REINVENTED RACISM. . .REINVENTING RACISM?
INTERPRETING IMMIGRATION AND RECEPTION IN RICHMOND, BC

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the liberalization of Canadian immigration policy in the late-1960s, a significant development has been the increase in the ethnic and racial diversity of Canada's population. Indeed, the visible minority status of many immigrants to Canada has powerfully shaped interpretations of social and physical change. In the context of substantial Asian immigration to Greater Vancouver, a number of commentators have argued that critical responses to change on the part of long-term Caucasian residents represent a 'reinvented', and often subtly expressed, racism. It is the contention of this author, however, that such conclusions are compromised by an uncritical assumption of what constitutes racism and a diminished empirical focus on sensationalized media accounts.

Working from this premise, this thesis attempts to examine in greater depth two categories poorly examined in these accounts: racism and the long-term resident. It traces the emergence of the category of race, the analytical and political imperatives which gave rise to a shift in focus from race to racism, and how—under the rubric of social constructionism—theories on racism have been deployed to understand contemporary social relations in Greater Vancouver. A critique of this literature provides the springboard for further analysis of long-term resident responses to change. Extended interviews conducted with fifty-four long-term residents of Richmond, BC—a Vancouver suburb that has received considerable numbers of Chinese immigrants over the past twelve years—strongly suggest that our understanding of social and physical change at the community level cannot be reduced to one dimension. Moreover, the complexity of

these responses also demands that the analytical and political import of evaluative terms like racism be prised open and subjected to scrutiny and open debate. Perhaps most importantly, the diversity of long-term Richmond residents' responses cautions against the production of racialized stereotypes in immigration research, and points to the need to provide more nuanced and contextualized interpretations of immigration and its impact on society.

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CHAPTER ONE

Obzera's Letter:
Immigration and the Deployment of Racism in Richmond, Canada

On January 13, 1996 the *Richmond Review* newspaper published the first edition of a

two-part series on the theme of international immigration to the City of Richmond, a

suburban municipality located immediately south of Vancouver, Canada (see map, Figure

1.1). Appearing on the cover of the *Review* was an arresting image, a photograph which at

first seems to be a simple snapshot, but whose composition suggests a careful and

deliberate manipulation of its elements. The picture, reproduced in Figure 1.2,

imaginatively transports the reader to an airport, presumably Vancouver International, and

dominating the frame is a frontal shot of a commercial jet airplane, landed, nose-cone

pointing up towards overcast skies. Upon closer inspection one can see a tow bar attached

to the jet's front undercarriage, indicating that the plane has just arrived, though from

where is uncertain. A suitcase, affixed with an airport tag marked 'YVR' and 'to

Vancouver' rests untended in the foreground, and jutting out of its sides—hinting that

much more wealth is contained within its confines—are Canadian fifty, twenty, ten, and

five dollar bills. Reading the symbolism of the photo one could arrive at a number of

meanings—and indeed, multiple interpretations of its related news story would soon fill

the letters-to-the-editor pages of subsequent issues of the *Review*—but in the context of

the paper's two-part immigration series the photograph had a specific message:

superimposed over the image of the airplane and the suitcase was the explanatory

headline, "Investing In a Dream: For Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Richmond is BC's City of

Choice." Outlined within the pages of the newspaper was a celebratory account of the

immigrant entrepreneur program and the perceived benefits to Richmond, an article which

drew on the weight of statistics, the visual impact of a bar chart, and quotations from

experts to secure its authority. "Richmond," wrote columnist Martin van den Hemel, "is

the crown jewel of BC in the eyes of most immigrant entrepreneurs hoping to make it big

in Canada. While 90 per cent of the province's immigrant entrepreneurs head to the

Greater Vancouver area, half of that group ends up in Richmond."[1] What this meant for

the city, so the story went, was a significant share in the wealth that was being brought
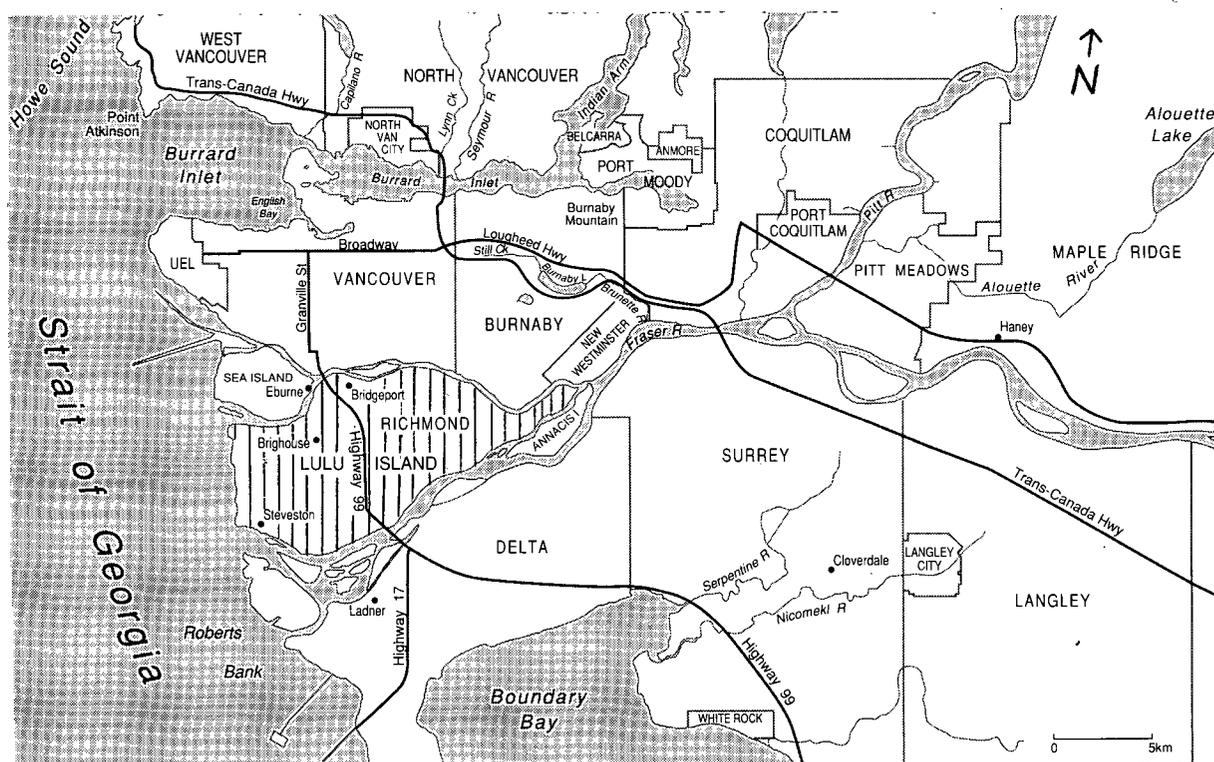
Figure 1.1: Richmond in the context of Greater Vancouver
 Source: Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*
 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), p. vi.

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[1] Martin van den Hemel, "Immigrant Entrepreneurs Boost Economy," *Richmond Review*, 13 Jan. 1996, p. 3.

into the province as a result of immigration. In 1994, van den Hemel noted, only 831

entrepreneur program applicants (plus their dependents) moved into the province of

British Columbia, yet they had a total declared net worth of $1.36 billion. On the basis of

their assets and geographical distribution in the Lower Mainland, immigrant

entrepreneurs were cited as major contributors to the regional economy, bringing hundreds
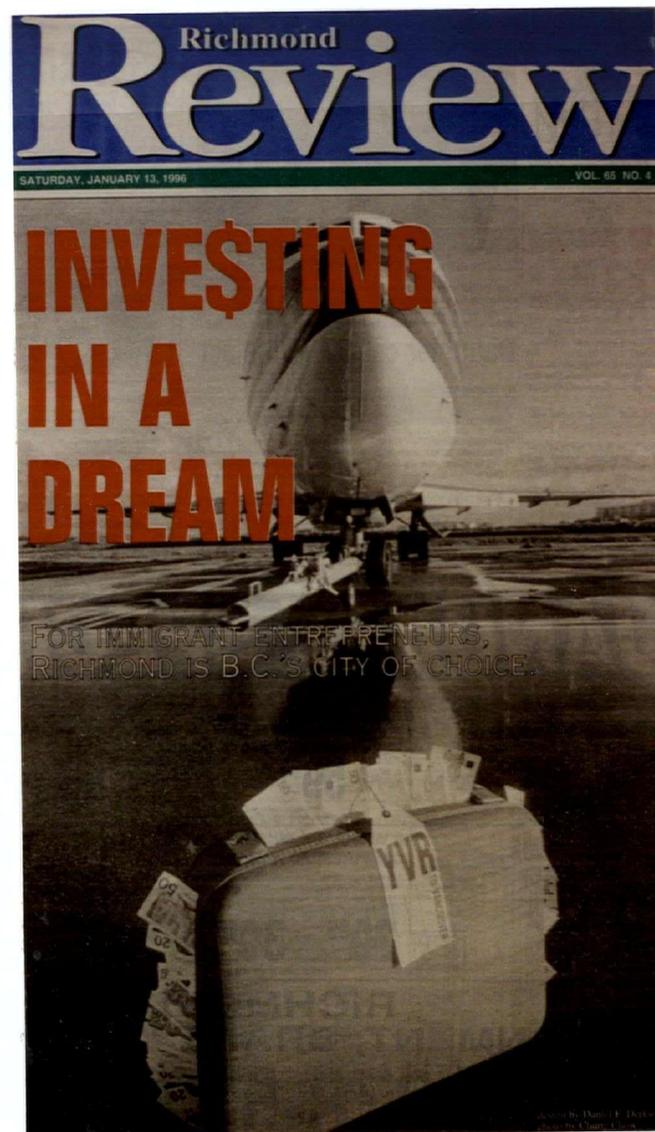
Figure 1.2: Investing In a Dream
    Source: *Richmond Review*, 13 Jan. 1996, p. 1.

of millions of dollars with them to buy houses and cars, and creating hundreds of jobs through direct and indirect employment. Robert Schultz, manager of the immigrant entrepreneur program for the provincial Ministry for Multiculturalism and Immigration, offered an estimate of the influx into the area's economy to be in the range of $200 million per year, with Richmond receiving about half of this figure according to van den Hemel's deductions.[2]

In addition to the claims made about the economic wealth generated by immigrant entrepreneurs, the column also offered an interesting commentary on their ethnic origin through the use of statistics that were only tangentially related to the information on the immigrant entrepreneur program. Presented in a sidebar were immigration data that indicated that the majority of *all* immigrants to the Vancouver area were from Asia. What this information did not say, however, was whether the majority of entrepreneurs were from Asia as well, or whether other categories of immigrants were making similarly high contributions to the local economy. In the absence of such data the reader was left to make this correlation on the basis of a less than definitive quote in the body of the article, with Lino Siracusa, Richmond's economic development manager, estimating that forty to fifty percent of business licenses over the past few years had gone to "Asians."[3] Whether a deliberate effort to allay public fears about immigration, or an unintentional juxtaposition of information, the selective data presented in the *Richmond Review* article, when strung together, seemed to suggest a comforting image of immigration into

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* Note that in Greater Vancouver, the vague term "Asian" is used by many as a shorthand for "Chinese," or those who *phenotypically* appear to be Chinese. Unlike the category employed by Statistics Canada, "Asian" in this context does not additionally refer to those of South Asian descent, popularly referred to as "East Indian."

Richmond in *general*: the people were predominantly Asian-origin, their numbers were relatively small, and the economic benefits of their movement to the city were immense. In light of this information, complaints about the impacts of immigration on Richmond would seem to be the result of misinformation, sour grapes, or *worse*.

Within a week, however, such dissenting voices were already beginning to intrude into the *Review's* account of immigration-driven prosperity, initially in the form of two letters to the editor. The immediate causes for these readers' complaints were the paper's confident estimates of Richmond's job surplus, and of immigrant-led job creation. Against the impression given by the cover of the *Review* and columnist van den Hemel, M. Obzera argued that for many residents immigration was not some uniformly positive, abstract, disembodied process of pumping capital into the local economy; rather, Obzera cited Asian immigration and attendant linguistic changes as factors resulting in the exclusion of long-term, unilingual anglophone residents from the local job market, expanding on this topic to register a series of pointed comments about discrimination, immigration, and the reshaping of Canadian cultural identity:

> After 20-plus years of service behind her, my daughter recently had to quit her job because of heavy stress. She has put out many resumes in the past few months and follows up on job advertisements in her line of work, which often call Cantonese or Mandarin an asset. It appears to me that Cantonese or Mandarin are prerequisites for getting a job in Richmond nowadays. We live in Canada, here in what used to be beautiful Richmond, where we have two languages, number one, English, number two, French. I'm not aware of Cantonese or Mandarin being our second language. What I call this is discrimination against Caucasians. People who were born and raised in Canada are no longer able to get jobs even with their qualifications because it appears every job available out there today in our immediate vicinity wants Cantonese or Mandarin. Who is running this country of Canada and where is it we're living? I suggest some investigation and answers. It was also brought to my attention in

the Bank of Montreal in our city, deposit slips are now in English and
Chinese, not our second language, French.[4]

Critical response by other readers to this provocative letter was immediate, sparking a

remarkably frank, two-month long debate in the letters to-the-editor pages of the *Review*

that moved beyond the initial focus on the immigrant entrepreneur program to engage

broader issues around immigrant settlement and change in Richmond. One tack adopted

by a considerable number of readers who objected to Obzera's missive was to frame

linguistic issues in economistic terms of supply and demand, affirming Obzera's

contention that English and French were the official languages of Canada, but arguing that

in Richmond, where there is a significant population of Mandarin and Cantonese speakers,

it was only reasonable to expect employers to want an employee who could communicate

in Mandarin or Cantonese as well as English.[5] Those unilingual English speakers who

could not cope with Richmond's changing linguistic climate were "fools" attempting,

"Canute-like, to halt the tide of inevitability."[6] Adopting an ethos of individual

responsibility, one letter writer characterized Obzera's daughter as the architect of her

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[4] M. Obzera, "No Chinese Language Means Few Job Offers," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 17 Jan.
1996, p. 9. A later letter by A. Barclay, "Jobs in Richmond? Where?" *Richmond Review*, 20 Jan.
1996, p. 9, expressed similar concerns related to language requirements and access to Richmond's
labour market.

[5] See, for example, Jeffrey Chan, "Chinese an Asset, Not a Meal Ticket," Letter, *Richmond Review*,
20 Jan. 1996, p. 9, Miguel Tu, "World's Getting Smaller, More Languages are Vital," Letter,
Richmond Review, 24 Jan. 1996, p. 11, Sean O' Connell, "Stop With the Whining," Letter,
Richmond Review, 24 Jan. 1996, p. 11, S.J. Liu, "Don't Blame Others for Lack of Work," Letter,
Richmond Review, 24 Jan. 1996, p. 11, A. Poon, "Just Supply and Demand," Letter, *Richmond
Review*, 24 Jan. 1996, p. 11, Edmond Lui, "Times Change," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 14 Feb.
1996, p. 4, and Chloe Lee, "Another Skill," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 14 Feb. 1996, p. 4.

[6] O'Connell, "Stop With the Whining," p. 11. Also see S. Liu, "Why Print Letters?" Letter,
Richmond Review, 27 Jan. 1996, p. 11, and B. Peritz, "Writing on the Wall," Letter, *Richmond
Review*, 27 Feb. 1996, p. 11.

own failure in the job market, since she "didn't adapt herself to today's fast-paced world."[7]

Seizing on the issue of responsibility, a series of readers argued that a number of long-term residents were engaged in a scapegoating exercise of blaming Chinese immigrants for their own inability to change with the times. These allegations of scapegoating were expressed in a number of ways: the most sophisticated arguments problematized the responses of many established residents, situating them within a broader historical context. Caucasian residents complaining about economic and linguistic challenges posed by the immigration of ethnic Chinese people, so it was argued, were on contestable moral ground, since their own establishment in Richmond—and indeed, Canada—was the legacy of European colonization of native peoples.[8] Another reader took the more straightforward approach of denying that the recent influx of Chinese immigrants had an effect on unemployment rates at *all*, thus contesting the very relationship between immigration levels and economic variables.[9] The most stringent critiques, however, turned around Obzera's definition of linguistic requirements as racially

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[7] S.J. Liu, "Don't Blame Others," p. 11.

[8] Kwok Ming Ng, "We're Still Lacking Those Saint-Like Qualities," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 27 Jan. 1996, p. 11, O'Connell, "Stop With the Whining," p. 11, and G. Lau, "More Arrogance," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 24 Jan. 1996, p. 11. Using European colonial practice as the springboard for critique of resident complaints—while characterizing contemporary linguistic changes as inevitable factors that local residents will just have to adapt to—would seemingly leave the latter open to the same criticism, that these changes simply represent a new colonization. Granted, illustrating that resident concerns are not innocent is a significant point, and the comparison with European colonial practice is effected, in large part, to *contrast* the current, more 'fair' attitudes of Asian immigrants (who, after all, were encouraged to immigrate by the Canadian government) with their European antecedents, but I'm not sure that these points totally blunt the sharpness of the colonial critique that can be directed against the 'might is right' reasoning that characterized many of the critical responses to Obzera's original letter.

[9] A. Poon, "Just Supply and Demand," p. 11.

discriminatory to Caucasians, characterizing resident anxieties about linguistic change as

racist and xenophobic expressions against Chinese-Canadians:

> As a Canadian, I am disappointed to learn just another instance of racism
> in my home country, Canada. . .
>
> Kwok Ming Ng[10]

> M. Obzera, your letter is not only insulting but also disgusting. . .Does it
> really matter to you what are the races of the people who run this
> country? Do you really think that 'beautiful' Richmond was beautiful
> before Mandarin and Cantonese speakers settled here?
>
> Jeffrey Chan[11]

> I am very offended by the letter titled "No Chinese Language Means Few
> Job Offers," Jan. 17 issue. I want to know what the title is implying. . .
> Richmond used to be beautiful, as you have said, but it is even more
> beautiful today. I hope that people living in Richmond do not
> discriminate against any races. . .
> S.J. Liu[12]

> In the last two issues your editorial pages carried a nasty stench of xenophobia.
> Messrs. Obzera and Barclay bemoaned the plight of themselves and their kin,
> pointing accusing fingers at Cantonese and Mandarin speakers.
>
> Sean O'Connell[13]

As Robert Miles notes, in the late-twentieth century racism is a heavily negatively loaded

term, and to claim that someone has expressed a racist opinion is to denounce them as

immoral and unworthy.[14] Judging from the definition of Obzera and Barclay's letters as

"offensive," "insulting," and "disgusting," the use of racism as a definitive term here was

bound up with a host of similar evaluations about the legitimacy of resident concerns, and

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[10] Kwok Ming Ng, "We're Still Lacking Those Saint-Like Qualities," p. 11
[11] Jeffrey Chan, "Chinese An Asset," p. 9.
[12] S.J. Liu, "Don't Blame Others," p. 11.
[13] O' Connell, "Stop With the Whining," p. 11.
[14] Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 1.

of their place in the letters-to-the-editor pages of a community newspaper, a point made

obliquely by S. Liu in the following letter:

> This country is a great one; its constitution offers everybody freedom of
> speech, including people like M. Obzera, whose daughter quit and can't
> find a job. Letter writer A. Barclay didn't mention why a hard worker like
> himself lost his job; they both blame the fact that they can't find a job
> because of their lack of necessary skills. Why does the Richmond Review
> let these pointless letters show up in the newspaper?[15]

Liu's questioning of the paper's role in providing a forum for resident fears was a point

followed up explicitly by significant decision-makers in the City of Richmond: Mayor

Greg Halsey-Brandt and councilors Corisande Percival-Smith and Kiichi Kumagai. In a

council meeting on February 26, 1996, after several weeks of back and forth dialogue

between critics and supporters of Obzera's and Barclay's positions, the three politicians

went on record to condemn the *Richmond Review's* printing of these letters, claiming that

the publishers were stirring up incendiary race relations in the name of selling more

advertising space in the newspaper.[16]

The characterization of concerns as racist, and the subsequent criticism of the debate

in the *Review* by civic leaders, was bitterly resisted by many of those who wrote to the

newspaper: this was not an issue of racism, they claimed, but of justifiable worries about

rapid cultural change, linguistic requirements, employment and economic prospects, and

the insensitivity of politicians to these issues.[17] In a remarkable intervention into the

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[15] S. Liu, "Why Print Letters," p. 11. The irony, though, in Liu's praise of free speech, and his subsequent prescription for the paper to stop publishing 'pointless' letters is hard to miss.
[16] "The Review Stands By its Readers," Editorial, *Richmond Review*, 28 Feb. 1996, p. 11.
[17] Among the people expressing these views: Lesley Scott, "Language the Issue," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 27 Jan. 1996, p. 11, Brian McKenna, "Column Bang On," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 31 Jan. 1996, p. 11, Lisa Sale, "Let's Get Along," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 3 Feb. 1996, p. 11, *Richmond Review*, "Economic Envy? Or Legitimate Frustration?" Editorial, *Richmond Review*, 7 Feb. 1996, p. 10, Brent Covey, "All About Greed," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 7 Feb. 1996, p. 11,

debate, the publisher of the *Review*, Dave McCullough, affirmed the reality (and, so he argued, the *legitimacy*) of long-term residents' fears of change, and defended the newspaper's decision to publish letters expressing these worries. His editorials raised a series of significant arguments about the character of these anxieties, criticized the deployment of the term racism in the debate, and merit lengthy quotation:

> The patronizing tone and ugly accusations of recent letters to the editor shouldn't be allowed to obscure two important facts about the job market in Richmond these days. Fact Number One is that the ability to speak Cantonese or Mandarin is an over-riding consideration for many employers. Fact Number Two is that unilingual job-hunters feel angry and betrayed. A couple of writers—M. Obzera on Jan. 17 and A. Barclay on Jan. 20— started a bit of a debate by stating these facts in fairly straightforward way. For having the temerity to speak out, they've been subjected to a barrage of spiteful verbiage from the pens of people who are either a) blessed with the good fortune of speaking a Chinese language at birth; or b) superior English-speakers with impeccable adaptability skills. Are Obzera and Barclay racists, fools and bitter souls? Was Obzera's letter disgusting and insulting? Is Obzera's daughter unfit for the modern workforce? Some of our readers think so. But, like others before them who have sought to stifle debate by pointing fingers and making unfounded accusations, they've failed to address the underlying issues. . .Most of the people who took the time to write made a big leap in logic to the conclusion that anyone who is upset about this unexpected turn of events must be a racist. Huh? It doesn't follow folks. Obzera, Barclay and Obzera's daughter have probably spent much of their lives learning the skills they were told they would need in order to be contributing worker bees. Now, due entirely to circumstances they could neither foresee nor influence, they're being told they lack one of the important prerequisites to employment in Richmond. Does that seem fair? . . .To criticize Obzera and Barclay for feeling victimized is arrogant and unproductive.[18]

F. MacDonald, "Spell Anarchy," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 14 Feb. 1996, p. 11, Darrin Anderson, "Well Said," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 14 Feb. 1996, p. 11, S. Vern, "Another Victim," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 14 Feb. 1996, p. 11, Lee Jansen, "Too Correct," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 6 Mar.1996, p. 11, and Jan Staines, "Face the Issue," Letter, *Richmond Review*, 9 Mar. 1996, p. 11.
[18] Dave McCullough, "No Use Slamming Victims of Changing Times," Editorial, *Richmond Review*, 27 Jan. 1996, p. 10.

> For the record, fearing the consequences of immigration does not make you a racist. Nor does opposing it. Racism relates to the reasons for your fear or opposition.[19]

Strong words, and McCullough's editorials served as reassuring catalysts, prompting even more disgruntled residents to write the *Review* to air their grievances about changes in Richmond. I wonder, though, how productive McCullough's intervention is; whether his forceful denunciation of Obzera's critics just reverses the totalizing logic of sweeping accusations of racism in public discourse, stifling debate by uniformly labeling those advancing charges of racism as spiteful, arrogant and unproductive—in short, replacing one silencing categorization with another. Can the issue of racism in Richmond be so readily foreclosed as he asserts? I am not convinced it can, while at the same time I contend that the definition of critical responses to change (ethno-cultural or otherwise) as expressions of racism is a charge that needs to be open to discussion and supported, not uncritically accepted. As helpful as a series of letters to the editor is in raising questions about immigration, the character of resident responses to change, and the status of racism in Richmond, I believe that such an exchange takes us only so far in generating interpretations. This thesis is an effort to address these issues and contribute to the discussion.

In attempting to develop an understanding of how established Richmond residents have viewed change in their community, including change associated with immigration, I have elected to approach the question in a more 'open-ended' fashion rather than explicitly employing a particular theory to guide the analysis. At some level I suspect that

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[19] Dave McCullough, "Moderation the Key in the Great Debate," Editorial, *Richmond Review*, 3 Feb. 1996, p. 10.

my choice of method is a criticism of how reception issues have often been framed in popular and academic discourse: shaped and explained within the context of a foundational (and seemingly unimpeachable) conception of racism. While I believe that it is possible to employ such theoretical frameworks in a reflexive manner that acknowledges their partiality, in this thesis I intend to use a primarily inductive methodology. I want to evoke the changes long-term residents have seen in Richmond, how they have viewed these changes, and *then* assess the role issues of race and racism play in these responses. This said, I agree with Derek Gregory when he writes that we need theory to account for social life, that the facts do not and never will speak for themselves, and I hope that my position here will not be construed as an atheoretical empiricism.[20] My choice of methodology, after all, is shot through with theories about how knowledge should be constructed, and in trying to make sense of resident responses I draw considerably on theoretical literature on race and racism. Indeed, these are major themes of this thesis, but I do not want them to constitute the only means by which resident responses are comprehended. The primary goal of this research, rather, is to effect a productive synthesis: drawing on concepts of race and racism to help interpret resident responses to changes in their community and, importantly, working from the responses to critically evaluate those concepts.

I would like to begin this discussion in Chapter Two by reviewing, through a selective survey, the varied history of racial categories. It does not represent an exhaustive account of what is a staggeringly diverse and prolific field—this would be well beyond the

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[20] Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge MA and Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell, 1994), p. 12.

scope of this research, and in any event I am not sure what interest resulting claims to total knowledge would serve. At the risk of unduly homogenizing the literature, I have framed this discussion in terms of a "changing grounds of debate," a movement from treating *race,* and groups defined as races—however race is conceived—as the primary objects of study to analyzing processes of *racialization* and *racism.* Looking more specifically at geographic approaches to race and racism, I trace a related change in focus: from empiricist mappings of race, to the geography of race or ethnic relations, and finally to the currently dominant social constructionist paradigm and its attendant geographies of racism. The latter approach is illustrated with accounts of the reception of Chinese immigrants in the Vancouver context, with specific reference to the work of Kay Anderson, Peter Li, Brian K. Ray and others, and brings us back to the local geographic setting, while a critique of this literature leads to further analysis of the Richmond site.

The third chapter of this thesis is a brief sketch of a historical geography of Richmond, paying attention to population growth, land-use changes, and anti-growth sentiments over the course of Richmond's past, and discussing in some detail the cultural, economic, and physical transformations of the past ten years. Working from this visioning of the Richmond context, in Chapter Four I address contemporary experiences and interpretations of change on the part of established residents—defined for the purposes of this thesis as those who have lived in Richmond since 1986 or before—of various ethno-cultural backgrounds. This information is drawn from a series of extended, semi-structured interviews I conducted with fifty-four residents over the course of 1997 and 1998. Following this, in Chapter Five, I revisit the substantial literature on racism to locate the responses of long-term residents within the various theoretical frameworks. At

the same time, however, residents' experiences provide an impetus to assess these concepts in an extended discussion on the analytic and political category of racism. Drawing from this commentary I argue for a more reflexive and measured conceptualization to the problematic of racism, one that can come to grips with the partiality of perspective and interpretation, the complexity of place and power, and the richness of individual human experience.

CHAPTER TWO

The Changing Grounds of Debate:
From Race to Racism

> Above all, I hope to have shown my reader that the answer to orientalism
> is not occidentalism. No former "oriental" will be comforted by the
> thought that having been an oriental himself he is likely—too likely—to
> study new "orientals"—or "occidentals"—of his own making.
>
> Edward Said[1]

By way of introduction in the previous chapter I outlined a debate among a number

of residents that occurred in the pages of the *Richmond Review* newspaper during the early

months of 1996. I also dedicated some time to explaining the focus of this thesis, and the

particular methodology that I sought to employ. A pivotal issue in both these discussions,

I think, is that of *representation*: the *Review* debate highlighting contesting impressions of

community change and interrogating the legitimacy of such representations, and the

commentary on methodology raising questions about the closures and openings effected

by different representational strategies. Representation is also a central theme of this

chapter, in which I define a movement in conceptualization and practice, from the

emergence of the category of race and disputes over its meaning, to the development of

the analytical categories of racialization and racism. This movement can be seen as a sort

of 'running representational critique', with the development of successive categories

emerging in response to the apparent shortcomings and dangers of the ones that preceded

them. In turn, drawing from the insights of Alastair Bonnett, at the end of the chapter I

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 328.

offer a critique of how social constructionist representations of racism have been mobilized in the context of Chinese immigration to the Lower Mainland.

From Interpretations of Race...

As Robert Miles reminds us in his 1989 work *Racism*, representations of the Other have a long history pre-dating the introduction of the word race into the English language. Migration, notes Miles, determined by the interrelation of production, trade, and warfare, has been a precondition for the meeting of human individuals and groups throughout history. Over the course of this interaction, imagery, beliefs, and evaluations of the Other have been generated to explain their appearance and behaviour in order to formulate a strategy for interaction and reaction.[2] What Miles brings to the fore is the fluidity and variability of these representations, which were not exclusively the province of Europeans, though European engagements with other peoples are the primary foci of his analysis. Contact and interaction between Greco-Roman and African societies, for example, resulted in varying conceptions of what the phenotypic differences—notably skin colour, but also hair type and nose shape—signified, their origin, and their relation to cultural differences. Indeed, the Greeks and Romans used a colour term, *Aithiops, Aethiops*, or *Ethiopian*, literally, a burnt-faced person, as a designation for the blackest and most wooly-haired people known to them.[3]

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[2] Miles, *Racism*, p. 11. See also Peter H. Wood, "If Toads Could Speak: How the Myth of Race Took Hold and Flourished in the Minds of Europe's Renaissance Colonizers," in Benjamin P. Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), pp. 27-45.

[3] Frank M. Snowden, Jr., "Europe's Oldest Chapter in the History of Black-White Relations," in Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective*, pp. 3-26.

This colour term, however, did not impart a singularly negative impression of Africans, nor was it uniformly applied. Frank Snowden's research into classical societies, literature and art illustrates that Greeks and Romans recognized variations in physical types—all blacks did not look alike—and that Ethiopians were regarded in both positive and negative lights.[4] African 'blackness' was alternately linked to death and the underworld, and viewed as a sign of beauty.[5] Greeks and Romans had highly positive images of blacks whom they encountered in their daily lives; the first impressions of blacks among many Greeks and Romans were frequently not of 'savages', but of soldiers who, like themselves, were warriors protecting their own territory against foreign invasion or pursuing their national or personal interests in other lands.[6] The origin of physical difference, so the dominant line of reasoning held, was the result of environmental factors. With Africans, skin colour and hair type were believed to be the result of constant exposure to the sun.[7] Furthermore, this environmental reasoning had associated positive cultural characteristics: according to Pliny the Elder, not only were Ethiopians burnt by the sun at birth, but they were wise because of the varying conditions of their climate. Northerners, in contrast, had white, frosty skin and straight, yellow hair, and were fierce because of the rigidity of their climate. The basic human substance—the same in all—was tempered differently in different climes.[8]

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[5] Miles, *Racism*, pp. 14-15, and Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," pp. 15-16. Snowden, though, is less willing than Miles to see a linkage in Greco-Roman society between 'blackness' and its association with the underworld, and the blackness of African peoples. He argues that the evidence of the relationship between people having antipathy to the colour black and reacting negatively to dark-skinned people is far from convincing.

[6] Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," pp. 10-11,

[7] Miles, *Racism*, pp. 14-15, and Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," p. 13.

[8] Pliny the Elder, *2.80.189*, cited in Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," p. 13.

Medieval European literary traditions refracted the Greco-Roman representations and explanations of the Other, imbuing them with religious significance and exhibiting the same characteristic ambivalence. On the one hand, according to Miles, various human physical features, including skin colour, were defined in the black/white colour calculus of western Christianity as being 'monstrous', expressing a hierarchical religious evaluation that represented others as phenotypic and cultural deviants from European norms.[9] However, as Snowden argues, early Christian representations of the Other were not solely and unrelentingly negative. Origen of Alexandria, for example, stressed the applicability of Christian black/white imagery to all people, regardless of their skin colour—all people were black *and* beautiful—and contended that it made no difference whether a person was born among Hebrews, Greeks, Ethiopians, Scythians, or Taurians: God created all equal and alike.[10] This combination of phenotypic and cultural categorization, negative, positive, or otherwise, was operationalized and modified through the course of European engagement with the Islamic world (and reciprocated in turn), and later in the colonization of the Americas from the fifteenth-century onwards.[11]

Regardless of how one views these representations, as primarily positive or negative, prior to the fourteenth century none explicitly used the term of *race* in their formulation. Indeed, Snowden is hostile to the idea that modern ideas of race and racism can be 'read back' into Greco-Roman and early Christian discourses and practices, arguing that people in these cultures, notwithstanding a few concepts and ideas sometimes interpreted as anti-black in sentiment, could see and comment on obviously different physical characteristics

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[9] Miles, *Racism*, pp. 16-17.
[10] Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis 2.9.5-6*, in Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," p. 19.
[11] Miles, *Racism*, p. 16.

without developing an elaborate and rigid system of discrimination based on skin colour.[12]

The notions of phenotypic and cultural difference formulated in this period on

environmentalist grounds, Miles writes, at least suggested an ambiguity; that the

distinctions between Europeans and Africans were not in principle (though this was less

acknowledged in practice) inherent in the sense of being fixed or inevitable.[13] Such a

distinction between pre-modern forms of ethnic differentiation and later modern forms of

racial identification is also made by David Theo Goldberg, who comments that the

specific set of socioeconomic, legal, and cultural relations that emerge in modernity had

no correlate in pre-modernity, and that identity only became explicitly rendered in racial

terms with these developments.[14] That these writers emphasize the conceptual separation

of the pre-modern era from later epochs in which ideas of race are explicitly (or, so it is

often argued, implicitly) invoked to explain differences in behaviour is an important note

that I will bracket for the moment, but one to which I will return in my consideration of

contemporary responses to change in Richmond.

With Marco Polo's journey to Cathay in the late-thirteenth century, a series of

crusades to the near-East, ongoing trade with sub-Saharan Africa, and the later exploration

of the 'New World' across the Atlantic, Europeans slowly became sensitized to the

problems and possibilities posed by varied peoples beyond the shores of the

Mediterranean Sea.[15] As in the classical era, contact with others during the European

renaissance generated imagery, beliefs, and evaluations to guide interaction and reaction.

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[12] Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter," p. 23.

[13] Miles, *Racism*, p. 30.

[14] David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell, 1993), p. 77.

[15] Peter H. Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 29.

Columbus' 1492 contact with aboriginal peoples in what later became named as America, for example, raised a series of questions as to whether these unknown beings were mortal or immortal, human or non-human; if they could be converted to Catholicism, or should be enslaved or eradicated.[16] As a result of these contacts, the classificatory term of race, derived from the Latin word *ratio*, or reason, gradually took purchase within Europe: Italians started to employ the word *razza* before 1400, and during the fifteenth century the terms *raca* (Portuguese), *raza* (Spanish), and *race* (French) came into use.[17]

The English, late to enter the drive to overseas expansion and far removed from the Mediterranean nexus of contact, did not utilize the term race until shortly after 1500. According to Michael Banton, the word race entered the English language in 1508, in the poem "The Dance of the Seven Sins" by the Scotsman William Dunbar. Describing those who followed the sin of envy he wrote:

> . . .And flatteris in to menis facis;
> And bakbyttaris of sindry racis,
> To Ley that had delyte. . .[18]

Banton situates Dunbar's poem in a larger religious debate that sought to reconcile stories of different-looking people in different lands with the biblical assertion that all humans were descended from Adam and Eve. Conflicting notions of this 'race as lineage' concept proliferated within ecclesiastical studies, with some reviving the classical environmentalist argument that people looked different because they had migrated to other

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[16] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[17] On the derivation of the word race from *ratio*, see Laura A. Lewis, "Spanish Ideology and the Practice of Inequality in the New World," in Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective*, pp. 46-66. On Italian/Portuguese/Spanish/French formulations, see Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 29.

[18] Cited in Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 1.

regions from a common point of origin, while others articulated a polygenetic view that claimed a variety of original ancestors, with Adam as the ancestor of the Jews alone.[19]

Yet concerns over notions of race were not isolated to religion alone. Discourses that utilized the term race in the sense of *lineage* came into increasing use during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and played significant roles in myths of national origin. Anglo-Saxons, for example, were defined as a race of people—in terms of a population with a common origin and history, not a fixed biological character—who had fought the Normans in England to reassert their traditions of liberty and democracy.[20] Furthermore, in the mid-eighteenth century it was used in France to denote groups that, in another register, might be defined in terms of class. In this context the peasantry was labeled as a different and inferior race by the upper classes.[21]

Perhaps the most potent and lasting articulations of race, however, developed with the increasing hegemony of scientific thought in the eighteenth century and were coupled with increased European contact with other peoples, overseas exploitation, the demands of the industrial revolution for natural resources, international banking and commercial capitalism, and the birth of the nation-state: in short, with the constitutive elements of modernity.[22] As Banton and Miles note, scientific definitions of race were notoriously

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 1. Also see Miles, *Racism*, pp. 32-33.
[20] Banton, *Racial Theories*, p. 2, Miles, *Racism*, pp. 31-32.
[21] Bernardo Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism* (Vancouver: Future Publications, 1994), p. 20, Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 23.
[22] This linkage of modernity with the classificatory term race is one made by many. See, for example, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, p. 13, Miles, *Racism*, p. 30, Banton, *Racial Theories*, pp. 2-6, and Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 28. For an interesting series of observations about the relationship between the idea of race and modernity, the fluidity of the term race, and the problematic of accounting for this diversity with a 'unified' conception of racism, I recommend Michel Wieviorka's *The Arena of Racism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), and his

unstable, changing in both content and form.[23] Early scientific classificatory systems

arose in the field of natural history, developing from the aforementioned religious

attempts to account for human origins, and focused on many of the same debates that had

raged over interpretations of biblical history; namely, what physical criteria were to be

considered distinguishing features, whether differences in appearance constituted varieties

of one species or distinct species of their own, and how environments might occasion

change. In 1684 French physician Francois Bernier suggested that people could be

classified not only by their country and region, but by their own different physical

characteristics, while one of the first to offer a systematic natural history was John Ray,

who wrote *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* in 1690.[24] Other

significant classifications of the animal and plant worlds were formulated by Carl

Linnaeus of Sweden in his *System Naturae* of 1735 and by Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon

in France, while these classificatory systems were extended to humans by Immanuel Kant

and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, medical professor at the University of Gottingen and

the so-called 'father of anthropology'.[25] At this stage of formation, classifications of

human groups, according to Banton, still were primarily conceived of as being variations

"Racism in Europe: Unity and Diversity," in Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood, eds., *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 173-188. Similarly, in the same volume, Ali Rattansi's "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities in a 'Postmodern' Frame," pp. 15-86, raises questions about the relationship between race and modernity, and how racism might be conceived in a postmodern framework. I will revisit these themes and Rattansi's work in particular, at the conclusion of this thesis.

