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ABSTRACT

This report presents a study of the implications of religion in the formation of new neighbourhoods and the neighbourly ties within these neighbourhoods. The study argues that a faith-based neighbourhood is essentially a social network of persons of the same faith, reinforced by the presence of a religious institution. Faith, we found, is not an all-encompassing characteristic of such a neighbourhood and does not make a neighbourhood an exclusive area. The study further argues that a faith-based neighbourhood is a part of Canadian urban landscape and is not so different from a typical Canadian neighbourhood.

KEY WORDS: religion, neighbourhood, social capital, neighbourliness, Toronto

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Faith-based ethnic neighbourhoods are growing rapidly across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and other metropolitan areas in Canada. These residential communities are a type of ethnic enclave that develops around places of worship and are inhabited predominantly by congregants of one faith who may or may not be of a single ethnic origin. Although still in existence across North America, such religious residential communities were more common around Catholic and Protestant churches up until the first half of the last century. In the last fifty years or so, improved transportation and greater freedom of choice in religious matters led to a decline in faith-based communities. Recently, however, we have seen their resurgence, mainly among ethnic groups and the followers of non-Christian religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism. The implication of religion as a catalyst for the formation of new neighbourhoods and the social connectedness within these neighbourhoods never have been studied in planning and geography.

Many of these religious communities grow organically, but some have been planned. The latter type of faith communities are ones that are planned and built near a religious institution, usually by the religious institution to house its congregants, either all by itself or in concert with a builder. Cathedraltown in Markham, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Church in Brampton, the Jewish Community Campus at Bathurst and Weldrick in Vaughan, and the Ahmadiyya Mosque community in Vaughan are a few examples of planned faith-based communities in the GTA. Concentrations that grow organically include a few new or existing homes or even as large as a subdivision around places of worship, where people of corresponding faith may incrementally move in and build up to form the majority. Cases in point include new subdivisions around the Hindu Sabha Temple on The Gore Road in Brampton and St. Clare of Assisi, an Italian Catholic church in Woodbridge's Vellore Village, and old neighbourhoods like the Nugget Avenue area in Scarborough and the area close to the Nanaksar Gurdwara in Brampton, which are a result of population displacement.

The rise of faith-based communities has raised issues of integration and isolation. Toronto journalist Haroon Siddiqui (1998) described the increase in places of worship in Canada as “religious pluralism” and argued that it does not create conflict but, rather, it promotes inter-faith understanding among citizens of a civil society. Some, however, have argued that “communities [growing up around these places of worship] would be too homogeneous within Canada’s heterogeneous culture, and that they would open themselves up to negative branding” (Avery 2003). Avery and some municipal urban planners also have raised the spectre that these communities will become “gated communities.” They fear these communities will become a source of tension within the broader community, exert undue influence in political matters, and pressure local governments to deliver services in ways that may conflict with the needs of the wider community.

Literature on how faith-based ethnic neighbourhoods evolve, how they integrate or segregate their members and the neighbourly ties within such neighbourhoods is sparse. This empirical research, being exploratory in nature, has been approached from a variety of perspectives and, thus, does not lend itself to a neat set of hypotheses. In the absence of any systematic studies, the
researchers undertook an investigation of a number of questions. What are the internal structures and characteristics of faith-based ethnic communities? What social, religious, and personal considerations draw people together to faith-based neighbourhoods in this modern age? What is the role of place of worship in the immediate community? Does faith contribute to the neighbourliness, as an essential element of social capital, in such communities?

OBJECTIVES

The research had the following three objectives:

1. To describe and explain the internal structures, both spatial and social, of faith-based communities, namely their ethnic and class composition, scale of exclusivity, and so on;
2. To explain the functions of a place of worship in the social life of a faith-based community; and
3. To explore social capital (like social network, trust, neighbourliness) in these communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study was focused on five organically-evolved ethnic communities that were based on three ethnicities (South Asian, Italian, and Jewish) and five major religions (Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, and Judaism). All of the communities were located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The communities chosen for the study provided an even geographic spread across the Toronto region and, at the same time, covered the three basic types of neighbourhood – inner city, urban, and suburban (Figure 1). Three out of five were in the northwest quadrant of the metropolitan area, outside of the city of Toronto in the suburban municipalities. Two were inside the City of Toronto boundary, with one in the inner city and the other located on the east side of the suburban Toronto. The communities outside of the city boundaries were no more than five years old and much younger than the ones within the Toronto limits.

A sample survey of the residents of the subdivisions near places of worship and known to have concentrations of one or more ethnicities and faiths was carried out. Five neighbourhoods within walking distance (400 m ~ 5-10 minutes) of the respective places of worship were defined for the study. In all, members of 30 randomly selected households were interviewed in each community. The survey instrument included questions about their social background, family characteristics, neighbourliness, participation in the activities at the place of worship (mosque,
synagogue, temple, gurdwara, or church), and their reasons for choosing to live in the neighbourhood (Appendix 1). Along with the community surveys, the visitors to the places of worship (only two out of five agreed to participate, however) were surveyed as well (Appendix 2).

Surveys were complemented with face-to-face, in-depth interviews with the ethno-religious leaders in each of the neighbourhoods. The leaders provided information about the history, structure, ethnic make-up, and theological orientation of the congregation, a chronology of changes to the neighbourhoods, and the social services provided by religious institutions. Interviews with municipal and elected officials of the study areas added further insight into the history and issues of physical and social integration.

Figure 1: Location of Case Study Neighbourhoods vis-a-vis the Main Ethnicities in the Toronto Area
Census Profiles of the Communities

The census profiles of the five neighbourhoods rely on 2001 census data (Table 1). Unfortunately, the ethnicity, religion, and immigration data of the 2006 census had not been released at the time of writing. The 2001 census data tell us that each of the communities selected contained a predominant religious group, but they were not exclusive areas. For example, the communities around the Nugget mosque and the Malton Gurdwara were predominantly inhabited by immigrants (63 per cent in the Nugget community and between 50 per cent and 61 per cent in the community near the Malton Gurdwara), many of whom had recently arrived in the country. The census tracts near the Malton Gurdwara had relatively high proportions of new arrivals to Canada.

Just over one-third of the residents living in the area around the Nugget mosque were South Asian (33.8 per cent), followed by people from the Caribbean (19.5 per cent). Interestingly, many Roman Catholics (22.1 per cent) also lived in the area, which was higher than the proportion of Muslims (17.9 per cent) and Hindus (13.1 per cent). Overall, 71 per cent of the residents owned their homes. Forty-seven per cent of the families in this area earned more than $60,000 annually, easily placing this neighbourhood in the middle-class income category. Sixty-three per cent of its inhabitants were immigrants, and 17 per cent of the population had arrived between 1996 and 2001.

The majority of the people in the four census tracts near the Malton Gurdwara were South Asians in 2001 (between 47 per cent and 55.5 per cent), followed by those from the Caribbean (whose numbers varied from 9 per cent to 18 per cent). With respect to religion, Sikhs and Roman Catholics were neck and neck (29.1 per cent on average versus 27.9 per cent, respectively). A clear majority owned their homes (69.5 per cent on average). Immigrants formed the majority of the population (57.9 per cent on average) in the area, out of whom one-third were recent immigrants to Canada. Finally, one-third of the residents in this neighbourhood reported family annual earnings of $60,000 or above.

Three out of the four census tracts that flanked the Holy Blossom Synagogue in 2001 had a clear majority of people of Jewish heritage. Hindus, Sikhs, and Roman Catholics were scarce in each of the four census tracts. South Asians and those from the Caribbean also were conspicuously absent from those census tracts. An overwhelming majority of families in the three predominantly Jewish census tracts earned $60,000 or above annually (83.4 per cent to 63.1 per cent). Many fewer immigrants, relative to the neighbourhoods surrounding the other four faith communities, lived in the Holy Blossom neighbourhood.

