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Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

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Metropolis British Columbia

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WORKING PAPER 08-01

THE HOUSING SITUATION AND NEEDS OF RECENT IMMIGRANTS
IN THE VANCOUVER METROPOLITAN AREA

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

Census data are brought together with the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada to investigate several issues: the type and quality of housing associated with immigrants in metropolitan Vancouver; the affordability of housing for immigrants; and the impact of immigrants on the housing market.

IMPORTANCE:

Increasingly, population growth is led by immigration, especially in the larger cities of Canada such as Vancouver. Housing is a "bottom line" element in successful integration; without adequate and affordable housing, immigrants will not be able to participate in Canadian society effectively. At the same time, it is vital to understand how immigrants are transforming the housing market.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Compared with other large cities in Canada, immigrants in Vancouver are more likely to own their homes and to reside in single-detached houses. In general, therefore, immigrants experience a progressive housing career. These tendencies are apparent within six months of landing in Canada and appear to intensify over time. This high level of ownership is disproportional to the level of household income received by immigrants and indicates that they are strongly motivated to purchase property, and are willing to under-consume in other areas in order to do so. Immigrants also have a higher level of crowding than the Canadian-born, which is related to their efforts to purchase housing (i.e., by assembling more income-earners in a household). However, while the trajectory of upward mobility in the housing market is true for many, it is not universal. A significant proportion of immigrant households cannot afford to purchase housing and are instead in relatively precarious circumstances in the rental market and some are at high risk of homelessness. There are important variations in the quality and affordability of housing across different admission classes of immigrants, and between those who are of European vs. visible minority background.

IMPLICATIONS:

Immigrants have a major impact on the housing market, given their high demand for rental housing (apartments and flats) upon arrival and tendency to purchase housing over time (single-family, detached houses). The fact that many immigrants experience acute affordability problems is a significant concern, and speaks to the need for greater emphasis on the provision of affordable housing in Canada.

WORKING PAPER 08-02**AN INTRODUCTORY LOOK AT THE ACADEMIC TRAJECTORIES OF ESL STUDENTS**

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

How do the academic trajectories of ESL youth vary by ethno-cultural background and English language proficiency? What is the interaction between these two background factors?

IMPORTANCE:

In British Columbia, about \$60 000 000 a year is spent on supplemental funding to assist ESL students in achieving equitable academic outcomes, despite little knowledge of these funds' effects or most efficient applications. Canadian empirical research describing ESL academic trajectories is sparse, and somewhat contradictory. The current paper compares the graduation rates, and participation and performance in English 12 and Principles of Math 12, among the native English speakers and the subgroups of ESL students who compose BC's 1997 grade eight cohort (n=54 436).

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Trajectories vary widely by ethno-cultural group. Chinese speakers consistently achieve higher than the native English speaker baseline. Speakers of Korean and Persian languages also tend to navigate favourable trajectories. Spanish, Vietnamese and speakers of Philippino and South Asian languages achieve well below the native English speaker baseline. Students at low levels of English proficiency upon entry to grade eight also navigate lower trajectories than their peers with higher English proficiency. However, the deleterious effects of low English proficiency vary widely by ethno-cultural group.

IMPLICATIONS:

Data need to be disaggregated for decision making. The 'ESL' label masks salient differences in achievement and academic trajectories among subgroups, and the large number of high achieving Chinese speakers inflates the estimation of ESL achievement. Similarly, ESL students who require ESL service in high school do not achieve as highly as 'ESL ever' peers. Support should be directed to the subgroups most clearly in need, rather than adopting one-size-fits-all policies. More effective language and content learning may require any of the following: credit granting 'sheltered' ESL content classes taught by teachers with specialist ESL knowledge; more flexible scheduling of ESL human resources to support students within credit bearing mainstream classes; and, ongoing ESL support throughout the academic career. Finally, allowing extra time for ESL (and other) students to graduate appears to be an extremely important booster of achievement and equity among subgroups.

WORKING PAPER 08-03**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES**

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

How do levels of civic engagement among first-generation immigrants compare across immigrant groups? Are immigrants more likely or less likely to become involved in voluntary organizations if they live in a community with higher proportions of recent immigrants from the same country of origin?