[23] Banton, *Racial Theories*, pp. 2-6, Miles, *Racism*, pp. 30-32.

[24] Banton, *Racial Theories*, p. 2. On Bernier, see Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 39.

[25] Banton, *Racial Theories*, pp. 2-6, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, pp. 13-14, Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 39.

in degree, maintaining a monogenetic view of humanity, and race was used infrequently either to describe peoples or in accounts of differences between them.[26]

Significant changes in the content and use of these classifications were soon to come, with transformations in beliefs about the origins and meaning of variations in phenotypic features. In a movement described by Banton as one from 'race as lineage' to 'race as type', distinctions between Europeans and Others became increasingly rigidified and naturalized; environmental and climatic explanations for physical differences fell out of favour due to observations that these features did not change when members of races moved to different geographical regions, and consequently monogenetic views of humanity became supplanted by polygenetic explanations. Furthermore, there was a growing propensity to rank, rather than merely differentiate, between 'whites' and others.[27] The scientific conceptions of race that arose from these polygenetic beliefs, although relying on varying and increasingly complex and obscure ideas of biological type (ranging from readily visible phenotypic characteristics of skin colour, hair type, and nose shape to measurements of cranial capacity, facial angle and cranial index), had a number of enduring characteristics. Race referred to a biologically distinct type of human being, a population having a commonality of 'stock' and phenotypic features, whose capacities and achievements were fixed by natural and unalterable conditions which were common to that collectivity.[28] Furthermore, as Miles argues, scientific discourses of race did not replace earlier conceptions of the Other, but were inhabited by them, refracting their

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[26] Banton, *Racial Theories*, pp. 5-6, 9.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-64. Also see Miles, *Racism*, pp. 32-33, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, p. 14, and Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," pp. 40-42.
[28] Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities," p. 54, Miles, *Racism*, pp. 32-33.

content. When viewed through the prism of science, ideas of savagery, barbarism and civilization—human characteristics previously conceived of as potentially mutable—became naturalized and fixed conditions of the so-called 'lower races'.[29]

...To Interpretations of Racism

It was in the context of this scientific conception of race and all of its correlative assumptions that the first definitions of racism emerged in the early to mid-twentieth century. Two significant factors led to this definition of racism which was linked to a larger movement that sought to repudiate scientific race-thinking, and which initially emphasized racism as embodying a particular ideological content. One major impetus for rejecting established and commonplace assumptions about the meaning of race was the experience of the Second World War; specifically, the abhorrent mobilization of racial discourses by the German Nazi Party to depict the Jews as an alien and inferior race, and whose rigid and de-humanizing classifications underwrote rationally planned extermination.[30] The second factor was the emergence of scientific evidence that eroded the idea of races as separate, natural and static groupings of people with their own distinct, cultural characteristics and potential for human development.[31] Drawing from these two events, critics of race-thinking sought to extricate scientific and sociological concepts

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[29] Miles, *Racism*, p. 33. As Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities," p. 54, points out, this racial taxonomy, while "representing some 'white' races as inferior to others, consistently consigned non-white populations to the lowest rungs of the racial ladder. Also see Wood, "If Toads Could Speak," p. 42.

[30] Miles, *Racism*, p. 43, Michel Wieviorka, *The Arena of Racism*, p. 2, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, pp. 21-22. For a specific and in-depth reading of modernity, racism/anti-Semitism, and the rationalities of the Holocaust, see Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1989).

[31] Miles, *Racism*, p. 42.

from this terrible legacy, and did so by affirming the initiatives that, after the war, challenged the claim that race was a biological fact.[32] The most significant of these efforts was that undertaken under the aegis of the United Nations, by UNESCO, which assembled on four occasions during the 1950s and 1960s to discuss scientific evidence on race. The fourth of these meetings directly offered a definition of racism as a false belief that there is a scientific basis for arranging groups hierarchically in terms of cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate.[33]

From these denunciations of the biological concept of race, a variety of responses (especially in sociology, which had a significant role in the discussions over race and ethnicity) were forged in regard to the utility of race as an analytical category. Some in the social sciences sought to retain the concept of race—not as a biological, causal determinant of behaviour, but as a social group defined on the basis of physical criteria, similar in status to those defined by national or cultural criteria.[34] Conversely, other writers feared that the use of race (with its essentializing connotations) in a *sociological* context would only serve to cause misunderstanding, and to prolong the life of a scientifically invalid concept. This belief underpinned efforts to jettison all references to race in academic and government discourse and replace it with the socially defined term of ethnicity, the considerable public reaction against affirmative action programs that are

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 45. This is not to say that the scientific dismissal of racial categories was a precondition for all opponents of race-based oppression. Miles notes that a major critic of racism in the early half of the century, Ruth Benedict, nevertheless believed races existed as scientific objects of inquiry, but not that they denoted permanent superiority and inferiority.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 46, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, p. 18. Also see John Rex, *Race and Ethnicity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp. 19-20.

[34] See John Rex and J. Milton Yinger, "Intersecting Strands in the Theorisation of Race and Ethnic Relations," in John Rex and David Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 20-21.

seen to violate 'colour-blind' liberal notions of equality, and related condemnations of 'race-structured' thinking in general.[35]

The belief in the fallacy of race as an explanatory variable led to a particular understanding of racism as an irrational act since, according to science, those who took these beliefs seriously were acting on what was, effectively, a mythological concept. Following this line of reasoning, Michael Banton pressed the argument further to state that since the scientific knowledge underpinning theories of innate racial superiority had been disproved (ironically, by a discourse of science which had propagated them), racism proper was dead.[36] This may have been the most provocative statement about the demise of racism, and one which discounted the persistence of biologized notions of identity in the public, but especially the private, realms, but it was not inconsistent with the tenor of those representations which were fixated on the content of the category of race. Whether one looks at Banton's bold pronouncements, arguments in favour of 'colour-blindness', or calls to replace the term race with ethnic group, the focus remains centered on the status and meaning of *race*, with racism derivative of this category and relatively limited in its purchase.

For many people, however, statements such as Banton's which posited the end of racism (whether at present or some future end-point) illustrated precisely what they saw as

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[35] The comment on 'undue' race-structured thinking is from Alan J. Levine, *Race Relations Within Western Expansion* (Westport CT: Prager, 1996). On the desire to conceptually separate ethnicity for race see, for example, Berdichewsky, *Racism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*, pp. 28-36. For a rebuttal of 'colour-blind' liberal thought in defense of affirmative action programs that categorize exactly along colour lines (though, it is said, as a proactive means to provide redress for societal inequities) see Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 223.

[36] Michael Banton, "The Concept of Racism," in S. Zubaida, ed., *Race and Racialism* (London: Tavistock, 1970), pp. 17-34.

the foreshortened historical perspective of an approach that chained the meaning of racism to a particular, essential, primarily irrational conception of race. As Miles points out, the initial concept of racism was developed within the particular milieu of the 1930s and 1940s, during which time efforts were made to remove the legitimization of science from the prevailing concept of race, and as a result nineteenth-century science which had largely defined the meaning of race was discredited as an ideology. However, the effect of de-legitimating older conceptions of science and race was to limit a definition of racism to this specific manifestation, so that this theory became so limited in its historical and geographic scope that it could not travel outside this social context without collapsing.[37] "In the absence of this nineteenth-century discourse of 'race', with all of its correlative assertions," writes Miles, "the analyst could only conclude that racism did not exist or had evaporated."[38] Concerned about the problems that the disappearance of racism as an object could pose to critical analyses of societal disparities and exclusions, a number of people set out to redefine racism in a way that unchained it from a specific, and restrictive, scientific content and an assumed temporality that had been or could be surpassed. One of the first movements in this re-definition of racism was the statement formulated by the members of the fourth UNESCO meeting:

> Whenever it (racism) fails in its attempts to prove that the source of
> group differences lies in the biological field, it falls back on justifications
> in terms of divine purpose, cultural differences, disparity of educational
> standards or some other doctrine which would serve to mask its
> continued racist beliefs.[39]

This figuration of racism emphasized a particular historical characteristic of the term race:

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[37] Miles, *Racism*, p. 47.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Cited in Miles, *Ibid.*

the variety of modalities (whether this be class, religion, nationality, ancestry, or imputed biological type) through which it was deployed to demarcate the Self and exclude the Other. Thus conceived, racism's geographical and historical scope was expanded, with it viewed as a flexible, fluid, even covert process that could take multiple forms dependent on the larger social context which gave it respectability.[40] To paraphrase David Theo Goldberg, the category of race in this conceptualization of racism is an empty vessel which acquires meaning in the process of use; it classifies people together by virtue of their sharing some purportedly significant characteristic.[41] Thought of in this way, the relationship between racism and discourses of race described in accounts that see racism as an outgrowth of a particular belief system effectively becomes inverted: the process of racism being the basal structure, and various conceptions of race acting as legitimating ideological categories.

Although this emphasis on racism rather than race was one adopted by many academics and activists, in practice subtle, yet significant, distinctions were drawn in regard to the concepts of racism and legitimization. Those interpretations which I would consider more conservative did not stray too far from essentialist, content-based definitions of racism offered by people such as Banton. Instead of concluding that racism had disappeared in the absence of any overt discrimination or explicit reference to biology, those arguing that this kind of racial ideology had persisted contended that it had become 'masked' or 'hidden' by seemingly acceptable modes of expression. Consider, for example, Martin Barker's frequently cited work on the 'new racism' of the British

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[41] Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 74.

Conservative Party's immigration policy of the 1970s. In *The New Racism* Barker

contends that since 1968 the Conservative Party and had been pursuing a conscious bid for

a new theorization of race.[42] According to Barker, cultural differences between indigenous

white Britons and non-white immigrants were invoked by the Tories to legitimize

restrictive immigration proposals, through appealing to genuine fears about the problems

and tensions surrounding immigration. Appealing to the 'fact' that people felt swamped by

immigrants allowed the Conservatives to draw a distinction between their realistic and

rational policies and those prejudicial, 'racist' ones advanced by the National Front party.

Although Barker considers the reality of immigration-related tensions, he argues that the

Conservatives had concealed a theory about race inside apparently innocent language. A

discourse of legitimate fears founded on ideas of intractable cultural difference shifted the

frame of discussion from outmoded notions of biological race to a more acceptable (and

seemingly more social) register. What was racist about this, following Barker, was the

implication of immutability and fixity carried over into concepts of culture, imparting a

pseudo-biological quality to groupings that were the result of social and historical

processes. The resultant 'theory of human nature' naturalized bounded communities, so

that it appeared reasonable to conclude that each community had its own separate place,

and that feelings of antagonism would be aroused if outsiders were admitted.[43]

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[42] Martin Barker, *The New Racism* (London: Junction Books, 1981), p. 25.
[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-25. Similarly, in the Canadian context, Peter Li has drawn links between overt racial supremacist groups and seemingly 'rational' or reasonable concerns about the impact of immigration, arguing that the latter represents a 'codified' language in which a message of racial hatred is disguised. See Peter S. Li, "Racial Supremacism Under Social Democracy," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 27 (1995), pp. 1-17.

While Barker's formulation of the relationship between contexts of legitimization and racism conceived of the former as a means of covering and justifying racism (described in Barker's book as an exclusion based on the belief of natural, immutable and fixed differences between populations) other, more radical and expansive interpretations collapsed this implicit distinction between legitimization and racism. The sense of legitimization of racism in these formulations is synonymous with rationalization—not just in the sense of a *cover* for some underlying ideology, but rather as the *very means* by which racist exclusions come about. Explaining this position, Goldberg writes, "racist exclusion may be rationalized as natural and so inevitable, as economically, politically, or culturally necessary, or as unfortunate but unavoidable."[44] Racism here is thought of loosely—as involving the differential promotion or exclusion of people by virtue of their being deemed members of different racial groups, however racial groups are taken to be constituted.[45] 'By virtue', in this framework need not imply some direct context of explanation for exclusion, but may be rationalized another way, as the patterned by-product of bureaucratization.[46] Included under this heading is the concept of institutional and systemic racism, the notion that if seemingly 'universal' applications of rules and guidelines of a particular institution or system result in differential racial effects, then they should be regarded as racist rationalizations.[47]

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[44] Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 111.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[47] For more critical discussion of 'institutional racism' see Miles, *Racism*, pp. 50-51.

On Geography, Race and Racism:
1)Empiricist Geographies of Race

Although the roles played by natural historians, philosophers and sociologists in

defining the meanings of race and racism have been significant, I believe I can say—

without being accused of disciplinary provincialism—that the practice of geography has

occupied a central place in this history.[48] Concepts and ideas of the origin of phenotypic

and cultural differences, from the classical age through the twentieth century, frequently

hinged on notions of environmental influence. Indeed, monogenetic views, those that

posited the basic unity or common origin of humanity, *depended* on the belief that

differences between groups of people were the result of geographic distance and climactic

variation.

This defining role of geography in issues of race, however, was not a unidirectional

movement, but rather, as Alastair Bonnett, Felix Driver, and David Livingstone point out,

a process of mutual determination.[49] Through both its technical power and qualities of

legitimization, geography as a discipline figured prominently in dividing, classifying, and

colonizing non-European peoples.[50] In turn, 'racial geography' was not only a part of the

geographic discipline which had developed during the expansion of the British Empire,

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[48] In thinking though, and trying to explain, the intersections between race and racism and geographic discourse, I borrow the tripartite framework of *empiricist geographies of race, the sociology/geography of race relations, and social constructionism* from Alastair Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline: Geographies of 'Racial' Identity and Racism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19 (Oct. 1996), pp. 864-883.

[49] Bonnett, *Ibid.*, Felix Driver, "Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*," 10 (1992), pp. 23-40, David Livingstone, "Climate's Moral Economy: Science, Race and Place in Post-Darwinian British and American Geography," in Anna Godlewska and Neil Smith, eds., *Geography and Empire* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 132-154.

[50] Livingstone, in "Climate's Moral Economy," p. 135, forwards this idea rather more forcefully than I have done here, writing, "Geography was not merely engaged in discovering the world; it was making it." Stated like this, geography's power to define the horizon of meaning is clear.

but was at the core of the subject, "its theoretical assumptions and global perspective permeating both its [geography's] physical and human branches."[51] Racial geographers such as Griffith Taylor, the head of the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto in the first half of the twentieth-century, held prominent positions within the academy, and saw their role as defining and explaining the distribution of human races.[52] Central to the practice of Taylor and other racial geographers was a belief in the environmental determination of society and behaviour:

> In the past it has been usual to explain national progress largely in terms of military power, religious beliefs, and sagacious rulers, as witness almost any history written in the nineteenth century. It would be foolish to deny he great influence of these factors, but there is a growing school of thinkers who believe that the environment is of at least equal importance, although the study of this factor has been neglected in the past. This neglect is a natural one, since it is only within the last half-century that the environments of the various peoples have been understood at all adequately. Further than this, many scientists are coming to the conclusion that it is the variation in the environment which is the most potent factor of all in influencing human evolution, whether biological or social.[53]

This belief that the environment determined the mental processes of its inhabitants encouraged racial geographers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to compile sets of seemingly 'objective' racial data (Figure 2.1) enumerating the nature of the movement of different races (Figure 2.2) and charting and quantifying their migratory and mental potentials.[54] Left unquestioned were the assumptions bound up with the idea of mental potentials—whose concept of intelligence acted as the yardstick by which

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[51] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 865.
[52] Griffith Taylor, "Racial Geography," in Griffith Taylor, ed., *Geography in the 20th Century* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 433-462A.
[53] Griffith Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1937), p. 4.
[54] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 866.

people were measured?—and while considerable energies were expended debating over

and refining the criteria of racial categories, there was little or no questioning of the

geographer's role in creating these categories, or the ethics of the project as a whole

Bonnett notes, however, that between 1940 and 1960 the popularity of this paradigm

waned, a development that he links to the decline of Britain's imperial ambitions, but one

that also coincided with the experience of the Holocaust and Nazi racist ideology, the

Figure 2.1: Charting 'Objective' Racial Data
　　Source: Griffith Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration* (Toronto: University of
　　Toronto Press, 1937), p. 55

scientific repudiation of race, and the initial articulations of racism.[55] In the 1960s and

1970s, though, this empiricist geography enjoyed a resurgence in popularity with the

influx of large-scale 'non-white' immigration into the United Kingdom and the rise to

prominence of spatial science, with the latter emphasis on data gathering, management,

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[55] *Ibid.*

and policy formation.[56] Although conceptions of race in geography had moved from

biological factors to social ones, racial categories were still viewed as largely

unproblematic, objective 'facts' that lent themselves to quantification and correlation, the

mapping of 'non-white' immigrant settlement, and the development of indices of racial
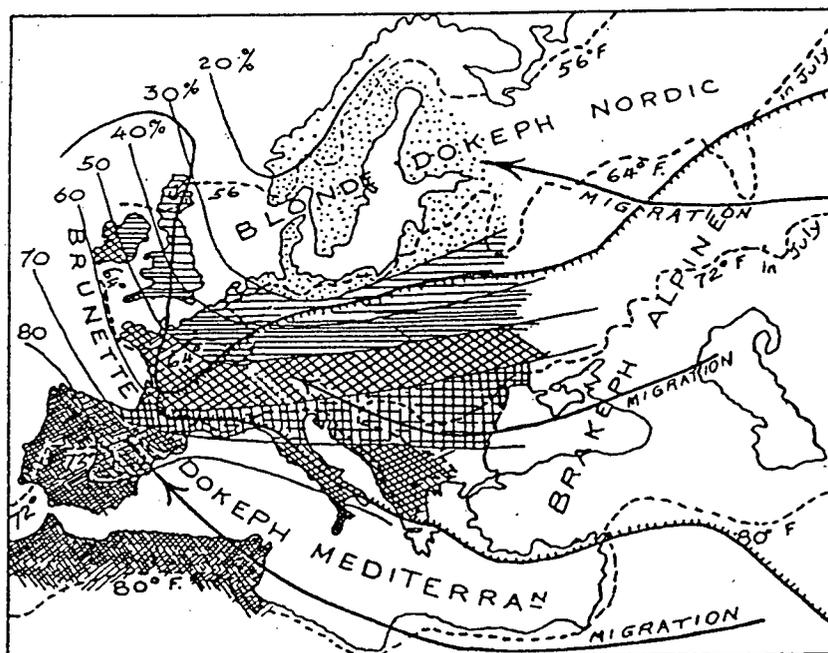
Figure 2.2: Mapping Race
Source: Griffith Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1937), p. 53.

segregation. The task for the social geographer, wrote R.E. Pahl of the University of

Cambridge in 1965, was to discern the pattern and processes involved in the segregation

of social groups and settlements in space. The social geographer is thus interested in the

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[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 866-867. This is not to say that it disappeared, however. Taylor's work in this period, for example, remained firmly embedded within the environmentalist tradition, but after the "Nazi-absurdities of 1932-45" as Taylor put it, he advocated a paternalistic "geopacifics"; a humanized geopolitics that sought to base the teachings of freedom and humanity upon real geographical deductions. In Taylor's view, geopacifics illustrated the benefits of race mixing, combated race prejudice, and set out where the leading nations must arise—not to conquer, but to lead the world. See Taylor, "Geopolitics and Geopacifics" in his edited work, *Geography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 587-608.

broad changes of population structure and distribution as the very necessary first stage of analysis.[57] Although Pahl argued that empirical studies needed to be related to a theoretical framework, notably absent from his and others' empirical geographical analyses of race were discussions of racism, conceived of either as a residual mythological belief in some biological factor that shaped behaviour or as a process of group identification and boundary formation that could take many forms.[58] Maintaining the traditional role of geography in relation to race, scholars working within the empiricist framework noted the role that space played in group relations, arguing that the social distance between groups had a direct relationship to the spatial distance and the distributions of groups within an urban area.[59] Geography 'mattered' in that it offered an explanation for the persistence of group differentiation, and the paradigm's statistical clarity, so Bonnett argues, has made it popular with geographers engaged in mapping exercises with geographic information systems (GIS).[60]

2)Geographies of Race Relations and the Sociology of Place

Although the empiricist tradition in racial geography has been maintained through the popularity and vitality of GIS, the 1970s and early 1980s were witness to a series of

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[57] R.E. Pahl, "Trends in Social Geography," in R.J. Chorley and Peter Haggett, eds., *Frontiers in Geographical Teaching* (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 81-100.

[58] It is interesting to note that while Pahl advocated moving beyond simple descriptive mappings of social distributions, he was hostile to the idea of grand theorization, as represented by the writings of spatial scientist William Bunge, arguing that "it would be impossible for the social geographer to create a model which would be suited to all societies at all periods of time," *Ibid.*, p. 95. Perhaps this reluctance explains his and others' failure to elaborate a theory of racialization in their accounts of social interaction.

[59] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 868.

[60] *Ibid.*

attempts to broaden the field and engage social theory more vigorously.[61] This move

marked a shift away from primarily descriptive accounts of groups' differential location in

space, and the social consequences of this, to consider and incorporate sociological

frameworks that sought to explain the reasons for these phenomena. As John Rex, a

significant figure in the British school of race relations notes, however, sociology did not

provide a ready-made body of theory to be applied to these issues, but was—and continues

to be—marked by conflicts and disagreements about paradigms and the very categories in

terms of which concepts are elaborated.[62] Within sociology, a variety of approaches to

race and racism vied for legitimacy: writers such as Michael Hechter and Michael Banton

adopted the view of methodological individualism, stressing the role of individual actions

and expectations in shaping social structures. Others, like Robert Miles and Manuel

Castells, for example, drew from Marxian analysis to identify what they saw as the class

factors underlying racial or ethnic group formation and acts of marginalization, while

scholars such as Rex utilized the framework developed by Max Weber to try and integrate

the roles of constraining structural factors with the agency of individuals in determining

these structures.[63]

Whatever the chosen theoretical framework, the race relations approach was (and

continues to be) characterized by its attempts to analyze the social, cultural, and economic

interactions of different races or ethnic groups. Geographers utilizing a choice/constraint

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 869.

[62] Rex, *Race and Ethnicity*, p. 2.

[63] Michael Hechter, *The Micro Foundations of Macro Sociology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Robert Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour* (London: Routledge, 1982) (also see Miles, *Racism*), Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), and John Rex, *Race and Ethnicity.*

framework, while introducing discussions of social relations that problematized the

straightforward spatial determinism of empiricist racial geography, maintained a belief in

the tangibility and reality of socially-defined ethnic or racial groups, a point made

forcefully by geographer Ceri Peach in his critique of Marxist interpretations that viewed

such social groupings as epiphenomena of class relations:

> The view which sees ethnic segregation solely in terms of class oppression
> seems, to me, to be historically and psychologically impoverished. Ethnic
> groups do not exist in any society independently of the class system of
> modes of production. However, this is not to say that their position in the
> class system or relative to the modes of production is the dominant factor in
> their ethnicity. English, Welsh or Russian ethnicity were established long
> before current class structures or modes of production. Ethnicity contains
> class rather than vice versa. The language, values, religion, culture and
> class of ethnic minorities are not simply badges of degradation imposed by
> more powerful groups to imprison, confine and divide those whom they
> dominate. They are elements of group and personal identity, fostered from
> within the group.[64]

What a positivist approach to social geography, that which focused on the interactions

between groups, did in contrast to reductionist Marxist accounts, according to Peach, was

to draw on the empirical study of the geographic context to then tease out the

consequences and causes of visible minority agency and constraint.[65] Segregating factors

in the non-white population could include, then, differences in socio-economic status,

social avoidance through voluntary segregation by the minority, and forced segregation

through rejection and exclusion of coloured immigrants by the white majority.[66] Even if

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[64] Ceri Peach, "Conflicting Interpretations of Segregation," in Peter Jackson and Susan J. Smith eds., *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation* (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 19-33. The quotation is from p. 31.
[65] *Ibid.* Also see Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 870.
[66] D. Philips, "The Social Segregation of Asians in Leicester," in Jackson and Smith, eds., *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation*, p. 103.

not mentioned by name, racism could encompass those characteristics of rejection and exclusion, even on cultural rather than phenotypic grounds.

John Western's account of Barbadian experiences moving to and living in London is a vivid example of this approach to race and ethnicity that viewed these categories as having a materiality, a meaning, that was not solely imposed by the dominant society, but which also self-consciously attended to the role of the researcher in representing these categories. Like Peach, Western contends that there is a tangibility to ethnicity that cannot be reduced to ascription by the dominant society, and in the beginning of *A Passage to England*, he reflexively acknowledges his role in emphasizing Barbadian agency in shaping their own identities, explaining the politics behind this decision:

> . . .On the one hand there is a strong urge to align oneself with the rejection of what in the United States pioneering black folklorist Zora Neale Huston termed "sad negro stories"--a rejection paralleled, for example, by Salo Baron's disdain for that "lachrymose conception of Jewish history" that harps on diaspora, inquisition, pogrom, and holocaust. There is it seems to me a strong strain of the lachrymose--along with the angry and the hurt--in the general British discourse: blacks as losers, blacks as problem. . .Yes, I wish to counter such inherent presupposition, and my experience with the particular interviewees does counter it.[67]

Indeed, throughout his book Western highlights the resilience, determination and independence in his participants, "a strength of Barbadian pride, or, if you will, chauvinism."[68] Nevertheless, Western is concerned about the potential that might come with emphasizing such endogenous aspects of Barbadian identity: the denial that colour has any impact on Barbadian Londoners' life chances, or worse, the possibility that the materiality of their ethnic affiliation may be invoked as justification for differential

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[67] John Western, *A Passage To England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 24.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

treatment or even rejection. Consequently, Western does not shrink away from relating stories of exclusion by white Britons, or events that he defines as racist—acts that run the gamut from ignorant comments to violent attacks, as in one Barbadian Londoner's account of the Notting Hill riots of 1958:

> I lived in Cornwall Crescent, which was the centre of the racial riots.
> I was chased by a gang of bottle-throwing thugs who were after my scalp
> . . .Mosley and his blackshirts were preaching negrophobia, and their
> doctrine of organized antagonism against black people was frightening.
> Those years were painful, it was a terrifying ride to the edge of darkness,
> having to endure all the friction.[69]

A disturbing account, but not the entire story of the Barbadians' experience, for in his interview transcriptions Western relates many instances in which these immigrants to London were received warmly by white residents, whom he pains to represent as a heterogeneous group. The end result is a richly textured, even messy, account of Barbadian life in London, and one in which racism (both definitionally and textually) plays but a limited, component part in the ebb and flow of inclusion and exclusion. There is little theorization on issues of racism, however, which given the Barbadians' cultural affinities with white Britons, seems restricted in *A Passage to England* to exclusion on the basis of appearance.

3)Social Constructionism and Geographies of Racism

For many critics the premises and practices of the race relations school and writers such as Western were seen as offering inadequate and even 'dangerous' explanations for group differences. Kevin Brown, writing at the same time in which Peach endorsed

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

studies that took as their basis the 'reality' of ethnicity, argued that the sociology of race

and ethnic relations had not provided sufficient critique to what he saw as an ethnocentric

host/immigrant framework.[70] In Brown's opinion, the choice/constraint concepts that

accorded some weight to an internally-developed identity, provided inadequate means by

which to interpret race or ethnic relations, failing, in his mind, to come to grips with

asymmetrical power relations in society.[71] Another significant and related critique

attacked the categories of race and ethnicity in these formulations. The race relations

school, in focusing on the relationships between racially identified communities and

individuals, were seen to instate race and ethnicity as real, concrete social agents.[72]

Although commentators such as Bonnett contended that the potentially reifying tendencies

of the race relations paradigm could be tempered by reflexive practices that questioned

racial and ethnic categories, viewing them as historically contingent—and I think

Western's book is a remarkable example of this method of self-conscious representation—

more radical scholars decried the entire race relations school itself, claiming that even

partially voluntarist accounts of ethnic and racial segregation and affiliation were

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[70] Kevin Brown, "Race, Class and Culture: Towards a Theorization of the 'Choice/Constraint' Concept," in Jackson and Smith, eds., *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation*, pp. 185-203. It seems to me, though, that the choice/constraint framework, and an analysis of the relative strengths of visible minority agency and constraint, would have something to say on power relations in society--seeing whether they were asymmetrical in practice rather than accepting the notion of inequality *a priori*.

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline, p. 869. For a thoughtful and reflexive view of these concerns about the reification of racial and ethnic categories, see Jeffrey Prager, "American Racial Ideology as Collective Representation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 5 (1982), pp. 99-119.

"dangerous to the black cause they seek to espouse. . .operating as culturalist rationalizations for British racism."[73]

In an effort to distance themselves from the perceived datedness of race relations work, geographers and race scholars have attempted a realignment through the social constructionist approach. As Bonnett notes, social geographer Peter Jackson has been at the forefront of this effort which has asserted that race has no explanatory value and serves little, if any, analytical purpose.[74] According to those advocating a social constructionist approach, what needs to be the focus of analysis for geographers, then, is not race (whether in its long-discredited 'biological' notions, or in culturalist interpretations of socially-defined races or ethnicities), but racism, which he describes as:

> . . .the attempt by a dominant group to exclude a subordinate group from the material and symbolic rewards of status and power. It differs from other modes of exclusion in terms of the distinguishing features by which groups are identified for exclusion. However, racism need not have recourse to purely physical distinctions, but can rest on the recognition of certain 'cultural' traits where these are thought to be an inherent and inviolable characteristic of particular social groups.[75]

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[73] Bonnett, *Ibid.*, p. 869. On the 'danger' of race-relations research, see Jenny Bourne and A. Sivandan, "Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen: the Sociology of Race Relations in Britain," *Race and Class*, 21 (1981), pp. 331-352. On their role as promoters of "culturalist rationalizations" see Lee Bridges' reviews of C. Peach, et al., eds., *Ethnic Segregation in Cities*, and Peter Jackson and Susan Smith, eds., *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation*, both appearing in *Race and Class*, 24 (1982), pp. 83-86.

[74] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 873, Peter Jackson, "The Idea of 'Race' and the Geography of Racism," in Peter Jackson, ed., *Race and Racism: Essays in Social Geography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), pp. 3-22 Given the extension of the category race here to include not only phenotypical, but also cultural characteristics, this assertion that race has not explanatory value and serves little analytical purpose seems to me to be as much a political decision as one founded upon the belief that races (or cultures) do not exist. Are those advocating the social constructionist position actually arguing that cultural attachments never act as causal factors? I find this highly unlikely.

[75] Jackson, "The Idea of 'Race'," pp. 12-13.

Thus, we have a broader, process-based approach to racism as advocated by Goldberg and others, one which moves from considering race or ethnicity as tangible entities to looking at the processes of racialization, whereby individuals are identified as members of groups different from the Self (via phenotypic and other traits), and racism: how these differentiations rationalize exclusionary practices. This approach to racism, while not attaining hegemonic status, has become dominant within geography, and I would like to now turn to its application to issues of immigration, race, ethnicity, and reception in the context of Greater Vancouver.[76]

Vancouver's Chinatown:
Kay Anderson and the Social Construction of 'Chineseness'

At the beginning of her book on the social construction of the category Chinese in Vancouver through the site of Chinatown, Kay Anderson expresses much of the concern that animates the representational move from the geography of race relations to the geography of racism. Looking back to 1978, when she was a third-year geography student at Adelaide University, Anderson recollects feeling "uneasy" about the field known as ethnic studies. This unease, she writes, led her to an important shift in focus, from writing an essay on a 'minority group' to an analysis of 'our' (read, 'White Australian') culture.[77]

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[76] This disciplinary status of social constructionism in Geography is argued by Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 873.

[77] Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p. ix. Incidentally, 1978 is also the date of publication of Edward Said's classic work *Orientalism,* which challenged Western scholarship on the East and stressed the *productive* role that the West had in creating the category of the Orient. The parallels with Anderson's project are extraordinary and lead one to wonder how much of an influence Said's work had in shaping Anderson's ethical, theoretical and methodological position as expressed in *Vancouver's Chinatown.*

Born out of this reservation about the reifying distinctions between 'us' and 'them' that she believed were fostered in race relations research, Anderson's Ph.D. thesis at the University of British Columbia, "East Is West: State, Place and the Institutionalization of Myth in Vancouver's Chinatown," interrogated the taken for granted category of Chinese and its physical manifestation in the residential and commercial area of 'Chinatown' near Vancouver's Central Business District.[78] In *Vancouver's Chinatown*, her 1991 book developed from this research, Anderson asserts that the conventional understandings of the Chinese quarters of Canadian, American and Australian cities have been figured around an uncritical acceptance of them as the product of Chinese immigrants who have made their lives in the West—that the 'Oriental streetscapes' of Chinatown have a natural connection to the Chinese and their immigrant experiences.[79] In geographic practice, Anderson notes, Chinatown has been conceptualized as a launching point in the assimilation of Chinese settlers, as an urban village pitted against encroaching land uses, as a Chinese architectural form, and as an idiosyncratic Oriental community amidst an Occidental urban environment.[80]

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[78] Kay Anderson, "East Is West: State, Place, and the Institutionalization of Myth in Vancouver's Chinatown," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1986.

[79] Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, p. 3. I am troubled, though, by Anderson's equating the identification of voluntaristic aspects of Chinese ethnic identity with a belief in their 'naturalness' or 'essential' character. I do not think that to speak of the former *necessarily* implies advocacy of the latter positions, and that such a link between the two conceptions—should it exist—needs to be explicitly demonstrated rather than assumed. Unfortunately, I believe that Anderson too frequently glosses over the potential distinctions between the expressions outlined within the pages of *Vancouver's Chinatown*—an elision which complicates her own identification of the voluntaristic aspects of Chinese identity: if invocations of endogenous Chinese cultural traits are somehow naturalizing and essentializing, how do Anderson's commentaries on Chinese agency avoid this damning characterization? What makes them conceptually different than the commentaries of 'white' Vancouverites is not clearly spelled out.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

It is in the context of these portrayals that Anderson posits her work as a fresh and more conceptually-advanced analysis, one that focuses on the role of western perceptions in creating, and sustaining, the categories of Chinese and Chinatown, rather than a discrete Chineseness as an implicit explanatory principle.[81] The resulting work is a remarkable intellectual accomplishment, a detailed and grounded examination of the idea of the Chinese and Chinatown as represented in white Canadian imaginaries over a time span in excess of one hundred years, and one that provides a bridge between micro-scale research and grander theories about the racialization process. Developing her argument from government documents, Vancouver's daily newspapers, and English translations of local Chinese newspapers, Anderson describes what she calls the 'movement in formation' of the Chinese and Chinatown: the initial, state-sanctioned process of representing 'John Chinaman' as an essentialized and typified outsider to white Canadian society, the confinement of Chinese settlers in a swampy settlement close to Vancouver's business centre (a territorialization which, in turn, reinforced the imaging of the Chinese as distinct and separate), the exoticizing valorization of Chinatown in the 1930s, its representation as a slum in the 1950s and 1960s, and the current re-celebration of Chinatown and Chineseness since the 1970s under the official doctrine of Canadian multiculturalism.[82]

Significantly, Anderson acknowledges the role ethnic affiliations played in binding people from China in a localized community, thus identifying the voluntaristic aspects of ethnic segregation cited by Ceri Peach and others working in the race relations tradition. "Some Chinese," she speculates, "might have been eager to distance themselves from non-

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[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 9.
[82] On this 'movement in formation', see *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Chinese, just as China had obviated contact with western 'barbarians' over the centuries."

