

# 3 Is diversity our strength? An analysis of the facts and fancies of diversity in Toronto

## Abstract

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A prominent characteristic of the city of Toronto is its increasing diversity, with half of the city's population being foreign-born. While the concept of diversity appeals to Toronto's reputation as a multi-cultural haven, the city's approach to managing diversity is becoming increasingly instrumentalist, i.e. diversity is considered an asset as long as its benefits are economically valuable. As a result, inner-city neighbourhoods in Toronto are thriving due to development projects and services, while the most diverse neighbourhoods in the inner-suburbs are left in a dire state.

This article presents an analysis of how the concept of diversity used within policy euphemises systemic discrimination and inequality based on race, class and gender. It serves to reveal the mismatch between policy rhetoric on diversity and its materialisation in the daily lives of the inhabitants of a low-income Toronto inner-suburb, by juxtaposing policy discourses with inhabitants' everyday experiences. By illustrating how inhabitants reproduce negative essentialised stereotypes based on diversity markers, the article argues that talking diversity as an alternative to or an escape from problematising the intertwined systems of race, class and gender oppression, could potentially serve to perpetuate them.

**Keywords:** *diversity, racism, class-based racism, gendered racism, Toronto*

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## § 3.1 Introduction

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The concept of diversity has recently evolved into a post-multiculturalism policy catchphrase. From education and employment to insurance and healthcare, catering to a diverse public has become a point of debate. With urban diversity on the rise due to trends including intensified global migration, population mobility,

and transnationalism, cities are adopting various methods of accommodating the increasing diversification of their populations. Similarly, within academic debates, there are increasing efforts to develop theories that address diversity in urban areas. Vertovec (2007) introduced the term 'super diversity' as a multidimensional perspective on diversity, referring to the interplay between social variables that pertain to the existence of social differences in urban areas. More recently, Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) have used the concept of 'hyper-diversity' to refer to an approach which goes beyond the unidimensional focus on ethnicity to address the complexity of diversity. Both the 'super-diversity' and 'hyper-diversity' approaches identify 'individual difference' and 'diversity within diversity' as central elements to the conceptualisation of diversity.

With over half of its population being foreign-born, Toronto is no stranger to urban diversity trends. Since 1997, the city has adopted the motto 'Diversity: Our Strength', which suggests the popularity of the discourse surrounding diversity. While the city brands itself as a multi-cultural haven, recent research indicates that the increasing diversity has been accompanied by a growth in income inequality, characteristic of the city, and segregation along income and ethnic lines (see Hulchanski, 2010). Although the city seemingly capitalises upon its diversity in its self-promotion, many of the diverse neighbourhoods located on the periphery of the city receive little attention and funds from the planning apparatus (Joy & Vogel, 2015). Similarly, Boudreau et al. (2009) contend that Toronto's approach to managing its diversity, although positive, is instrumentalist and. The instrumental approach to diversity diversity as a 'marketable asset', as long as its contributions are measurable in economic terms. In other words, diversity is positively perceived only as long as it can be capitalised upon for profit and economic gains. This approach to diversity is thus subject to dispute, due to its potential to exacerbate exclusion and inequality in the city. This is exemplified by the case of Jane-Finch, an inner-suburban neighbourhood in the North-west of Toronto, which reflects the highest levels of both diversity and poverty amongst all Toronto neighbourhoods. While affluent Toronto inner-city neighbourhoods thrive as a result of investments and development plans, insufficient attention is accorded to diverse inner-suburban areas such as Jane-Finch, where policy interventions are most needed. This suggests a disparity between the positive discourse surrounding diversity in Toronto and its manifestation in practice.

In light of the mismatch between diversity rhetoric and action, the primary objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between the discourses of diversity in policy and those reproduced and perpetuated by inhabitants who experience diversity on a daily basis. This is achieved through the juxtaposition of the policy discourses (derived from interviews with policy actors and by analysing policy documents) with inhabitants' everyday experiences of diversity. The study focuses specifically on an inner-suburban

neighbourhood, Jane-Finch, which is noted for both its demographic diversity and high concentration of poverty. The selection derives from the assumption that, if diversity is an asset, its positive contributions should pertain not only to affluent inner-city areas, but to all neighbourhoods including impoverished, peripheral areas like Jane-Finch. Does diversity contribute positively to all neighbourhoods, or is a luxury commodity from which only a select group of affluent inner-city patrons can benefit? Does positive diversity discourse go beyond rhetoric to guide behaviour? Answering these questions requires not only a close interrogation of the discourses surrounding diversity, but also grounding these discourses in concrete contexts i.e. exploring how diversity is experienced by inhabitants in practice. While multiple research contributions have highlighted epistemological paradoxes and contradictions in diversity, much of the research on diversity to date remains particularly theoretical in nature. The few existing empirical studies on critical diversity focus predominantly on diversity within organisational settings, management and higher education, rather than on inhabitant diversity at the urban scale (Ahmed, 2007a; 2007b; Benschop, 2001; Essed, 1991; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Litvin, 2002; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Furthermore, existing research favours the narratives of diversity practitioners and policy makers over the narratives of those belonging to historically-disadvantaged groups (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010). The existing body of critical literature can benefit from deep empirical investigations of the discourse and practice of urban diversity which takes into account the perspectives, narratives and experiences of inhabitants (as opposed to the perspectives of policy makers and practitioners only). This is a goal to which this article seeks to contribute.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, a brief overview of existing literature on diversity is presented. Secondly, the research approach and methods used to analyse diversity discourses in urban policy and in the lives of inhabitants are outlined. After a brief introduction to Toronto and the case study area respectively, the analysis is presented. Lastly, the results of the comparative analysis are discussed along with the implications of these findings for Toronto policy as well as for future research.

