

‘I Fit the Description’: Experiences of Social and Spatial Exclusion among Ghanaian Immigrant Youth in the Jane and Finch Neighbourhood of Toronto

Abstract

Public interest in the influence of neighbourhoods on immigrant integration in Canadian society has been growing in recent years; yet, there are few studies that explain the effect of neighbourhoods on immigrant experiences of exclusion in Canada. Drawing on in-depth interviews (12 males and 13 females) and a focus group discussion (five females and three males) conducted with Ghanaian immigrant youth between the ages of 18 to 30 from the Ghanaian community in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood of Toronto in May to June, 2011, this paper discusses the experiences of social and spatial exclusion among Ghanaian immigrant youth. Drawing on socio-spatial dialectics, the findings suggest that Ghanaian immigrant youth experiences of socio-spatial exclusion are intertwined in a dialectical process involving the Jane and Finch neighbourhood and the general public. In particular, the youth negotiate access to employment opportunities, shopping malls and counter exclusion through reformulation of resumes, and masking of their actual neighbourhoods. This paper fills an important gap in our knowledge of the lived experiences of African immigrant youth and contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of neighbourhood stigmatization and its impact on residents' integration into the larger society.

Résumé

Au moment où le public s'intéresse davantage à l'impact des quartiers de résidence sur l'intégration des immigrants à la société canadienne, peu d'études explorent l'influence qu'a le voisinage sur les expériences d'inclusion et d'exclusion des immigrants au Canada. Pour cette raison, cet article traite des expériences d'exclusion spatiale et sociale chez des jeunes immigrants Ghanéens âgés de 18 à 30 qui habitent le quartier de Jane et Finch à Toronto. Nous basant sur des entrevues semi-dirigées approfondies menées auprès de 12 hommes et 13 femmes ainsi que un groupe de discussion organisé avec trois hommes et cinq femmes, nous montrons que l'exclusion socio-spatiale que ces jeunes subissent est située dans un processus dialectique qui englobe à la fois les jeunes et le public. La dialectique socio-spatiale nous permet également à conclure que les jeunes résistent à l'exclusion en question et négocient leur accès à l'emploi et aux centres commerciaux par le biais de la reformulation du CV et le masquage du nom de quartier. De cette façon, cet article comble les lacunes en matière de vécu des jeunes immigrants africains et nous permet de mieux comprendre les dynamiques de la stigmatisation basée sur le lieu de résidence et l'impact que celle-ci a sur l'intégration des immigrants au sein de la société canadienne.



INTRODUCTION

Over the years, neighbourhood effects literature has reported on the influence of educational achievement, social exclusion of visible minorities, health, transition rates from welfare to work, school drop outs and deviant behaviour (Ellen and Turner 1997; Galster 2002) on immigrants. Scholarship has also shown that living in a deprived neighbourhood has negative effects on residents' life chances beyond the impacts of their individual characteristic (Bauder 2002). The study of neighbourhood effects has been driven by Wilson's (1987) work *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner city, the Underclass and Public Policy*. Wilson's (1987) ethnographic research revealed that the effects of living in concentrations of poverty in Chicago cannot be explained from a single perspective, leading him to conclude that the "local conditions and the social practices of residents of poor areas cannot be understood independently of the macro social and economic forces which shape them" (van Ham and Manley 2010, 3).

One fundamental question neighbourhood effects studies seek to answer relate to the causal effects of the neighbourhood in which residents live (Bauder 2002). There is, therefore, limited knowledge of *how* neighbourhood exclusions feed into the processes of everyday lived experiences, the manifestations of everyday exclusions, and *why* they occur. This paper addresses these issues by focusing on the social and spatial exclusion of Ghanaian immigrant youth. The objective of the paper is to examine the day to day experiences of exclusion among immigrant youth by addressing the following questions: (1) How does neighbourhood exclusion feed into the everyday lived experiences of immigrant youth? (2) What forms does social and spatial exclusion experienced by immigrant youth take? and (3) What factors contribute to social and spatial exclusion? In this paper I define youth to be within the age category of 18 to 30 years.

Existing literature indicates that visible minorities in Canada experience discrimination and exclusion, making integration into Canadian society difficult despite the multicultural policies that were introduced in the early 1970s (Creese 2011; Agrawal 2010; Smith and Ley 2008; Galabuzi 2006; Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005; Preston and Murnaghan 2005). These policies allow ethnic groups to retain their cultural heritage while participating in Canadian society (Reitz 2007). Despite the emphasis on the importance of diversity, multiculturalism has also come to mean exclusion for some social (minority) groups, because they increasingly become detached from mainstream society, thereby reducing their incentives to acquire their host country's language and gain access to educational qualifications and the labour market (Hou and Picot 2004).

