Who's your neighbour?

Exploring residents' perspectives of social diversity and interaction in the Canadian suburbs

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Executive Summary

This research builds on the "Trends in the Suburbs" project, led by Dr Jill L. Grant, which has explored trends in Canadian residential suburban environments. To date, the broader project has focused on the producers' side of planning and developing the suburbs, by examining qualitative data generated through interviews with planners, developers, and elected officials. This project examines the consumption of suburban development, through interviews with suburban residents in select Canadian cities.

Planners promote social diversity as a desirable characteristic of balanced neighbourhoods. In the Canadian suburban context, land use policies requiring mixed housing types suggest that planners can modify the built environment to encourage diverse groups of people to come together, fostering social interaction and a sense of community. Planning policies aim to provide opportunities for people of different ages, incomes and ethnicities to live together in the same neighbourhoods, promoting tolerance and social justice. Despite community design theory which advocates designing for diversity, residents' perspectives of social diversity suggest that planners face considerable resistance when implementing these theories in practice.

Few studies have examined residents' perspectives of diversity in Canadian suburban contexts, but studies of suburban life and social interaction in planned communities such as Herbert Gans' *The Levittowners* (1967) provided a guide for interpreting findings. Theories of social interaction and social relationships indicate that while planners can promote visual exposure to diversity through community design that mixes housing types, land use policies rarely affect residents' relationships with one another (Gans, 1961a). Since suburban communities provide housing for a limited range of incomes and classes, with residents preferring to live with neighbours from similar backgrounds, "diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity" (Putnam, 2007, p. 142).

To understand social diversity policies in practice, I explored residents' perspectives of social diversity in select Canadian cities. Five Trends in the Suburbs researchers, including myself, collected data through in-person, semi-structured interviews with 65 suburban residents between 2010 and 2012, in Surrey and Langley, British Columbia, Calgary and Airdrie, Alberta, Barrie and Markham, Ontario, and Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia. Residents discussed their perceptions of their own neighbourhoods and their broad views on the future of the suburbs. For this project, I drew findings from residents' discussions around neighbourhood social characteristics, housing mix, and social interaction.

I explored the ways in which suburban residents connect ideas of mixed housing types and tenures with social diversity. Residents readily identified that planners require developments to include different types of housing to accommodate different ages, income

levels and household types. Respondents acknowledged that their neighbourhoods remain relatively homogeneous in terms of income and class, and embraced neighbours with similar backgrounds. Residents felt comfortable with a superficial sociality, describing their neighbourhoods as "friendly" but places where everyone "keeps to themselves". Residents' resistance to diversity emerged from conflicts over property maintenance and increased density in their neighbourhoods. Residents expressed their biases against different incomes, classes, ages and ethnicities indirectly, hesitant to appear discriminatory.

My findings suggest residents framed the concept of social diversity dichotomously: "Diversity" was represented in positive attitudes and acceptable levels of mix, whereas "difference" emerged from negative attitudes and unacceptable levels of mix. Residents appreciate diversity in theory but resist difference in their neighbourhoods. Residents' views of their neighbours were shaped by a desire for social control and order over their environments. Neighbours from different income, class, age or ethnic backgrounds who stepped outside of social norms were held up as examples of the failure of policies promoting diversity.

Residents' resistance to difference poses significant barriers for implementing community design theory to promote positive acceptance of diversity. Residents' perceptions of difference affect developers' decisions to segregate housing types, and provide barriers to incorporating affordable housing for low income families in new suburban developments. For planners to effectively promote social diversity for the benefit of the greater public good, they must understand residents' resistance to difference, and think critically about efforts to translate social diversity theory into practice.

This research has received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSRHCC), through the "Trends in the Suburbs" project and the Major Collaborative Research Initiative "Global Suburbanisms: Governance, Land and Infrastructure in the 21st Century".

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1. Introduction

Community design theory views social diversity as a desirable characteristic for suburban communities. Planners have promoted "designing for diversity" primarily through land use policies that require mixing single detached and multiple unit dwelling types throughout neighbourhoods. While academic planning literature espouses social diversity as a method of producing a "balanced community" with residents from different backgrounds, little contemporary Canadian research has examined suburban residents' perspectives of social diversity and considered its effect on planning practice. Through findings from in-person interviews, I explored residents' perspectives of social diversity and interaction among suburban residents of selected Canadian cities. I sought to understand how residents framed their understandings of diversity in their own neighbourhoods, and how these perspectives affect planning practice.

This qualitative study contributes to two distinct research projects. It continues work on the project "Trends in residential environments: planning and inhabiting the suburbs" (or "Trends in the Suburbs") led by Dr Jill L. Grant of the Dalhousie University School of Planning. Between 2010 and 2012, five researchers, including myself, collected data from 65 residents in Surrey and Langley, British Columbia, Calgary and Airdrie, Alberta, Barrie and Markham, Ontario, and Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia. Interviews covered residents' perspectives of their own neighbourhoods and broad views on the future of the suburbs. For this project, I drew findings from residents' discussions around neighbourhood social characteristics, housing mix, and social interaction. The project also received funding through "Global suburbanisms: governance, land, and infrastructure in the 21st century" led by Dr. Roger Keil of the City Institute at York University, a Major Collaborative Research Initiative documenting theories of suburbanization. Both projects have been supported through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social diversity in theory

The concept of social diversity has featured as an important planning principle since the nineteenth century (Rose, 2004; Sarkissian, 1976). Planners describe social diversity or social mix as "a desirable mix of people with differing demographic, economic and ethnic characteristics that together create a balanced or complete community" (Grant & Perrott, 2009, p. 267). Planning theory suggests that mixing residents with different demographic characteristics is an important component of planning and designing new communities. Planners have argued that lower economic classes could improve their own fortunes and increase the "cleanliness" of their living conditions through visual contact with those of a higher economic status (Sarkissian, 1976, p. 231). Promoting social diversity has encouraged middle class residents to move into urban areas (Rose, 2004), implying that mixing economic classes can help to avoid the pitfalls associated with spatial concentrations of poverty (Bretherton & Pleace, 2011). By providing opportunities for diverse groups to live within the same neighbourhood, planners can facilitate an even distribution of amenities and services to all urban residents (Talen, 2006).

Jacobs (1961) argued for socially diverse cities as a means of maintaining vibrant, successful places, describing what Talen (2006; 2008) calls "place vitality". Diverse populations arguably allow residents with different backgrounds and perspectives to interact, increasing tolerance and fostering knowledge, especially among children (Gans, 1961b). Social mixing encourages innovation and increases a city's competitiveness, and promotes opportunities for social justice (Fainstein, 2005; Sandercock, 1998; Young, 1990) through the generation of "social capital" (Cole & Goodchild, 2001). The social capital concept suggests that positive relationships among diverse residents fosters cooperation within the neighbourhood setting, "thereby diminishing the social exclusion encountered by the poorer members of the community" (Cole & Goodchild, 2001, p. 355). In developing new suburban communities, social diversity theories influence planners to push for balanced neighbourhoods that provide opportunities for residents of different backgrounds.

2.2 Planning for diversity through housing mix policies

Community design theory asserts that demographically mixed neighbourhoods can be encouraged by mixing housing types in new developments (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001; Talen, 2006). As proximity to other residents can shape the level of interaction within neighbourhoods (Gans, 1961a), design of the residential environment should accommodate residents with diverse backgrounds (Talen, 2008). The ascendance of new urbanism and smart

growth has therefore influenced municipal planning policies to incorporate mixes of housing types and tenures in new suburban developments (Rose, 2004).

Some Canadian cities have adopted social diversity objectives in their planning policies, suggesting that a range of housing types should be provided in new developments (Grant & Perrott, 2009). In Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy calls for a mix of housing types and densities throughout suburban growth centres (HRM, 2006). The City of Surrey has committed to "[supporting] more choices in housing to meet the needs of people of all ages, household types, income levels, and lifestyles" (City of Surrey, 2002, p. 47). The City of Calgary includes specific and detailed policy in its Municipal Development Plan calling for a mix of housing types and tenures, stating that the City will:

> "Provide for a wide range of housing types, tenures (rental and ownership) and densities to create diverse neighbourhoods that include: i. A mix of housing types and tenures, including single detached, ground-oriented (e.g., duplexes, row houses, attached housing, accessory dwelling units and secondary suites), medium- and higher density and mixed-use residential developments; and, ii. A range of housing choices, in terms of the mix of housing sizes and types to meet affordability, accessibility, life cycle and lifestyle needs of different groups" (City of Calgary, 2007, p. 2-19).

In some cities, the New Urbanist movement has been influential in promoting diversity through mixing residential housing types and price levels (Day, 2003). The Town of Markham, Ontario, has several subdivisions designed with new urbanist and smart growth principles, developed through municipal planning policies that encourage mixing housing types throughout the Town (Grant & Perrott, 2009; Town of Markham, 2005).

Figure 1: Single detached housing on a small lot in Markham (Source: K. Perrott).

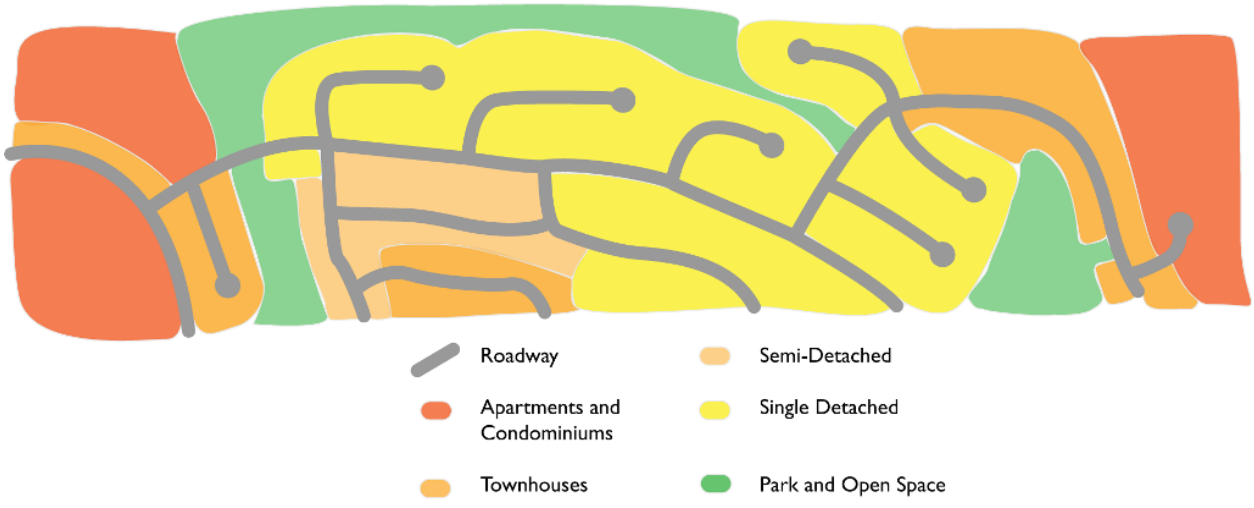
Figure 2: Mix of townhouses and apartment complexes in Markham (Source: K. Perrott).

