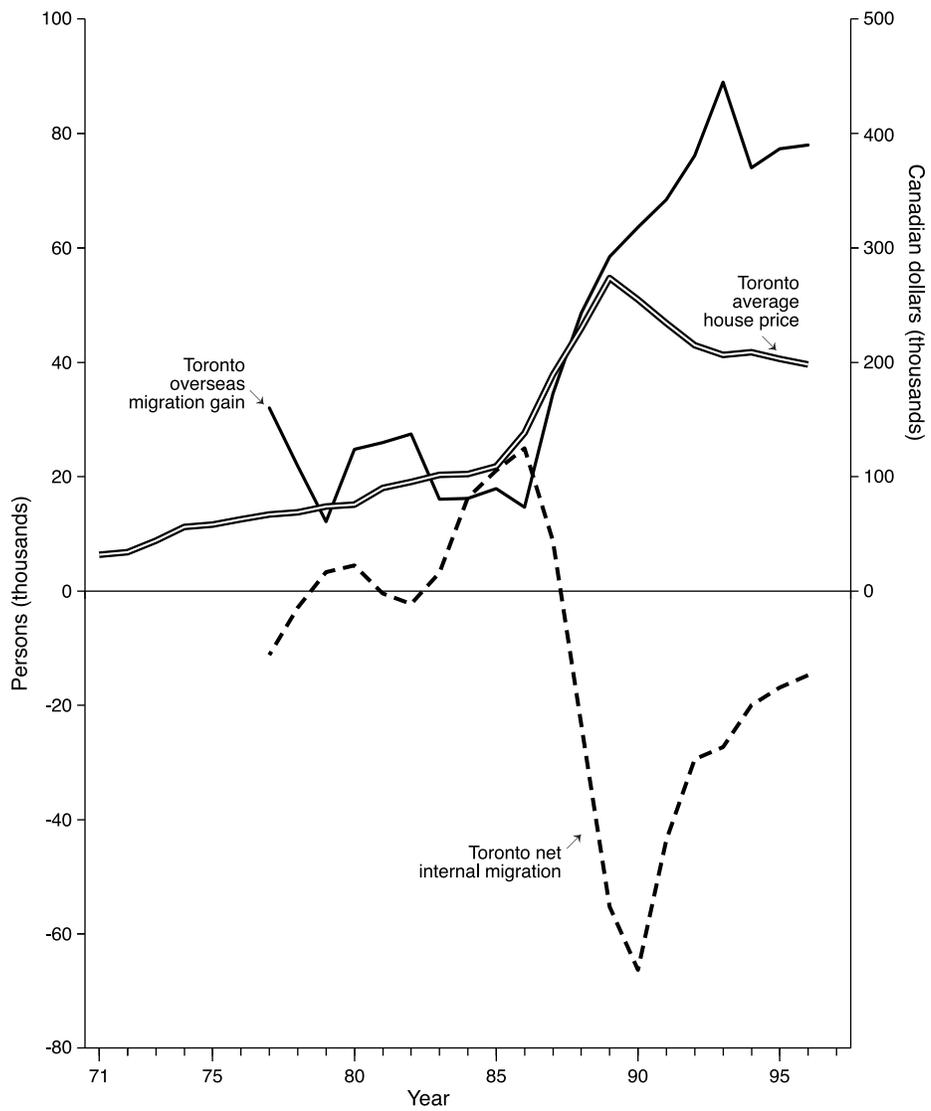
unemployment and also negative internal migration from Toronto ($r = -0.34$). Research on gentrification has shown this displacement effect for residents of inner city Toronto, where there was a net decline of 75,000 workers who were not employed in the quaternary sector from 1971 to 1991, and an increment of 60,000 workers who were (Ley 1996). Where did this displaced population move, and why?

