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Characteristics of Immigrant Transnationalism in Vancouver*

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Abstract: This is the second in a series of papers planned on the Vancouver Community Studies Survey project (see RIIM #03-06 for details). We begin by discussing the significance of transnationalism as an analytical category and survey the literature on the subject. We then consider the extent and significance of transnational activities indicated by 1479 immigrants who took part in our survey and note similarities and contrasts to the results of studies undertaken in Québec and the USA. In the Vancouver situation, we find extensive transnational activities among recent immigrants. Over time, immigrants appear to maintain social linkages overseas but the degree of economic transnationalism (e.g., business ownership) lessens.

Key words: transnationalism; immigrants; social surveys; identity; social networks.

Introduction

Transnationalism is one of a series of supra-national processes that has been discussed within the theoretical lens of globalisation. If globalisation represents a larger 'space of flows' that is said to overrun national borders to shape more expansive regional and global geographies, then transnational migration is one of those flows, the movement of labour that accompanies the reconfiguration of national economies and societies. Like the movement of capital, it seems, labour has now liberated itself from containment within national borders to engage in both continuing movement and communication between countries of origin and destination and also to establish a status of flexible identification in terms of national citizenship.

It is no surprise that transnational migrants touch down at precisely the same sites as John Friedmann (1986) first identified as the 'basing point' of the new globalising economy, the global cities that act as gateways between national societies and the world system. In Canada, Toronto and Vancouver have emerged as the nation's two primary windows on the world. In 2001, they included some of the highest proportions of the foreign-born anywhere in the advanced societies, 43 percent in the Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA) and 37 percent in the Vancouver CMA. Moreover a substantial proportion of these people are newcomers, landing between 1991 and 2001, amounting to 39 percent of the immigrant population in Toronto and 44 percent in Vancouver. These percentages translate into large numbers, consisting of 792,000 landings in Toronto and 325,000 in Vancouver in the 1991-2001 period; amongst this recently arrived cohort in particular we might expect to see considerable transnational activity.

The landscapes and social geographies of both cities have undergone significant restructuring in the past decade. An important development has been the suburbanisation of the immigrant population, no longer confined to older inner city reception areas, but now including substantial concentrations in inner suburbs, where proportions run as high as 54 percent in Richmond in 2001 and 47 percent in Burnaby, compared with a City of Vancouver share of 46 percent foreign-born (compare Hiebert 1999; Rose 2001). Moreover the composition of immigrant cohorts in Vancouver has strongly favoured the economic classes of independent and business migrants, more so than in any other Canadian urban centre. The high human capital and substantial financial assets of members of these groups have permitted residential selection in the region's high status districts, including the premier neighbourhood of Shaughnessy, where significant landscape change has occurred, leading to a notable conflict, since resolved, in the early 1990s on appropriate housing and landscape styles (Ley 1995). The impact of

immigration in the Vancouver housing market more generally has been appreciable; between 1986 and 2001 immigration dominated population growth and a very high correlation existed between annual immigration landings and the movement of metropolitan house prices (Ley and Tutchener 2001).

The setting of a gateway city with a large, newly landed population adding to existing co-ethnic communities provides a fertile laboratory for transnational behaviour. Case studies have demonstrated the existence of transnational activities among the largest immigrant communities, from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Waters 2002; Ley and Waters 2003) and from India, particularly the Punjab (Walton-Roberts 2003). In this chapter we make use of a large metropolitan survey of 1479 immigrants conducted in 2001 to assess the intensity of transnationalism along a number of dimensions and to establish relationships between transnational practices and socio-economic and ethno-cultural characteristics of the population.

Transnationalism: the story so far

Soon after Friedmann's pioneering discussion of global cities followed the early literature on transnationalism. Anthropologists noted a high density of transactions between immigrants to the United States and relatively proximate home countries like Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean (Glick Schiller et al. 1992), and Central America, notably Mexico (Rouse 1992). This early work on nearby sending nations has continued (Mountz and Wright 1996; Guarnizo 1998; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Levitt 2001; Pries 2001), and has also expanded to many other regional settings including transnational flows between East Asia and North America (Mitchell 1997; Ong and Nonini 1997; Ong 1999; Ley 2000), among countries in Asia (Yeoh, Willis and Fakhri 2003), and between Africa and Europe (Ali-Ali, Black and Koser 2001), amongst others.