The 2001 census data for the census tract in which St. Clare of Assisi lies was collected before the newest subdivisions were built. Since then, the demographic characteristics of the area have changed considerably according to the data we gathered from recent municipal property assessment roll, which puts Italians at 48 per cent of the total population. Back in 2001, the area was predominantly inhabited by Italians (64 per cent). Roman Catholics (77.6 per cent) also clearly dominated the area. Thirty-seven per cent of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood were immigrants.
At a figure of 97 per cent, the homeownership level in this area was the highest among all the communities under study.

Like the St. Clare of Assisi community, the Gore Road Community around the Hindu temple is fairly new. The most recent census data available on ethnicity, religion, and immigration go back to the year 2001. With many new subdivisions in the past few years, the demographic characteristics have changed. This was reflected in the data we collected from the municipal property assessment roll, which put South Asians at close to 61 per cent. In 2001, the area was mainly inhabited by Roman Catholics (50.5 per cent), followed by Sikhs at 22.3 per cent. At that time, almost 39 per cent were Italians, with South Asians (at almost 30 per cent) not too far behind. Seventy per cent of the families earned more than $60,000 annually at the time of the 2001 census. Almost 45 per cent were immigrants, with 8 per cent of the population categorized as recent arrivals.

The five neighbourhoods can be arrayed along a continuum of diversity. The two old neighbourhoods, Bathurst/Holy Blossom and St Claire of Assisi, had majorities of residents from the Jewish and Roman Catholic faiths, respectively. Ethnically, they were predominantly Jewish and Italian. The three suburban, and relatively new, neighbourhoods of Nugget Avenue, Morning Star Drive, and The Gore Road were religiously and ethnically diverse. The striking fact is that Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, whose places of worship were at the centres of these neighbourhoods, were minorities in these areas. Over time, they may come to be dominated by these groups but, so far, despite many years of the existence of the three places of worship, these neighbourhoods have continue to house majorities of residents from other faiths. All in all, these neighbourhoods were by no means exclusive to people of the respective faiths.

**CONTEXT**

The topic of this study falls at the intersection of a number of interrelated, yet seemingly distinct, areas of study, such as neighbourliness, the role of religion and places of worship in the lives of immigrants, and the impact of religion on space. The following subsections will touch upon the above areas as they relate to faith-based neighbourhoods.
### Table 1: Characteristics in the Census Tracts Nearest the Religious Structures in the Neighbourhoods under Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT closest to Nugget Mosque</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>% Immigrant</th>
<th>% Newcomer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>378.04</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTs closest to Holy Blossom Synagogue</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>% Immigrant</th>
<th>% Newcomer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTs closest to the Malton Gurdwara</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>% Immigrant</th>
<th>% Newcomer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>532.01</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>532.02</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529.01</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529.02</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT closest to St. Clare Parish</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>% Immigrant</th>
<th>% Newcomer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>412.07</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT closest to Gore Road Community</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>% Immigrant</th>
<th>% Newcomer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>576.13</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Neighbourliness**

Neighbourliness can be defined as the intensity of social relations and interactions among households living in a neighbourhood. It is, therefore, an expression of a society’s strength and it is an essential ingredient of a stable neighbourhood. Numerous neighbourhoods exist within any large metropolis, but a defining characteristic of large cities is that individuals live side-by-side and neighbourliness often amounts to only cursory politeness, limited to impersonal nods. Ethnic neighbourhoods, however, have been thought to be exceptions as areas where neighbourhood ties are intense and intimate (Gans 1962; Whyte 1943). But the opposite picture emerged in a recent study by Kumar and Leung (2005). The results of that suggested the degree of neighbourliness in ethnic neighbourhoods in Toronto was no different than in any other types of suburban neighbourhood. According to Putnam (1995), the neighbourliness in America (and, for that matter, in North America) has steadily declined over the years, while socializing with “friends who do not live in the neighbourhood” has been on the increase. There have been studies of neighbourhoods that have been based on such criteria as class, ethnicity, and stages of life, but none, to our knowledge, that have viewed faith as a binding force.

Some scholars have attempted to measure neighbourliness. For example, Rohe (2004) presented a model to gauge social capital at the community level, including neighbourliness. Rohe’s model involved the assessment of four key constructs: 1) the level of community engagement, 2) the characteristics of social local networks, 3) the levels of trust among community members, and 4) the extent and effectiveness of community organizational infrastructure. Hutchison (2004), in her study of the social capital in the Pico Union area of Los Angeles, used six indicators of neighbourliness: 1) attachment to the neighbourhood, 2) length of residence, 3) range of acquaintances in the geographical area, 4) levels of trust in neighbours, 5) levels of reciprocity among neighbours, and 6) involvement in local initiatives for neighbourhood improvement. Our study relied upon elements of Hutchison’s indicators of neighbourliness, especially the level and type of interaction, length of residence, acquaintances in the area, and level of attachment to the neighbourhood, along with detailed probing concerning the role of religion and places of worship in motivating people to relocate to a particular neighbourhood.

**Religion and Immigrants**

Religion is the key to “cultural reproduction” and ethnic identity of immigrants. In Williams’ words:

> immigrants are religious – by all counts more religious than they were before they left home – because religion is one of the important identity markers that helps them preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in a group (Williams 1988, 11).

Yet, religion, as one of the fundamental tenets of the multiculturalism policy in Canada, largely has been neglected in immigration and settlement studies (Bramadat and Seljak 2005; Kymlicka 2003).
In this regard, the classical hypothesis of the secularization of immigrants (Bramadat and Seljak 2005) and the portrayal of religion as an “opiate of the masses and as ephemeral in nature” (Warner 1998) seem to have played some role.

We are well aware of the significant social role religious institutions play in settling immigrants. For Warner (1998) and Bramadat and Seljak (2005), religious institutions were thought to provide immigrants with an entry point to the mainstream host society. Many scholars, such as Putnam (2000), Smidt (2003), and Ammerman (1997), have pointed to religious organizations as repositories of huge amounts of social, moral, and spiritual capital. These organizations also have been important institutional providers of social services, especially when government services have been felt to be inadequate or ineffective.

Putnam (2000) and Smidt (2003) hypothesized that religious organizations increase social capital in the community. In the words of Putnam, “faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America.” He went on to argue that religious institutions are an important incubator for civic skills, norms, community interests, and civic recruitment and civic engagement. This study attempts to empirically test the role of religious institutions and explore whether they contribute in any way to neighbourly ties.

The Role of Places of Worship

Besides providing religious space for its congregants, an ethnic place of worship frequently also operates like a community centre. The roles of places of worship have been widely documented (Coward et al 2000; Smidt, 2003; Ebaugh and Chaftez, 2000). Such institutions provide a wide range of social services, networking opportunities, cultural programs, and spiritual renewal not only to the immediate congregation but also to more widely dispersed communities. Moreover, they play an important part in the lives of immigrants. Particularly, they serve a key role in their adaptation to their new country. Immigrants depend on places of worship as social-service providers for counseling, emotional and financial support, and assistance with settlement. It is through informal networks developed at the places of worship that newcomers get transported, housed, employed, gain credit, and have myriad other practical needs met.