While some municipalities may more actively promote mixes of housing types and tenures within new developments, similar policies across Canadian cities indicate that social mix holds significant influence in planning practice. As a result of policies that promote mixed housing types, many new Canadian suburban developments have deviated from the

conventional suburban neighbourhood by providing semi-detached houses, townhouses, apartments and live/work units in addition to single detached houses. In theory, providing a range of housing types at different price points allows residents with diverse backgrounds to realize the benefits of socially mixed neighbourhoods.

The traditional urban pattern has segregated housing types such that conventional subdivisions have been dominated by single detached dwellings. The "Trends in the Suburbs" project has shown that in Canada, planners have promoted social mix policies and developers have adopted these policies in new developments (Grant & Perrott, 2009. See also: Craswell, 2011; Gonzalez, 2010; Laven, 2008; Perrin, 2012; Perrott, 2008a, 2008b; Scott, 2010). New suburban developments have incorporated a range of housing types, including single detached houses, semi-detached houses, townhouses, and apartments. On the ground, housing types are often segregated by streets, with limited mix existing within the same block. Figure 3 shows a typical new subdivision design, where housing types are grouped in clusters based on density and form. Condominiums are rarely located next to single detached homes, and are likely to be buffered by townhouses, roads, parks, or other open spaces. Homes with higher price points are located near each other, with larger, higher priced single detached homes grouped together on large lots, often on cul-de-sacs. In areas where single detached homes are adjacent to townhouses, the townhouses may be marketed as "executive townhomes" with similar square footage to a single detached house. Commonly, single detached homes located on smaller lots adjacent to semi-detached or townhouses are marketed as starter homes.

Figure 3: Typical New Suburban Design: Mixed Housing Types



Perin's "sociology of sprawl" (1977, p. 81) may partially explain segregation of housing types. In suburban communities constructed during the post-war period, movement to the suburbs was viewed an escape from dangers of the inner city. Suburbs provided residents with

a level of insulation from the negativity associated with inner city life. This conception of the suburbs is pervasive, and Perin suggested there is "social flight *within* the suburbs as well" (1977, p. 81). Residents hope to segregate themselves from those who are different, even within their own neighbourhoods.

Figure 4: Suburban townhouse design in HRM (Source: Author).

Figure 5: Small single detached house adjacent to large townhouses in HRM (Source: Author).

2.3 Understanding diversity theory in practice

Since the growth of the suburbs in the post-war period, researchers have examined diversity and interaction between residents of suburban communities. As the post-war suburbs have been criticized as places of social isolation and homogeneity, the recent influence of new urbanism and smart growth principles on community design theory has brought discussions of diversity and interaction back to the forefront (Rose, 2004; Winstanley, Thorns & Perkins, 2010). Contemporary research suggests there is little evidence to show that mixing housing types results in positive interactions between residents (Day, 2003; Grant, 2006; Thompson-Fawcett, 2003), or whether residents are "participating together in the local community in meaningful ways" (Talen, 2006, p. 242).

Few studies have examined residents' perspectives of diversity in Canadian suburban contexts, but results from studies of suburban life and social interaction in planned communities since the post-war period provide a guide for interpreting findings. Herbert Gans' *The Levittowners* (1967) remains one of the most comprehensive studies of suburban residents' perspectives. Gans' work as a participant-observer in the planned town of Levittown, New Jersey provided insights for understanding suburban residents' perspectives of diversity and their interactions with one another. Levittown residents understood themselves and their neighbours in relation to divisions of income, class, age and ethnicity. Gans suggested residents cope with difference by establishing social control over the physical appearance of their

neighbourhoods (1967). Perin elaborated, “there are the social pigeonholes people are defined to belong in, and there are the social principles with which they negotiate their relationships with one another” (1977, p. 168).

Gans examined the merits of promoting diverse (or “heterogeneous”) communities, suggesting that while social diversity is desirable, “a mixing of all age and class groups is likely to produce at best a cool social climate, lacking the consensus and intensity of relations that is necessary for mutual enrichment” (1961b, p. 177). Similarly, Putnam (2007) described two oppositional theories of social diversity outcomes. While contact hypothesis “argues that diversity fosters interethnic tolerance and social solidarity” (Putnam, 2007, p. 141), most theorists support conflict theory. Conflict theory suggests that because of “contention over limited resources, diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity” (Putnam, 2007, p. 142). Joseph and Chaskin (2009), summarized these points succinctly, noting that “there is evidence that the more diversity that exists in a community, the less trusting residents are of neighbours and the more they tend to isolate themselves from others, even from those of similar backgrounds” (Joseph & Chaskin, 2009, p. 2350).

Gans (1961a) explored factors affecting social relationships in suburban communities, arguing that both “physical propinquity” (proximity between neighbours) and “homogeneity” (similarity of background or values) are necessary for developing positive relationships between neighbours (p. 134). Gans concluded that planners can “affect visual contact and initial social contacts” through their influence over housing layouts in new developments, but “cannot determine the intensity or quality of the relationships” (1961a, p. 139). Rosenblatt, Cheshire and Lawrence (2009) confirmed Gans’ suggestion that planners can affect the physical proximity of residents and their frequency of visual contact, but cannot compel residents to develop meaningful social relationships. In exploring social interaction and sense of community in an Australian Master Planned Community, the researchers concluded that efforts by the developers were successful in building a sense of place, but “not as successful in influencing residents’ patterns of interaction and activity on the estate” (Rosenblatt et al, 2009, p. 138). Furthermore, residents were likely to make connections and friendships across more than one community, beyond their residential location (Rosenblatt et al, 2009).

These studies of social diversity and interaction have helped to frame my findings, and guided my interpretation of residents’ perspectives of diversity in their suburban neighbourhoods.

3. Purpose Statement and Research Questions

This qualitative study explores perspectives of social diversity and interaction among residents of Canadian suburban communities. I investigate the ways in which planning for a mix of housing types and tenures facilitates demographic mixing and interaction between neighbours in new suburban communities. I explore the effects of social diversity theories by examining how the physical mix of housing types in suburbs affects relationships between neighbours.

Recognizing that little academic research has analysed the extent to which the benefits of socially diverse neighbourhoods have been realized in Canadian suburbs, I investigate the planning principle in practice in the Canadian suburban context. Prior research for the "Trends in the Suburbs" project included in-person interviews with planners, development professionals, elected officials and a limited number of residents in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia. These interviews explored the social characteristics of neighbourhoods and efforts to incorporate mixed housing types. For this study, I specifically examine the perception of social diversity and interaction among residents.

Three main research questions guided my exploration of residents' perspectives of planning policies promoting social mix and interaction:

1. **To what extent do suburban residents connect ideas of mixed housing types and tenures with social diversity / social mix?**

2. **In what ways do suburban residents describe interactions with their neighbours?**

3. **How do suburban residents respond to effects of social diversity / social mix in their own neighbourhoods?**

My approach aims to help planners realize the benefits of social diversity policies, as findings illustrate the barriers that these policies face in implementation. Residents' perspectives can help planners understand resistance to land use policies promoting mixed housing types and tenure. By analysing qualitative data from in-person interviews with Canadian suburban residents, this project sets the stage for planners to understand the effects of social mix policies. My analysis considers the ways in which residents cope with difference in their neighbourhoods, pointing towards opportunities for acceptance of diversity.

4. Method

4.1 Approach

Taking the case study approach suggested by Yin (2008), I used data from comparative case studies which can be generalized to theory. For the Trends in the Suburbs project, we used a method of strategic sampling, "designed to encapsulate a relevant range in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly" (Mason, 2002, p. 124). I conducted a thematic content analysis of qualitative data from in-person interviews with suburban residents from select Canadian cities. I looked for patterns of meaning in the ways in which residents' constructed their views of their suburban neighbourhoods. Highlighting emerging themes from the data, I compared residents' perspectives from selected suburban communities, and generalized findings to existing theories of social diversity and interaction.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

Data collection for this study has been undertaken through the Trends in the Suburbs project, which explores trends in suburban Canadian residential environments. As a main component of the Trends in the Suburbs project, I conducted field surveys of three new residential subdivisions in Halifax Regional Municipality. Each of the target neighbourhoods were subdivisions constructed within the past ten years, and all included some level of housing mix. One subdivision included a wider range of housing types and price points than the others. Along with an examination of past Suburbs project research, these surveys provided a clear picture of the form and layout of development in new residential subdivisions. While I was interested in broader features of the subdivisions for the Trends in the Suburbs project as a whole, for this project, the housing types and organization of those types within the subdivisions were most relevant to studying social mix and interaction.

The main data set for this study comes from qualitative data conducted by researchers through in-person, semi-structured interviews in seven Canadian cities. While the scope of the study aims to consider the Canadian suburban context generally, rather than focus on the geographical differences between each of the respondents' cities, residents' responses are influenced by their geographical context and the level of diversity present in those areas. Barrie and Markham, Ontario are located within the commutershed of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and many residents have ties to the Toronto area for work or social commitments. Respondents from Calgary, Alberta, resided both in new subdivisions on the outskirts of the city and urban infill developments. Airdrie, Alberta, like Barrie and Markham, falls within the commutershed of Calgary. Langley and Surrey, British Columbia, are both part of Metro Vancouver and have seen high rates of growth in residential development with increased

immigration and high housing costs in the Vancouver area. Halifax Regional Municipality covers about 5,500 square kilometers, but respondents were targeted from suburban areas within twenty minutes' drive of the urban core. Figure 1 shows the location of each of the study areas in Canada.

Figure 6: Study areas in Canadian cities

Interviews in Barrie, Markham, Calgary, Airdrie, Surrey, and Langley were completed by three researchers during 2010. In 2011, one researcher interviewed four resident respondents in Halifax Regional Municipality. In summer 2012, with the social diversity concept in mind, I interviewed 17 residents. In total, the sample of residents includes 65 respondents. A breakdown of the number of interviews is provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Number of Respondents by City

City	Number of Respondents
Halifax Regional Municipality	21
Barrie	15
Markham	7
Calgary	5
Airdrie	4
Surrey	4
Langley	9
Total	**65**

Prior to 2012, researchers recruited 48 interview participants by approaching known contacts and making connections through residents' associations and other community organizations. In summer 2012, I conducted interviews with 17 residents from different suburban areas throughout HRM. Prior to recruitment, I surveyed and selected two target neighbourhoods from HRM's inner ring suburbs. When recruitment proved difficult, I expanded the search for participants to a third suburban neighbourhood. Interview participants were then selected using two strategies. First, I contacted residents of the target areas who were known to researchers via email with an invitation to participate. As a secondary recruitment strategy, I visited the target suburban areas and placed recruitment flyers on doorsteps and on community mailboxes (see Appendix 1). I targeted a variety of housing types in the hope of generating respondents of differing demographic backgrounds. The recruitment letter directed interested residents to make contact via email. Finally, all interviewers made additional contacts using a snowballing technique, in which respondents were asked at the end of their interviews for suggestions of other potential participants. Once respondents agreed to participate in the project, interviews were arranged at a time and place of their convenience. A consent letter (Appendix 2) and a copy of the interview questions (Appendix 3) were provided in advance so that participants understood the project and the interview process.