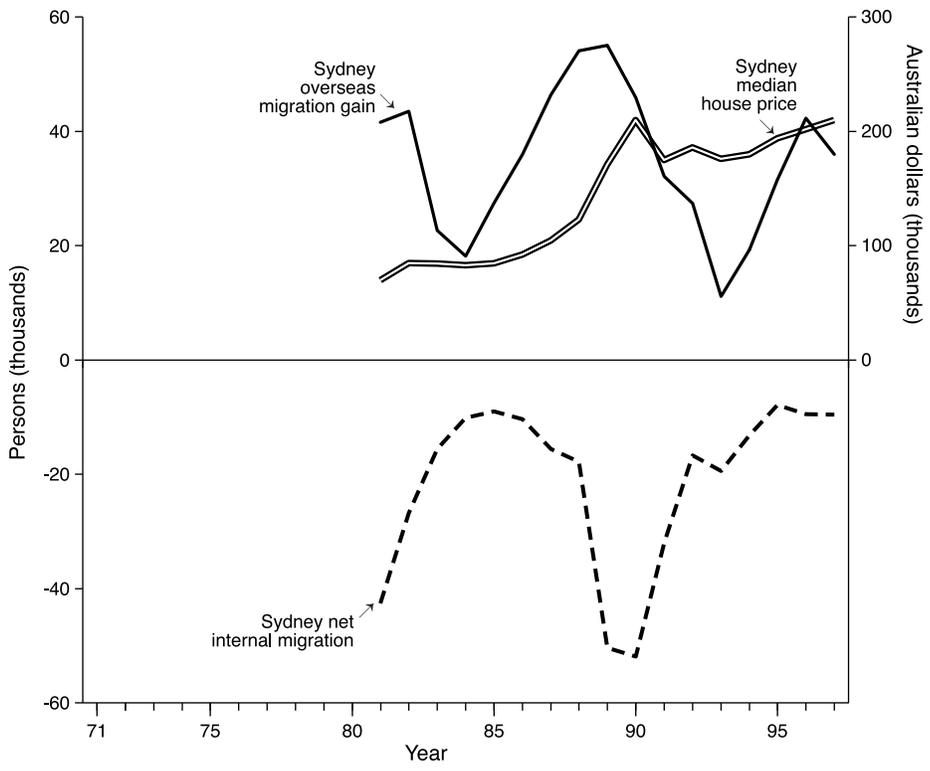
If internal out-migration from gateway cities cannot be accounted for readily by the economic cycle, what other mechanisms are available? This apparent impasse leads us to look further afield for possible explanations.

Refocussing: Counterurbanisation and the Housing Market

The significant corpus of work on counterurbanisation has examined internal migration away from metropolitan areas. This literature has examined motives for departure, and has identified the profiles of out-migrants and the reasons they cite for their mobility. Studies in Western Europe, North America, and Australia have identified a range of life-cycle and lifestyle factors of relevance to place alongside labour-market causes (Champion 1998). Work has frequently emphasized the effects of regional amenity, the quality of life bundle offered by small towns and rural areas. The initial literature on counterurbanisation emphasized the role of amenity, above even metropolitan spread effects, in redirecting population growth in non-metropolitan counties in the United States (Lamb 1975; Roseman and Williams 1980). In a more recent version, reference to a 'post-productivist countryside' makes the case for the more complex status of rural areas as places of both production and consumption (Halfacree and Boyle 1998). In a compilation of studies in 13 European countries, Kontuly (1998: 70) shows the range of explanations nominated to account for counterurbanisation, though among them there is "little support for residential preferences as a major factor".

This is perhaps not the best starting point for arguing for a deeper consideration of the role of the housing market in gateway cities, but that is the argument I wish now to make. Across the Canadian and American urban systems, immigrants tend to be located in high-cost housing markets; there is a correlation of 0.67 between the presence of immigrants and house prices in Canada's 140 urban places (Bourne 1998). The evidence from Toronto, as well as Sydney, reveals a high correlation between immigration levels and house prices over a significant period of time (Burnley and Murphy 1994; Ley et al. 2001). In Toronto over a twenty year period the correlation between the two attained the remarkable level of 0.81 [See Figure 1: Net Immigration, Net Internal Migration and House Prices in Toronto, 1977-1996. Source: Ley and Tutchener 2001. Figure 2: Net Immigration, Net Internal Migration and House Prices in Sydney, 1981-1997. Source: Ley, Murphy, Olds and Randolph, 2001.]





