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Spatial Residential Patterns of Aboriginals and their Socio-economic Integration in Selected Canadian Cities

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Introduction

In recent years, the Aboriginal population of Canada has been increasing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. Between 1996 and 2001, the non-Aboriginal population of Canada increased by 8.58%, while the Aboriginal population increased by 19.98%. About 35.9% of the Aboriginal population lives in the 23 census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Canada, a proportion that has not changed since 1996 (Statistics Canada 2003). Though this is lower than the 62.5% of non-Aboriginal Canadians who live in metropolitan areas, it is clear that Aboriginal people have a large presence in Canadian urban areas. This situation is likely to continue, and, in fact, the urban Aboriginal population can even be expected to increase (Peters 2000).

A notable feature of the growth of the metropolitan Aboriginal population is its unevenness across the country. Some smaller metropolitan areas in Quebec, such as Sherbrooke, Chicoutimi, and Trois-Rivières, experienced negative growth, and even Montreal experienced lower-than-average population growth of Aboriginals (**Table 16.1** – page 264). The two largest CMAs (Toronto and Vancouver) also exhibited below-average growth at around 11% during the last decade. In comparison, some metropolitan areas in southwestern Ontario and in the western provinces showed greater than average Aboriginal population growth. Kitchener, Windsor, and Calgary each showed increases of more than 40% over the last ten years. The three metropolitan areas with the highest proportional populations of Aboriginal origin (about 10%) are Winnipeg, Regina, and Saskatoon. They did not show greater-than-average growth in their Aboriginal populations. Evidently, the Aboriginal population of Canada is redistributing according to changing migration patterns. The causes for this redistribution could be many, such as local economic conditions, the proximity of reserves to metropolitan areas, and the dynamics of on-reserve/off-reserve living conditions in the different provinces.

Our primary interest in this study is not so much the broader spatial patterns of the Aboriginal population, but rather their patterns within metropolitan areas at the small area level. Aboriginals in Canada have their distinct cultures and

Table 16.1. Aboriginal population in Canada's major metropolitan areas, 1996-2001

Census Metropolitan Areas	1996	2001	Percent change
Canada (total)	27296859	29639035	8.58
Aboriginal (total)	1101955	1319890	19.78
Calgary	23850	33735	41.45
Chicoutimi	2535	2110	-16.77
Edmonton	44130	55040	24.72
Halifax	7795	10870	39.45
Hamilton	10450	12865	23.11
Kitchener	5785	8310	43.65
London	7710	9865	27.95
Montreal	43675	49315	12.91
Oshawa	5705	7630	33.74
Ottawa	29415	33535	14.01
Québec	8100	10045	24.01
Regina	14570	16750	14.96
Saint John	2320	3155	35.99
Saskatoon	18160	21975	21.01
Sherbrooke	2255	2105	-6.65
St. Catherines	8245	8845	7.28
St. John	2530	3170	25.30
Toronto	39380	44205	12.25
Trois Rivateres	2350	1910	-18.72
Vancouver	46805	52330	11.80
Victoria	10860	13150	21.09
Windsor	6435	9495	47.55
Winnipeg	52525	62875	19.70

Source: 2001 Census of Canada

languages. They have also been disadvantaged in their socio-economic development. New immigrants, especially those who are visible minorities, are to some extent similar to the Aboriginals in that they also have their own culture and language and are usually disadvantaged in their socio-economic resources. These differences in culture and language from the societies of Canadians with western European origins give rise to ethnic neighbourhoods and distinctive settlement patterns observable among some ethnic groups. One can expect to see residential segregation of the Aboriginal populations in Canadian cities for a number of reasons. Most of the Aboriginal population—because of lower incomes—may be forced to settle in the poorer areas of the city, where the real estate prices and rents are relatively low. Since the poorer areas are often found in the centre of cities, we find a greater concentration of Aboriginals in the city core areas.