Transnational ties have been obscured in the past in the Canadian literature on ethnicity that has been based on assimilation or multicultural frameworks, both of which have presupposed a model of immigrant containment within national borders (Winland 1998). Recently, however, considerable work, particularly in the Vancouver region, has examined transnational ties notably among members of the Chinese diaspora who have been the leading single immigrant group over the past twenty years (Mitchell 1997; Wong 1997, 2002; Ley 2000; Waters 2002, 2003; Ley and Waters 2003). Other contributions have demonstrated the diverse linkages between Greater Vancouver (in particular suburban Surrey) and the Punjab (Walton-Roberts 2003), and also the transnational fields of much smaller groups such as the Burmese (Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000). One of the few Canadian studies with a larger sample considered the overseas linkages of more than 400 immigrants to Quebec, including the scale of home country travel, remittances and property ownership, ten years after landing

(Renaud *et al.* 2002). Several of the questions in the Quebec study are repeated in our Vancouver survey, and comparative results will be noted later.

As the literature has proliferated, several attempts have been made to take stock of the field and to shape its often unruly growth (Kearney 1995; Vertovec 1999; Levitt 2001). The interdisciplinary nature of research has led to methodological debates as sociologists and geographers have entered the discussion. The early ethnographic work has been challenged, particularly by Portes in a series of papers, where he argued that the ethnographic approach of anthropologists has tended to exaggerate the incidence of transnational behaviour because it has sampled on the dependent variable (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Portes 2001). Rather than examine only those cases where transnationalism may be discerned, there should be broader coverage of an entire community that would include observations where such activity is lacking. There is growing recognition that earlier work tended to overlook the considerable variation both within and between immigrant groups of a common nationality in terms of their migration strategies on the spectrum from assimilation through multiculturalism to transnationalism (Ali-Ali, Black and Koser 2001; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). In this respect Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) conclude from a comparative study of Latin American groups in the USA that while participation in a particular transnational activity may be limited in an immigrant population, there is broad participation across the whole range of socio-cultural activities.

Portes and his team have also been sceptical that earlier anthropological studies over-emphasized the novelty of transnationalism, although unlike stronger critics (eg. Mintz 1998) this does not lead them to dismiss its conceptual utility. But they do urge a more rigorous approach that seeks evidence that is measurable rather than anecdotal.

While there is agreement that under transnationalism the relationships between society and space have been reconfigured (Pries 2001), some authors have gone further to suggest a deterritorialisation of immigrant social fields where a footloose mobility has replaced the importance of grounded spatial experience (Ong and Nonini 1997; Winland 1998). While the mobility of transnational migrants is acknowledged (Waters 2002), this does not mean that space has been eroded as a significant factor. Following a conceptual challenge by Mitchell (1997), other geographers have shown how space matters, both in the effects of distance upon family relations and also in terms of the acute spatial differentiation made by transnational migrants from East Asia concerning the opportunity structures of different nation states (Ley and Waters 2003). In addition, transnational behaviour is strongly grounded in distinctive spatial clusters of ethnic services that facilitate the hyper-mobility of astronauts moving

on the ‘Pacific shuttle’ between East Asia and the West Coast of North America (Zhou and Tseng 2001).

Survey data with medium- to large-size samples are required to tease out the more discriminating relationships required by recent criticisms. While there are relatively few precedents at present, an important exception is the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project directed by Portes and Guarnizo that has undertaken several phases of data collection among Colombian, Dominican and Salvadoran immigrants in four American cities. Their research shows that transnational entrepreneurs are of higher socio-economic status and more likely to be American citizens than foreign-born wage-earners and entrepreneurs with domestic linkages only (Portes 2001; Landolt 2001). Transnational entrepreneurs are, in general, more satisfied with life in the United States and of longer residential duration than the immigrant mean. Moreover immigrants engaged in political transactions with their home countries fit a similar socio-economic profile. In this research transnationalism, defined by economic and political transactions, emerges as a means of successful economic integration in the United States. While these relationships establish some empirical expectations for our Vancouver survey, the definition of transnationalism in the CIEP would seem to identify the process theoretically, not as an alternative to assimilation, but as a sub-set of assimilation processes (Kivisto 2001).

Methodology

Our results come from a large survey of Vancouver residents conducted in 2001. The goal of the survey was to gather information on the experiences of immigrants and the attitudes of the general population towards immigration and immigrant settlement. The survey included 2000 respondents but we concentrate in this study on the 1479 who were immigrants.[1] Given the uneven settlement pattern of immigrants in the Vancouver metropolitan area, we opted for a cluster design, with random sampling within five target areas that were selected for their distinct socio-economic profiles: the east side of the City of Vancouver, a working-class district that has long been associated with multicultural immigrant settlement; Kerrisdale-Oakridge-Shaughnessy, an upper-middle-class area on the western side of the City of Vancouver that has recently become home to relatively affluent immigrants mainly from eastern Asia; Richmond, a middle-class suburb immediately south of the City of Vancouver that is associated with a large Chinese-origin population; the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody), new middle-class suburbs in the northeast quadrant of metropolitan Vancouver that has become a popular destination for a mix of immigrants, with the largest groups from eastern Asia; and Surrey-

Delta, a distant working-class suburb in the southeast quadrant of metropolitan Vancouver that houses a large South Asian population.[2] The survey was conducted by telephone by a specialized marketing company that employed interviewers able to work in English plus Canonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Hindi, and Tagolog. Most recent immigrants chose to be interviewed in their native language while the opposite was true of those who had been settled at least 10 years. Interviews were conducted with an adult family member who received the call. Consequently interviews included family dependents as well as the principal wage earner. Among the sample 944 were in the labour force.