Places of worship serve not only as places in which to offer prayers and as community centres but also as centres for education (language and music classes, tutors in many subjects), leisure activities (karate, yoga, sports, and youth camps) and social services (weddings and other rites of passage, counseling for families, dispute mediation). Germain and Gagnon (2003) have described religious institutions as places that sometimes become spatial manifestations of the mediation between the community and the host society. At one level, then, religious buildings can be viewed as expressions of “a group’s collective identity in urban landscape” (Germain and Gagnon 2003, 299). At the same time, Germain and Gagnon raised the spectre of such cultural institutions as places where religion, as a cultural dimension, was non-negotiable – a dimension that could hinder an immigrant’s integration into broader society. For example, a religious institution may place norms and sanctions over its members and may discriminate against those outside its faith.
Impact of Religion on Space

Urban planning and geography might have been expected to provide an understanding of religion and space, but, to date, have offered very little in that regard. While there has been little theoretical debate, social and cultural geographers have provided a few works of empirical research on a religion’s impact on landscape. Those that do exist, however, have tended to look at large-scale regional and national religious patterns around the world or have examined small-scale physical forms of religious impacts on the urban landscape, cemeteries in particular (Kong 1990; Holloway and Valins 2002).

Contributors to the planning literature rarely have considered religious relations and planning in modern plural societies. Yiftachel’s study (1992) is one of the few comprehensive works to introduce an ethnic and religious perspective into planning. Another one is Thomas’s (1999) attempt to make a direct connection between reason and spirit in the field.

Winkler’s (2006) work in Johannesburg, South Africa informs us that the secular values of planning theory and practice are often either indifferent to, or, at times, in conflict with the religious beliefs of the majority of citizens for whom we plan. Anhorn (2006) explored the role of spirituality on planners’ work. He found that planners’ ethics, values, and self-examinations are informed by their spirituality and religion.

Other studies on the nexus of religion, immigrants, and planning policies have been limited to where places of worship have been built and the land-use and design problems associated with their construction. The challenges posed by places of worship to contemporary urban planning first received attention in Great Britain (Thomas and Krishnarayan, 1994). In Canada, the studies have mostly focused on mosques and the difficulties encountered during the approval process, although most were approved eventually (Isin and Siemiatycki 1999; Moore Milroy and Wallace 2002). Only Germain and Gagnon’s (2003) and Beattie and Ley’s (2001) studies have included places of worship other than mosques.

Summary

In the absence of any systematic study of modern faith-based communities, the literature review does not explain very well whether or not faith adds to neighbourliness. The literature, however, did help us with the identification of some indicators of neighbourliness. In the current study, we employed some of these indicators to gauge neighbourliness in the selected faith communities. A few studies of ethnic enclaves, conducted a while back, emphasized the intense network in such communities, but these have been countered by a few contemporary studies that refuted the earlier claims. Nevertheless, the literature did serve to inform us that religion is an important aspect of immigrants’ lives and that places of worship function as spiritual refuges as well as places of gathering where social networks can be developed.
CASE STUDIES: THE COMMUNITIES AROUND THE PLACES OF WORSHIP

Five case studies were chosen to allow the researchers to attempt to examine some of the issues from the literature. The five places of worship and the neighbourhoods around them that were selected for this study were: the Islamic Foundation of Toronto mosque at Nugget Avenue and Markham Road in the Scarborough area of Toronto; Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, a Sikh temple in the Morningstar Drive neighbourhood in the Malton area of Mississauga; Holy Blossom Temple, a Jewish synagogue near Bathurst Street and Eglinton Avenue in central Toronto; the Hindu Sabha Temple on The Gore Road in Brampton; and the St. Clare of Assisi Roman Catholic Parish in the Woodbridge area of Vaughan. In the following sections, each of these areas is discussed in turn through ethnographic descriptions of each neighbourhood illustrates and analyses of their social characteristics, the reasons for their formation, the influence of the place of worship, and the level of neighbourliness in each area.

The Nugget Avenue Neighbourhood

The residential area around the Islamic Foundation mosque, at the intersection of Nugget Avenue and Markham Road in north-eastern Scarborough, is an example of a faith-based neighbourhood in Toronto. It has evolved into such a neighbourhood as Muslims have come to be a majority in the immediate area. In the census tract surrounding the mosque, however, Muslims make up just 18 per cent of the population, indicating some concentration of Muslims, but the claim of being a faith-based neighbourhood applies to a small geographic area of a few streets within a half-kilometer radius from the mosque. Right away, then, one fact stands out in this case, namely, that this neighbourhood is ‘micro’ in scale and limited to a few city blocks.

The neighbourhood contains modest, single-family homes located across from the three-storey high mosque with its 125 foot high minaret dominating the skyline (Figure 2). The large mosque, which was built in 1991 after long public planning debates, contains a prayer hall, library, gymnasium, mortuary, Islamic school classes and meeting rooms, cafeteria, and 200 parking spaces. All in all, the structure has helped to imprint an Islamic identity on the landscape of this neighbourhood.
People living in this working-class neighbourhood describe it as a ‘friendly, quiet, and convenient’ area. About 55 per cent of the employed residents in the neighbourhood are engaged in ‘sales and service’ occupations, usually in retail sales, with another 15 per cent in ‘social service, education and administration,’ mostly in teaching and home making (Table 2).

This little neighbourhood is a typical suburban community of relatively young homeowners who are new to the area (5-6 years on the average). They are almost all immigrants of mostly Muslim and South Asian background, with slightly larger households than the current Canadian norm (4.3 as opposed to Canadian average household size of 2.6). The proximity of the mosque seems to have partially promoted a greater concentration of Muslims in these few blocks than in the larger area of the census tract.
Does the prevalence of Muslims make the Nugget Avenue neighbourhood a ‘faith community’? To address this question, we have to examine if this area is exclusively Muslim and if they are segregated from people of other faiths. In this regard, three things emerged from our analysis. First, about 40 per cent of the residents actually were Italian in what was once an Italian neighbourhood, and many of them lived side-by-side with immigrant Muslims. Second, the Muslims who lived in this area at the time of the study were of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Pakistanis, Indians, and Guyanese. So, the apparent uniformity of religion was mitigated by a diversity of ethnicity. Third, the scale of this faith concentration was so small that residents could not avoid encountering others both like and unlike themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Social Characteristics of the Respondents from the Nugget Avenue Neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of the respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ college/university/professional education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ethnicity – South Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant religion – Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant country of origin – Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Household size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time in the neighbourhood/house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mosque and the Neighbourhood

Mosques in Toronto, like the Islamic Foundation mosque, are not only places of worship but also community centres offering children’s programs, women’s groups, facilities for community events, summer camps, and lectures. In reply to the survey question, ‘what activities of the place of worship do you and your family participate in?,’ an overwhelming majority of Muslims indicated that their primary use was for prayers, followed by community meetings and children programs. The level of participation was not out of line with what happens at parish churches, except Islamic prayers are a daily, rather than a weekly, obligation.

When respondents were asked about why they chose to live in this neighbourhood, they gave the usual reasons: it was affordable, convenient, and near various services; but 70 per cent Muslims also indicated the proximity to the mosque as another draw. Yet, when asked if they would have moved here if there was no mosque, only 23 per cent indicated that they would not have located here if no mosque existed.

All in all, then, the mosque was a significant facility for Muslims. Yet, it may not have been the overriding element of their community life. Did it, in fact, bind residents together into a tighter community?
The interviewers returned from their household visits thrilled by the reception they got from the residents. They found residents to be friendly, not only towards them but also with each other. Respondents would introduce the interviewers to their neighbours and even walk them to other homes. This sentiment was not limited to the social network of Muslims, but was shared by non-Muslim neighbours. Is this a unique situation, peculiar to this small group, or a spill-over of the faith solidarity among a majority of residents? It is hard to answer this question on the basis of a one-time survey. Yet, it is a situation worth noting.