IMPORTANCE:

Past research has focused mostly on differences in voluntary association activity among different ethnic groups, using self-identification measures. This research looks directly at the question of first-generation immigrants to Canada, and works with a survey (GSS 2003) with a sufficiently large sample size to distinguish between major immigrant groups.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Immigrants who do not speak English or French at home are much less likely to get involved in voluntary organizations of all types. Official language usage at home is low among immigrants from Italy, Poland, Portugal, and China/Hong Kong, but very high among immigrants from the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany,

the Netherlands and France. Even accounting for language use differences, levels of involvement (membership in a voluntary association, attend meetings, volunteer) are lower among immigrants from India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Poland and China/Hong Kong. Group density – the proportion of individuals in a community who are immigrants from the same country – matters in the case of UK immigrants, Jamaican immigrants and immigrants from China/Hong Kong, but in opposite ways: for the first two groups, immigrating into a community with a high group density leads to lower levels of civic engagement, while for Chinese immigrants, more civic engagement is expected if there is an existing Chinese community.

IMPLICATIONS:

Social integration takes different forms for different types of immigrant communities and policies devoted to the encouragement of civic participation need to take these into account. For one group, Chinese immigrants, the presence of an existing Chinese community appears to be particularly important.

WORKING PAPER 08-04

SETTLING IN: NEWCOMERS IN THE CANADIAN HOUSING MARKET, 2001–2005

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada is used to investigate the participation of immigrants in Canada's housing market in the first four years of the settlement process. The analysis focuses on the changing rate of home ownership, crowding, affordability, and problems accessing housing. Special attention is given to differences between landing classes and population groups (especially Visible Minority groups). We also consider the impact of immigrants on the housing markets of Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

IMPORTANCE:

Housing is a "bottom line" element in successful integration; without adequate and affordable housing, immigrants will not be able to participate in Canadian society effectively. At the same time, it is vital to understand how immigrants are transforming the housing market. LSIC offers researchers a new and potent tool for investigating these issues. The longitudinal component of the survey is particularly important in this respect, and enables the study of housing as a process.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

In general, the housing situation of LSIC survey respondents improves remarkably over the years covered by the survey. This is registered in a much higher rate of home ownership in the third wave of the survey (at four years after landing) compared with the first (six months after landing). Similarly, the ratio of survey respondents spending more than 30 percent of their total family income on housing drops dramatically, as does the percentage living in crowded conditions. In other words, at least according to the measures explored here, LSIC suggests that the proportion of immigrants in core housing need drops significantly in the early settlement period. This finding coincides with our earlier work (cf MBC WP #08-01) where we introduce the concept of an immigrant effect in the housing market, meaning that immigrants achieve a higher rate of home ownership than their the Canadian-born at an equivalent level of income. This positive outcome is not universally shared, however, and certain groups—notably refugees, and immigrants of Black and Middle-Eastern background—see much less improvement in their circumstances than the average survey respondent. There are also important differences across Canada's three major metropolitan areas; simply put, immigrants enter different housing markets in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver. The cost of renting or buying a dwelling are far more affordable in Montréal than the other cities. However, the profile of immigrants settling in the three cities also differs and there is a kind of convergence effect at work. Montréal draws a larger proportion of immigrants who have a lower ability to pay for housing, and immigrants to that city experience similar affordability challenges and rates of crowding of their counterparts in Toronto and Vancouver.

IMPLICATIONS:

Given that LSIC is based on a single cohort of immigrants who arrived in 2000/01, in relatively positive economic conditions, we should be wary of generalizing these findings. Moreover, approximately 35 percent of those who participated in the first wave of the survey were lost by the third (three and a half years later). Nevertheless, our findings provide a sense of the considerable impact of immigration on the rental and real estate purchase markets in major Canadian cities. These impacts occur very quickly. Our findings also provide a new perspective on the economic integration of immigrants. While we do not seek to challenge the widely accepted view that immigrants experience difficulty obtaining employment commensurate with their human capital, or the pervasive worry over the extent of low income among newcomers, we believe that the rapid acquisition of home ownership adds another dimension to this story. Over half of LSIC respondents in Vancouver, for example, Canada's most expensive housing market, lived

in owner-occupied housing by the third wave of the survey. We believe that housing data reveal something of the extent of capital transferred to Canada by immigrants (an important fact not captured by any existing data sets) and considerable wealth that is generally invisible when we only consider data on income levels.

