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## The Filipino case: Insights into choice and resiliency among immigrants in Toronto

Canadian cities and regions are highly dependent upon immigration for their population growth. Immigrants make up 48 percent of the population in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and 40 percent in the Vancouver CMA (StatsCan 2008). As planning for growth in Canadian cities becomes more about planning for immigration, case studies examining immigrants' choices and patterns inform municipal and regional planning initiatives such as affordable housing strategies, immigrant settlement programs, and strategic transportation plans. Immigrants may be part of a changing demographic in Canadian cities: one that increasingly chooses public transit and rental housing in the context of polarized immigration policy and precarious labour markets. This paper presents a case study of Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA, the fastest-growing immigrant group in Canada. The Filipino population has high transit ridership, high rental tenure, low spatial segregation, unique labour market characteristics and immigration patterns. The study examined how Filipinos made housing and transportation choices, and how the choices of incoming immigrants have changed since the 1960s. The Filipino case characterizes immigrants' integration and resiliency in postindustrial cities with high immigration rates, competitive housing and labour markets, and may be used in analytical generalization to similar cities (Yin 1994, Flyvberg 2001, Flyvberg 2011).

This paper begins with an introduction to the existing literature, and a review of the data and methods used in this study. Following this, an overview of Filipino immigrants' employment, income, labour market participation, transportation and housing patterns is presented, drawing upon Census data from 1986 to 2006. Then the paper discusses the results of 32 in-depth interviews with Filipino immigrants who arrived in Toronto between 1968 and 2008. Finally, the paper concludes with the policy implications of immigrants' transportation and housing choices. Filipinos' practical and flexible approach contribute to the increasingly prevalent trends of prolonged public transit ridership and renting among immigrants. As municipal and regional planners advocate better public transit, growth along transit corridors, and mixed-used development in their plans and policies, the needs of immigrants must be integrated.

## Canadian Policy and Research Context

Canada's policy framework has led to a very different urban landscape than the US: for example, Canada has neither a federal transportation plan nor a national affordable housing strategy. The limited role of highway infrastructure and public housing projects in Canadian cities during the postwar period has contributed to much lower segregation rates, stronger inner cities, and higher public transit ridership (Pucher and Buehler 2005). During the 1950s and 1960s record numbers of rental apartments were built in Canadian cities; ninety percent of private rental buildings in Toronto were built before 1975 (City of Toronto 2006b, 13, E.R.A. Architects et al. 2010). High immigration levels kept inner city neighbourhoods vibrant, and the fact that Canadian federal income tax does not allow a deduction from taxable income for interest on mortgage loans also curbed urban sprawl in the postwar decades. Since the mid-1970s, federal policy favouring homeownership over renting (Darden 2004, Hulchanski 2007b) and few incentives for developers have resulted in a dwindling supply of rental and affordable housing in Canadian cities (e.g. City of Toronto 2006c, Teixeira 2009, Carter 2010, Gurnett 2010). Economic recessions and fiscal restraint during the 1980s and 1990s led to decreased funding for municipal infrastructure; in 1993 the federal government ended funding support for affordable housing in municipalities. In 2009, the United Nations declared that Canada had an affordable housing crisis. Our affordable housing strategy, Bill C-304, the federal Act to Ensure Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing for Canadians, has been working its way through the House of Commons since 2006.

In the absence of federal legislation, political fragmentation has been a crucial element in transportation infrastructure decisions: projects must be individually approved at the provincial and federal levels. Major international events appealing to upper levels of government have consistently served as catalysts for transit infrastructure in Canadian cities: Montreal's Metro opened for Expo 67, Calgary's LRT for the 1988 Winter Olympics, Vancouver's Expo Line for Expo 86 and its Canada Line for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Most municipal and regional transit systems have maintained strong ridership growth despite inconsistent infrastructure funding. Universal transit pass (U-Pass) programs for students in many cities including Edmonton, Vancouver, and Windsor, also contributed to steady ridership growth through the 2000s.

Toronto, like Los Angeles, London, Amsterdam and Sydney, is characterized by high immigration rates and a postindustrial economy with a concentration of high-end service sector occupations. The spatial impacts of postindustrial shifts on cities, such as relocation of manufacturing to suburban areas, a decline in manufacturing, and gentrification of inner city neighbourhoods, have been significant (Ley and Smith 2000, Hutton 2006, and Walks 2011). At the same time, there has been a gradual polarization in Canadian immigration policy: on one end, temporary and low-paid workers with few rights to citizenship (those who enter through the Live-in Caregiver Program or Temporary Worker Permits), and on the other high-income individuals with full rights to permanent residency (those who enter under the Skilled Worker, Entrepreneur, or Business Classes) (e.g. Hiebert 2006). Filipino immigrants are an extreme example of the difficulties immigrants face in "global cities" with precarious labour markets, polarized immigration policy and competitive housing markets. Within this context, a resiliency strategy guides their transportation and housing decisions.

Transportation and housing are intricately linked in planning practice. Municipalities integrate these two areas through initiatives such as densification along transit corridors and balancing housing with other land uses in built-up areas to minimize commuting (e.g. City of Vancouver 1991, City of Toronto 2006, Province of Ontario 2008). Housing choice invariably impacts transportation choice, and vice versa. Research on the impacts of land use on transportation choice illustrates this intersection (e.g. Handy 1996, Kitamura et al. 1997, Cervero and Kockelman 1997, Blumenberg 2000, Saelens et al. 2003, Frumkin et al. 2004, Joh et al. 2008). A few researchers have noted links between transportation choice and housing choice among immigrants in Canadian cities (Murdie 2002, Hulchanski 2010). Labour market participation impacts both transportation mode and neighbourhood choice (e.g. Handy 1996, Hanson and Pratt 1998, Kwan 1999, Cristaldi 2005, Shearmur 2006). However, despite the obvious symbiotic relationship, transportation and housing are often studied in isolation from each other, disseminated in different journals and funneled into different streams at professional and academic conferences.

There is very little research on immigrants' transportation patterns in Canada (Heisz and Schellenberg 2004, Lo et al 2011); Blumenberg and Smart (2010) have made the same observation regarding the US. Schimek (1996) and Pucher and Buehler (2005) reported higher transit ridership in Canadian cities compared to American cities; one-fifth of the Canadian population does not own a car (Litman 2003). Heisz and Schellenberg (2004) found that immigrants use public transit much more than the Canadian-born population in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal; they continue to use transit at a higher rate than non-immigrants for more than twenty years after initial settlement. Heisz and Schellenberg concluded that "projections for future transit needs could take into account that the urban population is not only growing, but also compositionally shifting towards a high-usage group...immigrants have a high-usage rate no matter how far away they live from the downtown core." Indeed, Hulchanski (2010) found little spatial variation in the percentage of the population commuting to work by transit in inner city, inner suburban, and outer suburban areas of the Toronto CMA (between 31 and 35 percent). Lo et al (2011, 17) maintain that, "transit needs to be recognized as a key ingredient for the success of the immigrant settlement process."