## § 3.2 Diversity theory and discourses

### § 3.2.1 Diversity

In academic literature, various approaches have been used to conceptualise diversity in urban areas. Some approaches are singular in their focus and concentrate on identifying the 'differences' leading to diversity. These include assimilation, neo-assimilation and cultural pluralism. Other approaches like multi-culturalism, post-multi-culturalism and cosmopolitanism address multiple dimensions of diversity. Although both sets of approaches have contributed significantly towards conceptualising diversity, they have been subject to criticism. The former category is criticised for its failure to capture the dynamic and multiple affiliations of individuals (Hollinger, 1997; Vertovec, 1999), while the latter tends to focus on ethnic and cultural identities, and does not sufficiently address additional factors influencing new diversities in the contemporary urban society, e.g. lifestyles, opportunities, attitudes and activities (Vertovec, 2010; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010; Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). These criticisms make way for a third category of more recent theoretical developments and approaches to diversity, which address multiple dimensions of diversity as well as the interplay and interaction between them. Examples of these approaches include inter-culturalism, super-diversity and hyper-diversity.

Vertovec's (2007) concept of super-diversity refers to the interplay between the variables contributing to the creation of social difference and population diversity in urban areas, and is presented as a multidimensional perspective on diversity (Humphris, 2014; Vertovec, 2007). While super-diversity has broadened the understanding of diversity, the concept is fairly limited in its scope, focusing only on contemporary immigrant-based urban diversity. Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) further criticise the concept for its limited spatial focus on new patterns of segregation, particularly in relation to new immigrant groups, and on new experiences of space and contact. As an alternative, Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) introduce the concept of 'hyper-diversity'. Unlike super-diversity, hyper-diversity does not focus only on new immigrant communities, but on "a wider scope of a diversity that includes different lifestyles within and between groups, and spatial segregation in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic variables as well as including trends in the native population, and their impact on the relationships with newcomers" (18). At its core, hyper-diversity acknowledges that people belonging to the same ethnic group may demonstrate different attitudes, orientations, values, and activity patterns, and engage in

different daily and lifetime routines. Thus, categories under which people are usually classified (e.g. class or immigrant groups) have less and less predictive power over these matters.

### § 3.2.2 Problems with diversity and its variations

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The concept of diversity has been subject to stringent criticism, particularly from feminist, critical race and post-colonial scholarship (Stratton & Ang, 1994; Essed & Goldberg, 2002; Puwar, 2004; Gunew, 2004; Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Ahmed, 2007a; 2007b). Ahmed (2007a) criticises diversity for being detached from histories and struggles for justice, thus propagating rather than transforming organisational structures. For Benschop (2001), the notion of diversity does not appeal strongly enough to social justice. Critical scholarship in educational studies and management studies often problematise diversity, highlighting its depoliticised deployment within management, which individuates difference and conceals collective experiences of systemic discrimination and inequality. In addition, talking about diversity does not necessarily entail commitment to practising diversity (Deem & Ozga, 1997).

While more recent approaches to diversity (i.e. super-diversity and hyper-diversity) address population diversity more comprehensively, they too have been criticised for focusing primarily on 'global cities', overlooking the more deteriorated, dilapidated and remote rural and suburban outlying areas (Humphris, 2014). This is despite increasing evidence for both the escalating poverty and racialisation of north-American suburbs (Frey, 2001; 2006; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Murphy, 2007; Holliday & Dwyer, 2009). Furthermore, these theories tend to 'flatten differences' i.e. fail to consider the various social positions and hierarchies within and between categories of difference. Issues of power, social position and politics are thus often neglected in the methodology and analysis of frameworks such as super-diversity and hyper-diversity. In addition, addressing many different categories within one theoretical approach, or in the words of Judith Butler (1990), 'the exhaustion of the et cetera', brings about challenges in the conceptualisation, operationalisation and conduction of research (Ibid). Super-diversity research has been said to cause analytical confusion (Sigona 2013), in that its scope of analysis is particularly broad. As a result, it may be unclear whether the super-diversity is related to an individual, the neighbourhood, the city, or society as a whole. The absence of power from super-diversity scholarship further results in a non-critical stance in relation to diversity. In summary, conventional unidimensional notions of diversity allow for the consideration of one category at a time, while multi-dimensional diversity frameworks like super-diversity and hyper-diversity address

different categories at once. Neither approach, however, takes into account the intersection of different categories, and thus fails to adequately address issues of privilege and oppression.