Likewise, in arguing that white imagery of Chineseness played a prominent role in

defining the Chinese and Chinatown in Vancouver, Anderson contends that it is not her

suggestion that Chinatown was a pure fiction, nor does she deny gambling, opium

addiction, and unsanitary conditions (components of the image of Chinatown as immoral

blight on the landscape) existed in the district where Chinese settled. Furthermore,

Anderson notes that the process by which Chinese and Chinatown have been defined over

this time has not solely been a unidirectional imposition by a white, male European elite,

but that the residents of Chinatown have negotiated this process, frequently manipulating

and contributing to the extant imagery for their own benefit.[83]

Such implied agency (and, perhaps, *responsibility*) on the part of Chinatown

residents for their representation notwithstanding, however, Anderson's focus remains

resolutely centered on the actions of the West and the governing elites in *creating* the idea

of Chinatown. While viewing Chinatown so unrelentingly as a social construction

of white Vancouverites has the effect of silencing the residents of Chinatown themselves

(who appear only as voices in the margins of the text), Anderson's choice of focus is a

political decision that she is willing to defend: she writes that this mode of analysis acts as

a "demystification" process, going beneath the surface of the taken for granted to

"illuminate" how race is circularly tied to systems of European domination.[84] These

representations of race, argues Anderson, have much less to do with truth, a one-on-one

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[83] On negotiation and manipulation of 'Chineseness' and Chinatown on behalf it its residents, see *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[84] For Anderson's extended discussions on the vanguard role played by social constructionists see *Ibid.*, especially, Chapter One, "Race, Place, and the Power of Definition," pp. 8-33 and Chapter Eight, "The End of a Fiction," pp. 245-252.

correspondence with what is 'out there', and more to do with legitimizing material

interests and practices of exclusion.[85]

The Ongoing Social Construction of Chineseness'?
Immigration, Housing and Change in Contemporary Vancouver and Richmond

Although Anderson's analysis spans an impressive time frame, her work in the

Vancouver context has focused on the geographic location of Chinatown, and ends in

1980. The social constructionist perspective employed by her, however, with its ability to

gather seemingly disparate representations under the same theoretical umbrella, has been

utilized by as number of scholars to challenge the meanings attached to contemporary

Chinese immigration in west-side Vancouver and the suburb of Richmond. Informed by

social constructionist theory, these observers have argued that long-term, white residents

have constructed an image of Chinese immigrants as undesirables, as the harbingers of

unwelcome neighbourhood change, and that this represents just the latest chapter in the

history of racist exclusion against Chinese peoples. Consider, for example, Peter Li's

perspective on issues of housing style change and immigration in west-side Vancouver and

the reaction of white residents to these phenomena:

> . . .using the case of recent Chinese in Vancouver and the public's
> reaction to new, opulent residential homes, the paper shows how a public
> image of affluent Chinese immigrants is being depicted as white

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[85] *Ibid.*, p. 20. Though note that in making this evaluation, Anderson moves from an implied *partiality* in her account—that her focus on the role of the West in creating the categories of Chinese and Chinatown (and the sidelining of Chinese agency) is a deliberate political strategy to counter an existing literature that has downplayed this productive role of category construction—to an overall evaluative statement on the character of the representations as a *whole:* that they have *much less* to do with representing the 'truth' as they do with legitimizing acts of exclusion. I appreciate the point that these representations should not be viewed as innocent of power relations, but since Anderson consciously and textually downplays the role of an endogenous Chinese culture in creating Chinatown, this conclusion seems to me to be the product of her thesis rather than anything else.

residents battle for changes in municipal regulations restricting the
construction of 'monster homes' in their neighbourhoods. The case study
shows that Chinese immigrants are being linked to 'unneighbourly
houses', and that in the process, social symbols and concepts take on a
racial significance to demarcate the differences between Caucasians and
their Canadian heritage, and Chinese immigrants and their foreign
culture. The study gives credence to the view of race as a social
construct, and it shows how a projection of 'race' can gain wide social
acceptance especially when it provides a rationale for a social problem.[86]

Li contends that concerns expressed in Vancouver during the late-1980s over residential

change, particularly the construction of large 'monster houses', provided a *context* for

constructing a negative image of Chinese or Hong Kong immigrants. In his view, and

suggested by the title of the article in which this take appears—"Unneighbourly Houses *or*

Unwelcome Chinese. . .(my italics)—battles against particular housing styles and physical

change in neighbourhoods act as a type of codified language, as a way of camouflaging

underlying racial anxieties in words that appear to be devoid of racial influence, with the

implied ultimate intent to "safeguard a fundamental aspiration of Canadian society that

entitles Canadian families to enjoy home ownership and community life in traditional

white middle-class neighbourhoods.[87] Thus, concerns over housing style, to paraphrase

another group of writers who have come to similar conclusions in the Vancouver area, act

as a "stalking horse" for other fears—the changing racial or ethnic composition of

neighbourhoods—that cannot be expressed in a more direct fashion.[88]

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[86] Peter S. Li, "Unneighbourly Houses or Unwelcome Chinese: the Social Construction of Race in the Battle Over 'Monster Homes' in Vancouver, Canada," *International Journal of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies*, 1 (1994), pp. 14-33. The quote is from p. 14.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[88] W.T. Stanbury, John D. Todd and David G. Banks, *The Housing Crisis: the Effects of Local Government Regulation* (Vancouver: Laurier Institute, 1990), pp. 111-112.

While themes of immigration, neighbourhood change, and racism in Vancouver have led to numerous studies and interpretations, the same issues in Richmond have received scant attention from academics.[89] One notable exception to this omission is the research of Brian K. Ray, Greg Halseth and Benjamin Johnson who have situated contemporary conditions in Richmond within the context of a project that seeks to examine the relationship between racism and city space. Drawing explicitly on the theorizations on race and racism advanced by David Theo Goldberg and Kay Anderson, among others, Ray, Halseth and Johnson contend that in Richmond, where the Chinese immigrant population has been growing over the last decade, "real and metaphoric spaces are integral to a reinvented articulation of old racist concepts."[90] The argument parallels that which Li makes in the Vancouver study: commenting on similar anxieties in Richmond about immigration, housing style and neighbourhood change, Ray, Halseth and Johnson assert that in Richmond, issues over housing—and in particular, the 'monster house' debate— are used as a "medium" and a "metaphor" for the expression of concern about

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[89] Other, significant contributions on the topic of neighbourhood change and racism in the Vancouver context are Katharyne Mitchell, "Multiculturalism, or the United Colors of Capitalism?" *Antipode*, 25 (1993), pp. 263-294, and David Ley, "Between Europe and Asia: the Case of the Missing Sequoias," *Ecumene*, 2 (1995), pp. 185-210. The theoretical and empirical positions of these two papers are quite different than those working through the avowedly social constructionist approach to address the same issues in Vancouver: both Mitchell and Ley appear to accord the category of Chinese and culture a tangibility and agency (especially in Ley's evocation of "two diasporas" of peoples, British and Chinese) that is less apparent in other works. In this way, and in the relatively limited role racism plays in their accounts, Mitchell and Ley's accounts seem to align with the race relations approach as outlined earlier.

[90] Brian K. Ray, Greg Halseth, and Benjamin Johnson, "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs: Issues of Ethnicity and Residential Change in Suburban Vancouver," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 21 (1997), pp. 75-99. The quote if from p. 75.

neighbourhood level ethnic change.[91] They, like Li in his work in Vancouver (and

Anderson's research on Chinatown) argue that these kinds of representations are marked

by an excess of meanings over things—that rather than explicating the ways in which

residential landscapes are actually evolving, these discourses serve instead to create

landscapes of difference and discrimination.[92]

In arguing that concerns over housing act as a cover or metaphor for 'racist' fears of

neighbourhood-level ethnic change, both Li, as well as Ray, Halseth and Johnson's

position on contexts of legitimization and racism is in alignment with the more

'conservative' position that I outlined earlier and illustrated with reference to the work of

Martin Barker. Interestingly, however, in commenting on the debates in Vancouver, Li

writes:

> . . .to what extent that these characterizations reflect the cultural origin
> of where these immigrants came from, or for that matter their current
> reality of life, is of less importance than the fact that such characterizations
> are widely accepted as common or real[93]

a statement that would seemingly place him in the radical social constructionist camp as

exemplified by Goldberg's position: whether or not the contexts of explanation are 'true'

or not is effectively irrelevant, that it is the fact of *exclusion* that matters and which is

illegitimate. Yet, following the methodology employed by Li, and also Ray, Halseth and

Johnson, one gets the sense that it *does* matter to them whether the contexts of explanation

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 83. What is meant by the term 'ethnic' here, however, is hard to discern. Given the authors' arguments that present Chinese immigrants as similar to long-term white residents in term of socio-economic status, their neglect of (potential) cultural differences, and the title of their paper ("The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs. . ."), fear of ethnic change seems synonymous with fear of those who are different in appearance.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[93] Li, "Unneighbourly Houses," p. 30.

are true, for their positions on racism are cemented by contrasting the 'social

constructions' made by residents with the 'reality' revealed by their analyses.[94] To quote

Ray, Halseth and Johnson, "we believe that the constructed images and popular discourse

surrounding change in Richmond bear only a weak relationship to the actual nature of

change and the Chinese population. In many ways this popular discourse has relatively

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[94] Not that this is particularly strong cement. In ascribing Vancouver's housing price increases to demographic forces such as the baby boom, increased household formation, and interprovincial migration, Li relies on the findings of David Baxter, from his *Population and Housing in Metropolitan Vancouver: Changing Patterns of Demographics and Demand* (Vancouver: Laurier Institute, 1989). The inferences drawn from the data, however, are highly flawed. The data on housing demand which Li (p. 23) cites is drawn from the 1976-1981 time period, prior to the major movement of Hong Kong immigrants to Vancouver in the late-1980s of which he is referring to. Similarly, Li's migration data presented on p. 24 refers to migrants to British Columbia as a whole, at which scale interprovincial migrants outnumbered international migrants between 1986 and 1991. However, at the metropolitan scale (which is, after all, the geographic area Li is referring to) statistics from the City of Vancouver indicate that international immigration has exceeded interprovincial migration into Greater Vancouver every year from 1981-1982 to the present (City of Vancouver, *Greater Vancouver Key Facts, 1997*, Internet: http://www.gvrd.bc.ca). I am indebted to David Ley of the Department of Geography, UBC, for bringing these inconsistencies in the Baxter data and Li's use of them to my attention. Similarly, Li's data on the correlation between home ownership and social group (p. 26) does not say anything about whether the residences listed are the 'monster' homes cited in popular media accounts, and so Li cannot draw any inferences (as he does) about whether Chinese immigrants were responsible for buying up new, large homes on Vancouver's west side as the popular accounts he cites suggests. In the Richmond study, the argument made by Ray, Halseth and Johnson hinges upon illustrating the socio-economic similarity between Chinese residents and British/French residents, implying that the only differences between the two groups are physical appearance and length of tenure (p. 96). Setting aside the fact that they neglect cultural variables such as language, the data they select do not really address the questions at hand. Their comparison of wealth between the two groups hinges on income levels and housing affordability (which is tied to income), but completely neglects the issue of *assets* possessed—no small matter if the multi-billion dollar per annum estimates of the flow of capital from Hong Kong to British Columbia offered by Mitchell, "Multiculturalism or the United Colours of Capitalism?," pp. 266-267, are taken into account. Furthermore, the data they use on housing status (pp. 92-93)—single-detached, row house, low-rise, etc.—does not address the question of whether recent Chinese immigrants to Richmond are responsible for the construction of large, 'monster' homes, while the data on property sales correlated with Chinese surnames (pp. 94-95) suggests that there *is* a considerable movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond neighbourhoods. One could also question their use of census data from 1991 to explain qualitative representations offered years later, their use of the census category "British/French"—by their own admission, only 28% of the population—as a stand-in for those long-term residents complaining in local newspapers about changes, residents who may not even correspond with this census category and share its socio-economic characteristics, but to question every methodological problem in these accounts is not my

little to do with physical change per se, and instead is reflective of a long history of ideas about immigrants, race and place in the suburbs."[95]

The implication, then, is that while the categories utilized by residents are social constructions and therefore suspect, the 'real' geography as disclosed by the writers is not, a curious position, to say the least, for those advancing the discursive and contingent quality of knowledge and boundary construction to adopt. Alastair Bonnett has described this tension as the intellectual strain between constructionist theory and politics, whereby the paradigm's adherents "ring fence" or "bracket off" categories deemed to be egalitarian and progressive from rigorous critique. Concepts such as equality, racism, and anti-racism tend to appear as taken for granted foundations, not as objects for scrutiny or as explicitly strategic essences.[96] Thus, while both Li and Ray, et al., acknowledge that *plural* meanings have been attached to concepts of race and racism, this does not lead to a substantive critique of those categories, nor an explicitly reflexive decision to utilize a particular meaning as the basis for analysis; rather, in the course of reading Ray, Halseth and Johnson's argument, we are told that we must view racism as a "fundamental part of culture," and that in researching how people come to be classified as "racially" different, we "can begin to conceptualize cultures, and geographies, of racism within any one society," while Li claims that "the notion of race needs to be understood not only as having a historical application to a group, but that over time, as the historical conditions are changed, new stigmas and markers are applied to 'race' to accord a new meaning to

primary objective here, nor the kind of representational critique that I want to register here in this thesis.

[95] Ray, et al., "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs," p. 83.

[96] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 876.

it."[97] Similarly, Anderson's definition of a "movement in formation" whereby the Chinese in Vancouver's Chinatown were conceived of as 'racially' different over a long period of time through various kinds of boundary commissions, trades on this notion of a fluid and flexible process of racism that is manifest through situationally and historically specific contexts of meaning. There are a number of assumptions bound up with such framings, not the least of which is that some intersubjective agreement or consensus has been reached on the meanings of race and racism: that the historically specific markers commented upon *are* referents to race, and that their use constitutes ongoing processes of racialization and racist exclusion.[98] Conceiving of racism in such a way, as a fundamental concept, glosses over the role of the authors in *creating* this category and the political decision involved in the interpretive move from race to racism, objectifying racism as something separate from the researcher which can be objectively apprehended and mapped. At its least reflexive, the constructionist position repeats the reifying excesses of racial geography, supplanting empiricist geographies of race (and geographies of race relations) with empiricist geographies of racism. Rather than coming to grips with the issue of essentialism, it is simply shifted to another register.[99]

In addition to this point, Bonnett has registered a further critique in regard to social constructionist geographies of racism that I think is particularly pertinent with regard to analyses of racism set within the local context: the way in which the category of 'whiteness' has been constructed within this discourse and associated with racism.

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[97] The quote from Ray, Halseth and Johnson is from their "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs," pp. 76-77, while Li's is from "Unneighbourly Houses," p. 17.
[98] Bonnett, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline," p. 878.
[99] On this issue of deferred essentialism, see *Ibid.*, p. 879.

Commenting on the political practices and strategies employed by anti-racist activists,

Bonnett argues that a central concern for anti-racists has been to discourage the use of

racial nomenclature that appear imposed, outmoded, offensive and phenotypically

reductive—to destablilize monolithic racial categories.[100] Yet he contends that there has

been a *selectivity* with which this strategy has been employed, that while the monolithic

categories of 'blackness' have been challenged, their corollary, 'whiteness' has remained

undisturbed as the taken for granted, mythical 'Other' of anti-racist discourse.

Furthermore, Bonnett contends, it is a mythical Other assigned clear and distinct moral

attributes:

> These attributes often include: being racist; not experiencing racism;
> being an oppressor; not experiencing oppression; silencing; not being
> silenced. People of colour are defined via their relation to this myth.
> They are defined, then, as 'non-whites'; as people whose identity is
> formed through their resistance to others' oppressive agency.[101]

Social constructionist geographies of racism in the Lower Mainland, I believe, have been

characterized by this representation of whiteness, viewing it as monolithic, racist entity, a

dominant group against which non-whites' identities have been formed. For all the

avowed intention to investigate how Chinese immigrants have been constructed as a

category, in practice the focus of constructionist research in Greater Vancouver has been

remarkably truncated in scope. There is surprisingly little engagement, for example—and

especially in Li's and Ray, et al.'s, interpretations—*with* the white, long-term

residents whose representations of change ostensibly constitute the focus of these

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[100] Alastair Bonnett, "Anti-Racism and the Critique of 'White Identities," *New Community*, 22 (Jan. 1996), pp. 97-110. For the specific discussion of anti-racist efforts to unsettle homogenizing racial categorizations, see pp. 98-99.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

researchers. Rather, the accounts appear sharply circumscribed by the authors' political and theoretical imperatives and their preconceptions of whiteness: the focus almost exclusively on *negative* responses to change, drawn from a sprinkling of popular media accounts, on behalf of white residents alone. Reviewing Kay Anderson's book *Vancouver's Chinatown*, a work which dedicates far more attention to the kinds of representations employed by white Vancouver residents than is present in the works of Li, and Ray, et al., respectively, Katharyne Mitchell has criticized this practice of representation, noting that Anderson "treads perilously close to homogenizing the 'European' attitudes as a type," pointing out that in her analysis "there is only a fairly rudimentary background sketch of key Canadian politicians and bureaucrats, many of whom come across as little more than mouthpieces for a seemingly universal if disembodied political rhetoric."[102] In the rush to shift the focus from concepts of *race* to processes of *racism*, from 'minority' groups to the 'dominant' white group, the danger that Edward Said warned against in *Orientalism* appears to have been realized: that those working under the aegis of social constructionism have created new 'orientals', or 'occidentals', of their own making.

In short, drawing from Bonnett's dual critiques, I believe that there are two problematic essences in social constructionist accounts of resident responses that demand further examination, and which I want to address in this thesis: an unreflexive and foundational conception of racism that remains uncontested in its application to particular geographical and historical contexts, and an essentialized representation of

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[102] Katharyne Mitchell, Review of *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980*, by Kay Anderson, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12 (1994), pp. 253-256. The quote is from p. 254.

whiteness that reduces long-term residents to mere mouthpieces of 'racist' ideology. I will deal with the latter criticism in Chapter Four in which I examine *how* long-term residents (both white and non-white) of Richmond have viewed change in their community, and the former in Chapter Five when I relate these responses back to concepts on race and racism. For the moment, however, I would like take some time to briefly outline a geographic history of the Richmond site as a supplement to this discussion and subsequent accounts.

CHAPTER THREE

A Context for Racism?
A Portrait of Migration, Change, and Protest in Richmond, BC

Native Displacement and European Re-settlement

Wrapped up in contemporary debates about immigration, neighbourhood change,

and the character of resident responses to these phenomena, it would be easy to become

mired in a presentism, to neglect the first inhabitants of Richmond: those peoples of the

First Nations. Members of the Coast Salish tribe depended on the Fraser River—for its

fish as a source of food, and the waterway as a means of transportation. Relying on

information provided by a Native informant, Leslie J. Ross notes that the Musqueam band

had permanent, year-long dwellings on the islands at the mouth of the Fraser, but that their

distribution was scattered and settlements were moved from year to year. Greater in

number, she claims, were temporary dwellings that housed fishermen during the summer

months of fishing and berrying.[1]

By the end of the 1800s, however, this Native way of life and power in the region

had largely disappeared, displaced by the sovereign and disciplinary power of British

colonialism. While contact between Aboriginals and whites was sporadic from the first

Russian, Spanish, British and American explorations of the West coast in the late-1700s

through the early 1800s, the establishment of Fort Langley by the Hudson's Bay Company

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[1] This, and much of the information in this chapter (though by no means all) is drawn from Leslie J. Ross' local history, *Richmond Child of the Fraser* (Richmond: The Corporation of the Township of Richmond, 1979) prepared for Richmond's Centennial Society. For her discussion of First Nations' settlement, see pp. 1-8. A more thorough examination of native settlement and displacement by Europeans in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia appears in Cole Harris, "The Lower Mainland, 1820-81," in Wynn and Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*, pp. 38-68.

in 1827 marked the beginning of regular interaction between natives and non-natives.[2] In

describing the extension of European power over the Lower Mainland, Cole Harris argues

that Fort Langley acted as a bounded society, and that company traders had difficulty

extending their control beyond its walls. More significant, he writes, were successive

developments: the establishment of a proprietary colony on Vancouver Island in 1849, the

introduction of industrial technology, the influx of people attending the 1858 gold rush to

the Fraser River, and the establishment the same year of the crown colony of British

Columbia, encompassing the Cordilleran mainland north of the 49th parallel.[3] With the

latter event, the trading regime and relationships between the Hudson's Bay Company and

Aboriginal peoples became supplanted by the enforcement of British civil and criminal

law, and Natives' control of their own territory began to come to an end.[4] As Harris notes,

the sheer weight of British power, brutally and episodically applied, precluded any major

battles between colonials and Natives, though one can imagine that the changes that were

transforming Aboriginals' lives were not well-received by them, to say the least.

In 1859, to expedite colonial settlement, the Royal Engineers were contracted to

survey the Lower Mainland, including Sea and Lulu Islands (present-day Richmond), and

divide it into 160 acre allotments (Figure 3.1). Once Natives were removed from their

land, receiving a few tiny reserves to live on, and restricted from purchasing property,

European settlers were free to buy surveyed sections and land that had not yet been

mapped by the Royal Engineers.[5] With European hegemony established, and attracted by

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[2] Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, pp. 8-19, Harris, "The Lower Mainland," pp. 38, 45-48. On "sovereign and disciplinary power," see p. 67 from Harris.
[3] Harris, "The Lower Mainland," pp. 46-49
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 53-56, Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, pp. 20-24.

the area's agricultural potential, immigrant homesteaders began settling on the islands at

the mouth of the Fraser River from 1860 onward. Although hampered by frequent

flooding and the need to dike and drain the low-lying delta land, there was a slow but

continual migration of farmers with their families to Lulu and Sea Islands from 1860 to

1880.[6] By 1879 the islands were incorporated as the Township of Richmond, and as

bridges were constructed linking Richmond with Vancouver, and roads blazed and graded

in the late-1800s, Richmond's population began to grow. On the southwest corner of
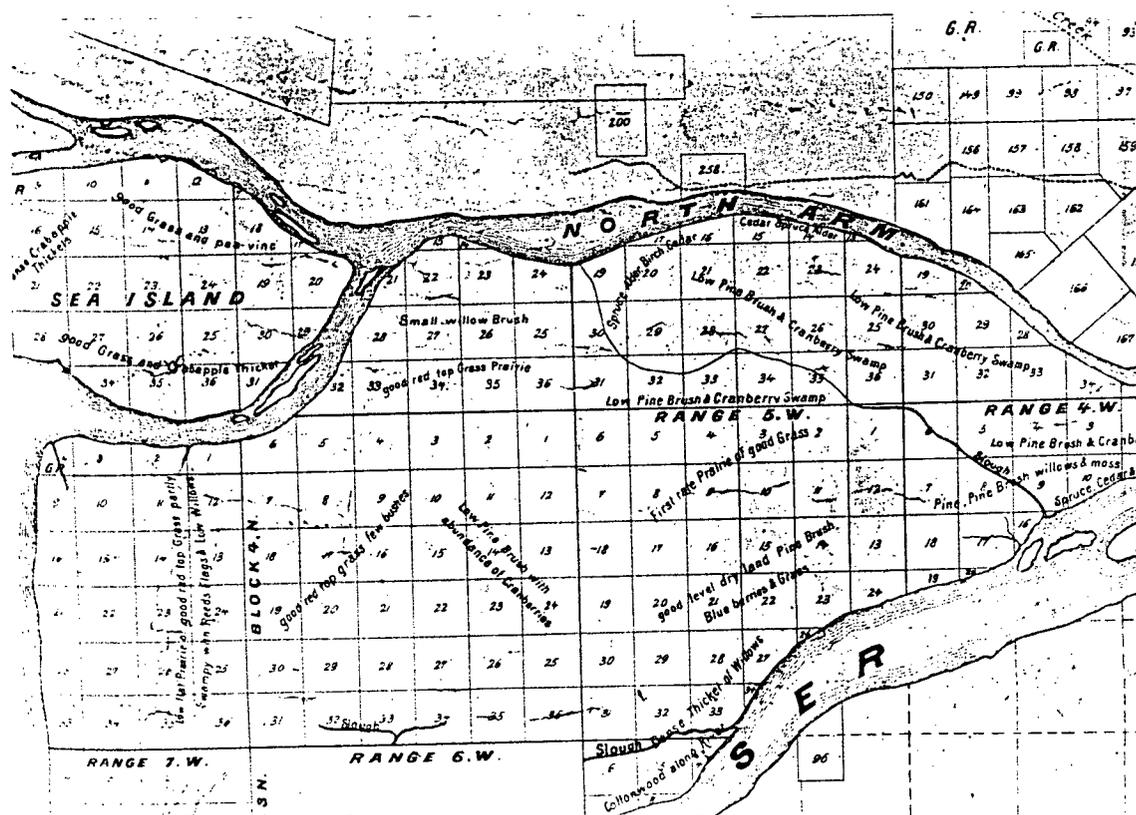
Figure 3.1: Possessing the Land: Early Map of Richmond Showing Vegetation
and Legal Divisions
Source: Leslie J. Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser* (Richmond: The Corporation
of the Township of Richmond, 1979), p. 21.

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[6] Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, p. 30, Graeme Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," in Wynn and Oke,
eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*, pp. 69-145. For early Richmond history in the context of Vancouver's
peripheral expansion, see pp. 78-82 of Wynn.

Lulu Island the town-site of Steveston, centered around fishing and canning activities, was a major node of residential settlement: by 1890 a 10,000 person boom town with a substantial population of Japanese fishers who had migrated to the region beginning in the late-1880s.[7] The remainder of Lulu Island was largely dedicated to farming, and even by 1930 half of Richmond's 8,000 people (down, somewhat, from the Steveston-led boom years of the late-1800s) lived on farms, while two-thirds of the municipality's land was agricultural. Less than five percent was given to transportation and urban uses.[8]

Suburbanization. . .

From 1930 to the late-1950s, however, Richmond's landscape underwent a profound transformation. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s a number of Richmond's large farms were broken into small holdings, occupied not by full-time farmers, but by people whose main employment lay in the central city of Vancouver. During the 1930s Richmond's population grew only gradually, despite significant migration westward of people from the prairies and Eastern Canada during the Great Depression, while the internment of Richmond's Japanese residents during the Second World War left a large gap in Steveston.[9] It was in the post-war period, though, that Richmond began to experience rapid population growth, initiated partly by the settlement of ex-servicemen and their families under the Veteran's Land Act, but as Wynn and others argue, primarily by the

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[7] Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, p. 49, Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 79, Don Hunter, "Steveston," in Chuck Davis, *The Greater Vancouver Book: An Urban Encyclopaedia* (Surrey BC: The Linkman Press, 1997), pp. 142-143.

[8] Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 79.

[9] On the changes in farming during the 1930s see *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81. The accounts of Richmond's slow 1930s growth and 1940s Japanese internment are from Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, pp. 156-158. For a more personal retelling of the internment experience on the part of Japanese residents, see Daphne Marlatt, ed., *Steveston Recollected* (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1975).

actions of individual developers and other external factors.[10] After 1945 Vancouver,

along with the rest of British Columbia, began the most sustained expansion in its history.

With BC coupled to the burgeoning manufacturing heartlands in Canada and the US as a

supplier of raw materials, the demographic 'baby boom', and increased domestic and

international migration, Greater Vancouver's population surged from 374,000 in 1941 to

562,000 ten years later.[11]

Although the central city grew during this period, the brunt of metropolitan growth

was picked up by outlying areas. While Vancouver proper accounted for 79% of the total

metropolitan population in 1948, by 1968 this share had dropped to 48%.[12] Drawn by an

abundance of land at lower prices than in Vancouver, the area's proximity to the city, and

their movement facilitated by the construction of transportation links such as the Oak

Street Bridge in 1957, an increasing amount of people began to settle in Richmond. By

1950 Richmond's population had reached 19,000, and within seven years it topped 26,000

people.[13] Tract housing leap-frogged areas of older, small holdings to 20-140 acre dairy

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[10] Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 82.

[11] Information on British Columbia and Vancouver's post-war expansion and relation to Fordist modes of production is drawn from Trevor Barnes, David Edgington, et al., "Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim," in Wynn and Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*, pp. 171-199, but pp. 171-181 in particular. In the same volume and also informative is Robert North and Walter Hardwick's "Vancouver Since the Second World War: An Economic Geography," pp. 200-233. Other accounts of Vancouver's post-war prosperity appear in a number of local histories: Patricia E. Roy, *Vancouver: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1980), Walter Hardwick, *Vancouver* (Don Mills ON: Collier-MacMillan, 1974), and Anne Kleppenborg and Alice Niwinski, et al., eds., *Vancouver's First Century 1860-1960* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1977). The population figure cited is from P. 133 of Kleppenborg and Niwinski's piece, "Crewcuts and Chrome 1945-1960" appearing in this work.

[12] Kleppenborg and Niwinski, "Crewcuts and Chrome," p. 133.

[13] On transportation links and their importance in encouraging settlement, see Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, p. 167, North and Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War," p. 206, Hardwick, *Vancouver*, pp. 129-130, Roy, *Vancouver: an Illustrated History*, p. 146, Kleppenborg and Niwinski, "Crewcuts and Chrome," p. 133, and Dean Pelkey, "Richmond," in Chuck Davis, ed., *The Greater Vancouver Book*, pp. 140-141.

farms in West Richmond that were, as Walter Hardwick puts it, "natural prey to the subdivider," unencumbered by zoning restrictions.[14] By 1958 less than half of Richmond's land area was dedicated to agricultural uses, and since 1930, 4,400 acres had been converted to other purposes. Residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial uses accounted for twenty percent of the municipal area, some 6,250 acres of land. In the space of twenty-five years Richmond had transformed from a rural town to a residential bedroom community.[15]

In the following decades Richmond's growth continued apace. Between 1961 and 1966 Richmond's population rose from 43,323 people to 50,460, a 16.5% increase. From 1966 to 1971 it jumped another 23%, rising by some 11.660 people to a total of 62,120 people. The greatest jump, however, prior to the late-1980s and early-1990s, occurred in the years 1971 to 1976, when Richmond's population grew by some 28.8%, or 17, 914 residents, to a total of 80,034 people. In the space of fifteen years, Richmond's population had nearly doubled—and over a twenty-year span it had almost tripled.[16] Attending these population changes were significant alterations in Richmond's economic base, with the encouragement of industries and businesses to develop in Richmond, and by the early 1970s Richmond had three industrial estates. While industry was being built up other changes were occurring with respect to occupational status. In 1961 the greatest number of Richmond residents were employed as craft labourers, in production processes, and related industries—by 1971, though this field grew in absolute terms, it was supplanted as the number one occupational category by clerical and sales occupations (which,

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[14] Hardwick, *Vancouver*, pp. 129-130, Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 84.
[15] Figures are from Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 84.

incidentally, would increase absolutely and relatively through the early 1980s) as

Richmond became more service-sector oriented.[17] In the midst of these changes, and

possessed of a boosterist spirit, the editors of the Richmond Review in 1967 could only

call for more growth:

> *Upon entering the new year, residents can look back over the past twelve*
> *months with a great deal of pride and satisfaction at the tremendous*
> *economic advances of 1966. And even before we entered the new year*
> *the die had been cast for continued growth and prosperity in the year to*
> *come. A start will be made on the extensive Hudson's Bay (department*
> *store) development, the $26 million CPA (Canadian Pacific Airlines)*
> *terminal, the Disneyland style amusement park, the arts complex, and a*
> *variety of other projects.[18]*

...and its Discontents

Such sentiments, however, were not universally shared, and considerable criticisms

of development and growth in general found their way into public discourse at the end of

the 1960s and into the 1970s, as in the case of this self-described 'old-timer' who

adamantly resisted the proposed alteration of a favourite beach spot into a port facility:

> *...on the western end of Lulu Island in Richmond there is a large*
> *expanse of sandy beach covering several square miles. Sixty years ago I,*
> *in the company of other teenagers, battled and explored in this area of*
> *clean, salt water sand. This place is now know as Sturgeon Banks...The*
> *industrialists of today wish to convert this ideal recreation spot into ship*
> *docking and loading facilities. The loss of a natural enjoyment location*
> *should be vigorously opposed by all bathing enthusiasts, especially limited*
> *income families who, for the price of a bus fare, would spend an enjoyable*
> *outing...Lower Mainland residents, please bear in mind that this may be*
> *your last chance to preserve what nature has given us in the most ideal*
> *climate in the world.[19]*

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[16] Population figures are drawn from the 1996 Canada Census results, compiled as *1996 Census Fast Facts* by BC Statistics, Internet: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

[17] Hardwick and North, "Vancouver Since the Second World War," pp. 205-208.

[18] "Let's Grow on as in the Past," Editorial, *Richmond Review,* 4 Jan. 1967, p. 2.

[19] Letter, *Richmond Review*, 19 Oct. 1966, p. 2.

As Ross notes, each new industrial development and residential subdivision brought about the loss of some agricultural land or open space, and developments of these kinds did not proceed without criticism, resistance, and some compromises. In the case of airport expansion on Sea Island, for example, the federal government sought to expropriate the farms and homes of the residents in the Cora Brown subdivision in the early 1970s. Ross points out that some land-owners complied with the move, selling their properties quickly, and resettling elsewhere in Richmond, but that other residents resisted, filling newspapers with angry and defiant letters.[20]

Yet these kinds of complaints were not isolated to particular instances or developments, though these often were the sparks that ignited anti-growth sentiment. For many people, such as the author of *Vancouver, Then and Now*, Roland Morgan, it was not just one particular development, but a general sense of change—change that he saw as bewildering, disoriented and haphazard—that was to be opposed. Writing in 1977 Morgan commented on development in a broad sense:

> . . .*recent rampant changes in our social scene have put a gulf between our place at the threshold of the 1980s and the world of a few decades ago. In some ways we have moved beyond the comfortable change of progress and improvement into metamorphosis of a kind which has left people alienated and bewildered; in the words of Yeats, "all changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born." Not that change is necessarily a bad thing. As the wit said, there is a certain relief in change, even if it is from bad to worse. But no one foresaw the scale of today's corporate gigantism, the hegemony of the car, the materialism of the instant shopping centre or the pervasive influence of domestic television.*[21]

. . .and of Richmond in particular:

> *The suburbanization of Richmond in the last two decades is on e of the greatest follies of the history of Greater Vancouver. The soil of Lulu*

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[20] Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser*, p. 178.

[21] Roland Morgan, *Vancouver, Then and Now* (Vancouver: Bodima Publications, 1977), Foreword.

*Island is delta river deposit—the best available—an agricultural
resource unmatched anywhere in the province outside the Comox Valley.
Yet close to half of it has been covered with tract housing and blacktop,
while huge areas of habitable mountainside around the city remain
bare.*[22]

In voicing his concern about the encroachment of suburban development on

agricultural land in Greater Vancouver, Morgan was not alone. Some four years prior, in

1973, the Provincial Government passed the Land Commission Act, establishing the BC

Land Commission (renamed the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission in 1977) with

powers to preserve agricultural land for farm use. In accordance with the Act, protective

zones known as Agricultural Land Reserves were established, with regulations limiting

subdivision and changes of use within the reserves. In Richmond, 5,179 hectares in the

South and East of Lulu Island were protected in this manner in the 1970s.[23] Similarly,

after the growth and expansion in Richmond between 1966 and 1971 the Planning

Commission of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (established by the Provincial

Government as a regional coordinating and planning body) urged the municipality to limit

the subdivision of lots and serviced townhouse sites so that it could become better-

integrated.[24] In 1975 the GVRD followed up on this initiative with a regional plan entitled

the 'Livable Region Strategy' that sought to preserve the quality of life in the region by

bringing order to development that was sprawling to the south and southeast of

Vancouver. Key components of this plan were the decentralization of work and residence,

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[23] Wendy Holm, Presentation for the G.V.R.D. Agricultural Conference, Greater Vancouver
Regional District, Development Service Department, November 2, 1991.

[24] Hardwick, *Vancouver*, p. 131.

encouragement of the development of regional town centres for shopping and services, and the promotion of medium and high density residential development in the vicinity of the town centres.[25]

Cosmopolitanization, Immigration. . .

In the ten-year period immediately following the establishment of the Livable Region Strategy, between 1976 and 1986 (a period bifurcated by a national economic recession in 1981-1982), rates of population growth in Richmond began to ease off from the frenetic pace of the 1971 to 1976 era. From 1976 to 1981, growth dropped only slightly in comparison to the previous five years, increasing by 20.14%, or 16, 120 people. From 1981 to 1986, however, the slowdown was more significant: in this period Richmond's population increased by 12,338 people, some 12.83%. Although less dramatic than the increases of the early-1970s, these were still considerable jumps in population, particularly remarkable when compared with the single-digit percentage increases recorded by the City of Vancouver during each five-year segment of this period. From 1986 onward, however, Richmond entered a new phase of rapid population growth that outstripped even the pace set in the first half of the 1970s. From 1986 to 1991 there was an absolute increase in Richmond's population to the order of 18,132 people (up 16.7%), while from 1991 to 1996 the rate of growth surged even higher: an increase of 22,243 people (up 17.57%). By 1996, then, the City of Richmond's population

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[25] North and Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War," p. 212. Also useful in explaining the role (and assessing the outcome) of the Livable Region Strategy is Ray Tomalty, *The Compact Metropolis: Growth Management and Intensification in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal* (Toronto: Intergovernmental Committee on Urban and Regional Research, CMHC, 1997).

(Richmond having been incorporated as a city in 1990) stood at 148, 867 people, 68, 833

more than had lived in the community in 1976.[26]

Population figures alone, however, only hint at the panoply of changes that were

physically and socially transforming the municipality through the 1980s and into the

1990s. As David Ley, Dan Hiebert and Geraldine Pratt note, gender relations in

Richmond began to be reworked in the 1970s and continued to change through the 1980s,

with increasing numbers of women participating in the labour force.[27] In the popular

media, however, this changing dimension of Richmond's demographic and social climate

has scarcely been noticed. Garnering much more attention has been the transformation in

Richmond's ethnic diversity through these years, with the notable increase in the city's

immigrant population, and its Chinese community in particular. This development has

been linked to the internationalization of Vancouver and the realignment of Canadian

trade patterns from Europe to the Pacific Rim, political instability attending the takeover

of Hong Kong by the Peoples' Republic of China in 1997, Canadian political stability and

immigration policy, and Vancouver's geographical location and diversity of amenities.[28]

As Brian K. Ray, Greg Halseth and Benjamin Johnson point out, with the exception

of Steveston, for most of its history Richmond has been a predominantly European space

within Greater Vancouver. As late as 1971, Richmond's Asian population, primarily

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[26] BC Statistics, *1996 Census Hot Facts* http: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca
[27] David Ley, Dan Hiebert and Geraldine Pratt, "Time to Grow Up? From Urban Village to World City, 1966-91," in Wynn and Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*, pp. 234-266. The reworking of gender relations is specifically referred to on pp. 239-242.
[28] H. Craig Davis and Thomas A. Hutton, "Immigration and Ethnic Conflict in Metropolitan Vancouver: Challenge and Response," *UBC Planning Papers Comparative Urban and Regional Studies #20*, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, October 1989.

Japanese, represented only 5.5% of the municipality's total population, while Richmond's immigrant population was even smaller, 4.9% of the total.[29] Some ten years later, in 1981, things had largely remained the same. Most Chinese in Greater Vancouver lived in the City of Vancouver, while there was no single census tract in Richmond where more than 10% of the population was of Chinese ethnic origin.[30] By 1986, though, Richmond's ethno-cultural composition was in the midst of transformation. By this time, immigrants represented some 31.3%, or 34,005 people, of Richmond's total population of 108,492 people, while residents of ethnic Chinese descent accounted for 8.3% of Richmond's population. Likewise, though English remained the home language spoken by most residents, some 80,270 people, by this time Chinese was the second most frequently spoken language at home, though admittedly, by many fewer people: 5,395.[31] The following period from 1986 to 1991 was witness to a continuation of these trends: by 1991 Richmond's immigrant population rose to 44,560 people, some 35% of the total, while the number of ethnic Chinese increased to account for 16.4% of Richmond's population. While 14,650 residents spoke Chinese the most often at home, English still remained the most prominent mother tongue (of 97,305 people)[32]

This growth in Richmond's immigrant population, ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity during this time period resulted in a series of institutional effects and responses. From 1986 to 1991, for example, enrollment in ESL (English as a Second Language) programs in Richmond's public school system increased significantly, from 1%

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[29] Ray, Halseth and Johnson, "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs," p. 88.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Statistics Canada, *Census Profiles British Columbia*, 1986, 94-119. Additional commentary on these changes appears in Ray, Halseth and Johnson, "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs."
[32] Statistics Canada, *Census Profiles British Columbia*, 1991, 95-384.

of the overall school population in 1986—170 of 17,748 students—to 16.3% of the total

school population in 1991, some 3407 of the 20,847 total enrollment.[33] In response to the

changing ethnic diversity of Richmond as represented by such developments, on March

12, 1990 Richmond Council directed that a task force on Ethnic Relations (later known as

the Co-ordinating Committee on Ethnic Relations) be struck to provide leadership to the

community and advice to Council, and a year later the City of Richmond drafted a

Multicultural Policy endorsing the valuation of cultural diversity, freedom from

cultural/racial discrimination, and ensuring that municipal bylaws, policies and programs,

service delivery and employment practices addressed these principles.[34]

Between 1991 and 1996, a period of historically high and sustained numerical

immigration targets at the federal level, both Richmond's overall number of immigrant

and Chinese residents grew dramatically.[35] By 1996, 48.3% of Richmond's 148, 155

residents held immigrant status, with 42.7% of these 71,625 people arriving to Canada

within the past five years. Concurrently, the number of Chinese-origin residents grew to

50,215 people, some 33.7% of the overall population.[36] At home, most Richmond

residents, 92,365 people, still spoke English, but this had decreased by 5.3% from 1991.