This is surprising considering the research agenda of Metropolis, an international network for comparative research and public policy development on migration, diversity and immigrant integration in Canada and worldwide. Over the past fifteen years, Metropolis researchers have produced hundreds of studies on immigrants' settlement patterns and integration into Canadian cities, but the role of public transit in integration has never been studied. Metropolis housing research does provide some insights into transportation choice among immigrants. Most ethnocultural groups have low residential segregation rates in Canadian cities (Balakrishnan and Wu 1992, Walks and Bourne 2006, Ray and Bergeron 2006); Figure 1 shows the low spatial segregation of the Filipino population in the Toronto CMA. Many Canadian neighbourhoods are becoming more diverse, with a mix of ethnocultural groups rather than "ethnic enclaves" dominated by one group. Social and transnational networks have some effects on spatial segregation (Owusu 1999, Murdie 2002, StatsCan 2005, Ghosh 2007, Teixeira 2008, Bauder and Lusi 2008). The scarcity of affordable housing in Canadian cities is also a factor: many studies have shown spatial concentrations of immigrants in areas with high concentrations of affordable and rental housing (Owusu 1999, Murdie 2002, Hou and Picot 2004, Hiebert et al. 2006, Walks and Bourne 2006, Ghosh 2007, Carter 2010). Homeownership has been

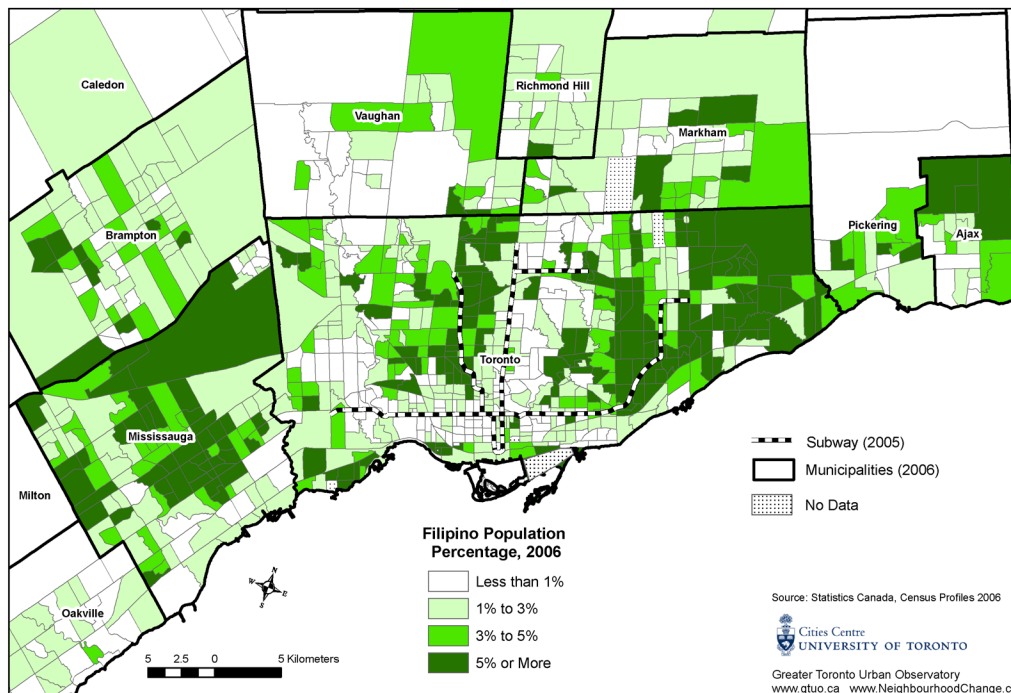


Figure 1. Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA. *Note the dispersal of the group across the region.*

*Map source: Cities Centre, University of Toronto. Printed with permission.*

decreasing among immigrants since 1981 (Balakrishnan and Wu 1992, Haan 2005) as recent immigrant cohorts tend to locate in the largest, most expensive cities in the country (Haan 2005) and have lower incomes than previous cohorts (Hiebert and Ley 2003, Hulchanski 2007, Walks 2011).

Researchers have identified differences in transportation and housing choices among immigrant groups: Heisz and Schellenberg (2004) found that Caribbean, Southeast Asian, Central and South American immigrants had the highest transit ridership. Some immigrants prefer to live among co-ethnics while others prefer mixed neighbourhoods (Teixeira 2008, Agrawal and Qadeer 2008). Some groups face more societal racism and housing market discrimination than others (Balakrishnan and Hou 1999, Murdie 2002, Darden 2004, Teixeira 2008). Some immigrants have a history of urban or high-density housing in their own countries compared to a history of rural housing, which may affect their housing choices (Murdie 2002, Teixeira 2008). Instead of a generalizable pattern of settlement and integration, a range of patterns has been acknowledged. Case studies of specific groups have nevertheless contributed to the dialogue on immigrant settlement issues among researchers and policymakers, which has led to innovative programs (e.g. bridging programs to increase foreign credential recognition).

## Data and Methods

As Flyvberg (2011) argues, in-depth case studies can excel in the development of new concepts, variables, and theories. The goal of this study was to test the theory that structural changes in policy since the 1960s have affected immigrants' housing and transportation choices. Filipinos are a unique case with the potential for analytic generalization to immigrants in other postindustrial cities. That is, if Filipinos' choices have been

affected by structural changes, then other immigrants’ choices must also have been affected, since Filipinos have high educational levels, English fluency, and other characteristics that should make it easier to immigrate and integrate into a postindustrial labour market. As Filipino researcher Dr. Nora Angeles put it, “The Filipino community is a canary in the coal mine...if we don’t see full integration, or find it a challenge, it raises a question in terms of how other communities might fare.” (in Lee-Young 2010)

In designing this study, it was necessary to use both quantitative data, which could provide information on housing tenure, household size, and transportation mode choice, and qualitative data, which could explore how these choices were made and why they have changed from the 1960s to the present. The quantitative data also had several limitations that necessitated the use of qualitative data: Canada does not have a national transportation survey, and transportation data has only been collected in the Census since 1996. Filipino ethnicity was not specified in the Census until 1986. An established approach in case studies of immigrants’ housing and settlement patterns is to summarize relevant statistics (usually from the Census or the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada) and focus upon insights from qualitative data gathered using focus groups, key informant interviews, and interviews with immigrants. This is the methodology followed in this case study.

For this study, choice is defined as the act or opportunity of choosing, and not preference, which is defined as choice guided by one’s judgment or predilections. Choice implies the power, right, or liberty to choose, as well as care in choosing. One may prefer to walk to work every day, but be unable to choose to live within walking distance. Choice implies a decision-making process; preference is an inclination that may or may not be realistic. Eleven Census variables were used: housing tenure, transportation mode, commute distance, total household income, weeks worked, labour force activity, industry, occupation, education, age, household size, and immigration period. The data sources were the Public Use Microdata Files (PUMF) for Individuals from the Censuses of Canada (1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006). The data was remarkably consistent across the twenty-year period, except for transportation mode and commute distance, which only date back to 1996. For each variable, Filipino immigrants’ choices were compared with those of immigrants in general and non-immigrants in the Toronto CMA.