### § 3.2.3 Diversity and multiculturalism in Canada

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In Canada, multiculturalism is a state-initiated enterprise, with its dedicated legal structures consisting of legislation, policies and administrative bureaus. Sociologist Himani Bannerji (2000) identifies multiculturalism as a state-sanctioned, state-organised ideological affair which found entry onto the Canadian political stage following the influx of immigrants from ex-colonised third world countries throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This increase in immigration is attributed to the Liberal Party's open-door immigration policy, adopted in alignment with Canada's aspiration for capitalist growth and liberal democracy. As a result, multiculturalism did not target, nor was it inspired by, European immigrants, despite their outstanding cultural and linguistic differences (Bannerji, 2000).

The discourse of multiculturalism in Canada holds at its core the notion of diversity, which, in its political use, transcends its descriptive function as a discourse and emerges instead as a social management tool. From a purely descriptive stance, diversity addresses heterogeneity and difference without considering the underlying power relations. As a political tool, however, the notion of diversity detaches difference from its political and cultural content. Diversity's political function is thus to depoliticise, i.e. On the one hand, it culturalises our existence and politics by presenting social being as a matter of cultural essence. On the other hand, it disarticulates culture from hegemony, providing a de-politicised and de-materialised reading of culture (Bannerji, 2000; 1991; Kymlicka, 1995; Goonewardena, Rankin & Weinstock, 2004). In the words of Bannerji (2000), the ideological nature of diversity is evident from *"its frequent use and efficacy in the public and official, that is, institutional realms. [...] serving as a form of moral regulation of happy co-existence, [...] it helps to obscure deeper/structural relations of power, such as racism and sexism or racist heterosexism, [...] and reduces the problem of social justice into questions of curry and turban"* (547; 549). Thus, by obscuring power and structure (de-politicization), and erasing Canada's colonial history (de-historicisation), the discourse of diversity and the politics of multiculturalism can hinder structural and social change and result in maintaining the status quo of inequality and domination.

In addition to Bannerji’s critical work, multiple studies have indicated a gap between official word and deed when dealing with multiculturalism generally (Qadeer, 1997; Milroy & Wallace, 2001; Siemiatycki et al, 2003) and Canadian multiculturalism particularly (Goonewardena, Rankin & Weinstock, 2004; Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005; Siemiatycki, 2011; Rankin & McLean, 2015). There is, however, much to be gained from deep empirical investigation as the existing critical literature mostly stays at the level of theorization. This study thus aims to contribute to the same line of inquiry, by providing empirical evidence to our understanding of how the reality of diversity compares with its premise as a political discourse.

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## § 3.3 Research Methods

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### § 3.3.1 Data collection

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Data was collected across two different fieldwork periods, conducted between September and November 2013, and September and October 2014 respectively. In the first period, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 key government and non-government policy actors and social planners. The purpose of these interviews was to highlight the dominant discourses regarding diversity in Toronto’s policy sphere. In addition to the data arising from the interviews, 21 of Toronto’s urban policy documents were analysed. The selection of policy documents encompasses documents that were identified by informants as most relevant for the governance of diversity in Toronto. These documents fall under 9 policy areas, viz. General Urban Policy; Children and Youth; Citizenship, Integration, and Newcomers; Education; Housing; Neighbourhood Policy; Safety; Social Services, including policy for Women, Homeless and Disabled people; and Work and Income. In addition, governmental and non-governmental views on policy addressing diversity were elicited.

The second fieldwork period consisted of 50 semi-structured interviews conducted with inhabitants of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The informants were initially recruited through local associations, and later via snowballing. The aim of these interviews was to identify the main discourses commonly used by inhabitants and to explore how diversity is experienced by people in their day-to-day lives. While the interview sample represents multiple dimensions

of diversity in Jane-Finch, it comprises mostly female informants (36 out of 50 informants). For detailed information regarding the informants, see appendix. This was partly due to logistics i.e. time constraints and limited access to male informants due to their low participation rates in local associations. Interviews were also conducted mostly during working hours when the male members were unavailable due to work, school, etc. Young racialised males aged 18-35 were especially hard to reach. This in itself is an interesting observation, as many of the interviewed service providers and youth outreach workers admitted to facing difficulties in serving and accessing young racialised males, who are considered to be most at risk of becoming involved in drugs, gangs and violent acts in the area (Ahmadi & Tazan-Kok, 2014).

The data was analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a methodology allowing for the exploration of not only the meaning and construction of discourses, but also their relation to the social structures and power relationships that shape them. It also allowed me to investigate why certain representations seem to dominate our thinking, despite the potential diversity of the discourse (Bryman, 2008). The Nvivo software was used to code and categorise the qualitative data, which eased navigation of the data, given that the sample was relatively large for qualitative research. It further allowed for the identification of themes in the data and the creation of linkages and relationships.

The analysis was guided by the following research questions:

- 1 *To what extent do dominant policy discourses regarding diversity in Toronto resemble those of the inhabitants, based on their daily experiences with diversity?*
- 2 *How do diversity discourses impact inhabitants' perceptions of their neighbours?*
- 3 *How do these discourses impact inhabitants' interactions with neighbours?*
- 4 *To what extent do inhabitants prioritise diversity when making relocation decisions?*

Therefore, this study seeks to both explore the discourses of diversity reproduced by policy and inhabitants, as well as how inhabitants experience diversity in their daily lives.