Increasing in use were non-official languages, by 109.7%, with Chinese the home

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[33] School District No. 38 (Richmond), *English as a Second Language Programs and Services Ongoing Review—Part II*, Preliminary Draft Data, 25 Mar. 1997. The data also appear in a more publicly accessible document published by the City of Richmond, "Richmond Schools," *Official Community Plan Hot Facts*, 4, 16 June 1997.

[34] City of Richmond, Richmond Co-ordinating Committee on Ethnic Relations, *Proceedings of the Multicultural Workshop*, held on September 28, 1991.

[35] Dan Hiebert, in "Canadian Immigration: Policy, Politics, Geography," *The Canadian Geographer*, 38 (1994), pp. 254-258 provides a concise and useful historical synopsis of the motivations, trends, and effects of Canadian immigration policy.

[36] BC Statistics, *1996 Census Hot Facts*, Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Greater Vancouver Perspectives* Internet: http://www.gvrd.bc.ca

language of 38,405 residents—more than double the figure reported in 1991.[37] In the

school system, by 1996 42.1% of the overall student population was enrolled in ESL, and

of these 10,160 students, 72.3% of them spoke Chinese as a first language.[38] More

qualitative data sources have associated this movement of Chinese immigrants to other

changes in the community: the development of so-called 'Asian' malls catering to Chinese

consumer tastes, the prevalence of Chinese signage, and the increased cultural dynamism

of Richmond.[39]

As evidenced in popular media accounts, such as the one which opens this thesis, the

movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond has (accurately or inaccurately,

depending on the perspective) frequently been linked to a series of other physical and

social changes in Richmond since 1986, among them Richmond's remarkable commercial

prosperity.[40] Setting aside questions of the underlying causal factors for the moment, the

statistics do present an impressive picture of economic growth: during the 1980s, and led

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[37] Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Greater Vancouver Perspectives*.

[38] School District No. 38 (Richmond), *English As a Second Language Programs*, City of Richmond, "Richmond Schools." The category of Chinese as a first language as defined by the school board and the city includes the Cantonese, Mandarin, Fukien, Hakkan and Hokhien dialects.

[39] See, for example, the journalistic impressions of change by Ric Dolphin, "Welcome to Dragonville," *Western Living*, 24 (Sept. 1994), pp. 28-38, and "Zen and the Art of Mall Raising," *Vancouver*, (Mar. 1995), pp. 36-47, Jerry Collins, "Two Solitudes," *BC Business*, (Apr. 1994), pp. 37-43, and on Vancouver more generally, Sam North, "Asia-Town," *Vancouver*, (Nov. 1996), pp. 46-54.

[40] The articles cited in the previous note (with the exception of North's "Asia-Town"), for example, make this oft-stated linkage between Asian immigration and local economic prosperity. Interestingly, in the context of his work "Unneighbourly Houses or Unwelcome Chinese," which downplays the relationship between immigration, and negatively-perceived housing style and housing price changes in Vancouver (cited in Chapter Two), Peter Li has argued elsewhere that there has been a direct link between positive economic indicators and immigration. In *The Making of Post-War Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 113, Li writes, "Without doubt, the injection of immigrant capital into Canada has contributed to the economic growth in parts of Canada. British Columbia seems to have been immune from the recession in the early 1990s in part due to presence of offshore capital, which has stimulated the real estate market and sustained the construction industry."

by MacDonald Dettweiler and Associates, more than 300 high-tech companies set up shop

in Richmond, while between 1983 and 1996 light industrial and warehouse space

increased from 13.5 million square feet to 20.5 million square feet.[41] By 1997 Richmond

was the second-largest provider of commercial-industrial floor-space in Greater

Vancouver.[42] In line with the Livable Region Strategy mandate to decentralize work from

the City of Vancouver, between 1989 and 1996 Richmond added 22,000 jobs to its

employment base, for an estimated total of 103,000 jobs—and in doing so, Richmond

became the only other city in the Greater Vancouver Regional District besides Vancouver

with more jobs than resident workers, becoming an employment centre in its own right.[43]

The focal point for this business activity was the Richmond Town Centre (Figure 3.2)

accounting for some 32% of the jobs in Richmond.[44]

While Richmond's business climate changed and expanded through the 1980s and

1990s, the municipality's residential landscapes were also witness to considerable physical

transformations. Accompanying the growth in population during this time were,

understandably, increases in the sheer numbers of private dwellings, from 24,325 in 1976,

to 38,120 in 1986, and up to 44,455 by 1991. A significant trend within this absolute

increase, however, was a change in housing type. Throughout this period, single-detached

houses—the quintessential suburban housing form—as a percentage of all private

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[41] The statement on high-tech industries is drawn from Pelkey, "Richmond," pp. 140-141. Light industrial/warehouse figures are from the Real Estate Board of Vancouver, *Metrotrends* (Vancouver: Real Estate Board of Vancouver), volumes from1983 through 1996.
[42] City of Richmond, "Jobs and Business," *Official Community Plan Hot Facts*, 4 (June 1997).
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*

dwellings decreased, from 78% in 1976, to 61% in 1986, and down to 54% in 1991.[45]

Accounting for the difference was an increase in multiple-family dwellings of various

Figure 3.2: Richmond Town Centre, Looking Northeast From Number Three Road
and Westminster Highway, May 1998.
<u>Photo by Author</u>.

kinds: semi-detached housing, row housing, duplexes, condominiums and apartments

(Figure 3.3). Statistics indicated that this trend was continuing, and even accelerating

through the mid-1990s: in 1991, 70% of new housing was single-family and 12% were

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[45] Statistics Canada, *Canada Census Profiles, British Columbia*, 93-800-810, 95-384, 94-119:
(1976, 1986, 1991).

apartment units. By 1993, however, single-family dwellings had dropped to 50% of all

new units, while apartments had risen to account for approximately 30% of this total.[46]

Looking specifically at single-family detached housing, two additional, significant

trends reshaped Richmond's residential landscapes from the early 1980s through the mid-

1990s: steep increases in house prices and changes in housing style. Median house prices

in 1979, some $75,000, increased to $121,000 by 1982 before dropping to $112,500 by

1983. From the mid-1980s onward, however, house prices skyrocketed. The median price

quoted in January, 1985, $115,000, rose to $120,000 by January, 1987, and to $143,000 by

the same time the following year. By 1993, however, this had more than doubled, to a

Figure 3.3: Condominium Development, Lynas Lane (West Richmond), May 1998.
 Photo by author.

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[46] City of Richmond, "A Snapshot of Housing in Richmond," *Official Community Plan Hot Facts*, 4 (June 1997).

median sales price in January of some $316,000. The following year the median stood at $350,000, peaking in January of 1995 at $390,000 before dropping slightly in 1996 to $375,000.[47] Less easy to quantify and outline, however, is the change in housing style popularly (and disparagingly) referred to as 'monster' home development. According to David Ley, the 'monster', or 'large' home style began to be evident in the mid-1980s in Vancouver's middle-class Oakridge district, as small residential construction firms with East European and Chinese principals sought to accommodate the housing tastes of a growing upper-middle class Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrant population. As Ley describes it, the construction process generally begins with the purchase of older single-family dwellings, which are subsequently demolished and the lot cleared of vegetation. In its place as large a home as is permitted under city bylaws (generally in the range of 4,000 square feet) is erected, and in order to maximize floor space on the lot, the house structure is generally square or rectangular, some two-and-a-half storeys high, with gently-sloping roofs. The architectural style of the new homes is often eclectic, drawing upon and juxtaposing different traditions, and frequently incorporating elements such as Greek columns, stucco siding, large windows, cathedral-type entrances with spiral staircases.[48]

...and their discontents?

The emergence of this housing form, however, has not been greeted enthusiastically by long-term Vancouver residents, who have vocally opposed the clearing of mature vegetation to make way for development, changes in landscaping, the size and bulk of the homes themselves, and the use of architectural styles seen to be ugly, intrusive, and

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[47] Real Estate Board of Vancouver, *Metrotrends*, 1979-1996.

insensitive to the existing urban fabric.[49] Following the construction in Richmond, from

the late-1980s onward, of homes incorporating these design elements (Figure 3.4), similar

sentiments began to be expressed by many long-term residents, both in town meetings in

which zoning regulations became focal points for discussion, and in angry submissions to

the letters-to-the editor pages of local newspapers.[50] Such concerns over residential

development have a long history in Richmond, but in the contemporary context the

'monster' home issue in Vancouver and Richmond has been complicated by another

dimension: the oft-stated linkage of these unwelcome residential landscape changes with

Chinese immigrants who are considered to be spearheading the redevelopment process.

This identification of a visible ethno-cultural group with regard to negatively-perceived

change has been described as racism in both the popular media and, as outlined at the end

of Chapter Two of this thesis, in academic literature as well. Furthermore, in light of this

linkage, arguments made by many residents that their concerns are aesthetic and have

nothing to do with the ethnicity of the owners of 'monster' houses, have been viewed with

some suspicion—as sanitized rhetoric masking underlying 'racist' beliefs.[51]

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[48] Ley, "Between Europe and Asia," p. 192. A useful description of the housing form also appears in Ray, Halseth and Johnson, "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs," p. 82.

[49] Ley, "Between Europe and Asia," p. 193. Also see Li, "Unneighbourly Houses or Unwelcome Chinese," discussed earlier in the thesis at the close of Chapter Two. As Ley writes, these concerns about the 'monster' house and its impact on existing neighbourhoods unleashed little less than a moral panic in Vancouver, with sensational newspaper accounts of the late-1980s sporting headlines such as "Monster Mash," "Monster Mishmash," and "How We Saved Shaughnessy from Monsters," and whipping up public sentiment

[50] Ray, Halseth and Johnson, in "The Changing 'Face' of the Suburbs," pp. 82-83, provide a useful outline of critical sentiments expressed with regard to 'monster' house development in Vancouver and Richmond.

[51] An argument presented forcefully by Brian K. Ray, Greg Halseth and Benjamin Johnson in the Richmond context as well as by Peter Li in Vancouver.

Figure 3.4: Juxtaposition of Housing Styles: New 'Monster' Home and Older Bungalow, West Richmond, May 1998
Photo by author

Interestingly, such suspicions about residents' motives were notably absent from *the* major anti-development protest in Richmond during the late-1980s and early-1990s (and indeed, the largest anti-development protest in Richmond's history): the opposition to the construction of housing on the last large parcel of farmland in West Richmond, Terra Nova, located at the northwest corner of Lulu Island.   Terra Nova had been a farming community for a number of years, with a fish cannery (demolished in 1978) operating until 1928. In order to protect this legacy, in 1972 129.5 hectares of Terra Nova land were designated as agricultural, and protected under the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), though maps prepared by the Greater Vancouver Regional District still designated the land

as 'urban'.[52] As far back as February of 1978 the municipality had considered developing 2,400 housing units on Terra Nova lands to defer the costs of developing internal drainage on non-ALR lands in West Richmond, but withdrew the plan after it generated public opposition.[53]

By 1986 a new redevelopment scheme began to take shape, a project that was steeped in controversy from the moment of its inception. Richmond's Official Community Plan of that year recommended the rezoning of Terra Nova for use as residential land, and in August of 1986, at the request of Richmond's city government, the provincial cabinet removed the Terra Nova lands from the protection of the Agricultural Land Reserve, overruling the decision of the Agricultural Land Commission to deny rezoning of the land to residential use. Unlike the 'monster' home debate, however, in which residents' reasons for resistance have been held up to critical scrutiny, suspicions of wrongdoing in this instance focused on the municipal and provincial governments and with the developers. The decision by elected representatives to supersede the judgment of an arms' length government agency was unusual, raising allegations of political interference and conflict of interest: some suggested that the provincial cabinet's decision was a political pay-back by provincial Premier, and Richmond representative, Bill Vander Zalm for the campaign support of local developer Milan Ilich. Ilich, the president of Progressive Construction (owners of the majority, some 80.9 hectares, of Terra Nova land) was a long-term Richmond resident with an impressive history of local philanthropy, and

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[52] This information is drawn from Leslie J. Ross' excellent account of Terra Nova's history, and the development debate, appearing in the companion volume *Richmond Child of the Fraser, 1979-1989* (Richmond: Thunderbird Press, 1989), pp. 14-17, to her earlier chronicle of Richmond's past. Ross notes that while the GVRD designated this land as urban, in 1981, after consultation with the Agricultural Land Commission, it voted to designate Terra Nova as agricultural land.

had close links to Vander Zalm. With the rezoning of Terra Nova to residential use, Ilich

stood to profit handsomely on his investment in land prior to cabinet's decision: a 36.4

hectare parcel of Terra Nova land zoned as agricultural land and purchased in 1986 for

$2.7 million would eventually, by 1989, increase in value to $17.8 million.[54]

Despite these suspicions, no evidence of impropriety was ever discovered, and by

October of 1987 builders began to seek public input for three development proposals

which offered a mix of commercial businesses, townhouses and park-land, in the face of

opposition by Civic New Democrat Alderman Greg Halsey-Brandt who accused

developers of going public with their proposals to help pro-development candidates in the

municipal elections scheduled for November of that year.[55] Significantly, pro-

development politicians of the Richmond Independent Voters' Association (RIVA), led by

long-standing mayor Gil Blair emerged victorious in the elections, holding a 5-4 majority

in council over the Civic New Democrats who opposed Terra Nova's development.[56] On

20th of April, 1988, council (in a 5-4 vote along party lines) gave approval to the first

reading of a by-law that established a master redevelopment plan for the area. The Terra

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[54] Information on Progressive Construction's ownership of Terra Nova property is from *Ibid.*
Questions about Ilich's ties to Vander Zalm continually appeared in local media accounts of the
Terra Nova development debate. See, for example, "'Snide Innuendo' at Hearings Rapped,"
Vancouver Sun, 26 May, 1988.

[55] "Meetings Over Richmond Land Upset Alderman," *Vancouver Sun*, 14 Oct., 1987.

[56] As Ross notes in *Richmond Child of the Fraser: 1979-1989*, p. 16, despite this victory by pro-
development councilors in gaining the majority of the seats, those candidates who campaigned
against the development topped the polls, and the Civic New Democrats (who collectively opposed
the development) achieved a significant 48% of the popular vote. While the pro-development
RIVA prevailed in the election, it was not a resounding victory, and the support of the Civic New
Democrats suggests that concerns about Terra Nova were widespread among Richmond residents.
The turnout of citizens critical of Terra Nova's development at public meetings in 1988 would
seem to support this claim, despite the contention of RIVA councilors at the time that these people
represented just a small, vocal minority.

Nova plan, already endorsed by council's planning committee, cleared the way for residential rezoning, and called for a phased-in construction of approximately 1,350 houses, 250 condominium units and a 2.4 hectare retail and commercial complex during the next decade (Figure 3.5). The next step in the development process was to send the bylaw and the rezoning application to a public hearing scheduled for the 17th of May, 1988.[57]

Figure 3.5: Townhome Development, Terra Nova, May 1998
Photo by Author

While the RIVA majority on council ensured that votes on the bylaw would favour the development proposal, public hearings on the bylaw and rezoning application unleashed a torrent of anti-development protest, bringing together in common cause

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[57] "Vote Moves Terra Nova Development a Step Closer," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 Apr., 1988.

citizens whose concerns about housing construction on Terra Nova lands were motivated

by a variety of expressed reasons. Echoing the sentiments of 10,000 petitioners who had

earlier expressed opposition to the building of housing on Terra Nova, most (though not

all) participants in the hearings passionately argued against development—a recurring

theme was the desire to preserve farmland, while some argued more generally for the

preservation of the natural environment (Figure 3.6). A spokesman for the Canadian

Wildlife Service contended that the Terra Nova lands were an important habitat for birds

from three continents and approximately twenty countries, birds which wintered or rested

in Richmond, and that development of the site could disrupt this pattern. Others were

concerned with the safety of the environment for human residents: a consulting geologist

reported on a study underway that suggested Terra Nova might be vulnerable to

Figure 3.6: The Pastoral Ideal, No. 4 Road, East Richmond, May 1998
Photo by Author

earthquakes that could threaten large-scale human settlement in the area. Some citizens, not opposed to the *idea* of development, expressed more specific concerns about the details of the Terra Nova proposal itself, with fears about the vagueness and enforceability of the community plan and the ancillary demands on the city's amenities that could attend such a development.[58] To further muddy the waters, local aboriginal leaders used the forum of the Terra Nova debate to reinscribe an aboriginal presence that had been marginalized in Richmond for some time. In the local media and public hearings Musqueam chief Wendy Grant and band manager Chris Robinson publicly objected to the Terra Nova proposal, arguing that the land had special cultural significance to the Musqueam and the community as a whole, a value that was "above and beyond" the dollar value that Richmond council and the developers envisioned.[59] After eleven nights and forty-five hours of hearings, the public consultation process came to a close, to the expressed relief of Mayor Gil Blair.[60] In June of 1988, despite this impassioned display of public concern over development, city council approved the second reading of the

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[58] Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser: 1979-1989*, p. 16.

[59] The passage in quotations is from Robinson, cited in "Indians Urge Development Halt," *Vancouver Sun*, 14 May, 1988. Also see "Native Chief Urges Terra Nova Stall," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 May, 1988, in which Chief Grant describes the Terra Nova site as an "archaeological resource." Although continuing native land claims in the Lower Mainland partially explain aboriginal interest in local redevelopment projects (and highlight the fact that the proposal to build homes on Terra Nova is a *re*development, building on earlier changes which displaced First Nations peoples), Musqueam and popular interest in Terra Nova was heightened by the discovery in 1987 of a preserved Salish Indian midden—or fishing camp dump—on the property. Development plans set aside this land as park-land, a site for a community centre, and an elementary school, a proposal that proved unsatisfactory for local native leaders. See the article entitled "Vote Moves Terra Nova Development a Step Closer" for more discussion on this planned land donation.

[60] "Terra Nova Meeting Ends in Confusion," *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June, 1988.

redevelopment, again by a 5-4 vote, sending the rezoning by-laws to Victoria for provincial approval prior to final reading and adoption by council.[61]

Although disappointed by this setback, opponents of Terra Nova's redevelopment persisted. Believing that there were serious flaws in the development and the public consultation process, executives of the Save Richmond Farmland Society initiated a legal challenge (which would later go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada) to overturn council's decision to approve the development plan. In the short-term this challenge was successful, as in late-1988 the BC Supreme Court—while upholding the provincial cabinet's decision to remove the lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve and the municipality's Official Community Plan endorsing residential development—ruled that the two rezoning bylaws which would allow development to proceed were invalid.[62] The BC Supreme Court decision brought on a new spate of public hearings beginning in the middle of December 1988, and as with the meetings conducted in the spring, turnout was high and the majority of the expressed sentiments were anti-development in character. Additionally, in this round of hearings, concerns were expressed about the way in which Richmond city council appeared to be trying to 'ram through' the Terra Nova proposal despite sizable public opposition to the plan.[63] Again, however, this time after sixty hours

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[61] It is interesting to contrast the situation in Richmond with developments elsewhere in the Lower Mainland: while Richmond council continued with the development proposal despite substantial public opposition, in the municipality of Delta similarly vocal protests about the proposed development of the Spetifore lands resulted in the termination of the project.

[62] See "Richmond Council Approves Schedule for Terra Nova," *Vancouver Sun*, 15 Nov., 1988 and "Terra Nova Fight Urged," *Vancouver Sun*, 3 Dec., 1988, and Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser: 1979-1989*, p. 16 for more details about the motivations behind the court challenge.

[63] "Residents Knock Council Over Zoning," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 Dec., 1988. As explained in this article, accusations that council was trying to 'ram through' the Terra Nova development plan revolved around the way in which council had organized the first meeting of the second public hearings: justified on the grounds that it would permit more people to speak in this venue, council

of public debate which concluded in middle of January, 1989, council's opinion on development remained the same, and in a final reading of the bylaw conducted in March of that year, approved the Terra Nova scheme by a 5-4 vote. Although the Save Richmond Farmland Society would continue its court challenge, appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the municipal elections of 1990 resulted in the election of a Civic New Democrat majority led by new mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt, the development of Terra Nova could not be halted, and construction continues to this day to take place on the site.[64]

As Leslie J. Ross notes, the fight for Terra Nova was intense and emotional: for many residents it represented the last stand for open space, for agriculture, and for a traditional way of life.[65] There can be no doubt that the redevelopment of Terra Nova has physically changed the landscape of the northwest corner of Richmond, just as other transformations—both large and small—have altered the look and feel of the community over the course of its existence. As noted, historically such changes have generated opposition on the part of long-term residents, yet the intensity of feeling around the Terra Nova debate suggests, as Ross points out, that the symbolic value of Terra Nova is greater than its 129.5 hectares of grass and soil. As we have seen in the case of the 'monster'

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extended the public hearing late into the evening two hours past the usual council sitting time, and made plans for the meeting to continue the following day in an afternoon and evening session. Residents referred to in the paper contended that this accommodation was simply an effort to get the hearings over with so that the new by-law could be ratified before the end of the year.

[64] On the results of the final reading of the by-law permitting development and the continued efforts by the Save Richmond Farmland Society to stop the Terra Nova plan with court challenges, see "Terra Nova Issue Faces Appeal to Top Court," Vancouver Sun, 6 Apr., 1989. With regard to the municipal elections of the following year, the Terra Nova development—and residents' discontent with the way in which council conducted the public consultation process—figured as a prominent campaign issue and is attributed with the downfall of the RIVA majority. Greg Halsey-Brandt specifically mentioned the Terra Nova process in his platform for election as mayor ("Terra Nova Fight Sparks Bid For Richmond Mayoraly by Halsey-Brandt," Vancouver Sun, 2 Oct., 1990).

[65] Ross, Richmond Child of the Fraser: 1979-1989, p. 17.

home debate and other issues around residential change in Richmond and Vancouver,

some have similarly stated that development issues have acted as 'symbolic' currencies, as

metaphors for other, underlying 'racist' concerns about ethno-cultural change. This

assessment of development issues has arisen from the significant ethno-cultural changes

that have attended recent immigration patterns in Richmond, the phenotypical visibility of

recent immigrants, and the explicit linkage of 'unwelcome' changes with this group. In

the Terra Nova dispute, however, questions of race and ethnicity are conspicuous by their

absence: in opposing the construction of homes on Terra Nova, protesters made no

reference to Ilich's Yugoslavian ethnic background, or that of the other developers while

conversely, in defending the development proposal, builders and members of council

made no return trade in accusations of racism.[66]

This apparent absence of racialized expression in the Terra Nova debate raises some

interesting questions about the interpretation of other development concerns, particularly

those such as the 'monster' home issue which have (potential) racial undertones: how are

we to assess responses to change that make no reference to a particular ethno-cultural

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[66] Indeed, if there was any typification on the part of long-term residents, it was in the repeated, derogatory use of the term 'developer' as a category, a point raised by Olga Ilich, land development manager for Progressive Construction and sister-in-law of Milan Ilich. Addressing council, Olga Ilich stated that she had been "dismayed" to find her company made the object of "snide innuendo" by previous speakers during earlier forum meetings, and argued that she and her brother "do not love this community any less because we are builders and contractors" (see "Snide Innuendo at Meetings Rapped," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 May, 1988). An additional typification of the Terra Nova plan was made by Jack Thirgood, former chairman of the Richmond Advisory Planning Commission, who decried the "Californiazation" of the Pacific Northwest as represented by such developments ("Terra Nova Developers Should Conduct Studies, Resource Professor Says," *Vancouver Sun*, 28 May, 1988). For their part, criticisms of resident protest on the part of pro-development council members and contractors focused on the duration of the public forums, the supposed 'small, vocal minority' that constituted anti-development opponents, and the "abuse of the system" that efforts to stonewall the Terra Nova scheme represented (see "Terra Nova Hearing Wraps Up, Mayor Raps 'Abuse of System'," *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June, 1988 for Mayor Gil Blair's views on the anti-development protesters).

group, but which may involve them? How do we assess those that *do* make such explicit

racial or ethnic reference? Does, or should, the tenor of the debate—and our

interpretation of it—be different in those cases involving visible minorities than those that

do not? What kinds of political meanings should we attach to these kinds of expressions?

Such questions are vital ones, and constitute the central thematic of this thesis, but to

speculate on them at this juncture is, I think, premature. While in this chapter I have

noted long-term resident concerns about development—as represented in newspaper

articles, letters-to-the-editor, and public meetings—over the course of Richmond's history,

these kinds of sources (as I argued in Chapter One) only take us a limited distance in

generating interpretations of the situation. Let us now turn, then, to a more substantive

engagement with the experiences and impressions of their community on the part of long-

term residents.

CHAPTER FOUR

With Finer Brush-Strokes:
Long-Term Residents' Interpretations of Change

> Growing like topsy, and dominated, numerically, by people whose pasts
> were elsewhere, Vancouver has not been an easy place in which to feel at
> home. Realtors and boosters have played upon this circumstance through
> the decades, and residents have responded in several ways to the
> challenge of defining and securing their space in the city. In doing so
> they have grappled repeatedly with the question that literary critic
> Northrop Frye saw confronting every Canadian: "where is here?"

Graeme Wynn[1]

If the first segment of Wynn's commentary speaks to the content of the last chapter,

in which I spent some time constructing a picture of change in Richmond, then the second

half of his couplet indicates the direction this chapter is headed. Having offered up my

interpretation of change (guided by the interpretations of others) I would now like to

consider the ways in which long-term residents have visioned transformations in

Richmond, the many ways, to paraphrase Wynn, in which they have responded to the

challenge of defining and securing their place in the city. I will try to confine my

comments in this chapter to a minimum, allowing, as best I can, the residents to speak for

themselves, for this is not only my thesis, but their story as well. I realize, though, that

such democratizing intentions on my part notwithstanding, it would be presumptuous of

me to deny my authorial role in speaking for residents in this space—even more

presumptuous to offer their passages up as unproblematic, mimetic reproductions of

'reality'. Although the willingness of those who participated in this research to share their

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[1] Graeme Wynn, "Introduction," in Wynn and Oke, eds., *Vancouver and Its Region*, pp. xi-xvi.
The quote cited apppears on pages xv-xvi.

experiences and speak candidly on sensitive topics was a pleasant surprise to me, I imagine that the interview process influenced the accounts in numerous, and invisible, ways. Furthermore, the residents who agreed to take part in this project were selected from a diverse community, and the passages that appear in this chapter chosen from a cacophony of voices. Before delving into the content of their responses, then, some explanation is needed to clarify how these observations and impressions made the journey from Richmond to this site.

Methodology

The accounts that follow are the distilled product of semi-structured, extended interviews that I conducted with fifty-four long-term Richmond residents in 1997 and 1998. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and ranged in duration from forty-five minutes to two-and-one-half hours depending on the number of participants present during the session and the depth of conversation. Although the interviews were structured around a series of questions I had prepared (see Appendix), I encouraged residents to expand on these themes if they wished. Some did so, providing additional insights, while others elected to stick close to the schedule of questions. Save for three exceptions, the interviews took place in residents' homes, a setting chosen in order to make the interview process as comfortable and convenient as possible for participants.[2] In many instances I conducted interviews with more than one person at a time, generally with married couples, though in one session three people, a married couple and their daughter, were present. This choice to do interviews with more than one person at a time was not a

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[2] Three interviews were conducted privately at the University of British Columbia campus in Vancouver, a site that was more convenient for these participants.

decision that I took lightly, concerned as I was about the possible effects that the presence of a spouse, parent, daughter or son might have on the responses. In the end I decided that the apparent benefits of this format (increased convenience for myself and participants with busy schedules) outweighed what I saw as a potential drawback: self-censorship in the presence of others. In hindsight, it is a decision I am satisfied with. I found spouses more than willing to offer different, and often conflicting, viewpoints, and as far as I can tell the presence of another family member did not seem to adversely affect the character of the responses. Unanticipated benefits to this format were the lively exchanges between partners that served to enrich the interview experiences, and the extra 'fact-checking' facility that spouses provided.

For the purposes of this research I have defined a long-term resident as an individual who has lived in Richmond since 1986 or before, an unabashedly arbitrary categorization hard to stick to in practice, but one made for a number of reasons. Temporally, it is in the post-1986 period that Asian immigration into Richmond has grown significantly, giving rise to interpretations and responses revolving around issues of race and racism, so the 1986 date effectively defines residents who had lived in Richmond prior to this movement. This allows for comparisons to be made between their perceptions of change prior to and during this period of significant international immigration. Defining long-term residents or the 'host' population using a cut-off date rather than in terms of a 'white' or 'anglo' ethno-cultural category (as Li and Ray, et al. do in their respective studies in the Greater Vancouver context) also permits other comparisons to be drawn between the responses of different ethnic groups. In this research I consciously made an effort to interview not only those residents of Caucasian appearance and European ethno-cultural

background—a group frequently associated with racism in popular and academic literature—but to cultivate links with residents of Chinese and Japanese ancestry to see how they have viewed change as well.

Having defined long-term residents in this manner, I contacted eligible potential participants using a network sampling strategy with a number of entry points. Initially I canvassed a number of acquaintances and friends of various ethno-cultural backgrounds and ages (and who met the project definition of a long-term Richmond resident) on their willingness to take part in the study. Those who agreed to take part received a form explaining the thesis objectives, participated in an interview, and were subsequently asked if they could suggest other potential interviewees. Once the initial participants confirmed their contacts' interest in the research, I telephoned those recommended, arranged interview times, and continued the process along the next link of the network. Although an efficient way of generating a sample of residents, there are some limitations to this method. It can hardly be seen to generate a random sample of participants, for instance, and the generalizability of the results, even at the scale of Richmond, is thus limited. To consider just one variable, economic status, based on their range of occupations and rate of home-ownership, all my participants could roughly be categorized as 'middle class', a limitation in diversity that cautions against an expansive interpretation of resident responses based on this study. Were this issue of generalizability my primary concern some randomly-generated sample, stratified in a manner as to be proportionally, statistically representative of the various segments of Richmond's population, would have afforded a more appropriate methodology. However, as John Western similarly argues in defence of the methods he used to explore Barbadian Londoners' experiences and sense of

home, the aim of this thesis is not to simply get some 'factual' or 'right' answers for a social science survey, but to ask questions in a particular way.[3] My goal is to develop a detailed, engaged understanding of residents' feelings about change in their community—not to generate a hard and fast, authoritative list of the changes identified, nor to just indicate the presence or absence of racial categories in these responses, but to see *how* these changes are viewed, if and *how* racial categories are employed, and *then* to relate this to concepts of racism. The network sampling strategy, in addition to easing some of the leg-work in selecting participants, acted as a 'vetting' process that served to make my presence less foreign and intrusive to people whom I did not know directly. I feel that this latter aspect of the methodology resulted in a richness and texture in the responses that would have been difficult to obtain from a randomly-selected group of people, and given the objectives of this research, that the tradeoff in generalizability is a price worth paying.

The Participants

Although the sampling strategy employed was not primarily directed towards generating a statistically representative sample of established Richmond residents, the group of participants proved remarkably diverse in terms of age, gender, national ancestry, and length of residency in Richmond, not to mention personality and individual circumstance.[4] Of the thirty-four Caucasian residents I interviewed, twenty-two were

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[3] See the preface of Western, *A Passage to England.*, pp xv-xx, but especially p. xvi, for a much more impassioned and literate discussion of the merits and drawbacks of this methodology than I am able to render here.

[4] This is not to say that there was no effort on my part to diversify the sample of residents, just that this was not my primary concern and that I did not employ a particular formula in doing so. As noted, I did make efforts to try and develop sample groups of not only Caucasian residents, but also those of Chinese and Japanese backgrounds. I also tried to ensure that there was a good mix of male and female respondents, and a wide spread of ages.

women, twelve men, with their ages ranging from the mid-twenties to the early-sixties.

The largest age cohort were those residents in their fifties, numbering twenty respondents.

The next largest group was the forties age bracket, with five people. There were four

respondents in each of the thirties and twenties age categories, and one individual was

aged in his sixties. Most people in this group of Caucasian residents, some twenty-six of

thirty-four respondents, were born in Canada. Nineteen members of the Canadian-born

were born in the province of British Columbia, with seven born in other Canadian

provinces. Of those born in British Columbia, seven were born and raised in Richmond:

five born in the 1970s who still lived in their parents' homes at the time of the interview,

one born in the 1960s, one in the 1950s, and one in the 1940s.[5] Seven of the thirty-four

Caucasian participants were immigrants who came to Canada from Europe (three from the

Netherlands, three from Germany, and one from England) in the 1950s and 1960s. One

resident, in neither the Canadian-born nor immigrant groups, was born in England in the

1970s by parents with Canadian citizenship. Of the twenty-nine Caucasian residents—

thirty-four minus the five who were born in the 1970s and still lived at home—who made

a decision to move to and live in Richmond, the greatest number, eighteen, moved to

Richmond during the 1970s. Eight other residents moved to Richmond in the 1960s,

while two arrived in the early to mid-1980s. One participant was born in Richmond in the

1960s, lived intermittently in and out of Richmond through the 1980s, and returned in

1990.

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[5] I have included in this group of Richmond-born and raised those people who were born in
Vancouver hospitals due to the lack of the required medical facilities in Richmond proper.

In terms of occupation and national ancestry, there was some diversity within a larger commonality. As I stated earlier, most of the occupations in the Caucasian group correspond with what has been termed a middle-class lifestyle. Five respondents worked in clerical or secretarial jobs, the same number as those who were self-employed in businesses ranging from marine upholstery, flooring, and garage-door installation to residential home construction. Five participants were employed in various technical occupations: two as lab technicians (medical and optical, respectively), two as computer technicians, and one as an aviation mechanic. Four respondents were students in colleges or universities, while an equal number were teachers in either elementary, secondary or religious schools. A further four people were full-time homemakers, and another four were employed in managerial positions. One respondent worked as a realtor, one as a gardener with a commercial plant service company, and one was retired. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of Caucasian residents could trace their family ties back to western European origins. Most frequently cited, by nineteen of thirty-four Caucasian residents, were links to the British Isles, with the Netherlands and Germany, mentioned four times each, also figuring as prominent familial ethnic origins. Other respondents traced roots back to the Ukraine, Rumania, Sweden, Norway, the former Yugoslavia, and British Guyana.

In addition to the thirty-four Caucasian long-term residents, I also interviewed twenty established Asian Richmond residents. Nine residents with Chinese family ancestry agreed to participate, six women and three men. On the whole this sample of residents was a younger group than the set of Caucasian participants: six people were aged in their twenties, two in their forties, and one in his fifties. Two members of this group

had emigrated from Hong Kong in the 1970s, while the remainder were born in Canada, and of those born in Canada, all were born in British Columbia, with two of these people born in Richmond during the 1970s. All those who made the decision to move to Richmond, some four residents, did so in the 1970s. With respect to employment status, three members of this group worked as elementary or secondary school teachers, two were college or university students, one an occupational therapist, one a professional engineer, one employed as a manager, and one respondent was retired. Although a commonly-used term by even the respondents themselves, the category of 'Chinese' belies this group's more complex family histories, with roots in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Nine residents of Japanese family ancestry were also interviewed, six men and three women. On the whole the participants in this group were older than those in group of Chinese long-term Richmond residents, but younger than the Caucasian group. The largest number, some seven people, were aged in their forties. One participant was in his twenties, and another in the thirties age group. No member of the group of Japanese participants was an immigrant to Canada. Eight were born in Canada and one resident was born in Japan, with the latter individual not having immigrant status on account of his father having Canadian citizenship at the time. Only two of the Canadian-born residents were born in provinces other than British Columbia, and of the six who were born in BC, all were born in Richmond: four in the 1950s, one in the 1960s and one in the 1970s. Except for the individual who was born in Richmond in the 1970s and lived in his parents' home, all of the Japanese residents (whether born in Richmond or not) had made a decision to purchase a home and move into Richmond. Seven did so in the 1970s, one in 1985, and one resident who had lived in Richmond from the time of his birth in the 1960s

until the mid-1980s returned to live in Richmond in 1990. In terms of occupation, three people were employed as elementary or secondary school teachers, two were homemakers, one person was employed in a managerial position, one worked in the food service industry, one was self-employed as a home-builder, and one was unemployed at the time of the interview.

I interviewed a further two individuals with Asian family origins who did not fit neatly into either of the aforementioned categories: one man in his twenties, self-employed in the computer industry, who emigrated from the Philippines to Canada and moved to Richmond in 1983. I also interviewed a woman in her twenties, born and raised in Richmond since the early 1970s by parents with Japanese and Chinese ethnic backgrounds, respectively.

