Preface

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These three groups of articles should be read against the backdrop of related contemporary trends in research on immigration and ethnic diversity.

One of the most important of these trends is toward comparative study across diverse immigrant-origins groups. In contrast to a focus on individual origins groups, multi-ethnic comparative research reveals the variety of experiences in different immigrant groups. This trend has been occasioned in part by the increased diversity of origins groups following the immigration policy reforms of the 1960s. These reforms facilitated a major shift away from entry by persons from the traditional North, East and South European countries, and toward entry by persons from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. The arrival of these new groups, with their great variety of experiences in finding their place within the broader society, has underscored questions about the exact nature and extent of these different experiences, questions which can only be answered by inter-group comparison. Almost from the beginning, it has been clear that differences in experience among the various non-European origins groups themselves could not be ignored. In fact, even research which focuses on persons often considered to have a common origin (for example, Chinese, Blacks, South Asians or Latin Americans) very often makes a special point to distinguish among key origins subgroups, or "sub-ethnicities".

This trend toward inter-group comparison has had a profoundly beneficial effect on theoretical development in the field. Comparison emphatically forces issues of how to explain the group differences. What social conditions are responsible for a shift in group priorities from cultural retention to social exclusion? How can we account for the fact that some groups have more negative employment experiences than others? Why does participation in particular institutions within minority communities appear to have such different implications for different origins groups? Questions such as these have given the

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development of theories of ethnic diversity a much higher place on the research agenda than it has enjoyed previously.

A second trend, related to the first and to some degree stimulated by it, is a greater attention to the potential for a complex dynamic tension between cultural diversity and the broader social cohesion. Instead of adopting one of two extreme positions -- either assuming diversity and cohesion to be polar opposites, or else insisting that they are always and everywhere in complete harmony -- research now more often reveals the many facets of their inter-relation. When is ethnic residential concentration associated with disadvantage, and when does it create the possibility for healthy minority community life; when may it do both? Why do ethnic businesses sometimes provide good, or at least satisfying, employment opportunities for some, while creating obstacles or frustrations for others? How do parents straddle this type of dilemma in attempting to manage the schooling of their children and maintain good relations with teachers? How does this issue play itself out for patients in the health care system?

A third trend is toward a focus on relations among diverse population groups within a particular minority community, groups distinguished not only by specific origins but also by economic or social class, and by gender, age, period of arrival or immigrant generation, and relations to mainstream and minority community culture and institutions. For example, one of the most important findings about the relation between issues of diversity and cohesion is that this relation may be quite different for minority-group persons in different population groups, depending on their relations within minority and mainstream communities. Whether or how the maintenance of diversity promotes the overall integration of a minority group may depend on an analysis of the extent and consequences of attendant within-group inequalities along various dimensions.

It quickly becomes clear that to participate in these various analytic trends requires the use of not one but a variety of data sources. On the one hand, comparative research encourages the use of census and other central statistical data sources, because of the need for representative data on different origins groups. On the other hand, there are inevitable limitations in the content and types of data available from such statistical sources, and analysis of complex relations across groups or within minority communities often requires the juxtaposition of these sources with special-purpose surveys or intensive interviews and case studies in particular communities. Learning new ways to balance these different needs within a single research project is one of the challenges facing contemporary immigration and ethnic research.

The contemporary salience of immigration issues in Canada, which because of our aggressively expansionist immigration policy is likely to continue into the indefinite future, has drawn many new researchers into the field. Even in the context of shrinking resources for the study of social issues, these new researchers join a growing group who are committed to the exploration of the many and fascinating issues that have been raised for the future of the country. The papers in this collection provide a glimpse of some of the most recent products

of this on-going research.