Interview participants were recruited through various social, cultural and immigrant settlement organizations in the Toronto Filipino community. Interviews followed a structured format with questions about their transportation and housing choices pre-immigration (in the Philippines) and post-immigration (in Toronto). In total there were 32 participants, 12 male and 20 female, which roughly reflects the Filipino population in the Toronto CMA (43 percent male to 57 percent female) (StatsCan 2009). Participants lived in a variety of neighbourhoods across the

Immigration Period	Interview Sample (%)	Total Filipino Population (%)
1961-1970	6	2
1971-1980	34	13
1981-1990	13	17
1991-2000	19	42
2001-2006	28	26
Total	100	100

Table 1. Percentage of interview participants in each immigration period, compared to the entire population of Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: 2006 Census of Canada Public Use Microdata Files: Individuals.

Toronto CMA, worked in many different occupations, and had a wide range of incomes. Twelve participants immigrated under the Assisted Relative Class, 13 independently as Skilled Workers, and 7 under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP); their immigration periods are listed in Table 1.

## The Filipino Case: Trends and Policy Implications

Filipinos entered the country in very small numbers until the early 1970s, when family class immigration was legalized in Canada and martial law was declared in the Philippines. There was much sharper increase after

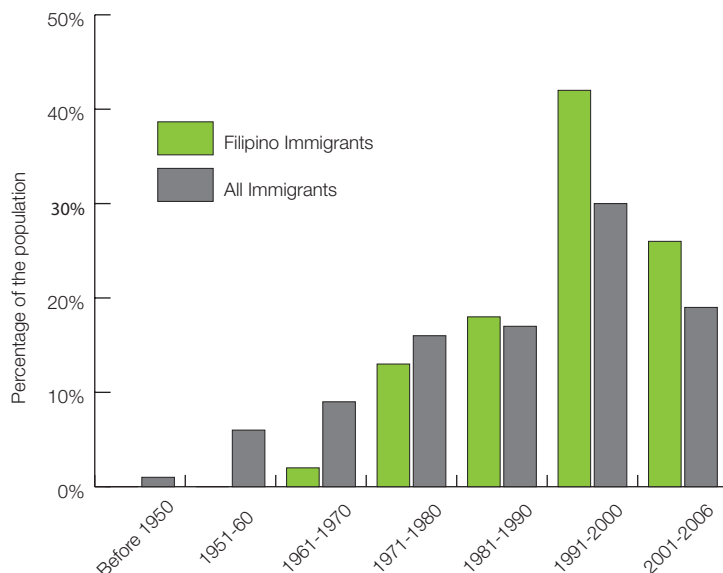


Figure 2. Immigration period in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.

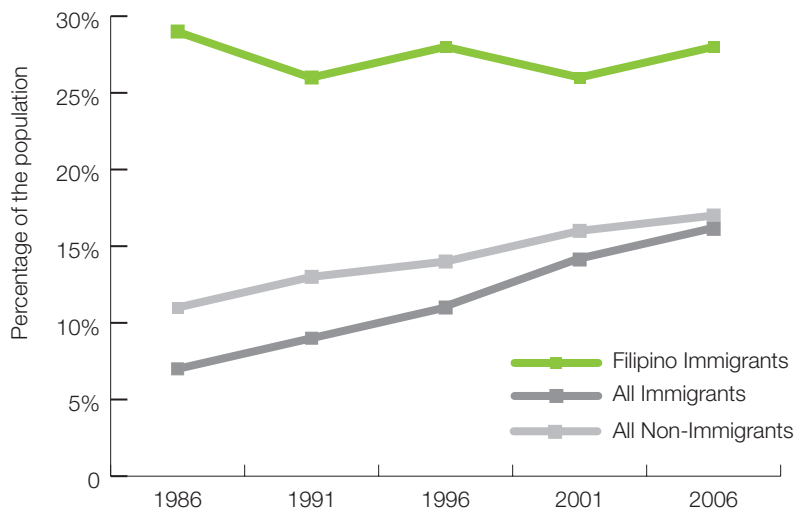


Figure 3. Percentage of the population with Bachelors degree as their highest degree, certificate or diploma in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.

the Live-In Caregiver Program began in 1992: Filipinos were increasingly entering the country under the LCP rather than the family or skilled worker classes (Darden 2004).

Since the Philippines was the top source country for immigrants to Canada in 2008, the first decade of the 2000s will likely surpass the all-time high of the 1990s.

### *Education, Income, and Labour Market Participation*

It is well known that immigrants to Canada have higher educational attainment than the native-born population (Gilmore and Le Petit 2008); that lower incomes cannot be explained by lower qualifications for high-paying occupations (Bauder 2003, Hiebert 2006). Immigrants' educational levels, income and labour market participation can play a role in their transportation and housing choices. Spatial and temporal implications of specific industries and occupations, such as the dispersed locations of manufacturing in suburban and exurban areas of the region or the incidence of shift work among nurses, also affect choices. In this case, Filipinos' high educational levels seem to offer them little advantage in an increasingly



polarized labour market. In 1986, 29 percent of Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA had Bachelors degrees, compared to only 7 percent of all immigrants and 11 percent of non-immigrants. By 2006, 28 percent of Filipinos had Bachelors degrees compared to 16 percent of immigrants and 17 percent of non-immigrants. In what has become a Canadian lament (e.g. Bauder 2003, Kelly et. al 2009), this high educational attainment is often not recognized by Canadian employers and professional associations. As a result Filipinos struggle to regain their professional status in Canada, and their story is one of income disparity.

Many authors have noted an increasing income gap between the highest and lowest income percentiles in Canadian cities (Hulchanski 2007, Hulchanski 2010, Pendakur and Pendakur 2011). Several authors have indicated the significance of income in housing choice (Murdie et al. 1999, Haan 2005, Hiebert 2006); presumably, income would also impact transportation choice. In 1986, Filipino immigrants had the same median individual income as immigrants in general, substantially higher than the median for non-immigrants. But over the twenty-year period, non-immigrants' incomes have increased steadily, while immigrants have not seen the same gains. The median individual incomes also mask much greater disparity. In 2006, Filipino immigrants' median income was 118 percent of the median income of immigrants in general and 87 percent of non-immigrants' median income. But at the seventy-fifth percentile, Filipinos made 95 percent of the income of immigrants in general and 71 percent as much as non-immigrants. And at the ninety-fifth percentile, Filipinos made 84 percent of the income of immigrants in general, and only 61 percent of non-immigrants' income.