Discourses, as defined by Rogers (2004), are systemic clusters of themes that function as 'ways of representing'. In other words, discourse is "a way of constituting a particular view on social reality" (Bryman, 2008: 501). Discourses give meaning to social life, make certain actions possible or desirable, and are used by different actors in society to legitimise their activities and positions (Ibid). Gibson (2005) suggests that research should avoid a reductionist approach by pursuing detailed analyses of discourses which are situated in "the material context of both their production and reception" (1693). Gotham (2004) similarly stresses the merits of investigating the "economic, political and social forces that are entangled with cultural images and discursive practices".



The importance of situating an analysis of discourses in socioeconomic and political context is further emphasised by Young et al. (2006). This study seeks to further contribute to literature which grounds textual and discursive analysis in context, in alignment with contributions made by Gotham (2004), Gibson (2005), and Young et al. (2006).

### § 3.3.2 Introduction to the case study area

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The research was conducted in the city of Toronto, Canada, which boasts a current population of 2.79 million, with 5.6 million in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Bourne, Hutton, Shearmur & Simmons, 2011). Toronto is considered to be one of the most diverse cities in the world based on its population statistics. According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), Toronto's metropolitan area population comprises 46.0% foreign-born and 52.4% Canadian-born (non-immigrant) citizens. Of the Canadian-born nationals, 0.7% are Aboriginal (Statistics-Canada, 2011). While factors of globalisation, population flow, and increased migration have led to greater diversity within the city, many newcomers face discrimination in the labour market, they have limited access to resources (in particular, affordable housing), and are subject to poor quality of life. In reality, Toronto is a polarised city wherein spatial and socio-economic inequality among residents is steadily increasing (Joy & Vogel, 2015). The city's population reflects more than 200 different ethnic groups, many of whom were original settlers to inner-city Toronto, and who, in recent years, are facing increasing suburbanisation (Joy & Vogel, 2015; Siemiatycki, 2011). As a result, many immigrants have settled in areas of concentrated poverty, including two of Toronto's inner-suburbs, Scarborough and North York. Toronto's 'new' immigrants face challenges in finding affordable and adequate housing, discrimination in the housing market, and overcrowding (Preston et al., 2011). In addition to insufficient affordable public and private housing, Toronto's inner-suburbs reflect a high resident turn-over, poor infrastructure, and gang- and gun-violence-related issues (Joy & Vogel, 2015). Planning efforts in Toronto have thus been criticised by multiple scholars for promoting elitist inner-city reformist politics, which grants insufficient attention to working-class and migrant populations in the inner-suburbs, particularly in terms of their access to housing and their employment conditions (see Joy & Vogel, 2015; Boudreau, 1999; Boudreau, Keil & Young, 2009).

The research was conducted in Jane-Finch, a neighbourhood located in the inner-suburb of North York in the northwest end of the GTA. Jane-Finch was originally developed as a model suburb in the 1960s with adequate public housing, and was

intended to be host to a socially diverse population. Initially it included a large stock of public housing and experienced a considerable wave of immigration from the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Africa, and South America. The neighbourhood has one of the highest proportions of youth, sole-supported families, refugees and immigrants, people without a high-school diploma, low-income earners, and public housing tenants of any community in Toronto. In addition, an equally diverse population is accommodated in middle-class detached and semi-detached houses, townhouses, and high-rise tower blocks in Jane-Finch (Ahmadi & Tasan-Kok, 2014). Contradictions in Toronto’s planning (i.e. valuing diversity in rhetoric, but overlooking the working class and minority-occupied inner-suburbs despite their rich diversity) render Jane-Finch the ideal case study in which to compare discourses surrounding diversity in policy and in practice.

	TORONTO	JANE-FINCH
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	632	21
Total population	2,503,000	80,150
<b>Age</b>		
0-19	16.1%	43.4%
20-64	69.9%	43.1%
>65	14.0%	13.6%
Percentage of population not born in Canada	50.0	60.0
Persons 25 or over without a school certificate, diploma or degree	18%	35%
Average household income	C\$80,300	C\$53,900
Unemployment rate	6.7%	9.2%

TABLE 3.1 Key characteristics of Jane-Finch and Toronto / Source: Statistics Canada, 2006

## § 3.4 Policy diversity discourses

Diversity is considered a positive attribute by Toronto policies, and the concept is used to promote Toronto’s image as an inclusive and tolerant city. Diversity is defined in policy as a “*key competitive strength upon which the City must build*” (Immigration and Settlement Policy Framework, 2000), and “*a source of social, cultural and economic enrichment and strength, and of national/international prestige*” (City of Toronto Multilingual Services Policy, 2002). Although the City of Toronto’s Strategic

Action 2013-2018 policy identifies the promotion and celebration of diversity as key components of the city's vision (3), it also suggests that diversity be considered an economic driver and asset that should be leveraged (14). These examples all show how in Toronto policy diversity is embraced mainly because it can potentially be capitalised on for economic gain. Diversity is thus celebrated for its economic and monetary potential and for its capacity as a competitive tool. However, regarding diversity as positive only when it can bring about economic benefits requires rendering invisible types of diversity that are not economically beneficial. For example, racialised lower-income families would be unlikely to contribute to a positive, potentially economically-beneficial view of diversity, and are thus overlooked by policy-makers in talking about diversity. For instance, it would be hard to believe that a racialized lower-income family is perceived to contribute to such diversity.