In reply to the question about the 'how and where' people interacted, responses were largely along the lines: ‘we meet outside in the streets and occasionally visit neighbours at home.’ About 23 per cent of Muslims mentioned the mosque as the venue for interacting with neighbours in addition to the streets and other local facilities. Obviously, the mosque, as an institution, and faith, as a binding force, had some bearing on the neighbourliness in this area, but they were neither all-encompassing nor exclusive influences. They acted, therefore, as catalysts rather than as primary factors. One practice specific to this neighbourhood was summer barbecues that drew most of the residents and others from the nearby subdivisions. This was mentioned as a neighbourly activity by a number of respondents to the survey.

In reply to the question, ‘what do you like/dislike about this neighbourhood?,’ the most common answer was that it was ‘quiet, clean, and friendly.’ Only two respondents mentioned the mosque as a desirable institution in the neighbourhood. Moreover, there were some positive comments about the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood. Regarding the negative aspects of the area, the modal (most frequent) response (40 per cent) was that there were no dislikeable elements. Overall, residents of this little neighbourhood seemed to be well satisfied. The basis for their satisfaction was similar to what one finds in a typical suburban Canadian neighbourhood. Perhaps surprisingly, the bonds of faith were not exclusively what had underlain the positive outlook of the residents.

Summary

In sum, at the time of the study, the Nugget Avenue neighbourhood was a Muslim-dominated neighbourhood, with a distinct ethnic and faith identity. It was an enclave, but not an exclusive area. People of other religions and ethnic backgrounds were living alongside Muslims. The mosque as an institution, and faith as a binding force, had some bearing on the neighbourliness in this area.
The Morningstar Drive Neighbourhood

This neighbourhood also had a high concentration of a religious group at the time of the study. In this case, it was Sikhs living near another place of worship, the Sri Guru Singh Malton Gurdwara. The combination of these two qualities, concentration of a religious group in proximity to a place of worship, made this neighbourhood a faith-based community.

Located in the Malton area in the north-eastern part of the city of Mississauga, the neighbourhood extends over a few blocks of the city, and includes a cluster of subdivisions. The gurdwara is found in a converted high school building along Airport Road next to Pearson International Airport (Figure 3). Established in the 1980s, the gurdwara spurred a movement of Sikhs into the nearby residential subdivisions of single-family homes and duplexes that once largely had been inhabited by Italians. About 32 per cent of the population of the neighbourhood was Sikhs, but 30 per cent were Roman Catholics. Yet, the striking presence of the gurdwara had given the neighbourhood an identity as a Sikh area, an image reinforced by the South Asian-oriented strip malls nearby. At the time of the study, the Morningstar Drive neighbourhood could best be classified as a middle-income neighbourhood, with 32 per cent of households earning more than $60,000, which placed the area close to the Toronto CMA average ($70,000).

The gurdwara, like other places of worship in Toronto, not only offers daily prayers but also many community services, such as weekly gathering places, a centre for family and children’s services, language classes, and sports. It serves Sikhs from far and wide and, thus, is supported by much broader community, although for the neighbourhood it is an institution with a strong presence.

Social Profile of the Neighbourhood

The Morningstar Drive neighbourhood is associated with Sikhs who are in the majority and it has the makings of an ethnic enclave. Yet it is also a suburban neighbourhood of relatively comfortable working families. To gain an understanding of the social organization of the neighbourhood, the following table reports critical indicators (Table 3).
Figure 3: The Morningstar Drive Neighbourhood

Table 3: Social Characteristics of the Respondents from the Morningstar Drive Neighbourhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of the respondents</td>
<td>42.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ university /college education</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ethnicity – South Asians</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant religion – Sikhism</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant country of origin – India</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean household size</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time in the neighbourhood/ house</td>
<td>6.4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey revealed that an average household head in this neighbourhood was about 43 years old. Although 38 per cent of the respondents had some post secondary education, only 17 per cent had studied at a university. At the other extreme, 21 per cent were high school dropouts. Sikhs from India were in the majority, making the neighbourhood a South Asian enclave where
ethnic/religious institutions stood out. Yet, it would be mistake to characterize the area as an exclusively Sikh or South Asian. About 37 per cent of the residents were of other ethnicities and religions, mostly West Indians and Christians.

A typical household in the area consisted of a nuclear family, comprised of a couple and two children, though a third of the households were two-generation families, mostly Sikhs, where one or more parents of the couple lived with them. A stable neighbourhood now, the average time living in the neighbourhood at the time of the survey was 6.4 years, a figure comparable to other suburban neighbourhoods.

Only one out of the thirty respondents of the survey had been born in Canada. The rest were immigrants, most with more than 10 years standing on the average. Occupationaly, 65 per cent of the employed respondents were engaged in ‘trades, transport and equipment operator,’ including truck and taxi drivers, factory workers, and self-employed tradesmen. The second largest category for respondents’ occupations was ‘sales and service,’ mostly retail, childcare, and homemaking workers.

The social profile of the neighbourhood, thus, presents a picture of an immigrant community of solid working/middle class standing, with a concentration of Sikhs and other South Asians, but not exclusive to them. The faith linked many residents together, but Canadian suburban culture also was a defining element of their social organization. How did the gurdwara affect the social life in the neighbourhood? Let us now turn to this question.

The Gurdwara and the Neighbourhood

Sri Guru Singh Malton Gurdwara has a defining presence in the neighbourhood, dominating the skyline and serving as a sort of community centre cum prayer place for Sikhs. Yet, its reach extended to a large community living all over Mississauga, Etobicoke, and Brampton.

Obviously, the gurdwara’s influence locally extends to Sikhs primarily, and, through them, to the quality of life in the neighbourhood. In reply to the question about ‘what services of the place of worship members of a household take part in,’ a large majority of Sikh household heads in the survey of visitors to the gurdwara (81 per cent) referred to ‘prayers, and religious services’ as their primary activity, and the same was the case for their spouses (Appendix 2). Their children, however, took advantage of classes and sports in addition to the religious services. The gurdwara, therefore, served as a place to meet and greet friends and relatives, as is the case with churches. Unlike Muslims, Sikhs’ participation in prayers was largely a weekly affair, as only 13 per cent indicated that they prayed almost daily.

From the responses in the survey, the gurdwara did not seem to be an all-encompassing neighbourhood institution. To be sure, it linked Sikhs together, but it did not displace other neighbourly networks. Of course, the proximity of the place of worship was mentioned as one of the attractions of the neighbourhood. Yet, only 19 per cent of Sikh respondents indicated that they would
not have moved in the neighbourhood if there had been no gurdwara. The gurdwara, then, served as a social network complementing other local organizations.

The Faith and Neighbourliness

How does a shared faith affect neighbourly relations? Does it create a community of close relations? According to respondents’ answers about interactions with their neighbours, there does not appear to have been any extraordinary conviviality in this neighbourhood. Even the shared faith of Sikhs did not seem to have increased neighbourliness much more than in many other suburban neighbourhoods. In answer to the question about interactions with neighbours, the most common response was that we meet them ‘outside’ on the street and sometimes at home. Only about 25 per cent of Sikhs mentioned ‘place of worship’ as another venue for meeting neighbours.

More than faith, ethnicity (Punjabi) was mentioned as the basis of relations. Regarding the frequency of relationships among the adult members of the families, 65 per cent of respondents indicated that they interacted ‘occasionally.’ ‘Yes’ answers among Sikhs (those indicating they met each other ‘regularly’) were a bit more numerous (38 per cent). Women were friendlier, yet a majority indicated that their interactions were largely limited to ‘greetings’ and conversations on the street and at the local school, whereas the place of worship (the gurdwara) was mentioned by only a small number in addition to other venues. Children played with each other in the street/park and met in the school and in the gurdwara. Altogether, social interactions were neither exceptionally intense nor primarily focused on the place of worship in the Morningstar Drive neighbourhood. Overall, the shared faith created social networks, but not an especially neighbourly community.