The survey was extensive and covered a variety of topics, including household and family structure, employment, income, immigration history, demographic characteristics of the respondent (age, sex, ethnicity, place of birth), quality of neighbourhood life, perceived discrimination, attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism, citizenship, satisfaction with Canada, and transnational activities. In this chapter we concentrate on the transnational module of the survey, and tabulate results on this dimension with the socio-economic, demographic, and immigrant status of respondents.

Results

We begin with a brief enumeration of the answers to ten questions about transnational behaviour (Table 1). As might be expected, a large proportion of our respondents have friends and relatives who remain in their country of origin, and nearly all keep in touch with them. Contact in most cases takes place either weekly or monthly, though a small number maintain daily communication. The vast majority utilize electronic means of communication, especially the telephone, though a high number also uses e-mail. It appears that the postal system has receded in significance, with only one in five immigrants mentioning this form of communication.[3] Approximately two-thirds of those who answered our survey travel to their pre-migration country. Of those, the majority do so irregularly, less than once a year. However, one-quarter travel once a year or so, and one in five make this journey on a more frequent basis. There is also considerable interaction in the opposite direction: over 60 percent host visitors from their home country. As before, this travel occurs regularly (at least once per year) for about half of the respondents, and more occasionally for the others.

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[1] We deliberately oversampled immigrants by approximately double, relative to their proportion of the total population. A detailed discussion of the sampling methodology, including a summary of the complete survey instrument, can be found in Hiebert 2003.

[2] Full descriptions of these areas can be found in Hiebert *et al* 1998; the social geography of immigrant settlement in Vancouver is addressed in Hiebert 1999.

[3] Respondents were given a list of communication methods and asked to identify all that apply. The vast majority indicated only one or two methods and only two were coded for analysis. The figures in the table therefore add up to more than 100 percent of respondents.

Table 1: Basic enumeration of transnational activities

Question	Yes #	Yes %	No #	No %	Refused	Total
Family or friends in pre-migration country?	1332	90.1	143	9.7	4	1479
Do you keep in touch with them?	1271	95.4	60	4.5	1	1332
How often?						
Daily	87	6.8				
Weekly	486	38.2				
Monthly	524	41.2				
Yearly	139	10.9				
Less than once a year	23	1.8				
Don't know/Refused	12	0.9				
Total	1271					
How do you keep in touch?*						
E-mail	652	51.3				
Telephone	1167	91.8				
Postal mail	253	19.9				
Visits	302	23.8				
Refused	3	0.2				
Total	1271					
Do you travel to that country?	1008	68.2	468	31.6	3	1479
How often?						
More than once a year	201	19.9				
Once a year or so	238	23.6				
Less than once a year	550	54.6				
Don't know/Refused	19	1.9				
Total	1008					
Does your job require you to travel to that country?**	48	7.9	555	91.7	2	605
Do you own property there, or have a home?	329	22.2	1123	75.9	27	1479
Do you run a business there?	47	3.2	1411	95.4	21	1479
Do you provide financial assistance to people there?	212	14.3	1247	84.3	20	1479
Do family or friends from that country visit you here?	903	61.1	567	38.3	9	1479
How often?						
More than once a year	123	12.2				
Once a year or so	237	23.5				
Less than once a year	514	51.0				
Don't know/Refused	29	2.9				
Total	903					

*Respondents were allowed two answers to this question; percentage figures therefore exceed 100.
**676 out of 1479 immigrant respondents are currently employed (another 155 are self-employed)

We also asked about economic links that facilitate or require transnational connections. Of the 944 respondents in the labour market (126 of whom were unemployed), only 48 are involved in work-related travel to their country of origin. We were surprised, given the literature on transnationalism, by the low proportion who answered this question positively. This was also true of our question on

transnational business ownership; again just under 50 of our respondents operated businesses in their home countries.[4] A much larger proportion own property abroad, nearly one quarter of all respondents. Finally, on the economic front, around one in seven respondents send money to family and friends in their pre-migration country.