And yet, Filipino immigrants consistently have a higher than average employment rate (see Figure 5). Unemployment has remained between 4 and 7 percent for Filipino immigrants, immigrants in general

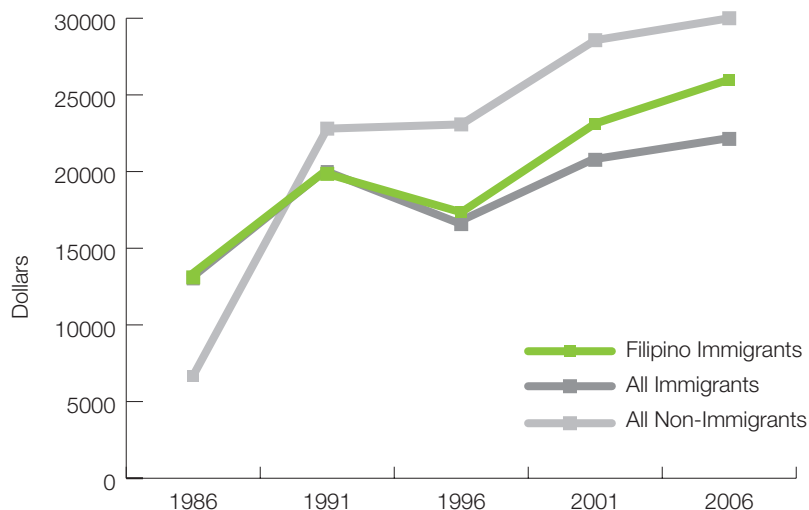


Figure 4. Median individual income in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.  
Note: These median values include individuals living with non-relatives, multiple-family households, and non-Census families.

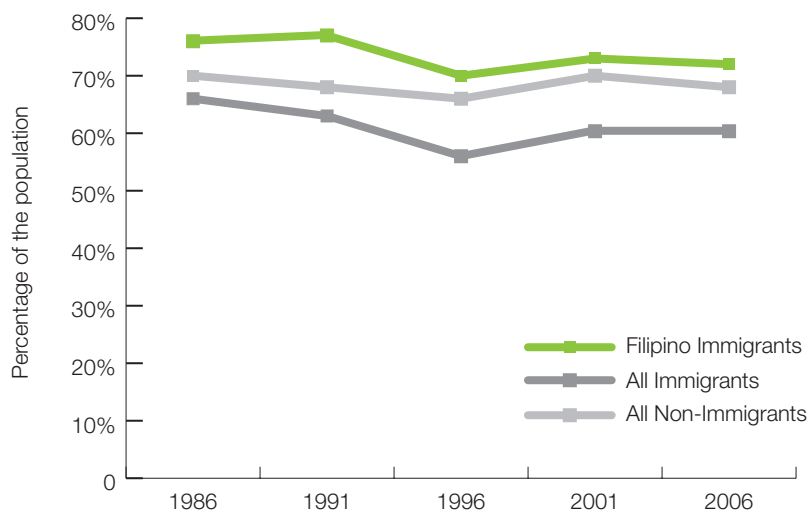


Figure 5. Employed population in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.

and non-immigrants. Even at the peak of unemployment in 1996, Filipinos immigrants' unemployment rate only increased by two percentage points to 6 percent.

Evidently, low labour force activity is not a factor in the increasing income gap between Filipino immigrants and non-immigrants at the higher percentiles. Shifts in industry and occupational sectors, on the other hand, seem to be more influential in explaining changes over time. Stable, unionized jobs in the manufacturing and resource industries have decreased in numbers as higher-level service sector jobs have increased. Increased educational requirements and increased emphasis on communication in these jobs are compounded by problems with foreign credential recognition. This has left many immigrants working in lower-paying industries such as retail and accommodation/food services, where work is often temporary and non-unionized. Part-time, temporary, and shift work have broken up the traditional Fordist model (Li 1998, Hutton 2004, Hutton 2006); many work at more than one job. Peck and Theodore (2010), Walks (2011), and Bourne et al. (2011) have detailed the precarious nature of post-industrial work in the neoliberal policy context.

The twenty-year period from 1986 to 2006 illustrates these industrial shifts. The percentage of the population working in the manufacturing industry decreased from 1986 to 1996. But from 1996 to 2001, the rate for Filipino immigrants increased to the point where manufacturing became most prevalent in this group: 22 percent of Filipino immigrants worked in manufacturing in 2001, and by 2006 more than twice as many Filipino immigrants (19 percent) as non-immigrants (9 percent) worked in the manufacturing industry. Filipinos' employment in finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) industries decreased from 17 percent in 1986 to 10 percent in 2006 while the percentage of immigrants in general and non-immigrants working in FIRE remained stable (between 8 and 9 percent). Three times as many Filipino immigrants (18 percent in 1986) work in the health and social services industry than immigrants in general or non-immigrants (6 percent). This level remained fairly stable over the twenty-year period despite increased professional requirements in this industry, which suggests that women who may have been coming in as nurses or social workers are opting for the LCP instead.

These industrial shifts are confirmed by the Census data on occupation. Filipino immigrants' participation in managerial and administrative occupations has not increased as quickly as for non-immigrants: in 2006, 11 percent of Filipino immigrants, 19 percent of immigrants in general and 23 percent of non-immigrants worked in these occupations. Clerical and related occupations have decreased for all three groups over the twenty-year period. Even in the medicine and health occupations, long a stronghold of Filipino participation, there was a decrease from 14 percent to 10 percent from 1986 to 2006 while rates for immigrants in general and non-immigrants were stable (4 to 5 percent). While Filipinos' presence in these higher-paying professional occupations decreased, their presence in service occupations (e.g. child care and home support workers) increased during the recessionary period. In 1996, 29 percent of Filipino immigrants, 17 percent of immigrants in general and 13 percent of non-immigrants worked in service occupations. These levels stabilized after the recessionary period, but Filipino immigrants are still overrepresented in these occupations. In 2001, 12 percent of Filipino immigrants, 9 percent of immigrants in general and only 3 percent of non-immigrants worked as "supervisors, machine operators and assemblers in manufacturing", and these levels remained stable in 2006.



Now that foreign credentials are undervalued and educational and exam requirements for certification have increased, it is much more difficult for immigrants to work directly in their professions. Kelly et al. (2009) noted that by 2006, Filipino men were over-represented in jobs unique to manufacturing, processing and utilities, and under-represented in management occupations. Recently-arrived Filipino women often begin their lives in Canada as live-in caregivers or in lower-level service sector jobs; the clerical and administrative occupations that may have offered them temporary employment in the past have decreased rapidly over the past twenty years. Institutional and societal racism may also play a role: Kelly et al. (ibid) reported that 36 percent of their 421 survey respondents in the Filipino community had seriously considered leaving Ontario because of what they considered to be unfair barriers to professional practice.

We would expect to see the effects of these industry and occupational shifts on transportation and housing choices: for example, an increase in caregivers, who are required to live with their employers, would likely contribute to shorter commute distances in the Filipino population. Many researchers have written about the suburbanization of the immigrant population in Toronto, the relocation of jobs to suburban locations and the increase in part-time and temporary work that may increase the likelihood of working multiple jobs (Bourne and Rose 2001, Hutton 2004, Hulchanski 2010, Walks 2011, Bourne et al. 2011).

### *Transportation and Housing Trends*

Filipinos' distinct labour market patterns are matched by unique patterns in transportation mode choice, commute distance, and housing tenure. Although patterns in transportation mode for the commute to work and commute distance can only be traced back to 1996, the data reveals several distinct patterns among Filipino immigrants. First, significantly more Filipino immigrants use public transit for the commute to work (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). In 1996, 48 percent of Filipino immigrants used transit to commute to work compared to 27 percent of immigrants in general and 19 percent of non-immigrants. This level has decreased since 1996 for Filipinos, while for the other two groups transit use has remained stable. Still, in 2006 twice as many Filipinos were commuting to work by transit (40 percent) than non-immigrants (20 percent).

