

- Title:** 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.