The same relationships would seem to hold in American gateway cities. A study of the housing markets in the 27 largest metropolitan areas in the United States found that six coastal gateway cities formed a distinctive cluster in terms of house price levels and trajectories (Dieleman et al. 2000). Data covered the decade from 1985 to 1995, the same period as Frey's work on immigration and internal migration. The gateway cities of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC, Boston and San Diego had the highest price levels throughout the decade, but also marked oscillations with price peaks in 1989. In both respects they were unlike cities in the remaining two metropolitan clusters where prices were much lower and trends over time much more gradual. It is pertinent to note the similarities between their price movements and the price lines of Sydney and Toronto, other gateway cities with high immigration levels and exposed to global influences, that also showed marked oscillations with a 1989-1990 peak. We have already commented on the parallel migration experiences of gateway cities in the United States with their counterparts in Canada and Australia. Now we observe also similar housing market trends. House prices in gateway cities in all three nations experienced the same price cycle, rapidly increasing through the 1980s, with a peak in 1989-90, and a marked correction to the mid 1990s. What is striking is not only this parallel trajectory, but also that the housing markets of gateway cities in different countries show more affiliation with each other than they do with other large cities in their own countries.

Admittedly, the relationship between immigration and house prices becomes less robust when spatial disaggregation occurs from the metropolitan area to individual census tracts (Burnley and Murphy 1994, Ley et al. 2002). However, what happens when this overall price inflation is transmitted to neighbourhoods within cities, as it must be, albeit refracted through local circumstances? Then processes internal to the housing market could lead to divergent population movements. Potential native-born home buyers (and tenants) could be priced out of the market and obliged to move to other cheaper districts, including locations outside the city. This argument has been made with some force in Australia where significant evidence exists that examines poverty-driven out-migration from Sydney. Net losses from Sydney between 1986 and 1991 were led by lower income groups, including an over-representation of the unemployed (Hugo and Bell 1998). A lower cost of living, and in particular the cheaper housing of non-metropolitan areas has been an attraction to this population. These changes are occurring within an economic context of rising unemployment and the growing concentration of high-skilled jobs in large cities. For the more recent 1991-96 period, out-migrants from Sydney remained primarily low-income, Australian-born and of working age (Birrell 1999). In empirical work in Southern California, Frey and Liaw (1998a) similarly detected a significant cohort of out-migrants

from Greater Los Angeles with only modest human capital. Their limited education and job skills were ill-suited to the emergent post-industrial economy of the region. We might suppose that these migrants would also be unable to compete in the inflating housing market of the region.

The Toronto data cited earlier revealed the displacement of 75,000 inner city residents working in non-quaternary jobs associated with the gentrification of inner Toronto between 1971 and 1991 (Ley 1996). As the inner districts have traditionally provided the largest low-cost housing stock in the region, it is not surprising to learn that internal migration from Toronto between 1977 and 1996 shows a high negative correlation ($r = -0.77$) with the rising gradient of house prices (Figure 1). Net out-migration reached its peak of 55,000 in 1989 and 66,000 in 1990, precisely the same years as the housing market crested after runaway inflation that had doubled house prices in four years. It was the same in Sydney, where prices also more than doubled between 1986 and the peak in 1990 (Figure 2). Net out-migration skyrocketed in 1989 and 1990, reaching almost 52,000 in the latter year. It is understandable that such price (and accompanying rental) levels would be prohibitive to displaced inner city residents and other low income households and encourage their departure from the metropolitan area. As we shall now see, high prices would also prompt out-migration at the peak of the housing market for other groups, but for different reasons.

