Quality of Life of Immigrants: Integration Experiences among Asian Immigrants in Saskatoon

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ABSTRACT   Saskatoon, one of Canada's fastest growing cities, has attracted and retained a great number of Asian immigrants in recent years, a trend particularly notable because of the city's historically low immigration retention and absence of ethnic enclaves. Committed to engaged scholarship, the Community-University Institute for Social Research and the Open Door Society, a newcomer settlement agency in Saskatoon, collaborated on this qualitative study, working together to hear from immigrants and document what they identified as barriers to and facilitators of their Quality of Life (QoL) in the city. In particular, in their discussion of QoL and its determinants, recent and established first generation Asian immigrants in Saskatoon presented in this study related their perceptions of quality of life to neighbourhood resources, sense of belonging in the community, and social comfort (social reception). Furthermore, most of the immigrants of this study showed strong determination to integrate into the mainstream, which they believed would bring them and their children better quality of life in Canada. Three key themes emerged: educational access and opportunity, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, and reception of the local neighbourhood to recent immigrants. This study sheds light on the perspectives of Asian immigrants settling in a Canadian mid-sized city that remains without ethnic enclaves.

KEYWORDS   Asian immigrants, quality of life, Prairies, ethnic enclaves, immigrant integration

According to Tonon (2015), "Quality of life is the perception each person has of his/her own place in life, within a cultural context and the system of values he/she conforms to, as related to expectations, interests, and achievements" (p. 5). For Ferris (2006), "Quality of life is also conditioned by social structure, which may be considered in terms of demographic characteristics, cultural traits, psycho-social characteristics of the community, as well as the characteristics of its institutions,

both official and private, which develop their action in this context" (as cited in Tonon, 2015, p. 5). Over time, researchers have realized that assessments of quality of life should go beyond economic determinants to consider those socio-cultural factors; factors such as access to social services, housing, environmental space, and people's perceptions of particular groups or individuals that were also seen to affect quality of life (Williams, Kitchen, Randall, & Muhajarine, 2008). Further applied to quality of life in medical health (Cohen & Leis, 2002), this perspective has led to an increasing focus on people's quality of life in smaller cities and/or neighbourhoods (i.e., environmental space), as opposed to larger regions where research has frequently been conducted (Williams et al., 2008). Similarly, criticism of objective descriptions of people's quality of life has led to subjective measures, such as satisfaction with life, services, for assessing people's perceptions of their quality of life, and an enlarged role for engaged scholarship (Kitchen & Williams, 2010; Williams et al., 2008). Indeed, Tonon (2015) stated that the use of qualitative methodology in quality of life studies is "essential to the understanding of people's experiences of well-being and to the discovery of new issues related with the quality of life field" (p. 4).

Though literature about quality of life abounds (Cohen & Leis, 2002; Dugas, Lawrence, Teplitsky & Friedman, 2002; Kitchen & Williams, 2010; Williams et al., 2008), few have focused on the experiences of immigrants outside of large Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Ng, Northcott & Abu-Laban, 2007; Randall, et al., 2014). This study aims to fill that gap and add to this body of literature so as to better understand the lived experience of immigrants in smaller, but growing, Canadian cities.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is a mid-sized, Western Canadian city with a current population of 246, 300, projected to grow to 400,000 within the next 20 years (Keatings, et al., 2012). Historically, the city has had a relatively low proportion of visible minorities. According to Walks and Bourne (2006), the 2001 Census of Canada indicated that both of the census metropolitan areas[1] (CMA) of Toronto and Vancouver had visible minorities representing 36.8% of the population. By comparison, Saskatoon had 5.6%. Currently, due to Saskatchewan's economic progress, some of the settlement trends have been changing with the attraction of immigrants through new employment opportunities (Keatings et al., 2012).

Unlike some other larger cities in Canada that share a long history of visible minority immigrant settlement, Saskatoon's experiences are recent and, arguably, limited in cultural supports and networks among co-ethnics. As a result of this short history, whether visible minority immigrants in Saskatoon enjoy a positive quality of life (e.g., adequate social services, housing, and satisfactory employment) has yet to be examined.

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[1] According to the 2001 Census Codebook (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 7), a CMA was "formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area… The census population count of the urban core was at least 100,000... To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area."