The experiences of visible minorities have attracted considerable academic attention in recent years. Among other issues, scholars have examined their residential

patterns (Ray and Preston 2009; Qadeer 2005; Balakrishnan and Gyimah 2003; Owusu 1999), housing problems (Peach 2005; Balakrishnan and Wu 1992), labour market constraints (Block and Galabuzi 2011; Creese 2011; Galabuzi 2006; Wong 2000) and the educational attainments of immigrant children (Abada and Tenkorang 2009; Opoku-Dapaah 2006). Housing experiences of immigrants in Canada have received particular attention (Balakrishnan, Maxim and Jurdi 2005; Murdie 2003; Hou and Balakrishnan 1996), which is understandable given the crucial role housing plays in the integration of immigrants into the host community (Carter, Polveychok and Osborne 2009; Murdie 2008; Edmonston 2004). A total of 23,200 Ghanaians were living in Canada by the time of the 2006 national census with the vast majority of the Ghanaian immigrant population in Canada—17,470—living in Ontario (Statistics Canada 2006). Other Canadian cities with sizeable Ghanaian immigrant populations are Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau, and Edmonton. Most Ghanaians in Toronto reside in older and newer suburban districts such as North York, Etobicoke, Mississauga and, increasingly, Brampton (Mensah 2010; Wong 2000; Owusu 1999).

This article comprises four sections: the first section introduces the study area—its residential patterns and neighbourhood effects; the next section considers the theoretical framework—socio-spatial dialectics, and methodology; the third section comprises the findings and discussion; and the last section presents the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW: RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD EFFECTS

The extent to which immigrants are able to integrate into any host society depends on the nature of the social and spatial integration available. Residential segregation feeds into the formation of ethnic enclaves, thereby strengthening the forces of socio-spatial exclusion. Some researchers have argued that residential segregation creates differences in the organization of society, promoting unique working-class subcultures structured along the lines of ethnicity, stage in the life cycle and levels of skill, and reinforces various forms of social and spatial exclusion (Qadeer and Kumar 2003; Bauder 2001, 2002). Neighbourhood of residence itself functions as a symbolic marker that signifies a worker's value in the labour market (Bauder 2002; Ellen and Turner 1997).

Similarly, immigrant assimilation occurs when the attitudes and practices of immigrants, which include their residential location behaviour, eventually become similar to those of the receiving society (Mendez 2009; Hiebert and Ley 2003a). The use of the assimilation perspectives in North America dates back to the 1930s and 1940s when scholars of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology used assimilation to

explore the social and spatial patterns of immigrant settlement and adaptation to their new cultural and economic environment (Alba and Nee 1997). These authors suggested that new European immigrants were likely to be clustered in particular neighbourhoods, and to subsequently relocate to wealthy suburbs (Mendez 2009; Hiebert and Ley 2003a; Alba and Nee 1997).

Canadian researchers and policy makers have avoided the term assimilation, using instead integration and spatial concentration (see Qadeer 2005; Hiebert and Ley 2003b) because the term assimilation is multidimensional, associated with various functional, cultural and spatial aspects of the process of immigrant adaptation in their new country (Alba and Nee 1997). Canadian researchers and policy makers have avoided the term assimilation because of the multiculturalism policy introduced in the 1970s, which aimed to create a level plane for diverse cultures; hence, there was no longer a need for assimilation as is the case in the United States. Most integrationist researchers are concerned with whether immigrants and members of visible minority groups experiencing residential segregation will relocate to new neighbourhoods as their socioeconomic condition begins to rise to that of the host society (Murdie and Teixeira 2003). In other words, the debate centres on whether the increase in immigrants' income is accompanied by their moving away from ethnoburbs to places of greater convenience as discussed by Balakrishnan and Gyimah (2003) and Murdie and Teixeira (2003).

Some researchers note that residential concentration could also be a result of choice (Bolt, Özüekren and Philips 2010; Owusu 1999), with minorities choosing to stay close to each other, and some dominant groups avoiding contact with minority members to protect and maintain their cultural identity (Agrawal 2010). Many studies in the Canadian context have concentrated on spatial assimilation, residential segregation and integration, mainly because of multiculturalism policies (Qadeer 2005; Balakrishnan and Hou 1999) but one area of constant interest has been the spatial concentration of immigrants, with an emphasis on minority immigrants' preferred location of settlement. Some researchers contend that immigrants will choose to live in Canadian cities and, preferably, closer to their ethnic group members to enable them to pool resources together, thereby developing these areas into ethnic enclaves (Teixeira 2007; Alba, Logan, Stults, Marzan and Zhang 1999; Owusu 1999). For instance, Owusu (1999), in his study of Ghanaian immigrant residential patterns and housing choices, found that most Ghanaian immigrants live in suburban districts of the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Interestingly, he found a relatively low incidence of reported housing discrimination among Ghanaians, and attributed it to the housing strategies they adopt by living with ethnic members. The findings from these studies confirmed that residential segregation along ethnic lines persists in Canada (Owusu 1999).

Although other researchers have argued that residential segregation would dwindle with a rise in the social class of immigrant minorities, residential concentration seems to persist among ethnic minority groups after controlling for social class (Myles and Hou 2004). Other studies suggest that residential segregation may take place because of social distance, as seen among recent arrivals of visible minorities in Canada, including Chinese, Blacks and South Asians (Balakrishnan and Gyimah 2003).

Most researchers have argued that residential segregation is taking place because of Canada's multiculturalism policy (Mendez 2009; Myles 2002), which recognizes the interplay of the forces of ethnic ancestry, ethnic network, and social capital, which is premised on the idea that the best way to integrate recent immigrants into Canada's social system is to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians, while working to achieve equality for all Canadians, in the country's economic, social, cultural and political spheres (Myles and Hou 2004). Although other studies suggest that ethnic clusters are primarily a consequence of systematic discrimination or poor socioeconomic resources (Mensah 2010; Balakrishnan et al. 2005).