As the collected data forms part of the broader data set for the Trends in the Suburbs project, I built on an established set of interview questions. The semi-structured interview format allowed all researchers to use the interview questions as a guide, probing for further details. Interviewers were not compelled to ask every question of every respondent, especially if they felt that the issue had been previously answered under another question. The interview guide included questions such as:

- *How would you describe the social characteristics of the neighbourhood?*
- *To what extent do the suburbs here try to accommodate a variety of households – different types of residents living in the same neighbourhood?*
- *What do you see as the benefits/challenges of promoting a mix of housing types?*

These questions prompted respondents in all study areas to describe their impressions of mixed housing types and the social characteristics of their neighbourhoods. For the HRM interviews in 2012, I amended the existing interview guide, altering the order of the questions and adding questions that would further prompt residents to discuss the level of social interaction in their neighbourhoods. I provided respondents with a mapping exercise that explored how residents interacted with their neighbours. During the interviews, I provided participants with a map of their neighbourhoods, directing them to mark on the map where they could identify the residences of acquaintances and close friends, and prompting them to describe how and where they interact with their neighbours. As it became obvious that my perception of respondents' neighbourhoods did not necessarily reflect their perceptions, I

began to direct residents to first mark the area they consider as their neighbourhood. This technique allowed residents to think about the spatial construct of their neighbourhoods. Their perceptions often differed greatly from my initial assumptions.

Following each interview, I took notes, reflecting on the process and summarizing obvious emerging themes as a guide for future analysis. All interviews were transcribed, edited and coded in preparation for analysis. I conducted a thematic content analysis, first examining each interview in its entirety, identifying key themes through the scope of the social diversity concept. Emerging themes from all interviews were then compiled to explore common ideas discussed among respondents. Resident responses from each city were compared and contrasted to understand how their geographical context affected their perspectives. This descriptive analysis technique allowed me to explore the ways in which residents responded to ideas of social diversity and interaction in their neighbourhoods and interpreted planning principles of mixing housing types.

4.3 Respondent sample and limitations

As residents were chosen for convenience rather than through random sampling, the overall sample of respondents cannot be easily categorized. Data collected from the HRM interviews in 2011 and 2012 recorded the location of residents' neighbourhoods, and interviews conducted in 2012 recorded key demographic characteristics (gender, age, income level, housing and household type). For responses from other cities, I derived respondents' residential locations and demographic characteristics from the interview transcripts. As a result, some of the characteristics of the interview respondents are incomplete. Using a convenience sample and the snowballing technique for recruitment affected the type of respondents that have participated in the study. Respondents chose to participate and most seemed comfortable and confident doing so. Respondents contacted using the snowballing technique likely had similar backgrounds to their referrers. In general, respondents appeared to have stable economic backgrounds and housing situations.

By choosing target neighbourhoods in HRM, I hoped to produce comparable data between respondents; however, the expansion of the scope of this project to include residents' responses from other cities complicated this process. In other cities, target neighbourhoods were not selected, resulting in responses from a wider range of housing developments. Respondents resided in a range of neighbourhood types within the selected cities (see Figure 7). Most respondents resided in new subdivisions in inner or outer ring suburbs, constructed in the past ten years. Nearly one-fifth of respondents resided in older suburban neighbourhoods. Five respondents lived in new subdivisions considered urban infill, which included new housing that differed from the surrounding urban area. Two respondents from the Barrie interviews resided in an exurban area. Eight respondents from Markham and Calgary resided in New

Urbanist communities, and three respondents from Surrey resided in private or gated communities.

Figure 7: Respondents by Neighbourhood Type

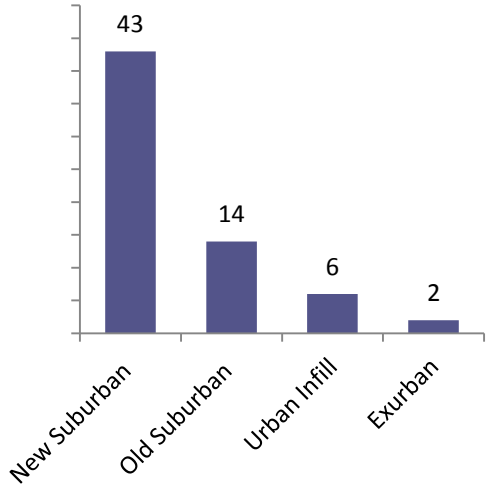
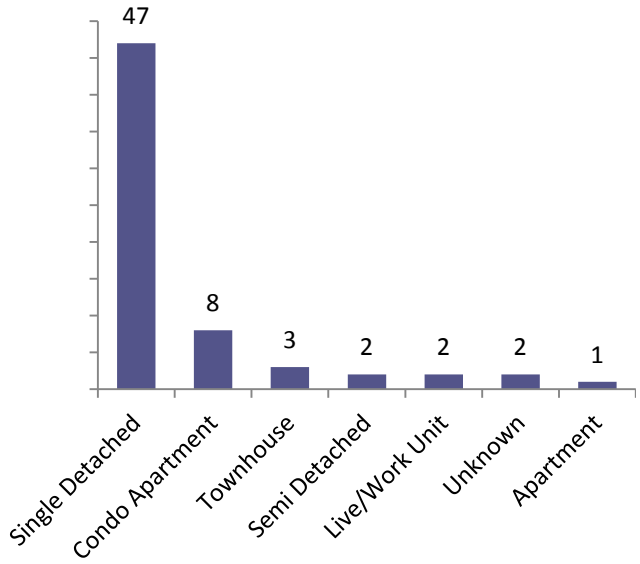


Figure 8: Respondents by Building Type



Most respondents lived in single detached housing, with eight respondents living in apartment-style condominiums, and a few respondents living in townhouses, semi-detached homes and live/work units (Figure 8). The housing type of two respondents in Calgary was unknown, as that information was not recorded in the interview transcript.

Table 2: Respondents by Gender

	Female	Male	Total
Halifax	15	6	21
Barrie	9	6	15
Markham	6	1	7
Calgary	5	0	5
Airdrie	2	2	4
Surrey	4	0	4
Langley	6	3	9
Total	**47**	**18**	**65**

The demographic characteristics of respondents varied in terms of household types, but many characteristics were overrepresented. Of 65 respondents, 47 were female and 18 male (Table 2). There were no male respondents from Calgary or Surrey, and only one male respondent from Markham. As age was difficult to discern from some interviews, respondents were classified by household type, indicating whether respondents lived alone, as married or common-law couples, with young children or adult children in the household (Figure 9). Many respondents had children, with nearly one-third of respondents having young children ("young families") and just over one-quarter of respondents living with adult children. One-quarter of respondents lived with a spouse, with a few respondents living alone. Three

respondents are classified as unknown, as this information could not be determined from the transcripts.

Nearly all respondents owned their own homes, with only five renters among the sample of 65 respondents (Figure 10). Respondents were not directly asked about their income levels, but given the type and quality of housing present in their neighbourhoods and the responses received, most respondents likely had medium to high incomes. No interviews indicated that respondents could be considered low income residents.

Figure 9: Respondents by Household Type

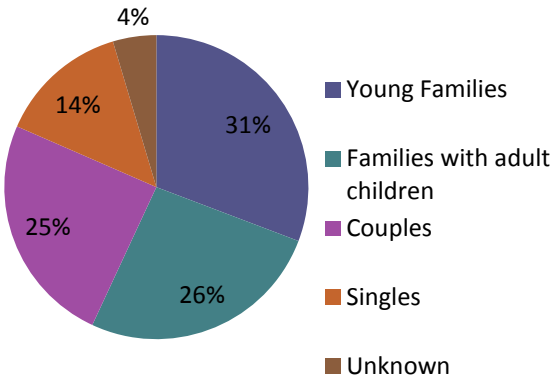
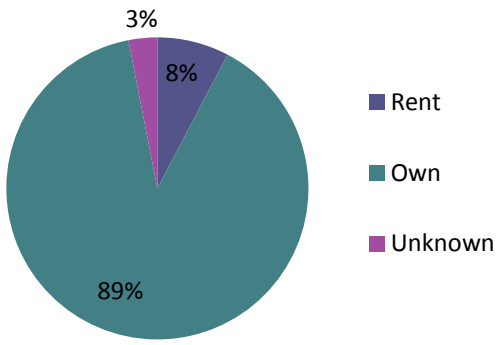


Figure 10: Respondents by Tenure Type



Differences in the interview guide and each researcher's interview style likely impacted the range of responses received. Considering the sensitivity of discussing issues such as income, race and class, responses may have been affected by what Joseph and Chaskin call "social desirability bias" (2010, p. 2352), in which respondents reply with what they think is the appropriate or politically correct response, rather than their true opinion. Differences in the cities' demographic and historical contexts may have impacted residents' perspectives, but it is difficult to discern to what extent. For example, patterns of immigration in recent years has likely exposed residents in the Toronto and Vancouver areas to interactions with more visible minorities than in HRM, but both positive and negative attitudes towards ethnic diversity were noted in all cities.

Despite its limitations, a broad cross-Canadian sample of suburban residents provides a more robust picture of perspectives of social diversity than previously studied. The data set of respondents' perspectives can be generalized to theory as it provides deeper insight into Canadian suburban residents' opinions than so far provided by the literature. While planners rely on community design theory to formulate policy for planning new suburban communities, resident perspectives found in the data set will further inform planners' understandings of resistance to diversity. My findings examine the extent to which the attitudes and behaviours of residents shape planning practice.

5. Findings

I have organized my findings so that the following sections answer each of my research questions in turn. In conducting the thematic content analysis, I drew themes from the data related to social diversity and social interaction. These themes were analyzed and consolidated, and are presented so that each research question is answered and findings can be generalized to theory.

Section 5.1 answers the first research question: **To what extent do suburban residents connect ideas of mixed housing types and tenures with social diversity / social mix?** I discuss the physical mix of housing in new suburban neighbourhoods and residents' perceptions of that mix. The ways in which residents' perceive housing type and tenure diversity affects their perspectives of ethnic, income, class and age mixing in their neighbourhoods. This section explores the ways that residents related these concepts to mixed housing types.

Section 5.2 answers the second research question: **In what ways do suburban residents describe interactions with their neighbours?** Residents described a superficial level of sociality in their neighbourhoods, relating their neighbours' social characteristics to their levels of interaction. This section examines residents' social and community ties to their neighbourhoods, and outlines some barriers to creating close social relationships.

Section 5.3 answers the third research question: **How do suburban residents respond to effects of social diversity / social mix in their own neighbourhoods?** Respondents described their resistance to diversity by framing intolerance in terms of physical form and function of their neighbourhoods. Residents spoke indirectly about their preferences regarding social diversity in their own neighbourhoods, pointing towards a distinction between acceptable levels of diversity and unacceptable levels of difference.

