



SESSION 5

FEB. 17, 2022

Suburban migration: Interrogating the intersections of global migration and suburban transformation

Chair: Zhixi Zhuang, Ryerson University

**Suburbanization and migrant entrepreneurship in the U.S.,
Cathy Yang Liu, Georgia State University**

**Stuck in the suburbs? Socio-spatial exclusion of migrants in Shanghai,
Jie Shen, Fudan University**

**Housing new Canadians on the “edge of the suburbs” in Vancouver: A case
study of immigrant renters in Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond and Abbotsford,
Carlos Teixeira, University of British Columbia Okanagan**

**Ryerson
University**

**Canada Excellence
Research Chair in
Migration & Integration**

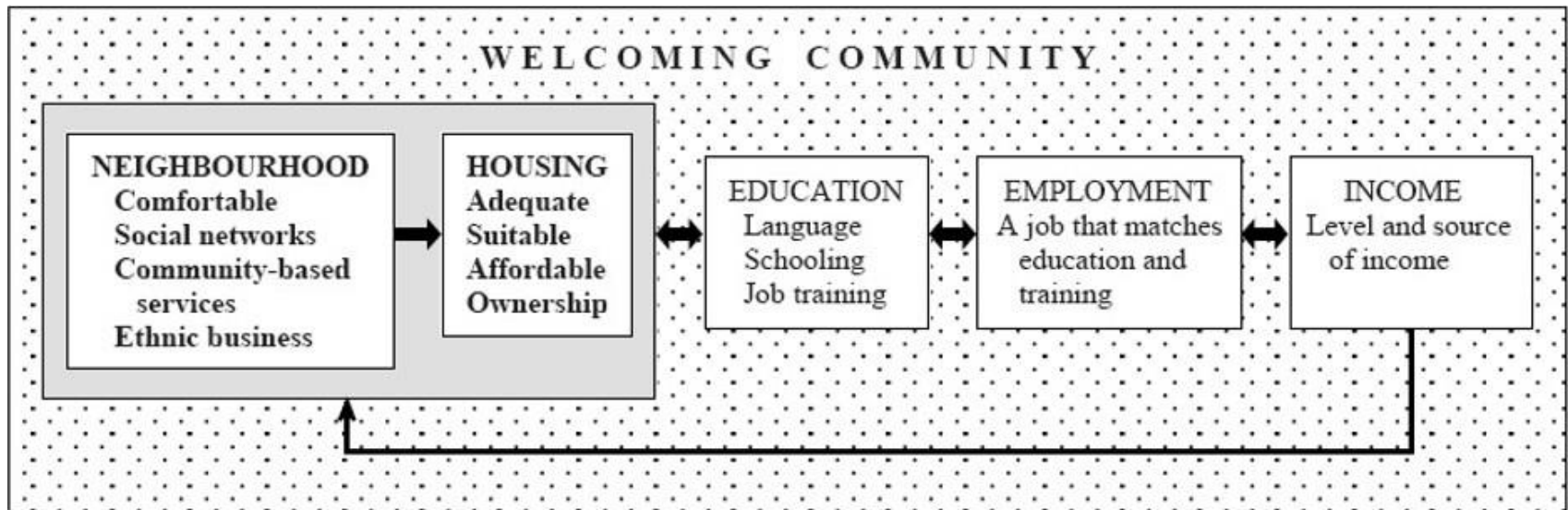
**HOUSING NEW CANADIANS ON THE “EDGE OF THE
SUBURBS” IN VANCOUVER: A CASE STUDY OF THE
SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING EXPERIENCES OF
IMMIGRANT RENTERS IN BURNABY, SURREY,
RICHMOND AND ABBOTSFORD, WITH
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY DIRECTIONS**

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- The successful integration of immigrants into a new society is based on their attainment of several basic needs, of which one of the most important is access to **ADEQUATE and AFFORDABLE HOUSING**



Source: Adapted from Murdie and Teixeira, 2003.

Figure 1. The importance of a welcoming community, of neighbourhood and housing in immigrant and refugee integration.

HOUSING RESEARCH IN CANADA

- Access to adequate and affordable housing has long been a concern in cities such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal --- major “port of entries” for new immigrants and refugees

WHAT ABOUT THE INNER (OLD) AND OUTER (NEW) SUBURBS?