According to Williams et al. (2008), "Between the late 1970s and early 1990s, research incorporated new perspectives and attracted 'new players to the table' including business, government leaders, and community organization" (p. 7). Bringing together diverse players to work and learn together, the overall goal of this study is to better understand quality of life among visible minority immigrants in Saskatoon and thereby engage policymakers and community organizations to better serve the needs of recent immigrants. Where necessary, it is hoped that this study contributes to the development of evidence-informed policy, programming, and advocacy. This article begins with an analysis of recent immigration trends in Saskatchewan and a discussion of the current immigration literature as related to our focus. An examination of the quality of life and its determinants as identified by recent and established immigrants in Saskatoon is presented and focuses specifically on four areas: their perceptions of quality of life, neighbourhood resources, sense of belonging in the community, and social comfort (social reception).

Recent Immigration Trends in Saskatchewan
In the context of Canadian immigration policy, the recent Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is distinguished in allowing many Canadian provinces and territories to have their own streams of programs that target and even fast track people who have the skills, education, and work experience needed to contribute to the economy of that province or territory (CIC, 2015). Though immigrants still primarily settle in Canada's three largest census metropolitan areas, smaller urban and rural regions have experienced a recent increase in the number of immigrants settling in their regions (Radford, 2007). Saskatoon has not traditionally experienced high ethnic and racial diversity as a result of immigration in the city (Radford, 2007), but this is changing. For example, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013), the number of those who held permanent residency status in Saskatoon had increased from 631 to 4,455 between 2003 and 2012 (a 6-fold increase in less than a decade). Among Saskatoon's immigrant population in 2011, an estimated 11,185 recent immigrants (42% of all immigrants) had settled in the city between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2014). The majority of these immigrants were Asian. Three of the largest groups were Filipino, Chinese, and South Asian peoples; Tagalog, Mandarin, and Urdu were frequently reported as languages spoken in these households (Statistics Canada, 2014).

The Saskatchewan provincial government has recently modified the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program[2] (SINP) in the hopes of attracting and retaining more

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[2] The Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) is a provincial government immigration program that selects and accepts immigrants who demonstrate the potential to settle in Saskatchewan and fulfils the criteria that meet the needs of the province. It includes: Skilled workers, Entrepreneurs, Family referral, Farm owners/Operators, Health professions, and students (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013).

immigrants (Garcea, 2007). For example, within the *Entrepreneur* category of the SINP, which aims to attract immigrants with the capital to invest in businesses or purchase farms in the province, criteria were revised to be more attractive to immigrant entrepreneurs (Cameron, 2009). The result has been a significant increase in the number of business class immigrants in the province (Cameron, 2009). Several participants in this study immigrated to Saskatoon under the 'entrepreneur' category (see Results and Discussion), and we return to this issue below.

Quality of Life among Immigrants in Mid-Size Canadian Cities

While much of the Canadian literature focuses on the migration experiences of immigrants in large CMAs (Fong & Hou, 2013; Grenier & Nadeau, 2011; Li, 2008; Li, 2004; Razin & Langlois, 1996; Reitz and Lum, 2006; Sweetman & Warman, 2013; Xie & Gough, 2011), studies of Prairie cities are limited. Although some studies include all major and smaller CMAs in Canada (Kazemipur & Halli, 2001; Walks & Bourne, 2006), few studies have focused on Canada's mid-sized cities. This is especially true in places where immigrant retention has been low (Radford, 2007). As a result, there has been a stronger call in recent years for research on immigrants residing outside of Canada's major metropolitan areas. Such research is necessary to support smaller urban and rural regions experiencing a growing population of visible minority immigrants, as well as the immigrants settling there (Radford, 2007).

A major difference between Canada's three largest metropolitan areas and mid-sized cities is the former's long-established history of ethnic enclaves. An *ethnic enclave* refers to "ethnic neighbourhoods in central cities that serve relatively impoverished new arrivals as a potential base for eventual spatial assimilation with the white majority" (Logan, Zhang, & Alba, 2002, p. 299). Ethnic enclaves arise and are maintained because they meet immigrants' social, cultural, and economic needs (Logan, et al., 2002). For many, the enclaves are "transitional neighbourhoods" that act as a springboard for newcomers to fully integrate into mainstream society (Logan, et al., 2002). However, other reasons have been identified for the presence of ethnic enclaves, including immigrants' sense of comfort and belonging in enclave neighbourhoods and the proximity to services offered by co-ethnics (Allen & Turner, 2005).