5.1 Connecting housing types and household types

During interviews, we asked residents, "To what extent do the suburbs here try to accommodate a variety of households?" My first research question explores the ways in which residents responded to efforts to provide mixed housing types to accommodate different household types. Residents recognized that different sizes or styles of housing attract different household types and sizes to their neighbourhoods.

> *"In this neighbourhood, we have a number of different developments. We have detached housing, we have semi-detached housing, we have larger families, we have smaller families. This particular street accommodates mostly small families. Along this street, you have mostly semi-detached housing. But if you just walk around the block, you find detached housing, quite large houses which will accommodate larger families. So I think in that way, there's a good variety. There's a good mix of housing for sure." (H12R3M)*

Some respondents recognized distinct housing types are designed for specific household types. One respondent in HRM noted that houses in her neighbourhood were designed specifically for older and younger families. This respondent also observed that the neighbourhood provides little housing for those living alone or groups of unrelated people.

> *"When we were originally shopping for a house, most of the houses were for sale so we could look through different ones and you could tell who they were building this for. This was going to be for empty nesters or this was going to be for a young family. You could definitely tell that they were aiming for the two extremes. It would be young families and older people. You don't see many single people here. You don't see, you know, groups of young people here. It's like all families or old people." (H12R11F)*

Residents view providing mixed housing types as an opportunity to remain in the neighbourhood through different life cycle stages. A Barrie resident stated that townhouse developments provided housing for those in transitional stages, reflecting Perin's assertion (1977) that the goal for most residents is to own a single detached home.

> *"Every subdivision also builds townhouses because the townhouses are a stepping stone. They are more affordable. They are not as expensive as a house…Instead of paying rent, they may buy a townhouse. So there is a demand for townhouses because again that's usually a separated family or a new family to Barrie who just wants to buy a townhouse, get to know the city and then move to a house somewhere else. It's a transitional form of living. A young couple may buy a townhouse first before transitioning to a single family home." (B10R9F)*

Field surveys of Canadian suburbs have shown that while many new residential subdivisions include a range of housing types, most continue to segregate building types by street or separate dwelling unit styles by price point (such as the neighbourhood layout found in Figure 3, Section 2.2). While community design theory suggests that mixing housing types within neighbourhoods provides opportunities for residents with diverse backgrounds to interact, subdivision layouts reflecting conventional suburban design may limit the effectiveness of planning policies. Some respondents recognized that housing mix within their neighbourhoods does little to integrate household types. A respondent from Barrie described the physical separation of multiple dwelling units from single detached dwelling units within her neighbourhood.

> *"I know that the developers have deliberately put in the multi-family along with the suburban to try to equalize the demographics of the area. And it just doesn't really work from what I've been able to figure out. It's like you've got the townhouse units that are always separate no matter where you put them. In the subdivision, it's like they try to link them all up…but they are still always separate." (B10R6AF)*

Segregating housing types by streets and price level were seen as strategies to protect the property values of more expensive homes. Respondents in Airdrie described their neighbourhood as a "premier area" because it did not have multiple dwelling units. An HRM resident explained developers separate housing types when designing subdivisions in order to minimize perceived effects on property values.

> *"I know some people don't like it. They say, well, I've got my single family and you put me next to a row house. And then they say, well, because they're less expensive homes, it brings the value of mine down. To a large extent what they've done here is put them on separate streets and they transition from one level to the next when they're looking at the cost of the houses. For example, the lots at this end of the street appear to be bigger than at the other end of the street, which are closer to the row houses. So they're slightly smaller homes. So they had a gradual increase and decrease between the sizes." (H12R14F)*

Residents' attitudes varied towards planning initiatives promoting mixed housing types. Most respondents spoke favourably towards incorporating mixed housing types in their neighbourhoods, although some spoke of the concept only in abstract. Residents who had moved to neighbourhoods with a high level of housing type mix were more likely to speak positively of the concept. Respondents noted that their neighbourhoods catered to different types of people and their needs. One respondent living in an urban infill development in Calgary noted that mixing housing types encouraged a vibrant street life, as residents with different backgrounds make the area active during different times of day.

> *"I think with the housing types, you get a wider range of people from their age and their income as well. So pretty much everything on the spectrum is there. Which is nice because you have people there all the time. It's not like a typical suburb where I think people go to work at 8:00 am and come back at 5:00 pm, and the whole community flees to downtown and then they come back. You kind of have everybody on different schedules." (C10R8F)*

Negative perceptions of mixed housing types commonly focused on the effects of increased density, and respondents frequently acknowledged that residents are protective of their property values. Residents living in areas with a low level of housing type mix described concerns over nearby new developments that included multiple dwelling units. A few respondents in exurban communities in Airdrie, Surrey and Langley expressed concern that increasing density by developing on smaller lot sizes lowered quality of life. An HRM resident suggested that the increase in apartment building construction in her neighbourhood would lead to social conflict.

> *"There are too many buildings going up [nearby]. It's too dense. It's too densely built up. If you have too many people living close together, it usually breeds a problem of some sort or the other." (H12R5F)*

Overall, respondents readily connected mixed housing types with mixed household types, and described the benefits and challenges of mix in terms of the effects on neighbourhood social characteristics and property values. Many residents suggested providing mixed housing types increased the "diversity" of their neighbourhoods, and often described this diversity in terms of their income and class differences, housing tenure type mix, ethnic makeup, or age diversity. The following sections address each of these emerging themes.

5.1.1 Income and class diversity

Although field surveys indicated that very little housing is available for low income families in new suburban communities, many respondents suggested mixing housing types provides an opportunity for households of different income levels to live in the same neighbourhood. Respondents pointed to condominiums in their neighbourhoods as evidence that mixing housing types can provide opportunities for different household types to live in the area. A single mother living in a condominium apartment in an urban infill community in Calgary spoke positively of planning policies promoting housing type mix as she was able to find housing appropriate to her lifestyle. Some residents indicated that different housing types are designed for residents at different stages of property ownership. Respondents depicted townhouses, semi-detached houses and condominiums as starter homes for younger residents with lower incomes, and single detached homes for those with higher incomes. In describing housing mix in her neighbourhood, an HRM resident explained that the range of housing for different income levels produces a diverse community.

> *"I would say they probably have done a good job of [accommodating a variety of households] because we've got the apartments, we've got the condos, we've got the townhouses, we've got the first level entry homes and we've got the more expensive homes. So as a result, you end up with a very diverse community." (H12R6F)*

Despite suggestions that housing mix produces income diversity, respondents more commonly described neighbours with similar incomes to their own. Some respondents stated that "dual incomes" were needed to afford housing in their neighbourhoods, suggesting that the suburbs may provide housing for a limited income range. A Langley resident categorized his neighbours into four household types, observing that young families need secondary rental suites or financial assistance from relatives to afford their mortgages, while empty nesters and those with professional occupations can better afford high housing costs.

> *"We do now have some young families. However, they are in a position where they need either to get help from their parents to afford it, or they need to rent a finished basement in order to help with the mortgage. That would be the young families. We also, interestingly enough, have seniors in the area. Most of their families have left, but they still wanted a large enough home, and have bought into the area based on it being a fairly nice area. It's not a million dollar home, but it's certainly in the $500,000 plus category. So*

the second category would be the folks whose children are on their way out, or out. The third category, which I fit into, is the white collar employee, nice car in the driveway. Again, not a million dollar home, but a pretty nice home. Children who are either in their upper high school years or into university, and somewhat independent. And in the fourth category would be the folks who come in there clearly on speculation. They have bought in with the idea that they would hang onto an investment for a little bit, and then move out." (L10R2M)

Housing prices in suburban neighbourhoods can restrict housing to those with mid- to high incomes. Residents observed that although housing types may be mixed, their suburban neighbourhoods generally do not accommodate low income families. A few HRM residents described a lack of affordable housing in their neighbourhoods, observing that housing prices remained higher than most low-income residents could afford.

"There is no room here for lower income families. Because whether you rent or if you try to own a house, it's more expensive than most other areas in Halifax, because it's new and it's a prime location. So if you rent houses here, it's about 40% more expensive than another area… I would say there's the middle income family to high income family that live in the area here. You don't see people that are on social help or social assistance." (H12R4AM)

Residents acknowledging a lack of affordable, low income and social housing in their neighbourhoods pointed to failed models of social housing in HRM as hotspots for crime; however, none suggested low income housing should be incorporated into their own neighbourhoods. An HRM resident spoke reservedly about the need for affordable housing in the city in relation to her own neighbourhood.

"You don't have subsidized housing here. Not that I'm looking for it but the people have to live somewhere. And maybe at least technically there should be some places where you have more affordable housing for those who for whatever reason don't earn the money to afford higher priced units or buildings. But don't do it like Uniacke Square [a social housing development in Halifax]. *That is the biggest disaster. It has to be done inventively." (H12R5F)*

As Gans (1967) suggested, class is a taboo subject, with residents unlikely to speak directly in terms of class structure. Instead, some respondents described their neighbours' occupations and education levels. These respondents perceived professional and trade occupations as an indication of diversity, regardless of income level. A Calgary resident described class diversity in her neighbourhood through the education levels and occupations of the parents from her children's public school.

"I've noticed just through the school. My older children attend the public school and so, the backgrounds and education of people are really widely ranged. And then there are also

people that we know, he's a doctor, and so it runs the whole gamut of manual labour right up to professionals." (C10R6BF)

Higher education was framed in contrast to trade occupations on more than one occasion, again suggesting residents identify with class rather than income divisions. An Airdrie resident described diversity in his neighbourhood, suggesting those with different occupational and educational backgrounds interacted despite perceived class differences.

"There's everybody from mechanics to highly educated people, there's everything there. It really doesn't matter what you do for a living there. Everybody, if you're walking down the street they talk to you. That's great." (A10R11DM)

5.1.2 Perceptions of renters and rental housing

Perceptions of renters and rental housing ranged from recognizing the role of rentals for providing affordable housing to antagonistic attitudes towards renters and their effect on neighbourhoods. Residents' perceptions of housing tenure are closely tied to class structure.

Often, respondents qualified their positive attitudes towards rental housing by defining acceptable types of renters. Residents suggested acceptable renters could afford to buy in the neighbourhood, but rented due to life circumstances. In a new urbanist development in Markham, for example, one resident spoke positively of rental units leased to doctors and nurses on shift work. In Barrie, a few respondents described situations in which homes are rented to new residents who are unsure if they will stay in the neighbourhood.

"Just rich people, some families [rent]. Some families could work here. They are not sure where they are going to stay for a long time so they rent. And if they do decide to stay, they buy. But some other people just rent initially." (B10R7M)

Rental housing and renters more commonly elicited negative responses. While residents understood the need for rental housing in their neighbourhoods, renters themselves were perceived to create social conflict. Residents frequently linked renters to neighbourhood problems, including property maintenance issues, traffic congestion and crime. A few respondents from suburban HRM identified the level of traffic congestion created from apartment complexes and rental units as the worst features of their neighbourhoods. A Barrie resident remarked that although students commonly need rental housing and other resources, additional car traffic and high vehicle speeds spark fear that young renters will change the character of their neighbourhoods.