These, then, are the people whose experiences appear in the pages of this chapter. I have already tried to explain the various ways in which I have knowingly and unknowingly shaped their accounts: the process by which residents were selected, categorized and interviewed. It is in the final stage, however, that of translating the interview material from transcribed accounts to essay page that I am perhaps at my most intrusive. The interview process produced a veritable mountain of qualitative material, a considerable amount of which, unfortunately, cannot be included here due to space constraints. In the interest of manageability, I have had to be selective in presenting quotations, though I have tried to draw out what I consider representative or particularly interesting observations, and include as much of the original interview material as possible in this section. The organization of this chapter parallels that of the interviews themselves, and is roughly chronological in nature, beginning with the participants' first impressions and

experiences of Richmond and progressing through to the present day. In examining and presenting this material I have tried to tease out general trends or patterns for each group of residents, noting first the frequency or commonality of particular kinds of responses, and then engaging with their content as suggested by extended captions from the residents themselves.[6]

Early Impressions:
Moving to Richmond

Although a number of participants were born in Richmond and have never had to make this decision, for most of the long-term residents in this study Richmond was a location that they *chose* to live in, a move determined by a number of motivating factors. Significantly, in the context of an American and Canadian literature that frequently imputes racial motivations underlying such decisions to live in the suburbs—most sensationally as 'white flight' from the racially heterogeneous inner city—the incentive most often cited by Caucasian residents, sixteen of thirty-four people, was rather more prosaic: housing affordability. For many respondents, such as this man who immigrated from Germany to Canada in the 1950s, redevelopment of Richmond's farmland into affordable residential property (and in this instance, connections with a local builder) presented the opportunity to fulfill a dream of home-ownership:

> We had an apartment in Kerrisdale (an upper-middle class Vancouver neighbourhood) in 1970, but decided that we wanted to find a house. . . Greczmiel Construction—they did all that construction at Westminster

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[6] In presenting this information and comparing the responses of long-term residents I use the shorthand 'Caucasian', 'Chinese', and 'Japanese', to define the different groups of participants. Given that these labels homogenize diverse groupings of people, and that the residents may not even identify themselves in such terms (though many do), they are, perhaps, absurd. I use them primarily in the interest of economy, not to imply that there are rigid distinctions between the groups, or that any of them are more or less 'Canadian' than the other.

> Highway and Number Two Road—I went to him and I said, "Gene, I'm
> looking for a house." In those days you had houses for $60,000. I said,
> "have you got anything a little cheaper?" He said, "yes, I do." They had a
> house, a lot, between two houses and it was just part of a farm. . .
> Behind us was all strawberries, and I just bought that one. It was a hell of a
> lot cheaper than $60,000!

A similarly money-minded approach was taken by others for whom, based on factors like

livability and proximity to family, Richmond was not the first choice of residence, but

ended up as their home simply because it was the most affordable place to live, as in the

case of this couple in their fifties who moved to Richmond in the early 1970s:

> When we. . .well, we were looking for a house and it was just economics,
> really, because it was where, at the time, we could afford it. At that time
> the houses were reasonably-priced in Richmond. We looked at North
> Van—we would really have liked to have lived in North Van—and we
> looked around in Burnaby, but we only had so much money. We had a
> budget, and when we looked, Richmond was the place that fit that budget
> . . .and in Richmond our house was new when we bought it. No, it
> wasn't our first choice, but it seemed to be the place that could get us the
> house we wanted—reasonable. . .and it was close to everything and not
> far from town and so it seemed convenient.

. . .and this woman in her thirties who seemingly did everything possible to try and stay in

the central city of Vancouver, but ended up being squeezed out to Richmond by a tight

real estate market and high rental costs:

> When I got out of college in 1979-80 the housing situation in Vancouver
> was so bad—there was, like, a .01 percent rental availability rate, and, of
> course, because of debts from school I couldn't afford anything I could
> find, so I moved back in with my mother for six months, which was just
> about the limit I could take. Then I moved in and shared a house with a
> girlfriend for a year, but then she made other plans and I still couldn't
> find anything I could afford in the city, so the next logical choice
> was. . .being a city girl I still had to be at least near the city, so I was doing
> some work in Richmond at the time and found an apartment that was
> available, affordable, and useable.

Not very colourful motivations, perhaps, but common ones, and not just among those

Caucasian residents interviewed, but also those of Japanese and Chinese descent. Among

the four long-term Chinese-Canadian residents who made the decision to move to

Richmond (as opposed to those who had that decision made for them), all mentioned price

of housing as the primary incentive drawing them there, though perhaps not as bluntly as

this man in his fifties who moved from Vancouver to Richmond in the early 1970s and

explained the main reason why:

> Price—simple as that. It was the cheapest place for us to buy a house.
> We didn't want to go to Burnaby because it was expensive, but we didn't
> want to go all the way out to Surrey or Delta because that was too far.

Similarly, among the eight Japanese residents who had made a decision to move to

Richmond, housing price was mentioned by each one as a key factor influencing their

choice of location. As in the case with Caucasian and Chinese residents, Richmond's

affordability offered an attractive opportunity to satisfy dreams of home ownership and

starting a family, as with this man in his thirties who decided to build a home in Richmond

after living in Vancouver for a number of years:

> I'm sure affordability was part of it, too. It's much more expensive to
> live in Vancouver. We wanted to buy a place where we could start a
> family rather than buying an apartment in Vancouver because it's a little
> harder to have children in an apartment.

Although an important factor in determining the residential location of people in all

groups, Caucasian, Chinese or Japanese, affordability of housing was rarely mentioned as

the lone motivational force leading to this decision, but one that operated in concert with

others. Some of these associated factors can be seen in the quotations on affordability

presented above: ties to a local builder, the desire to own a first home, proximity to work,

the beginning of a family—but they also appear as motivations cited in their own right.

Within both the Chinese and Japanese groups of residents, proximity to either the city or

work (or a combination of the two, as with those who worked in Vancouver) were the

most frequently commented upon factors, next to housing price, that influenced their

move, a point raised in the following discussion between this long-term Richmond

resident of Japanese background, Tina, and her Chinese-Canadian husband Richard:

> Tina: We were comfortable. I was teaching in Richmond, and the last
> thing I wanted to do was travel very, very far.
>
> Richard: So it was easier to live near her school than mine.
>
> Tina: So I think it was price, but I don't think we looked in Vancouver. It
> wasn't as if we thought, "Oh, we'd like to live in Vancouver, but it's too
> expensive." It was just a foregone conclusion, so the only place we did
> look was in Richmond We never really did look in Surrey (a more
> distant suburb of Vancouver). I'm sure at that time we could have bought
> a cheaper place in Surrey and Delta, but we'd be commuting to work.[7]

This proximity to work and the city was also an important consideration for long-term

Caucasian Richmond residents—*"don't forget, I worked at the Airport Inn in those days,*

so Richmond was closer," "we looked at houses in Panorama Ridge [Surrey] but it

seemed so far out," "we looked at Coquitlam and we looked at Richmond, which were

affordable for us at the time. I do a lot of traveling with my work, so I wanted to be close

to an airport"—one mentioned by nine of the thirty-four Caucasian participants. More

prominent motivations, however, mentioned by fourteen people in the Caucasian group,

were ones defined in terms of the 'attractiveness' of the community, a catch-all phrase that

encompassed a variety of features apart from those of affordability and proximity. For

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[7] The names of these, and all other participants in the thesis, have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

many Caucasian residents, this 'attractiveness' was intimately bound up with Richmond's

rural or semi-rural character, and the associated benefits it was seen to confer, including:

. . .living space, as suggested by the two following women in their forties:

> Well, when we came down from Prince George Barry got a job in
> Vancouver with a forest company. I think we lived in an apartment
> building for a while, but we really liked the Richmond area. It wasn't as
> populated as it is now, and being from a farming area as I was, I didn't
> like living so close together and in Richmond you didn't. At that time
> (the early 1970s) it was spread out.

> *For me, I didn't really care, because I grew up on a thirty-three square*
> *foot lot in Vancouver. Adam grew up in Saskatchewan on a big farm, and*
> *he just felt very claustrophobic in the little thirty-three foot lots where his*
> *aunt and uncle lived(in Vancouver), and then we moved to the apartment.*
> *When we first got married we lived in an apartment at Quebec and*
> *Eleventh in Vancouver and that just sent him around the bend because*
> *there wasn't any grass. To buy a house in Vancouver you're still just*
> *getting thirty-three foot lots and we wanted something more, and Richmond*
> *offered that. Richmond offered—it was a farm community when we moved*
> *into it (in the early 1970s), and your house lot. . .the first house we moved*
> *into had almost a half-acre lot.*

. . . community atmosphere in which to raise children, cited by this woman in her fifties:

> We wanted to move here because we wanted a family place where the
> kids could grow up with sports facilities and community atmosphere and
> Richmond had that when we moved here.

. . .less congestion, mentioned by this man in his sixties:

> Well, Vancouver was already getting a bit too expensive and we like
> Richmond. People said, "oh that's so far out." Well, in those days maybe
> it was far out. We liked it. We drove around every weekend and looked
> at several places and we liked it here. . .it was just because it was nice
> and there wasn't any congestion here.

. . .or simply quiet surroundings, as in the case of this married couple in their forties:

> When we got married we lived in an apartment in Kitsilano (a middle-
> class Vancouver neighbourhood) for about three years. Two to three
> years, then we bought a house in Richmond, mainly because my sister
> lived in Richmond and we always visited her, and we liked Richmond.

> We just liked it. It was just more "country-ish." In those days we liked it
> here rather than in Vancouver In fact, when we first moved here. . . of
> course we had lived (in Vancouver) on Cornwall Avenue right across
> from the Kitsilano Pool and there was a lot of traffic, and at first we
> could hardly sleep (in Richmond) because it was so quiet! But we got
> used to it.

Although a significant factor influencing a number of residents' decisions to move to

Richmond, the force of Richmond's 'rural' character in drawing settlement appeared to be

group-specific, mentioned by ten of the thirty-four Caucasian residents who had moved to

Richmond, but by none of the movers in the Japanese or Chinese groups. Similarly, while

four Caucasian residents cited the availability and quality of amenities such as community

centres, schools, and shopping as factors inducing them to move to Richmond, only one

resident of Japanese descent mentioned this, and none of the Chinese long-termers.

Whether or not the inter-group differences in motivations noted above are significant

is open to debate (and the small sample size cautions against reading too much into them),

though I do find the distinctions interesting. Perhaps less contentious is the congruence

between Japanese and Caucasian movers to Richmond in another motivating factor, the

presence of social networks in the community. For five Caucasian residents, such as the

following three participants, having friends in Richmond exercised some influence in their

decision to move to the community:

> I grew up in South Vancouver, and a whole lot of the group of people
> who I graduated with from high-school—there was a great number of us
> that settled here in Richmond.

> *Richmond was a place where our friends were.*

> I had some friends who had moved out this way, so from a social point of
> view it (moving to Richmond) made sense as well.

And while only one of the Japanese residents mentioned friends as drawing factors, family figured prominently in the decision-making process that convinced seven of the Japanese movers, like these four residents, to make Richmond home:

> I love this place. My roots are here—friends, relatives. . .that was a big reason.

> *My mother being here made a difference in deciding where we moved.*

> Being close to family was an issue.

> *I would say (we chose) Richmond because both of our families are. . . we have our roots in Richmond. We both liked living in Richmond.*

. . .As it did for seven of the thirty Caucasian movers such as these three:

> Our families were here. For me, anyways, I never thought of going anywhere else but Richmond. When it came to getting our own house, for me it was coming back to Richmond. Vancouver was out-of-sight in price unless you wanted to rent, but Richmond was a place where our friends were, our families were, and Vancouver was just an intermediate place to rent.

> *. . .and being close to our families. Our parents both lived in Richmond, and still remain, so. . .I think that. . . I guess it's just a bit of rooting.*

> At the first possible chance we had we moved back to Richmond because this is our home. This is our home. Richmond is it for us.

Interestingly, while ties to friends were mentioned by five residents in the Caucasian group, and ties to family mentioned by both Caucasian and Japanese residents as factors influencing their move, none of the Chinese respondents who moved to Richmond indicated that these played any role in their decision. Interesting, but perhaps not surprising given that a number of Caucasian and Japanese residents had families that had

been in Richmond for one or two generations before them, whereas all of the long-term

Chinese residents interviewed who had moved to Richmond did so relatively late, in the

1970s, and were the first members of their respective families to live in the municipality.

Life in Richmond

Where there was considerable similarity among all the long-term residents was in

their recollections of Richmond prior to the mid-1980s: its physical appearance, its 'feel'

socially and culturally, and the changes that were transforming Richmond in those years.

A recurrent theme among all groups, Caucasian, Chinese or Japanese, mover or non-

mover, older or younger, born in Richmond or elsewhere, is the recollection of

Richmond's rural or semi-rural landscape, as this survey of responses suggests:

> At the corner of Maple and Number Two Road there was a large field
> and they always had big tulips. We used to go there as a family. There
> were no neighbours—you had to walk quite a distance to get to one.
> Everybody had two acres or five acres. It was very rural and you had to
> go from Number Two Road to Railway to catch the train, and that's how
> we all got around in those days (the 1950s). . .When we bought this house
> in 1968 there were 110 acres here. It was very rural, still, when I bought
> in '68. This (southwest) end of Richmond hadn't developed at all.

> Caucasian woman, aged fifties

> . . .at that time we (the participant and his wife) were dating, all through
> the sixties, so starting about 1963 I was aware of Richmond. From my
> point of view it was a farming community. Lots of farms, not many
> houses. There were no subdivisions, of course. People lived in houses
> that were on fairly large lots. There were not that many people around.
> There was one shopping mall that they opened up back in the 60s. They
> didn't have a lot of amenities like movie theatres. We would constantly
> go into town for all our movies, we'd go there to eat. In the mid-1970s
> we'd still make excursions into town.

> Chinese man, aged fifties

Richmond was really farm-like (in the 1950s and 60s). We earned our money picking strawberries and picking blueberries and raspberries and loganberries. We would work in the fish cannery. . .so it was really primary industry.

Japanese woman, aged forties

Well the neighbourhood here was a field and there were cows in there. After the road and this house there it stopped and all the way down to the school was a farmer's field there. And that was probably the norm for most of the subdivisions around.

Caucasian man, aged forties

I remember Richmond as lots of farmland—there was a lot of farmland around and a lot more empty space, fields and things—and not as a place with high-rises. We never thought of Richmond having a 'downtown'. That's still sort of a weird thought. I guess I always remember my old neighbourhood—because it's fairly old now—as being lots of trees, big trees. They've had time to grow.

Chinese woman, aged twenties

What I remember about Richmond I think I relate a lot to my backyard. At our old house we had a really large backyard. We used to ride our bikes around all the way through the yard all the time. There were horse stables that I have seen pictures of—I don't think it was there when I was born. We had a large backyard. Our whole neighbourhood had large yards. I used to play with the girl next door and they had a really large backyard. I just remember Richmond being really open and spacious.

Caucasian woman, aged twenties

It is unfortunate that the written word does not convey the emotions that seem so palpable

during the interview experience, that they cannot fully capture the sense of nostalgia and

attachment that permeate so many of these descriptive accounts of Richmond's landscape.

This sense of valuation, however, is more readily apprehended in residents' accounts of

social life during this period of time, accounts which in many respects are linked to these

semi-pastoral descriptions of Richmond's physical appearance. When asked to think back

to these years, several residents commented favourably on the sense of community that they enjoyed in the years prior to the mid-1980s, as in the case of this Japanese man in his thirties who offered the following impression of his time growing up in Richmond:

> I think that a lot of kids that grew up in our generation in Richmond, it was sort of a suburban story where there was not a lot of traffic. At this time it did not have the problems of a big city. Richmond was basically similar to what Mission (a more distant, semi-rural municipality) is now. It was basically a sort of carefree lifestyle.

An observation paralleled by this Caucasian woman's recollection of raising her children in Richmond during the 1960s and 1970s:

> Sure the kids had a ball. I mean in those days the kids could hop on their bikes and they could go for a whole day and you never saw them back until suppertime. You never worried. If something happened somebody would come and tell you.

. . .and this Chinese woman's recollection of her childhood days in the 1970s:

> I loved Richmond. I remember going out after school in the summertime and I would just ride my bike from about six—I played with my friends until about dusk, about eight or nine, just out there roaming on the playground, ride my bike. It was the really carefree kind of childhood days that we'd all want to go home to.

For others, such as the four following people (a Caucasian man in his fifties who immigrated from Germany in the 1950s, a Chinese resident in her twenties, a Caucasian woman in her thirties, and a Caucasian man in his fifties), this sense of community was largely derived from the relationships they had with their neighbours:

> (commenting upon his experiences arriving in Richmond in the 1950s) Oh yeah, we were quite welcomed. We were. . .actually the neighbours, as soon as we arrived. . .it was the next day—we arrived on a Saturday— and the next day on Sunday the neighbours on both sides came over with pies and drinks and whatnot, and the people across the street brought their kids over and introduced themselves to us. We didn't know what they were saying, and they didn't know what we were saying, but we were introduced and that started the neighbourhood.

We knew a lot of our neighbours. I went to church, the Richmond Chinese Alliance Church. . .actually that started in Vancouver and then they had sort of a satellite branch in Richmond, so then we started going there. So a lot of people there were living in Richmond, too, so there was that community. Everyone lived really close together. You know, you went across the street to see your neighbour, and you could borrow sugar from your neighbour, that sort of thing. And I think the neighbours that we had there, they were neighbours that had always been there. Our first house, we lived there for thirteen years—the people around us never seemed to change either.

Investigator: Were these neighbours Caucasian?

Yeah. There were maybe one or two Chinese, but not a lot. Just a mix. They (Caucasian neighbours) were real friendly, and my parents were friends with a number of them.

The first apartment building I moved into, the neighbours actually knocked on the door and introduced themselves. Of course, I grew up in Kitsilano, which was very much a neighbourhood, and in the years where you could walk around at night and not worry and walk down to the beach and back again and not be worried about your safety, so the nice thing about Richmond was that it still sort of had that feel about it. It kind of felt small-town, and in fact it wasn't a city when I first moved here. It didn't become a city until a few years later. It was not really rural, essentially, though there were areas of it (that were), but it felt kind of small-town and peaceful and not too hustly-bustly.

The original area we lived in, we had community activities where we had neighbourhood barbecues. We had special. . .we had a party where one of the couples would find an ethnic restaurant somewhere and would invite the other fifteen to twenty couples in the neighbourhood and we'd go to the restaurant for dinner and go back to the host's for dessert and a drink. We'd do Christmas caroling and stuff like that. There was a whole series of intra-community activities that we did with the neighbours.

During the interviews with residents of Asian ethnic backgrounds, but not with the Caucasian residents, conversation about life in Richmond during this time period often engaged with issues of race and racism: sometimes after prompting by me, but the topic was occasionally broached by the participants themselves. Asked whether they had

experienced what they saw as racial discrimination in this period, almost all the

respondents, as in the case of this Japanese long-term resident in his forties, stated that

they, personally, had not experienced a significant degree of discrimination in Richmond

prior to the mid-1980s:

> For me, anyways, me and my family. . .hardly any. My dad, his best
> friend at the time was a guy named Jameson who used to own all the
> Slumber Lodge hotels out here, and when he (his father) was interned
> (during World War Two) he stayed with him, so that was pretty good.
> When we moved to Steveston, there was every race you could think of,
> and when I went to school at Lord Byng here. . .I didn't speak the
> Japanese language, but you'd find the newer Japanese kids who had
> come right from Japan. . .they had a class called new students, language-
> barrier students, so they had East Indian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese,
> etceteras—they were picked on in school because of the language barrier.
> That was the only reason. With me speaking English, I didn't experience
> that. I had Caucasian friends, a lot of Japanese friends, some Chinese
> friends, a couple of Italians, Germans. That was Steveston. Everybody
> got along.

. . .a similar experience related by another long-term Japanese Richmond resident in her

forties who also grew up in Steveston:

> Richmond, for the Japanese, was great because we were so. . .I guess to a
> certain extent we were insular, because we had the numbers, we were kind of
> sheltered. It wasn't until I hit UBC and when I started to take a summer job
> outside of Richmond, that I got racial slurs that I never had in all the years I
> was growing up in Richmond. It came as a surprise—here I was past my
> teens and I hadn't. . .It was very rare. I could count on my hand the times (I
> experienced discrimination). The Japanese, I think because we did have
> numbers and we. . .I don't know if it was because we made a greater effort to
> assimilate or what it was, but I don't remember ever being discriminated
> against. . .it was more my grandmother saying, "are you bringing—is she
> white? Who is coming over? Is she white?"

This Filipino resident in his twenties commented upon his experiences as a member of

a visible minority in Richmond prior to the mid-1980s, relating this to the sense of

community feel and contrasting it with what he saw as the current racial climate:

> The population used to be, if you think about it, like Ladner (part of the outlying suburb of Delta and semi-rural in character). I'm Filipino, and I'm a visible minority, but it was less. . .the Richmond of yesterday is not the Richmond of today. It was much friendlier. There was less. . .you couldn't see the ethnicity of Richmond. We were Filipino, but it wasn't a big deal. You didn't have the problem of stereotypes of Hong Kong immigrants coming and buying up all the houses and having all the nice cars, speeding, etceteras.

Quite often it was such contrasts between the present circumstance (and this is a focus later in the paper) and their experiences prior to major immigration movements of Asians into Richmond that acted as inroads into discussions of race and racism before the mid-1980s. In a couple of instances, the apparent contrast between self-defined incidents of racism in the past and present were placed into doubt as the participants reflected on their past experiences in light of their current circumstance, as with this Chinese resident in her twenties:

> You hear a lot of driving comments (now) —"oh, female, Asian driver." That's the worst stuff. I never noticed it before, but maybe it's just because now I'm older and when I was younger I didn't get it a lot.

Although some questioned their perception of the apparent absence of discrimination prior to the mid-1980s, this female Japanese resident in her forties was one of the few to explicitly relate stories of discrimination. Recalling her childhood memories growing up in Steveston shortly after the Second World War when her parents returned from internment in Manitoba, she related the following account:

> I guess we came back here in 1949 and I remember coming to Mitchell School and there weren't many Japanese and I remember it was quite tough. We didn't know the context of the war and I remember being called "Jap" and "you Japs go back to where you belong." Stuff like that. My parents more or less told us, "turn the other cheek". . .When we were younger, my sister and I, sometimes we'd notice if we went to stores, if there were two people waiting, even if we were first a lot of the

> salespeople would go directly to the Caucasians. They'd wait on us only
> when they were done, you see. I never said anything, but my sister
> would, and then they'd say, "Sorry, we didn't see you." It was always
> very polite. There was never any overt (discrimination).

Interestingly, her commentary on discrimination while growing up in Richmond was most

closely paralleled not by the experiences of other Asian participants, but in the

recollections of this Caucasian resident (the same resident, interestingly, who commented

on the friendliness of his neighbours upon arrival) who had immigrated from Germany to

Canada shortly after the war:

> I was treated, at times, very badly because, perhaps, it extends back to the
> war. They considered me German—I'm not German, but I speak
> German, so I was put in that category, so I was treated quite badly at the
> time of my arrival.

Changes in the Community

Whether resident recollections of the period prior to the mid-1980s were primarily

negative or positive (and the latter, to me, seems to be the case), marked by self-defined

accounts of racial discrimination or devoid of such experiences, the Richmond context

prior to the mid-1980s was not a static one, according to the respondents. When asked

what, if any, changes were occurring in Richmond during this period of time, a few

people, particularly those participants in their twenties, said that they honestly could not

remember any. Most participants, however—twenty-two of the thirty-four Caucasian

residents, and six of the nine in each of the Chinese and Japanese groups—responded by

citing "development" of some kind: public facilities and transportation networks,

residential, commercial, or industrial construction, slow, steady or rapidly-paced. Other,

often related, changes mentioned were house-price increases (by four Caucasian

residents), population growth (by two of the Chinese long-term residents, three of the Japanese residents and four Caucasian participants), loss of farmland (by two participants in the Caucasian group), and ethno-cultural change as a result of Indo-Canadian immigration (by two Caucasian residents). In thinking back to the changes that occurred, and perhaps because their immediacy had been tempered by the passing of time, most respondents offered a simple chronicling of change, without any strong value judgments attached to them, as in the following account of change rendered by this Caucasian woman in her forties:

> I noticed that they spent a lot of time filling in the flood canals, especially on Number Three Road and Number One Road. They did the major arteries, so they did Number One Road and Number Three Road. They just recently finished them up on Number Two Road, which obviously isn't a major artery, and Number Four Road and Five Road, though there still are, to a lesser extent, some flood canals in the less-traveled sections, especially south of Steveston Highway. I remember they filled in the flood ditches, they revamped Richmond Centre (a mall), they built the extension to join the Bay and Sears(department stores), so they built that. They got rid of the railway tracks on Granville—they dug all those out. They widened Number Three Road. . .

. . .this Chinese resident in his fifties:

> I think what happened is that in the 1970s the first subdivision went in (it was earlier than this) because they're inexpensive to build, and the proximity to downtown is there, and I think you only crossed over one bridge to get downtown.

. . .and this Japanese resident in his thirties:

> Yeah, I tend to recall it starting to change from a place where there were a lot of nurseries and warehouses to more of a commercial place. When Richmond Centre was built I thought that was a big thing, that the Bay was coming. The big thing was that they had rooftop parking, which was unheard of in Richmond, to actually go up a ramp to park other than on the street. I remember things like McDonald's coming up, and that was a big thing, the first McDonald's in Canada. I can remember that, because my father's a builder. I could sometimes go and look at these houses and

> I remember seeing areas that were fields and basically became
> subdivisions, so I can remember seeing areas that were no longer fields
> and I remember new schools being built because there were more people
> living here, but it was quite gradual.

While some cited these changes as being positive developments (for example, from a pair

of Caucasian respondents: *"they filled in the ditches, they made the streets safe—four*

lanes in a lot of areas," *"the bus service got better: instead of running once an hour it ran*

once every half-hour"), most residents, Japanese, Chinese or Caucasian, were resigned to

simply accept the changes that they identified occurring at the time—and which, of

course, they had a hand in creating:

> It was that there were more people, so you get more services, more
> businesses to move in. What we referred to in those days as Brighouse was
> basically Number Three Road between Westminster Highway and
> Granville. One lane of Granville was a railroad from the old interurban
> that used to go from Marpole (in South Vancouver) to Steveston. That one
> had stopped by the time I moved in, but the railroad service was still there.
> Parts of it are still being used on Railway. It used to come all the way
> down Granville and Garden City and then go north. So changes happen—
> where are these people going to go? And of course, more businesses, more
> people work around here. It's inevitable. You deal with it: how else can
> you do it? You can't stick your head in the sand.
>
> Caucasian woman, aged fifties

> Development. The development. The house that I live in now didn't
> exist then. When we lived on Granville we watched it being built. So
> the development and the loss of farmland (would be changes I would
> identify). There is a lot of farmland that has been lost, but nevertheless it
> was a farmland that farmers. . .it's kind of sad, but the farmland was
> there and they keep saying "it's the loss of farmland," and it is sad to lose
> farmland, but they couldn't afford to farm it anymore. You know, the
> costs. There were no subsidies to the farmers, and the cost of farming the
> land cost more than they could make from farming the land, so there was
> lots of vacant farmland. Terra Nova was farmland, but it had sat
> unfarmed for many, many, many years because the farmers could just not
> afford to do the farming on it. So I don't mind the development in
> Richmond. I would just have liked, maybe five-year planning for it, and

not just doing it. Planning and the money put aside to build the schools and the roadwork and whatever.

<div align="right">Caucasian woman, aged forties</div>

I think council was also undergoing. . .at that time, they were building all the time and there was always controversy: should we be allowing all these high-rises? Should we be doing this? Should we be doing that? I think at that time they limited the apartment height to three storeys. They allowed a few to go up to ten, then they stopped it, but they kept allowing the subdivisions. Every time they did that they were taking a farm and turning it into a subdivision.

I guess we couldn't be against it, the increase in housing, because our home used to be a farm!

<div align="right">Chinese man, aged fifties, and
Japanese woman, aged forties</div>

Still others, however, especially among the group of Caucasian residents, had decidedly negative views about many of the changes that were occurring in Richmond prior to the mid-1980s. In some instances this negative assessment was related to specific developments that were being built close to their homes, and the impression that change was being imposed upon them by the city government without consultation, complaints registered by this Caucasian woman in her forties, and a Caucasian couple in their fifties:

I remember in 1975 they decided to add this shopping centre here. I remember going to a meeting, and we were not too keen on it (the shopping centre), really. We were quite happy with Broadmoor. It had a Safeway and a hardware store. We weren't really too keen on the new shopping centre, really, but it went through anyways. I don't know why they bothered to have this public meeting. They didn't listen to anybody.

. . .because when Lansdowne (mall) was built there was kind of a lot of controversy. It (the old property, a horse racing track) was supposed to be a park and then the City Council allowed the shopping mall to be built, so—

And then they said that extra part between the mall and Garden City was going to be left open, that there was going to be some open space there, but now there are two apartments there. Now I notice that they have the other corner up for development too.

Investigator: What did you think at that time? Did you think that Lansdowne should have been a park, or did you think it was okay for a mall development to be built there, or did you even care?

I remember being distressed about it, upset about it. I didn't think it was the wishes of the people, and the Council made this decision even though there had been a promise that there was going to be some park land there, so that sort of got me upset.

Other concerns revolved around the issue of lost farmland, though in neither case here

(a Chinese man in his forties and a Caucasian man in his fifties) were the residents so

perturbed that they felt compelled to take action:

There was always a feeling to me, anyhow, that gobbling up all this farmland wasn't quite right, but it was nothing I'd get political about. I hated to see the farmland disappear, because that's what I was used to, but it didn't really concern me at the time.

There was a big increase in the number of houses, and obviously there were big increases in the number of people as well. A lot of Richmond was still farmland, and it (development) left a lot, and at that point Richmond was growing, but it didn't seem like it was growing uncontrollably.

The most impassioned statement against growth and development in the pre-1986 period,

however, was offered by this man in his fifties, one of the oldest of the long-term residents

in the sample (settling in Richmond in the 1950s), who in conversation with his wife,

lamented the loss of a treasured animal habitat and sense of community:

The sixties and seventies to me, the biggest change I've found. . .because I've always been kind of interested in the wildlife and the diversity of bird-life in Richmond. That is something that really struck me when we moved here, and to me that was one of the changes I didn't like. It didn't matter where you went you had pheasants running across the street. It didn't matter where you went, there were tons of pheasants and there

were hawks and owls, a lot of song-birds and a lot of mosquitoes and stuff like that. And that. . .especially pheasants. . .the small area my parents had on Cambie Road, almost six acres, we used to see thirty, forty pheasants out there without any problem at all and the same thing. . .let's say on Number Three Road where you have McDonald's and Lansdowne and so on. You take the opposite side from Lansdowne across Number Three Road: that used to be all field that was just loaded with wildlife and ducks and geese and you name it. It was just beautiful. That's the biggest change to me that happened in the seventies: it was just tremendous the amount of building that was going on all of a sudden, and the problem is that they didn't just pick one certain area. Developments were going on all over Richmond from Number Five Road on (westward).

Investigator: It was just all spread out?

It was just spread out everywhere: a pocket here and a pocket there and it really destroyed Richmond to my way of thinking. . .

Well, it changed the meaning. . .

. . .the community feeling.

Into the Eighties and Nineties

The intensity of such statements about change in the 1970s notwithstanding, if the frequency and variety of responses is any indication, residents' attention to and awareness of change heightened in the period from 1986 to the present. In many respects, however, residents' perceptions of changes in their community during this time-frame can be seen as a continuation of trends that they were noticing throughout the early-1980s, the 1970s, and even the 1960s. Mentioned by all participants in the Asian long-term resident groups, and by twenty-five of the thirty-four members of the Caucasian participants was the theme of "development" in various forms: commercial, public, and residential—a theme that several people had mentioned in their recollections of change in Richmond throughout the 1970s and before. Although for a few the development of the mid-1980s through the mid-

1990s was effectively, as two Caucasian women (one in her forties and one in her fifties) suggested, "a continuation of what's happened earlier," for many other respondents in all categories there seemed to be a qualitative change in the pace of development and growth as compared to their previous experiences, an impression that this recent era was witness to a faster, less restrained series of transformations:

> Definitely the busy-ness—how many more people have moved here in the last ten years. How I could look down our street, Garden City and Francis, looking down into Downtown Richmond, Three Road Area, and there was nothing. You couldn't see buildings or anything. Now when I look I always make the comparison: I always say, "It looks like Vancouver," to see all these sky-rises and taller buildings. Before you couldn't see any of that.
>
> Chinese-Japanese woman, aged twenties

> I think growth was encouraged (by the city government). And I think that growth is good—I'm not saying that growth isn't good, but I think it was allowed to grow almost uncontrolled for a number of years.
>
> Caucasian man, aged fifties

> In the last eight to ten years things have gone too fast. Whereas we used to drive down and you could see green spaces, now you don't see all of these; you see monster houses and traffic. I think it really has come too fast. There have been too many people brought in too fast. Look at all the schools and all that—look at all the portables (temporary classroom structures located on school grounds as a supplement to main school buildings) at the schools. We can't compensate for all of the kids that are coming in. People are moving in, but where are they going to go to? There's kids in portables. You know, too fast.
>
> Caucasian woman, aged forties.

> I think basically the changes that have taken place in the past ten years right up until now are just phenomenal. . .It's incredible, the growth. It's almost too much, too fast, in my view. It's too much, too fast and Richmond hasn't grown with the growth and now they're finding it hard to accept all this growth, but it's continuing to grow. I think they're building too much, too fast. A lot of it is unnecessary building, but it's

just. . .the growth of the downtown core itself where Richmond City Hall is, the high-rises that are there now, those are called highrises.

<div style="text-align: right">Caucasian man, aged fifties.</div>

Massive changes. For instance, Terra Nova. I abhor that. I found it really upsetting when they developed on it. That, and just buildings going up so quickly. Even now, when I first moved here (an apartment tower, her second residence in Richmond) none of these buildings were up, and that was five years ago. You see how quickly they go up. It's amazing, especially the downtown Richmond area.

<div style="text-align: right">Chinese woman, aged twenties</div>

As these passages suggest, this perceived change in the pace and character of development over the past twelve years has not been entirely well-received by long-term residents of any ethno-cultural background. When asked to identify those changes that they viewed as negative ones over this time period, thirty-two out of the thirty-four Caucasian residents mentioned growth and development issues of various kinds as factors reducing their enjoyment of the community. For a handful of residents, these changes had the effect of physically erasing places that still resided in their memories, producing a sense of loss, and challenging their ability to comprehend their surroundings:

A change in just the number of buildings going up. They're very close together and we're losing a lot of the green-space that we have. When Terra Nova was built up—my piano teacher used to live down in that area, and I remember that we used to go down to a vegetable market there. We called it 'Chips', just because he used to live behind us and that was his nickname. Anyways, I remember this vegetable store in the middle of nowhere and then all of a sudden they had to move out, and there was all of this building going on. When I am there now I don't even recognize the area because it's just all houses.

<div style="text-align: right">Caucasian woman, aged twenties</div>

I was driving on the street just the other side of Number Three Road and I had to stop and think where I was. I'm telling you, I stopped and sort

of catch my breath and take another look. I thought, "this is so unreal."
It's just massive, high-rise condominiums.

> Caucasian man, aged fifties

Within the group of Caucasian residents there were other development and growth-related

complaints as well, ranging from crowding and population growth in general (mentioned

by ten residents), crowding in the school system specifically (mentioned by eight), loss of

farmland or green-space (by three), to increased noise (cited by two residents). Notably,

the development of large or 'monster' homes, so commented upon in the Vancouver

context, was mentioned by six residents, such as the following, who (though note the

subtleties and differences in emphasis in each of the accounts) objected to what they

considered the housing form's excessive bulk, garish style, and impact on existing

neighbourhoods:

> I hate development. I hate seeing the old buildings being torn down to
> put these giant monster houses up. I just have this attitude that if
> anything is over five years old it shouldn't be torn down. . .I think they're
> ('monster' houses) absolutely horrible. They're like Barbie-doll houses,
> as we call them. Everything's stone and cement—there's no gardens
> anymore. Aesthetically, I don't care for them in the biggest of ways.

> Caucasian woman, aged
> twenties

> In terms of housing, the houses got bigger. The styles changed. We went
> to almost these bunker-style houses where they went two, three stories
> straight up. One storey was thirteen feet high, and they would dwarf the
> original two-storey houses and one house we lived in was like that: they
> ripped down a little, tiny bungalow beside us and built this monster
> garrison beside us. It was a two storey house and it was a full old-size
> storey above the size of our house. They would blacktop the lot and not
> put any trees in. Five, six, seven cars in the driveway...and they weren't
> doing. . .they weren't trying to fit in. These new houses and newstyles
> were not fitting in with the existing neighbourhoods. . .It was difficult to
> adjust to because the older-style homes, you had this house in the middle
> or maybe set to one side or the front or the back, but you had a fair

amount of lot. The house might have occupied fifty percent of the lot, maybe a little bit less. These new homes occupied ninety percent of the lot. There was no place that you could get to know your neighbour because the thing was all house, and the windows were up high so you never saw your neighbour. It made it very difficult to keep any kind of a flavour in the neighbourhood.

Caucasian woman, aged forties

I think Richmond goes from one extreme to the other. We have all of these so-called 'monster houses' that are being put up which look incredibly ugly. I just have to say this. They try to combine Gothic with Roman with New-Age Modern all on the same property, and it just doesn't fit. If you have, all of a sudden, this huge house between these older-looking houses it looks really out of place. There's also annoyance over the fact that sometimes the monster houses go over. . .their driveways go over onto the city's property line, and people might say, "why are they allowed to do that?" They're cutting down trees, that's another concern.

Caucasian woman, aged twenties

It changes the neighbourhood. Working class people don't live in those kind of homes, so we feel like we're being pushed a little bit. Maybe it's a paranoia, a bit. It's a beautiful-looking street, and basically looks the same: nice, quiet street, but the houses are so huge. . .we just wish they were houses for the working people and not just for the rich, because they're not working people that buy those homes. What happens is that Richmond is being taken over by the rich, and the working guy—if he can stay, that's fine—but he can't afford to stay.