Saskatoon has no socially recognized locales with a high concentration of a particular visible minority immigrant group, or ethnic enclaves. Although Saskatoon is experiencing an observable immigrant population increase, no ethnic enclaves of visible minority immigrants are yet present.

Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-Laban (2005) have examined seven mid-sized cities in the province of Alberta and have observed a strong correlation between city size and its refugee-status and immigrant retention rate. The results have suggested that in large cities such as Edmonton and Calgary, "where there are adequate services, wide-spread employment opportunities, and a critical mass of people from similar ethnic backgrounds, the majority of newcomers will stay" (Krahn, et al., 2005, p. 891). Elsewhere in small towns of Alberta, Lai and Huffey (2007) have found that

immigrants experience language differences, lack of credential recognition, and discriminatory treatment. As a result, these immigrants are unable to gain employment that fits their professional background and are often discredited because of their country of origin, race or ethnicity, or skin colour (Lai & Huffey, 2007).

Quality of Life: Assessment and Implication

If quality of life assessment is influenced by socio-cultural factors (Tonon, 2015) and even by "social structure . . . in terms of demographic characteristics, cultural traits, psycho-social characteristics of the community, as well as the characteristics of its institutions, both official and private" (as cited in Tonon, 2015, p. 5), an assessment of, and action on, quality of life also has policy and political significance (Tonon, 2015).

A quality of life assessment can be subjective, depending on how 'good' is defined. It exists in a specific space and time, one that is socially and culturally constructed (Vega, 2015). More specifically, Hofstede (1984) states, "Quality is a question of values and is related to the 'good' and 'bad' standards; moreover, that those values partly depend on personal choices and, to a great extent, to the cultural context" (as cited in Vega, 2015, p. 40). In this study, South and East Asian immigrants' perceptions of quality of life in terms of neighbourhood resources, sense of belonging in the community, and social comfort or social reception were examined. This analysis of Asian immigrants' quality of life in Saskatoon not only has policy and political significance, but also sheds light on migration experiences conditioned by a particular social structure.

Data and Methods

This study, a partnership between the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) and Saskatoon Open Door Society (ODS), was part of a larger Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Metropolis-funded research grant focusing on QoL issues among immigrants in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Hamilton, Ontario; and, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, representing three of Canada's five major geographical regions (Atlantic, Central, and Western). This three-city study employed a phased, multi-method design. The first phase involved a tested quality of life telephone survey that was carried out in each city. The discussion presented here focuses on the second phase, an in-depth exploration of issues pertaining to quality of life as identified by recent and established immigrants in Saskatoon.

Focus groups were conducted with representatives from three key immigrant communities by facilitators from those communities. Focus groups were an ideal approach in this study for several reasons. Communicating through dynamic interaction, focus groups are important in their ability to give voice to communities that may not otherwise be heard (Morgan, 1996). In addition, the sense of belonging to a group builds support and safety when sharing personal and potentially sensitive information (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). What makes the

discussion in focus groups richer than separate, individual interviews is the opportunity for participants to both listen to and explain themselves to each other (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). This is particularly important in Saskatoon, where narratives of newcomer experiences are only beginning to be explored.

Between November 2012 and February 2013, four semi-structured focus groups took place with both recent and established first generation Asian immigrants. Participants were from Mandarin-, Urdu- and Tamil-speaking communities, representing most of the largest new immigrant groups in Saskatoon (Statistics Canada, 2014). Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) claim language to be "the most frequently cited contributor to ethnic identity" (p. 137). The strong predicting power of ethnic language on the transmission of cultural heritage and values enables this group comparison.

In this study, recent was defined as living in Saskatoon between one to five years, and established was defined as six to fifteen years in Saskatoon. In keeping with the exclusion criteria of the larger three-city study, international students, who reside in the city for education purposes primarily, were not part of the focus groups. Table 1 summarizes the salient demographic characteristics of these groups.

Focus groups among recent immigrants were conducted in Mandarin and Urdu, and those among established immigrants were conducted in Tamil and English. It should be noted that, while the Tamil-speaking group was initially recruited for the recent immigrant focus group, it was learned over the course of the session that many had been living in Canada for up to seven years prior to moving to Saskatoon. As such, their experiences and perceptions are recounted in this study as midway between recent and established groups. The recent immigrant Mandarin group, as well as the more established immigrant Mandarin group, included respondents from China and Taiwan.