When respondents were asked what they liked and disliked about their neighbourhood, the answers fell into the same patterns as one might expect to receive from people in any neighbourhood. It was described as being ‘quiet, peaceful, a good place to raise kids, close to shops and transport.’ Only two Sikh respondents mentioned the proximity of the gurdwara as an asset. There were not many strong dislikes.

Summary

In a nutshell, the Morningstar Drive neighbourhood is a Sikh-dominated area. It has an ethnic and faith identity; it is an enclave, but not an exclusive area where one does not find non-Sikhs. The Sikh faith and the gurdwara foster social networks, but the community sentiments they engendered operated within the norms of Canadian neighbourliness.
The Bathurst and Eglinton Neighbourhood

This community is close to Bathurst Street and Eglinton Avenue, and surrounds the Holy Blossom Temple (Figure 4). The 150-year-old Holy Blossom Temple is the largest synagogue in Canada and in the Reform Movement worldwide. Its current membership exceeds 2,000 families from an original membership of 105 in 1856. The synagogue moved from downtown Toronto to its current location in 1938. At that time, the area was rural and far from Toronto’s main Jewish settlement districts. Over the years, Holy Blossom has drawn many of the city’s movers and shakers and many members of its intellectual elite. Moreover, the members of the congregation come from different parts of the world. Many trace their roots to Eastern Europe, while other, more recent immigrants have come from South Africa and Israel.

Social Profile of the Neighbourhood

Data from the 2001 census substantiate the survey results which revealed that almost 65 per cent of the residents of the area are Jewish. Most (84 per cent) were Canadian-born baby boomers who tended to be relatively older (mean age is 45.8 years) than the immigrant population. An overwhelming majority of them were university or college graduates and employed in high-paying positions in service sectors like health, management, business, finance, and government services. The 2001 data revealed that just over half of the families living in this area earned in excess of $100,000, which considerably above both the City of Toronto and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) averages. As is the trend with this generation of Canadians, family size was relatively small (3.35). A clear majority had lived in the neighbourhood for more than 11 years, making it a strong, stable neighbourhood (Table 4).

Table 4: Social Characteristics of the Respondents from the Bathurst Neighbourhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of the respondent</td>
<td>45.8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ university/college education</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ethnicity – Jewish</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant religion – Jewish</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian-born</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean household size</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time in the neighbourhood/ house</td>
<td>11+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked how their community was different from the previous neighbourhoods in which they might have lived, many people described the community as ‘comfortable, safe, centrally located, and close to the different amenities.’ The demographic homogeneity of the neighbourhood was cast in both positive and negative lights by respondents. About 30 per cent opined that the Jewish nature of the community was a positive trait, while two in the sample thought it to be less multicultural and too Jewish. Some also brought up the issues such as the ‘upper class snobbery,’ ‘sense of entitlement,’ and ‘lack of closeness among people.’

The Synagogue and the Neighbourhood

The synagogue claims to be at the forefront of speaking out ardently for human rights and social justice. It has been engaged in campaigns to help the poor and hungry. More recently, the congregation has addressed a vexing problem in Toronto – homelessness – by building a cooperative housing project for single mothers and hosting dinners for those in need.
The synagogue holds numerous services for its members and plays an important role in their lives by providing a range of services from daily and Sabbath worship services, to assisting in life-cycle events like baby naming, consecration, bar/bat mitzvah, confirmation, weddings, and funerals. The synagogue acts as house of education as much as a house of worship. It houses a Jewish Learning centre, and a religious school for students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade ten, as well as a pre-school. The congregation has initiated or been involved in a number of community activities such as helping the homeless, the ill, and victims of domestic violence.

In response to the question about the reasons for choosing to live in this neighbourhood, many cited ‘safety, quietness, family and friends living in the area, and proximity to downtown.’ Many also cited ‘being close to work and to facilities and services that met daily needs, such as schools, shopping, and transportation’ as reasons for their choice of the neighbourhood. Interestingly, the proximity to the place of worship was not a significant factor. One third said that they would have moved irrespective of the presence of the synagogue, while a quarter indicated that synagogue was an important factor, along with the presence of co-ethnics, religious schools, and so on. Faith, therefore, did seem to have some influence on relocation to this neighbourhood, but whether it added to the neighbourliness is what we probe in the following section.

**The Faith and Neighbourliness**

In response to the question ‘how often and where do you interact with your neighbours?,’ at least half chose to meet ‘outside the home,’ and only occasionally or sometimes. Almost half of the respondents’ interactions with their neighbours were limited to occasional greetings. A couple of residents interacted more often and invited each other inside their homes because of their children, while another couple suggested they were close to a few neighbours who were good friends. Children seemed to be much more connected with their neighbours, probably because they socialized more often than their parents did. Overall, however, neighbourliness among the residents of this neighbourhood did not seem to be a striking asset.

In response to the question about the likes and dislikes of the neighbourhood, the oft-cited answer about likeable qualities was ‘quietness, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety.’ Only two mentioned the proximity to the synagogue as a desirable feature of the neighbourhood. For a few (5 out of 31), the presence of people of their religious background was cited as a positive point. At the same time, three (out of which two were Jewish) indicated that the area was too homogeneous, too Jewish, and highlighted these characteristics as a downside of the neighbourhood. Increasing property taxes was also brought up as a negative aspect. Nevertheless, 35.5 per cent of the respondents seemed satisfied with the area, and did not bring up anything negative.
Summary

This neighbourhood is a well-established, stable Jewish enclave. Faith does seem to play some role in the reason behind why people have moved here and stayed on for a long time. But this was not the only factor that affected their decision to relocate here. Neither faith nor the synagogue seems to have contributed to tightening the personal bonds among the residents.

The Gore Road Community

This community is located close to the Hindu Sabha Temple, which was established as a society in 1975 but did not find its permanent location until June 1995. It is one of the largest Hindu temples in North America. The temple originally was located in a farmhouse at Derry Road and Highway 10 and had an original congregation size of 10 to 15 families. It grew to 300 families within a few years. When Highway 407 was expanded, the temple was forced to relocate to The Gore Road. The initial proposal called for a facility of 20,000 square feet, and included a temple, a banquet hall, a Sunday school, kitchen facilities, 130 housing units, a community centre, and playgrounds, all of which has been built.

The temple, an impressive building with three tall shikharas dominating the surrounding landscape, is situated on a 24-acre parcel of land on The Gore Road in City of Brampton, a suburban municipality in the northwest portion of the GTA (Figure 5). Up to 1,000 congregants can be accommodated on the main floor of the temple. The school at the temple site offers courses in Hindi language, dance, music, and yoga.

Social Characteristics of the Community

Somewhat isolated subdivisions, built within the last few years, and commercial developments now surround the temple. The community provides an array of housing types, including detached, semi-detached, and townhouse units. According to our estimate from the property tax assessment rolls, approximately 61 per cent of the residents in the community can be categorized as South Asians.

Hindus do not form the majority of residents in The Gore Road community, adding up to only 42 per cent of the total population. In fact, Sikhs form the largest ethnic group (45 per cent) here, and the community includes some Muslims and Catholics. Among those surveyed, 78 per cent were immigrants, mainly from India (55 per cent). Home ownership for respondents was remarkably high at 100 per cent (Table 5).
Table 5: Social Characteristics of the Respondents from the Gore Road Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of the respondents</td>
<td>37.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of households with university/college education</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ethnicity — South Asians</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant religion — Sikhism</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion — Hindu</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant country of origin — India</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean household size</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time in the neighbourhood/house</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean age of the respondents in this neighbourhood was 38 years. A relatively young population, as one might expect among relatively recent immigrants, occupied the subdivisions around the temple. A clear majority (68 per cent) of them were immigrants who had been living in the country for more than 11 years. Almost half of them had a university or college degree, while just a little less than quarter had only a high school degree. Mainly Sikhs and Hindus dominated the area with Sikhism as the dominant religion, a faith practiced by people who had moved to Canada from India.