The instrumentalisation of diversity as a competitive advantage is most visible in the Toronto Economic Development Strategy (2000), which states that:

*“Regional competitive advantage is derived from building upon the particular and unique strengths of that region, the strengths that Toronto has that its competitor cities may not. These strengths include Toronto's ethnic diversity. [...] Toronto also has the greatest cultural, linguistic and socio-economic diversity of any city in the world. These are key competitive strengths the City must build on. [...] [diversity] is what inspires creativity and innovation, creating opportunities in so many different areas of endeavour, and it is why Toronto is home to so many talented artists, educators, entrepreneurs, skilled tradespeople, researchers, professional, and community leaders.”*

As stated in the quote above, diversity in Toronto is marketed as a competitive strength in policy, bolstered by those groups who contribute to creative industries, arts and culture and the economy of the city. However, by disregarding groups who are considered unable to contribute to economic competitiveness (e.g. the homeless, the racialised poor, welfare recipients etc.), policy discourses create a subtle differentiation between what is perceived as desirable and undesirable diversity. Therefore, the types of diversity that cannot be capitalised upon for economic gains are regarded as undesirable. Because income inequality is closely related to geographical location in Toronto (i.e. a concentration of poor, racialised communities in the inner-suburbs), undesirable diversity and those groups representing it are disregarded not only in policy discourses, but also in property investments. This in turn bears further spatial consequences for the city (e.g. segregation and gentrification in the inner-city).

Discourses reproduced by policy actors during interviews reflect the celebration and promotion of diversity as a marketable asset evident in policy documents. Identifying

Toronto's diversity as a *tremendous asset and strength*, one policy maker stated the following:

*"People who uproot their lives, sometimes taking significant risks to come to this country, are already somewhat entrepreneurial. I think we still need to figure out how to unleash some of that entrepreneurial potential [...] and think about how to take advantage of the fact that Toronto is one of the most diverse cities in the world. in terms of both developing a more entrepreneurial based economy, providing more opportunities for people to unleash those energies and also taking advantage of their amazing connections across the globe to better situate ourselves competitively in a global economy." [Male, City of Toronto's Employment and Social Services, Director]*

Emphasis on the financial benefits of diversity appeared to be a common thread among many interviews. Furthermore, the interviews highlighted the fact that even though the discourses surrounding diversity in policy transcend the conventional categories of ethnicity and gender, they often operate at an individual level.

*"Often everybody thinks about diversity as a room full of different colours, but it is not about that. For me it was recognising individual diversity and the uniqueness of the individual". [Female, City of Toronto's Park, Forestry & Recreation, Community Recreation Branch, Manager of community development]*

Therefore, while diversity appears to be widely celebrated in policy, implicit differentiations between types of diversity are evident, based on whether the type of diversity is considered to be competitively advantageous or not. This in turn creates a hierarchy among diversity types and those who embody them.

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## § 3.5 Inhabitants' diversity discourses

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Living with ethnic and cultural diversity is considered a daily reality in Jane-Finch. The majority of informants were aware of their neighbours' cultural backgrounds, and positively appraised the diversity in their immediate surroundings. The area's long history with and extensive experience of diversity, coupled with the legacy of the Canadian multiculturalism policy, has promoted a general civility towards diversity in the neighbourhood. Diversity has thus become 'common place' in Jane-Finch, and local residents experience it as a normal aspect of their daily lives. Common-place diversity emerges over time as an outcome of processes of neighbourhood

diversification (Wessendorf, 2013). However, despite the normalisation of diversity in Jane-Finch, the interviews revealed a disparity between the reproduction of positive narratives about diversity and the inhabitants' daily experiences of diversity. In fact, *civility towards diversity* in Jane-Finch goes hand in hand with *essentialisation* based on race, class, and gender, among other markers i.e. categorising people into groups which exhibit fixed mental and behavioural traits (Biddis 1979). While diversity is generally positively appraised, inhabitants' perceptions of themselves, each other, and the area in general are shaped largely by racist and classist stereotypes. Although diversity is celebrated, tension along axes such as class, gender and race still exist. This resonates with some residents' understanding and perceptions of diversity, and a common discourse amongst the residents is the fear or pathologisation of the undesirable 'other', for example the poor, welfare recipients, blacks, single mothers, and racialised youth. This is exemplified in a quote by Johnny, a middle-aged Indian homeowner, who commented on the difference between how he perceives other homeowners in his street and those living in Toronto housing:

*"This part is all retired people and people who have settled down here and bought houses, right? But I think if you go a bit down there is a lot of people living on welfare and so they have a different set of constraints. [...] There should be work done, I think in terms of people getting educated and more civically conscious so that they know their civic duties. That okay this is a house for us and we can take ownership as opposed to being entitled. Turning from a purely welfare mentality. For some of us because of that background and upbringing it comes naturally but for some people it does not happen at all." [Male, Indian, 46-60, homeowner]*

The quote provides an example of how essentialised characteristics are attributed to welfare recipients, especially regarding civic consciousness, responsibility and entitlement. It also suggests a sense of superiority and paternalism on the part of non-welfare recipients, evident in Johnny's suggestion that welfare recipients need to *be educated into civic responsibility*. It should be noted that the existing stock of Toronto housing in Jane-Finch accommodates mostly racialised (often female-headed) households, and that essentialisation and stereotyping of these households take place at the intersection of race, class and gender. Stereotypes targeting working-class residents, welfare recipients in particular, were especially common among homeowners and households living in the slightly more affluent parts of the area.

In many instances, civility towards diversity did not go beyond lip service as many seemed to hold double standards when it came to attitudes towards diversity, especially in terms of the tensions experienced in daily encounters. For example, Gloria, an elderly Jamaican resident, expressed very positive sentiments towards the

general diversity of the neighbourhood but adhered to stereotypes when describing a conflict with a neighbour:

*“She uses the Muslim card, oh you don’t like me because I’m a Muslim. So if anybody says anything she’ll complain that you are doing it because she is a Muslim! So people don’t want to talk. Diversity is not supposed to be like that. And if a Muslim person is someone like that who can come in and terrorise other people, you can’t do anything because she is a Muslim.” [Female, Jamaican, 61-75, Private housing resident]*

Gloria, in this quote, emphasises the religious identity of her neighbour above any other marker when putting the tension experienced into context. The expression ‘using the Muslim card’ further trivialises issues such as Islamophobia and discrimination towards Muslims (Hooks, 2003).

Notwithstanding the general positive sentiment towards diversity among informants, individuals belonging to minority groups commonly reported facing prejudice and micro-aggressions in the area. Heba, an Egyptian Toronto-housing resident in her 50s, described her experience of prejudice from neighbours for wearing a hijab as follows:

*“No, I am not similar to lots of people in Jane-Finch because of my culture and my religion. I am different because you know, I’m a Muslim. They are Christian and have different religions. Some people mind or don’t agree that I wear that [points to her scarf]”. [Female, Egyptian, 46-60, Public housing resident]*

Furthermore, we observed that informants’ perceptions of diversity influenced their interactions with others. For example, the aforementioned double standard of civility towards diversity on the one hand, and stereotyping and prejudice on the other, impacted the way that residents interacted with one another. A common reaction from informants who have internalised negative stereotypes was that they would prefer to avoid contact with specific groups and using certain spaces, rather than embracing diversity. Gita, an Indian homeowner, expressed her disdain for the Toronto-housing-occupied part of the neighbourhood:

*“I like my street mostly and the nearby area here. I don’t like to go close to the Jane-Finch area, I don’t know, because of crime, the black people live there, they bother the people sometimes.” [Female, Indian, 31-45, homeowner]*

This is an example of stereotyping at the intersection of race and class as it targets, particularly, black Toronto-housing residents. Gita also indicated that her perception was not based on first-hand experience, but on rumours and negative representations in the media. Jane-Finch suffers from a long-standing stigma which further impacts

inhabitants' perceptions of the neighbourhood. It is important to note here that stereotypes and essentialised traits are not only imposed on minority groups by the white Canadian majority, but are also internalised and reproduced daily by minorities themselves. As Gita exemplifies, some informants actively tried to dissociate themselves from the most stigmatised part of the area which is the Jane-finch intersection, associated with poverty, crime, gang-related shootings and drugs. Efforts to dissociate often included residents reproducing negative narratives about the area. This signals the internalisation of an '*inferiority complex*' by minorities, in which they are made to feel inadequate for not adopting the social, cultural and racial norms of the dominant white society (Fanon, 1967). Interestingly, many of the minority residents project this inferiority complex onto other groups deemed more inferior, for example the poor or welfare residents, by reproducing degrading stereotypes.

Regarding the impact of diversity on relocation decisions, based on the interviews it can be stated inhabitants' primary motives for moving to Jane-Finch included affordability of housing and goods in the area, availability of Toronto housing, having social ties in the area, and size and conditions of the dwelling (see Ahmadi & Tasan-Kok, 2015). As previously indicated, Toronto has experienced an ongoing trend of segregation by income. In less than a decade, the city has polarized into wealthy inner-city neighbourhoods and low-income neighbourhoods in the inner-suburbs (Hulchanski, 2010). The polarization is further accompanied by geographic segregation along axes of race, ethnicity, and poverty (Ahmadi & Tasan-Kok, 2013; Hulchanski, 2010; Mustafa, 2013). Thus, the assumption that inhabitants simply 'choose' to relocate to inner-suburban neighbourhoods is simply benign to the broader structural forces that ultimately direct housing decisions. As Hulschanski (2010) rightfully contends, "*it is money that buys choice*". The influx of racialised residents into lower-income inner-suburban neighbourhoods like Jane-Finch over the past years is thus an outcome of the reality that a growing number of ethnic and racialized households in Toronto hold relatively few resources and as a result fewer choices in the housing market. This is exemplified by a quote by Julia, an Argentinian homeowner in her early 40s, regarding her purchase of a house in Jane-Finch despite finding the area unattractive:

*"It was because of our budget that we had to buy in this area, because if we were going to go to another area it was really expensive but I don't really like the area." [Female, Argentinian, 31-45, homeowner]*

Diversity is thus a de facto outcome of the availability and affordability of housing in Jane-Finch to lower-income ethnically racialised households, rather than a direct pull factor. When making relocation decisions, household resources and specific housing market characteristics tend to outweigh diversity. Diversity influences relocation decisions in the form of preference for proximity to members of the same ethnic group

or already existing social ties. However, for most informants, affordability was said to be the main reason for choosing to live in Jane-Finch (see Ahmadi & Tazan-Kok, 2015). Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s who works as a service provider in the area, similarly recognises diversity in Jane-Finch as consequential:

*“Yes, in many instances you can say that probably people want to live close to their friends and family but I would say, and you know it is natural that you want to make the best out of the reality [...] I will suggest to you that a lot of people end up living here and you know simply because that’s what you can afford”. [Male, Chilean, 46-60, homeowner]*

Diversity appears to be secondary to issues such as poverty, discrimination in the housing market and socio-economic inequality.

Many of the discussions with community workers and non-profit actors revealed that diversity talk is often used to avoid talking about structural inequality (particularly based on race and class) and thus euphemises the subtle oppressions encoded therein. In the following quote, an informant explains the political nature of discourses of diversity and multiculturalism and how they can result in exclusion:

*“At the policy level, we have a problem in Canada because we must hide the problem under the disguise of multiculturalism. Oh, we have a wonderful life, we are very inclusive. But when we talk about inclusion we actually marginalise a lot of other groups. [...] Multiculturalism works at the very political level. I call them photoshoot opportunities!” [Female, Social Planning Toronto, Community planner]*

Similarly, another social worker based in Jane-Finch contended that positive diversity talk, often accompanied by images of ‘happy colourful faces’ as a visual translation of the metaphor (see Kandola & Fullerton, 1994), does not go beyond rhetoric to create inclusive outcomes:

*“On many levels we have been able to come up with languages that will mask the bad odour so the whole notion of inclusion and all those, Canadians are very good at saying those things and that makes you feel very welcome. But if you look at the practices that will tell you where the problems are. [...] In some ways, the glamorisation [of diversity] is like those Benetton ads.” [Male, Chilean, 46-60, homeowner]*

Diversity and multiculturalism can thus be instrumentalised within policy to side-line socio-economic inequality and discrimination. By leaving locations of marginality and subordination unattended, diversity runs the risk of not only failing to implement structural change, but potentially preventing it.



## § 3.6 Analysis and discussion

The empirical analysis indicates that diversity is largely normalised in Toronto. There does, however, seem to be an unwritten distinction between desirable and undesirable forms of diversity, as certain forms are left out of the policy discourse. The policy discourses have thus led to a normalization of hegemonic discourses regarding diversity. On the one hand, they have set the agenda that diversity is good, thereby creating civility towards it. On the other hand, this normalization does not pertain to any type of diversity but rather to its acceptable forms (e.g. entrepreneurs and creative types). Diversity is therefore simultaneously valued and pathologised.

In marketing the imagery of Toronto as a city that accepts and celebrates diversity as its strength, marginalized groups and lifestyles are excluded, as keeping up with this imagery requires not only economic capital but also cultural capital and performance of certain lifestyle which includes particular forms of consumption and taste. Similarly, the marketed identity of a hyper-diverse individual as mobile and fluid contradicts that of the immobile working-class other. This explains why Jane-Finch, despite its diversity, is clearly not a development and investment 'hub'. Thus, in the words of Latham (2003), "*the diversity celebrated within contemporary cities is mediated, engineered, and packaged*" (1702). While inner-city Toronto is marked by its diversity, this is a diversity that is planned, legitimated, organised and commodified as part of the process of promoting the city (Young et al., 2006).

Furthermore, as reflected by the interviews with Jane-Finch inhabitants, diversity as a concept is celebrated, but tensions along the axes of class, gender, race, and religion still dominate residents' daily encounters with diversity. Again, at the neighbourhood level, civility towards diversity goes hand in hand with essentialisations and categorisations on the basis of these markers and their intersections, as well as negative stereotyping of what is not considered to be acceptable or desirable diversity. These essentialised stereotypes in turn shape the residents' general perceptions of one another. The analysis further shows that within Toronto policy, diversity can function to render the intersection of multiple historically-marginalised identities invisible, thereby exacerbating exclusion and inequality, proving that diversity discourses are inherently political in nature. The use of diversity within an instrumentalist approach further signals a hierarchy between different types of diversities i.e. desirable and undesirable, which stigmatises the intersection of certain identity categories, requiring their elimination, either via exclusion and urban cleansing or assimilation (Anthias, 2013).