WORKING PAPER 08-05

CANADA'S VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATION: 1967-2017

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

The goals of this paper are to examine the changing place of visible minorities in Canada within the context of the demographic, social and economic changes and to highlight the related policy initiatives which have occurred over the last four decades.

IMPORTANCE:

Projections of visible minority groups conducted by Statistics Canada in 2005 suggest that Canada's visible minority population will grow substantially by the year 2017. The majority of this growth will take place in Ontario and British Columbia, with specific concentration in the Toronto and Vancouver regions, and with some growth in various mid-size cities such as Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa. Given that on average the visible minority population will be younger than the white population (but not younger than the Aboriginal population) and that immigrants in general will be more likely to be of working age than the Canadian-born population, Canada will be increasingly reliant on both Aboriginal and visible minority groups to fill labour force requirements, particularly in Canada's large Census Metropolitan Areas.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

In social policy terms two implications need consideration. First, the cost of discrimination and racism has a profound impact on the minorities and newcomers, creating a dichotomous society prone to large-scale inequality, exclusion and resentment. Second, large-scale immigration will invariably create some level of disequilibrium in society, whereby "mainstream" and "new arrival" communities jockey for influence and power for defining the societal norms. To address these issues it is important to observe that governments in Canada have not ignored the implication of this demographic change. Various public policies have been developed.

IMPLICATIONS:

If the demographic trend is extended past 2017 it is clear that the non-white population will grow proportionally faster. Inter-marriage will both cause increasing diversity and offer us a bridge between cultures. This country will be as radically different in 2051 compared to 2001 as it is now compared to 1951. It is not clear to us that governments, and society at large, are spending the time and energy required to plan for such fundamental change.

WORKING PAPER 08-06**DESKILLING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS: REUNIFICATION AMONG TRANSNATIONAL FILIPINO FAMILIES IN VANCOUVER**

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the long-term effects of the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) among Filipino families who immigrate to Canada after the terms of this temporary worker program have been met?

IMPORTANCE:

Immigration of families following the Live-in Caregiver Program is a relatively recent phenomenon (since 1995) and there is very little known about family integration in Canada. Whilst government statistics indicate that the Filipino community is well integrated in the labour market, with very high rates of employment participation, this study indicates that these statistics are misleading and obscure potential problems among Filipino youth who have been separated from their mothers for many years.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

We assess the impact of the LCP through qualitative interviews with 27 families who have been separated by the LCP followed by family immigration to Canada. The much-anticipated family reunion typically has not been easy, and conditions of the LCP contribute to difficulties in settlement and integration. Since so many of the hopes of migration are tied to children's education and future well-being, we look very closely at the lives of the children, in particular their educational and occupational success in Canada. Analyzing the educational achievements of children in the sample, along with BC Ministry of Education data for children who speak Tagalog at home, and 2001 census data, we conclude that these children are not faring as well as might be hoped. The challenges differ depending on when a child has immigrated. Children who come

in their late teens, often having been enrolled in or even completed university in the Philippines, find themselves being sent back to high school, at adult education learning centres. Among this cohort, conditions associated with the LCP are directly reproduced in their own lives: some actually come to Canada through the LCP as their mothers have done, some experience the downward mobility from university student to low skilled worker, so typical of their mothers who have been registered in the LCP, and some repeat the experience of separation from their own children in the Philippines. Those who come at an earlier age also face significant challenges. Relative to other Asian language groups, grade point averages at graduation are low, and relatively few Tagalog-speaking students are listed on the honour roll. Roughly one quarter of the girls and over one third of the boys who speak Tagalog at home and entered the Vancouver school system in grade 8 between 1995 and 1999 did not graduate from high school. We identify a number of ways in which the LCP leads to this outcome. First, the separation and sequence of LCP followed by immigration can set up a dynamic of conflict within the family. Second, the remittances of women registered in the LCP have in some cases raised the economic standing of their families in the Philippines, and accommodating to a lower economic standing in Vancouver creates stresses. Third, women who have gone through the LCP are typically deskilled by the time their families arrive, and are working long hours in multiple jobs so they are not as available to their children as they would like. The deskilling of mothers can also create pressures for children to contribute to the household income.