For as well as *displacement* of demand, immigration could also be associated with *replacement* in the housing market (as in the labour market). Mortgage-free, long-settled homeowners would be enticed to cash in their home equity and sell, perhaps to newcomers, moving to cheaper housing in the suburbs or outside the metropolitan area. This option would be particularly attractive to empty-nest and retired households, who would also have greater freedom to leave the city, contributing to domestic out-migration.⁵ In their study of out-migrants from Los Angeles, Frey and Liaw (1998a) also observed a disproportionate share of the elderly amongst movers. In Sydney it is notable that one of the principal destinations of out-migrants has been the amenity-rich Gold Coast, suggesting that retirement or pre-retirement moves contribute an important part to those departing the metropolitan region (Murphy and Zehner 1988). But while significant, the retirement-age population alone should not be exaggerated. The population aged 65 years and over accounted for only 20 percent of net out-migrants from Sydney in 1991-1996 (Birrell 1999) and 28 percent of net out-migrants from Toronto in 1996-2001 (Statistics Canada 2002). Pre-retirement empty-nesters are also an important cohort here. Their out-migration would also follow the housing market cycle, with much greater inducement to cash in at or near the price peak.

⁵ British research has placed particular emphasis on the middle class character of counterurbanisation, sometimes in the language of rural gentrification (Fielding 1998; Phillips 1993).

Thus both out-migrants fleeing high housing costs and empty nesters and retired households wishing to cash in on premium prices would have strong inducements to leave high-priced gateway cities during the peak of the housing cycle. That is precisely what the data show across the 1989-1990 period in both Toronto and Sydney. For the longer 1977-96 period a decline and even a net loss through internal migration is correlated with rising Toronto house prices; the correlation of -0.77 (and of -0.70 of internal migration against immigration) suggests it is high house prices associated with internationalisation, not high rates of regional unemployment, which are linked with domestic out-migration.

But this argument addresses only one side of the equation. If the high residential prices of gateway cities prompt out-migration, why should these housing markets be attractive to immigrants, whose numbers include a large low-income cohort? Low-income immigrants to Sydney exceeded the net low-income outflow from Sydney by 15 percent during 1991-96 (Birrell 1999). How could immigrants, who are typically poorer than the native-born, and refugees, who are much poorer, make their own entry to the expensive housing markets of gateway cities?

It is perfectly clear that immigrants suffer disproportionately from affordability problems in gateway cities. The National Population Council in Australia noted that “Migrant housing affordability is extremely low in Sydney; for some migrant categories dropping to less than half the level for the total population” (1990:1). Immigrants also endured serious affordability problems in Canada, with 31 percent of the most recent (1991-94) households spending more than half of their income on shelter; in contrast only 11 percent of the native-born suffered from this acute level of housing distress (CIC 2000). Moreover, 39 percent of 1991-96 immigrants suffered ‘core housing need’ in 1996, a measure that combined criteria on affordability and residential quality; this compared with 17 percent of the native-born (CMHC nd).

Immigrants characteristically move into rental housing; 60 percent of new immigrants in Sydney were in private rental units in 1996 (Ley et al. 2001). But the pressure to move into homeownership is high, with the rental share dropping to 35 percent for the 1986-90 cohort and to 23 percent for 1981-85 arrivals. Metropolitan rental costs are typically highly correlated with house prices (Dieleman et al. 2001), so that whether as tenants or homeowners immigrants in gateway cities confront significant cost barriers. An adaptive strategy to affordability problems is the long-established solution of the poor: to tolerate lower quality housing and more crowding than would be acceptable to the native-born, in the same way that immigrants will also take jobs that are avoided by the native-born. Evidence from Los Angeles and New York has confirmed that this strategy of increased crowding remains in force in poor immigrant and refugee districts (Clark 1998; Chin 1999). In Canada

immigrants are also much more likely to live in crowded conditions. Whereas only 4 percent of Canadian-born households in Toronto exceeded the crowding threshold of more than 1 person per room in 1996, this figure rose to 24 percent among immigrant households who had arrived in the 1980s, and reached an amazing 46 percent of those landing in Canada in the 1990s (CIC 2000). Doubling up is a solution in the ownership as well as the rental sector; membership in a multiple family household in Toronto greatly increased the probability of immigrant homeownership (Ray 1998). In this manner poor immigrant arrivals are able to find a place in the high-priced housing market of gateway cities. Their combined demand contributes to robust positive correlations between immigration numbers and price movements in both Toronto and Sydney.