- It is also an increasing issue in the growing outer suburbs of major metropolitan areas where the *SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT SERVICES IS LIMITED*. Within this context **BURNABY, SURREY, RICHMOND** and **ABBOTSFORD** are good study areas.

- **GAPS in the Literature --- There is very little published data/literature in Canada on the suburbanization of immigrants' housing experiences in the INNER (OLD) and OUTER (NEW) suburbs.**

Literature:

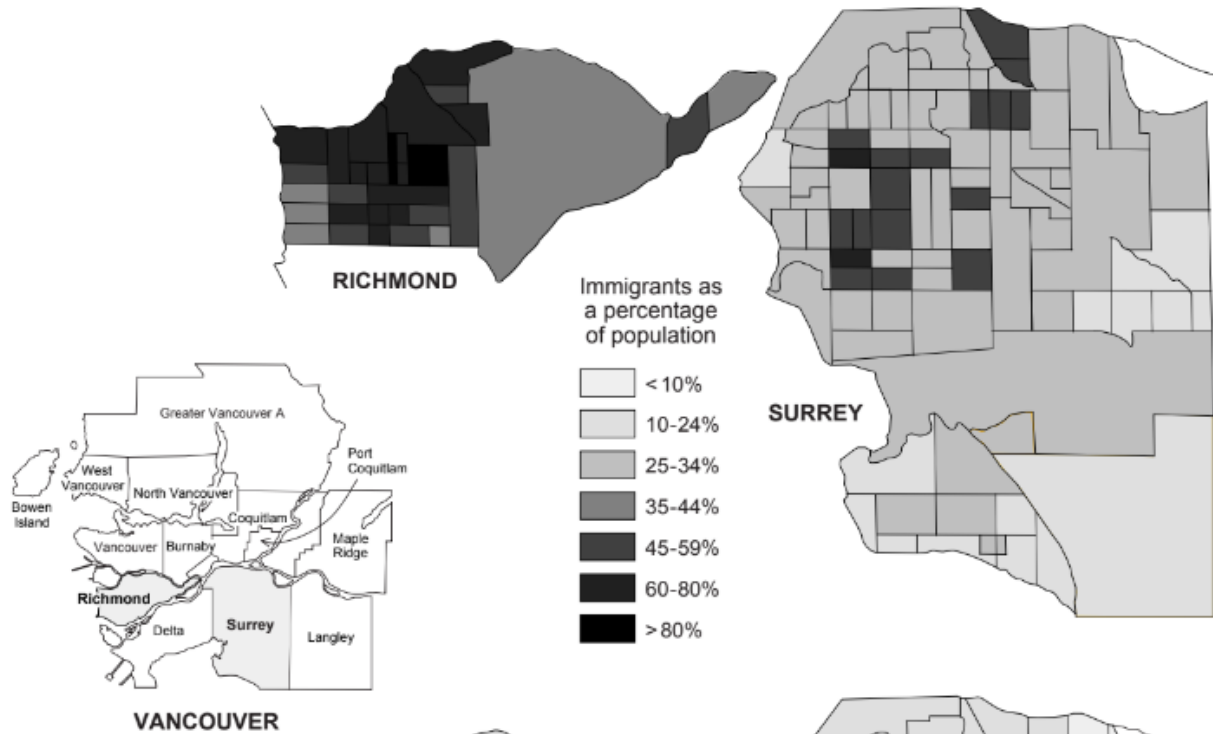
- **Bunting, Walks and Fillion, 2004**
- **Fiedler, Schuurman and Hyndman, 2006**
- **Hiebert, 2017//Hiebert, Mendez and Whyly, 2008**
- **Kataure and Walton-Roberts, 2015)**
- **Lo et al., 2010**
- **Murdie and Skop, 2012**
- **Preston, Murdie et al., 2009**
- **Teixeira, 2010, 2014, 2017// Salinas and Teixeira, 2020**

- This paper explores immigrant renters' SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES, including their access to local services and their HOUSING EXPERIENCES and OUTCOMES in the suburbs of Vancouver.