Apart from Aboriginals often being in the lower socio-economic classes, their greater social distance from the white European groups may also increase residential segregation of the Aboriginal population. Social distance is a measure of cultural affinity with another group. Greater social distance is often reflected in higher levels of residential segregation. In fact, many studies have found a parallel between social distance and residential segregation (Balakrishnan 1982; Lieberson and Waters 1988; Kalbach 1990). Aboriginal populations may also be concentrated for voluntary reasons. They may want to reside in close proximity to other Aboriginals so that social interaction can be maximized and they can better maintain their culture and values. The greater their self-identity, the more they can be expected to be residentially segregated from other groups.

The case of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is unique; they are different from recent immigrant groups. Minority groups such as the Chinese, South Asians, or members of the Caribbean or black community often have to go through various stages of acculturation (e.g., language acquisition, learning of new occupational skills, etc.) after immigrating to a new country. Living in a neighbourhood with a high number of people with a similar ethnic background may give them certain advantages in their integration, though it may also be argued that it may increase their isolation from the wider society, and thus have negative effects as far as integration is concerned (Hou and Picot 2004). In contrast, Aboriginal peoples have never been newcomers as they are the original people of Canada, and are well aware of mainstream Canadian culture, though they may often choose not to engage with it. They do not face the same culture shock as immigrants to Canada. They do, however, share the effects of discrimination and prejudice experienced by visible minorities in general.

In the case of immigrant groups, the degree of residential segregation decreases with the duration of stay in Canada, and in later generations, as they increase their social mobility (Balakrishnan 2003). For these groups, segregation levels are high due to the high rate of immigration but can be expected to decrease with time. Studies have shown that segregation for visible minority groups, such as the Chinese and South Asian communities, is much less in the areas of the cities where the socio-economic status of the residents is relatively high as measured by their income, education, and occupation, implying that with social mobility, segregation decreases (Balakrishnan and Hou 1999). This is not the case with the Aboriginal populations to date. The levels of segregation for Aboriginal peoples show no sign of decreasing over time (Maxim et al 2003). This may be because certain visible minorities are able to overcome segregation by increasing their socio-economic achievement, a process that has not been evident for Aboriginal peoples. One should also not expect that the situation of Aboriginals parallels that of the black community in the US. Aboriginals did not go through the experience of slavery which had profound implications for the black community in their ability to choose a place of residence (Massey and Denton 1993).

Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the spatial residential patterns of Aboriginal peoples in the 23 census metropolitan areas of Canada in 2001 to see the validity of the following hypotheses.

- Hypothesis 1: The index of segregation will be positively correlated with the size of the CMA, as well as the size of the Aboriginal population.

Larger cities and a larger Aboriginal population will enable the Aboriginal community to benefit from advantages of size. A minimum threshold size is often necessary to maintain certain specialized institutions, such as ethnic community centres, places of worship, welfare organizations, and speciality stores. From a different perspective, where there is discrimination, large numbers can accentuate the situation as the minority becomes more visible and can be seen as a threat by the majority ethnic group(s).

- Hypothesis 2: The indices of segregation between Aboriginal peoples and the charter groups of British and French will be lower than between Aboriginals and the various visible minority groups, such as the Chinese, South Asians, and the black community, as well as from other European groups.

Aboriginal peoples have lived in Canada since well before the colonization by Europeans, and many generations of Aboriginal people have become quite familiar with the cultures of the major charter groups of the British and French. Though they may be disadvantaged economically and though many live on-reserve, more than half of Aboriginals live in the urban areas of Canada. Many are fluent in one or both of Canada's official languages. Urban Aboriginal people may in fact share a more similar lifestyle with Canadians of French and British origin than with recently arrived visible minorities, such as members of the Chinese, South Asian, or black communities. Therefore, we expect that, in spite of their common experience of facing discrimination and prejudice along with the other visible minorities, they will exhibit less segregation from British and French. Furthermore, because the Aboriginal culture and lifestyle are so different from those of other visible minority groups we might expect that their segregation from these groups will be greater.

- Hypothesis 3: Aboriginals will be concentrated in the poorer areas of cities.

Given the lower socio-economic achievement of Aboriginals, we expect to find this situation.