Back to Cultural Avoidance: The Congregational Thesis

As a third possible account for the countervailing migration movements of immigrants and the long-settled in gateway cities, I return to concepts of homogeneous socio-cultural groupings, but place them in a different interpretive frame from a simple thesis of white flight. Both immigrants and the long-settled may seek voluntary segregation and for similar reasons: the maintenance of institutionally complete social and cultural communities and congregation with like-minded households. Remember this important conclusion from social psychology: “Undoubtedly the most prominent assertion in group research is that people like and interact with those who are most similar to them” (Weick 1969: 14). Rightly or wrongly, this is part of the sense of at-homeness for many residents, whether immigrant or long-settled. Birrell (1999) has noted that the lower income residents leaving Sydney are moving disproportionately from districts of immigrant entry, and anecdotal evidence suggests that ethno-cultural compatibility is one attraction of the coastal communities to which they move (Kijas 2002). But at the same time ethnic self-selection is an important feature of immigrant settlement as well. It is after all chain migration that leads to the spatial concentration of immigrants in a limited number of gateway cities. As Wei Li (1999) was told in the Asian ethnoburb of Monterey Park in Los Angeles, the attraction of the district for immigrant Chinese was “Because of living here we feel just like home. There are so many Chinese people and Chinese stores, restaurants, banks, newspapers, radios and TV, almost everything you need”. Similarly, the observation sometimes made of immigrants that “they keep to themselves” is, from interviews we have undertaken in Vancouver, by and large true – but it is equally true of those who make the observation! Identity formation and maintenance for all groups is closely associated with selective in-group interaction.

We are treading a thin line here, but what I am working toward is the notion of voluntary segregation, a metropolitan society comprising congregations of more or less like-minded others.

Segregation of course is never fully voluntary, far from it, and it would be a serious error to identify only choice as defining the contours of social life. But within certain bounds, and they may be broader now than in the past, households do work out their own congregational membership. We know from past research that the desire for compatible lifestyle groups has always been a feature of suburban living, but it is true of other social worlds as well. And importantly, congregation is a process that is consistent with, if not encouraged by, official multiculturalism with its mandate of respect for cultural difference. The establishment and reproduction of cultural difference requires social interaction, conveniently achieved through residential segregation. From this viewpoint, the rhetoric of white flight presents a misleading interpretive frame, which achieves sensationalism rather than precision. What is happening among both immigrants and the long-settled is re-location, a re-jigging of residence to achieve satisfactory congregational life.

In the United States where many authors see assimilation as the primary policy objective (Clark 1998; Borjas 1999), the creation of homogenous ethno-cultural groupings can be troubling – though it is always the Latinos of East Los Angeles or the Chinese of the San Gabriel Valley that seem to define the problem, rather than the white suburbs or affluent retirement counties. But in Canada, Australia and those Western European countries committed to a policy of multiculturalism, spatial segregation must be seen as a predictable outworking of identity relations. Congregational life and multicultural policy fit hand in glove. Multiculturalism, by favouring interaction and proximity among groups sharing a common biography, also unwittingly sanctions separation between groups of dissimilar biographies.

While outside Canada multiculturalism is regarded as one of the country's most admired exports, within Canada it has in recent years come under criticism from the political left, the political right, and latterly from some immigrant groups as well, opposed to what they see as an essentialisation of their identities. Hyphenated Canadians, it seems, is all they are permitted to be by the managers of multiculturalism (cf. Hage 1998). This debate has reached the august committees of the national census where there has been a spirited debate as to whether the response 'Canadian' is an acceptable description of ethnic identity, reminding us, if we ever needed it, of the social and political constitution of official statistics.