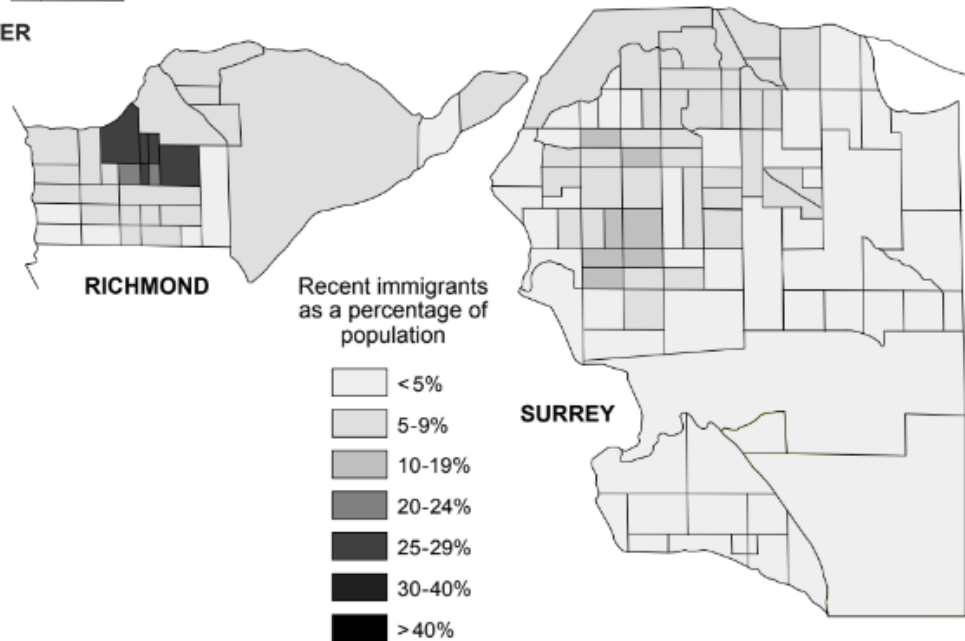
RESEARCH QUESTIONS GUIDING THIS STUDY

1. What are the *socio-demographic profiles* of immigrants living in the suburbs?
2. Does available *housing* matter in their decision to locate in the suburbs?
3. What *housing services* exist to support immigrant settlement in the suburbs?

4. What is their *current housing situation*, and what barriers (e.g., ethnic background/race, language, income, source of income) have they faced in locating and obtaining affordable housing in a suitable neighbourhood?
5. Are immigrants at risk of “*hidden homelessness*” in the suburbs? What strategies are they using to cope? Do their housing conditions change over time?
6. What integrative role, if any, does a *welcoming community* play in the successful inclusion of immigrants in the suburbs?
7. What *policy changes* are recommended to remedy issues identified in this study?