IMPLICATIONS:

The LCP, a temporary worker program, is a de facto immigration program for many Filipino families and needs to be assessed in light of the implications of family separation for settlement and integration, especially for Filipino youth.

WORKING PAPER 08-07

IMMIGRANT RESIDENTIAL GEOGRAPHIES AND THE "SPATIAL ASSIMILATION" DEBATE IN CANADA,
1997-2006

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

The paper critically reviews literature published between 1997 and 2006 on immigrant residential geographies in Canada, to assess recent contributions to our understanding of the dynamic relationship between socio-economic attainment and the residential location of immigrants.

IMPORTANCE:

The geographical dynamics of immigrant settlement are an important aspect of the process of socio-economic integration, as they can reveal patterns such as residential concentration and the suburbanization of housing location among newcomers. With Census 2006 data now making their way into research laboratories in Canadian universities, it is important to take stock of existing research as a way of identifying knowledge gaps but also areas where consensus has largely been achieved.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

The paper argues that a major empirical focus of this literature has been to examine the continuing validity of the "spatial assimilation" assumption. This is the assumption that immigrants will typically follow an "up and out" pattern of residential settlement over time, in which socio-economic upward mobility is accompanied by geographic mobility out of areas of initial settlement (characterized by high concentrations of immigrant residents). Two main findings are identified: first, there is growing consensus that "ghetto" situations do not characterize the geography of newcomer settlement in Canada; second, there is some evidence of a bifurcation in the settlement pattern: while most immigrants are still likely to follow the "up and out" trajectory posited by spatial assimilation theory (modified by a growing degree of suburbanization in their initial location), some migrants are settling in neighbourhoods with high rates of owner occupation shortly after arrival. The most recent research has also highlighted the importance of examining the dynamics of the neighbourhoods where settlement takes place, rather than focusing exclusively on the incidence of mobility.

IMPLICATIONS:

The most recent findings in the literature suggest new directions for research on immigrant residential geographies, including an examination of the impacts of the changing character of neighbourhoods where settlement occurs (for example, taking into account the growing proportion of immigrants in the overall population, or analyzing neighbourhood changes related to land use and other government policies), testing the validity of the "up and out" assumption across generations, studying the suburbanization of settlement patterns and the formation of enclaves by well-to-do newcomers, and expanding the choice of methods used to measure and describe geographical patterns.

WORKING PAPER 08-08

ENCLAVES, PEER EFFECTS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

Does attending school with more peers from a student's own ethno-cultural background improve or hinder their academic progress?

IMPORTANCE:

The tendency for immigrants to settle in local enclaves means that their children often attend schools where a large proportion of their peers are from the same ethno-cultural group. If academic achievement is affected by the characteristics of school peers, this tendency may influence the academic success of immigrant children. These effects may be positive or negative. Acquisition of host country language skills may be slower in enclave schools. On the other hand, social and support networks may be stronger in more concentrated schools. Resources, social norms, and attitudes towards school may also vary among ethno-cultural groups, and influence peer outcomes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

We find that the characteristics of school/grade peers affect student achievement. Achievement is higher for students if they attend school with a larger proportion of Chinese home language peers, and is lower if they attend school with a larger proportion of Punjabi home language peers. These peer effects are the same regardless of a student's own home language, suggesting that linguistic or ethno-cultural similarity to peers does not in itself play a significant role in immigrant success. Rather, the human capital and cultural norms of peers appears to be what matters. Attending an enclave school provides minor benefits to Chinese home language students and major costs to Punjabi home language students.