Contrary to the above arguments on good neighbourhoods, Bauder (2002) observes that the notion of "neighbourhood effects" implies that individuals who live in so-called ghettos, barrios and slums are responsible for their own social and economic situation. Public discourse has embraced this assumption, and certain policies and social conventions have been put in place to enforce cultural exclusion and to facilitate acculturation. Further, Bauder (2002) argues that underprivileged communities do not actively isolate themselves from society and economic opportunities; rather, they are marginalized because of their cultural differences. Bauder's research demonstrates how neighbourhood effects are caused by a combination of local processes of identity formation and the perception by outsiders of a marginalized community (Bauder 2002). Bauder (2002, 2001) notes that the neighbourhood is influenced by both internal and external factors that are embedded in institutions such as schools, community centres and places of worship. Likewise, Ellen and Turner (1997) and Waldinger (1997) note that imposing a cultural identity on neighbourhoods with derogatory labels such as "ghetto" suggests that individuals living in these neighbourhoods have low skill levels, poor work ethics, and occupational incompetence, which usually deter employers from offering them jobs.

Similarly, Bolt et al. (1998) explain that neighbourhoods play an important role in the everyday lives of the inhabitants. The assumption is that living in a specific locale affects the life choices and opportunities of people. Bolt et al. (1998) argue that neighbourhoods can create the conditions that produce social exclusion as segregation and concentration limit the opportunities people have to participate in civil society, and reduce the likelihood of having even limited contacts with relevant individuals and institutions. They also argue that the residents of segregated districts

may have a negative image among the urban populace that could lead to exclusion from social services. Wilson (1987) contends that neighbourhoods that are heavily populated by minorities are usually perceived as poor and are likely to experience isolation from community resources, such as libraries, parks, clinics, schools, and community and business organizations. The interplay of the above factors—economic, political and social—determines the segregation of visible minorities in Canadian cities.

THE STUDY AREA: THE JANE AND FINCH

Jane and Finch is located at the intersection of two arterial roads in the northwest of the city of Toronto, Ontario, Canada—Jane Street and Finch Avenue West. “Jane and Finch” is defined both in terms of its physical attributes as well as an idea (Boudreau, Keil and Young 2009). The physical characteristics of the area are gas bars and shopping malls on three corners, and a 33-storey apartment building on the fourth. It is 16km northwest of downtown Toronto about 6km from north to south and 2km from east to west and populated by approximately 60,000 inhabitants (Boudreau et al. 2009). Jane and Finch is often referred to as a “corridor” comprised of the lands on either side of Jane Street from Highway 400 in the west to Black Creek in the east and from Highway 401 in the south as far north as Steeles Avenue, which is the boundary between the cities of Toronto and Vaughan (Boudreau et al. 2009).

As an idea, Jane and Finch is often construed by Torontonians to be located on the margins of Toronto society. It is perceived as an unattractive and unsafe part of town (Boudreau et al. 2009). “Jane and Finch” was branded very early in its development as a poorly planned place—in other words, a suburban ghetto (Boudreau et al. 2009). This branding has been perpetuated over several decades by repeated representations of the district in the mass media as a troubled area. It is almost impossible to find another reference to it in present-day discourse other than as the “crime ridden and impoverished Jane and Finch corridor” (Boudreau et al. 2009, 122). Jane and Finch area is characterized by substantially lower incomes and post-secondary education levels; bottom heavy population distribution, numerous lone parent families, old and recent immigrants, and people of colour (Boudreau et al. 2009), which is also where the majority of Ghanaians in Toronto reside (Mensah 2009).

GHANAIANS IN CANADA

Ghanaian immigration to Canada can be divided into two broad waves. The first wave lasted from the early 1970s to 1986, while the second wave has been occurring since the early 1990s, and continues at present, with the four-year period from 1987 to 1990 as a transition phase (Mensah 2002, 2010). Mensah (2010) contends that the migration of