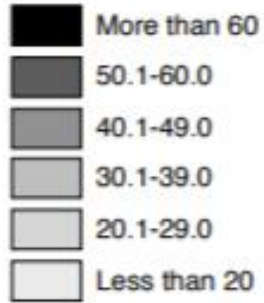
VANCOUVER



RICHMOND

SURREY

Immigrants as a percentage of total population



* = Indian Reserves

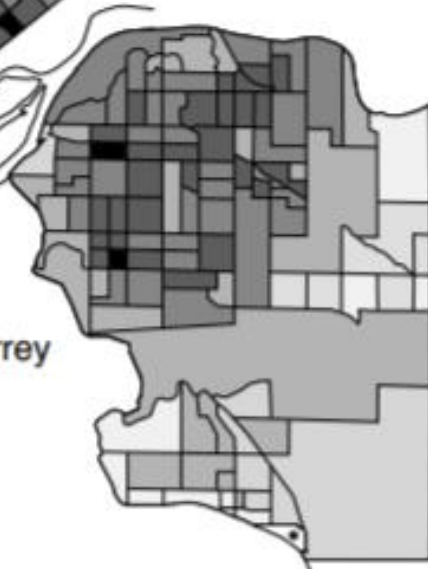
Greater Vancouver & Abbotsford



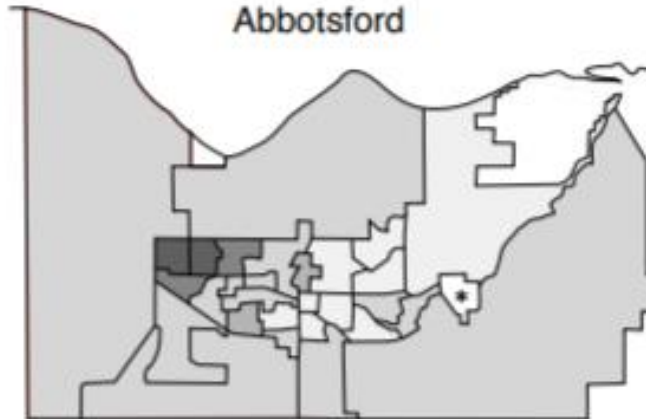
Burnaby



Surrey



Abbotsford



DATA COLLECTION

SUMMER 2010

Informal Interviews:

15 Key Informants

Focus Groups* (#7):

- 111 Recent Immigrants
- (88 Renters/Homeowners = 23)

• **TOTAL = 176 RECENT IMMIGRANT RENTERS**

- Time of arrival in Canada: Study A/2010 - (2000-2009) and Study B/2019 - (2008-2018)
- Sources: Teixeira 2010, 2014 and 2017// Salinas and Teixeira, 2020
- * At the end of each focus group, all participants filled up a five page questionnaire.

SPRING 2019

Informal interviews:

60 Key informants

Questionnaire Survey:

- 129 Recent Immigrants
- (88 Renters/41 Homeowners)

FOCUS GROUPS / QUESTIONNAIRE

Research Questions / Themes:

- 1. Socio-demographic profile of immigrants**
- 2. Transitions: From source country to Canada**
- 3. The housing search process**
- 4. Housing experiences / challenges in the rental / homeownership markets**
- 5. Present housing situation in the suburbs**
- 6. The strategies used to cope with housing challenges / barriers**
- 7. Services to support immigrants settlement in the suburbs**
- 8. Outcomes: Satisfaction with housing and neighbourhood**
- 9. Recommendations / advice on improving housing for new immigrants in the suburbs**

FINDINGS

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Participants (N=176 – Recent Immigrants / Renters)

- Most participants were born in Asia (China, Philippines, India...), Middle East (Iraq...) and Mexico
- Female (58.5%); Married/Common Law (64.5%); Mean age (40); Landed immigrant/Citizen (66%)
- Highest education – “*Some university/Post secondary education*” (80%); Main Activity – “*Working at a job or self-employed*” (59.3%); “*Seeking employment*” (20%)
- Ability to speak English – “*Fluent/Very good*” (61.4%)

SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES IN THE SUBURBS OF VANCOUVER

A. Initial Temporary Housing:

- **Group housing – Important role played by relative/friends from the same ethnic background and religious organizations**
- **Settlement services played a minor role/finding housing**
- **Little Government support on arrival --- finding housing/jobs**
- **First year in Canada is the most difficult for newcomers**

B. Sharing Accommodation with Relatives / Friends:

- Respondents recognized more advantages (savings/rents; cultural comfort/integration...) than disadvantages (overcrowding; lack of privacy; family tensions...) of initially living with relatives/friends

C. Human Capital, Income and the Labour Market:

- Most agreed that high levels of education do NOT necessarily translates into good jobs --- most respondents were not satisfied with the type of jobs (low-paying) they had --- NO recognition of their credentials/major problem/integration into a new society
- [Low paying jobs/low incomes --- affordability problems/poor quality of housing]

HOUSING EXPERIENCES IN THE RENTAL HOUSING MARKET

A. Financial Difficulties / Housing Costs:

- High percentage of respondents spending 30% or more of their income on shelter [30% - 50%= 39.6%] [More than 50%=45%]

B. Constrained Residential Mobility:

- Low paying jobs - Less choices – What to rent/live --- Uncertainty/future moves?
- 30% of participants indicated they felt discriminated by landlords --- limitations/to improve their housing conditions

C. Housing Trajectory:

- Sharing accommodation on arrival in Canada (65%) -- Basement apartments -- quite often of poor quality and in overcrowded conditions --- “Survival strategy” -- a form of “Hidden Homelessness”? -- For how long?