These basic data on transnationalism reveal a clear pattern already well established in the literature: there is much variation in the extent and intensity of transnational activity. Some immigrants presumably do not participate in these sorts of interactions at all, as they have no family or friends left in their pre-migration country.[5] Also, small numbers of our sample have friends and relatives in the home country but make no effort to stay in touch with them. There is also what we could call a middle-level of transnationalism, with occasional visits to and fro mixed with regular electronic contact and, perhaps, some financial interests that stretch across the vast distance that separates pre- and post-migration contexts. There are also those who, no doubt, answered all, or nearly all, of our questions affirmatively—those who fit the description usually offered of cosmopolitan transnationals, who live lives characterized by geographical fluidity and who identify themselves with at least two places. The interesting question, of course, is, what distinguishes those who maintain extensive transnational links from those who do not?

In the remainder of the tables presented in this chapter, we focus on the either/or questions posed to respondents. In each table we cross-tabulate a socio-economic or demographic feature of our sample with eight indicators of transnationalism. Cells in each table refer to the percentage of respondents in a particular category (in rows) who answered the question (in columns) positively. In constructing these tables, chi-squared tests were conducted to identify statistically significant relationships. Note that these tests should be seen as instructive rather than definitive in several cases where the sample size is quite small. This is particularly the case when dealing with the questions about job-related transnational travel and transnational business ownership. Also, readers should be alert to the cases where socio-economic and demographic categories are small, and treat them with a degree of caution.

The first and perhaps most important finding of our study is that the relationship between level of transnationalism and socio-economic status is relatively weak. Our survey included questions that

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[4] Of course this figure must be an underestimate as most migrants with transnational business activities are overseas for most of the year, and would therefore not be at home for a telephone interview.

[5] However, it is still possible that they interact regularly with family or friends in a third country, an issue not explored in our survey.

enabled us to sort respondents on the basis of their level of education and income.[6] Education is largely unrelated to the presence or absence of family and friends in the pre-migration country, as well as the propensity to keep in touch with them and to send them money (Table 2). Surprisingly, education and the tendency to travel to the home country were also unrelated. There was a significant relationship between educational attainment and the tendency to hold property in the pre-migration country, but it was not linear (that is, those at both the higher and lower ends of the educational scale are more likely than those in the middle to hold property—a difficult pattern to explain). The only two associations that were in a predictable direction were between education and the likelihood of holding a business in the pre-migration country on the one hand, and hosting visitors from the pre-migration country on the other. In both cases, those with university degrees and other forms of post-secondary education engaged in more transnational activity.

As with education, household income does not appear to be strongly linked to the level of transnational activity (Table 3). It is not surprising that households across the income spectrum are about equally likely to have family and friends in their home country. However, the fact that there is little differentiation between high and low income households when it comes to maintaining social contact *as well as* economic relationships, is surely more unexpected. Around three percent of our respondents in every income category, for example, operate businesses overseas. Clearly, though, income is associated with increased travel between Canada and the pre-migration country, in both directions. The level of household income is also associated with the propensity to retain property in the home country, though not in the direction many would expect. Households with the lowest incomes in Canada are most likely to hold property abroad, while those with higher incomes in Canada tend to give up their overseas land. There are several plausible explanations for this pattern. For example, those who have not yet found their economic footing in Canada may be hedging their bets by maintaining the ability to return, while those who have "made it" in Canada might have shifted their economic activities to this country; or, alternatively, perhaps we are seeing the effects of "cash rich, income poor" individuals who live comfortably in Canada while earning little income—in this case property overseas may provide a source of income that is unreported, or underreported, by respondents.

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[6] Unfortunately, only 1015 of the 1479 immigrants in our survey provided an answer to our question on household income. Around one-third of those who didn't answer the question explained that they did not know their household income, while two-thirds simply refused to specify it.

Table 2: Transnational activities by level of educational attainment

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
<High school	46	87.0	92.5	73.9	0.0	28.3	0.0	10.9	34.8
Some high school	101	86.1	96.6	63.4	5.6	34.0	2.0	14.0	36.6
High school	308	91.5	95.7	70.8	3.7	19.0	3.0	17.3	61.0
Some post-sec	185	89.7	91.6	67.0	6.7	14.7	2.2	11.9	63.8
Post-sec dip	228	89.9	96.1	67.0	7.9	16.6	3.6	16.0	67.8
Univ. degree	606	91.1	96.4	68.3	10.2	26.9	3.8	13.8	64.6
Probability		0.646	0.213	0.798	0.354	0.000	0.007	0.630	0.000

Table 3: Transnational activities by 2001 household income

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
<25,000	246	91.9	94.2	57.7	11.1	33.9	2.9	16.3	46.1
25,000-49,999	328	91.5	96.7	70.7	6.3	21.7	2.7	17.1	59.0
50,000-74,999	218	91.7	92.0	70.6	5.5	19.7	2.3	16.1	66.1
>75,000	223	91.0	97.0	71.7	11.5	14.9	3.2	9.9	77.1
Probability		0.987	0.052	0.002	0.482	0.000	0.958	0.101	0.000

* Total number in the survey; the number answering each question is different and less than the total indicated here.