In partnership with the Open Door Society, participants were recruited through formal and informal social networks. All participants were given an opportunity to review the questions before the focus group, and informed consent was explained in the language of the respondents. Translated copies of the focus group questions were also provided in this study approved by the University of Saskatchewan's human behavioural research ethics review board.

The audio-taped focus groups lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. Transcripts and facilitators' observation notes were analyzed thematically, preserving the perspectives of participants. Clusters of meaning were developed into significant statements that were thematically categorized through a quality of life lens. These significant statements and themes were pulled together to create a quality of life narrative of the participants' perceptions and experiences.

A combination of constant comparative analysis and discourse analysis was used to uncover shared themes among the four groups of respondents. Constant comparative analysis is particularly useful when there are multiple focus groups within the same study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and discourse analysis procedures allow

for an understanding of social interaction processes, particularly from discursive interactions occurring among participants (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

While exploring the four quality of life components—perceptions of quality of life, neighbourhood resources, sense of belong in the community, and social comfort or social reception—three key themes emerged from the focus group data. They are educational access and opportunity, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, and reception of the local neighbourhood to recent immigrants.

Results and Discussion

Educational Access and Opportunity

In a globalized world, immigrants are often exposed to some of the values of the host country prior to their migration; therefore, they share some commonalities with those in the host society upon arrival (Kazemipur & Halli, 2001). For example, Gu (2006) states that the more privileged status of Western culture, and educational opportunities in particular, is a "pull" factor that attracts immigrants to emigrate to North America.

In this study, both recent immigrants and established participants cite the educational opportunities (and linguistic advantages) for their children as among their primary reason for migration—and a key factor in successful integration. Participants notice a different learning style in Canada compared to Taiwan, China, India, or Pakistan, but generally hold positive attitudes about the impact this has on their children. For example, a Mandarin-speaking father (recent immigrant) illustrates this view:

> I feel we do not have to worry about it [different educational system in Canada] so much. In Taiwan, my child's school started at 7 a.m. and he got off at 6 p.m. Now we have the G27 [World Summit], but Taiwan is still not one of the members. Is working hard like that worth it? It is pointless. Just immigrate to Canada and live here.

A Tamil-speaking recent immigrant also believes her daughter, who completed school in Canada, has an advantage over those who completed school in India.

> Here there are internships they do; they have that hands-on experience. Compared to those who have done a Master's there—I'm sorry, I'm not saying this to degrade it—but here, it is good. I like it. For children, from a young age there are presentations and projects—everything is involved. To get into the workforce it is very easy, but it is always book knowledge back home. Going in with book knowledge, our people are finding it very difficult.

Overall, the participants are positive about their decision to immigrate and believe

that their children were better off growing up in Canada. As one participant put it, "We had pretty good jobs in China, but we immigrated here because we wanted our family to have a good life, for the kids to have an easy life here."

Many participants state that mastery of English would provide a significant advantage to their children's life, both now and when they later enter the labour market. A mother from the Mandarin-speaking established immigrant group shares her observation:

> For me, I will still choose Saskatoon for the kids' education. In Toronto, [there are] too many Chinese people, they cannot learn English. I have some friends living in Vancouver and their kids still have an issue learning English.

Although the participants do not specify whether they purposely chose the schools in Saskatoon (e.g., styles of teaching and curriculum) over other schools in Canada before migration, they are clear about the advantages of learning English in Saskatoon's schools (where there are neither ethnic enclaves nor mainstream schools that teach in a language other than English), which brings them a great deal of satisfaction.

The importance of learning and speaking in English that we found in this study is in contrast to other studies that have explored immigrant settlement. For example, Clark & Drinkwater (1998) indicate that the existence of ethnic enclaves in host cities works as a "pull" factor to attract immigrants due to opportunities offered through shared culture and language. However, the participants of this study have few positive comments about the advantages of settling in cities where ethnic enclaves are present. Do immigrant parents trade-off the benefits of their children's language acquisition in mid-size cities without ethnic enclaves with the potential cultural and economic opportunities available through ethnic enclaves in larger cities? We did not pursue this particular line of inquiry in this study as it was not part of the larger project. However, this finding suggests that more complex factors are at play when immigrants assess their potential QoL (trade-offs between current economic opportunities versus deferred advantages through quality education) and make decisions that lead to settlement in a particular locale/city. Accordingly, more research focusing on immigrants' decision to migrate, where to settle, and potential trade-offs between current and future (for children in particular) QoL issues are needed to fully describe the immigrant experience in contemporary times.