Caucasian man, aged fifties

On the whole, within both the Japanese and Chinese long-term resident groups negative comments on development were more limited and specific than those issued by Caucasian residents. Ruminating on the topic of changes in Richmond over the past ten to twelve years, four Japanese residents mentioned development in general as a negative change, while two had more specific complaints to do with the construction of high-density housing. Interestingly, two of the Japanese residents, like their Caucasian

counterparts, mentioned the construction of 'monster' houses as a negative development

over the last twelve years:

> I think some of the, in terms of the built form, some of the. . .if you look
> at the emergence in the last seven or eight years of these very large, not
> terribly attractive homes—for me, as a builder, I like to build nice homes
> and I'm not really encouraged by what I've seen in terms of the built
> form of these homes, these large homes that people have built. I don't
> think they contribute to the street beauty. I built this house and the way
> this street looks is more my idea of how people should be building
> homes.
>
> Japanese man, aged thirties

> Personally, the kind of houses that are boxes with the pillars at the front
> entranceway. . .I'm not offended, I just think they're ugly (laughter). It's
> typically the home that has had the front yard paved because they have a
> three-car garage in front of it. The monstrous, monstrous entranceway. A
> box structure that is two storeys high that goes right to the length of the
> property. It's just not my style. I think it's ugly, and there are so many of
> them cropping up. I don't know what it's supposed to represent. .
> .somebody's taste in homes.
>
> Japanese man, aged forties

Within the group of Chinese residents, the range of development-related complaints was

even more sharply circumscribed, with development in general mentioned by three

residents (with one specifically relating this to concerns over environmental degradation)

as a negative recent change. Among all three groups, however, one growth/development

factor was frequently mentioned: the increase in automobile traffic in Richmond. All nine

Japanese residents, such as the following woman in her forties, commented on the rise in

traffic (and the attendant difficulties in parking) as a negative change:

> When we grew up there (Steveston) it was just a small little town, but
> now it does have the look of a tourist town. I remember that we'd do
> banking for my mother and I used to be able to park right in front of the

> bank and do all her banking. Now there is no space. I remember talking to my cousin about it: "oh gee, sometimes Steveston is just so overcrowded. There's so much traffic."

In the group of Chinese residents, seven out of the nine respondents (one resident in this group could not think of—or would not state—any negative changes at all), commented on an increase in traffic as a negative factor (for example: *"More traffic. Number Three Road is terrible. It's so bad—it's like it's constantly under construction, but nothing is getting done."*), while among Caucasian residents, this rise in traffic was a change cited by twenty out of thirty-four participants as a negative trend of the last twelve years.

When asked to assess who or what was responsible for these negative development-related changes (or when they offered up unsolicited explanations), governments of various levels, but especially the city government, were taken to task, viewed as entities primarily concerned with promoting growth, failing to consider and plan for the consequences of their decisions on long-term residents, and unresponsive to their wishes. These opinions appear in some of the passages that have already appeared in this section, as they do more explicitly in the following quotations:

> I would have to say that in the last ten to twelve years Richmond has tended to grow at all costs. Even though in areas such as Terra Nova people voted, and residents expressed opinions, and had petitions that they didn't want that to become a residential area, city council more-or-less ignored everybody's wishes and developed it anyway. I think in a lot of cases they became masters of what they thought was their own way of doing things rather than listening to the general public. Supposedly, there was an agricultural land reserve in place, but that didn't seem to make any difference. . .I think what council did was to react too quickly to removing land from the Agricultural Land Reserve, and taking farmland and strictly developing it. A lot of the land was developed first, then they built houses on it and people moved in, so it was the opposite way around. People weren't coming out here and begging to build houses. The developers were

developing the land and then finding contractors to buy the lots and build houses

Caucasian resident, aged fifties

I think the previous council and perhaps the present one now, from what they said when they first got in, they have become less and less identified with being interested in slowing down development here in the city. They've been actively promoting development here in the city. That's part of the reason why developers have put up the kind of housing (multi-family dwellings) that I pointed out earlier. It's your real-estate agents, the market, appealing to perhaps the offshore buyer with the money. . .the developer with the money to change what used to be two adjacent lots with houses into a townhouse.

Japanese resident, aged forties

. . .so I don't mind the development in Richmond. I just would have liked, maybe, five-year planning for it, not just doing it. Planning, and the money put aside to build the schools and the roadwork and whatever. In Richmond they have to put the people in, in there. You have to have 10,000 people in this area and then we'll give you a school. But in the meantime where are all these people going? What are they doing? They have to have you all filled in there and then they'll give you something, and I don't think that's the way to go, because by that time you're just falling over everybody. . .It's funny, because they are just right now in the process of doing a five-year plan for the growth of Richmond and allowing the citizens to put their input into it. There are going to be surveys and everything. I think that's ten years too late. I think that a plan should have been put into place before they did all this and agree to all this growth. I think you have to plan for something this mega.

Caucasian woman, aged forties

Perhaps there is nothing remarkable in these concerns about growth and development and

the attribution of responsibility: after all, complaining about the government is a routine

Canadian activity, and such anxieties over the pace of growth, the shape of development,

and the role of government have a longer history in the Lower Mainland and Richmond.

In the 1970s, for example, anti-development sentiments (see Chapter 3, pp.61-64)

emerged in response to a period of considerable regional population increases, attendant

pressures on land and housing stocks, and government-initiated redevelopment strategies

that were seen as unresponsive to the needs of everyday people. Indeed, there may be

considerable affinities between the responses of present-day Richmond residents and their

predecessors, but in the current context other elements enter the equation to problematize

a straightforward and unrelenting story of anti-growth, anti-government sentiment. The

first intervening factor is rather simple: in addition to their criticisms of development and

government, long-term residents who participated in this study identified many positive

changes that they saw accompanying the growth in the community over the past twelve

years. A recurrent theme, mentioned by thirty-two out of thirty-four Caucasian residents,

eight out of nine Chinese residents, and all nine Japanese residents, was praise for the

improvement of local amenities (be they public or private) and the role of population

growth and the civic government in bringing such changes about:

> I think Richmond is a very people-oriented community, and in the midst
> of all this development they make a point of ensuring there is parkland,
> there is green-space, community centres, sports complexes. I can tell you
> from all the referendums we have—every time we have a civic election
> they want to borrow money for another aquatic centre or another hockey
> rink or whatever, so all of that is definitely a plus. . .there's been a great
> increase in facilities for seniors, the library complex has expanded.
> All those sorts of things are great. The increase in the business and the
> industrial sector is wonderful because, of course, it helps to keep the tax
> rates down. So all those things, I think, are positive.
>
> Caucasian woman, aged thirties

> I think the growth in Richmond has allowed the city to upgrade its
> infrastructure, whereas when we were growing up there really wasn't much
> in terms of community facilities. Richmond, I think, has dramatically
> upgraded the quality and the number of their community facilities. The
> community centres are probably as good as any in the Lower Mainland and

I think that makes it more attractive for younger families to move to
Richmond.

> Japanese man, aged thirties

I think that the complex that has gone in down at Number Six and
Triangle has been an excellent amenity. My younger boy was in hockey
at the time and sort of went through the transition where there were only
two sheets of ice in all of Richmond, to now where there's ten, maybe.
We sort of went through that. . .and really needed it. That's really good.
That's just one development. Generally speaking, I don't think the
industrial parks are bad for Richmond—it has generated a huge
workplace and tax base which has allowed us to do these things.
Property taxes in Richmond aren't particularly high.

> Chinese man, aged forties

Additionally, a handful of Caucasian residents explicitly cited population growth as a positive factor enhancing the quality of life in Richmond over the past twelve years by changing the 'atmosphere' of the community. For these residents, a woman in her fifties who had traveled extensively around the world, a retired resident in his sixties who immigrated to Canada from Berlin in the 1950s, and a self-employed businesswoman in her thirties, growth in Richmond had resulted in an energy, a cosmopolitan quality, that had been missing before:

My husband and I are thrilled to be living in the big city. We would
never move out to the boonies. We appreciate every bit of cosmopolitan
growth that there is here, and wouldn't leave it for the world. We go out
and look at other parts, but we're happy to be here where everything is
available and it's clean—there's no wild. . .we don't mind the crowds.
One of the most wonderful things to do when you've got nothing else to
do is watch people. You can do that at any street corner now because
they have restaurants which have people. . .instead of being hidden at the
back of the restaurant, they're lining people up on benches, like
Starbuck's (coffee houses). You sit at the window and watch people
pass. Hey, we've been dreaming about that opportunity for years—it's
here now.

*I think the quality in Richmond—the quality of life has improved because
we have become more cosmopolitan. . .my wife is from London—I don't
know if she likes it or not—but I like it being busy.*

The city has a lot of energy. For all that it has gotten big and crazy in
some areas, I think that it is still a reasonably positive, well-balanced
place to live.

Even the idiom of the 'monster house', although most often criticized, was not universally
reviled. Admittedly a minority voice in this group, this retired Caucasian resident (the
same cited above who enjoyed Richmond's cosmopolitanism) expressed his appreciation
of the style:

On my street they had all these little houses and now they've got all these
big houses, and they look nice. People say, "oh, look at all these big
houses," well, I say if they want to build a big house, let them build a big
house, so long as they don't put it in front of my house. But I don't mind
at all, because some of it is definitely an improvement.

Investigator: Over what was there before?

Yeah, because they had a little house and a lot of land, farmland if you
like, but now it looks a lot more. . .civilized.

An observation seconded in the simple statement, *"I like the look of them,"* made by a
Japanese long-term resident in his twenties.

The second intervening factor in this story of resident criticism of development
renders matters somewhat more complex: as outlined in Chapter Three, between the 1970s
and the mid-1990s the sources of population growth in Richmond changed, and by the
latter years of this period, immigration from Asia emerged as a major factor in the city's
economic and demographic upswing.[8] This was not lost on residents complaining about

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[8] By the City of Richmond's rough estimates, one-third of Richmond's population growth in recent
years is accounted for by international immigration, one-quarter from natural increase and the
remainder from immigration from other areas in BC and Canada. (City of Richmond, "What Will
the Population of Richmond be in 2021?" *Official Community Plan Hot Facts*, 4, 12, June 1997).

population growth and development, who attributed many of these changes to

Asian immigration (see, for example, the allusion to the 'offshore buyer' made by the

Japanese resident quoted on p. 117). Commenting on the 'monster' house phenomenon,

for example, the Japanese home-builder in his thirties who expressed his distaste for the

style (p. 115) articulated this theory as to how they had come to be developed:

> My guess is that a lot of people who live in those houses come from
> densely-developed areas: Hong Kong, Taiwan, wherever. Their living
> space is quite small—your private yards are quite small, you don't have a
> lot of living area, so when they come here, in relative terms it's cheap, so
> why not build as big as you can? The best way to maximize floor-space
> ratio on any given size lot is to build a box, so that gives you the maximum
> amount of space. They want to do things like create an impression, so they
> create the two-storey entry with the big columns and large windows
> because it gives a very grand impression. I think the thing is that they
> come from an area where a million-and-a-half dollars didn't buy you very
> much, but here just about half that will buy you a grand home, and that's
> what they want. I think a lot of that is the expression where "we can have
> it, so let's get it."

A similar, though more judgmental, theory was expressed by this Caucasian woman in her

forties who emphasized what she saw as the class position of immigrants she considered

responsible for housing style change:

> . . .and then, because it's the wealthiest that have come out of Hong Kong,
> they don't care about building the mega-houses, cutting down the trees,
> changing the neighbourhoods. They didn't come caring about Canada
> because it is a temporary 'wait and see' home. It's not their new home.
> They didn't come with a—some of them—with a really healthy attitude
> either. . .because it's the wealthy that have come over. They've not cared
> what they've done to neighbourhoods.

Given that Richmond's overall population increased by 22,000 people between 1991 and 1996, its
population of non-immigrants remained relatively stable, and that the number of immigrants
increased by approximately 40,000 people (and that 30,565 of Richmond's 70,000 person
immigrant population arrived during these years) in this five-year span (see BC Stats, *Census Fast
Facts*) the city's estimate on the immigrant contribution to population growth seems very
conservative to me.

When asked bluntly whether, in light of their association of these unwelcome changes with Asian immigrants, these complaints were simply window dressing covering an underlying disdain of having Chinese as neighbours, the majority of residents vehemently denied that this was the case, citing the 'reality' of these changes, and claiming that their non-Chinese had been responsible for building them. Commenting on the monster home phenomenon, for example, the Japanese resident who had linked them to Asian immigrants defended his view on aesthetic grounds:

> As a builder I have no problems stating my objections because to me I come to those objections from the standpoint of a builder and as someone who would prefer to see attractive housing that's more sympathetic to the existing urban fabric, rather than something that is so foreign and obtrusive. . .you know, if it was rich Albertans coming to Richmond and building large houses I think the reaction would be the same, "that these rich Albertans are coming and building rather large, ugly houses. I wish they would build nicer houses," so I don't think. . .you know it's natural that it seems to be directed to a certain racial or ethnic group because only one ethnic group resides in these homes.

And this Caucasian woman in her thirties who similarly argued that *why* she objected to the housing style was significant, and cited other instances where she made similar complaints about the housing styles of Caucasian family and friends:

> It depends on how I'm objecting to it. If I'm objecting to the neighbours being there, because they're Chinese, I would say it's racism. If you're objecting to the style of house it's a preference. I wouldn't say it's racism. It depends on the reasons you're objecting. . .I mean, we can drive around Terra Nova and I don't like the feel of that area because when you're driving all you can see are pavement and houses. Now we have family and friends that live there who are not Chinese and so. . .I can't say it's racism. I don't like the neighbourhood because you're driving and you don't get that sense of neighbourhood where there are yards and trees.

This difficulty of trying to disentangle, or conceptually separate, issues and objections over housing style from the perceived owners of the houses was one acknowledged by this Caucasian resident in her twenties, who—after I questioned her on this point—reflected on whether her opposition to the style had anything to do with what she saw as the ethnicity of most owners:

> You know, it's hard to say and that's something I question myself. It's tough because you don't want to think that you're against the fact that it's Chinese living there. I suppose it's tough to say because really it seems like it is only the Chinese that are living there. . .I don't know—it's something I question myself and wonder if a white person were to decide to build a monster house if. . .yes, I think a part of me would still object to it, you know, if all of a sudden there was this huge house going up that's sort of ugly, out of place, the cutting down of trees. . .Yes, I would still object to it. Whether or not it is more so because of the Chinese people, I can't really say.

A remarkably forthright response, and indicative of how difficult it is to tease out implicit meanings that may or may not lie behind apparently non-racial comments on change, even for those people expressing such feelings.

Yet perhaps the disclaimers made by residents about their motives in resisting housing style changes and development trends have some substance, if only because so many people seemed willing to *explicitly* discuss ethno-cultural change as one of the transformations of the last twelve years. When asked to identify the changes that they saw happening in the community since 1986, in addition to the development-related issues they identified, twenty-one out of thirty-four Caucasian residents cited Asian immigration and the increasing ethno-cultural diversity of Richmond, as did every single Asian long-term resident. Although all the Caucasian residents would discuss these themes and express criticisms later in the interview when I probed into their opinions on

ethno-cultural change and immigration, some fourteen participants in this group offered

unsolicited comments that identified "Asian immigration" (as it was most frequently

expressed) and associated changes as negative developments of the last twelve years. A

significant proportion of these concerns revolved around issues of language, with many

Caucasian residents, such as this woman in her twenties, criticizing the perceived

demands that English as a Second Language programs were placing on the school

system:

> My only concern with ESL is that it is putting a lot of pressure on the
> education system, which is maybe another downside to the way that
> Richmond has been setting itself up with the immigrant population because
> ESL places huge pressures money-wise on our educational system. I just
> find it odd that the Canadian government, to get into federal politics again,
> is paying for these kids to learn the language in our own country when if
> you went to any other country. . .I would never expect anyone to pay for me
> to learn their language. I think it should be up to you. It should be your
> role, or your part of the bargain when you become an immigrant, to learn
> the language. I don't know if that is exactly right, that we should be paying
> for them to learn our language.

Other language issues were linked to the emergence of Chinese-only signs in Richmond

over the last twelve years, the perceived insularity of the immigrant Chinese community,

and a failure to 'assimilate' into the existing social fabric. This Caucasian man in his

fifties expressed a familiar refrain when he stated:

> . . .in general I feel peoples' feeling is that the Chinese, or the Asian
> population that came here, simply came here as a means of getting away
> from what they were afraid of someplace else, and that they didn't come
> here to become Canadians, but to continue on with their way of life
> exactly the way they were before. We have Asian malls, all the store
> signs and whatever are in Chinese. . .the majority of our people in
> Richmond are not Asian and can't even read the signs.
>
> <u>Investigator</u>: So signage is an issue?

> Signage, to me, is a big issue. We're a bilingual country, French and
> English. I'm not saying that they cannot have Chinese on their signs, but
> I believe that a major part of the sign should be in English. We're an
> English-speaking majority and they should come here and fit in and
> become Canadians. If this is their new country and their new home, come
> here and join in with the rest of our people. We have people from a lot of
> other countries that don't have the same arrangements, or don't have things
> going their way the same as what the Chinese do.

As the above quote indicates, linguistic issues could become coupled with commentaries

about the apparent behavioural qualities of immigrants, qualities that were seen as

undesirable, and their introduction into the community as a negative development.

Considering the emergence of shopping malls in Richmond that targeted Asian customers,

a number of Caucasian long-term residents contended that Chinese-language signage and

the actions of store clerks, for example, made them feel excluded:

> The one thing I really don't like is all these Chinese shopping malls
> . . .(it's to) the point where a white person walks into those malls
> and you feel very, very uncomfortable, even though you have
> business in that mall. With my work I had to go to those malls, and
> I usually did my business first thing in the morning. That was when
> I was in the mall. Those malls were practically empty, but
> whatever people did happen to be there, they would look at me as if
> "what the heck is that person doing here?" Hey, I'm doing my
> business. So basically it was just in and out, and don't bother with
> it all. I do know of a young lady who went into one of those shops
> and was told to go to Safeway. That's where I draw the
> line. . .
>
> <div align="right">Caucasian woman, aged fifties</div>

> Right next door to where I work—Yaohan Centre is right next door to
> where I work—is an Asian mall. It's not strictly for Asians, I mean,
> you're more than welcome in there, but a lot of the stuff in Yaohan
> Centre has Cantonese writing, and a lot of the Asian people shop there
> and they speak Cantonese to you at the counter. If you want to speak
> English they won't speak English to you, so I think the language is a big
> barrier when it comes to the Asian population in Richmond.
>
> <div align="right">Caucasian woman, aged twenties</div>

Some areas I don't like it (cultural diversity) because I'm at the point of frustration where people come here and they bring their old traditions with them—and I have nothing against that, but they try to push their old traditions onto everybody else and a lot of the people are coming here with   a lot of their money and they seem to be flaunting it right in your face: "We've got the money now and you don't." I think this is what bothers me more than anything, going into the different stores now. . .I, myself, will not step foot in Parker Place (an 'Asian' mall) because of the attitude. I'm sorry, but I've been in there a few times where I've been treated like sheer garbage.

Caucasian man, aged forties

Although 'Asian' malls were one site of interactions between Caucasian long-term residents and recent Asian immigrants that led to negative impressions of Richmond's increasing cultural diversity during this time, a series of residents, particularly (though not exclusively) women, commented upon immigration and the negative effects that it was seen to have on their neighbourhood relations. In their discussion on neighbourliness, a change in their sense of community, and the role of Asian immigration in this perceived development, this long-term resident couple expressed feelings expressed by many (some fifteen of thirty-four) Caucasian residents:

I think the biggest impact in the last—perhaps not ten years, but less than that—has been the Chinese population. That has had a tremendous impact on Richmond.

It's very hard to reach out to them as a neighbour.

That's the biggest single difference that I think has made Richmond a total different community to what we have been used to. The Chinese influx has been so strong and so big that we haven't really, as people who have lived here for a long time, we haven't really adjusted to it yet. We're still adjusting to it by going shopping, the kids going to school, the recreation places, church, whatever. It has had a tremendous impact.

Investigator: What makes it so difficult to get in touch with, or get in contact with. . .I don't know whether you have any recent immigrant neighbours, for example—

*I can give you two examples, John. In the first house on our right is a
young family, and I think there is a senior in there as well, or a parent.
They moved in and I saw them on the street, so I went over and I spoke
to them. I said, "hi, you're new to the neighbourhood," and whatever, and
they were very friendly and so on, but very reserved and possibly just
tolerated my dialogue. They'll come out onto the driveway and never,
ever, say hello. You know, I try to reach out to them. A young woman
was walking with a small child, just the week before last, and I was
talking to her, and I said, "how is your child?," and whatever, yet she'll
come out, duck the driveway and see me on the road, not acknowledge
me, and I don't know whether it's. . .culturally, in their country. . .And
then, across the street, I don't know if I could tell you how many times
I've waved and said "hi." Sometimes they'll acknowledge you, but they
will never—they'll see us out there and it doesn't matter how many times
I've said "hello, that's a nice dog" or something, they never, ever reach
out. . .*

Referring to these neighbourhood relations and the apparent differences between long-

term residents such as themselves and recent Asian immigrants, this self-employed

Caucasian resident in his fifties reflected on what he saw as underlying reasons for them:

> . . .I've talked to a lot of Chinese in Richmond and other areas about
> integration, just in the hour I spend with them (in his work), and I get the
> feeling that they'd love to integrate, but they don't know how, or it's too.
> . .their cultural beliefs are such that they're not as outgoing or extroverted
> as say, a non-Asian is. . .you have to be fair here, though—we didn't
> make a large effort to know them (the resident's Chinese neighbours),
> and I'm sure the reasons were much the same on both sides: the language
> barrier. You can only smile and nod so many times.

Indeed, when asked to speculate as to the source of the differences that they perceived

existed between themselves and newcomers, every long-term Caucasian resident cited

"cultural differences" as a primary cause, with behaviour as a function of the social

environment in which these respective groups of people had lived in.

Perhaps, then, this constitutes a reformulated racism in the sense that Martin Barker

has proposed and I outlined earlier, in which seemingly social categories such as 'culture'

assume a quasi-biological, essential discreteness and immutability and are invoked by

white residents to exclude those defined as 'Other'.[9] Perhaps, and I will discuss this

possibility and other theories on race and racism later, in Chapter Five, but there are other

aspects of resident responses that introduce complexities to this account. The first, and

possibly the most simple, point to make is that in addition to negative assessments that

they made with regard to ethno-cultural change over the past twelve years, and in

particular, the influx of Chinese immigrants into Richmond, many Caucasian residents

also had highly complimentary comments about this movement. When asked to indicate

which changes in Richmond since 1986 they viewed as positive developments, twelve

residents explicitly indicated changes associated with Chinese immigration and cultural

diversity in general. Comments of this kind related to the opportunity to see a "new

setting" in Richmond in terms of markets, restaurants and stores, to learn about other

languages and cultures ("*if I had the desire to learn Cantonese or a second language, I*

think it would be a lot easier if you were immersed in it, when your neighbours next door

speak Cantonese and the people across the street speak Cantonese"), the characteristics

of their Chinese-immigrant neighbours ("*we always said they were good neighbours*

because they always kept up their property. There are no run-down houses in Asian

neighbourhoods in the sense that you'd get old cars parked in the front street and

---

[9] Though in assessing the responses of long-term residents and speculating about their significance with regard to racism, it is important to keep in mind the accounts they have given of exclusion *by* recent Asian immigrants. I will comment in more detail in Chapter Five about how these might inflect on a reading which sees the critical responses of Caucasian residents to immigration and associated changes as racist expressions.

furniture out in the car-port."), and, as this man in his fifties remarked, the way in which

this change was shaping their children's outlook on life:

> One of the big things I noticed that I thought was very good was in the
> schools, in this sense: with our kids, they did not define the difference, and
> so it didn't matter whether it was a Chinese, an East Indian boy, a Dutch
> boy, a Ukrainian boy, or a German boy—they were all just boys,
> or girls, or whatever the case may be. Earlier, in my time, there was quite
> a strong distinction. Like, if you were a Ukrainian, you weren't as good
> as an Englishman, and looked down upon. But that was what I noticed
> with our boys. I can't say that for all boys, but I do know it was
> not uncommon to come home and I would see a boy from India in the
> house with our guys, a black boy from Africa, a boy from Chile, so it was a
> real mix. I think that part of it was great.

The second point to note is that critical comments on ethno-cultural change

attending immigration were not solely the province of Caucasian residents, but expressed

by long-term Japanese and Chinese residents as well. On the whole, however, these were

offered less readily than were criticisms made by Caucasian residents, and in the case of

long-term Chinese residents, accompanied by considerable discussion around questions of

identity and the appropriateness of racialized references in critical discourse. When asked

what changes since 1986 they viewed as negative, no resident in either Asian group of

long-termers explicitly included in this category the movement of Chinese immigrants into

Richmond—though criticisms would emerge with further discussion—rather, two

residents in the group of Japanese respondents, and five of the Chinese participants (as

well as the two other Asian respondents not included in these two groups) commented on

a "rise in racial intolerance" over the last twelve years as a negative change, something

not mentioned by the group of Caucasian participants. For many of these Asian residents,

particularly Chinese-Canadians, this critique emerged out of their own personal

experiences of being identified as a recent immigrant (and subject to abuse) simply

because they phenotypically *appeared* to be members of this group. As one resident of Japanese and Chinese heritage in her twenties explained, "*Sometimes it gets turned around, I think. When people see me they don't necessarily know I'm from here or if I'm from Hong Kong, if I'm one of the ones that's coming in and taking over.*" Similarly, this Japanese-Canadian woman commented on her provisional 'insider' status in critiques of Asian immigration (on account of her long-term residency status), but wondered whether comments were directed at her because of her appearance:

> . . .some of the things my co-workers say, because they know me so well,
> I don't think they look at me as a member of a minority group because
> they'll say things like, "all the Chinese come here and the prices of
> houses go up," but then I'm thinking, "oh, gee. . ." but I don't say
> anything. Sometimes I'll agree and say, "oh, those Chinese drivers," but
> sometimes I think, "are they thinking that about me, too?" They're not,
> obviously, because they wouldn't say that to me.

Perhaps these kinds of criticisms of recent immigrants, and incidental abuse of long-term Chinese residents, seemed especially galling to the Chinese participants in light of their past experiences, in which they consciously or unconsciously downplayed any Chinese identity:

> I think what happens is that when you're growing up. . .I never thought
> I was any different from you. I thought I was basically 'Canadian', so I
> grew up with the idea that I would do Canadian things. I just happened
> to be Chinese, so I'd do a few of those things, but I'm first of all
> Canadian. Whether I'm Chinese-Canadian or Caucasian-Canadian, that
> didn't make any difference to me. Being a teacher, I was in a school
> with all white teachers, so I thought I was like them. I thought I was
> white in my mind, so, in other words, I thought I was Canadian.
>
> Chinese man, aged fifties

> In high school I would want to be seen as 'white'. I tried to not be Chinese.
> I wouldn't want people to lump me into the same group: 'FOB'—Fresh off
> the Boat.
>
> Chinese woman, aged twenties

Yet despite this positioning of themselves as separate from newcomers, with the large-scale movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond from the mid to late-1980s onward, a persistent theme among long-term Chinese residents (mentioned by seven of the participants) was a rekindling of Chinese cultural (or racial) affiliation, and a change in their view of their own identity. As the Chinese-Canadian resident in his fifties who commented on his past beliefs that he was 'white' stated with respect to recent ethno-cultural changes:

> With Richmond becoming very Chinese-y it's actually made it very easy
> for me, because I feel comfortable moving around Richmond, rather than
> if it didn't happen. Now I'm actually becoming more Chinese-y: I
> practice it (speaking Chinese), I use it, I'm at the ('Asian') malls a lot,
> the stores a lot, so I've actually gained a language and some culture out
> of this, and I'm quite proud of the fact that I'm Chinese, but I'm equally
> proud of the fact that I'm Canadian.

For this Chinese long-term resident in her twenties, this reclaiming of Chinese identity was (in part) a conscious effort to gain a foothold in the job market:

> I think that with more Asian people that Asian culture has become more
> close to me, in that I see it more often and I see more people having those
> same traditions, not just me anymore. So that's positive. . .In general
> maybe the opportunities have opened up for me because I'm—Asians
> help Asians; not that they don't help other people, but I think in a
> business sense they help Asian people more. I think I've gotten more
> opportunities because of that. It's very self-centered, I suppose. . .In
> trying to be valuable in the job market, especially in Richmond, now I
> play up my Asian background more, just because it seems to be what
> people want now. I get, "Do you speak another language?" I'm like,
> "yes, I do," and they'll go "Oh." It's a lot different now. In a way I'm
> almost using my Asian background to my benefit.

Whereas for the following resident, also in her twenties, there was some intangible, essential quality to being Chinese that formed a bond of attachment between her and other Chinese people, whether they were recent immigrants or not:

> . . .there's this Chinese pride thing in which Chinese are very proud of
> being Chinese. I'm not ashamed of being Chinese. I'm not ashamed of
> my Chinese culture. It's a very important part of who I am, but I can't
> . . .you have to <u>be</u> Chinese to understand it. I can't explain it. . .it's just
> who we are.

Based on some sense of bond with recent immigrants, some long-term residents of

Chinese (but generally not Japanese) residents expressed the compulsion to stand in

defence of recent Asian immigrants, as explained by this woman in her twenties with

Japanese and Chinese cultural heritage. . .

> For me I think it is a bit of a racial thing, feeling more connected to Asian
> immigrants, maybe wanting to defend them in a way. I think I have that
> in me sometimes.

. . .and this Chinese resident who grappled with explaining her feelings when critical

comments of Chinese immigrants were made by Caucasian long-termers:

> When I talk about some of these issues with my Caucasian friends, given
> their personality and stuff, I am aware of what to say and what not to say,
> so obviously it depends upon the person. If I am talking to somebody,
> like talking to a long-time resident such as my ex-boyfriend's father. .
> .he'd be talking about these 'monster' houses and things—I'd just sort of
> nod my head and listen quietly, because he was quite adamant. He was
> your typical Richmond resident who was opposed, totally opposed, to
> them. To me, being from my background, I almost felt like saying—see,
> that's the thing: sometimes I feel like there's an obligation, like I almost
> have to defend the Asian immigrants because I'm Chinese myself. I am
> a Chinese-Canadian, but just because they're saying something about
> these immigrants doesn't mean that they're saying something about me.
> It's not a reflection upon me, but I almost take it like that, like I should
> say something in defense.

Not bound by the same kind of cultural (or racial) affiliation with recent Chinese

immigrants, through the course of the interviews Japanese long-term residents offered

comments and criticisms of recent Chinese immigrants similar in content and form to

those made by long-term Caucasian residents, with the same kinds of anxieties over ESL

programs and the perceived behavioural characteristics of newcomers, for example, as

illustrated here:

> Part of the problem. . .the problem, if there is one, is in the public school
> system, English-speakers may end up being in the minority and this is
> already evident in my son's classroom in grade one. It's not as noticeable
> in other classrooms he could have been in. Within our immediate
> neighbourhood, for example, we know—we visited the school—that it
> would have been over 90% ESL and that's a concern because we want
> our son to be able to enjoy the company of everybody in the class, and
> not restricted to those who will be comfortable speaking to him with or
> without the facility of English, so that's one reason. . .

> Japanese man, aged forties

> . . .it gets pretty frustrating after a while. My best friend is Chinese, but
> he was born in Canada and he even says they're (recent Chinese
> immigrants) terrible. He gets ticked-off once in a while. I think some of
> them(Chinese immigrants)have poor attitudes. They pretty much think
> they own the city or something. It gets pretty frustrating for myself,
> walking through the mall and you hear them yelling and they don't speak
> English. They're all speaking Chinese. . .

> Japanese man, aged twenties

Critical comments about new Chinese immigrants to Richmond, if not quite so readily

offered, were also registered by long-term Chinese residents who, as they frequently

stated, occupied a 'middle position' between long-term Caucasian residents and the new

group of migrants. In conversation, every resident with Chinese background offered at

least one critical comment on the behaviour of newcomers. As an expansion on their

opinions about the perceived exclusions and 'racist' comments directed towards recent

Chinese immigrants (as well as themselves) by long-term Caucasian residents, a common

claim (made by seven of nine long-term Chinese residents) was that discrimination went

both ways: that recent Chinese immigrants could engage in exclusionary acts against long-

term Caucasian and Chinese residents. Commenting on her experience in an Asian mall, this woman in her twenties recalled an illuminating experience which altered (in part) her perception of long-term Caucasian residents' anxieties about ethno-cultural change effected by immigration:

> A friend of mine said that (he was treated poorly in an Asian mall) in Grade Twelve and I couldn't understand him until we went to the mall together and they gave us such dirty looks. . .like me, "what are you doing with that white guy?" sort of look. My brother who is married to a Caucasian woman, they get it all the time. . .I think it's true, how they (Caucasian) residents feel is true, because they (recent Chinese immigrants) don't make. . .they feel like. . .I'm not saying everyone, but I think this is how they think: "we have enough people to support our business, so if you don't feel comfortable, too bad. We're not going to cater to you. That's how they think, whereas the North American culture is more like trying to help people and welcome people.

. . .while other long-term Chinese residents, such as these two women in their twenties, offered other critical assessments (and note the similarity in tone with those comments offered by long-term Caucasian residents) of the differences between long-term residents of Richmond and recent Chinese movers:

> . . .It's cultural and it's money and the perception of what money is for. I think that with older residents a lot of people have worked hard for their homes, their cars and their lives and I don't see—this is Asian children— I don't see Asian children valuing things as much as I see the children of long-term residents. You go to any parking lot in a high-school in central Richmond and you can look in the parking lot and you can tell this is staff parking and this is student parking, and it's not the staff parking that has the nice cars. This may be very judgmental, but I've seen in my church alone a very high immigrant population, and the opulence of these new kids is just amazing. It's the mentality of what money is for and how it is spent. That would be one big thing in my mind for the younger generation. For the parents, I can't say.

> *I'll take the way newer immigrants act differently than long-term residents. Part of it is just the setting they've been brought up in. There is less regard for neighbours or the sense of other people. I think you're just aware of yourself and that's it, because you grew up in a city like*

> *Hong Kong where there's however million people packed into a place like that—that (being focused on yourself) is privacy. You don't care what others think. It's such a huge city, whereas here you get to know people and you're just more aware of people. I just think they don't know that there should be. . .manners might not be the best word. . .just socially appropriate behaviours. I'll give you an example: we have a neighbour across the street—you'll be backing up your car, and the courtesy is that you've started backing up, so you get to go first. She doesn't care. She will continue backing right up and go her own way and you'll honk at her and she'll like—apparently this happened to my neighbour—she gave her the finger, to her own neighbour. She's been living there for a long time, but she never—they've never made the attempt to socialize or say 'hi' or to be friendly the way you think neighbours should.*

Although there were a few bold souls who expressed confidence in making these kinds of statements, such criticisms were offered cautiously by most long-term Chinese residents, and not without a certain degree of reflexivity and fear of categorizing people. While discussing the differences she saw between long-term Chinese residents and recent Chinese immigrants, this woman in her twenties offered the following observations and caveats:

> People my parents age. . .yeah, I do see differences. I'm thinking about my friends' parents, who I grew up with, and my own parents and I think they're more blue-collar workers. . .or not even that—I don't want to classify people—whereas I see the people I know who have moved here as more of a business-side of things. . .(on generalizing) that's been something that I've been really careful of, or I try to be, in the sense that I know that some of the comments I've made before are racist, like I would consider them racist myself, towards my own, but because I'm Chinese I've been excused of it. I don't think it matters. It's one thing to be critical, and then it's another thing to just be rude. I think that I've crossed that line before.

Such reflexivity and concern over stereotyping was not only one prevalent within the group of Chinese residents, but also present in many Caucasian and Japanese resident' accounts of change, manifest in a questioning of their own construction of categories in

explaining change and social relations in Richmond. Whether animated to do so by fears

of impropriety, the semi-official atmosphere of the interview process and my presence as a

researcher, or by a genuine awareness of their own role in creating meaning (and in

thinking about how I might respond to such questions, I suspect some combination of the

three), in the course of the interviews, numerous residents stressed the partiality of their

categories and pointed out that the groups to which they were referring were internally

differentiated. This sense of partiality and reflexivity comes out , I believe, in many of the

quotes previously cited (see, for example, the reference to "my guess" made by the

Japanese resident on p. 121, the self-questioning of the Caucasian resident on p.123, and

the critique of his own 'neighbourliness' made by the Caucasian man on p.127), as it does

in the following observations on the process of categorization:

> I have a bit of a problem with the drivers out there. I don't like to
> stereotype and say all Chinese people are bad drivers, but there's a lot of
> Chinese people in Richmond and I think that's how they get labeled with
> being bad drivers, but there are quite a few bad Chinese drivers, but
> there's quite a few bad Caucasian drivers too (laughter). It's probably
> that there are more Chinese people living in Richmond, so you notice
> them more.

> Caucasian woman,
> aged twenties

> *We have immigrants who are coming to this country because they truly*
> *want to live here. Then we have the immigrants who are leaving because*
> *they think maybe their country might have a volatile situation and "we'll*
> *come here and we'll watch. Oh, it's not looking so bad now, so we're*
> *going back. Thank-you so much for the free ride, and now we're going*
> *back. . .You see, I deal with a different group because the school I work*
> *at is out in eastern Richmond. Our school has got seventy-three students*
> *in it, and out of the seventy-three we have got seven Asians. That's it.*
> *Three of them are in ESL—they're a brother/sister trio. We had one ESL*
> *Chinese girl last year, so we get a very low-key ESL population. They*
> *don't flaunt their wealth, they just bring their lunch to school in a bag*
> *just like everybody else does, and I think we just deal with a financially-*

poorer student or more conscious of not showing their wealth. I wonder
if the group my husband deals with on a regular basis (and of which he
expressed critical opinions with regard to their behaviour) are the
wealthy ones and what their money would buy in Hong Kong buys so
much more out here, and so they're still expressing their wealth or
they're finding that their money buys a heck of a lot more here, so they're
not sure of how to act. Or maybe they're the group that's here while they
were waiting to see what Hong Kong and China were going to do, and
maybe now they're going to go back and the families have decided that it
is not going to be so bad over there, so they can go back now—they were
hedging their bets. Maybe they decided their kids were going to get a
better education and then bring them back over to Hong Kong where
they might get that much more of a better job because they've been
taught English and their people skills have gotten a little bit better than
what they would be over there. I'm not sure, but my husband works with
a different group.