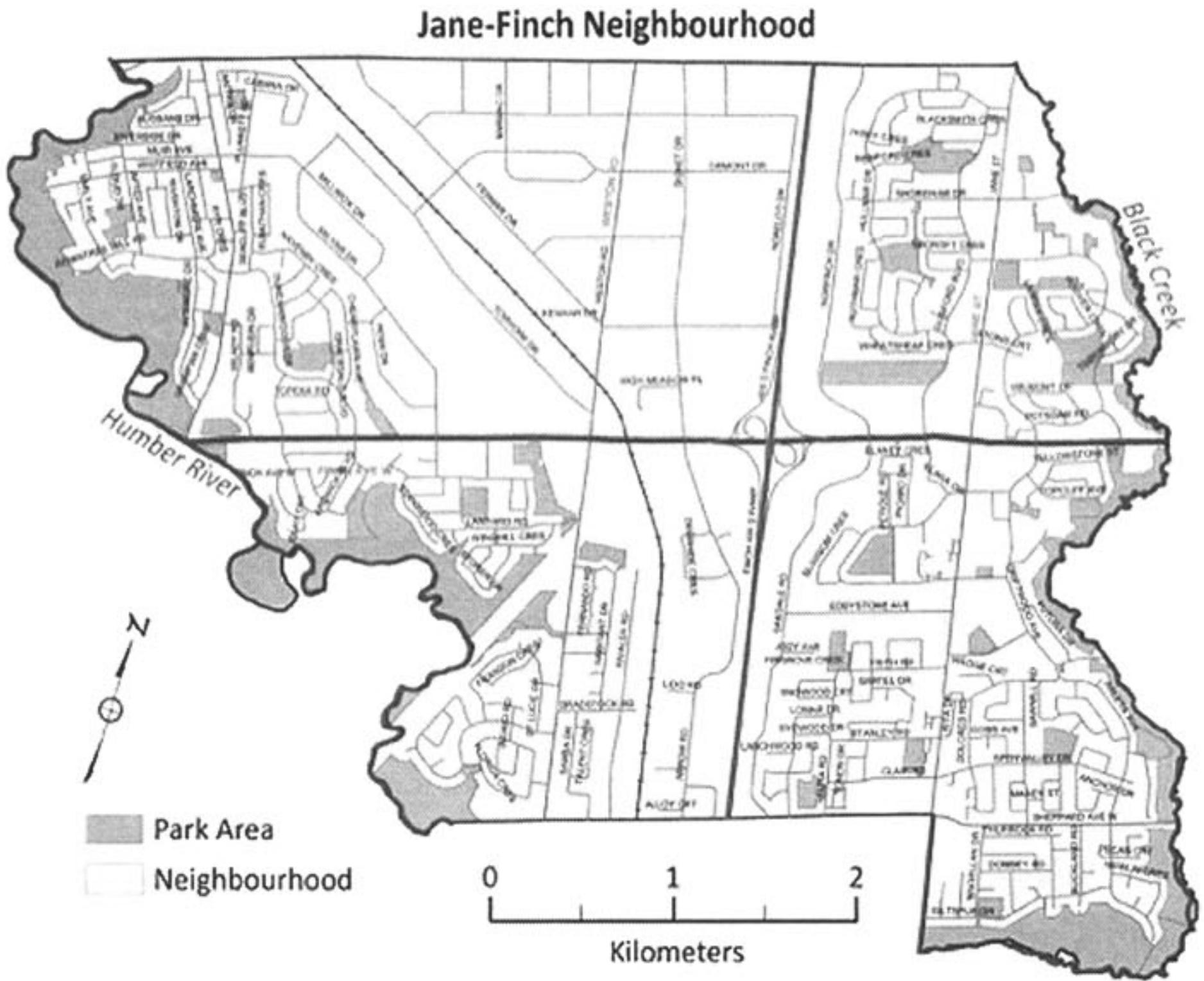


Fig. 1. The Study Area – The Jane-Finch Neighbourhood

Ghanaians to Canada was fuelled by the economic and political instability in Ghana and favourable immigration policies in Canada. In the 1970s, Ghanaian immigration to Canada comprised government-sponsored students who came to study, professionals in the education sector, health workers and a few political dissidents escaping persecution (Mensah 2002, 2010). Most of the first wave of Ghanaians settled in Ontario, specifically in Toronto, which has continued to be home for most Ghanaians in Canada (Owusu 1999; Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Mensah 2010).

Following the introduction of the *Immigration Act* of 1976, which incorporated the U.N. Convention’s definition of a refugee into Canadian law, the majority of Ghanaian political refugees came to Canada (Mensah 2010). Ghanaian immigration to Canada increased in the 1980s when Ghana’s economy plunged into crisis. The implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in Ghana also led to the retrenchment of civil servants, and severe cutbacks in health care and other social services (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Mensah 2010). With the economic crisis and political instability, many Ghanaians sought refuge in other countries, such as Canada (Mensah 2002, 2010; Owusu 1999).

At the beginnings of the 1970s and the 1980s, Canada was hit by economic recession, which led to restrictions on immigration. The second of those recessions was over by the mid-1980s, and the government of Canada increased the permitted number of refugees and family class immigrants, paving the way for more Ghanaians to emigrate (Opoku-Dapaah 2006; Mensah 2010).

The second wave of Ghanaian immigration to Canada began after the recession in early 1991. The category of migrants comprised students, political dissidents, and both skilled and unskilled workers, which increased the annual number of Ghanaian immigrants beyond one thousand (Opoku-Dapaah 2006). Studies have shown that the second wave of immigrants were less educated than the first wave; the former were of the refugee and family unification classes, in which educational background was not a key determinant of entry (Mensah 2002, 2010; Opoku-Dapaah 2006). This trend led to the upsurge of unemployment and English proficiency problems in the Ghanaian immigrant community. The number of Ghanaians entering Canada has been decreasing, albeit slowly, as a result of the introduction of Bill C-86, which has tightened the requirements of immigration, with more stringent medical examinations and increased immigration processing and landing fees. Additionally, Bill C-86 has introduced the fingerprinting of asylum seekers, and has empowered immigration officials to refuse refugee claim if the applicant traveled to Canada through a safe country or through any country in which the applicant could have applied for a refugee status (Mensah 2002, 2010; Donkor 2005).

A total of 23,200 Ghanaians were living in Canada by the time of the 2006 national census with the vast majority of the Ghanaian immigrant population in Canada—17,470—living in Ontario (Statistics Canada 2006). Other Canadian cities with sizeable Ghanaian immigrant populations are Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau, and Edmonton. Most Ghanaians in Toronto reside in older and newer suburban districts such as North York, Etobicoke, Mississauga and, increasingly, Brampton (Owusu 1999; Wong 2000; Mensah 2010). This spatial distribution stems from their desire to live closer to other Ghanaians, and the fact that they usually seek affordable public and private rental accommodations that are, most often, in the suburbs (Owusu 1999; Mensah 2002; Opoku-Dapaah 2006). A multiplicity of factors—economic, political and social—has resulted in the immigration trends evident in the Ghanaian community that moved to Canada.

METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants of the study and interviews were used for studying the subjective experiences and attitudes of individuals, households or groups (Roulston 2010; Creswell 2009; Silverman 2005). In this study,

participants were purposefully selected based on their age (18-30 years) and, also, on their being Ghanaian immigrant youth who had lived in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood for at least approximately six (6) months. This is because within six months most of the participants would have settled in; the most difficult adjustments normally occur during the few months after arrival.

The interview's flexibility makes it amenable for purposes of procuring data useful in this study. To procure primary data for this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 key informants between the ages of 18 and 30 (13 females and 12 males) and one focus group discussion (5 females and 3 males). The 25 key informants and the focus group discussion participants were recruited during an African Day celebration hosted by the Ghana Seventh Day Adventist Church in Toronto. The African Day celebration attracted Ghanaians and nationals of African descent living in the Greater Toronto Area. The interviews and focus group discussions were organised between May and August of 2011. Their background characteristics are: two participants had finished college, and were now working. Another had an undergraduate degree, and was employed, while the remaining participants were students in colleges and universities. One participant was employed as a part-time teacher at the Jane and Finch primary school during his summer vacation, but otherwise was a student at York University. The remaining participants combined school and work, and mostly worked part time when school was in session and full time during the summer holidays.

The interviews were guided by critical theme areas, including: participants' perceptions of social and spatial exclusion, their access to social services such as education, housing and employment, and use of sports and recreational facilities. The venues for the in-depth interviews were church premises and individual homes (16 out of 25). Also, some of the interviews were conducted by email and telephone (9 out of 25). The average interview lasted for about 60 minutes.

The focus group discussion (FGD) comprised eight participants (5 females and 3 males). The FGD lasted for approximately one hour. The consent of participants was sought before an audio recording device was used for interviews and FGD. Handwritten notes were used to capture information, such as group dynamics and body language of participants that the recorder could not capture. Interviews and the FGD were collated by drawing together thematic issues in order to identify patterns, similarities and differences.

The interviews and FGD were all transcribed, and data analysis began with re-reading the text from the transcripts and listening to the audio tapes several times to capture the meaning given to the participants' experiences of social and spatial exclusion. While re-reading the text, the research objectives helped in formulating the themes that were used in the data analysis. For instance, recurring themes in the

answers to a particular question were used to identify consistencies and differences. The next step was to thematically categorize the information, which was identified using the research objectives. In order to detect coherence, the text was re-read to get the meaning of the communication. Within major themes, sub-themes were identified to help refine the emergent issues affecting individual's feelings of exclusion. Issues emerging from the discussions were collated into the "memos", and incorporated into these thematic categories, until thematic saturation was attained (Baxter and Eyles 1997). The last stage was to use the themes and connections to explain the findings and their significance for the analysis.

After the interviews and FGD, the participants were debriefed, and member checking was done to ensure that the researcher (me) captured the exact wording of participants. This was done by mentioning the key themes that were discussed.

One of the shortcomings of this research was the sampling selection; I focused on Ghanaian youth in some specific churches due to accessibility of participants for the study. This could potentially have excluded some of the youth who were not members of the churches I used in my study, resulting in the loss of other insights which would have potentially enriched the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIO-SPATIAL DIALECTICS

The socio-spatial dialectics framework is used to examine the lived experiences of social actors that relate to social and spatial exclusion. The mechanisms that drive these experiences and their impacts on participants' access to social services, such as jobs, shopping malls, schools and surrounding neighbourhoods, are examined in detail. To date most researchers who have explored visible minorities' residential segregation, integration and assimilation in Canada have approached it through the lenses of the assimilation model and integrationist perspectives. Such studies are often focused on experiences in the housing market (Carter, Polveychok and Osborne 2009; Edmonston 2004) and the labour markets (Block and Galabuzi 2011; Wong 2000). In an attempt to understand the experiences of social and spatial exclusion among Ghanaian immigrant youth, it is imperative to approach this topic using the socio-spatial dialectic. In reviewing the literature, it is necessary to identify key mechanisms that influence socio-spatial exclusion: space as a social production, and socio-spatial dialectics.

The socio-spatial dialectic is the phenomenon where the spatial shapes the social, and vice versa (Soja 2011). Soja argues that socio-spatial dialectics help to assess or to recognize that the geographies in which we live can have negative as well as positive consequences on practically everything we do (Soja 2011, 1989). As a framework that focuses on the dialectical nature of the social and the spatial, the theory can help to

explain the extent to which Ghanaian immigrant youth are spatially excluded into black enclaves that feed into their social exclusions from mainstream locations such as clubs, employment and churches in the Greater Toronto Area.

Space as Social Production

The organization of space as a social product is contextual (Soja 2011, 1989; Lefebvre 1976; Harvey 1996). According to Soja (2011), the materialistic interpretation of spatiality is to recognize that spatiality is socially produced, and that society exists in two forms: as substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations between individuals and groups. According to Soja (2011), both the physical space of nature and the mental space of cognition and representation are incorporated into the social construction of space, but cannot be generalized as being equal. He indicates that the physical view of space has deeply influenced all forms of spatial analysis, whether philosophical and theoretical, practical and empirical, whether applied to the movement of heavenly bodies or to the history of the humanscape.