Language, Employment, Economic Insecurity, and Quality of Life

The participants of this study express frustration and anxiety about the language barriers they encounter and how it inhibits their own employment opportunities. An Urdu-speaking recent immigrant states, "The main problem is English; otherwise, we are experienced and have professional backgrounds." A Mandarin-speaking recent immigrant mentions, "I have many friends from China who are all recent immigrants. They all encounter language barriers, so they mostly work at the bottom of society,

washing dishes in a restaurant." According to the participants, the language barrier has made their knowledge and skills irrelevant in Saskatoon, negatively affecting their quality of life, as one participant expresses:

> I want to work a job that suits my professional training, a job in which I can fully practice my skills. If this happens, I can have a steady income. I can buy a house. When I have my own house and a steady income, I can take my wife and child out for a trip or something. I feel it is pointless to plan for the future if I do not have a job that suits my professional training. Engineers from China cannot always be washing dishes in Canada. It is not good for them and it is also a waste of human resources for Canada.

Another Mandarin-speaking newcomer participant adds, "All of us who were able to come here either had high economic or educational status [back home]. We are all very well-educated and trained professionals. But once we came here, we could only work as labourers." Similar sentiments are shared among Urdu-speaking participants, who have also struggled with finding jobs that match their qualifications.

The language barrier that immigrants encounter in the mainstream labour market is an issue commonly identified, especially among new immigrants (Lai & Huffey, 2007; Li, 2004; 2008). The economic or employment opportunity offered through shared language with the co-ethnic group is one of the most significant factors that make ethnic enclaves appear attractive to immigrants (Clark & Drinkwater, 1998; Portes & Jensen, 1992). However, in a city with no identifiable ethnic enclaves, it is evident that immigrants in Saskatoon who wish to permanently settle here must overcome language, and therefore economic, barriers.

The Saskatchewan government is aware of language barrier issues. The Open Door Society, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SIA), offers an Enhanced Language Training (ELT) program that aims to assist skilled immigrants to prepare for employment in the Canadian labour market (Saskatoon Open Door Society, 2013). Participants receive language training in fields related to the training and work experiences they have obtained prior to immigration. The program also helps participants experience Canadian workplace culture, increase their understanding of the local labour market, and build occupation-related networks (Saskatoon Open Door Society, 2013). An Urdu-speaking newcomer who had benefited from this language program states, "I improved my language and then got selected into the ELT [Enhanced Language Training]. It gave me hope that I will be able to get a job."

The Tamil-speaking group, recent migrants to Saskatoon, but have lived elsewhere in Canada up to 7 years, present a contrasting case regarding the issue of language barriers for integration. The experience of these participants provide some evidence of success of the SINP—it contributes to a pattern of internal migration within Canada by offering potential job opportunities in Saskatoon. As a Tamil-speaking immigrant who had left Toronto for Saskatoon one year prior to the time of the focus

group states:

> I researched into all of the provinces to see which was better for a health profession and found out that Saskatoon was better. In five years', ten years' time, Saskatoon will need a lot of health professionals. That's what the government says. I thought, if I go now, it would be best for me.

None of the Tamil-speaking immigrants discuss a need to improve English proficiency, possibly due to their length of residence in Canada, in addition to the use of English in India as one of its official languages. This group generally speaks positively of employment opportunities during the focus group. A higher level of English fluency has likely reduced the language barriers faced by these immigrants, providing an edge for employment opportunities not shared by other immigrant groups.

However, employment insecurity remains an issue as many work in short-term and/or temporary positions. For example, one Mandarin-speaking immigrant indicates,

> I find if I want to get a better quality of life, here, I should be looking for a more stable job. Now, it's just the side contract. After two years, I have to look for a new position. It's hard for me, so I prefer to look for a more stable life, a stable job. Even if the income is a little lower, it's okay. I can accept that.

Temporary employment has a negative impact on workers' well-being as they are less secure and offer inferior pay and limited access to social benefits (Fuller & Vosko, 2008). This precarious employment status affects the QoL of the immigrants in this study. The age of immigrants further adds to a sense of insecurity. Some participants are afraid of not being able to remain competitive in the labour market. "At our age, if we lose a job, the same kind of job is not found." The results suggest that appropriate and stable employment are an ongoing concern for many immigrants in this study. Aside from language learning programs, the discussions indicate a need for more assistance from local and provincial governments to better match skilled workers with appropriate employment categories.