Indicates highest value

Indicates lowest value

Columns printed in a light tone indicate non-significant results in chi-squared tests.

Statistical relationships were more readily discernible between transnationalism and other variables. The duration of settlement in Canada plays a strong role, with significant effects upon every one of the indicators (Table 4). Recent immigrants, defined in our study as those who landed between 1991 and 2001, tended to keep more contact with family and relatives overseas and were much more apt to retain economic linkages between Canada and their pre-migration country. However, those who are longer settled travel more and act as host to more guests from their home country. This stands to reason, as they are likely to have the financial resources required for trans-continental travel.

Table 4: Transnational activities by period of landing

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
Since 1991	703	**95.4**	**98.8**	**64.3**	**10.9**	**32.3**	**5.4**	**17.2**	**57.1**
Before 1991	773	**85.7**	**92.1**	**71.9**	**6.0**	**13.8**	**1.2**	**12.2**	**65.4**
Probability		0.000	0.000	0.002	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.001

Table 5: Transnational activities by selected immigration class**

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
Spouse&Dep.	543	89.5	95.2	67.8	5.0	**17.9**	2.3	8.4	63.3
Family	292	92.8	95.9	69.9	5.5	29.0	2.4	21.4	48.6
Refugee	41	78.0	**81.3**	**46.3**	7.7	22.0	4.9	24.4	41.5
Independent	416	91.5	96.3	67.8	13.5	21.3	3.9	16.9	69.7
Business	55	94.5	**100.0**	**81.8**	**33.3**	38.9	**11.1**	**1.9**	**80.0**
Caregiver	22	85.7	**100.0**	72.7	**0.0**	**52.4**	**0.0**	**33.3**	**28.6**
Other	78	84.6	93.9	65.4	3.8	23.1	3.8	19.2	52.6
Probability		0.063	0.002	0.020	0.080	0.000	0.070	0.000	0.000

* Total number in the survey; the number answering each question is different and less than the total indicated here.
** Classes with fewer than 20 respondents have been omitted
Indicates highest value
Indicates lowest value
Columns printed in a light tone indicate non-significant results in chi-squared tests.

The Canadian immigrant selection system also plays an important role in transnational activities (Table 5). A small number of our respondents were admitted under a special program designed to recruit domestic servants and caregivers to Canada. While our results for this group are not definitive, they suggest that Live-in Caregivers maintain extensive social and economic linkages with family and friends in their pre-migration country, with the highest rates of keeping in regular communication, sending remittances, and retaining ownership of property. Respondents in this category do not operate businesses overseas, however, and receive few visitors from their home countries (though they travel home relatively often). Business immigrants also exhibit a distinct profile. As might be expected, they have the highest tendency to operate a business in their home country, and one in three engages in job-related trans-continental travel. In general, this group has the means to travel and host visitors, and most do so. Nearly all have family and friends overseas and all of those who do maintain regular contact with them. More than one-third maintains property overseas. In

contrast to Live-in Caregivers, however, business immigrants are very unlikely to send money home, perhaps because it is not needed given the high socio-economic status of this group.

Refugees (again, a small sub-group in our survey) exhibit the opposite profile. Given their flight from dangerous circumstances, refugees have the lowest level of contact with family and friends in their home country, and are least likely to travel there. They also receive few visitors from their home country. However, a fairly high proportion sends money to overseas friends and family.

The largest groups included in our survey, independent immigrants, their spouses and dependents, and family-sponsored immigrants, are fairly similar in terms of their transnational activities, which tend to be between the extremes set by refugees on the one hand and business immigrants on the other. A couple of distinguishing features are evident when we look more closely at differences between these groups: independent immigrants, as might be expected, are more likely to engage in work-related travel and to operate a business overseas.

There are also profound differences in transnational activities related to ethnic origin (Table 6). Those who identified themselves under the general category of eastern Asian in origin—including Chinese-, Korean-, and Japanese-Canadians—are, by far, the most transnational of our survey participants. Individuals from these backgrounds maintain the strongest links with family and friends, travel the most in both directions, have the highest tendency to maintain business interests in their home countries, and engage in the most job-related travel.[7] Of course it is worth noting that most of the business immigrants in our survey were Chinese-Canadians.

Table 6: Transnational activities by ethnic origin**

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
European/Cadn	421	87.4	93.4	67.4	7.7	10.8	1.7	8.6	70.7
Arab/W Asian	36	88.9	90.6	52.8	0.0	27.8	0.0	19.4	44.4
S Asian	255	85.9	96.8	61.6	1.8	41.2	1.6	16.9	32.5
E Asian	614	93.8	97.0	76.0	13.1	23.9	5.5	12.7	72.7
SE Asian	93	92.5	95.3	54.8	4.8	21.7	3.2	35.9	34.4
Latin Amer/Carib	30	90.0	88.9	50.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	30.0	63.3
Probability		0.002	0.020	0.000	0.099	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000

[7] In many ways this fits the analysis of transnationalism offered by Ong (1999).