"College students come from all across Canada, and rent and need food and need services... [It is a controversy] because it changes the dynamic of the neighbourhood. So you bought your nice house and then the students move in, and you've got more traffic. Your kids are playing out on the street, and the students are driving a little bit too fast at that age. They can be coming into our college as young as 17 years old. So they are still

immature at that point. And there are a lot of them maybe living in the same house. So you have maybe four kids with cars in one driveway meant for a single family home. That causes a lot of controversy." (B10R9F)

Some respondents suggested that renters do not take as much pride as owners in maintaining the appearance of their homes. Residents expressed concern for the effect of substandard levels of maintenance of rental properties on their own property values. A few respondents described covenants in their property titles that prohibit renting, and complained that rental housing in their neighbourhoods jeopardizes the quality of the area. An HRM resident remarked that rental units directly affect property values.

"Another thing I'm noticing is the whole renting piece. I've not checked my bylaws [referring to restrictive covenants] *but two houses down from here, they're renting, and it's a gong show. They're not taking care of the lawn. And I don't know what the arrangements are there for that. But they've got crap under their back patio… So as a property owner here, it's concerning to see some people buying and then renting out because it affects then your property value." (H12R6F)*

Respondents suggested that the transient nature of people living in rental housing contributes to crime and insecurity in the community. A few respondents attributed crime in their neighbourhoods to renters living in the area. A Surrey resident described the neighbourhood's concern about residents of a rental unit in her neighbourhood:

"We are not supposed to rent, except I think maybe there are two or three units. There is the odd rental. There is a unit right here on the corner that people are concerned about. We think that the people are not exactly law-abiding citizens but we don't know that." (S10R3F)

While some respondents recognized the role of rental housing to provide affordable housing options, few respondents spoke positively of the renters themselves. These themes reinforce Perin's 1977 findings, indicating that concern for renters is still strong.

5.1.3 Age diversity

Many respondents suggested mixing housing types facilitates a mix of ages within neighbourhoods. Frequently, respondents' own ages and housing situations shaped their perceptions of age diversity in their neighbourhoods. Younger and older respondents equally identified the benefits of mixed age communities; however, older respondents were more likely to describe segregating themselves with similar age groups.

Residents suggested different types of housing suit different life stages, allowing residents to move between housing types within their neighbourhoods as they age. In contrast, similar to providing for only certain household types, some suburban developments provide housing for only particular ages. An HRM resident observed that her neighbourhood housed young families

in single detached homes and older residents in condominium apartments, but provided few housing types for those in the interim life stages.

> *"Lots of young families. That's the bulk of it. It's a weird area, I guess. It's young families like us or the other extreme – old people. So in most of the condos, the joke is that the older you get, the further down the hill you get because there's a nursing home at the bottom of the hill. So a lot of people started out across the street there and then slowly start to make their way down the hill. So it's a mixture of older and young families." (H12R11F)*

Respondents of all ages suggested that providing housing for different ages allows residents to develop a more balanced community. Older residents who spoke positively of age diversity in their neighbourhoods implied they did not want to live in homogeneous neighbourhoods. An older resident of a private community in Surrey described actively seeking out a development with a mix of ages, stating that a community restricted to older adults would not be a desirable place to live.

> *"We didn't want to get into that 55 and over. We prefer to be with kids. I don't know, it's just more comfortable to be in a mixed [development]. We didn't want to be in 55 or older." (S10R3F)*

Another older resident of Surrey suggested that age mix in her community has helped to teach local children to respect older adults.

> *"Where I live, the kids can play street hockey. And that is good because although when I moved in, they were just little kids, now they're teenagers. So they are still playing street hockey. That is good that you can relate to the kids. Because if you don't, if you don't have a good integration of age then one doesn't appreciate the other. And the kids who used to come over to my house when they were little, their mother would put them outside and they'd come toddling over to visit, they still talk to me because I am that lady over there. If I was just another old lady, they wouldn't talk to me." (S10R2F)*

Some respondents with young families suggested that age diversity is a benefit of providing a mix of housing types; however, young respondents with children more frequently appreciated living in neighbourhoods with other children. Those respondents who spoke positively of age diversity rarely made personal connections with residents from different age groups. An older resident from a gated community in Surrey described the challenges of finding commonalities between the older and younger age groups.

> *"I always feel we are split into two here, in that we have some our age group, in which we are almost retired or retired, and then there are younger families in here. It's amazing how there is a split in the socializing between these two groups, and not too much mingling with each other. I don't know if that is the same everywhere." (S10R4F)*

Some older respondents preferred to live without children in their immediate surroundings. An older HRM resident living in an apartment building described her preference for living in a child-free building, as this offered a degree of control over the expected activity in her building.

> *"So I said to the superintendent the day we were looking, "Well, I'm not too crazy about living in an apartment with kids because they're always pressing the elevator buttons." And she said, "Oh, no, we keep an eye on them." But you know, they're also racing up and down the hallways. You can't control kids all the time. So I prefer to be in a seniors building. Or an adult building, I guess, is a better term for it." (H12R2BF)*

Overall, most respondents viewed age diversity as a benefit of providing mixed housing types. Although respondents suggested that they did not want to live in homogeneous neighbourhoods, some recognized that social connections are more likely to be made between residents of similar ages. Not all residents wanted to live in mixed neighbourhoods, especially older adults who may have reservations over children's behaviour.

5.1.4 Ethnicity and "multiculturalism"

Responses related to mixing housing types and household types less commonly considered ethnic differences than age or income differences. We did not ask respondents to describe their own or their neighbours' ethnicities; instead, respondents were asked to describe the social characteristics of their neighbourhoods, and perceptions of ethnicity in relation to housing types occasionally emerged from this question. Few respondents in the sample were visible minorities, but several respondents observed that their neighbourhoods were diverse or "multicultural". Respondents in HRM spoke more often about ethnic diversity in their neighbourhoods than residents in other Canadian cities, and were the only residents to describe this diversity as "multiculturalism". Canadian immigration patterns have resulted in few immigrants in the Maritimes compared to other provinces, but respondents from HRM suggested there may be more immigrants living in new suburban communities than in older neighbourhoods.

> *"Definitely more multi-cultural than my old neighbourhood. Definitely. I don't know why that is. But anyway, definitely. Not that I know people, but just from seeing people walking in the neighbourhood. So obviously a new neighbourhood is a little bit more multi-cultural probably." (H12R13F)*

A few respondents in Ontario also described an increase in ethnic diversity in their suburban communities. A first generation immigrant respondent from Barrie noted that increased numbers of immigrants in recent years in the town meant more residents were likely to understand their accent than when they first arrived in Canada. Two respondents from Markham described new immigrants moving into their neighbourhoods, many from Eastern

Europe and some from Southeast Asia and China. A Markham resident's description of her neighbourhood's ethnic makeup demonstrates the difference between HRM residents' perceptions and her own:

> *It's not really, I would say, a diverse population. I would say it's mostly Caucasian, if that's what you're looking for. Yes, it seems to be mostly Caucasian and Asian, and then a little mixture of everything else. (M10R10F)*

Whereas in HRM, residents were quick to describe their neighbourhoods as "multicultural" or diverse due to the presence of any visible minorities or immigrants, the Markham resident suggested that her neighbourhood was not diverse despite "a little mixture."

Respondents rarely connected mixed housing types to providing for mixed ethnicities; however, some residents suggested the housing needs of larger immigrant and visible minority families may not be adequately accommodated by existing housing types. Residents in suburban communities other than HRM were more likely to identify unique housing requirements for visible minorities and immigrants. A Markham resident (*M10R2F*) suggested that South Asian families living with different generations under one roof may benefit from policies that allow secondary suites in single detached homes. Another Markham resident explained that in her neighbourhood, Chinese immigrant families have invested in large single detached houses and allowed their children to live there alone.

> *"There are some ethnicities that value having extended family living with them: so Indian families, Chinese families. There was a huge influx of Chinese families, young people actually, before the Hong Kong takeover. And a lot of the parents stayed in Hong Kong for business reasons, and the children moved into these giant houses waiting for their parents to finish and close up the business and then come. So there were teenagers living in these giant houses by themselves for many years. But I think now it's more like you see sometimes the Indian families that have maybe grandparents or aunts and uncles living in the houses. But I would say that is probably the minority." (M10R4F)*

These findings indicate that mixing housing types may do little to encourage ethnic mix. Providing mixed housing types satisfies housing needs for different household types, life cycle stages, and income levels, but does little to attract diverse ethnic groups.

5.2 Social interaction

To answer my second research question, I explored the ways in which residents described their interactions with their neighbours. By examining residents' perspectives of social interaction, I hoped to gain insight into the effects of diversity within communities. Respondents in all cities were asked about the social characteristics in their neighbourhoods, and to describe their level of involvement in local community activities. During the 2012 HRM interviews, respondents were asked to describe interaction with neighbours on the street.

When asked to describe social characteristics, respondents reacted to social diversity in their neighbourhoods by describing positive and negative social interactions with their neighbours. Most residents spoke of good relationships with their neighbours, whereas those who spoke negatively had experienced some level of social conflict in their neighbourhoods.

5.2.1 The "friendly" neighbourhood

Suburban residents' descriptions of their daily encounters with neighbours suggested social interactions maintain a level of superficial sociality, whereby residents are friendly with one another but tend not to build close social connections. Respondents frequently depicted their neighbourhoods as "friendly", describing cordial relationships with neighbours. Many greeted their neighbours while walking dogs or with children, or while visiting community mailboxes. Respondents described saying 'hello' to others on the street, but did not usually pause to have a conversation. A few described neighbourly activities, such as keeping an eye on someone's home while they were away. Residents living in apartment buildings with common areas have opportunities to interact with neighbours both inside and outside of their buildings, and in some cases described different relationships between the two groups. An HRM resident explained:

> *"With the ones in the building, I interact with them. The ones outside, I know only from seeing when I go for a walk or they go with their dog or kids, and people say hello. And I always say that too, you know. So it's not interaction on any personal level there because I do not know the people. You know, I don't go for coffee or for tea." (H12R5F)*

Many respondents felt that although their neighbourhoods were very friendly, residents tended to keep to themselves. In HRM, the mapping exercise demonstrated that several respondents were familiar with their immediate next door neighbours, but unfamiliar with people a few houses away or on the next street.

By contrast, residents from new urbanist developments in Calgary and Markham described more interaction than found in other suburban communities. Respondents suggested that street and house designs in their neighbourhoods encourage social interaction, indicating that residents may have a level of buy-in to new urbanist principles prior to purchasing their homes. A Calgary resident suggested the lack of attached garages helped to make residents more visible to one another, increasing sociability in her neighbourhood.

> *"Especially our street, it's a very social street. The fact that there are no driveways, everyone is just out on their front porches or they come and park there. So, you always see everyone around more than when there are front garages, and people go into the garage and into their house." (C10R6AF)*

Developments promoting mixed housing types and styles through new urbanist principles set parameters for what residents expect from their neighbourhoods. A Markham resident living in a new urbanist community suggested that the developer initially marketed the neighbourhood as a sociable place so as to attract residents, often young families, who were open to interacting with their neighbours. Despite a shift in the marketing strategy, the respondent suggested that the neighbourhood still attracted similar residents due to affordable house prices.