Transportation Mode for the Work Commute (%): Filipino Immigrants					
	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Car-driver	n/a	n/a	39	46	46
Car-passenger	n/a	n/a	8	6	9
Public transit	n/a	n/a	48	42	40
Walked to work	n/a	n/a	4	5	3
Bicycle	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
Other method	n/a	n/a	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2. Transportation mode for the commute to work (%) for Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA.

*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*

Transportation Mode for the Work Commute (%): All Immigrants					
	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Car-driver	n/a	n/a	60	61	60
Car-passenger	n/a	n/a	7	7	8
Public transit	n/a	n/a	27	27	26
Walked to work	n/a	n/a	4	4	4
Bicycle	n/a	n/a	0	0	1
Other method	n/a	n/a	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3. Transportation mode for the commute to work (%) for all immigrants in the Toronto CMA.

*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*

Transportation Mode for the Work Commute (%): All Non-Immigrants					
	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Car-driver	n/a	n/a	66	66	63
Car-passenger	n/a	n/a	7	7	9
Public transit	n/a	n/a	19	20	20
Walked to work	n/a	n/a	6	6	6
Bicycle	n/a	n/a	1	1	1
Other method	n/a	n/a	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

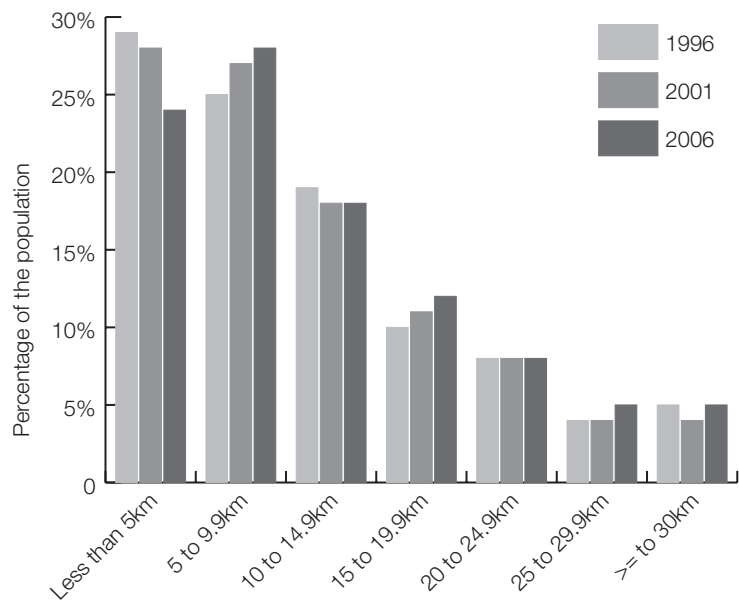
Table 4. Transportation mode for the commute to work (%) for non-immigrants in the Toronto CMA.

*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*

Secondly, these high rates of transit use are balanced by lower rates of driving to work. In 1996 the percentage of Filipino immigrants who drive to work was only 39 percent, compared to 60 percent of all immigrants and 66 percent of non-immigrants. While the driving rates for non-immigrants decreased slightly over the ten-year period, the rate for immigrants was stable, and the rate for Filipinos increased to 46 percent. Filipinos travelled to work as car passengers and walked to work at rates similar to immigrants in general and non-immigrants.

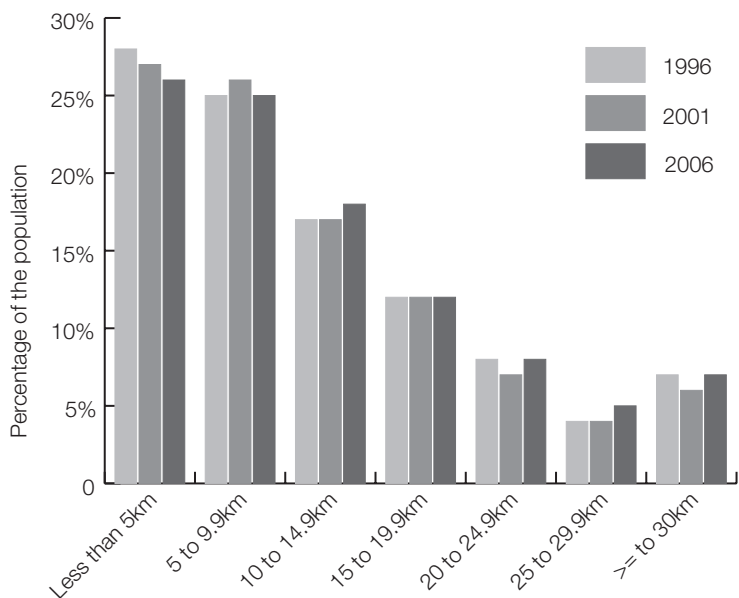
Filipinos' consistently higher transit ridership may be related to changes in the labour market and immigration policy. However, high transit ridership may not be problematic: there is little evidence that Filipino immigrants face spatial limitations to labour market participation, as long-standing theories might indicate (e.g. Burgess 1925, Kain 1969).

In general, the majority of the employed population in the Toronto CMA lives less than 5km from their workplace (around 30 percent), and the percentage decreases gradually until the last category (greater than 30km), where there is a slight increase, usually reflecting people living in outer suburbs and exurbs. This pattern is seen for non-immigrants (in Figure 8, about 10 percent fall into “greater than 30km” category), and is slightly less pronounced for immigrants (in Figure 7 about 7 percent fall into this category). For Filipino immigrants, only about 5 percent commute over 30km to work (see Figure 6). From 1996-2006 there was an increase in the number of Filipino immigrants commuting 5 to 9.9km to work (three percentage points) and a decrease in those commuting less than 5km (four percentage points). However, there seems to be a limit to how far Filipino immigrants are willing to commute, since most Filipinos still live less than 9.9 km from their workplace and there was no increase in the “greater than 30km” category. This observation is reinforced in the interviews. In fact, the similarity in these patterns seems to confirm Filipino immigrants’ spatial dispersion across the region, as Figure 1 illustrated.