IMPLICATIONS:

The implications that can be drawn from this research are limited by the fact that our methodology exploits random variations in peer composition that are generally small. Effects that may come into play through "critical mass" mechanisms therefore are not captured in our estimates. In addition, our approach isolates peer effects associated with the characteristics of students in the same school and grade, and will provide no information about peer effects at a higher level of aggregation like the school or neighborhood. With these caveats in mind, our results imply that the challenges faced by immigrant children from communities with below-average levels of human capital may be magnified when those students are concentrated in ethnic enclaves. Additional

resources may be required to ensure the academic success of children in these communities. School policies that increase the extent to which ethno-cultural groups are sorted across schools may magnify differences in average achievement between immigrants and non-immigrants, and between different immigrants groups.

WORKING PAPER 08-09

EXPLORING LINKAGES BETWEEN THE COUNTRY OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COMPLETION AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVITY OF IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

Using 2006 Census data pertaining about 7.6 million workers of core working ages (25-54), the paper poses the question about the extent to which the completion of post-secondary training in Canada or abroad may have facilitate workers' level and pace of economic activity. It also indirectly addresses issues related to labour market participation and employment/unemployment chances by completing of post-secondary education in Canada or in countries of similar/dissimilar educational structure (e.g. OECD vs. Non OECD countries)

IMPORTANCE:

This research is relevant because the place of post-secondary training of immigrants is a good proxy for the quality of education brought from abroad and its capacity to be transferred to the Canadian market. It has also implications for those who are Canadian-born who have decided to complete their post-secondary education elsewhere and return to work back in Canada.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

The likelihood of obtaining Canadian training increased with the length of immigrants' stay in Canada. Individuals with Canadian training had better labour market activity outcomes than those with foreign post-secondary training. However, there were also noticeable differences in activity levels between those trained in Western educational systems such as France and Germany compared to those trained in non-Western ones such as Pakistan, China PR and South Korea. Participation and employment rates were found to be consistently higher in the former group compared to the latter. A multi-variate analysis of cross-classifications suggests that, although important variation in activity levels is attributable to age, gender, recency of immigration and region of resi-

dence, the completion of post-secondary training cannot be discarded as an explanatory factor in its own right.

IMPLICATIONS:

The study highlights again the issue of the utilization of post-secondary education credentials in the labour market and of the possible policy routes opened for the various stakeholders such as individuals, governments, licensing bodies and employers. Problems related to the portability and transparency of credentials cut across different segments of the workforce which include immigrants of different lengths of stay in Canada and the Canadian-born trained elsewhere.

WORKING PAPER 08-10

EXPLORING IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S FEARS OF CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

How do immigrant women understand their fear of crime? What factors contribute to their fears? How do these fears influence their daily routines and what types of strategies do immigrant women employ to remain safe?

IMPORTANCE:

This project will help us to examine how crime prevention strategies directed at women and members of racial/ethnic communities address the needs of immigrant women.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Fear of criminal victimization for immigrant women is fraught with multiple layers of concerns shaped by issues of gender, race and class differences. The respondents in this study have shown that while they share similar concerns with women generally over fears of being in public, they have also highlighted more nuanced differences in how their fears are influenced by their identities as racialized women. Their responses echo those of other researchers who note that the interlocking systems of race, class and gender generate experiences that differ materially for each combination of traits. The fears expressed by women in this study are a product of daily incivilities, mixed media messages about women's responsibility for "protecting themselves" and the underlying threat of personal and/or sexual attack. For racialized women, these incivilities include the possibility of encountering racist conflict or racial discrimination in public. The self-regulating behaviours the respondents engaged in are not just a response to their fears, but it is also a way make daily life manageable so that they are able to engage in their normal routines and activities. In the absence of their ability to stop crime from occur-

ring, the respondents take the only action they can—imposing limits and boundaries on their own activities to prevent the possibility of becoming a crime victim.

IMPLICATIONS:

This study highlights how making immigrant women feel safer in public involves recognizing the different issues and concerns women hold. It also points to the need to speak to women and include them in the preparation and implementation of crime prevention programs.