> *"They sold the concept of new urbanism. They sold the idea of a young community. They sold the idea of know your neighbours, of live outside, of live in a city-like environment. They sold that idea. So I think people who initially bought in there, that's what they were buying. So it's attracted a group of people who were into that, who wanted that city-like setting, who wanted that social environment. They got that. That is what they were buying into. I think now that they have given up that marketing strategy, they are just selling houses. They are not really selling a philosophy anymore. It's come away from that, but it's still really attracts a younger demographic. It really still attracts young families. I don't know if it's because of the neighbourhood itself. I think it is. And I think it's also because of the price point of the houses that people can buy there and still afford to live." (M10R3F)*

Suburban housing designed using new urbanist principles increased residents' visibility within their neighbourhoods, affecting the ways in which residents interacted with one another. Despite positive descriptions of street-level interaction, these findings do not indicate that residents develop close relationships with their neighbours, reflecting Gans' theory (1961a) that planners may increase residents' physical propinquity, but not the quality of their relationships.

5.2.2 Social and community ties

Respondents described different levels of social relationships and ties to their communities. Very few residents identified as members of local community organizations, with many unaware if such groups existed in their neighbourhoods. Residents' associations were rare, with only two respondents reporting themselves as active members. Respondents who did describe some level of involvement with local organizations typically belonged to groups outside of their neighbourhoods, such as religious groups or volunteer organizations. Some residents spoke of not having the time to become involved, while others expressed a desire for a residents' association but did not feel confident or have the initiative to organize one. A Surrey resident explained that she volunteered her time for a neighbourhood watch program because few of her neighbours were willing to participate.

> *"I'm a Block Watch captain, merely because nobody else would be captain or even co-captain. And I've asked people and they say, "No, I don't have time." (S10R2F)*

In describing efforts to revitalize a community park, an HRM resident outlined the challenges of organizing neighbours around a cause. Residents' competing objectives can limit the effectiveness of community organizations.

> *"We tried to strike up a few committees because we wanted to clean up the park but that went nowhere. My agenda was to get the kids off the street. I wanted to see that park utilized better, and was willing to dedicate my time to doing things to try to get some funding for that. But the majority of the parents in the neighbouring area, their agenda was to get money to put a playground in, to buy the equipment. And so it didn't go anywhere. Then we tried to get together to do a neighbourhood community group. And that went nowhere. We had some issues where there were some wayward young children that were wreaking havoc. We had a community meeting and, you know, we were going to rally around each other and develop this neighbourhood watch program. But it went as far as getting phone numbers and names and addresses but it didn't go anywhere. So I'm not involved in anything at the moment." (H12R1F)*

Most respondents' social ties belonged primarily outside of their neighbourhoods. The mapping exercise completed with HRM residents in 2012 showed that of those respondents who had close friends in the neighbourhood, most had made those connections through work, family or other social situations, rather than through the neighbourhood. Residents were not averse to social interaction with their neighbours, but said they had not moved to their suburban communities looking for personal connections and a group of friends. An HRM resident explained that most of the residents in her adults-only condominium building had enough meaningful social relationships outside of the building that it was unnecessary to make close connections with their neighbours.

> *"In our stage in life and people in this building, the majority of them already have their friends and their families. Most of them are from here or have been away and would have family here, and I don't think they need any new friends. Everybody is very nice to you but you know, that's about as far as it goes. But then by the same token, I wouldn't want somebody knocking on my door every morning either." (H12R2BF)*

Respondents suggested that they wanted a level of privacy from their neighbours. A Barrie resident acknowledged that she preferred when her neighbours leave her alone.

> *"I think that it is more intrusive than Toronto, that people are more interested in knowing your business. I don't know if it's because of the age dynamic of the street or if it's just because of the socialization of Barrie people, that they think it's their business to watch you… [My neighbour] is kind. But they are nosy. I had to get used to that. I had to get used to people being nosy." (B10R12F)*

Many respondents claimed they were too busy with work and social commitments to socialize with neighbours. A Surrey resident explained that she did not want to spend her limited free time with her neighbours.

"I've always worked full-time, and I've never really been that friendly because when I come home from work, I don't want to have to engage with my neighbour. There's a lovely lady across the way who is retired. And I think she'd like to be friends but I just don't want to come home from work and have her wanting to visit and go for a walk." (S10R3F)

Like many respondents, this resident did not consider her neighbours to be friends, and was not looking to develop social relationships. Residents seem unlikely to become friends with neighbours outside of their own age groups.

Reinforcing the idea of in-group solidarity (Putnam, 2007), respondents with social connections within their neighbourhoods spoke positively of neighbours who were of similar ages and income levels to their own. Respondents appreciated having something in common with their neighbours, and residents with young families frequently found it appealing to have other families with children in the neighbourhood. A Barrie resident described his neighbours' similar social characteristics as among the best features of his neighbourhood.

"The thing I like best about the neighbourhood is there seems to be a lot of similar demographics, I guess. You know, young families, same level of income, same friendliness level, I guess, as any other part of Barrie. But I have something in common with some of the neighbours." (B10R6BM)

In contrast to an HRM resident's assertion that Canadians typically "keep to themselves and be polite" (H12R3M), some of the first generation immigrants interviewed described forging close relationships with their neighbours. An immigrant in HRM who had recently moved with his family to a new subdivision from a rural community outside of Halifax described making close friendships with a few of his neighbours.

"We interact with most of our neighbours here. We visit each other. We invite each other for coffee and drinks. We've developed some really close relationships with some of our neighbours here. Yes, with a couple of them. But the rest are just basic relationships. Not too involved." (H12R4AM)

Another first generation immigrant in HRM suggested that he chose to move his family to a new suburban community because he was more likely to develop relationships in a place where he did not need to break into previously established social groups.

"When I was searching for my house, I looked at [older neighbourhoods] … but when I went there, I didn't feel quite welcomed to the neighbourhood because the residents had been living there for a long time. So they had their closed knit social group. When I was visiting the school, I was quite a stranger to the crowd. So I felt not very welcomed to that closed knit social group. But what I expected and found [is that] the new neighbourhood, it belongs to me because we are now defining the social relationships. It's no one's private neighbourhood. It's the people who just joined there, started there. So I would say it's evolving so I can feel I am a part of it." (H12R15M)

Overall, my findings indicate that the strongest social ties rely on some level of commonality between residents, or require residents to organize their efforts to socialize.

5.2.3 The role of children

Children frequently formed important links between households. An HRM resident from a young family with children explained the advantages of living in a community with other young families. Her children played with other children in the neighbourhood, and she coordinated activities with other parents.

> *"There are a lot of similar people in age and in situation to us which makes it very appealing. You know, a lot of families on the same street that have children in the same age range as ours. They can play together and we can share rides and things like that". (H11R3F)*

An HRM resident described her young child's role in introducing her family to the community, and hypothesized that her child would help further develop relationships with neighbours.

> *"For the first three years that we were here, we didn't really know our neighbours. After having a kid, that's different because I was at home for a year on mat leave and I'd take the kid out. And then you'd run into kid people – people with strollers and whatnot. So I guess our interactions have changed a little bit because of having a baby. When he's older and he's going to be playing with the kids on the street, that might change the interaction again and we might get to know people a little more. Now he's just a baby so he doesn't play with the other kids or anything. But I can see that being the mechanism to get to know the neighbours. (H12R11F)*

A few respondents with grown children also recognized the role children play in building relationships, suggesting that it becomes more difficult to meet people in later life stages. A Surrey resident lamented her social isolation, explaining that she more easily interacted with neighbours when she had small children.

> *"We are really quite isolated. I mean if something happened to us, the neighbours would help us out, but it's not a warm, fuzzy, friendly place. I don't know of any neighbourhoods that are like that. When we lived in Kamloops, when the kids were small - I think that might be it too, that ages and stages. Because when your kids are small, you tend to know your neighbours because the kids all play together. So it could be that we are just past that stage. Because I think that the young moms in here do know each other because I see them with their kids in the playground." (S10R3F)*

While children from households with similar backgrounds bring neighbours together, residents described concern over exposing their children to those from different backgrounds. An HRM resident described a conflict between parenting styles between residents with different class backgrounds.

"We had a family living at the end of our street. The poor souls were really underprivileged, I guess is the word. And they had children who were just rotten, who used to come and play with the kids on our street. And it was always tough, you know, our mothers would be trying to say, "No, you can't have all that sugar," and, "Take that gun away." They had very competing philosophies of how to bring up their children. So I guess that's it -- One had no philosophy and the other had some, you know. So everyone was kind of relieved when they moved away. And I guess that, that could be problematic. (H11R5F)

Although children do not discriminate based on social constructions such as income and class divisions, parents' attitudes affect their children's abilities to make their own social connections. A Barrie resident described protecting her children from those who come from lower income families.

Across the road, there is a very poor section of Barrie, and the kids that live in that neighbourhood often come from alcoholic, drug environments. And I don't want my kids hanging around with those kids… It's not a government housing project but it's just really poor. And I have nothing against poor people. I'm fairly poor. No matter what neighbourhood you are in, there are going to be kids that come from parents that drink and do drugs. And I don't want my kids hanging around with those kids. (B10R12F)

Gans (1961a) explained that since children "choose playmates on a purely propinquitous basis" (p. 136), social conflict may arise if residents have competing attitudes towards child-rearing. My findings suggest that as a result, close social relationships between families with children function best when residents come from similar social backgrounds.

5.2.4 Crime and safety

Respondents' perspectives reflected the traditional view of the suburbs as safe havens from the dangers of the inner city (Perin, 1977). In comparison to urban centres, residents described their suburban neighbourhoods as comfortable and safe places to live. Residents in Halifax and Barrie cited crime rates in urban areas as a reason they preferred to live in the suburbs. Respondents spoke of homeless people, drug addicts and prostitutes as the types of people found in downtowns, and believed suburban communities provided protection from negative social influences.

Residents of suburban communities of Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver described the level of sociality in their neighbourhoods as friendlier than in the cities. An Airdrie resident described feeling unsafe when she lived in a large city, where she refused to open the door to strangers, and reported feeling much more comfortable in her suburban neighbourhood.

For me with my husband's occupation, he's away a lot. So in a bigger city, like where we lived for ten years, I wouldn't answer the front door if the doorbell rang if I didn't know who it was. Here, I'm more inclined to come down and see who is at the door because I

feel safer. You know, you can go walk your dog and it's a safer feeling, a more community feeling. (A10R11BF)

Barrie residents spoke of the cold attitude of their former neighbours in Toronto compared to the friendlier neighbours in their new subdivisions. A resident in Surrey expressed a similar sentiment about her former home in the City of North Vancouver. In a new urbanist community in Markham, a resident described a sense of comfort and safety because she knew her neighbours. This respondent joked that the level of petty crime compared to Toronto indicates the relative safety of her suburban community.