At the time of the study, the households in the area were a mix of nuclear (48 per cent) and extended families (42 per cent). The average time lived in the neighbourhood was less than 5 years, primarily because the subdivisions themselves were about that old. The high level of home ownership certainly helped to make this a solid, suburban neighbourhood.

The respondents described the neighbourhood as ‘clean, safe, quiet, and new.’ The concentration of South Asians was cast in both positive and negative lights. Some said that it was nice to be with co-ethnics, those who could speak their language, while some said that The Gore Road community was not culturally diverse and was overwhelmingly dominated by one ethnic group.

The Temple and the Neighbourhood

Physically, the presence of the temple in the neighbourhood is dominating. The Hindu saffron flags atop the three *shikharas* form the landmark as well as provide cardinal orientation for those in the area. The temple, however, has grown into a regional destination. It does not just cater to its immediate neighbourhood, but to a larger community dispersed across the GTA. The survey of visitors to the temple told us that although a majority (55 per cent) came from the same municipality, Brampton, where the temple is located, the rest were visiting from the surrounding municipalities like Toronto, Mississauga, and Vaughan. Even among those visitors who lived in Brampton, 90 per cent did not live within walking distance of the temple.
In response to the question about the activities the households were engaged in at the temple, a majority, including spouses, said prayers and other religious services. Their children took dance and language classes in addition to the religious services. Coming to the temple seemed to be a weekly affair, with only a couple of respondents claiming to come more often.

When asked about the reasons for moving into the area, only 13 per cent (4 out of 31 respondents) in The Gore Road community mentioned the presence of a place of worship as a determining factor in their move. Instead, ‘affordability and proximity to work place, highways, and facilities’ were cited more often. To confirm and validate the above answers, the survey included a follow-up question: ‘In the absence of a worship centre, would you have moved here just for the qualities of the neighbourhood even if it did not have your place of worship or congregation?’ Respondents’ answers to this question confirmed their affinity or lack thereof to the place of worship in the neighbourhood. A full 71 per cent in The Gore Road community said that they would have moved there irrespective of the presence of, or proximity to, the place of worship. Only 13 per cent said that they would not have moved here if there had been no Hindu temple.

**Figure 5: The Gore Road Community**
Survey participants were asked a series of questions to ascertain the level of neighbourliness in the faith-based communities. The following question was posed to all participants: ‘How do you interact with your neighbours? For example, do you spend leisure time together, such as having tea, babysitting, and the like.’ After this question, interviewers asked detailed questions about the types of interactions respondents and their families had with their neighbours. Participants were asked detailed questions about where the interactions took place (at home, on the street, and so on). They were also asked about the frequency and nature of such interactions (exchanging greetings, chatting, get togethers, and so on).

Sixty-eight per cent of respondents from The Gore Road neighbourhood said that they saw their neighbours on the streets, while 45 per cent said that their neighbours came inside their homes as well. Interactions outside the home, however, were limited to the occasional exchange of greetings. A few (4 out of 31 respondents) claimed that they went beyond greeting exchanges primarily because they had family and family friends living in the neighbourhood, but the majority of participants (55 per cent) noted that their interactions with neighbours were limited to occasional greetings and chit chats. Children seemed to be friendlier with the neighbours as they played or hung out with other children in the neighbourhood. One thing to point out was that only one respondent mentioned place of worship as a place to meet neighbours.

About the question on the likeability of the neighbourhood, the most common answer from the participants in The Gore Road areas was that the neighbourhood was ‘safe, quiet, convenient, and easily accessible.’ Some also mentioned that it was close to their work place. A few mentioned that there was a sense of community because people spoke the same language and friends and families lived in the vicinity. In this type of social environment, one does not feel isolated and their children have more freedom to visit places. No one pointed out the place of worship as an element of likeness for this neighbourhood.

Regarding the dislikes of the neighbourhood, 55 per cent did have anything negative to say about The Gore Road community. The rest, however, had concerns about the lack of available services like buses, parks, grocery stores, community centres, schools and so on. Two respondents commented on the lack of diversity in the neighbourhood, noting that it was mostly Hindus and Sikhs who lived in the area.

Summary

Since the proportions of Hindus and Sikhs were similar, The Gore Road area cannot be seen as an exclusively Hindu community. Despite its roles as a dominant physical presence and place of spiritual renewal, with a reach far beyond the immediate vicinity, the temple, as institution, and the faith had little apparent influence on the social bonding among the residents of the area. We must,
however, be mindful of the fact that the community is new and is struggling to make do in the absence of many basic community services.

The St. Clare of Assisi Community

This community is located around The Saint Clare of Assisi Roman Catholic Church in the Woodbridge area of the City of Vaughan (Figure 6). The church was opened in 1995. Prior to that, Mass had been celebrated in a local school on weekends for 7 years. As with all Catholic churches in the Toronto area, this church was centrally planned and located by the Archdiocese of Toronto based on the information it collected from various government agencies, school boards, developers, and pastors.

Social Characteristics of the Community

At the time of the study, people living in this neighbourhood were relatively young as the mean age of our respondents was 29.1 years (Table 6). This relatively young age might be explained by the participation of at least six respondents who were in their early 20s. Many in the neighbourhood were engaged in the sales and services sector while others worked in trades, transport, and as equipment operators. A few were self-employed workers, government workers, and students. Almost one-third, however, were high school dropouts. A clear majority (68 per cent) identified themselves as Roman Catholics, mainly from Italy (21.4 per cent) and Iraq (25 per cent). Also included in the sample were a Sikh, a Hindu, an atheist, and a few followers of other religions. The numbers tell us, therefore, that this is a Catholic neighbourhood, but certainly not an exclusive area where one does not find people of other faiths and ethnicities. Demographically, the area seems to have changed and become more diverse in the past 6 to 7 years as the data from the 2001 census suggest that the area back then was composed of 64 per cent Italians and almost 78 per cent Roman Catholics.
The respondents described the St. Clare of Assisi neighbourhood as ‘new, quiet, nice, and safe.’ A few pointed out the ethnic diversity in the positive light. One person, however, was very critical of the neighbourhood and said: “the people are not very helpful and there isn’t a very strong community.” He went on to say that “you don’t really see people walking on the street.”

The Church and the Neighbourhood

At the time of the study, St. Clare of Assisi Parish offered a range of services to its congregants. Faith-related services included scripture teachings, wedding ceremonies, funerals, baptisms, various social activities, and programs for youths. There are also different ministries within the church such as choir, altar servers, communion distribution, and lectors and gospel readers. The church’s Knights of Columbus members were involved in supporting the church and providing aid to those in need. To these ends, they were involved in raising funds for a number of charitable causes such as youth, needy families, and social agencies.
Table 6: Social Characteristics of the Respondents from the St. Clare of Assisi Neighbourhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage/Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of the respondent</td>
<td>29.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ university/college education</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ethnicity – Italian</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other visible minority</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant religion – Catholicism</td>
<td>67.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin – Iraq</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin – Italy</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean household size</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time in the neighbourhood/house</td>
<td>11+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community-wide involvement of the church often involved working with the school boards. Recently, the church opened its doors to the community for a blood-donor program and a food drive. In addition, some parishioners prepared snacks at the church and then distributed them to the hungry.