WORKING PAPER 08-12

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR NATIVES,
IMMIGRANTS AND DESCENDANTS IN SWEDEN

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

The aim of this paper is to explore the determinants of voting within the context of social inclusion by comparing immigrants, their descendants and native citizens in Sweden while controlling for a range of socio-economic, demographic characteristics and contextual factors.

IMPORTANCE:

Voting in free elections is often viewed as the most basic and important form of political participation. As such, the level of participation can be seen as an indicator of how well democracy is faring.

FINDINGS:

We find that after controlling for demographic, socio-economic and contextual characteristics, acquisition of citizenship makes a real difference to the odds of voting and is therefore, a likely and powerful indicator of social inclusion. Immigrants who obtain citizenship are far more likely to vote than those who do not. Arguably, some of this may be attributed to the number of years of residency in the country. However, even non-citizens born in Sweden have substantially lower odds of voting. Somewhat surprisingly, age at immigration does not make a substantial difference to the odds of voting.

IMPLICATIONS:

At a time when States in North America and Europe are looking to restrict citizenship, it is worthwhile noting that the act of granting citizenship has substantive implications for the ability to build social inclusion.

WORKING PAPER 08-13

INTEGRATION OF YOUNG FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCOPHONE SCHOOLS IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the academic, social needs and expectations of francophone African students enrolled in schools operated by the Conseil scolaire francophone [Francophone Education Authority] in BC? And what are the specific challenges that all academic partners—school administrators, teachers, community workers, and students' parents—are facing, in order to facilitate academic and social integration for these students?

IMPORTANCE:

This exploratory study, the first of its kind to be done in the francophone African population in BC, brings into light the importance to contextualize and address the issues of academic and social integration of young francophone African immigrants from a dynamic perspective, and to build (inter)cultural competence among the players in the educational system.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

1. The study shows the complexity of the situations that exist, in terms of the migrants' status, origins, languages and cultures and their previous social and academic experiences. Some difficulties that are facing young African students in school are associated with their pre-migration experiences, while others are more specific to the francophone schools. In particular, community workers and teachers report the academic and cultural disconnects as major obstacles to the integration of students. Also, there is a shared concern among the partners involved in their education about including students from the francophone African community, although there is a disconnect between the various spaces where the representation occurs.
2. The lack of collaboration between school-community partners and school-family seems to be an issue. However, the CSF has recently hired liaison workers to facilitate the integration of young immigrants.
3. The triple minoritization of young Africans (immigrants/refugees, francophones, visible minority) and the power imbalance between Anglophones and Francophones filter the identity experience of young Africans in their new integration context.
4. For some parents knowledge in both languages is seen as a tool for social mobility, while for others acquiring fluency in English is the primary tool for social success in the new environment.

5. Community workers report that some children are not admitted to the schools because their parents do not speak French. We consider that the issue is more complex than simply “not speaking French”, however the denial of their francophone identity felt by the parents could discourage other African parents to register their children in the francophone schools, to avoid the risk of the same rejection.

IMPLICATIONS:

In the light of the data collected, it would now seem essential that a larger study be conducted involving all francophone African students enrolled in the CSF’s schools and that a comparative perspective be incorporated by expanding the research to the provincial level.

WORKING PAPER 08-14

THE IMPACT OF SECURITY BASED RACIAL PROFILING OF MUSLIMS

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

The overarching question to our participants was: “Has the current government national security apparatus caused overt suspicion upon the activities of yourself or those you know?” To gain a sense of how participants understand racial profiling, researchers used eight guiding questions, modifying them when needed, to allow participants a wide range of entry points through which their narrative could take shape.