The contrast between those from east Asian backgrounds and those from Latin America and the Caribbean is particularly sharp. The latter group of respondents is small in number, but appears to have relatively modest links with home countries (except for remittances). Those of European origin are also less transnational than average, especially when we look at their relative lack of economic connections (property and remittances). This probably reflects several factors: European immigrants in our survey tend to have been in Canada longer; they come from more affluent countries where remittances are less needed; and, possibly, they make more of a clear break with their previous economic activities when migrating to Canada. Two other groups are distinctive in specific ways: South Asians are by a large measure most likely to own property in their home country (in almost all cases this is India);[8] and those declaring southeast Asian origins are most likely to send remittances home (this is related to the high number of Filipinas who entered Canada as Live-in Caregivers).

Table 7: Transnational activities by interview language**

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country	Visits fr. home country
English	933	87.2	93.5	63.9	6.1	15.8	1.8	14.0	63.1
Cantonese	263	96.2	98.4	84.4	9.7	21.0	3.2	15.7	73.1
Mandarin	164	100.0	99.4	72.0	27.9	41.7	12.6	13.2	66.0
Punjabi	109	89.0	99.0	64.2	2.0	57.8	0.9	17.4	15.6
Probability		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.798	0.000

* Total number in the survey; the number answering each question is different and less than the total indicated here.
** Classes with fewer than 20 respondents have been omitted
Indicates highest value
Indicates lowest value
Columns printed in a light tone indicate non-significant results in chi-squared tests.

We can learn more about the Chinese-origin sub-group by turning to the language in which the interview took place. Our survey reveals strong differences between immigrants from the Cantonese-speaking regions of southern China and Hong Kong, compared with those from Taiwan and Mandarin-speaking parts of China (Table 7). Aside from travel, the latter group maintains more social and economic ties with their pre-migration country. Remarkably, every one of our 164 Mandarin-speaking respondents has friends and family in their home country, and virtually all keep in regular contact with those overseas. They are also far more likely to be involved in trans-Pacific work-related travel, and to own property and businesses abroad. Cantonese speakers, on the other hand, travel more regularly

across the Pacific. Punjabi-speakers tend to hold overseas property, while the fact that they receive few visitors probably reflects their recent settlement in Vancouver and their modest economic means. We also find that respondents who felt most comfortable participating in our survey in English tend to be the least transnational.

Table 8: Transnational activities by home language

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country
English only	330	83.0	92.3	66.0	9.2	9.2	1.2	9.1
English & other	579	91.2	94.5	67.0	7.5	21.3	3.1	17.4
Non-English	567	93.6	98.1	71.1	7.6	32.0	4.5	14.8
Probability		0.000	0.000	0.189	0.167	0.000	0.027	0.003

Does this mean that there is an acculturation effect visible in our results? We have already seen that more settled immigrants participate in fewer forms of transnationalism (though travel is an exception). Table 8, which divides respondents by their home language, offers some evidence on this point. Those respondents who speak a non-English language at home exclusively[9] engage in more intensive transnationalism in terms of several of the activities explored in our survey: they keep more regular contact with family and friends, and are more apt to own property and businesses in their pre-migration country. Similarly, those who only speak English in their homes are the least transnational (though a high proportion receive visitors from abroad). However, a careful look at the data demonstrates that the relationship between home language and transnationalism is far from perfect. There is in fact no statistically significant difference between language groups and their propensity to travel to home countries either generally or for work. The question on remittances also yielded ambiguous results. Rather than showing a straightforward acculturation effect, the language data may reflect the distinction between European immigrants (who have tended to embrace English as their home language) and immigrants from other parts of the world.

[8] It is notable that most of the migrants who have moved from India to Vancouver have come from the Punjab region (Walton-Roberts 2003); moreover, most are Jat caste, or farmers, which helps explain their effort to retain ownership of property abroad (see Bains and Johnston 1995).
[9] Respondents were asked to name up to three languages routinely used in their household. Answers to these questions were coded into the categories employed in Table 8.

Table 9: Transnational activities by citizenship status

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country
Canadian only	696	**86.5**	**92.2**	69.3	**4.5**	16.2	**1.0**	14.5
Canadian and other	339	93.5	**98.1**	**81.4**	8.7	**15.5**	2.4	**10.4**
Other only	441	**93.7**	98.3	**56.5**	**14.2**	**38.6**	**7.4**	**17.8**
Probability		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.015

* Total number in the survey; the number answering each question is different and less than the total indicated here.