When we asked about the reasons for locating in the neighbourhood, one-quarter of the respondents suggested ‘it is close to their work place,’ 18 per cent said that they chose the neighbourhood because it is close to facilities of daily needs, and 14 per cent cited affordability. Only two said that the place of worship was a determining factor; for another two, place of worship was the second most important factor. Another three respondents said place of worship was one of several factors, but not the prime reason, behind their decision to move into the area.

Many Catholic Iraqis who lived in the area, however, did not attend the neighbourhood church. They went to a church elsewhere where they could hear Mass in their own language.

Sixty-four per cent of the survey participants in the St. Clare of Assisi area said that they would have moved to the neighbourhood even in the absence of the place of worship. Just 14 per cent claimed that the presence of the church was a decisive factor in locating to the neighbourhood. For the majority, however, the church was not a determining factor in choosing the neighbourhood.

The Faith and Neighbourliness

For the question about ‘how and where’ people interacted with neighbours, most responded, ‘we meet outside on the street and occasionally a few friends who live in the neighbourhood come to our homes.’ One person mentioned the church as a place to meet neighbours. Another brought up the local bus as a venue where he saw his neighbours. The interactions on the street were limited to greeting exchanges and chit chat. As in the other neighbourhoods in this study, children in the St. Clare of Assisi area visited neighbours’ houses often and played together.
People liked that the neighbourhood was ‘safe, close to shopping, and quiet.’ Only one pointed out the presence of church, especially the church bells, as a positive aspect of the neighbourhood. Two were pleased with the presence of co-ethnics in the neighbourhood. Regarding the negative aspects of the neighbourhood, one respondent mentioned the church bells, which would go off every hour until late in the night. Traffic was brought up several times as the major negative characteristic of the area. One-quarter of the participants in the sample mentioned the lack of either neighbourliness or sense of community. They found that the neighbourhood was too quiet, devoid of community life, and suggested that ‘people are very private and reserved.’ Forty per cent of the participants, however, had no complaints about the area.

Summary

This community is relatively new, and neighbourhood bonds have not developed yet. The church obviously has little influence over the neighbourly network. Despite the dominance of one religion, the diversity of ethnicity militates against uniformity of religion.

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

The neighbourhoods described above vary demographically in terms of ethnicities and religious affiliations, and they are located physically in different parts – suburban, urban and inner city - of the GTA. Each neighbourhood had a distinct identity primarily because of the presence of a prominent religious institution. Economically, they fell in either the middle-class or upper-middle-class categories. Despite these variations, what was common among at the time of the study them is that they were not overwhelmingly inhabited by one ethnicity or the followers of one religion. Each neighbourhood had a substantial presence of multiple ethnicities and religious followers. According to our survey participants, affordability, accessibility, proximity to workplace, safety, and cleanliness nearly always trumped the presence of a religious institution as reasons for location to the area in question.

For the most part, neighbourhood interactions in the selected faith communities were limited to formal and polite gestures on the street. Interactions were different among some groups. The interactions were a bit more informal and sometimes intimate and intense among friends and who may be living close by in the same neighbourhood or among those neighbours who had children of the same age. Some social networks had grown in the places of worship. But, clearly, these levels and forms of neighbourly interactions were not entirely a result of faith or place of worship, and usually were present in non-faith-based suburban neighbourhoods as well. While religious institutions and faith had some influence on neighbourliness in two out of five communities (Nugget Avenue and Bathurst and Eglinton), overall, neither religion nor the presence of a place of worship seemed to have much bearing on neighbourliness. All in all, the characteristics exhibited by the faith
neighbourhoods studied here were not far from what we might expect to find in a typical suburban
neighbourhood in urban Canada.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the characteristics of faith communities and examined how and why they
form. The findings present us with a mixed picture of such neighbourhoods. Only one out of five of
those surveyed suggested that faith and the presence of a place of worship had some bearing on
either their decision to relocate or on neighbourliness, a condition necessary for the tightening of
bonds in the neighbourhood. For most survey participants, relocation decisions appear to have been
products of market forces, pre-existing ethnic and personal ties, and, of course, individual choices.

Five essential conclusions can be drawn from this research project:

1. A faith based neighbourhood is essentially a social network of persons of the same faith,
   reinforced by the presence of a religious institution/place of worship. The faith-based social
   network is not geographically bound. The network and its ties may be based on the
   association with the place of worship, but certainly not just because the congregants live
   side-by-side in a neighbourhood. Mere presence of a place of worship does not make urban
   friendship and intimacy local either. The contemporary faith-based neighbourhood, like any
   other neighbourhood, is a community of polite, but limited, social relations. Educational
   institutions, political/economic organizations, professional groups, and voluntary
   associations are the critical sites of social cohesion, not the neighbourhoods (Qadeer and
   Kumar 2006).

2. Religion seems to play a role, although a weak one, in binding people together. It does
   have some influence in forming small concentrations. But even the formation of a small
   concentration and its neighbourly network depends largely upon the religion and the
   individuals’ adherence to its various rituals. For instance, for a devout Muslim, devotional
   practices centre around the mosque, so it may make more sense for her/him to move closer
to a mosque. Unlike Muslims or Sikhs, Hindus do not have a unified set of beliefs and
   practices shared by all believers. Nor is their religion as heavily focused on a community
   temple with daily or weekly congregational worship, hence a long commute is less
   burdensome and, thus, there is no need to live in close proximity to their respective religious
   institutions.

3. Faith is not an all-encompassing characteristic of a neighbourhood. There are several other
   guiding factors in relocating people such as affordability, accessibility, safety, and
   cleanliness. For most people, affordability, accessibility, and other factors are necessary
   conditions, while the presence of a place of worship is merely a sufficient condition in the
   decision to relocate.
4. A faith-based network does not make a neighbourhood an exclusive area. Invariably, there are people of other faiths and ethnicities, though a minority, living in the same neighbourhood. In fact, a significant amount of exchange happens at work, at school, and at other places of interest outside the neighbourhoods. Comparing their geographic size and number of residents with those of census tracts, each of which consists of 5,000 residents on average, these congregational neighbourhoods are much smaller.

5. At the scale of a subdivision, social environment and local institutions largely determine the residents’ levels of satisfaction. Faith and place of worship can serve as catalysts to draw people together, but they do not displace other characteristics of a neighbourhood, like accessibility, affordability, schools, and so on.

All in all, a faith-based ‘community’ is a piece of the Canadian spatial fabric. According to our findings, it is not strikingly at variance from a typical Canadian neighbourhood.

This is an exploratory work based on a small sample of neighbourhoods as well as the small number of subjects surveyed. The findings of this study could form hypotheses for future research works. Controlling for income, geographic location, education, and length of stay, for example, might yield different results. Moreover, a more refined and in-depth ethnographic technique undoubtedly could give us further insight into social ties and personal networks in faith-based communities.
APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR RESIDENTS OF FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES

February 26, 2006

Introductory Letter for Interviewees.

Dr. Sandeep K. Agrawal of Ryerson University is carrying out an exploratory study entitled “Faith-based ethnic communities: process of inclusion or exclusion”. It is a small study that is attempting to answer questions such as: what is the role of place of worship is in the lives of the residents who live nearby? Why and even whether there is a tendency for various ethnic groups move closer to their places of worship. Of particular interest is the examination of what services a place of worship provides to the community around it. For this study, selected residents of these neighbourhoods will be interviewed, as would be professionals and community/religious leaders. As a resident of the community close to a place of worship, you are being requested to share with us your opinions, experiences and observations. We have drafted a set of questions that will help focus our discussion and draw out your perceptions. Your co-operation in answering these questions will greatly help us in pursuing our study and contribute to a better understanding of the role of religion in settlement patterns in the Greater Toronto Area. Please spare half an hour of your time to answer our questions.

