
Practicality and Resilience: Lessons learned from a housing-transportation case study



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Outline for the presentation

- Research context and research questions
- Results from a case study of Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA
- Recommendations for future housing-transportation research

Immigrant housing choice: Canadian results

- Immigrants show a lot of variety in their housing choices depending on their ethnocultural group
- Immigrant spatial concentration patterns are linked to a variety of factors such as social networks, employment trends, and the location of affordable and rental housing
- Most of the research reflects societal bias towards homeownership and economic barriers immigrants may encounter; recently a trend towards sociocultural networks

Immigrant transportation choice: Canadian results

- Immigrants living in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal are much more likely to use public transit than those born in Canada, though this decreases with time
- About 20% of Canadian households do not have a car, more than double the US rate (8.7%)
- There is little evidence of “spatial mismatch” in Canadian cities, where public transit users are quite diverse in income and ethnocultural group

Structural change and urban growth in cities

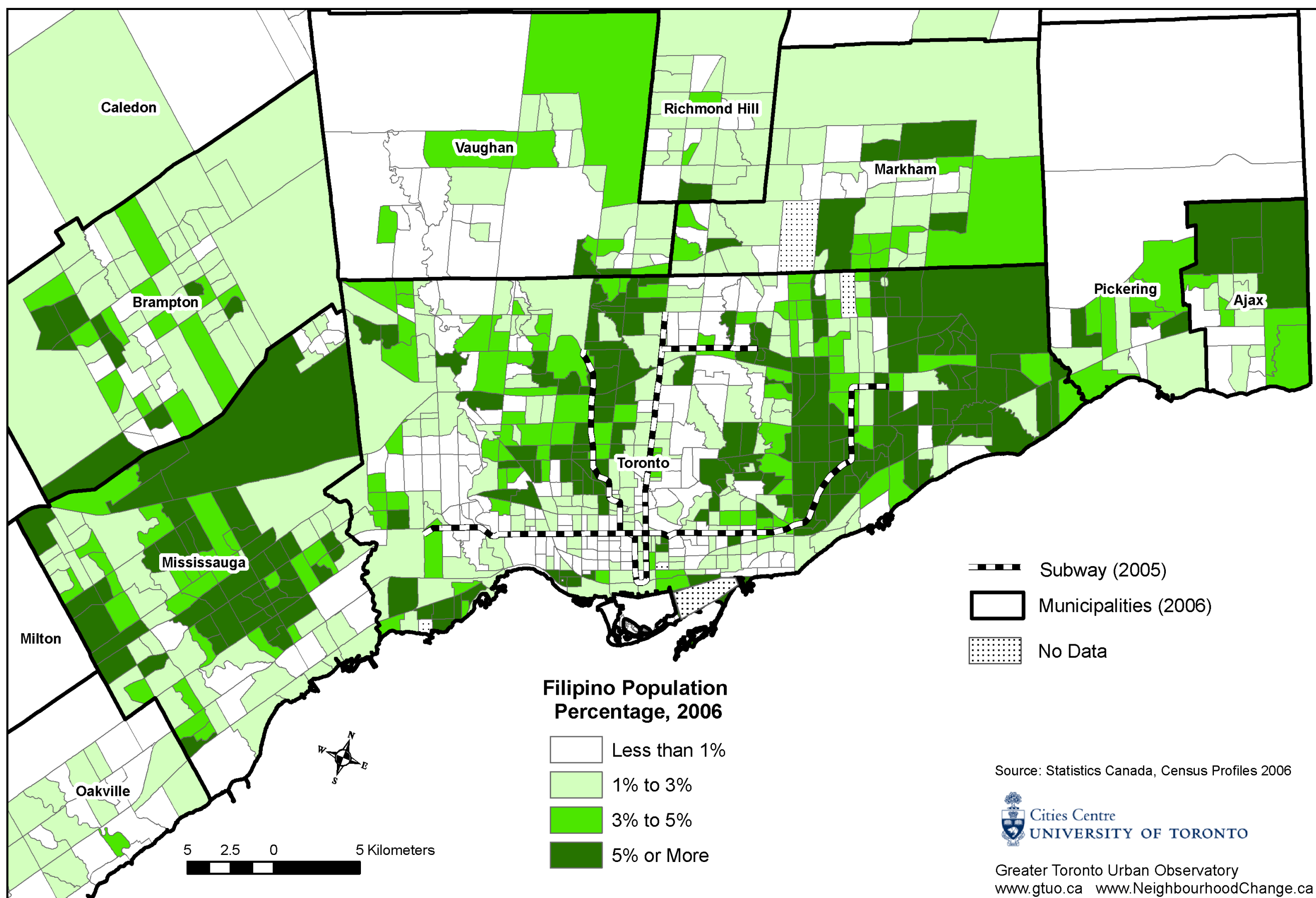
- Changes in immigration policy: fewer family class immigrants and more economic class immigrants (highly skilled and well educated), more temporary workers, different source countries
- Changes in housing policy: little new rental housing has been built, inner city rents have increased, and high-rise condos have begun to replace apartments
- Changes in the labour market: manufacturing has relocated to the suburbs, smaller cities, and offshore; professional and managerial jobs have increased in the inner city; job instability has grown; the work day has become more flexible
- Changes in transportation infrastructure and choices: subway construction, highway construction, increased gentrification around transit lines