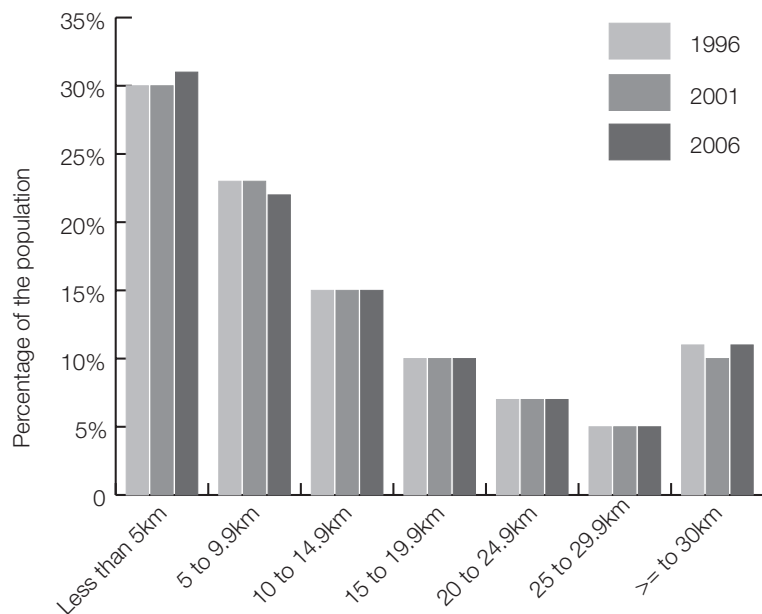
**Figure 6. Commute distance for Filipino immigrants in the Toronto CMA.**

*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*



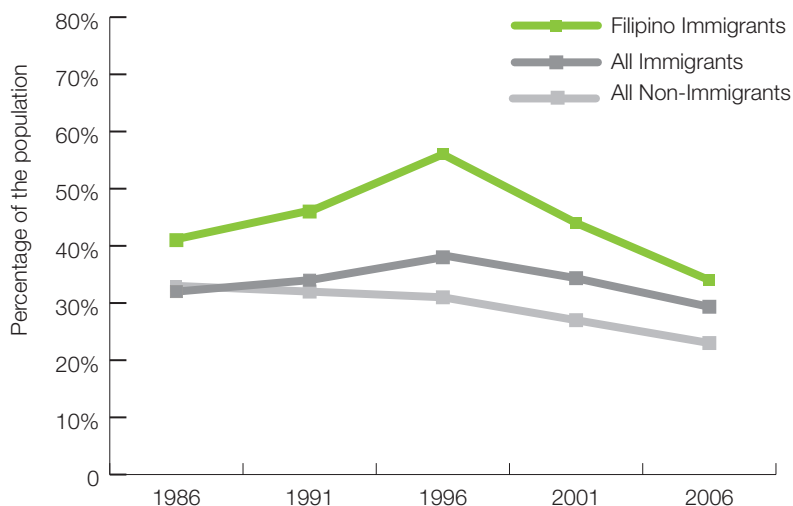
**Figure 7. Commute distance for all immigrants in the Toronto CMA.**

*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*



**Figure 8. Commute distance for non-immigrants in the Toronto CMA.**  
*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*

consistently higher rental rate than immigrants in general and non-immigrants. Even in 2006, which saw the lowest rental rates for all three groups, renting was more prevalent among Filipinos (34 percent) than among immigrants in general (29 percent) or non-immigrants (23 percent). Thus, for Filipinos, renting was almost as common as owning until 2006, while there has been a steady decline in renting among non-immigrants over the twenty-year period. Correspondingly, Filipino immigrants have the lowest rate of homeownership, with a low of 44 percent in 1996 and a high of 66 percent in 2006.



**Figure 9. Renting in the Toronto CMA.**  
*Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.*

Since it takes some time to build up enough capital to buy a home (Balakrishnan and Wu 1992) and the 1990s saw a major increase in immigration—or, as Haan (2005) writes, an “increase in immigration recency”—the structural change theory suggests that this policy shift would impact housing choice. The type of immigrants entering the country (e.g. caregivers) may also have impacted housing choice. The 1990s recession in Ontario, leading to decreased federal funding for affordable housing, would seem to have played a role. In fact, 1996 represented a renting peak and a major increase in condominium tenure among Filipino immigrants, who have a

This is somewhat surprising considering Filipinos’ consistently larger household sizes; in Haan’s 2005 study of the decreasing homeownership advantage of immigrants over non-immigrants, he found that larger family sizes were one of the few factors that insulated immigrants’ homeownership rates from further decline. Household sizes have remained remarkably stable across the twenty-year period, but Filipinos consistently have larger households than immigrants in general and non-immigrants (see Figure 10). Larger household sizes may indicate more children, living with adult family members, or living with non-relatives.

Despite larger household sizes, small household units are very popular in this community: Filipinos maintained a higher rate of condominium tenure than both groups for the entire twenty-year period. Condominium tenure was fairly low in 1986: 14 percent for Filipinos, 11 percent for immigrants in general, and only 8 percent for non-immigrants. By 2006, 19 percent of Filipinos, 18 percent of all immigrants, and 10 percent of non-immigrants lived in condominium units, with the most rapid increase during the recessionary years (see Figure 11).

This reflects two aspects of affordability: lower prices for condominium units compared to single-family homes, and a growth in the secondary rental market to accommodate rental demand, since very little purpose-built rental housing has been constructed since the 1970s (City of Toronto 2006d, E.R.A. Architects et al. 2010). Although the actual contribution of rented condo units to the rental housing “universe” in Toronto is only around 5 percent, 34 percent of all condominiums in the City of Toronto were rented in 1996. This decreased to 20 percent by 2005; the City notes, “it is a typical characteristic of the secondary rental market to revert to ownership when conditions are favourable” (City of Toronto 2006d, p8). Other cities (e.g. Vancouver) have seen increases in condominium rentals during prolonged low rental vacancy periods.

The Census data has given an overview of the economic situation, housing and transportation choices of Filipino immigrants. The interviews provide more insights into the role of structural changes in policy and the labour market on these choices. Within this context, the participants revealed a great deal of practicality and resilience in their housing and transportation choices.

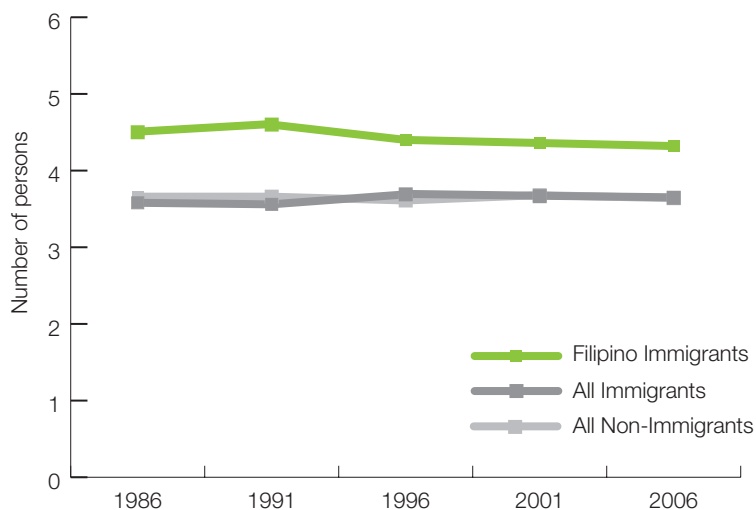


Figure 10. Median household size in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.  
Note: These median values include individuals living with non-relatives, multiple-family households, and non-Census families.