Someone came by and graffitied the back of the garages and the fences and that. They called the police. You know, in Markham, somebody called the police. In the city, you're like, "Oh man, again?" Here they call 911, "Someone graffitied my garage!" (M10R3F)

Some respondents related crime to multiple dwelling units, associating antisocial behaviours with the residents in these forms of housing. A Barrie resident described what led to her decision to move from another neighbourhood with a townhouse development.

"A big problem was that with these townhomes came unsupervised children. When they started lighting fires in the greenbelt behind our house or climbing over the fence and swimming in the neighbour's pool when they were fully dressed and couldn't swim, we thought maybe we would move to a better area for our kids to grow up in." (B10R1AF)

As townhouses and other multiple dwelling units may provide affordable options for low income residents, residents with low levels of tolerance for income and class diversity associated vandalism and petty crime with higher density housing developments.

5.3 Effects of social diversity

When asked "What do you see as the challenges to promoting a mix of housing types in your neighbourhood?", many respondents suggested efforts to promote diversity may be stymied by intolerance. A respondent from HRM speculated that her neighbourhood's diversity prevented neighbours from getting to know one another.

"There's a lot of diversity in our neighbourhood. But I think that sometimes as a result of that, people do their own thing and they're not comfortable stepping outside of their comfort zone. So I find that people just keep to themselves." (H12R8F)

Confirming Gans (1961a) and Putnam (2007), findings show that high levels of diversity among neighbours may prevent meaningful social interaction and inhibit close social relationships. This section examines residents' responses to diversity in their neighbourhoods, exploring the ways in which residents rationalize their feelings towards difference.

5.3.1 Conflicts over property

Since intolerance of diversity remains a taboo subject, residents were hesitant to discuss negative attitudes towards their neighbours. More often, respondents implied their resistance to diversity in relation to the physical appearance and day-to-day operation of their neighbourhoods.

Whereas conventional suburbs typically provide only single detached housing, new subdivisions accommodate multiple dwelling housing types such as townhouses and apartments. Some respondents associated these housing styles with undesirable social behaviours. A Surrey resident complained that because high density housing does not provide residents with places to socialize, residents act disruptively in common space visible to all residents.

> *"I've heard from other friends that live in those more crowded [townhouse developments], there's just no place to socialize. One of my friends was saying that the neighbours pull up a chair outside their garage, and they sit out there and drink beer. You know, it gets noisy and sometimes obnoxious. But you know, sometimes there would be little neighbourhood gatherings. And it would be better if there was a place, like maybe a small park which we do have in this unit. But it just seemed like there really was no place to socialize or do anything." (S10R3F)*

Respondents commonly associated higher density housing with low income residents, and foresaw effects on the values of adjacent properties. An HRM resident did not approve of efforts to mix household types because of the effects of less expensive multiple dwelling units on higher priced single detached homes. The respondent suggested residents in row houses take less pride in the maintenance of their property.

> *"I think they do a fair bit of [accommodating a variety of households]. But I'm not sure it's the way to go. I would be really, really annoyed if I paid over $400,000 for a house, and down the way, I had all these row houses that have gone up in the last three years and their appearance is going downhill daily. I know. I walk there every day. You know, to me that doesn't bode well for a neighbourhood because people coming in look at that and they say, "I don't want to live here." (H12R9F)*

Residents' intolerance for ethnic diversity emerged from their descriptions of conflicts over property. Some respondents reacted to mixed ethnicities in their neighbourhoods in relation to physical maintenance issues and property values. An HRM resident suggested that residents with different ethnic backgrounds did not maintain their properties to acceptable standards for the neighborhood. This respondent stated that she is "fine" with the level of diversity in her neighbourhood, but went on to describe undesirable behaviour attributed to her neighbours' ethnicities.

"We're getting a lot of multicultural types who maybe don't care for their property as much as you would like. Or they don't observe the bylaws like no laundry out on your front steps. We do have a lot of diversity, which is fine, but at the same time, it's frustrating if you've got a nice property and they are not necessarily either caring for their lawn or they're drying their clothes on their front steps. You know, it can be very frustrating." (H12R6F)

The way that residents relate ethnicity to household size emerged from descriptions of conflicts over parking and traffic congestion. A Langley resident suggested ethnic homogeneity helps maintain order over parking spaces in her neighbourhood.

"The demographic of the people here is also predominantly Caucasian, I should add. I think that's important because when you are in Surrey and you've got a predominantly Indo-Canadian community, they have a tendency to have a lot more family members living in one house. And when that occurs, of course that results in more cars and everything else. Most homes are two-car family, and then your basement suites having one or two cars." (L10R1F)

My findings suggest that many suburban residents desire conformity and order over the physical appearance and function of their neighbourhoods. Residents have expectations of control over neighbourhood public space, and blame social characteristics like ethnicity and household size for challenging those expectations. Drying clothes in the front of the house, for example, falls outside the social norms of the neighbourhood, further cementing visible minorities' status as outsiders. Residents demonstrate resistance to difference by associating standards of care over property to social characteristics when their neighbours do not conform to ideas of appropriate neighbourly behaviour.

5.3.2 Tolerance and discrimination

Asked about the benefits of providing a mix of housing types, residents indicated a preference to live in neighbourhoods with people from diverse backgrounds. Residents described an inherent benefit to mixed neighbourhoods, whereby they valued visual exposure to different ethnicities and ages regardless of actual levels of interaction. A Surrey resident appreciated the opportunity to socialize with a mix of people, even though she did not actively engage her neighbours.

I think if I did want to make friends, there's more opportunity. We don't have grandchildren. I don't want to live with a bunch of people where all they can talk about is their cruises and their grandchildren. So that is a thing for me. I like to see the kids around. I don't have much interaction with them. I just like to be with a mix of people and different ethnicities. (S10R3F)

One HRM resident believed that interaction among children of different ethnicities promotes tolerance and integration in her neighbourhood.

"A feature of this neighbourhood that I like is it's very multi-ethnic and multi-racial. Although that doesn't affect me all that much, I am happy to see that the children going back and forth to school are going [together]. Particularly the little kids. High school, I don't see it. But with the little kids, they're playing together and they're different nationalities and have very different backgrounds. And I think that's good. That's a good trend in our world. If we can get the little kids interacting then it's going to be more peaceful." (H12R7F)

Although many respondents suggested they support efforts to promote social diversity in their neighbourhoods, they acknowledged the existence of discrimination. Respondents most commonly described discrimination based on income and ethnicity, and occasionally age. Few respondents were outwardly discriminatory, instead couching their negative perceptions of others with statements like "Not to sound like a snob, but - " (L10R2M), and "They don't bother us, but - " (B10R19F).

Most respondents viewed ethnic diversity as a positive attribute of their neighbourhoods, but others described challenges for social integration. An HRM resident clearly stated that she saw no benefit in promoting mixed housing types, and responded with negatively towards the ethnic diversity in her neighbourhood.

"There's quite a little ethnic community here. A lot of immigrants., and they're not really sociable. The Chinese people, I find most of them are interested in their property and they want to say hello. But the Arab people that live in this neighbourhood, and there are lots of them, are almost paranoid. That's my opinion. They'll run away when they see a dog, and they do their own thing. They don't take care of their property. They have no regard for rule and regulation. And they're just going to do their own thing. And I'm sorry but I feel that in our country, if you're going to come here, you should adapt a little better. Fit in." (H12R9F)

Although many respondents spoke positively about age diversity within their neighbourhoods, some reported discrimination between different age groups. Respondents portrayed older residents as particularly protective of their neighbourhoods. A young professional faced discrimination from older residents when attempting to buy a home in an established Calgary neighbourhood.

I was going to buy into [an older, established neighbourhood]. Anyway, the resident's association there were aged 55-plus. And they literally thought I was a drug dealer at 26 trying to buy a place. They were asking my realtor all these questions, and inquiring about my occupation and whatever. Probably Googled me or did something creepy. Anyway, I didn't end up going there because they did not react fondly to my offer. (C10R7F)

Whereas respondents' described acceptable circumstances for ethnic diversity and age diversity, income and class diversity rarely elicited the same support. Very few residents spoke openly about their own income and class biases, but some described others' discrimination.

> *"What I'm finding is the people that I talk to who are buying the $600,000, $700,000 homes [in that neighbourhood] are very upset now that the forest behind them is getting cut down and they're putting up all those apartment buildings. And they're very upset over that. And so it's really interesting because I find the upper SES* [socioeconomic status]*, they don't want the mixture in their suburb. Whereas, you know, I find the lower SES people are grateful that they can be there and they're so excited they can be in these types of communities. Which I do I think is great." (H11R2M)*

Hesitant to admit discriminatory attitudes, residents frequently expressed their income and class biases through their resistance to new development in their neighbourhoods. Adding higher density styles of housing such as townhouses and apartment buildings to new subdivisions stirred controversy. Asked about the challenges to incorporating a mix of housing types, an HRM resident suggested that the Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) mentality frequently impedes the development of low income housing.

> *"Oh, everybody's got the NIMBY syndrome, right? Everybody's got that. Habitat for Humanity certainly has challenges when there are neighbours that decide no, that's not happening in our neighbourhood. And that's only one house! So there certainly would be challenges to sell some type of low income housing." (H12R13F)*

Some respondents described coming together with their neighbours in campaigns against new, higher density developments in their established neighbourhoods with limited success. Residents described feeling threatened by new developments in their neighbourhoods, facing uncertainty of who would be living there. A Markham resident summarized the issue:

> *"I know the concern with the town homes being put through in our development is property value-related. But why? The reason being because there is a lot of concern that with these townhouse and row houses, that because they are lower priced and they are seen as starter homes, people have concerns about turnover in the neighbourhood, and who is coming in and out, in and out. So it's not these families that move in, like us, and are there for 10, 15, 20 plus years. Also, a lot of these might be rented. And you don't know month to month who is living there. So there is also, I think in the back of a lot of these people's minds who are retirees getting older, and have security issues…The property value is an overarching obvious theme but the undercurrent is an issue of who are the people that are going to be moving in there – lower income, what do they do for a living, are they in and out of the neighbourhood?" (M10R4F)*

My findings demonstrate that residents feel threatened by difference. A pervasive fear of "the other" underlies resistance to social diversity.

6. Data Synthesis

In Section 2.3, I suggested Canadian planning policy promotes social mix without understanding whether mixing housing types can effectively foster diversity and social interaction. My findings demonstrate that while policies promoting a mix of housing types provide opportunities for different household types to live in the same neighbourhood, they may have limited effect on ethnic, age and income diversity.

Suburban residents were aware of the motivations behind planning policy. Residents understood policies promoting mixed housing types aim to provide opportunities for residents of different backgrounds to live in the same neighbourhood; however, residents remain skeptical of the promised benefits of mix. Resistance to difference takes many forms. Some residents openly resisted diversity, stating they saw no benefit in promoting a mix of housing and speaking negatively about the effects of diversity in their neighbourhoods. More often, residents demonstrated their resistance to increased diversity through expressions of concern for their property values, or by protesting increased density in their neighbourhoods.