Multiculturalism in Canada has brought about a shift in terminology from categories of identity to a broader notion of diversity. The concept is, however, as concealing as it is encompassing. While diversity does promote recognition of the complexity of identities, it fails to address how pillars of identity (race, class and gender, among others) can be sources of social inequality and, therefore, does not promote social justice. It does not challenge inequalities, nor does it aspire to, as long as it affirms the existing power structures and social hierarchies. By euphemising structural inequalities, diversity can in fact prevent transformative change and function as an agenda for reproducing inequality.

In conclusion, while there seems to be a resemblance between policy and inhabitant discourses regarding diversity at the level of rhetoric (i.e. normalisation of and civility towards diversity), the manifestation of these discourses in practice often does not match the rhetorical stance. From a research point of view, it is therefore important to differentiate between discourses and practices. By exploring discourses without contextualising them in existing practices, societal structures and local histories have only but 'scratched the surface' of the problem. Critical research could further investigate how processes of marginalisation on the basis of race, class, gender, and multiple other markers are reified and reduced to easily marketable constructions of difference and identity, such as diversity. Ultimately, whether the discourse of diversity, with its epistemological deficits, can advance the agenda of social justice by going beyond its current political deployment within capitalism in line with safeguarding the status quo, remains a burning question.

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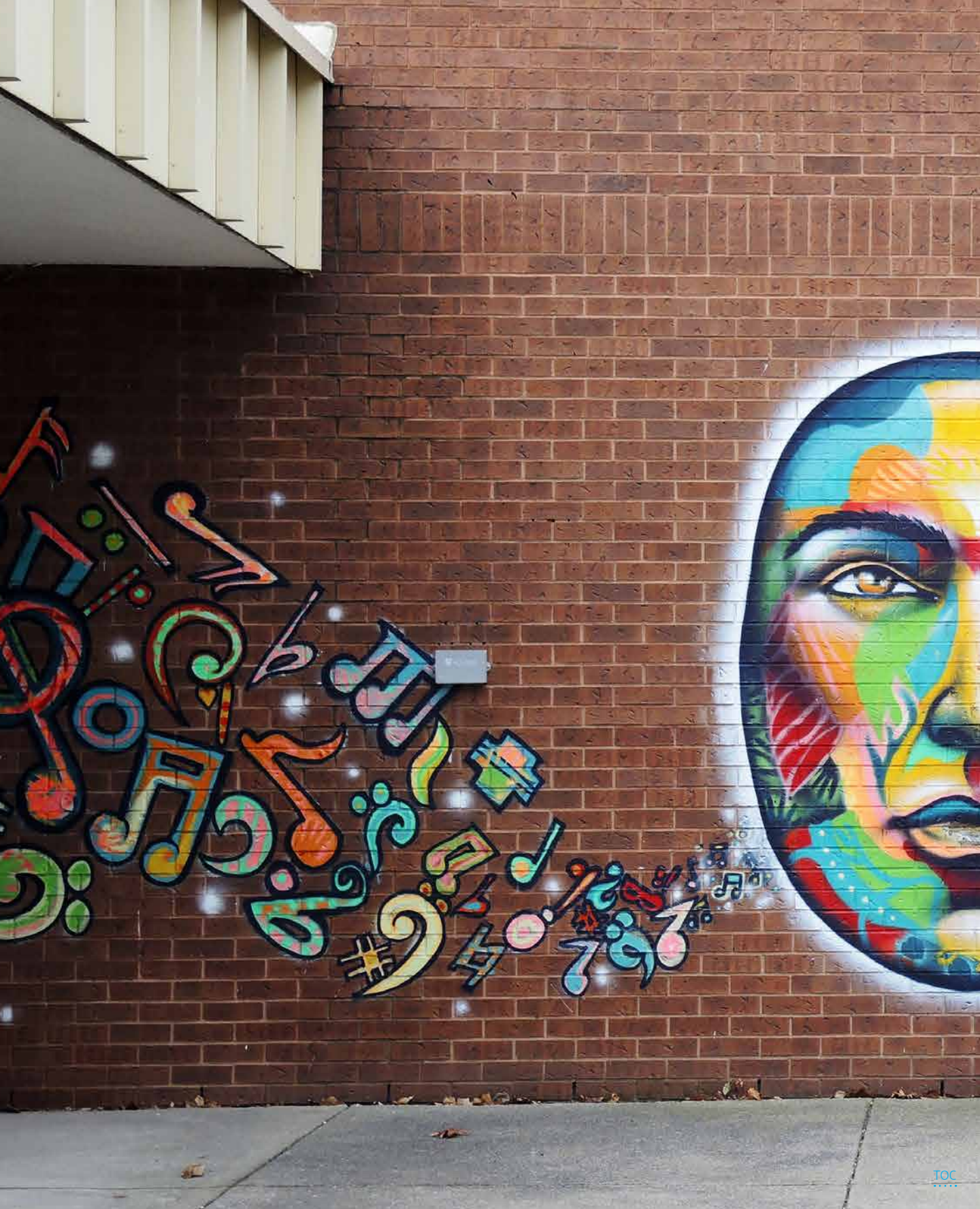
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