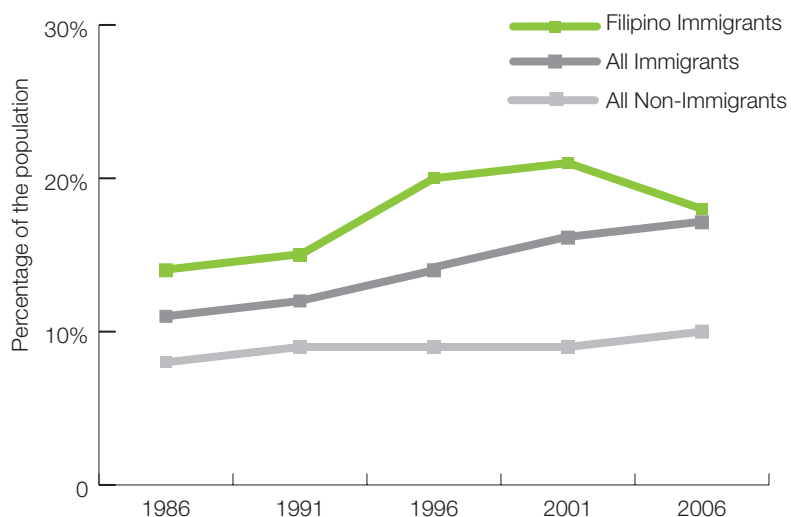


Figure 11. Condominium tenure in the Toronto CMA.

Data source: Public Use Microdata Files for Individuals. Statistics Canada.

### **Pre-immigration: Experiences in the Philippines**

Most of the participants were from Manila (23 out of 32) but several were from other large cities. Transit was by far the dominant mode of transportation for the participants before immigration (21 out of 32); only three drove. Transit options are more varied in the Philippines: participants used buses, jeepneys (small buses or vans) and tricycles (motorbikes with two seats behind the driver). The latter two options were present even in suburban residential neighbourhoods and rural areas, since jeepney and tricycle companies are usually small, privately-owned home businesses. Most of the participants were satisfied travelling this way; the vast majority traveled to work by transit. The presence of drivers and other household staff lessened the participants' need for driving: for example, a younger child might be sent to school by tricycle with a nanny. Even for households with cars, driving was not the *de facto* transportation mode for all trips: these participants continued to travel to work by transit.

Most described their neighbourhoods in the Philippines as mixed use (14) or residential (13). In most of these neighbourhoods, the presence of small stores operated out of individual homes meant that it was always possible for residents to buy essentials within a few minutes' walking distance of their homes. Participants showed a lot of diversity in housing tenure in the Philippines: 47 percent rented a room, apartment or house while 53 percent owned a townhouse or single-family house. Rental units were often low-rise townhouses, as opposed to the high-rise units common in Toronto. Over half of the participants were satisfied with the size and quality of their housing (17 out of 32), but some said their housing was too small (4), poor quality (4) or unsafe (2).

Living with extended family was common: 13 of the 32 participants lived with extended family, 16 with the nuclear family and the others with roommates. Half of the participants (16 out of 32) also had live-in household help: nannies, maids and drivers. The average household size for the sample was 6.6 individuals. There was a lot of flexibility in household size: those who lived in Manila often hosted other family members for various reasons (e.g. a cousin might come and stay with them while studying at university). Extended family members often lived in the same neighbourhood, and in some cases the family property had been divided to make room for the adult children.

Generally, the participants did not seem to view property as an investment while they lived in the Philippines. For those whose family owned a home, it was usually because they had inherited the property from their own parents. This has changed as the Philippines has adopted a more Western approach to the housing market and mortgage system. Although renting is still commonplace, owning is now possible for the middle classes. The participants' transportation and housing behaviour carried over to their lives in Canada.

### **Post-immigration: Insights from Canada**

While transit was still the dominant mode of travel after immigration to Canada (15 out of 32 participants), 13 drove for most of their trips. Generally, car ownership did not represent the pinnacle of transportation choice: seventeen of the 32 participants' stated preferences did not match their transportation choices. Almost half of the participants (15 out of 32) preferred using transit, while others only considered it a transitional transportation mode until they could afford a car. For those who did buy a car, the reasons were



very diverse: they lived in an area where transit was not very reliable (2), transit was not convenient to access their workplace (8), they had a small child (5) or because of the cold weather (3). Only six indicated that they preferred to drive. Many of the participants drove for years and returned to transit use upon retirement. Many continued to use transit for the work commute, reserving the car for household errands. Typically, a household would have one car, so the rest of the household would travel by transit or as car passengers. Many realized the costs of car ownership were beyond them, or had seen other Filipinos buy before they were financially equipped to handle the expenses.

Housing was readily available, affordable, and easy to find for those who arrived in Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s; for those who arrived more recently, there were more challenges. The need for references and a credit history, although present in the 1960s and 1970s, was more pronounced for participants who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s. Informal rental agreements now exist between recent arrivals and more established immigrants. The locations of rental housing were often not ideal and rents were quite high in relationship to newcomers' salaries. This seems to confirm the major changes in housing policy that have led to higher rents and lower vacancy rates in major Canadian cities since the 1990s (City of Toronto 2006b, 2006c). Few participants encountered housing discrimination based on ethnicity in their search for an apartment, although some landlords are discriminating based on income, as Murdie et al. (2002) discussed.

Most of the earlier arrivals settled in the inner city, but 1990s and 2000s arrivals often settled in suburban neighbourhoods where friends and family lived. Social networks are crucial in initial settlement: many would live with a friend or family member upon arrival. However, those who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s usually stayed a very short time (a few days or weeks) while those who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s often stayed with relatives for months or years. Even though many participants had lived with extended family members in the Philippines, they revealed varying degrees of comfort with these arrangements in Canada.

Earlier arrivals described their housing as spacious, well-maintained, and adequate for their needs; those who arrived in Toronto more recently described their housing as small, cramped, or poorly maintained, often basement apartments that they shared with friends or family. Since purpose-built rental has become more expensive, secondary suites have become the affordable housing type; Toronto has permitted secondary suites since 1999.

Housing location was influenced by many factors. Twenty-three of the 32 participants said that access to transit was a factor in their initial or successive housing choices. Nineteen of the 32 participants said they chose housing that was close to their workplaces, 22 chose to live near their children's schools, and 20 chose to live near shops and services. Half of the participants (16) also chose to live near a church; the vast majority of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, and Catholic churches are extremely commonplace in Toronto. This likely contributes to the remarkable spatial dispersion of the Filipino group in the Toronto CMA. Participants were very mobile: the average number of moves in Canada was 3.5. The most common reasons for moving were housing size, housing type (buying a home, selling the home and buying a condo), and proximity to work. The importance of these factors in housing choice mirrors the participants' choices in the Philippines, where the majority said they always had access to shops, services, schools, workplaces and churches regardless of whether they lived in suburban or urban neighbourhoods.

For about half of the participants (17 of 32), their housing choices did not match their preferences: either they could not afford their ideal housing type, or they preferred to rent but decided to buy due to the practical aspects of ownership (accumulating money over time) or the influence of family members. Almost every participant acknowledged that their attitudes towards housing had changed since they arrived in Canada: many used to believe renting was acceptable, but their perceptions shifted after living in Toronto for a few years. The number of times that the participants referred to renting as “throwing your money away” was notable in a population with a strong rental history in their home country. Many had always wanted to own a single-family home, but for others ownership was merely a practical decision based on their household size, the fact that they had small children, or that they would be sponsoring relatives who would stay with them for a few years. Condos were common for young newcomers, singles and retirees; increasingly, they represent a practical way to move into homeownership.