Understanding the spatial organization of society is important to understanding how social processes work, and the way they are conceptualized and acted upon politically (Massey 1985). Similarly, Sayer (1985) makes the point that space can only be understood in terms of the objects and processes that constitute it, implying that the study of space must be rooted in social theory. Dialecticians argue that space, in the sense of territory, is not just something existing outside and prior to society, but something produced by society (Sayer 1985). The spatial is therefore social (Massey 1985) which is why “to be alive is to participate in the social production of space, to shape and be shaped by a constantly evolving spatiality which constitutes and concretizes social action and relationship” (Soja 1985, 90). Soja explains that spatiality is portrayed as a social product and an integral part of the material constitution and structuration of social life. The implication is that spatiality cannot be appropriately understood and theorized separately from society; therefore, social theory must contain a central and encompassing spatial dimension.

The multidimensionality of the term ‘social space’ implies that whether it is in the form, content and distributional pattern of the built environment or the relative location of centres of production and consumption, or the political organization of space into territorial jurisdictions, the uneven geographical distribution of income and employment will be seen as rooted in a social origin, and filled with social meaning (Soja 2011, 1989).

Socio-spatial Dialectics

Dialectics is a philosophy or a method of discovering truth by discussing logical arguments, and considering ideas that are opposed to each other, and cognisant of

how two aspects of a situation affect each other (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts and Whatmore 2009). Dialectics emphasize processes, flows and relations with particular attention to contradictions in the processes and flows (Gregory et al. 2009; Harvey 1973) as well as the formation and duration of systems and structures; thus, processes, flows and relations constitute the form and shape that give rise to systems and structures (Harvey 1973). The basic argument is that immigrants' spatial exclusion precipitates their social exclusions from mainstream employment and housing. Thus, a dialectician would argue that one is socially excluded from employment because the same person is spatially secluded from where the jobs are. The two processes reinforce each other dialectically as unemployment can be the cause of the person's spatial seclusion, and it can also be the consequence of it. In relation to Ghanaian immigrant youth lived experiences of socio-spatial exclusion, socio-spatial dialectics will help us to understand how social processes produce the spatial processes that have turned Jane and Finch into a hub of socially excluded individuals. As defined here, socio-spatial dialectics would enhance our understanding of how social and spatial exclusion are mutually reinforcing. Anyone experiencing social exclusion is very likely caught up in the dynamics of spatial exclusion concurrently, and vice versa. Thus, low-income residents of Jane and Finch are just as socially excluded as they are spatially excluded from the rest of the GTA and its services.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: EXPERIENCES OF GHANAIAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH

Negative Label: Jane and Finch Neighbourhood—“You fit the description”

The negative label of Jane and Finch had the following consequences for the youth living in this neighbourhood. Some of these consequences include labour market access, racial profiling and access to other social services outside the neighbourhood. There were no significant gender differences between males and females; both male and female participants described similar experiences of social and spatial exclusion. Participants expressed profound concern about the negative public perception of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood. They especially said that Jane and Finch is “an off-limit neighbourhood” in the minds of many non-residents, characterised by a range of social ills, including a high concentration of criminal activities, youth deviant behaviour, low-income and unattached individuals, and drug and alcohol dependence with specific reference to the Ghanaian immigrant youth. As one informant reported, “it is seen as the bad part of town.” This stigma was reported to have far-reaching implications for the social and economic wellbeing of youth in the area, particularly the ethnic minorities, as captured in the quote below:

I've got to be totally honest with you...when people hear the name Jane and Finch it's like a dump—there are druggies everywhere in the neighbourhood. We're all druggies. It's like we're all nuts. It's like it has all the scungy housing and people.... Simply put, this is an area of Toronto, where the sun refuses to shine (Austin, 25, M).

Such negative sentiments appear ingrained with several respondents as they recount how this stereotyping affects their lives:

I think it's because Jane and Finch has had a bad reputation for awhile with the perceived violence, crime, drugs, and snobbery, it affects our entire lives...it impacts our self-esteem. So Jane and Finch's image has not been a very good one (Robert, 30, M).

According to the informants, the negative public perception about the area is due, in part, to sensational media reporting, especially in the event of a crime. Media reportage, the informants believe, has contributed to the neighbourhood's reputation as the “problematic neighbourhood of the GTA.” But one female respondent disputed this saying:

I think there are troublesome people, but it's not everyone here. It's just that it's in people's minds already that this area is a troubled spot. An ordinary conflict or police arrest from this area gets too much unnecessary attention (Serwaa, 28, F).

Nearly all of the informants maintained that the stereotypical labelling of Jane and Finch as a notorious and high crime neighbourhood has a significant adverse impact on their economic, social and overall access to resources. A major concern among Ghanaian immigrant youth living in this neighbourhood is their poor employment prospects. Participants indicated that accessing a job in Toronto with a Jane and Finch postal code on the résumé was problematic:

As soon as you tell potential employers of your postal code that's enough...you start to feel that your chance of landing that job is next to nothing. In fact, you can see from their faces that they're thinking—oh God, he is one of them. I definitely believe that we're treated differently because of where we live (Hanson, 27, M).