Caucasian woman, aged forties

As the above comments suggest, there was considerable questioning around the topic

of the source of perceived differences between long-term residents and recent Chinese

immigrants. Significantly, in the context of scientific beliefs on race that posited a fixed,

biological, immutable origin for behavioral differences and qualities, no resident in any

group believed that this was the source of difference between themselves and newcomers:

every resident, when asked, attributed these perceived differences to cultural factors—as

the result of recent immigrants and long-term Richmond residents having been socialized

in different milieus. Perhaps invocations of cultural difference can, *pace* Barker, be seen

as smuggling in pseudo-biological notions, but in the context of resident comments on the

future of these differences, this appears unlikely. When asked whether they believed the

differences (if any were perceived) between themselves and immigrants would become

less marked in the future, seven out of nine Chinese long-term residents, eight out of the

nine Japanese residents interviewed, and twenty-eight of thirty-four Caucasian residents

expressed the belief that they would, through a process of assimilation of the immigrants

by the host society, or by a process of integration in which there would be convergence

resulting from adjustments made by long-term residents and recent immigrants . Although

the majority of residents offered such comments with qualifications—that whether

differences between long-termers and recent immigrants would become less significant in

the future depended on factors such as the political situation overseas, the willingness of

immigrants to commit to long-term residency and adapt culturally and linguistically, the

pace and scale of future Chinese immigration to Richmond, the actions of government,

and the kinds of accommodating efforts made by long-term residents—the tenor of most

resident speculations was optimistic.   Speaking of the current situation in light of his

family's own experience, this long-term Japanese resident in his thirties expressed a

confidence held by many about the future situation:

> I think that in any wave of immigration you always have—it doesn't
> matter what group: from Europe, from Japan, from any area. . .the first
> wave is the parents and there might be some small kids, and because
> they're new to the country, new to language, new to culture, they tend to
> stick with their own group and they don't assimilate very well because
> the parents aren't comfortable with the language or the culture. The kids,
> on the other hand, are in schools and they are basically immersed in the
> culture, so I find that it's basically one generation. It was the same way
> when I think about my grandparents. My grandparents came from Japan
> in the early part of the century. My grandparents didn't learn English,
> and most people my age, their grandparents didn't learn English. To this
> day, the ones that are still alive, they still don't know very much
> English because Steveston, at that time, had Japanese stores, Japanese
> doctors, Japanese hospitals—you could get everything in Japanese. The
> same thing is happening now, but on a much larger scale. You have a
> bank where you can get service in Chinese, Chinese restaurants, Chinese
> stores, Chinese supermarkets. . .almost exactly the same now as it was
> with the Japanese in the 1920s, but then one generation later all the
> children knew English, all the children went to school, they all had
> friends who were Caucasian and Chinese and it doesn't matter, and that's

what I think is going to happen with this group, this wave that came in
the eighties.

Perhaps because of this optimism about the future, based on past immigrant

experience, and a belief that problematic differences dividing long-term residents and

newcomers would be resolved, residents were relatively sanguine about Richmond as a

community and of their place in it. When asked what their future plans were for living in

Richmond, eighteen of the thirty-four Caucasian residents, six of nine Japanese residents,

and three of the nine Chinese residents interviewed, stated that they intended to remain in

the municipality. Four Caucasian residents, however, expressed plans to move out, (an

additional two were in the process of moving from the municipality), while similar plans

were intimated by two of nine Japanese residents and three of nine Chinese residents. For

many residents, though, this question of future plans was too difficult to warrant a

straightforward answer. Ten Caucasian participants, one Japanese resident, two Chinese

residents, and both of the other Asian participants answered that they were not sure

whether they would continue to live in Richmond. Like the residents who had indicated

they were moving or staying, for those who were less decisive a series of factors entered

into the equation. While, as I speculated, attitudes on immigration might enter into such a

decision, for most residents personal circumstances and attitudes towards development

and growth were explicitly cited as the primary factors dictating their residency plans.

Many of those planning to move commented on the busy-ness of the community and their

desire to move to a place with a quieter way of life, as in the case of this Caucasian

woman in her twenties:

> I don't think I'm going to stay in Richmond. At the age that I am now I will be done university within a year. I think, looking ahead, because I like the freedom, I like the open space, that I would like to live in a place that is a little bit smaller with maybe a little bit more room, a little more land to live on. As far as the future, and me having a family, I think that I would like to bring up my children in a place that wasn't so hectic, so fast-paced. I just feel boxed-in sometimes in Richmond. I don't know if it is just the city life, or if it's just the way Richmond is, but I have dreams and hopes of moving out of Richmond. Whether it's five years or ten years down the road, and where I will go, I don't know, but if I do get the opportunity to move out I think it will be right out of the Lower Mainland to somewhere smaller. Definitely somewhere smaller that has more open space and more of a rural setting rather than a busy city like Richmond.

A further consideration, especially for respondents in their twenties who stated that they could not afford to buy a home in Richmond, was the rise in living expenses that attended growth in the community. As the following quote from a Caucasian man in his fifties illustrates, however, this concern was not isolated to younger residents:

> Well, it probably isn't going to be in the near future, but down the road we'll probably look to move out of Richmond. Basically, in my opinion right now, it's just too expensive to retire in Richmond, so I would look at a place that was less expensive, where the cost of living. . .where the cost of housing, particularly, taxes, and so on was less expensive.

Although dissatisfaction with Richmond's increasing urbanity illustrated that physical changes in the municipality were enough to motivate people to consider moving, the role of rising living costs, such as those mentioned in the quote above, in determining future plans was more complex. The impression given by many who cited such factors was that of satisfaction with the community and regret that they would no longer find it economically viable to live there. This cost/benefit dilemma, resolved in favour of staying by some, in favour of moving by others, becomes clear in accounts given by residents who

were unsure of their future plans, such as this Caucasian woman in her fifties. Note the

careful inventory of places, the assessments of their character and expense, and the

commentary on immigration issues at the end of the passage:

> I think it's too difficult to predict, particularly with personal circumstances, but I like to think we could stay here, hopefully in this house, for as long as possible. I like Richmond. I have thought about the possibility of if we had to move, where would I want to move? I certainly wouldn't want to move to Surrey or Langley—there's just no way. Possibly, if I could afford it, maybe back into Vancouver. Kerrisdale is a very nice area. The West End?—probably not. We've lived there before, but I think that's for a younger community now. South Granville is very nice, but again, the houses are probably terrifically expensive. But I wouldn't. . .I love my garden. There's still some open space in Richmond. We still have Garry Point Park, which is a little gem. We still have some ocean that we can get to easily, and I'd be really lost without the ocean. So yes, I hope to stay here a long time. So I don't know. . .whether they (recent Chinese immigrants) stay or go or come or do whatever, that's fine. I just hope that they will mix in and we can all live in reasonable harmony.

The difficulty of long-term residents to definitively answer questions about their future

plans is, I think, not unusual—indeed, it speaks to the difficulty that attends efforts to

impose a rigid and definitive guideline on the contingent character of everyday

experience. Similar complexities obviously complicate the task of providing closure in

the form of a concluding paragraph that sums up how Richmond residents have conceived

of change in their community, and there is a touch of the absurd in neatly categorizing

their experiences based on a relatively brief interview experience. Any attempt to provide

interpretation is bound to raise questions about what is included and excluded in the

process, and the meanings that this brings to bear on our understanding of the site—a

healthy critique, as I will further argue in Chapter Five, that makes us question the very

substance of our interpretations. Nevertheless, as a prelude to further questioning, I would

like to offer some summary observations on resident responses as outlined in the interview material.

Following the accounts offered by the sample of residents interviewed in the course of this research, and set against a literature which has often imputed a racialized motive behind the choice to live in the suburbs, people originally moved to the community for a variety of reasons that had nothing to do with issues of race: for the long-term Chinese-Canadian residents, affordability of housing and proximity to work were the major considerations. Among Japanese-Canadian residents, in addition to the factors cited by Chinese residents, the desire to be close to family members was an additional motivation. For Caucasian-Canadian residents, all these factors played parts in their decisions to move to Richmond. Importantly, however, Caucasian residents also indicated that the 'rural' character of Richmond, and its perceived associated benefits, played a part in spurring their move. This rural character of Richmond prior to the 1980s was one commented upon by almost every resident, whether Caucasian, Japanese, or Chinese, a mover or non-mover, young or old, and one valued by many—not just Caucasian residents. Given this attachment of worth to Richmond's rural (or semi-rural) setting, it is not surprising that growth and development in the community in the 1970s and before, not to mention in the late-1980s and early 1990s, was not universally well-received by the long-term residents I interviewed. While the improvements in amenities such as roads, street lighting, and shopping were regarded as welcome changes during this time, some concern was expressed—especially by Caucasian residents—about the effects that development and population growth were having on the preservation of farmland, green-space, and their quality of life.

However, if my interpretation of resident responses is indicative of how they were feeling at this time, development and growth were not particularly significant concerns for anybody prior to 1986, and for the most part, residents of all groups seemed content with the way the community looked and felt during this era. Judging from the frequency and character of responses, however, in the post-1986 period development and growth assumed greater prominence as a concern of long-term residents. Almost every single Caucasian resident mentioned development of some pace and type as being a negative change since 1986, and while such concerns were relatively muted among residents of Japanese and Chinese ethnic backgrounds, they still were present, manifest especially in criticisms of Richmond's increased automobile traffic.

Alongside, and occasionally intersecting with these criticisms of development— particularly in the case of 'monster' home construction—were concerns expressed about Richmond's changing ethno-cultural climate and the impacts this was perceived to have on the community. Mentioned as a change by every Asian long-term resident, and by the majority of Caucasian participants, the increase in Richmond's Chinese population over the past twelve years as a result of immigration elicited a variety of responses. The most explicitly critical comments were made by Caucasian residents, with fourteen of thirty-four participants stating outright that changes associated with this movement (such as the rise of the English as a Second Language student population in schools, Chinese-language signage, and loss of community feeling) were negative developments of the last twelve years. Many more within this group, when prompted by me to express their opinions on these topics later in the interview, stated similar reservations. Among Japanese residents, ethno-cultural changes were not explicitly mentioned as negative developments since

1986, though, as in the case with Caucasian residents, concerns about changes related to the movement of Chinese immigrants into Richmond emerged with further questioning. This was also the case with the group of Chinese long-term residents who were often reticent to express criticisms of recent immigration trends and associated impacts.

Yet to only focus on negative responses to development and ethno-cultural change would be to reduce resident responses to just one or two dimensions, for in addition to their critical observations, long-term residents of all ethno-cultural backgrounds had favourable comments to offer about the transformations in their community. When asked to identify those changes in Richmond since 1986 which they identified as positive ones, for example, every Japanese resident interviewed, eight out of nine Chinese residents, and thirty-two of thirty-four Caucasian residents indicated development of some kind, generally improvements in the quality, quantity, and variety of amenities, as beneficial changes over the past twelve years. Similarly, a number of residents explicitly cited the influx of Chinese immigrants into Richmond, and related changes, as positive developments since 1986. This approval of ethno-cultural change was perhaps most prevalent among Chinese residents who, while sympathetic to the concerns of other long-termers, felt a unique sense of attachment to recent immigrants. For many Chinese long-term residents, the influx of Chinese immigrants had served to rekindle their own, often consciously submerged, sense of their Chinese identity. For others, especially those residents who spoke a Chinese language, it provided new opportunities for material advancement. Among Japanese and Caucasian residents, the influx of Chinese immigrants was linked to positive changes ranging from an increase in (and appreciation of) cultural diversity in general, to more specific factors such as the increased variety of

restaurants, the opportunity to learn different languages and cultural practices, and the contributions that this immigration pattern was making to their children's social awareness. Considering resident responses to development and ethno-cultural change on the whole, then, the impression is not that of a rigid alignment in favour or against these transformations, but rather an *ambivalent* stance wherein the participants in this study considered changes in Richmond to have both positive *and* negative dimensions. How theories of race and racism fit into these ambivalent responses, and how ambivalence might enter into such theorizations is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reinvented Racism. . . Reinventing Racism?
Rethinking Interpretations of Social Relations in Richmond (and Elsewhere)

> Critical theorists such as Habermas and Apel have shown that all criticism
> presupposes the possibility for a better life. Yet critical social scientists
> have been coy about talking about values. They frequently use negative
> terms such as 'racist' or positive terms such as 'democracy' which carry a
> strong, evaluative message, but there is often a refusal to present the
> arguments for the evaluations. Indeed, even to ask for such justifications
> is likely to be taken as shocking and threatening—as implying the
> acceptability of the thing being opposed—rather than just a request for
> clarity about what exactly we oppose or favour and why and with what
> implications.

> Andrew Sayer and Michael Storper[1]

Earlier in this thesis, in Chapter Two, I dedicated a considerable amount of time

and space addressing different approaches to the categories of race and racism,

structuring the argument in terms of a movement from viewing *race*, however defined,

as the object of analysis to interrogating acts and processes categorized as *racism*. In

outlining this transition, I also attempted to move from the 'abstract' to the 'concrete',

using Alastair Bonnett's interpretation of trends within geographic practice to highlight

the various assumptions and methodologies bound up with these different approaches to

issues of race and racism: from empiricist geographies of race which viewed racial

categories as objective, real entities to be charted and mapped, to geographies of race

relations and the sociology of place which, while more attentive to the processes of

category construction (and the researcher's role in continuing these processes), still

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[1] Andrew Sayer and Michael Storper, "Ethics Unbound," Editorial, *Environment and Planning
D: Society and Space*, 15 (1997), pp. 1-17. The specific quote is from p. 1.

viewed racial groups as legitimate objects of inquiry, and finally, to social constructionist geographies of racism that eschewed the intermediate position of the race relations camp to focus squarely on the actions of the 'dominant' group and processes conceived of as racialization and racism. Considering how the latter framework has been used to explain developments in the local context, and again drawing from Bonnett's insights, I argued that despite the avowedly social constructionist position of authors such as Kay Anderson, Peter Li, Brian K. Ray and others, in practice two problematic essential categories remained at the heart of their respective enterprises. My first contention was that the category of *racism*, in these accounts, tended to be considered as an unproblematic and foundational object of analysis, not viewed, self-consciously, as a political category or a strategic essence open to critique and discussion. The second objection I registered was to the way in which 'whiteness' was represented in such social constructionist research: reduced to the status of the 'dominant' population (and *vice versa*, the 'dominant' population reduced to white residents) and diminished in the texts to mere mouthpieces for 'racist' ideology.

Although I cannot refute my role in shaping these accounts and in organizing the information presented in the interviews, the material in Chapter Four represents my attempt to address, in the Richmond site, the latter shortcoming of social constructionist research on race and racism, to engage with long-term residents and their responses to change and develop a more multi-faceted and detailed account of their experiences by allowing, as best I can, them to speak for themselves. If not entirely de-essentializing the category of the long-term resident (after all, to say anything requires us to use at least conditional 'essentials'), I hope that this last section has forwarded a qualitatively

different essence than the category of 'whiteness' as it appears in much academic and anti-racist discourse—not as a textually invisible, homogeneous, and assumed, category, but one that is the product of a reflexive decision-making process: a grouping whose constituent voices are present, front and centre, and whose conceptual unity is questioned by the very diversity and complexity of these voices.

I believe this complexity to be one of the most significant characteristics of long-term residents' experiences of Richmond since 1986, and in the years preceding this date. Indeed, so varied and nuanced are resident interpretations of change that there is a strong temptation on my part to conclude the discussion in this thesis on that note: to inveigh against any mono-causal interpretation of affairs and stress the poverty of any single theoretical framework when confronted by the 'messiness' of everyday life. As seductive as this line of argumentation may be, however, and as sympathetic as I am to projects which seek to temper the excesses of grand theory, I do not believe it would be productive to leave matters at this state. First of all, in and of itself there is nothing particularly insightful in stating that theories are partial views of the world—the point has been expressed capably by others and there is no point in simply rehearsing the argument here. More significant to me is the way that juxtaposing 'theory' and 'experience' as discrete, oppositional entities denies the necessary interpenetration of the two, leaving each unscathed by any meaningful encounter with the other. In the context of this research, then, while I have contended that the experiences of Richmond residents have not been well-served empirically by analyses conducted under the rubric of social constructionism, this is not to say that theories on race and racism can be forever dispatched or warded off by simply invoking as a mantra the complexity of the

world around us. What I intend to do in this chapter, rather, is to try and bring the theories of race and racism into *engagement* with the expressions and actions of long-term Richmond residents. The point is to assess resident responses through these different frameworks, but importantly, also to discuss the analytical and political import *of* these frameworks and offer my own perspective on their utility.

Drawing from the experiences of long-term residents as outlined at the conclusion of Chapter Four, I will begin this commentary by addressing the complexity and ambivalence manifest in resident responses to change. I suggest how these characteristics serve to complicate the interpretive process, examining recent theorizations on the subject which attempt to incorporate these nuances into a 'postmodern' conception of racism, one that stresses the fragmented quality of identity and the multiplicity of subject positions. Working from the notion that despite the importance of this view of the subject as partial, ambivalent and contradictory there might still be a need to identify what aspects of identity are 'racist', I then raise the question of how we might go about determining the 'investment' that individuals have in racism. In the second section of the chapter I apply different conceptions of racism to the interview material in an attempt to understand resident responses and determine the role racism plays in their interpretations of change. What I hope to illustrate is that the answer we provide to this question primarily depends on the perspective that we employ, and that empirical adjudication on its own does not provide an adequate interrogation of either resident comments and actions or concepts of race and racism.

The subsequent sections of the chapter stem from this belief that empirically testing the presence or absence of racism leaves important questions about definitions

and the meanings they bring to bear on our understanding of events unaddressed, and represent my effort to open up various conceptions of racism to critical scrutiny. My questioning in this section proceeds along two fronts: the first part is an examination of the utility of various conceptions of racism as *analytical* tools. I consider the phenomena they include and exclude, respectively, and what I see as their strengths and weaknesses. The second section is an engagement with the *political* import of the category of racism, particularly with the apparently strong negative evaluation that it carries. I query whether this political stance is justified in every instance, but more significantly, whether it might be more productive to de-essentialize racism of this seemingly inherent meaning. This is not to say, however, that judgment should be forever suspended, or that there is no place for objecting to practices and rationalities that result in exclusionary effects. Rather, agreeing with Sayer and Storper's commentary at the head of this chapter, and revisiting the debate around Obzera's letter, I contend that de-essentializing racism's meaning is a necessary step in *developing* these values.

On Theorization, Racism, and Ambivalence

In Chapter Two I described the continued development of theories on race and racism as a 'running representational critique', as an ongoing process of re-evaluating and reformulating the concepts that we use to make sense of the world. Such questions are at once empirical as well as political, and the history of concepts of race and racism have been characterized by these dual concerns. Theories that posited behaviour as determined by phenotypical 'racial' membership, for example, were challenged in the first half of the twentieth century on their (lack of) empirical merit, and for their

political import as justifications for exclusionary practices. Looking at the empirical challenges to theory, a familiar tactic of critique has been to challenge a concept's ability to account for the complexity of the world: to point out the exceptions, excesses and absences that place its status as an explanatory framework in peril. In the face of such criticism, proponents of a particular theory can follow a variety of paths. One could, in various ways (from critically interrogating contrary empirical evidence to personally discrediting your opponents) take action to restate the validity of your theory. Alternately, one might decide, in the face of critique, that your theory is no longer valid and attempt to devise a new framework for explanation. Another course of action would be to find some way to accommodate the critiques of your position within a reformulated theoretical framework. Although the ambivalence of long-term Richmond residents' discourse as outlined in Chapter Four may seem empirically corrosive to theories purporting a 'reinvented' racism (and I will speak of this potential in greater depth later), recent writers have attempted to maintain the concept's utility through a retheorization which can account for these nuances.

This transformation of the understanding of racism has, in some quarters, been likened to a movement from 'modern', rigidly-defined conceptions of racism to flexible 'postmodern' theorizations. As Ali Rattansi acknowledges in his insightful and provocative essay, recognizing the ambivalence of discourse and identity introduces complexities to accounts that represent contemporary acts of racialization and racism as a seamless process, "as all-encompassing and monolithic, smoothly reproducing

racialized stereotypes and practices of discrimination."[2] Contending that existing

paradigms that seek to understand racialization and ethnic and national mobilization

have reached the point of intellectual exhaustion, Rattansi advocates a productive

viewing of these processes through a loosely-defined 'postmodern' frame, with one of

its component parts being a suspicion of doctrines of pure origins and of political

projects which rely on strong classificatory systems. In the context of debates over

racism and ethnicity, and paralleling Bonnett's critiques of social constructionism and

anti-racist practice outlined earlier, this postmodern suspicion leads Rattansi to de-

centre and de-essentialize two significant categories: racism and the 'racist' subject.

Considering the latter category, Rattansi argues that a postmodern framing, informed by

psychoanalytic theory, which considers identities as de-centred and fragmented by

contradictory discourses and the pull of other identities, allows for a more sophisticated

and complex understanding of racist practices. Rather than seeing the racist subject as

coherent and monolithic, Rattansi contends that more contextually sensitive research has

teased out identities that are marked by contradictory tugs of racist and anti-racist

positions, by an ambivalence in which *multiple* subject positions are expressed.[3]

Thinking through Rattansi's theorization on ambivalence, Bonnett's criticism of

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[2] Ali Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities in a Postmodern Frame," in Rattansi and Westwood, eds., *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front*. The quote is from p. 60.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71. The particular research projects Rattansi cites are M. Billig's, "I'm Not National Front, but. . .," *New Society*, 68 (1984) and *Fascists: A Social Psychological View of the National Front*, (London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978, S. Jones, *Black Culture, White Youth* (London: MacMillan, 1988), Ali Rattansi, "Changing the Subject? Racism, Culture and Education," in J. Donald and A. Rattansi, eds., *'Race', Culture and Difference* (London: SAGE, 1992), and M. Weatherall and J. Potter, *Mapping the Language of Racism* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

'whiteness', and the comments of long-term Richmond residents as they appear in this thesis, I think there is considerable utility in applying Rattansi's postmodern frame on issues of racism to contemporary debates over the reception of Chinese immigrants in Richmond. Attending to the fragmented character of the category 'long-term resident', and the ambivalence of individual responses disabuses us of the temptation of reducing the problem of racism to that of 'whiteness', and of limiting accounts of reception in general to racism. Instead of being diminished to a stereotypical caricature, the complexity of long-term residents and their responses is fully appreciated, with negative comments on ethno-cultural change constituting just one 'subject position' among many adopted by them.

Although I believe that these kinds of methodological and representational concerns are significant—and in fact, emphasizing them constitutes a major critical argument of this thesis and the justification for the more detailed engagement that I sought to develop with long-term residents in the course of the project—I realize that it is not enough to stress the excess of things over words, to simply state that the world is too complex to be accounted for by one theoretical perspective and leave the argument at that. Commenting on the effect that simply emphasizing the heterogeneity and fragmented character of phenomena has for the articulation of an analytical and principled position, Rattansi cites one such study which addresses the ambivalent position of its subjects and cautions that a view which sees *every* identity as *equally* inconsistent, contradictory, and conflictual can run the risk of denuding subjects of identities altogether, presenting all individuals as "dilemmaticians" who are anti-racist to the same extent as racist. What this position evades, writes Rattansi, is "the issue of

the different 'investments' that individuals may have in particular identities and identifications in a wide range of contexts."[4] Such a position homogenizes positions as disparate as the National Front activist and the anti-racist activist, for while both may draw on conflicting logics and face discursive dilemmas in justifying their subject positions, the way in which they respectively engage in social practices towards racialized groups, argues Rattansi, is vitally different.[5] Difficult questions arise, however, when we attempt to elucidate this difference, to render judgment by teasing out the varying investments that ambivalent subjects have in 'racist' positions: how do we go about doing this? What constitutes this 'racist' identity which represents one subject position among many? What kind of political significance or meaning should be attached to this subject position?

As Rattansi points out (and as the various interpretations rendered in Chapter Two of this thesis suggest), those in the social sciences have had little success in furnishing uncontentious definitions of terms such as racism, and the postmodern imperative to de-centre and de-essentialize further complicates matters by muddying the process of drawing neat boundaries around them. Perhaps one approach to this conundrum, following an empirical mode of inquiry, would be to address these various theories on a one-by-one basis and test their the extent to which racism, however defined, plays on these ambivalent subject positions, and which definition adequately accounts for the facts at hand. Consider, for example, some of the conceptions of racism that I have

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[4] *Ibid.*, pp.71-72. The study Rattansi cites as a problematic application of this de-centred approach to ambivalent subjectivities is Weatherall and Potter's exploration of white New Zealanders' construction of Maoris as racial problems, *Mapping the Language of Racism*, documented in the previous note.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

outlined in this thesis and how they relate to resident interpretations and responses to change: possibly the easiest proposition to 'test' is the conception of racism which defined it as the explicitly stated belief that there were discrete groupings of people whose characteristics and behaviour were biologically determined and immutable, and which could be ranked hierarchically. Looking at resident responses as outlined in Chapter Four, were we to define racism in this manner, it would be hard to consider any of the statements racist *per se*. When asked to comment on the source of perceived differences between long-term residents and recent Chinese immigrants, none of the residents in any of the groups cited biological factors as a root cause; rather, participants commented on the presence of cultural differences, attributable to the social environments in which recent immigrants and long-term residents, respectively, had been socialized as the reason for differences in behaviour between them. As the widespread belief that recent immigrants (and especially their children) would gradually assimilate or integrate into the dominant culture—whether or not one believes that this is a desirable outcome—attests, these kinds of differences were not regarded as immutable or fixed, or genetically transmitted from one generation to the next.

Empirically assessing the next proposition on racism is rather more difficult, and begins to illustrate the shortcomings of an approach to these issues which depends primarily on visible evidence to secure its status, this approach being what I have defined as the more 'conservative' of the expansive definitions of racism outlined in Chapter Two. To restate the argument, instead of viewing racism as having disappeared in the absence of any explicit reference to biological factors, those arguing that racism had persisted contended that old concepts of racism had been hidden in or masked by

seemingly more legitimate expressions. Martin Barker in *The New Racism*, for instance, argued that assertions made by the British Conservative Party in the 1970s on the legitimacy of white Britons' fears about the cultural impacts of non-white immigrants smuggled fixed, biological notions of identity into the seemingly social register of culture. More pertinent to this analysis, in the Richmond context Brian K. Ray, Greg Halseth and Benjamin Johnson have suggested that concerns over housing and changes to the built landscape represent mediums and metaphors (in the sense of *covers* or *codes*) by which white long-term residents can register otherwise unacceptable 'racist' anxieties over ethno-cultural change. Working from this latter premise, and given the greater concern over issues of housing, development, and growth expressed by Caucasian residents as opposed to Chinese and Japanese long-termers who participated in this research, it would appear that as a group, white residents had the greatest investment in racism. Yet this assumption depends on 'cracking the code', on proving that when residents are talking about concerns over development, they really are expressing concerns over ethno-cultural transformations (and, significantly, such concerns are equated *with* racism by the authors working in the Richmond context, a linkage I will bring into question later in this chapter), a proposition which may sound straightforward, but one remarkably difficult to accomplish in practice. Deprived of the clairvoyant powers that would allow us to see into the minds of long-term residents, we are forced to rely on their own arguments about cause—and they, most likely, do not have a transparent understanding of their own feelings either—and other clues that lead us to draw inferences about the motivations at work in this site. Considering development and related growth concerns in the Richmond context, I would contend

that there are a number of aspects to resident responses which should give pause to the notion of reducing them to covers for racist ideology, or concerns related directly to the city's changing ethno-cultural atmosphere. The first point to make is that a prominent reason behind many (especially Caucasian) people's decisions to move to Richmond, as expressed in the course of the interviews for this thesis, was Richmond's rural or semi-rural character, a factor which should enter our consideration of their later responses to physical change in their community to assess their logical consistency. After all, were these residents to have cited Richmond's urban character and busy-ness as motivating factors inspiring them to move there, critical comments about development and growth would seem rather more suspect, and we might more readily believe that there are other motivations behind this protest. On the same note, it is important to take into account that concerns about development among many Richmond residents predated the influx of Chinese immigrants in the mid-1980s through the 1990s. Additionally, I believe that it is also significant that in this latter period Richmond has also been the site of considerable anxieties over development projects (especially the development of the Terra Nova lands) that can hardly be said to have a racial dimension. In light of these various circumstances, perhaps there is some credence in the view that contemporary concerns over growth and related changes are a continuation of earlier feelings on the topic, a continuity that belies a simple racialized interpretation of current anxieties.

Despite these observations, it must be acknowledged that there is no conclusive way of proving that contemporary criticisms of development do not represent masks for other fears about the city's changing racial composition. The presence of concerns over growth through the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and to the present, and the expressed valuation

of a semi-pastoral landscape do not, in and of themselves, provide iron-clad proof that current criticisms are not motivated by other factors, a situation compounded by the qualitative increase in development-related concerns with regard to the post-1986 period, and many residents' linkage of certain changes deemed unwelcome (as in the 'monster' house debate) with the immigration of people who are, in many instances, phenotypically and culturally different than themselves. Similarly, the presence of explicit comments on ethno-cultural changes seen as negative ones alongside these seemingly *a*racial commentaries on development *may* suggest that the latter are not covers for underlying 'racist' motivations—after all, why would residents use these as mediums for expressing ethno-cultural concerns and then openly state such critiques?— but again, we are left with inference, not 'proof' about underlying causes for anxiety.

Such complications and difficulties that attend efforts to discern underlying ideologies from actions are resolved by more radical and expansive interpretations of racism that collapse the distinction between the two. Following this line of reasoning, with reference to the scenario over development presented in the previous paragraphs, whether or not such concerns and representations of change are motivated by anxieties over ethno-cultural transformations (or if groups defined along ethnic or racial lines are responsible for such changes) is effectively irrelevant—it is the process of *exclusion* that is the important consideration. The concepts of legitimization and metaphor, in addition to being thought of as a medium in the sense of a *cover* for ideology, is here (partially) de-essentialized and conceived of as the *very means* (whether as a conscious act justified by a particular reason, or as effect of anonymous, de-personalized regulations,) by which 'racial' groups are subject to exclusion. Although the focus of this research has been on

long-term residents' views of change, and not, strictly speaking, their physical actions,

criticisms of development—not to mention negative comments about cultural

difference—offered by long-term residents can be regarded as actions and processes, as

intended exclusions, themselves and considered within this framework. Thus

conceived, it would be hard to view the critical responses of long-term residents as

constituting anything but racism: first, they explicitly link an identifiable 'racial' group

(albeit culturally defined), recent Chinese immigrants, with behaviours and changes

viewed as unwelcome, and second, the seemingly racially neutral comments on themes

such as development and population growth can be seen, given the considerable

movement of Chinese immigrants to Richmond over the last twelve years, to have the

potential *result* of excluding this group. Both expressions can be thus be seen to

legitimize and rationalize the exclusion of a racialized group, the 'Chinese'.[6]

In applying these theories to the empirical material at hand on resident responses,

we can see that none have provided a ready-made solution to the question about the

extent that racism plays in the ambivalent expressions of long-term Richmond residents:

depending on the perspective taken, racism either plays no role in resident responses,

possibly lies hidden behind seemingly benign comments on development and growth (as

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[6] Though it is significant to note that if this strong argument is applied more fully to the Richmond context, it would implicate Chinese-language signage and other unwelcome signals and cues at Asian malls (as described by Richmond residents in the interviews and by M. Obzera's initial letter) as racist exclusions against Caucasians. Furthermore, housing development that systematically excludes poorer—often Caucasian—residents could also be considered as racist exclusions under this framework. That such exclusions are not popularly referred to as racism—and indeed, that Obzera's critique along these lines was *itself* described as racism—begins to hint at the analytical incoherence of this position as it is selectively applied to the understanding of particular contexts. I am indebted to David Ley for pointing out these examples of exclusion, and how this strong argument might incorporate them within its framework.

well as in comments on ethno-cultural transformations), or permeates all facets of resident impressions of negative change, even those not explicitly connected with a particular ethno-cultural group. The problem of assessing the various theories on racism solely by testing if they are empirically 'true' is, as Rattansi has pointed out, that discourses of 'race' and ethnicity (not to mention racism) produce objects of analysis in forms that prevent simple empirical adjudication between competing discourses. In other words, *how* we define racism sets the parameters by which it *can* be tested empirically, defining what phenomena will be included and excluded in the verification process and complicating the distinction between the material and the cultural.[7] However, while theories on racism may act to 'shape' the world outside them, and as sympathetic as I am to Rattansi's position, I would contend more strenuously that they still need to be held accountable to that world. They must be tested with regard to the phenomena that they purport to explain, and, significantly, what phenomena they cannot explain adequately. Nevertheless, I concur with Rattansi when, on theories of race and racism, he stresses that critical inquiry demands more than empirical testing. As I commented earlier in my critique of social constructionist geographies of racism, the danger in taking a resolutely positivistic stance on racism lies in lapsing into an empiricism that essentializes it as an object of study, ascribes it a stable and unimpeachable meaning, and then maps its presence or absence in various discourses and locations. What this kind of mapping elides is the controversy over meaning that surrounds the term racism and its application as an analytical category.

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

If the theorizations of David Theo Goldberg, Ali Rattansi, Kay Anderson and others are any indication, a significant response to the imperative to de-essentialize racism, most notably in the arguments leveled against accounts that hinged on a particular content, an explicit biological line of causation, has been to inflate the term's definitional scope to encompass almost any kind of collective representation and action deemed to be an illegitimate exclusion. Thus, it has become popular to speak not of racialization and racism in the singular, but rather of historically specific *racializations* and associated *racisms*, operating, in Rattansi's words, "when categories of 'race' are explicitly invoked or when popular or specialized biological and quasi-biological discourses are drawn upon to legitimate projects of subject-formation, inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, inferiorization, exploitation, verbal abuse, and physical harassment and violence." Furthermore, the expansionists argue, such projects "may or may not involve explicit inferiorization, and may or may not contain references to biological notions of 'stock', 'blood', genetic differences such as colour and capacities such as intelligence."[8] In commenting on this trend to inflate racism's meaning, Robert Miles has observed that in this process of expansion, what connects these 'racisms', what they have in common *qua* racism, and what distinguishes them from other forms of marginalization and exclusion is generally not clearly spelled out.[9] This is a significant critique of an inflationary stance on racism, and Miles' critical, yet sympathetic, questioning into the meaning of racism and its use as an analytical (and political) concept represents what I believe is a more fruitful and productive use of what Rattansi

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 58. For a sympathetic, yet vigorous critique on the practice of expanding racism's definitional scope, see Miles, *op cit.*, pp. 41-67.
[9] Miles, *Ibid.*, p. 65.

has termed the postmodern project of de-centring categories. Rather than leading to the idea of plural (essentialized?) racisms which still lend themselves to empiricist charting and mapping—and, too often, shouting matches in which accusations and denials of racism are lobbed back and forth like bricks—further application of the deconstructionist imperative leads us to a more explicit, reflexive debate about what should constitute racism, its political import, and the advantages and disadvantages, as we see them, of ascribing different definitions to the term.

Racism as an Analytical Category

So informed, let us revisit the definitions of racism as previously outlined in this section and in Chapter Two and, rather than just empirically testing the different propositions, rigorously engage them in debate with regard to the inclusions, exclusions, and meanings that they bring to bear on our understanding of resident responses in the Richmond context. In reading this thesis, one might understandably get the impression that I am critical of the more expansionist social constructionist perspectives on issues of race and racism. Indeed, as outlined at the close of Chapter Two, I do have serious reservations of how such theoretical frameworks have been utilized in practice to 'understand' contemporary responses to immigration and change in the local context. This does not mean, however, that I am opposed to the principles of social constructionism *tout court*, and in fact, a considerable part of my disappointment with the way in which social constructionist perspectives have been applied to questions of racism derives from an appreciation of the challenges they have posed to the uncritical use of racial classifications. First and foremost, for example, by arguing that such categories do not simply exist, but are *produced* by humans, and by shifting the focus

away from the 'objects' of analysis to the subjects making such observations, the constructionist argument makes us take ownership of our statements and categories instead of viewing them as simply reflections of what is going on in the world. Seeing discourses as social constructions opens, to paraphrase Bruno Latour's metaphor for scientific knowledge, the "Pandora's box" of ready-made facts, introducing into the discussion a debate about who is offering up representations and the interests that such commentaries and actions serve, and demanding that we interrogate our own representational practices.[10] Considering the Richmond context and the categorizations of long-term residents with regard to changes in their neighbourhoods, the social constructionist argument interrogates these representations: we are drawn to question the very terms 'Chinese', 'community', 'development', 'monster house', and the meanings associated with such categories. On what grounds does one use the term 'Chinese' to define a population segmented by age and gender, by period of immigration, by language, and with various interests, histories, and desires? What do we mean by 'community', and should this meaning be modified to make it more inclusive? Why do I define certain developments and behaviours as unwelcome and argue for their cessation, and is this necessarily fair to others who might see these as positive things to be encouraged? Thus applied, social constructionism further encourages the reflexivity already expressed by many of the long-term residents who participated in this research, counters the taken-for-granted character of other residents' statements, and subjects the reasons offered for the exclusion of 'racial' groups to close scrutiny.

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[10] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 1-17.

This latter aspect of expansionist perspectives on racism—the interrogation of rationality and contexts of legitimization—is another contribution to discussions of race and racism which I consider to be particularly valuable. By introducing the concept of reason into histories of exclusionary practice, advocates of a broader understanding of racism prevent us from relegating exclusionary practices deemed undesirable to the past, or ascribing them to the prejudiced and unenlightened beliefs of a few 'irrational' souls. Through highlighting and conceptually linking the various, and overlapping *reasons*, from common lineage, religion, national origin, phenotypical appearance and biological type, to cultural beliefs and practices, which have been used to justify the formation and differential treatment of particular groups so defined, those arguing for an expanded definition of racism implore us, to use the words of one long-term Chinese Richmond resident, to "always be vigilant." A broader interpretation of racism blurs the distinctions often drawn between these different 'rationalities', pointing out that for those excluded, whether or not differential treatment is justified by biological explanations, religious affiliations, the invocation of cultural differences, or as the result of anonymous processes not directly making use of such discourses, the fact of marginalization remains the same.

As a result of this theoretical coherence, by not getting hung up on the specifics surrounding particular rationalizations for exclusion, wider definitions of racism informed by social constructionist perspectives on representation enjoy an envious geographic and historical mobility that make them especially powerful tools of analysis. As Kay Anderson's work illustrates, tracing the many ways in which the Chinese have been depicted as others by Euro-Canadian institutions (notably governments) in

Vancouver over a one-hundred year time span, conceiving of racism more generally in terms of rationalized exclusions (or intended exclusions) gives such analyses a historical depth and scope absent from many more specific definitions of racism.[11] Pressed to its most radical extent it avoids the methodological and definitional problems that attend efforts to discern whether a particular ideology underlies expressions and actions that do not explicitly refer to that ideology (witness, for example, the difficulty in the Richmond context of trying to assess whether contemporary concerns over development are 'masks' for fears over the ethno-cultural changes in the community since 1986), and permits productive comparisons to be made in different geographical contexts and times. In highlighting the *various* modes by which others are socially constructed in ways that exclude, and processes that exclude without intention or any explicit reference to a 'racial' group, more expansive conceptions of racism see "the big picture," to quote self-proclaimed radical anti-racist activist Bob Blauner, and work against a parochialism mired in the particularities of the local context.[12]

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[11] It is important to note, however, that while Anderson's work is especially illustrative of the kind of broad historical horizon opened up by a more expansive approach to racialization and racism, I do not think it (and the work of many other researchers working with the ideas of social constructionism, for that matter) represents the most radical interpretation as advocated by those who define racism primarily in terms of processes, even impersonal and unintentional ones. Anderson's work stresses the intentionality behind the myriad representations of the Chinese by white Vancouverites—that they serve to protect material interests—and she argues that notions of Chinese 'separateness' as represented in these accounts are indicative of a racial ideology. My point in citing Anderson to exemplify a broader interpretation of racism is to note that she does not limit this ideological content to one *mode* of differentiation or justification—namely, biological factors—but includes various kinds of representations, such as invocations of cultural difference, within her conceptual apparatus.