Indicates highest value

Indicates lowest value

Columns printed in a light tone indicate non-significant results in chi-squared tests.

The argument that transnationalism may dissipate over time, or as circumstances change, is more apparent when we shift our attention to citizenship status (Table 9).[10] Here the general pattern is clearer: those who have taken up Canadian citizenship and revoked their original citizenship tend to maintain fewer transnational ties, whether social or economic. Conversely, those who have not acquired Canadian citizenship—a mix of those who have been in Canada less than 4 years; people from countries that do not allow dual citizenship and who want to retain their original citizenship; and those who do not wish to become Canadian citizens—tend to have the strongest overseas links, especially economic ones. We see the same results when examining the relationship between national identity and transnationalism (Table 10). Respondents who say that they *always* "feel Canadian" are less attached to friends and family in the pre-migration country, and maintain fewer economic linkages. Those who only *occasionally* or *never* feel a Canadian identity are engaged in more transnational lifestyles; they are six times more likely, for example, to operate a business in their home country, three times more likely to own overseas property, and between 1.5 and two times more likely to send remittance payments. Again, though, the travel variables are outliers to this pattern: the more respondents feel attached to Canada, the more they travel to their pre-migration country and the more they host visitors from it.

[10] As in the home language case, respondents were asked to name up to three citizenships. These answers were used to construct Table 9.

Table 10: Transnational activities by identification as Canadian

	number*	Family in home country	Keep in touch	Travel to home country	Job requires travel	Property in home country	Business in home country	Send $ to home country
Always	462	**85.4**	93.6	**71.3**	6.8	**18.3**	1.8	**11.2**
Most of the time	399	91.2	**93.4**	70.6	7.3	17.0	**1.5**	13.4
Sometimes	309	93.2	97.9	70.9	**3.8**	20.0	2.9	18.3
Occasionally	110	93.6	97.1	60.0	**20.0**	32.7	3.7	**21.3**
Never	160	**95.0**	**98.7**	**59.4**	16.7	**45.9**	**10.8**	15.8
Probability		0.001	0.011	0.001	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.044

* Total number in the survey; the number answering each question is different and less than the total indicated here.
Indicates highest value
Indicates lowest value
Columns printed in a light tone indicate non-significant results in chi-squared tests.

Discussion

We would not expect transnational practices to be the same in any two places. Much of the American research has been undertaken in southern California and the cities of the East Coast. Those migrants are typically of modest means and travel between relatively close origins in Central America and the Caribbean and their homes in the United States. In Vancouver, in contrast, recent immigration is dominated by sources in East Asia, principally China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea, South-east Asia, notably the Philippines and Vietnam, and South Asia, principally India. Older migration is from Europe. Movement between Vancouver and these origins is long and can only be undertaken by air, an expensive means of transport. Distance and cost are bound to affect the easy movement of transnational migrants.

It is instructive to compare the incidence of transnational activities in Vancouver with a longitudinal panel survey undertaken in Montreal (Renaud *et al.* 2002). In the fourth round of interviews with some 300 immigrants ten years after arrival, 96 percent of respondents had family in their home country, compared with 90 percent in Vancouver who specified they had friends or family in their home countries. Of the Vancouver sample, 68 percent had travelled to their home country at least once, close to the Montreal figure of 72 percent. There were also surprisingly similar likelihoods of owning property in the country of origin (22 percent in Vancouver, 24 percent in Montreal), and of owning a business there (3.2 percent in Vancouver, 2.3 percent in Montreal). In contrast remittances were sent by far fewer Vancouver immigrants, only 14 percent, compared with figures ranging between 28 percent and 67 percent in the four rounds of the Montreal panel (Renaud *et al.* 2002).

Considering that more than half the Vancouver respondents had landed in Canada more than ten years before the interview, compared with none of the Montreal group, the samples are not comparable in length of residence, a variable highly associated with the incidence of transnational activity, nor indeed in terms of immigrant countries of origin. Consequently, despite similar profiles on several items, it is difficult to know how to interpret the Vancouver-Montreal comparisons, aside from a few observations. Not surprisingly the different indicators of transnationalism reveal marked variations in incidence. With Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) we find that there is broad participation in transnational linkages among the immigrant population, though some specific activities, notably economic transactions, are limited to relatively few. The restriction of transnational entrepreneurship to a small group was also noted by the CIEP assessment of Latin American immigrants in four American cities (Portes 2001; Landolt 2001). Travel seems quite different from other indicators, and increases in incidence in both directions with increasing length of residence.

The distance from Vancouver to immigrant origins is likely a factor here, for cross-tabulations reveal that it is higher income respondents who are more likely to visit their home countries and receive visitors from them. There are a few other associations with socio-economic status. Lower-income immigrants are more likely to report owning property in their home countries, as are those reporting lower education levels, while low education attainment is also associated with an absence of homeland business ownership, and also with receiving few visitors from home.

