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Immigration and the City

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Cultural and racial heterogeneity is one of the defining characteristics of the immigration that has shaped Canada and the United States, particularly in the countries' major urban centres. In recent decades, the source countries of immigration have also changed, from continental Europe to non-European countries (e.g., Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East). Socio-economic disparity among immigrants is another characteristic of this "new" wave of immigration. Both "old" and "new" immigration waves have played a key role in shaping the richly complex social, economic, religious, and political landscape of both countries' urban and suburban landscapes. Today, both countries' major gateway cities are characterized by a multiethnic mix of immigrant groups settled in a diverse array of neighbourhoods and diaspora communities. The latter provide excellent social laboratories to study "immigration and the city," and to observe how immigration, and its growing ethnic and racial diversity, affects urban structures and processes, including their "ethnic imprint" left on cities. However, despite the fact that immigrants and their descendants form an important segment of the total population of the major metropolises in the United States and Canada, comparative scholarly work on the rich history of their settlement experiences, community formation/structure and their impact in major "gateway cities" remains extremely limited (see the most recent work by: Qadeer 2016; Teixeira, Li and Kobayashi 2012 and Frazier, Darden and Henry 2009). In the "age of migration" this timely book by Fong and Berry thus makes an important contribution to the study of immigration in cities in the United States and Canada. As the authors note, this book largely focusses on the settlement and acculturation of immigrants in both countries. More specifically, it explores how geography shapes settlement in cities and key aspects of immigrant housing attainment; community, business, and economic activity; and contributions to cosmopolitan life.

The social and economic life of immigrants, including their integration in cities is an increasingly important topic. How urban forms shape immigrants' integration patterns and how their adaptation changes these forms are key questions guiding this study. In answering them, Fong and Berry provide an invaluable perspective on how immigrants shape the structure of cities and how these cities, in turn, accommodate the immigrants' culturally diverse needs and preferences. Drawing insight from a rich multidisciplinary literature spanning migration and ethnic studies, social and cultural geography, economic and urban sociology, this well-structured, comprehensive manuscript offers an in-depth understanding of the working of immigrant urban communities, institutions and businesses.

The book begins by defining the main characteristics defining contemporary immigration to major cities in the United States and Canada, as well as the characteristics of the urban context where immigrants settle. The authors then proceed to a summary of the classical sociological explanations/perspectives in the early twentieth century and explore how new scholarly perspectives/explanations attempt to address some of the limitations

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of the classic explanations/perspectives. The authors examine four neighbourhood types (mixed, gentrified, economically polarized, and immigrant suburban) that have been largely shaped by the process and outcomes of immigrant integration. Chapter 3 focuses on immigrant housing attainment and “housing careers,” and on how cities are increasingly being shaped by immigrants’ housing decisions. Chapter 4 focus is turned to the social and economic activities that bind immigrants together as well as the emergence of the “ethnoburb” and the integral role of transnational activities within immigrant communities. Chapter 5 is an in-depth discussion of ethnic economies and businesses, and how the latter benefit from immigrant community. The authors also review the concepts of “immigrant enclave economy” and “ethnic economy”. Chapter 6 reviews the complex, two-way flow of influence between immigrants and food; leisure activities in global cities, especially sports; and how immigrants’ identity and culture have shaped the landscape of the built environment. The authors remind us that “New kinds of data that measure the behaviors of immigrants can help social scientists understand this complexity in ways that were not possible using conventional socio-demographic information from United States and Canadian Censuses” (p. 103). Building on this, the authors explore, in the next chapter how the emerging field of time-use data can shed light on immigrant adaptation and experience. The authors conclude with the study’s major implications, which can be summarized as follows: (a) the adaptation processes and outcomes of immigrants in cities have become more complicated; (b) the socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds of immigrants have strong influences on the process of adaptation and acculturation, which in turn shape the urban form, (c) urban forms shape the outcomes and processes of integration among immigrants, and (d) new measures and approaches are needed to better describe complex processes of adaptation and acculturation. In their final remarks, the authors underline that: “as immigrants settle in a city, their integration patterns and outcomes shape the city’s development. At the same time, the forms of the host city shape their integration. This dual process creates a complex picture that is further obscured by increasing diversity and changes in urban structures. New forms of research, such as time-use data, can help clarify these fascinating developments.” (p. 130)

Immigration and major urban centres in the United States and Canada are in transition, their geographies being reworked. This book represents an excellent and timely study on the settlement and acculturation of immigrants in both countries as well as on the complex forces shaping their major cities. It helps us to better understand the urban, social, cultural and economic landscapes of increasingly culturally diverse cities across both countries, by examining how immigrants integrate and shape/impact the internal structure of these cities and their growing suburbs and how cities grew to become so ethnically and racially diverse. Given the significance of the questions raised by the authors throughout the book, I hope it will encourage further comparative research on the settlement experiences, integration and suburbanization process of “old” and “new” immigrant groups in both countries to better understand which are more successful than others when integrating into a new society/city and why. This book has a wealth of useful information, as well as policy implications. Not only do the authors achieve their main objectives and clearly answer the main research questions guiding the eight chapters of this book, they do so in a remarkable way, delivering a well-organized study of interest to both academics, including undergraduate and graduate students in different disciplines (sociology, geography, economics, planning, ethnic and urban studies) as well as policymakers and government officials interested in the integration and impact of immigrants in North American cities.

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