D. Reasons for Moving (Present Residence):

- Housing costs/rents too expensive
- Quality/Housing conditions

E. Voluntary vs. Involuntary (“forced”) move:

- Involuntary (“forced”) move = 24.4%

F. Housing Search --- Information Sources Used:

- **Relatives and friends from the same ethnic background (co-ethnics and social networks)**
- **Social media/internet/Graigslist/local newspapers**
- *Note: Very few sought or received assistance from government or non-government organizations*

G. Housing Search --- A “Difficult” - Stressful Task:

- **Low incomes compared to high rents/housing costs**
- **Type/size of housing/location**
- **Lack of in-depth and reliable housing information about the local rental housing market**

● *H. Coping/Survival Strategies:*

- **Renting a basement/sharing accommodation with relatives and friends**

I. Current Housing Situation:

- **Current housing type – Apartment w/less than 4 stories (35%); Basement apartments (20%)**
- **Number of persons in current dwelling – 5 persons or more (39%)**
- **Living in subsidized housing (7%) vs. On wait list (21%)**

J. Residential Satisfaction (“very dissatisfied/somewhat dissatisfied”):

- **Current dwelling (41.36%)**
- **Current Neighbourhood (45%)**

K. Moves / Residential Mobility?

- **Most aspire to become homeowners in Canada – the ultimate dream!**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need for more aggressive, *wider distribution of housing / job information* by the Canadian government overseas and for immigrants upon arrival in Canada
- Cooperation and partnership between *all levels of government* to provide more *funding for affordable housing* (for-profit and non-profit) in the suburbs → It can also be a major step towards ensuring the well-being of the suburbs growing population, including *low-to moderate-income immigrant renters*
- What about the role of the *private and the non-profit sector*? More “dialogue” is needed between governments and the private sector → Role and impact of Canada’s National Housing Strategy?

- **More comprehensive housing information be available by the Government and community organizations/NGOs:**
 - Housing prices/rents
 - Vacancy rates
 - Workshops for newcomers
 - Housing web site in different languages
 - Legislation - tenant's/landlord's rights and responsibilities

In sum,

- a)** Few community organizations in the suburbs of Vancouver offer specialized housing services, information, and assistance to recent immigrants about the local housing markets
- b)** There is an urgent need for more community organizations/settlement services specializing in the provision of *ethno-specific settlement services/housing programs* ---Need for “*housing specialists*” → Important role in the housing search process/housing outcomes
- c)** Education/better information and more laws *against discrimination* (e.g., stereotyping; level and source of income...) in the rental housing market

FUTURE RESEARCH

- *More longitudinal research is needed to clarify immigrants' housing histories/housing trajectories over time: how they adjust to complex and expensive housing markets; how they access affordable, adequate and suitable housing; and how they settle and integrate into Canadian suburban societies?*
- *There is need for more exploration of immigrants' use of personal social networks versus service agencies, and for comparative research in other suburban housing (rental/homeownership) markets*

- *Discrimination* has been recognized as a barrier to equal access in Canadian housing markets, but few studies have explored discrimination, particularly with regard to *ethnic and racial differences* in the suburbs of Canada's major metropolitan areas
- There is need to explain the “forces” that contribute to immigrants' *involuntary residential concentration* in certain neighbourhoods in suburban rental markets, including the role of *gatekeepers* such as landlords, housing managers, real estate agents...

- **More qualitative research is needed to clarify how *unaffordable and/or poor quality rental housing* affects social exclusion, segregation and integration among recent immigrants, as well as how *adequate and affordable housing* benefits immigrant households**
- **Web-based resources, including the *social media* have the potential to play an increasingly important role in the settlement and housing experiences of recent immigrants in the suburbs, but to date little research has been produced in Canada (e.g., amount, quality and biases of housing information provided by these sources in the suburban rental market...) → Impact? Formation of housing sub-markets...?**

Acknowledgements

- The author would like to thank all the immigrants and key informants who participated in this study, and all organizations for their advice and help in recruiting study participants. Thanks also to Anabel Lopez Salinas for sharing with me her in-depth knowledge about the Latino communities in B.C./Vancouver and for co-authoring a paper with me (2020) focussing on the “Settlement and housing experiences of recent Mexican immigrants in Vancouver suburbs” (GeoJournal).