Data and Methods

The data come from the 2001 census data for the 23 census metropolitan areas of Canada. Census tract data are used to calculate the concentration, segregation, and dissimilarity indices. The Gini index of concentration used here is derived from

concentration curves. The vertical axis shows the cumulative percentage of the Aboriginal population while the horizontal axis shows the cumulative percentage of the census tracts arranged in decreasing order of the Aboriginal population. A curve that coincides with the diagonal line indicates that the Aboriginal population is equally distributed among the census tracts, implying no spatial concentration. The farther the curve is from the diagonal, the greater the concentration. The Gini index is the ratio of the area between the curve and the diagonal, to the area of the triangle above the diagonal. Thus the range for the index is from 0 to 1, indicating no concentration or complete concentration.

The index of dissimilarity measures the differential distribution of two groups over a number of areas. It is the sum of either the positive or negative differences between the proportional distributions of two populations. The index ranges from 0 to 1, indicating complete similarity or dissimilarity in the distributions of two groups. The segregation index refers to the index of dissimilarity between an ethnic group and all other ethnic groups.

A socio-economic status index (SES) for each census tract was constructed combining measures for three variables: education, income, and occupation. It was assumed that a combination of three variables indicates SES better than any one taken separately. The three variables were operationalized as follows.

- *Education*: percentage of adults over 25 years of age with a university degree residing in the census tract
- *Income*: median family income in 2000 in the census tract
- *Occupation*: percentage employed in higher-status occupations (namely managerial, professional, and technical occupations) in 2001 in the census tract

The three variables were first standardized to the same overall mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10 in each CMA.

Findings

Population Size and Segregation

Total and Aboriginal populations for the various CMAs are shown in **Table 16.2** (page 268) along with the segregation and concentration indices. Correlations between size and segregation indices are modest at best. In cities where there are relatively large numbers (about 9%) of Aboriginal people, such as Winnipeg, Regina, and Saskatoon, the indices are also high, over .300. Smaller CMAs with small Aboriginal populations such as Chicoutimi, Sherbrooke, St John, and Trois-Rivières have lower segregation indices. The three largest metropolitan areas of Canada—Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—have large Aboriginal populations of about 50,000. But, as a proportion of the city's population, they are low, for example only 1.0% in Toronto and 1.5% in Montreal. However, the segregation indices in these cities are fairly high, .345 in Toronto, .271 in Montreal,

Table 16.2. Total and Aboriginal population in Canada's major metropolitan areas and indices of segregation and concentration, 2001

Census Metropolitan Area	Total population in CMA	Aboriginal population	Percentage Aboriginal	Segregation index	Concentration index
Calgary	943310	33735	3.6	0.252	0.374
Chicoutimi	153020	2110	1.4	0.163	0.277
Edmonton	927020	55040	5.9	0.263	0.369
Halifax	355945	10870	3.1	0.196	0.349
Hamilton	655060	12865	2.0	0.287	0.412
Kitchener	409765	8310	2.0	0.236	0.368
London	427215	9865	2.3	0.259	0.389
Montreal	3380640	49315	1.5	0.271	0.410
Oshawa	293550	7630	2.6	0.232	0.346
Ottawa	1050755	33535	3.2	0.215	0.354
Québec	673105	10045	1.5	0.276	0.436
Regina	190020	16750	8.8	0.351	0.452
Saint John	121340	3155	2.6	0.251	0.370
Saskatoon	222635	21975	9.9	0.318	0.393
Sherbrooke	150390	2105	1.4	0.257	0.399
St. Catherines	371405	8845	2.4	0.235	0.382
St. John	171105	3170	1.9	0.197	0.392
Toronto	4647955	44205	1.0	0.345	0.497
Trois Riveres	134645	1910	1.4	0.231	0.349
Vancouver	1967480	52330	2.7	0.289	0.428
Victoria	306970	13150	4.3	0.268	0.407
Windsor	304955	9495	3.1	0.189	0.308
Winnipeg	661725	62875	9.5	0.306	0.392

Source: Special tabulations

Correlations between		Pearson
Index of segregation and total population in CMA	…………………	0.426
Index of segregation and Aboriginal population	…………………	0.483
Index of concentration and total population in CMA	…………………	0.562
Index of concentration and Aboriginal population	…………………	0.363
Indices of segregation and concentration	…………………	0.854