So we end with the age-old concern of social geography with the question of spatial segregation. What we need of course is more than a measurement of segregation; we need an interrogation of its *meaning*, in dimensions that are simultaneously economic, social, cultural, political, and ethical. From Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid* to Borjas' *Heaven's Door*, and to Frey's 'demographic balkanization', there is an abiding assumption that the separation of ethno-cultural

groups is an American dilemma that ought not to be. But that is not, and I would argue, cannot be the position of multicultural policy. While agreeing with the criticisms of segregation – the risk of encapsulation in poverty districts, an outsider status that aggravates stereotyping, political marginalisation – an acceptance, or more properly multiculturalism's nurturing, of diversity requires institutionally complete communities, and these flourish when intense local interaction is assured by the existence of segregation. The irony of course is that this spatial solution, under the aegis of a liberal multiculturalism, can also be compatible with ethnically or racially prejudicial models of group apartheid.

Conclusion

I have suggested that labour market effects may have been over-emphasized in accounting for out-migration from gateway cities. Such effects have been demonstrated most persuasively for inter-state or inter-provincial movement, but if much of the departing population is moving to adjacent counties outside the metropolitan area rather than to different states or provinces, it is difficult to argue for a substantial change in labour market conditions. During the 1986-1996 period, the key decade for the divergence of internal migration and immigration flows, I have argued for the role of the housing price cycle in gateway cities in partitioning the two migration streams. In Australia and Canada, prices and rents in gateway cities rose rapidly to a peak in 1989-90, and it was at this inflationary crest that out-migration increased to a flood. This movement is not explicable by labour market effects at the origin for unemployment was at relatively low. A preferred interpretation is that different submarkets were drawn to leave gateway cities at the same time but for separate reasons: the poor because they were priced out of the market (although jobs were available); empty nest and retirement households because of the capital gains available at the crest of the price cycle. Immigrants and refugees, however, despite their general (though far from universal) poverty were able to enter a high-priced market with employment prospects because they were willing, by enduring acute affordability problems and through high levels of crowding, to tolerate housing conditions unacceptable to the native-born.

This interpretation accounts for the paradox of cohorts who are growth averse, who leave the city during a period of lower unemployment and economic growth. Work in counterurbanisation has emphasized distinctive period effects in internal migration, and future research should assess whether the interpretation offered here is historically specific or if it applies to earlier housing market cycles also. If it has a broader applicability we might expect to see, for example, an intensification of out-migration from Sydney in the renewed housing boom at the beginning of the present decade.

Cultural avoidance, the white flight thesis, becomes a secondary factor in a housing market interpretation. The marked oscillations in out-migration – common to gateway cities in all three nations – took place simultaneously in different national ethno-cultural contexts. It is difficult to envisage the existence of so finely tuned a racist time-keeper. Equally, if cultural avoidance has been the key primer for out-migration, there should not have been a decline in the outflow during the 1990s in the face of substantial continuing immigration. At the same time it would be naïve to assume the absence of cultural avoidance for some members of the population. Here I have suggested that an interpretation emphasising within-group attraction should be given at least as much prominence as the common perspective that highlights out-group avoidance. Congregational life is predicated for immigrants and domestic migrants alike on ethno-cultural compatibility, a sense of ‘at-homeness’, and such values are underwritten by national policies of multiculturalism in Australia and Canada in particular.

The balance of the evidence reviewed here suggests that the housing market has been an understated factor in motivating the native-born and long-settled to leave cities where they are unable to afford accommodation, or alternatively where they wish to cash in real estate equity, particularly at or prior to retirement. These housing markets remain acceptable for immigrants arriving through chain migration, because of their willingness to tolerate dire housing conditions. Congregational association is also likely to play a role for both immigrants and the native-born, but this need not be conceptualised in the rhetoric of flight. If a liberal multiculturalism permits spatial separation as a prerequisite for identity formation, then the same logic that sanctions immigrant chain migration may also envisage outward movement of the long-settled to join like-minded others. This may be a politically precarious conclusion, requiring careful exposition, for it reveals the soft underside of an immigration policy that starts with the assumption that assimilation is not inevitable, nor perhaps even desirable.

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