We are bound by the ethical principles of research, which are summed up below.

Ethics: According to the academic research ethics, your responses to the following questions will be reported anonymously except those remarks that you explicitly give permission to quote. The confidentiality of your opinions will be maintained and our report will refer to your responses in general terms without any possibility of linking them to you as a person. Also you have no obligation to answer all or some questions or continue with the interview if you are not so inclined.

If you have any questions, now or later, please feel free to call me

Thank you

Sandeep Kumar Agrawal, PhD, AICP, MCIP
Associate Professor
416-979-5000 ext 6767
Questionnaire for households living in communities of faith

Interview with head of household or partner

A few questions about you and your family.

1. Your age----- education------- your present job/ business-----

2. Previous job/occupation------- your ethnicity…………religion……

Languages that you can speak------------------,

3. Your wife/ husband’s education----

Languages spoken-------

4. Your spouse’s present Job (if any)------------------- Previous Jobs (if any)-------------------

5. Who else live with you here, total number living here-------- relations with you------------------

6. If any children, how many and what are their ages-----------------------------------------------------

7. If immigrant, when did you come to Canada………………Wherefrom………

8. In the Toronto area, where have you lived before coming here?

I -------------------------, ii………………………., iii……………………….

9. How long have you lived in this community?

10. Do you own_____ or rent _____ this house?

11. What were some of the reasons you decided to move into this community? (assign order of priority one or more of the following categories…the most important is number 1 reason, and others follow in the order of importance

    I) People of my faith around……
    ii) was an area where other people of similar ethnic background live…..
    iii) It was affordable…………
    iv) was close to place of work…….
    v) Close to facilities of daily needs……
    vi) Family lives in the area……
    vii) near my Church, Mandir, Gurdwara. Temple or Mosque ……

12. What services does your place of worship offer generally to the community/your neighbourhood?

   I) Religious classes  
   ii) Language classes  
   iii) Employment services/business opportunities  
   iv) Youth sports  
   v) Camps  
   vi) Seniors’ meeting place  
   vii) general gathering place and opportunity to meet neighbours and friends  
   viii) others ……………………………………..

13. How do you and other members of your family participate in the activities of your place of worship, (i.e. church, Mandir, or Gurdwara, Temple or Mosque)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What Activity</th>
<th>How Often</th>
<th>With Whom do you Associate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Parents</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. In the absence of the worship centre, would you have moved here just for qualities of the neighbourhood even if it did not have your place of worship or congregation?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

15. How is this community different from others where you have lived before?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

16. How do you interact with your neighbours? E.g. spend leisure time together, such as having tea, babysitting etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Where (at home, on street, grocery store, in place of worship etc)</th>
<th>How Often (regularly, occasionally or rarely)</th>
<th>What Activities (exchange greetings, Chat, get together, exchange tools or information)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. Do you view yourselves as being part of the community outside of your neighbourhood? If yes, then to what extent?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

18. How do you interact with the community at large, people of different religious backgrounds and ethnicity (outside of your workplace such as recreation areas, parks, schools…etc)

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

19. What are some of the things that you like, and don’t like, about this neighbourhood?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX 2: SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR PLACE OF WORSHIP VISITORS

Dr. Sandeep K. Agrawal of Ryerson University is carrying out a study entitled “Faith-based ethnic communities: process of inclusion or exclusion”. This is a small study that attempts to answer questions such as: what is the role of place of worship is in the lives of the residents who live nearby or elsewhere? Why and even whether there is a tendency for various ethnic groups move closer to their places of worship. Of particular interest is the examination of what services a place of worship provides to the immediate and broader community.

For this study, visitors to the place of worship will be asked to fill out this questionnaire. As a visitor to this place of worship, you are being requested to share with us your knowledge, opinions, experiences and observations. Your co-operation in answering these questions will greatly help us in pursuing our study and contribute to a better understanding of the role of religion and places of worship in settlement patterns in the Greater Toronto Area. Please spare 10-15 minutes of your time to answer our questions.

We are bound by the ethical principles of research, which are summed up below.

According to the academic research ethics, your responses to the following questions will be reported anonymously except those remarks that you explicitly give permission to quote.

The confidentiality of your opinions will be maintained and our report will refer to your responses in general terms without any possibility of linking them to you as a person. Also you have no obligation to answer all or some questions or continue with the interview if you are not so inclined.

If you have any questions, now or later, please feel free to call me.

Thank you

Sandeep Kumar Agrawal, PhD, AICP, MCIP
Associate Professor
416-979-5000 ext 6767
Demographics:

1. Current House Location:

   Municipality/ City ................ .... Postal Code .........................

2. Do you live within walking distance of this place of worship?

   - Yes
   - No

3. Gender:

   - Female
   - Male

4. Age Range:

   - 18-25
   - 26-35
   - 36-45
   - 46-55
   - 56-65
   - 66-75
   - 76-85
   - 85 and over

5. Languages you speak  

6. Religion 

7. Total number of people living with you in your household: 

   - Spouse
   - Children
   - Parents
   - Other

Place of Worship Information:

8. How often do you visit this place of worship? (please tick one)

   - Once in a week
   - More than once in a week
   - Bi-weekly
   - Once in a month
   - For festivals or special occasions
   - Other
9. What services does this place of worship generally offer that you know of? *(please tick all that apply)*

- [ ] Religious classes
- [ ] Language classes
- [ ] Dance classes
- [ ] Employment services/business opportunities
- [ ] Youth sports
- [ ] Children’s Camps
- [ ] Seniors’ meeting place
- [ ] Gathering place and opportunity to meet friends
- [ ] Political speeches
- [ ] Religious lectures
- [ ] Health- and social service-related events/classes
- [ ] Others …………………………………………

10. What type of activities do you and other members of your family usually participate in at this place of worship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Relatives / Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Today's Visit:

11. How did you get here today? (please tick one)

- Walking
- Private Vehicle
- Public transportation
- Took ride with a neighbour/Friend
- Other ............................................

12. Total number of people accompanied you to the place of worship today: .................

  Spouse...........
  Parents.........
  Children........
  Friends.........
  Relatives........
  Neighbour........

13. Any specific reason for your visit today?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
14. What activities are you participating in *today*?:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives / Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre

CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre is one of five Canadian Metropolis centres dedicated to ensuring that scientific expertise contributes to the improvement of migration and diversity policy.

CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre is a collaboration of Ryerson University, York University, and the University of Toronto, as well as the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the United Way of Greater Toronto, and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.

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Citizenship and Immigration Canada
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Department of Canadian Heritage
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Human Resources and Social Development Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada
Public Safety Canada
Canada Border Services Agency
Justice Canada
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CEDQ)
Federal Economic Development Initiative for North Ontario (FedNor)
The Rural and Cooperatives Secretariats of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Statistics Canada

For more information about CERIS contact:
CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre
246 Bloor Street West, 7th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V4
Telephone: (416) 946-3110 Facsimile: (416) 971-3094
http://ceris.metropolis.net
Launched in 1996, the Metropolis Project strives to improve policies for managing migration and diversity by focusing scholarly attention on critical issues. All project initiatives involve policymakers, researchers, and members of non-governmental organizations.

Metropolis Project goals are to:

• Enhance academic research capacity;
• Focus academic research on critical policy issues and policy options;
• Develop ways to facilitate the use of research in decision-making.

The Canadian and international components of the Metropolis Project encourage and facilitate communication between interested stakeholders at the annual national and international conferences and at topical workshops, seminars, and roundtables organized by project members.

For more information about the Metropolis Project visit the Metropolis web sites at:
http://canada.metropolis.net
http://international.metropolis.net