Table 16.3. Indices of dissimilarity between Aboriginals and other ethnic groups for Canada's major census metropolitan areas, 2001

	British	French	Other Western	Central & East European	Italian	Jewish	South Asian	Chinese	African	Caribbean
Calgary	0.275	0.238	0.271	0.287	0.366	0.562	0.486	0.461	0.339	0.334
Chicoutimi	0.203	0.179	0.257	0.339	0.473	0.974	0.851	0.553	0.666	0.782
Edmonton	0.292	0.248	0.297	0.263	0.344	0.627	0.574	0.459	0.406	0.445
Halifax	0.209	0.193	0.209	0.301	0.306	0.574	0.500	0.508	0.352	0.405
Hamilton	0.326	0.271	0.374	0.304	0.385	0.548	0.496	0.493	0.434	0.351
Kitchener	0.250	0.212	0.284	0.237	0.319	0.480	0.416	0.393	0.344	0.321
London	0.274	0.247	0.296	0.28	0.358	0.499	0.499	0.471	0.377	0.400
Montreal	0.360	0.240	0.378	0.503	0.518	0.832	0.725	0.608	0.546	0.564
Oshawa	0.233	0.183	0.261	0.275	0.326	0.483	0.426	0.445	0.354	0.343
Ottawa	0.350	0.184	0.356	0.368	0.424	0.607	0.521	0.534	0.486	0.421
Québec	0.299	0.281	0.342	0.352	0.405	0.861	0.851	0.639	0.568	0.591
Regina	0.368	0.345	0.356	0.362	0.482	0.526	0.597	0.474	0.499	0.550
Saint John	0.269	0.208	0.288	0.356	0.354	0.552	0.643	0.597	0.400	0.609
Saskatoon	0.331	0.304	0.338	0.298	0.328	0.599	0.656	0.437	0.499	0.487
Sherbrooke	0.326	0.251	0.274	0.286	0.313	0.675	0.697	0.717	0.585	0.434
St. Catherines	0.240	0.214	0.307	0.277	0.338	0.496	0.469	0.440	0.444	0.417
St. John	0.190	0.222	0.306	0.35	0.444	0.616	0.695	0.512	0.647	0.864
Toronto	0.283	0.267	0.301	0.421	0.529	0.749	0.576	0.618	0.505	0.484
Trois Rivieres	0.240	0.207	0.266	0.343	0.417	0.890	0.958	0.783	0.600	0.547
Vancouver	0.284	0.254	0.275	0.268	0.348	0.535	0.544	0.573	0.363	0.392
Victoria	0.269	0.213	0.257	0.264	0.282	0.435	0.478	0.494	0.352	0.389
Windsor	0.211	0.219	0.252	0.267	0.350	0.518	0.466	0.477	0.321	0.412
Winnipeg	0.352	0.321	0.354	0.342	0.418	0.660	0.553	0.468	0.393	0.433

Source: Special tabulations

Less than 100   Less than 500   Less than 1000

and .289 in Vancouver. It appears that the size of the Aboriginal population is more important than the size of the city itself for the magnitude of segregation. The correlation between Aboriginal population and index of segregation is .483. There is only modest support for the hypothesis that city size is positively associated with segregation.