It is clear that many of the participants understand the tradeoffs between housing and transportation choice. In one case, a participant had moved into her “dream home” in Mississauga, but after a few years she and her husband decided the longer commute time and higher housing price wasn’t worth it. They relocated to a condo close to their workplace in North York.

### **The impact of structural changes on choices**

For many of the participants, the prospect of better employment in Canada was a major incentive for immigration. This study sample confirmed the Census data: the norm was to initially work in a lower-paid job, often in a different field. Earlier arrivals tended to find work in offices or banks, while later arrivals worked in factories, in food preparation or retail. While earlier arrivals had to retrain in Canada, or write licensing exams to practice in their fields, the process took several months. For those who arrived in the 1990s or 2000s, the process took several years. Of the ten participants who arrived in the 1970s, the average length of time to find work in their field was about two months; for the ten who arrived in the 2000s, the average was 32 months. Many of the participants never ended up working in their field of expertise, particularly men who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s. While both men and women work in sectors outside their area of expertise initially, men seem less likely to move back into their occupational sector. Occupational shifts have played a key role in workplace location: employment at an office meant a routine, nine-to-five workday, often in the inner city. Working in manufacturing, food preparation and retail requires more part-time, evening, and temporary work, and most of these jobs are not in the inner city. Many recent arrivals work more than one job, complicating the decision to live close to work. The increase in live-in caregivers in the 1980s and 1990s has led to more recently-arrived Filipinos living at their place of employment. Many participants mentioned these significant structural changes in the labour market.

Changes in immigration policy were acknowledged as having a major impact on the participants’ housing and transportation choices, particularly the LCP. Of the seven Live-in Caregivers in the sample, four did not own homes and six did not own cars. While changes in housing policy also affected the participants, particularly the availability of affordable rental housing in Toronto, they were less aware of the policies influencing these trends. Life cycle stages, such as having children and retiring, affected the participants’ choices, but not as much as structural changes. Single-person households are very common due to divorce

and the LCP (caregivers entering on their own, and then becoming permanent residents, working for many years before sponsoring family members). Homeownership, living in a single-family home, and car ownership were therefore not considered practical options for many participants.

The most interesting observation from the interviews was how often the participants' choices stemmed from their experiences in the Philippines: that is, living in mixed-used communities, renting and taking public transit. Preferences were often suppressed in the interest of practicality, which seemed to drive the participants' choices more than the "American Dream" ideology. If anything, the participants seemed to maintain the single-family-home-with-two-cars "ideal" for as short a time as necessary. Retaining the desire to express tastes or characteristics slightly different from the norm can contribute to a group's social resilience (Hall and Lamont forthcoming); in this case, continuing to choose mixed-use communities, renting, and public transit when possible can be seen as a resiliency strategy particular to the Filipino population. Florida (2008) asserted that flexibility in housing choice could lead to increased economic resilience. In unstable economic environments and precarious labour markets, choices that lead to community resiliency should be more highly valued than choices that raise debt load and hamper mobility.

## Conclusions

In many ways, the Filipino case illustrates challenges typical to immigrants in "global cities" with polarized labour markets and competitive housing markets: they earn lower incomes than the native-born population, often work below their skill level, and often live in overcrowded housing. Increasingly, they have trouble working in their professions and end up working in manufacturing, food preparation and retail jobs; in some cases they never return to their field of training. The fact that this particular group is experiencing these problems, despite their English proficiency and high education levels, indicates the pervasiveness of these issues in Canada's immigrant population. As Flyvberg (2011, 306) noted, "atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied...the deviant case helps researchers understand the limits of existing theories and to develop the new concepts, variables, and theories that will be able to account for what were previously considered outliers."

Structural changes in policy and the labour market have undoubtedly had an effect upon Filipino immigrants' transportation and housing choices. However, it is also evident that car ownership and homeownership were not the preferred choices for many of the participants. Participants chose the most practical options for their current situation and were flexible when their situation changed. Because renting and transit were common in the Philippines, even in residential areas and gated communities, the participants expected to encounter this flexibility in Toronto. It was only when met with difficulties (e.g. commuting long distances with infrequent transit) that they made the decision to buy a car. Similarly, although renting had been common in the Philippines and homeownership was not perceived as an investment, after a few years in Toronto the participants began to perceive renting as a "waste of money". This transition is interesting considering the decades of housing policy supporting homeownership over renting in Canada, which has made renting a less affordable and less prevalent option.

The Filipino strategy of practicality and flexibility contrasts with that of other major visible minority groups in Canadian cities, notably the Chinese and South Asian populations, whose multi-family household strategy contributes to higher-than-average homeownership rates (Balakrishnan and Wu 1992, Hiebert et al. 2006); these two groups also have very high driving rates (Heisz and Schellenberg 2004). Both strategies contribute to social resilience: on one hand the retention of values unique to the group, and on the other the adoption of Neoliberal values common in the host society (Lamont and Molnar 2001, Hall and Lamont forthcoming).

Immigrants may only choose to live in the suburban single-family house with two cars “ideal” for a decade or two. Outside of these two decades, they may rent, live in more central areas of the city, live in smaller units, and/or take transit. This increased, and prolonged, dependence of new immigrants upon rental housing and public transit creates particular challenges for municipal and regional planners in Toronto, Edmonton, Waterloo, and other Canadian cities. Official planning documents and policies have indicated their desire for better public transit, growth along transit corridors, and mixed-use development. However, they often fail to link these initiatives to the needs of rapidly-growing demographics such as of immigrants.

For example, although most new housing in Canadian cities has been in the high-end condo market, which is out of the reach of many immigrants, a recent report on housing in Toronto stated, “the rental sector offers at least as much potential for compact, transit-oriented development as the condo sector.” (ONPHA and COHFC 2010, 19) Policy initiatives supporting rental housing construction in transit corridors makes sense considering the shortage of rental units in Canadian cities; in fact, Toronto took exactly this approach in the 1960s and 1970s. Forty years after their construction, renters in Toronto’s high rise towers are still more likely to take transit, walk, and cycle, and less likely to own cars; yet the majority of these units are three-bedrooms, built for families (E.R.A. Architects 2010). Municipal planners have many tools to ensure that initiatives to build transit-accessible, mixed-use neighbourhoods create more choices for people without displacing low-income populations: Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), tax increment financing (TIF), inclusionary housing policies, donation of public land, transfer of development rights, density bonuses, land and air rights leasing, and streamlined processing for designated projects. Most of these tools have been used extensively in Toronto, with the exception of CBAs and TIF, which have never been used in Canada. Planners can use them effectively to construct more rental and affordable housing in close proximity to public transit routes: the City of Vancouver will use streamlined processing and density bonuses to encourage affordable housing projects along the Canada Line, an LRT line that opened in 2009 (Lee, 2010).

Planners’ abilities to use available tools, and to work with senior levels of government on policies supporting municipal/regional transit and affordable housing, will play a major role in increasing the affordable, sustainable choices available to immigrants in Canadian cities. Considering the structural changes that have made immigrants’ integration into Canadian labour and housing markets more difficult in recent decades, all three levels of government need to do more to ensure that municipal infrastructure meets diverse housing and transportation needs.

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