Religion, Culture and Social Comfort

Many immigrants are exposed to a diversity of cultural and religious events prior to migration (Kazemipur & Halli, 2001). Those who have experienced Western holiday celebrations in their own home countries find it less challenging to adapt to religious holidays in the settlement community. A Tamil-speaking participant states, "Even when going to school in India, they celebrated everything from Navarathiri to Christmas. It didn't matter if you believed in one thing or not." Participants also speak of making efforts to integrate into the community for the benefit of their children. The same Tamil-speaking participant went on to say:

> For example, you celebrate Christmas. We don't believe in it, but when the kids go to daycare, when others talk about Christmas, they will feel left out because, when they finish the holiday, they wouldn't have anything to talk about. So at least for them you have to place a tree, have a small dinner or something fancy, even if the true meaning isn't there. They shouldn't feel left out.

The results of this study demonstrate that parents make significant attempts at integration, even among those who might have not been exposed to Western culture prior to migration. A Mandarin-speaking participant states, "We bought costumes for the children and we took the children out for trick-or-treat. We prepared Thanksgiving turkey." Another Mandarin-speaking participant stresses that his family participated in Canadian practices of leisure and recreation for and with his children. "Every summer, we go camping. That is a traditional Canadian cultural practice." One Mandarin-speaking participant makes a point on culture and sense of belonging when asked what his experience has been with regard to the presence or absence of visible signs or symbols representing his culture in Saskatoon:

> I think this has to do with time. We are human. We will miss home. But after living here for a year, I do not have much feeling for Mid-Autumn Festival. My child goes to school here, so I force myself to have a sense of belonging in Saskatoon. I tell myself I belong here. I force myself to think this way. I feel time will change everything. I will not have to force myself as time goes by.

Another Mandarin-speaking participant also agrees that one must find a sense of belonging in Saskatoon. "Do not choose this place if you do not want to live here. You come because you feel this is a suitable place to live." The results indicate that the primary concern of these immigrants regarding their QoL in Saskatoon is the wellbeing of their children—even if this required regularly affirming their decision to immigrate.

Findings in this study, however, show that for immigrants, maintaining their cultural and religious practices is important even if there are no larger identifiable co-ethnic communities in the city. A Tamil-speaking participant describes it in this way: "There aren't a lot of Tamil-speaking people but, still, during Pongal, we go to the temple and celebrate there. During Diwali, everyone [goes there]." These types of religious and cultural practices, and opportunities available to practice in the local community, increase their QoL and strengthen their ethnic ties. One participant explains,

> If you celebrate it alone at home, you don't get that feeling because, when you're in India, that whole atmosphere is like that. So, when you do this at the temple, everyone comes with that festive mood. So when you go, you have that happy feeling. So, because of that, it's good here.

Reception (to the Settlement) from the Local Neighbourhood

The experiences of the participants of this study demonstrate some of the social barriers they encounter as they settle into their local neighbourhoods. A Mandarin-speaking participant comments, "We want to meet local people/native-born, too, but they are always very busy." A female, Urdu-speaking participant says:

> I tried to integrate with a Canadian lady in my neighborhood, but she never allowed her children to play with ours. She even called police twice or thrice. Finally, she left that place. So, integration is not that easy for either of us.

A Mandarin-speaking participant also speaks of difficulties with Canadians. "I've been in Canada for 15 years. I have gone through a lot of difficulties, from the beginning until now, so I know the law."

The Tamil-speaking group, who have lived in other Canadian cities before migrating to Saskatoon, share an employment-related experience of exclusion:

> After being there for some time, they accept you. But initially, you are the first brown person and they don't know how to accept you comfortably. They don't know how to approach you and speak to you. It is difficult when there are so many other people and you are the only [different] one. Because even for you, you don't know how to approach all of those people.

Moreover, limited mutual understanding between the majority and minority groups is observed among children. An Urdu-speaking participant describes a cultural 'learning curve' for children of different race/ethnicity at school:

> It's not their fault—they have never seen the scarf or why we hide our hair. They asked my daughter in class, 'You don't have hair, or what?' The girls took my daughter to the washroom and checked her hair. She had hair. So why does she hide her hair?