Research questions

- Have structural changes played a major role in shaping immigrants' housing and transportation choices?
- Have these choices changed over time (are new immigrants making the same choices as earlier arrivals?)

In particular,

- How do Filipino immigrants make housing and transportation choices in the Toronto CMA?



Methods

- Comparison of data for the 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Census years for Filipino immigrants, compared to all immigrants and all non-immigrants
 - Census variables: housing tenure, transportation mode to work, commute distance, total household income, weeks worked, employment/unemployment, industry, occupation, highest degree or certificate, and household size
- Principal components analysis (PCA) with 1996 and 2006 Census data
- Interviews with 32 Filipino immigrants who arrived in Toronto between the 1960s and the 2000s

Research results

- Filipinos have educational attainment and high labour market participation but lower incomes than the general population, mainly due to decreased work in higher-paying occupations and industries since the late 1980s
- Sudden increase in immigration to Canada in 1990s, prolonged high levels
- Higher rental rate and lower homeownership rate
- Higher rate of transit use for the commute to work, lower rate of driving to work
- Slightly shorter commute distances than non-immigrants (similar to all immigrants)
- The PCA shows that structural changes are more influential on housing and transportation variables than income or household size

However, Filipino immigrants tell us...

- Filipinos approach housing and transportation with a **resiliency strategy**: they make the most practical choice for each situation and cannot be easily categorized as renters/owners or transit users/drivers
- There is a lot of flexibility in household sizes (LCP, family sponsorship), family status and jobs, contributing to mobility
- They have strong histories of transit use (jeepneys, tricycles), renting, and living in mixed-use neighbourhoods while in the Philippines, and sought this type of neighbourhood in Canada
- Social networks are very strong, and influence housing type, housing location and transportation mode



Lessons learned

- Filipino immigrants' choices have been shaped by structural changes in housing policy, immigration policy, and the labour market
- Housing and transportation choices, as recorded in data such as the Census, cannot be taken as proof of preference
- There may be a latent demand for affordable, transit-accessible housing among other immigrant groups
- “Transitional” choices now last much longer: flexibility of choice needs to be borne out in housing and transportation infrastructure. Resiliency should be supported in immigrant communities

Housing

Joh et al, 2008
Frank, Sallis & Engelke, 2004
Cervero & Duncan, 2003
Cervero & Kockelman, 1997
Kitamura et al, 2007

Transportation-
land use

Economic
geography

Growth
management
policy

City of Vancouver, 2009
City of Brampton, 2008
City of Toronto, 2006
Allison, 1997

Transportation
equity

Shearmur, 2006
Cristaldi, 2005
Jarvis, 2003
Kwan, 1999
Hanson & Pratt, 1998
Hanson, 1995
Hanson, 1980

CNT, 2006
CHT, 2006
Blumenberg, 2000

Transportation

Housing and transportation
research links

Policy implications

- New federal Affordable Housing Strategy: municipalities and provinces should pay attention to housing types (e.g. low-rise and ground-oriented rental) and housing tenures (e.g. renting, co-op)
- New rental projects have as much potential for compact, transit-oriented development as condo projects
- Municipalities need to preserve affordability in transit-accessible areas where immigrants are likely to live:
 - Community Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)
 - Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for TODs in affordable neighbourhoods
 - Streamlined processing for proposed rental TODs

Future research

- How do immigrants' housing/transportation histories affect their choices in Canada?
- What are the perceptions of homeownership/renting in different cultures? How does this affect choices?
- Do immigrants understand the advantages and disadvantages of choices (e.g. the mortgage system, car insurance, commute distance)?
- How does family separation (e.g. from immigration) impact housing/transportation choice?
- What are the implications for small and mid-sized cities?

Questions?

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