IMPORTANCE:

This research is the first of its kind to investigate the impact of security based racial profiling of Muslims in Canada. Our primary research goals were to discover how participants view the concept of racial profiling, whether they have experienced it or not, and to what extent, if any, their lives have changed as a result of the broad range of security measures now practiced by Canadian law enforcement and intelligence officials. In recording their narratives, many of which recount deeply troubling experiences of being singled out by an authority of the state, we seek to emphasize the value of personal experience as a means of generating a wider dialogue among all members of Canadian society, including policymakers, security officials, legal professionals, and advocacy groups.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Participants overwhelmingly expressed the concern that state officials target Muslims with greater scrutiny and suspicion than others on the basis of religious identity, without regard to age, ethnicity, gender or place of birth. We learned that the “national security”

rationale currently justifies the screening and surveillance practices that have raised the alarm that racial profiling is happening in Canada. The claim that national security is at risk, largely uncontested by mainstream Canadian political officials and media commentators since the calamity of 9/11/01, gives endurance to the notion that religious identity can, despite the protections afforded by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, provide a basis for treating an individual with greater suspicion. This suspicion has had a wide range of effects on the personal lives of participants, in the economic, social, media and educational arenas, in which our study participants live, work and interact with fellow Canadians, in ways that compound the socio-economic, bread-and-butter challenges many of them face daily. Participants express an understanding that few spaces are neutral anymore; that the expanded powers of police and security agents mean that no cultural or religious Muslim gathering place is likely to escape surveillance.

IMPLICATIONS:

We find that the impact of racial profiling in Canada on participants' feelings overall, of belonging to a civil society, of enjoying fully all rights and freedoms guaranteed by citizenship are sufficiently negative to render more or less irrelevant the contention that there is a valid distinction to be made between the perception and the practice of racial profiling. In other words, racial profiling is a vital community concern which calls for state responses that reach beyond denial of its existence. In this regard, racial profiling mirrors security concerns as a socially constructed reality. Our overall recommendation is that there needs to be greater transparency about what state agencies are doing and why. There also needs to be greater understanding of how and why this practice is experienced as harmful.

WORKING PAPER 08-15

ABORIGINAL INCOME DISPARITY IN CANADA

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

What does Aboriginal income disparity look like in Canada? In particular, we examine economic disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of: different types of 'Aboriginality'; incomes and earnings; the return to education; glass ceilings and sticky floors; and geographic location, urbanity and remoteness.

IMPORTANCE:

We show in this paper that Aboriginal people constitute by far the most economically disadvantaged ethnic communities in Canada. Their economic outcomes are worse by an order of magnitude than the outcomes of other disadvantaged groups, such as South Asians and Blacks. However, unlike other ethnic minorities, they are essentially unstudied by mainstream economists.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Aboriginal men and women face severe earnings disparity relative to majority persons with similar characteristics such as age and education. This disparity is on the order of 30 to 50 per cent. Within the Aboriginal population, registered Indians fare worst, persons with self-reported Aboriginal identity fare somewhat better, and persons with Aboriginal ancestry (but not identity or registry) fare better still. Although it is well documented that Aboriginal people have very poor educational outcomes, we find that even those who attain high levels of education face substantial earnings disparity. Indeed, we see little evidence of economic integration even at the highest levels of schooling. That labour market disparity is important even for Aboriginal people with high levels of education suggests that glass ceilings may be one driver of economic disparity. However, our investigation of glass ceilings belies this. In fact, we observe something more like a "sticky floor", wherein the most severe disparity is actually at the bottom of the conditional earnings distribution, and disparity is smaller—though still present—at the top of the conditional earnings distribution. We observe a great deal of variation in measured Aboriginal earnings disparity across Canadian cities. Past research has suggested larger co-ethnic populations can reduce the level of disparity for group members. Unfortunately, we find that this is not the pattern for Aboriginal people—indeed, it seems that the greater the size of an urban Aboriginal community, the worse the economic outcomes for its members.

IMPLICATIONS:

There is virtually no economic research on Aboriginal peoples' issues in Canada (or, indeed, worldwide). Thus, there is little research to guide policy. This may explain (in part) why 12 billion dollars per year spent by the Federal government on Aboriginal programming does not seem to 'do the trick'. Aboriginals comprise 1 to 3 per cent of the population of Canada, and (due to high birthrates) they are among the fastest-growing ethnic groupings in Canada. We find evidence that Aboriginal people face extreme economic disparity in many dimensions. Consequently, all analyses of and policy approaches to economic inequality and poverty in Canada must face Aboriginal people's issues head-on.