Zhou and Lee (2007) challenge the notion of integration—that immigrants will adapt to the mainstream society after a reasonable length of residence in the host country—by arguing that it is naïve to believe the majority would accept the minority groups unconditionally. That is, even if immigrants are willing to become fully integrated into the mainstream society, the degree of openness of those in the mainstream remains debatable. These results indicate a need for more research on the social aspects of quality of life among immigrants and their children in smaller Canadian cities. The results will be useful for scholars, policymakers, and community organizations to assess if programming and advocacy are facilitating integration as a two-way adjustment (Hiebert & Ley, 2003).

Conclusion

This study examines the quality of life of Asian immigrants in Saskatoon, a city where no ethnic enclaves are identified, in the hopes of contributing to immigration literature in smaller Canadian cities. The results of this study indicate that among recent immigrants there are some who indicate significant barriers to achieving a good quality of life. In terms of socio-economic factors, many of the recent immigrants of this study are under- or precariously employed, or lacked job security. English language proficiency is a significant barrier to economic integration, which leads to low quality of life perceptions among participants in this study. There is also evidence indicating perception and experience of unfavourable responses in local neighbourhoods creating a negative impact on immigrants' quality of life. By contrast, the immigrants of this study do not seem to be concerned about the absence of ethnic enclaves in Saskatoon. Most believe that living in a place where fewer of their co-ethnics reside will benefit their children (higher perception of quality of life), particularly in regards to language acquisition.

Another key finding of this study is the effort made by the immigrant parents to facilitate integration for their children. As far as the children's language learning and integration processes are concerned, immigrant parents in this study are of the view that the education and the school experience that their children receive are a positive factor in enhancing the children's quality of life. Whether these positive perceptions of the role of education and school opportunities are typically shared by ethnic minority immigrants residing in other small or mid-sized Canadian cities where no ethnic enclaves are present, is not known. Further understanding is needed of new immigrants' experiences and their quality of life in smaller Canadian cities, where increasing numbers of newcomers to Canada are now settling.

The results lend cautious support to the success of some government initiatives, including the Saskatchewan Immigration Nominee Program, to attract immigrants, and programs offered by community-based organizations, such as the enhanced language training for language training in the professional field. However, it is clear that more assistance will be required to match skilled immigrants with appropriate employment. A recent immigrant participant suggests a "skilled worker internship program," one that allows more employers to meet skilled immigrants of different backgrounds, which will be mutually beneficial for networking and competitiveness among workers.

Similar to findings in other Prairie provinces (Lai & Huffey, 2007), evidence of exclusion of visible minority immigrants is still found in Saskatoon. More educational programs about multiculturalism—both to the wider public and children in schools—are needed. As a result of the limited support immigrants in Saskatoon are able to receive from their co-ethnics, political and social advocacy for mutual exchange and understanding between the mainstream and visible minority immigrant groups is essential.

This exploration of South and East Asian immigrants' experiences in Saskatoon

lays the groundwork for a more informed understanding of the quality of life and integration process of both recent and established immigrants. Most of the immigrants of this study show strong determination to integrate into the mainstream, which they believe will bring them and their children a better quality of life in Canada. Future studies could focus on the comparability of characteristics of immigrants residing in places with and without ethnic enclaves. Comparative studies on the social development of immigrant children conditioned by different social structures in Canada also require scholars' attention.

Table 1. Characteristics of focus group participants

Focus Group	Country of origin	Recent/ Established	N (Female/Male)	Pre-immigration employment (by sector)*	Post-immigration employment (by sector)*	Came alone /with family (%)
Mandarin	China/ Taiwan	Recent	6 (2/4)	Senior Manager: 2 Intermediate Sales and Service Personnel: 1 Manual Worker: 2 Clerical Personnel: 1	Senior Manager: 1 Intermediate Sales and Service Personnel: 1 Unemployed: 4	0/100
Urdu	Pakistan	Recent	5 (2/3)	Professional: 3 Senior Manager: 1 Senior Clerical Personnel: 1	Sales and Service Personnel: 3 Clerical Personnel: 1 Unemployed: 1	25/75
Tamil	India	Established	5 (4/1)	Skilled Sales and Personnel: 3 Administrative/Senior Personnel: 1 Semi-Professional/Technician: 1	Middle Manager: 2 Professional: 1 Semi-Professional/Technician: 1 Sales and Service Personnel: 1	40/60
English	China/ Taiwan	Established	6 (4/2)	Professional: 3 Semi-Professional/Technician: 1 Unemployed: 1 Graduate Student: 1	Semi-Professional/Technician: 5 Semi-Skilled Manual Worker: 1	Not available

Source: Human Resources and Skills Development (2013)

Acknowledgements

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