Along the same theme, another male participant observed:

You just have to mention the two letters 'J and F' and people go like what! They are stunned. Thereafter you're treated like a second-class citizen. It appears they expect a certain kind of individual to live there. Whether you're that type of person or not, it doesn't matter at that point, we're all tagged with the same label. We're all just scum to them (Austin, 25, M).

Participants also were of the view that such an image signifies the public perception about people living in Jane and Finch—“nothing good comes out of this neighbourhood.” As another youth shared his experience within a focus group discussion:

I've been to a number of job interviews and when potential employers look at your resume and you see their facial expression you automatically know what they are thinking.... It's like 'why are you living in that neighbourhood'? (FGDs-Youth).

To overcome this negative label in their job search, some of the informants mentioned that they resort to using a different mailing address on their job applications:

In terms of getting a job, I know some people who use different addresses. I kept Jane and Finch on my resume; I was not called for a job. This is because the neighbourhood is stigmatised as a place where all the bad people are, all the gangs and all the bad things happen in this neighbourhood (FGDs-Youth).

The participants repeatedly highlighted the level of stigma associated with the neighbourhood when discussing the barrier it poses to their employment. One informant rhetorically asked: “Why is it that when we change our neighbourhood address, we get the job? Are we not the same people?” (Yvonne, 26, F). The participants were firmly convinced that their locale affects their access to certain jobs and social services both in and outside of the Jane and Finch area. Even though informants demarcated their socio-spatial exclusion in numerous ways, there were some commonalities in their experiences within that neighbourhood and the GTA. According to Soja (2011), social and spatial processes are inseparable, and could be the cause of phenomena such as social exclusion. For instance, minorities residing in enclaves such as the Jane and Finch neighbourhood will try to escape racism based on their proximity to people of the same race. By being in the Jane and Finch area, however, such minorities tend to experience greater discrimination because the neighbourhood is stigmatized as bad (Boudreau et al. 2009). Such a scenario represents a clear case in dialectics, where a phenomenon can be “good” and “bad” at the same time (Soja 2011). Thus, the Jane and Finch neighbourhood can be viewed as both the cause and consequence of exclusion. The findings in this study revealed that Ghanaian immigrant youths' encounters with the boundaries of exclusion and inclusions have ultimately shaped their overall sense of belonging and integration within the GTA.

Respondents generally agreed that the applicant's education influenced the employer's perceptions of a potential employee. When a potential employee is from a dangerous neighbourhood and has attained a higher level of education, the applicant makes a positive impression and is likely to be offered the job. Conversely, when an individual from the Jane and Finch presents with a low educational attainment, they are unlikely to be employed. Clearly, the neighbourhood effect is not that

straightforward, as it depends on the context such as the employer, the type of position, and the achievements of the job seeker. Yet, there is no denying that geography has some impact on the employment chances of these youth.

To circumvent the barrier created by the stigma of Jane and Finch, some of the participants expressed the desire to relocate to other residential areas. A female participant in one in-depth interview who had lived in the area for eight years explained her understanding of the neighbourhood effect on her chances of securing employment:

I wished I relocated to other areas in the city because there is certainly a huge price that I pay simply by living in this area. But we are kind of locked up in a vicious cycle because you need a good job to be able to afford rent in these other places but you can't seem to get one because no one would employ you because you live here in the first place. It's as if you are stuck between a pair of scissors (Michelle, 30, F).

Indeed, it was evident from interviews that some participants preferred to relocate but their options were limited. Their residential mobility was constrained by income and access to capital producing a feeling of entrapment.

The stigmatization felt by the Ghanaian immigrant youth goes beyond employment issues as both male and female participants explained that living in the neighbourhood affects their integration into Canadian society. The reasons given for the lack of integration were twofold: first, because employment is a crucial element in immigrant settlement and integration into a host society, and second, the informants generally feel “like second-class citizens” because of the connotations of their neighbourhood. Phrases such as: “I don't belong”, “I feel like an outsider”, “this is not my home”, “I am a visitor”, and “I am not immersed here...” were common.

In addition, one of the implications of living in Jane and Finch was susceptibility to racial and neighbourhood profiling by the police. Participants generally expressed strong concern about this profiling by the police and such worries were highlighted by one informant who opined that “this practice is unfair and unacceptable.” Many youth from the area are arbitrarily stopped for police checks when driving around the neighbourhood:

I have been pulled over several times, sometimes more than once within a day by the same police officer. Usually they ask you all sorts of questions... license or if you've ever been charged before ...they typically follow with the phrase 'you fit the description' (Vincent, 28, M).

Others similarly blamed the neighbourhood in which they lived while describing their experiences with the police. One of the informants shared his experience this way:

I remember an occasion when I drove at night with my friends, we were stopped by the police and interrogated. They told us to go but one asked for our ID cards and when they saw the name of the neighbourhood they started asking us questions upon questions.... 'Whether we have been arrested before for a crime'.... Personally I think the neighbourhood led them to ask us these questions (John, 24, M).

In the FGD, the youth similarly linked the reputation of the neighbourhood and the frequency with which police stopped them on the road. Many respondents believe that they are stopped for police interrogation not for exceeding the speed limit, but because of the appearance or design of the car they drive. As one female respondent puts it: "the notion is that people who live here are 'no hoppers', 'rough', 'hoons', 'druggies', and 'crazies'...how could they afford such an expensive car?" Another respondent said:

I have been stopped, and I think this is because of the look of the car. It was a small car with tinted windows. I was coming from work, I was still in uniform and my friends came to pick me up. So the guy in front took out his license and they asked us all to get down and started the search. Another time I was standing in front of our building and a cop walked up to me and said you fit the description of someone who had committed murder in the neighbourhood (Joshua, 26, M).