Intergroup Segregation

Indices of dissimilarity between Aboriginals and other ethnic groups are presented in **Table 16.3** (page 269). With almost no exception, the lowest indices are found between Aboriginals and the charter groups of British and French, mostly between .200 and .300. This pattern is evident in every metropolitan area. Even in cities where there are a large proportion of Aboriginals—such as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina—the indices of dissimilarity from the British and French are lower in comparison to the other ethnic groups. The indices are somewhat higher for the other European groups, and much higher for the visible minority groups. In Toronto and Vancouver, where most of the Canadian Chinese population live, the indices of dissimilarity between Chinese and Aboriginal peoples are quite high, .618 in Toronto and .573 in Vancouver. They are high in the other CMAs as well, around .500. Similar patterns can be observed with members of the South Asian community as well. Most of the Canadian South Asian population lives in Toronto and Vancouver, where the indices of dissimilarity with Aboriginal peoples are .576 and .544 respectively. In Montreal the index is even higher at .725. The indices of dissimilarity between the Aboriginal community and the black community are slightly lower than with Chinese or South Asians but still higher than with the European groups. The highest segregation indices are found between Aboriginals and the Jewish population. Most of the Canadian Jewish population lives in Montreal and Toronto. The index of dissimilarity between Aboriginals and the Jewish population is very high both in Montreal at .832 and in Toronto at .749. These figures are comparable to the white–black segregation figures found in large American cities. These differences would be expected when we examine the socio-economic class of the Jewish population measured in terms of income and the same measures of the Aboriginal populations. Therefore, the residential segregation between these groups may be partly attributed to class segregation. At the same time, social distance and the need to live in close proximity to one's own group may also be factors.

Aboriginal Concentration and Social Status of Neighbourhoods

We have hypothesized that Aboriginal people are more likely to be concentrated in poorer neighbourhoods. They may not have the resources or disposable income and hence the option to choose among a variety of residential areas in the city. Discrimination in housing may also force them into the less desirable areas of the city. Without special tabulations for small areas by Aboriginal status and socio-economic characteristics, we cannot comment on the relative importance of class

and Aboriginal status in selecting a place of residence. However, we can look at the overall status of neighbourhoods in which Aboriginals are found concentrated, and thus indirectly test the hypothesis. Census tracts in which the percentage of Aboriginals is found to be greater than the percentage in the metropolitan area as a whole were identified as areas of concentration.

Table 16.4 (page 272) presents the mean socio-economic status (SES) indices of those tracts so identified in the 13 largest CMAs. Because small numbers of census tracts may distort the values, we have excluded the other CMAs. The SES index for each census tract takes into account the proportion in the higher occupations, proportion of adults over 25 with a university degree, and median family income in the tract. This index was computed for each census tract in a metropolitan area and standardized to a distribution with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for that CMA. With hardly any exception, the social status of the neighbourhoods where Aboriginals are over-represented have the lowest SES when compared to the other groups. In every city they are also below the city mean. The disparity is most evident in the cities where they form the largest proportion. For example, in Winnipeg, the average SES index of Aboriginal neighbourhoods is only 43.2 compared to the city average of 50.0 and 53.0 for the British. Other visible minority groups live in much better areas. The same is true in Regina and Saskatoon, the mean SES index being 42.7 and 42.8 respectively. Aboriginals seem to do best in the three largest CMAs of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. The mean SES index of neighbourhoods where Aboriginals are over-represented was 48.6 in Toronto, 47.6 in Montreal, and 47.2 in Vancouver. Though still below the city average of 50.0, they are higher than in all the other CMAs.

Conclusions

A main reason to study residential segregation is that it is a measure of how well or how poorly a group has integrated into the society at large. We have postulated that segregation can be a result of social class, social distance, or cultural identity. In the case of the Aboriginal population, it is clear that social class is indeed the important factor. They are socio-economically disadvantaged in relation to other groups, especially the European ethnic groups. Their lower class status limits their choice of residential location. Social distance as a causal factor for Aboriginal segregation in the urban areas is less clear. They have been in Canada a long time and intermarriage with whites has been considerable, as evidenced in the increasing number of persons claiming mixed heritage. In comparison, interracial marriages between whites and visible minorities, such as those in the Chinese, South Asian, and black communities, are comparatively lower. In lifestyle choices (such as food, clothing, sports, etc.) Aboriginals are closer to the British or French than to the visible minorities.