[12] Bob Blauner, "White Radicals, White Liberals, and White People: Rebuilding the Anti-Racist Coalition," in Benjamin P. Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective*, pp. 115-137.

Although I appreciate the points and contributions made by those advocating an expanded conception of racism—the argument that categories are *socially constructed*, not taken-for-granted, objective facts, the implication of reason in exclusionary practices and the consequent blurring of the distinctions drawn between different contexts of legitimization, 'rational' and 'irrational' expressions, the past and present, and different geographical locations—I have some nagging reservations about the inclusions and homogenizations which underpin the coherence of this traveling theory, concerns which are at once 'analytical' and 'political' in character. Commenting on radical interpretations of racism Robert Miles has argued that in defining racism primarily in terms of exclusionary effects, and not viewing it as the product of a particular ideology, the most expansive conceptualizations risk not discriminating between different factors that lead to exclusionary practice: that they blur the distinction between belief and action, conflate those exclusions that are intended results with those that occur as the result of unintentional processes, and perform ecological fallacies by implying that what is a *collective* disadvantage is necessarily a determinant of *individual* disadvantage. Miles contends that this kind of "conceptual inflation" of racism's meaning blunts its analytical sharpness, for it implies a simplistic and misleading mono-causal interpretation of exclusionary practice instead of considering it as the result of various complementary factors. Citing the example of proportionally greater Asian and Caribbean unemployment in the United Kingdom, Miles notes that not all people of Asian and Caribbean origin in Britain are unemployed and that an explanation for their 'collective' unemployment must be consistent with this fact. This premise leads him to identify the *multiplicity* of factors which can be seen to lead to unemployment among

these groups: from individual circumstances such as physical disability and industrial injury to other forces such as exclusionary practices based on negative stereotypes and a refusal of white workers to work with people of Caribbean and Asian origins, and, significantly, their greater proportional employment in the textile and clothing industries that were especially vulnerable to restructuring under capitalism. As stated, Miles contends that to simply label all these instances as racism because of their effects— effectively rendering issues of cause irrelevant—denies the complexity of the situation, but more importantly, he argues that issues of cause *are* important in defining interventionist strategies. The point is that if we see exclusion of people or actions as being a negative consequence, it is vital that we understand the causes for such exclusion, so that these factors can be countered.[13]

In the Richmond context, for example, were one to see the exclusion, or intended exclusion, of recent Chinese immigrants as a resolutely negative development, it would be important to consider the various determinants behind these exclusionary practices: in the context of Richmond's population increases and the contribution of international immigration to this trend over the past twelve years, slow growth or anti-development sentiments could be viewed as factors promoting the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. Frustrations about the perceived behaviour of recent immigrants could represent another axis of exclusion, as could concerns over Richmond's changing linguistic climate and a desire for English-language signage. Following Miles, all of these would constitute different enough reasons so as to justify different responses: in the first instance, one might challenge the ethics behind slow growth sentiments and argue that recent

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[13] Miles, *Racism*, pp. 56-61.

immigrants have as much a right to live where they wish in Canada as do long-term residents. To address perceptions about the undesirable behaviours of immigrants, one could question the assumptions tied up in standards of deportment, point out that one group does not have a monopoly on behaviours considered inappropriate and highlight differentiations within groups, or work on educating people about the reasons behind these differences so that they might better understand them and develop empathy, or at least sympathy, with others. Furthermore, looking at concerns about the use of different languages in the community, one could question the importance of a common language in developing neighbourhood bonds, challenge the predominance of English as an official language, and argue for the right of people to receive service in the language they are most comfortable speaking on the grounds of inclusivity.

While I agree with Miles' points about the need to recognize the multiplicity of factors that can lead to exclusion, and that in defining the differential results of these forces as 'racism' there is the *potential* of ascribing a uni-dimensional interpretation of cause (as in the reduction of concerns about housing and landscape change in Richmond to anxieties about ethno-cultural change), I am not quite sure whether his analysis is quite on the mark, or whether the criticisms he makes are inherent drawbacks of the most expansive definitions of racism. I do not believe, for example, that considering racism broadly in terms of rationalized exclusions *necessarily* leads to a singular interpretation of cause: one could, out of the belief that such exclusions are unjust, recognize any number of reasons leading to them and adopt any of the interventionist strategies outlined above. The point, implied by the de-essentialized conception of racism as outlined by Rattansi and others, is that one need not be chained to a singular

explanation of the causes producing 'racialized' exclusions. A more pertinent argument than Miles' objection, I believe, is to point out that if the meaning of racism is used in this general sense to refer to practices resulting in differential impacts on a particular ethno-cultural group, the expansion of its analytical meaning has the potential to become infinite. It is hard to imagine any practice or discourse in our society as not having some sort of statistically uneven ethno-cultural or racial impact, which then raises the question: on what basis do we draw the line to identify practices as racist or not racist?—for without such a distinction the concept of racism risks becoming vacuous as an analytical tool. A possible way to circumvent this (and the approach that seems to be commonly adopted), could be to refer to different levels and kinds of racism, depending on the degree and type of exclusion. Implicit in this perspective, however, is that ethno-cultural exclusions and objections have some analytical primacy over other excluded categories, factors, and social goals.[14] Looking at expansive interpretations, such as Goldberg's commentaries on racism and its relation to contexts of rationalization, the latter are subordinated, conceived of as legitimizing categories in the process of racist exclusion. Thinking about these factors in such strong terms, it seems to me, leaves little room to study—more less privilege—other social forces on their own right.

Following from the points outlined above, more convincing to me than Miles' discussion of the conflation of causes effected by expansive definitions of racism is his account of an additional definitional and analytical problem: the question of what distinguishes racism from other modes of exclusion. As noted, analytical questions can

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[14] I am indebted to David Ley for encouraging me to articulate this concern.

be raised about the degree of importance we wish to accord 'racist' exclusions in relation to other social factors and goals, and where, practically, we can define racism in a society in which discourses and practices have differential effects. While I would contend that such questions are significant, they do rest on a poorly examined assumption that there are exclusions which can be properly identified and defined as 'racist'. This might seem an unproblematic distinction to make, but complications emerge with the double movement of de-essentializing the meaning of racism, as exemplified in social constructionist arguments that stress the *various* modes of othering that characterize the history of race, while still attempting to articulate some definition of racism which can encompass these seemingly disparate phenomena. Although expanding the meaning of race to consider discourses and practices that do not depend on, or explicitly refer to, biological determinants of behaviour has given the analysis of racism an impressive geographical and historical breadth, it has made it difficult to determine what makes racism distinctive from other kinds of exclusionary discourses and practices. How should racist exclusions, conceptually, be distinguished from sexist or ageist ones if 'racism', so it is claimed, can take different forms and draw upon various othering discourses? What differentiates ethnocentrism, nationalism or xenophobia from racism, and does it matter whether we draw such distinctions? In evacuating the term racism of a particular meaning—a move that I am not sure discussions of 'historically specific racisms' sufficiently remedies—expansive definitions of racism such as David Theo Goldberg's appear to lack a certain analytical rigour that would explain their application across a wide range of historical and

geographical contexts.[15] If racial groups can be constituted in different ways, then what secures their definition *as* racial groups, and their exclusion as racism?

Goldberg, Miles, and other scholars have recognized this problem in broadening out the definition of racism and have tried to furnish more specific definitions of the terminology that distinguish racialization and racism from other forms of differentiation and exclusion, yet maintain their ability to be applied to explain phenomena in various places and times. Goldberg has written that whether racism can be said to exist or not depends in large part on the contexts of definition: that, minimally, racism operates by *naturalizing* similarities and differences, making them appear virtually unalterable—but more particularly, and with reference to the conceptual complication of the Jews who have been characterized as a race, religion, non-racialized culture, and nation, respectively, for a racist exclusion to be occurring the group being marginalized must be either explicitly racialized or (as in the case of Jewish people) linked to a history of racialized characterization.[16] Defining these phenomena, Miles has offered the more specific definition of racialization as a representational process whereby there is a signification of some biological characteristic(s)—usually skin colour—by which a collectivity may be identified. Miles contends that in this way the collectivity is represented as having a natural, unchanging origin and status, and is therefore inherently

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[15] The vagueness becomes apparent in Goldberg's definition of racism offered in *Racist Culture*: "racisms involve promoting exclusions, or the actual exclusions of people in virtue of their being members of different racial groups, however racial groups are taken to be constituted," p. 98.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 101. Though note that in Goldberg's definition of the term racism, this process of *naturalization* is equated with *legitimization* and *rationalization*, a linkage (as I will discuss later) which may be too tightly drawn: do all rationalizations and legitimizations necessarily naturalize, or can some distinctions be made between those rationalizations and legitimizations which are conditional, provisional, and open to critique and those which are not?

different. Racism occurs when the group identified is attributed with additional, negatively evaluated characteristics (biological or cultural) and/or represented as inducing negative consequences for any other.[17]

Neither attempt to come to a definition of racism that reconciles different expressions within a common framework, in my mind, does so without introducing additional analytical problems, not unlike those which James Duncan and David Ley have identified with attempts to apply the tenets of structural Marxism across a range of geographic and temporal contexts.[18] While Goldberg and Miles' commentaries on *naturalized*, fixed differences are interesting definitions of the content which could be seen to provide a conceptual link between various expressions (similar to Martin Barker's linkage of essentialized cultural representations with older biological categories of race), this, and other observations and definitions of racialization and racism are bedeviled with problematic assumptions that founder when applied to an empirical understanding of events and expressions. In Goldberg's schema, the links between past and present expressions are drawn, and potential interruptions to this theory sidelined, by an *ad hominem* argumentation: negative evaluations of Jews in the present context, even if they do not make explicit reference to inherent, 'racial'

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[17] Miles, *Racism*, p. 79. Though note that Kay Anderson, in *Vancouver's Chinatown*, extends this definition of racism further in her critique of Canadian multiculturalism policy. The positive ethno-cultural designations of multiculturalism, in her work, are conceived of as being similarly racist to negative typifications in that they both depict social groups as essentialized collectivities. As such the argument is not unlike that presented by Martin Barker in *The New Racism* of socially-defined cultural categories attaining pseudo-biological notions of immutability.

[18] James Duncan and David Ley, "Structural Marxism and Human Geography: A Critical Assessment," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 72 (1982), pp. 30-59. Also see Bonnett's critique of this as it pertains to definitions of race, specifically, in, "Constructions of 'Race', Place and Discipline."

differences, must be considered racist, since the collective entity 'Jews' is linked to a racialized history in which supposedly intractable differences provided the basis for their exclusion—current *rationalizations* for criticism and exclusion are simply *naturalizations* in a different guise. Similarly, in Miles' more specific definition, the use of biological characteristics as the basis of identifying a collectivity is said to connote some sense of immutability, while the attribution of negative characteristics to that group constitutes racism. Apart from failing to address what distinguishes racism from other kinds of ideologies (does sexism not rest on the attribution of determinant biological factors which influence behaviour?), there is the conceptual leap made that reference to physical characteristics in defining a collectivity implies that it, and its 'behaviours', are immutable.

What happens when concepts like these are applied to an understanding of the interview material in the Richmond context, and how valuable are they as analytical tools? Comparing the responses of different groups of residents suggests caution in applying them too eagerly. Following Goldberg's definition, for example, even if recent Chinese immigrants are not explicitly 'racialized', the category 'Chinese' is linked to a history in which it was regarded as a discrete, fixed entity and associated with supposedly immutable characteristics deemed unwelcome. Perhaps, then, even in the absence of explicit biological explanations for behaviour or references to 'race', we should consider expressions making negative references to 'Asian' or 'Chinese' immigrants racist, since they—as Miles might argue—define a collectivity on the basis of phenotypical features. Complications arise, however, when we try to use these theories to account for criticisms of the perceived behaviour of recent Chinese

immigrants by long-term Chinese residents: they define a collectivity on the basis of phenotypical features—as 'Asian'—and associate this group with behaviours described as negative (or at least as different). Does this constitute racism? If so, then it adds new complexities to theories which link racism with the condition of 'whiteness', but analytically there are added complications. Does the category 'Chinese', which *both* recent Chinese immigrants and long-term Chinese residents *share*, not have a history of being used as a badge for racialized exclusion? Does their identification of recent immigrants as 'Asians' and reference to phenotypical features necessarily connote inherent difference as Miles suggests? Given the statements of long-term Chinese residents regarding their own experiences and beliefs that recent immigrants would 'assimilate', their expressed sense of affinity with recent Asian immigrants, and their phenotypical similarity with them, imputations of inherent, immutable difference seem unlikely. Perhaps, then, on the basis of these grounds, there is cause for hesitation in referring to the critical comments of long-term Chinese residents with regard to recent immigrants as being racist, but if we accept this premise, why should we view the similar comments of long-term Japanese and Caucasian residents any differently? Are their critical representations of recent Chinese immigrants—almost identical in their critical content to those statements offered by long-term Chinese residents, even if they are more readily voiced—necessarily racist in a way that critical comments made by long-term Chinese residents are not? If so, what does this do to our understanding of exclusionary practices directed by Caucasians against other Caucasians, such as in the persecution of Jews (and to cite a more parochial instance, by long-term Richmond residents against the German speaking immigrant as stated on p. 105 of this thesis),

without distinguishing phenotypical features? To state that representations are or are not racist because of *who* is saying them—because of phenotypical differences between groups, and an implied link between present expressions and groups and past acts of 'racialized' exclusion—while possibly useful as political currency, illustrates the analytical problem of applying such expansive definitions of racism across different ethno-cultural groups in a consistent manner. Without a clear, and more restricted sense of the characteristics which define racism, we are drawn to rely on uncritical linkages between past and present expressions based on assumptions of meaning and *ad hominem* judgments.

Racism as a Political Category

At some level, I am inclined to believe that these analytical debates surrounding the definition of racism are less decisive—that for all intents and purposes it does not really matter whether we choose to relegate the analytical concept of racism to the past, as forwarded by Michael Banton, or whether, like David Theo Goldberg and Robert Miles, we want to expand its use to mark contemporary acts of boundary formation, critical expression, and acts of exclusion. As I have noted, I believe that there are certain problems that arise when the scope of the term racism is expanded to include various modes of 'othering' beyond those which refer explicitly to biological factors, and I am less than impressed with efforts to de-essentialize the meaning of racism while boldly applying it to the study of particular historical and geographical contexts. Definitions of racism and concerns with these concepts, however, are not just academic and cannot be reduced to mere trivia for they have explicitly *political* consequences as well: as Andrew Sayer and Michael Storper's quote at the head of this chapter suggests,

terms like racism carry with them a strong evaluative content. Thus, what we choose to define as racism has not only the effect of including and excluding certain phenomena from an analytic category, but of rendering *judgment* on those phenomena: tarring those included with the stain of illegitimacy while sparing other expressions and actions this fate. Considered as a category with strong evaluative connotations, then, what we want to define as racism, as Sayer and Storper argue, should be the site of debate over what we want to oppose or favour, why, and with what consequences.

Prior to engaging different conceptions of racism and the evaluative content that they attach to different expressions, I want to note the *specificity* of the historical and geographical contexts in which the term racism first became linked with a profoundly negative meaning. As Miles and other observers have noted (see the discussion in Chapter Two) the initial definitions of racism as an object of study emerged in response to the *content* and *use* of 'racial' categories as scientific, biological entities that justified hierarchical relations of domination and subordination—most horrifically, perhaps, in the mobilization of racial discourses by the Nazi party in World War Two to rationalize the systematic extermination of the Jews.[19] Out of the revulsion generated by this event developed a particular conception of racism as an 'unscientific' belief, but more significantly, an association of the term with a strong, negative evaluation. Racism thus became not only an analytical category, but on the basis of its association with this historical event, a term of political critique, a way of defining particular beliefs and actions as illegitimate.

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[19] It is important to note, though, that writers such as Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities," pp. 54-55, have highlighted that exclusion and extermination of the Jews was also predicated on grounds of cultural difference.

Given this political import, it is understandable that when Michael Banton, at the close of the 1960s, confidently proclaimed racism to be dead, there was significant concern about the potential effects that this might have on a critical examination of societal disparities and exclusionary practices. Yet in proclaiming racism to have ended (an assessment that was undoubtedly premature, even considering the limited definition Banton was employing), I find it hard to believe that in saying so he was stating that exclusionary practices directed at groups had ended, that these exclusionary practices could not be legitimized on religious, cultural, or other grounds not explicitly referring to race, or that these rationalizations should not be considered illegitimate and challenged. What Banton *was* referring to was a specific ideology of biological superiority and explicit acts of inferiorization based on what was deemed a morally irrelevant category, phenotypic type. As such, the definitions of racism formulated shortly after World War Two *clearly* stated what was to be seen as illegitimate, the evaluation of an individual's worth based on physical attributes such as skin colour, even if the method of challenging this belief—by 'disproving' it scientifically and relegating it to the status of mythology—tended to sideline the moral evaluations bound up with this repudiation of race, and left the door open for people to relegate exclusionary practices deemed as objectionable to the prejudiced beliefs of irrational souls.

While efforts have been made to de-essentialize the meaning of racism beyond this particular ideological manifestation, pointing out the varied history and use of the term race, and arguing that it can be mobilized for 'benign' projects of resistance and redress, strangely absent from this de-essentializing turn is a destabilizing of the evaluative content of the term racism, or at least as Sayer and Storper call for, an

explicit, reflexive discussion of the reasons *why* we should consider racism—and the phenomena identified in its name—as reprehensible.[20] Thus, while the scope of racism has been expanded to include various othering discourses predicated on perceived differences such as culture, religion and behavioural habits, and differential effects of practices which make no recourse to such discourse, the evaluative content attached to these has remained the same as that which attended older conceptions of racism based on discredited essential biological characteristics. By defining *both* as racism (or, more specifically, new expressions as "reinventions of old racist concepts" as in the case of Ray, Halseth, and Johnson's analysis of the local context), they are consciously or unconsciously placed on a moral plane of equivalence, regarded as equally malignant—an equivalence that I do not believe is justified in every circumstance.[21] Those arguments, such as Martin Barker's, which attempt to conceptually link past and present representations by contending that invocations of culture can take on biological or pseudo-biological overtones at least have the benefit of clearly stating what they see as objectionable about this mode of othering: the type of logical progression made between phenotypical appearance and particular 'undesirable' behaviours, the implication that both are fixed and immutable, and the subsequent effort to exclude those with particular

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[20] For commentary on the use of racial categories as tools of 'resistance', see Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities," pp. 56-57, and Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, pp. 97, 114-115.

[21] It is important to note, however, that a number of analysts have sought to subdivide the category of racism into different levels with different evaluative contents. See, for example, Michel Wieviorka, "Racism in Europe: Unity and Diverisity," in Rattansi and Westwood, eds., *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front*, pp. 173-188, and his book *The Arena of Racism*. Also useful is Frank Reeves' *British Racial Discourse* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially Chapter One, "The Meaning of 'Racism': its Limitations in the Study of Discourse Dealing With Racial Issues," pp. 7-27. Nevertheless, this meaning is only de-essentialized so far, as even in its 'milder' forms it is negatively evaluated.

phenotypical characteristics based on this supposedly unbreakable link. Morally, I think there is much to commend with regard to the initial definitions of racism and the expanded application of the concept as represented by interpretations such as Barker's analysis—that there is something especially objectionable about fixing an individual's identity to their physical appearance, deeming them as separate, and working from this premise to legitimate the exclusion of phenotypical others on the basis *of* their appearance. Conceiving of identity in this way, I would argue, denies the myriad differences within 'racial' groups, precludes any chance for meaningful interaction between individuals and encourages the prejudging of an individual's worth based on his or her appearance. To paraphrase the ruminations of political philosopher Charles Taylor, it prevents us from viewing those who look different as *having* equal worth: our assessment is already tainted by the presumption that these phenotypical others possess qualities that we deem undesirable.[22] Apart from its clear political stance, this particular definition also sharpens the analytical definition of racism offered by Miles and outlined earlier, illustrating *how* phenotypical appearance is *naturally* linked to behaviours and changes viewed as unwelcome.

But when Richmond residents of various ethno-cultural groups link changes deemed unwelcome with recent immigrants referred to as 'Asians' or 'Chinese', are they *necessarily* imputing this kind of causal relationship between phenotypical appearance and behaviour? The ties do seem to parallel those outlined by Martin Barker

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[22] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-73. Taylor refers specifically to this concept of presuming equal worth of others as a starting point on p. 67.

and, if biological determinants are rejected by Richmond residents who refer instead to *cultural* differences between themselves and newcomers, there still appears to be a relationship between physical appearance and behaviour. Significantly, however, despite the implication that there is some natural link between phenotypical and behavioural traits, based on the transcribed interview material, the differences identified between long-term residents and recent immigrants were not seen as fixed or immutable, or deriving from biological bases with skin colour acting as a marker. Although identified with reference to negative changes in the community over the past twelve years, 'Asian' or 'Chinese' immigrants (not to mention 'Chinese' in general)were not viewed as a monolithic group—internal differences along various axes such as class and age were recognized by participants in this research, as were differences between newcomers and long-term Chinese residents. Nor were actions considered unwelcome exclusively laid at the feet of recent Chinese immigrants: participants observed that certain behaviours deemed undesirable transcended a single ethno-cultural or racial group and that development pressures were the result of government planning problems and domestic migration (including their own movement into Richmond) as well as population growth brought on by international immigration from Asia especially. Furthermore, many residents exhibited an introspective sensibility, questioning their use of categories such as 'Chinese', and thinking about their own role in neighbourhood changes as considered negative ones over the past twelve years.

Instead of a natural, causal link between phenotypical type and behaviour, then, the invocation of the categories 'Asian' and 'Chinese' on the part of long-term residents

appears to work in the opposite direction, moving *from* behaviours and actions considered negative to socially define those who they see responsible for them. This is a significant difference, I believe, from imputing a fixed conception of behaviour on the *basis* of appearance, and yet I remain unsure whether there is something still morally objectionable to this association of behaviours and changes with a particular, visible ethno-cultural group, something that we still might wish to negatively call racism. I fear that this linkage of negative characteristics with a physically identifiable ethno-cultural group can all too readily lead to the typification outlined above—that in light of this negative association, when one sees somebody with particular physical characteristics, they are *a priori* associated with 'undesirable' characteristics, demeaned, excluded and discriminated against. As the experiences outlined by long-term Chinese residents— whereby, based on their appearance, they were considered to be 'new' Chinese immigrants—attests, the subtle distinctions and reflexivity expressed by many long-term residents in the course of the interviews are not always evidenced in the practice of everyday life. Interpretations based not on engaged experience, but on presumptuous, stereotypical typifications still abound on both sides of the long-term resident/recent immigrant divide even if this research methodology can only get a glimpse of them. Given this reifying potential, perhaps a more appropriate mode of discourse would be to refer simply to actions, behaviours, or developments, in general without making reference to a particular racial or ethno-cultural group as being responsible for them.

As David Theo Goldberg notes, however, there are some instances which are almost impossible to describe without making reference to a racial group: how could long-term residents, for example, refer to the increase in Chinese language usage and

signage in their community *without* referring to the influx of Chinese-speaking immigrants that precipitated it?[23] Furthermore, and following the comments of many Chinese residents and the presence of specifically Chinese cultural organizations in Richmond, there is a *tangibility* to cultural difference—that the category Chinese should not only be considered as an instrumental projection used to serve the interests of a dominant 'white' group, but also as an integral part of identity constructed, in part, by members within that group and manifest materially in the landscape. The way in which we acknowledge this materiality of cultural difference, I would contend, has analytical and political import with regard to how we view negative references to ethno-cultural groups and whether we categorize these as racism. Social constructionist perspectives, for example, have tended to view negative representations of racial/cultural difference (whether this be biological, cultural, or otherwise) as essentializing gestures, as racist social constructions made by a dominant group to exclude a subordinate, phenotypically different group. The most radical perspectives, represented by the concepts of institutional racism and David Theo Goldberg's statements on legitimization and rationalization, further argue that racist exclusions need not even refer to explicit socially constructed representations, that they can be regarded as the unintentional, patterned exclusions of regulations, educational standards, economic forces and the like. Both views, I believe, share the same consideration of the various rationalities resulting in differential treatment, exclusion, or criticism as relatively unimportant in themselves, but as superficial legitimizations subordinate to the true problem of racism. Ironically, at the very moment when rationality is, importantly and appropriately in my view,

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[23] Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 97.

brought into a discussion of 'racist' exclusions, it is marginalized as seemingly 'irrational' by the (possible) fact that it results in such exclusions. Conceived as such, the reasons for exclusion may be wily adversaries to be opposed, but not ones to be considered as important, or deemed morally acceptable.

As a political position I can see the value in challenging the sanctity of these reasons, and of questioning their exclusionary effects, but in denigrating all 'reasons' offered to justify exclusion I think these perspectives go too far, homogenizing different kinds of rationalities, and critically limiting the range of acceptable expression. Social constructionist perspectives on legitimization, such as those of Anderson and Ray, *et al.*, dismiss discussions of cultural difference by considering them as essentialist gestures, eliding the materiality of these differences and a serious engagement with the content of such discussions. Similarly, interpretations of rationalization and legitimization as anonymous forces with differential 'racial' effects reduces them—no matter what their content or perceived virtue—to illegitimate justifications for racism. Such views negate by homogenizing what I consider, based on the research in the Richmond site, to be important distinctions between criticism and dehumanization, between unthinkingly and strategically essentialized categories. At its worst, this interpretation of racism simply reverses the *ad hominem* argumentation that characterizes colour discrimination, for instead of colour acting as the natural, and therefore unimpeachable, 'justification' for exclusion, it becomes the defence *against* exclusion on any grounds: criticize my actions or that of my ethno-cultural group and you are demeaning me; if I am excluded, it is unjust because of my racial membership. As Katharyne Mitchell has argued with reference to Kay Anderson's work, challenging the rationalities for exclusionary

practice so unrelentingly as illegitimate social constructions not only has the effect of negating cultural difference and identity, but of operating as a general *mea culpa* for Western civilization, one that threatens to block off the further opening of cultural debate.[24] When we consider rationalized exclusions and non-discriminatory ideals in such stark, oppositional, binaristic terms—as racism and anti-racism, 'oppression' and 'resistance'—what room *is* there for discussion? What happens to debate around neighbourhood change and immigration? How do we find middle ground?

A productive way of opening ground for discussion, I think, is to de-essentialize racism of its political import, to empty it of its seemingly 'inherent', strong, negative meaning. This may seem a radical gesture, and I do not want to be misunderstood as offering unconditional support for all acts and rationalizations for exclusion; nor is this to say that people should not have principled opposition to these rationalizations. In some respects, however, arguing for the de-essentialization of racial categories is not a new idea. As stated earlier, commentators like Rattansi and Goldberg have argued that such categories need not be tools of oppression, but can be seen and used for 'progressive' acts of inclusion and resistance. What Rattansi and Goldberg have shied away from, however, is the categorization of these uses *as* racism, despite the fact that the mobilization of doctrines of racial and cultural purity—not to mention tropes of inclusion and resistance—depend on various modes and acts of exclusion to secure their status.[25] Such reticence, I suspect, derives from their endorsement of these uses, and a

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[24] Katharyne Mitchell, "Review: *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada*," pp. 254-255.

[25] Rattansi, "Western Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities," p. 57, Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, pp. 114-115.

fear that defining them as racism may saddle these projects with the burden of the term's morally evaluative content.[26]   Much more useful, in my mind, than disavowals of racism based on assumptions of its analytical and political meaning—a state of affairs which seems to currently define the discourse on race and racism in Canada—is to explicitly state what *analytical* concept is being used, what *political* meaning is being attached to it, and the reasons *why*.

Yet in arguing that charges of racism need to be de-essentialized, it is not my contention that this gesture should be directed towards the concept of racism alone, for I believe that there is merit in the critique of reason as it applies to justifications offered for exclusionary practices. If such reasons for exclusion have too often been unchallenged in the past and present, and if expansive definitions of racism have placed non-discriminatory ideals above all other 'rationalizations', prising them both open to shed light on their analytical and political assumptions serves to demystify and denaturalize them, opening them up to critique. Rather than dismissing outright the reasons or causes resulting in exclusionary practices as racist expressions, or, conversely, tarring those claiming racism as arrogant and unproductive, we are forced to *engage* with them.

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[26] Although I have suggested these reasons behind the reticence to define these mobilizations of racial categories as racism, Goldberg has attempted to prove that American affirmative action programs that set quotas requiring a certain percentage of the positions be filled by blacks do not exclude white applicants from those positions, a proposition which hinges on considerable sophistry, uncritical assumptions about relative power and access to jobs, and homogenization of all white applicants as members of a privileged class to work its rhetorical magic. Since Goldberg precedes this performance with an interesting commentary on whether some racialized exclusions might be considered more morally acceptable than others, this disavowal of racism as it pertains to affirmative action is a disappointing resolution of a question that would have drawn his political position clearly into the open. See Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, pp. 114-115.

Interpreting Social Relations in Richmond (and Elsewhere)

How might this mode of inquiry be put into practice, and how would it impact on our interpretation of events in Richmond? Let us consider these questions by revisiting the debate surrounding Obzera's letter as outlined at the beginning of this thesis, and by association, many of the concerns as expressed by the residents who participated in this research. The first, and perhaps most obvious, point to make with regard to the various anti-essentialist arguments I have forwarded in this chapter relates to the kinds of methodologies and representational strategies we bring to bear on our analyses of situations, events and expressions. The very notion of engagement, as I see it, demands a degree of openness and suspension of judgment as a starting point for dialogue. This is not to say that we, as people with particular beliefs and perspectives, enter into such conversation as blank slates, nor is it to say that we should not make use of our theoretical and ethical perspectives in order to arrive at a judgment in the course of this engagement. What it does mean, in my opinion (as I noted in my critique of 'whiteness' as it appears in much social constructionist research), is that as useful as these perspectives are in providing us with guidance and direction, for intellectual or ethical growth to occur they must not be allowed to shape the analysis too rigidly at the outset, or preclude meaningful contact with other peoples and places. Rather than turn the world into a reflection of our own theoretical perspective, we are drawn instead to approach the positions and debates, like those surrounding Obzera's letter and the responses of other long-term residents, on their own terms—to appreciate the complexity and variety of their responses and the meanings attached to them.

This said, I am well aware of the irony involved here: that in advocating such a strong methodological and ethical position against the 'excesses' of theory, I have instated another 'theory' of how knowledge should be developed. To the potential charge that this does not dispatch with essentialism, but merely shifts it from the realm of 'theory' to that of 'experience', I can only offer two responses. The first point to make concerns the political decision to locate the 'essential' in experience, and hinges on this question: should experience and empirical study be primarily used to illustrate theory, or should theory be developed out of experience. Setting aside the problems of viewing these in such discrete, oppositional terms, I would advocate the latter, for if our theories and representations are not held accountable to those people, places, and experiences which constitute them, to whom *are* they responsible? The second point to raise, however, is that just as theoretical inquiry need not necessarily be viewed in essential terms—that this can be tempered by a critical, reflexive sensibility—the realm of 'experience' need not be essentialized and fetishized either. What this entails, I would argue, is a movement in the other direction, a critical interrogation *of* experience. What is the import of the concepts we use to negotiate everyday life? What do they include and exclude? What is the political significance we wish to attach to them?

Drawn by the first de-essentializing movement to examine the concerns and responses of Richmond residents, then, we are implored by the second to subject them to critical analysis: when Obzera writes of the exclusion of Caucasian residents by recent Chinese immigrants, for example, what significance does this have? What do residents mean when they use the categorization 'Chinese', and what analytical and political problems might there be with this usage? Is this racist, as some residents (and

observers) have argued? If so, what does this definition of racism entail, and what political meaning do we attach to this? In this chapter, and this thesis in general, I have offered my opinion on the status of resident responses, the inclusions and exclusions that different conceptions of racism bring to bear on our understanding of experience, and the political consequences—as I see them—of this categorization. Others may disagree with my interpretation, and are perfectly welcome to critique my position, but in doing so I would hope that the analytical and ethical reasons for their views were laid bare. What this does, I believe, is to bring the discussion of values squarely and explicitly into the foreground—opening terms like racism, laden with negative associations and thus with the ability to silence, to debate and challenge of their privileged status. To phrase it crudely, if we see the responses of long-term residents as 'racist', so what? Or conversely, so what if Chinese-language signs make long-term Anglophone residents feel excluded? Every inclusion, by definition, entails some sort of exclusion—and in a world where resources are not infinite, political decisions and priorities have to be made.

In thinking through issues of racism in the context of immigration and associated impacts, then, perhaps there are 'racialized' exclusions, however defined, which society is willing to accept, even deem necessary—a potential that the elevation of non-discriminatory principles above all else is unwilling to entertain. Perhaps there are other exclusions, such as those justified on the basis of skin colour or biological type, which we deem morally wrong. How do we go about determining this is of crucial importance. Unfortunately, as evidenced in the debate over Obzera's letter, too often the tendency is to flay one's opponents—to denigrate their reasoning by deeming it as "disgusting,"

"offensive," "arrogant," and "unproductive." Concurring with Amy Gutmann, I believe that finding the answer to these questions "depends upon dialogue among reasonable people who disagree on the answers to some fundamental questions about the value of various literary, political, economic, religious, educational, scientific, and aesthetic understandings and achievements."[27] Such dialogue, as necessary now as it ever was, demands that we take the rationalities of others into account, and cannot be served as long as we trade in categorical accusations, in unreflexive political categories, and in simplified depictions of the world around us.

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[27] Amy Gutmann, "Introduction," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism*, pp. 3-24. The quote appears on p. 20.

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APPENDIX

Schedule of Interview Questions

The interviews with long-term residents followed this schedule of questions, though as noted in the text, conversation frequently evolved from these points to engage other issues. The list of questions is more comprehensive than the interview material covered in Chapter Four: in the process of conducting interviews, I found that some questions that had initially seemed useful were, in the end, of limited utility. Conversely, some interesting questions developed organically out of the interview process and were added to schedule of questions used as my guideline. Unfortunately, this means that some earlier participants did not have the opportunity to answer them, and no follow-up interviews were conducted by me to rectify this. These questions are of a supplementary character, however, and the material appearing in Chapter Four pertains to questions that were asked of all participants.

1) Personal History/Identity

-Could you please describe what you might call your family history? In other words: where and when you were born, where and when your parents were born, if you or they moved to Canada, British Columbia, or the Lower Mainland, when this occurred, etc.

-Do you speak any languages apart from English? If so, how did you learn them (at school, in the home, etc.).

-Apart from language, are there any traditions of a national or ethnic character that you have maintained in your family?

-If someone were to ask you to identify yourself in national or ethnic terms (for example: 'Canadian', 'French-Canadian', 'Chinese', 'Japanese-Canadian', etc.) how would you respond? Why?

-Do you think it is possible to maintain traditions from a family homeland or previous country of residence and still be Canadian at the same time?

-On a final note, could you briefly describe your work history, beginning with your present employment and moving back in time from there? If you do any volunteering or charity work, I would also like to hear about that.

2) Richmond History

-When did you move to Richmond?

-Why did you decide to move here? Did you look at any other places in the Lower Mainland when you were deciding?

-What was Richmond like when you first moved here? What did it look like? How did it 'feel' culturally or socially?

-Did you enjoy living in Richmond at this time (specify that you are referring to the period prior to the mid-1980s—ie., in most cases, the 1970s)?

-What changes, if any, did you notice in Richmond from the time you first moved here until 1986? Expo '86 might be a helpful marker or cut-off date to help you think about this period.

-Do you recall how you felt about these changes at the time?

3) Contemporary Change and Response

-What changes, if any, have you noticed in Richmond since 1986—over the past ten to twelve years? These can be physical changes, social changes, cultural changes, whatever you can think of.

-Which changes since 1986 would you describe as positive changes?

-Which changes since 1986 would you describe as negative changes?

-Overall, considering both the positive and negative changes, would you say that the quality of life has improved or declined in Richmond over the past ten to twelve years? Another way of putting that which might make answering the question easier is to ask whether, for you, the positives changes that you have identified outweigh the negatives, or vice versa. If you cannot say one way or another, that is fine, but please explain why it might be difficult to do so.

-In a very general sense, what is you attitude towards the idea of community 'growth' or 'development'? Perhaps it might be useful to think of a continuum where, on one

side, you might have someone who adopts a very preservationist stance and is highly critical of change, while on the other hand you might have someone who believes change is generally a positive phenomenon. There could be a range of opinion in between these two types. Where would you situate yourself in this spetrum?

4) Questions of Ethnicity, Race, and Citizenship (introduced, if necessary, by me)

-(If necessary, point out Asian immigration and ethnic change in Richmond over the past ten to twelve years).

-From what you have seen and heard by reading newspapers or in talking with your friends and neighbours, how have established Richmond residents responded to this change? What do they think of Chinese immigrants? What do you think?

-Canvass opinions on various 'hot-point' issues (eg. Large or 'Monster' homes, ESL, language, etc.).

-If there are differences between the established Richmond population and recent immigrants, what do you think is the cause of these differences?

-Do you think that these differences will become less marked in the future? Why/why not?

-On the topic of immigration, what kinds of obligations—if obligations isn't too strong a word—do you believe immigrants should have when they move to a new country? (Clarify realms, such as language, culture, if necessary).

-Conversely, what kinds of obligations do you think established residents should have towards new immigrants? In other words, what kinds of things, if any, should established residents do to make new immigrants feel welcome? Where should the limit be? Should 'welcoming', for example, extend to providing services to immigrants in their 'native' tongues?

5) Discussing these issues in Richmond

-(If differences, criticisms have been mentioned with regard to recent immigrants) Do you feel comfortable discussing these issues in Richmond outside of a closed, relatively 'safe' interview format such as this? If so/if not, why?

6) Future residency plans

-What are your future plans in terms of where you plan to live? Do you plan to stay in Richmond or move elsewhere? Why/why not?