The stigmatization associated with the neighbourhood significantly influences the integration of the Ghanaian immigrant youth within and outside Jane and Finch. For instance, the study indicates that Ghanaian youth experience socio-spatial exclusion because of the negative label associated with Jane and Finch. The youth maintained that having a postal code of the Jane and Finch catchment area on a resume limited their chances of being shortlisted for an interview by prospective employers. Respondents observed that their black colleagues who resided in Brampton and other neighbourhoods were more likely to be shortlisted for the interviews and consequently, employed.

This finding had dialectical implications: the youth perceived that some employers saw the youth from that neighbourhood in only a negative light, prompting the youth to use different addresses on their job applications. This is consistent with the findings of Bauder's (2002) study of youth in San Antonio, Texas in the United States where he found that employers and educators rejected applications from the Lanier area because of the perception that residents were unreliable and incompetent. It is also similar to Bertrand and Mullainathan's (2003) study on racial discrimination in the labour market in Boston and Chicago in the United States, where they found that applicants living in better neighbourhoods received more calls back for job interviews than those who lived in poorer ones. I would reiterate that the findings were not related to race but, rather, to the neighbourhood. On the

positive side, some employers thought of these youth as people who had endured a lot, and have accrued valuable life experiences, and are, therefore, worthy of support.

Put differently, contrary to the general belief that residing in Jane and Finch acts as a barrier in finding employment, two out of the 25 of the interviewees reported that living in this neighborhood had opened unlikely opportunities for them. According to these participants, some employers and employment agencies were astonished by their achievements and gave them chances in spite of them living in Jane and Finch. The dialectical nature of the experience of discrimination among Ghanaian immigrant youth is thus explained. As some youth accessed certain jobs because they lived in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood, others experienced exclusion. Also, while some youth saw Jane and Finch as the bane of their social and economic immobility, others viewed it as an advantage.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the social and spatial exclusion experienced by Ghanaian immigrant youth living in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood of Toronto, bringing critical insights into various ways in which social and spatial processes engender feelings and states of social exclusion. This paper addressed three key questions: how neighbourhood exclusion feeds into the everyday lived experiences of immigrant youth, what forms these social and spatial exclusions take and why they occur. Although there are earlier studies on visible minorities' experiences of social exclusion, the emphasis on socio-spatial dialectics in this study brings a different dimension to the topic. The dialectical nature of social and spatial processes offers initial evidence that exclusion of Ghanaian immigrant youth does exist in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood and, potentially, in the GTA. It has recently been observed that much of the literature on social exclusion and inclusion ignores the "spatial" or "mobility" dimensions. Social exclusion has a spatial dimension, and how this is expressed in space has not received much research attention. As people negotiating new social environments, and as common targets for racial discrimination, Ghanaian immigrant youths experience difficulties in constructing a sense of belonging and identity. Thus neighbourhood exclusion feed into the everyday lived experiences of Ghanaian immigrant youth and this is experienced through the forms of social exclusion, namely the negative label given to the Jane and Finch neighbourhood in Toronto. Participants were of the opinion that the public's perception of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood contributed to their experiences of social and spatial exclusion. As noted in the findings, participants continuously associated their experiences of access to the labour market and racial profiling to the negative label attached to the Jane and Finch neighbourhood. Participants were of

the view that the neighbourhood in which you live adversely influences your socialisation process outside the neighbourhood.

On the basis of the foregoing findings, I conclude that social exclusion is about unemployment as it impacts access to social services outside the neighbourhood (for example, the negative label of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood and limited access to resources). The Ghanaian immigrant youth in this study experienced exclusion while accessing shopping malls and restaurants inside the locale of Jane and Finch. Social regulation and stigmatized realities within constructions of private and public spheres and labour market disadvantages further restrict Ghanaian immigrant youth efforts toward inclusion (Creese 2011; Mensah 2010, 2002; Galabuzi 2006). It is clear that Ghanaian immigrant youth are spatially excluded in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood, and this, in turn, contributes to their limited access to employment opportunities, racial profiling and other forms of exclusion. Despite these challenges, the young immigrants were actively resisting marginalization, using creative and varied strategies (such as hiding their true neighbourhoods) to negotiate public spaces.

It is reasonable to argue that the association between social and spatial exclusions is dialectical. The socio-spatial dialectics that came out as a major finding is that the Jane and Finch neighbourhood has its physical and social advantages and disadvantages. In its physical sense, it has many public housing complexes that have been stigmatized as a low-income immigrant neighbourhood. Socially, inhabitants are discriminated against in their access to jobs.

Despite its acknowledged limitations, the present study contributes to the literature on race, ethnicity and integration of visible minorities in Canadian cities. Also, future research on immigrant youth integration should include a broader scope of immigrant youth (not just one immigrant group) to enable an extensive comparative study on the differences in the integration processes of immigrant youth in Canada.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Amal Madibbo (my PhD supervisor) and Dr. Rita Yembila for their feedback on earlier drafts of this paper, as well as my Master's thesis supervisors Prof. Joseph Mensah and Dr. Godwin Arku for their support during the writing of my thesis.

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