We also venture to state that cultural identity plays a lesser role in the case of Aboriginal segregation than in the case of the Chinese, South Asian, or black

Table 16.4. Mean indices of socio-economic status for concentrated ethnic groups for Canada's major census metropolitan areas with Aboriginal population over 10,000, 2001

	Calgary		Edmonton		Halifax		Hamilton		Montreal		Ottawa		Québec	
British	52.0	119	52.7	102	52.7	44	52.8	92	53.2	270	53.4	129	52.4	72
French	49.6	93	49.5	91	50.4	40	50.0	74	50.8	461	47.5	105	53.7	79
Aboriginal	44.3	84	44.0	74	46.0	36	45.2	69	47.6	357	46.5	102	48.7	59
Other Western European	51.4	97	51.4	89	51.4	37	54.2	69	53.7	326	53.6	127	53.5	66
Central & Eastern European	53.1	101	49.6	93	53.5	39	48.7	67	52.2	296	53.3	120	51.0	67
Italian	52.6	80	50.7	71	54.0	31	49.6	65	50.0	203	53.4	92	52.0	65
Jewish	55.0	56	55.5	52	54.4	27	52.2	46	56.6	123	55.0	71	56.7	19
South Asian	48.3	45	52.6	57	53.7	30	51.0	58	51.2	188	52.8	86	55.8	20
Chinese	50.0	62	50.8	75	50.4	33	49.8	58	50.7	276	52.0	84	53.1	52
African	49.1	80	49.1	80	46.0	27	50.6	59	49.6	327	48.0	68	50.3	49
Caribbean	47.9	80	50.3	74	50.9	31	49.1	66	47.8	254	50.6	79	51.4	58
Total tracts	142		202		85		171		846		234		165	

	Regina		Saskatoon		Toronto		Vancouver		Victoria		Winnipeg	
British	54.6	22	55.2	25	51.9	450	52.6	204	52.3	36	53.0	88
French	49.9	20	50.3	21	51.7	448	51.1	194	47.3	33	49.6	60
Aboriginal	42.7	20	42.8	16	48.6	346	47.2	153	45.1	29	43.2	59
Other Western European	51.6	27	51.9	25	52.7	426	51.0	202	50.4	32	51.6	87
Central & Eastern European	53.1	27	52.9	23	50.9	371	51.5	220	49.9	40	51.7	65
Italian	51.8	21	50.7	23	49.4	253	50.9	135	48.8	30	53.3	65
Jewish	54.3	17	56.1	19	57.3	167	55.4	121	51.9	24	55.0	30
South Asian	55.6	13	58.2	19	47.4	281	45.0	101	50.4	22	53.4	43
Chinese	52.9	18	54.2	14	51.0	242	50.3	146	50.9	25	52.2	45
African	52.5	21	53.0	14	47.0	279	49.6	149	47.3	24	49.9	57
Caribbean	51.4	15	51.6	24	46.2	338	50.2	179	50.4	28	51.8	61
Total tracts	50		51		924		386		68		163	

Source: Special tabulations

*Note: The means of SES indices are 50 for each CMA

communities. Institutional completeness is found to be lower among Aboriginal peoples when compared to other visible minorities. For example, in urban areas, specialized stores, places of worship, and ethnic media are found to a much smaller extent among Aboriginals than among the other visible minorities. This is explained in part by the existence, for many, of home communities where they have family and other contacts, but the argument can still be made that the cities are not being created as ethnically complete and separate places for Aboriginal peoples. Our findings in Aboriginal residential segregation are in line with these observations. Though social class results in a certain level of segregation for the Aboriginals, it is less than that of the other visible minorities, for whom social distance and distinct cultural identity accentuates segregation from the European ethnic groups. We also feel that the greater cultural dissimilarity between Aboriginals and other visible minorities may be the cause of greater segregation between these groups.

The differences among the CMAs in Aboriginal segregation and the lack of a strong relationship between Aboriginal size and segregation raise interesting questions. Do the migration patterns of Aboriginals from the reserves to the cities and vice versa affect settlement patterns in the cities, and if so, is proximity a factor? Do local municipal policies for affordable housing development projects play a role in segregation? The fact that some cities attract Aboriginals while others do not seems to indicate that the push factors (factors that make people leave a community, such as high cost of living, poor transportation, high unemployment, high crime rates, etc.) and pull factors (attractive factors, such as lower cost of living, better schools and recreation, good climate, etc.) differ by CMA, and these may be relevant in understanding not only the growth of the Aboriginal populations in the different cities but their segregation patterns as well.

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