But these are the only significant relationships between transnational activities and socio-economic status, which emerges as a weak predictor. In contrast the CIEP results showed much stronger positive associations between transnationalism, socio-economic status and length of residence. Our results are in general quite the opposite. Length of residence is significantly associated with all of our indicators, but aside from the two travel measures, all other indicators show some weakening with the passage of time. Vancouver immigrants arriving since 1991 are more than four times as likely to engage in transnational business ownership as earlier arrivals, whereas the CIEP findings showed a greater probability of transnational entrepreneurship with *increasing* length of residence. Moreover, while education is positively associated with entrepreneurship, it is seemingly randomly distributed across different income bands of immigrants in Vancouver.

In contrast to the weak showing of socio-economic status, immigration class and cultural variables in our survey show strong associations with transnational activity. Business class immigrants expressed the strongest transnational behaviour with high proclivities to maintain contact and strong tendencies to engage in economic-related travel to their home countries, reflecting the familiar profile of the East Asian astronaut household (Ong 1999; Waters 2002). While immigrants with Live-In

Caregiver status had minimal business connections home, they too kept in close contact (though not through personal travel), were the most consistent in sending remittances home and had the highest proportion owning property in their country of origin. Refugees were the second most likely to send remittances, but otherwise had moderate or low linkages. The remaining classes, those landing through family sponsorship or as independents (skilled workers) had intermediate positions, with skilled workers predictably expressing greater job-related connections, but lower levels of remittances and less property ownership.

The role of immigration status, largely independent of socio-economic status, is an important finding, but no less relevant were a series of ethno-cultural variables, reinforcing the view in the literature of substantial inter-group (as well as intra-group) variation in transnational activity. The strongest tendency in the data was for immigrants from East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea) to exhibit the highest level of homeland contact in most categories aside from remittances which was led by South-east Asia (particularly the Philippines). Mother tongue analysis showed that Mandarin-speaking regions (China, Taiwan) were the most transnational. In contrast, English-speaking groups, and national origins in Europe and (surprisingly) Latin America and the Caribbean had considerably more limited homeland contact. A consequence of these relationships was that groups self-identifying as non-white (or visible minorities) were more likely to live in a transnational field—though these differentials were not generally as great as those associated with home language.

A final area of interest is the relationship between transnational behaviour and a sense of Canadian identity. Again our results counter those of the CIEP data. Respondents who always identified as Canadian showed low levels of transnationalism, other than visits to their homeland and receiving visitors from those countries. But all economic linkages (including remittances) were very low. These relationships were significant across all of our transnational indicators—suggesting that none of them is trivial in differentiating a sense of belonging (though the direction of the relationship is reversed for the two travel items). Relationships were even stronger against a question exploring citizenship status, where the options were Canadian-only, dual citizenship, or non-Canadian status. Indeed citizenship status was the best predictor of all our variables against transnational activity. Aside once again from the two non-economic travel indicators, all the indicators showed (unlike the CIEP results) that heightened membership of a transnational field limited the probability of Canadian citizenship, and by a marked degree. For example, only 1.0 percent of immigrants with Canadian citizenship ran a business in their home country compared with 7.4 percent of those without Canadian citizenship; 4.5 percent of the former group engaged in job-related travel to their country of origin, but 14.2 percent of the latter.

This leads to our principal conclusion: whereas the American research identifies transnationalism as a form of integration, if not assimilation (Portes 2001; Kivisto 2001; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002), our Vancouver results locate membership in a transnational field among immigrants who are weakly connected to the Canadian nation state. For this group, at least at present, transnationalism is not a subset of integration, but an alternative to it.

Conclusion

In light of the few large surveys of transnational behaviour in Canada it would be unwise to press a Canadian-American contrast too far. From our analysis we would concur with the American research that transnational practices are widely shared in such routine events as maintaining social contact but are far more restricted when it comes to entrepreneurial transactions. So too there is evidently considerable variation among national-origin groups in their scale of activity, and to these differences we would also add the distinctive effects of class of immigrant landing.

But our indicators of transnationalism also diverge from the influential CIEP study in important respects. Our findings indicate that transnational entrepreneurs are far more likely to be recent immigrants and not to hold Canadian citizenship. So too they are not well-specified by socio-economic status. Our profile is closer to the original anthropological representation of transnationalism as an alternative to social and economic integration—a view reinforced in Vancouver by more focussed qualitative studies (Ley 2000, Waters 2002)—rather than to the view advanced by Portes and his team that transnational behaviour is an aid to economic integration, indeed to assimilation, in the United States for well-settled immigrants (Portes 2001, Kivisto 2001).

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