In most cases, suburban neighbourhoods remain exclusive to middle and high income households. Proposals for low income housing, even in adjacent developments, are met with resistance. Residents acknowledged a need for affordable housing but did not welcome it into their neighbourhoods. Renters and rental housing were frequently associated with crime and poor maintenance standards, and depicted as a threat to peaceful, well-functioning suburban neighbourhoods.

I did not find that providing mixed housing types fosters ethnic diversity; however, there is some indication that immigrants and visible minorities looking for welcoming communities look to new suburbs where they face less resistance from established social networks. Aware they represent difference, visible minorities may be hesitant to move to older established neighbourhoods. Similarly, the young Calgary resident's experience of age discrimination from older residents in an established neighbourhood implies that young professionals and young families may also recognize relative openness in new suburban communities. Residents acknowledged a mix of housing types better meets the housing needs of residents during all life cycle stages, and for different family sizes. Seen as starter homes, semi-detached houses and townhouses attract young families to new suburban communities, and apartment-style condominiums draw empty-nesters looking to downsize from single detached homes.

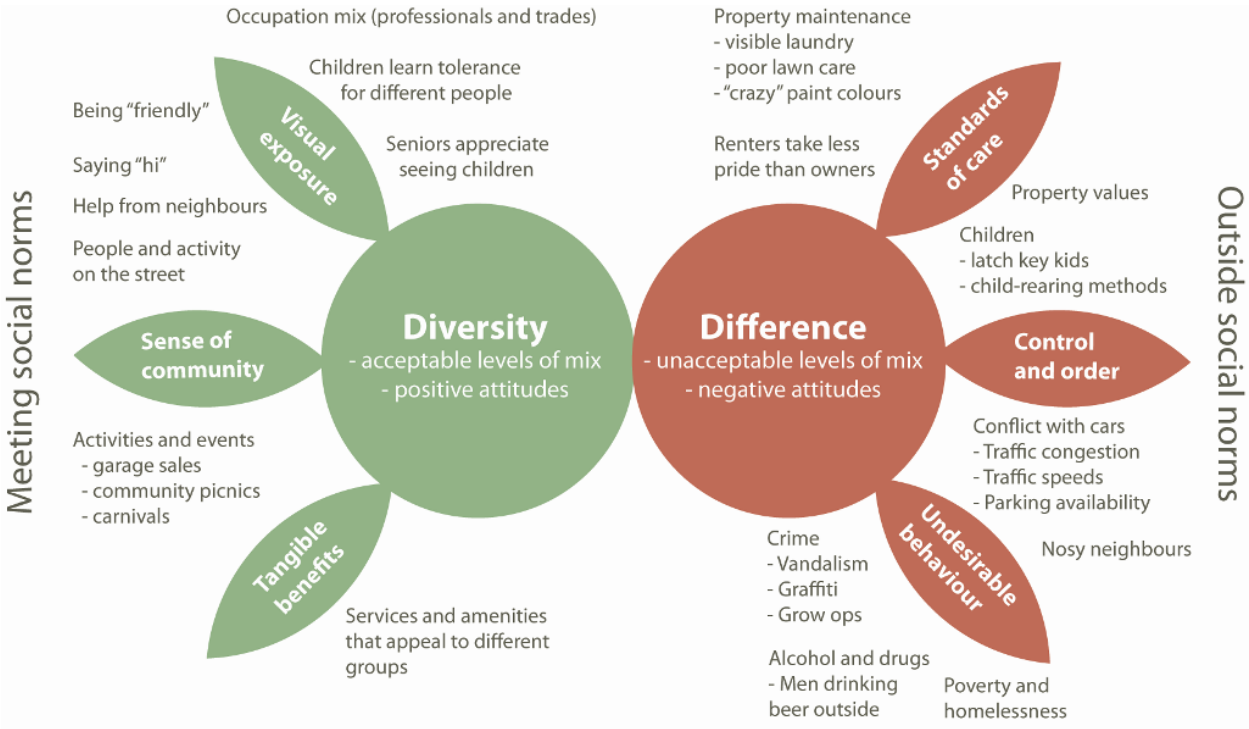
My findings suggest residents increasingly maintain social contacts with friends and family outside of their neighbourhoods, placing less emphasis on befriending their neighbours. Despite lacking close relationships, residents appreciated similarities between themselves and their neighbours, and found comfort in having things in common. I found suburban residents to be happy to "keep to themselves", only making social connections when they have something

in common beyond their identities as neighbours. Residents from similar age groups, family types and sizes, or connections between ethnic backgrounds may foster deeper social connections. In neighbourhoods with similar family structures and households, parents felt in control over their children's choice of playmates, limiting the challenges faced when neighbourhood children come from different backgrounds and styles of child-rearing. Residents expected that neighbours from similar backgrounds also have similar attitudes towards property maintenance, providing a sense of control and order over the neighbourhood's appearance and day-to-day functions.

6.1 Diversity versus difference

Although I have used the terms "diversity" and "difference" loosely throughout this paper, my findings indicate that residents framed the concept of social diversity dichotomously: "Diversity" was represented in positive attitudes and acceptable levels of mix, whereas "difference" emerged from negative attitudes and unacceptable levels of mix. Figure 11 outlines the elements of these opposing terms.

Figure 11: Conceptualizing "diversity" and "difference" in suburban residential neighbourhoods



I found residents spoke positively about the idea of "diversity", reciting the notion that it is "better" to live in a neighbourhood with a mix of people. Residents suggested that visual exposure to those from different age, income, and ethnic backgrounds promotes tolerance,

especially through children. Some residents bought into theories of diversity which suggest visual exposure helps us learn to accept one another. On the ground, visual exposure to diversity occurs during street-level interaction. Residents described most suburban neighbourhoods as friendly places where their neighbours said hello to each other on the street. Neighbourly activities, such as "keeping an eye" on a neighbour's house when they are away, helped promote a sense of community among residents. Residents reflected Jacobs' idea (1961) that people on the street at all times of day helps further promote a sense of community through an active street life. Residents suggested diversity could produce tangible benefits to the community, such as organized events like community picnics and garage sales, and increase in services and amenities catering to residents' diverse needs.

Residents accept diversity provided all residents adopt normative behaviour consistent with middle and upper class, educated lifestyles. By contrast, residents were wary of actual "difference" in their neighbourhoods. As Gans found in Levittown, a "pervasive system of social control develops to enforce standards of appearance" (1967, p. 176). Residents disapproved of their neighbours' decisions to dry their laundry on their front steps and neglect their lawns, and related social characteristics such as ethnicity, income, and class to differing standards for property maintenance. Residents implied a further class bias when they suggested renters do not take pride in maintaining their homes. Underlying the concern for property maintenance and property values is a desire for a sense of order over what happens in their neighbourhoods. Residents protected their children from the influence of wayward children, revealing "differences over discipline reflect class differences in child-rearing" (Gans, 1967, p. 160). Residents linked household sizes (and the household sizes of particular ethnicities) with neighbourhood problems such as traffic congestion, traffic speeds and parking availability. Descriptions of undesirable behaviour such as petty crime and vandalism, and drinking alcohol in public, further reveal class bias and fear of "the other".

There is a unique suburban quality to these findings. In the post-war period, residents fleeing the city viewed the suburbs as safe and comfortable places, free from the undesirable characteristics of the city. These contemporary findings show residents understand their suburban communities as safe from crime and social conditions such as poverty and homelessness, compared to the undesirable conditions found in urban environments. Residents expected their suburban neighbourhoods to insulate them from negative aspects of urban life, but difference can upset this expectation. Residents held a high level appreciation for diversity, but those that experienced difference in their neighbourhoods became increasingly negative towards policies that promote mixed housing types and household types. As a result, residents begin to tolerate, rather than celebrate, the diversity in their neighbourhoods.

6.2 Implications for planning practice

My findings present significant challenges for planning practice. Residents' perspectives pose significant barriers for designing the built environment to promote positive acceptance of diversity and interaction among residents from diverse backgrounds. I found, as Gans did more than 50 years ago, that design can affect visual exposure to diversity but residents need to be personally motivated to build friendships.

What implications does this have for planners, who seek to implement planning policies based on theory promoting the benefits of diversity? Canadian planning policy faces clear challenges in practice, as residents' ongoing resistance to difference limits the effectiveness of planning initiatives that promote diversity. At their most basic, residents' perceptions tell us about the market demand for housing. Field studies showed that developers cope with residents' resistance to difference by segregating housing types in new suburban developments. By minimizing the level of direct mixing between household types and income levels, developers follow planning policies but appeal to market demand. Responses showed that even rental housing in new suburban neighbourhoods only provides for middle and high income residents. Residents' resistance to difference challenges planning theory which promotes designing for diversity. I suggest that planners cannot rely on policies requiring mixed housing types to provide affordable housing in their cities, as ongoing resistance to difference likely means new housing constructed in suburban neighbourhoods will cater to particular age groups, income levels, and household types.

6.3 Further research

My findings point towards an ongoing challenge for planners to translate social diversity theory into practice. There are preliminary indications that residents of new urbanist communities may be more open to a higher level of diversity than in conventional suburbs; however, given that this would conflict with findings from other studies of new urbanism (Grant, 2006; Thomson-Fawcett, 2003; Winstanley et al, 2010), further conclusions require a broader sample of residents from new urbanist communities.

In future studies, I hope to closely examine the dynamics of diversity and difference, and explore opportunities for planners to promote social justice. The work of Leonie Sandercock (1998) and Iris Marion Young (1990) advocates for diversity for the sake of social justice and equity, and may provide a road map for future research. Fainstein (2005) suggests that land use planning must be supported by "a political consciousness that supports progressive moves at national and local levels towards respectfulness of others and greater equality" (p. 16). How do planners understand their roles in promoting diversity? Can planning strategies draw on positive attitudes towards diversity and overcome residents' resistance to difference? If planners seek to promote socially just and equitable cities, future research is needed to

examine suburban residents' dichotomous perceptions of diversity and their impact on planning practice.

7. Conclusion

Exploring residents' perspectives of social diversity and social interaction in the Canadian suburban context can help planners understand the challenges faced by planning policy promoting social mix. My findings showed that residents understand both diversity and difference in their neighbourhoods, reacting positively to the theory of diversity and negatively to behaviours that fall outside social norms. Residents reported a narrow range of incomes and ages and little ethnic diversity in their neighbourhoods, satisfying residents' preference to live with those from similar backgrounds. Homogeneity in their neighbourhoods provided residents with a sense of control and order over their neighbours' behaviours and the day-to-day function of their neighbourhoods. Planning policies requiring mixed housing types in new suburban developments fell short of their goal to foster diversity; housing costs keep most suburban homes out of reach of low income families. Furthermore, residents from neighbourhoods with mixed housing types rarely developed more than superficial relationships with their neighbours.

To understand social diversity theory in practice, planners must appreciate residents' perspectives and their complex constructions of "diversity" versus "difference". Residents' resistance to difference poses a challenge for planners and planning policy. Land use policies promoting mix are implemented by developers who rely on residents' preferences to assess market demand. In suburban environments where residents have sought to escape the negative aspects of urban life, promoting diversity proves contentious. Protective of their lifestyles, residents are skeptical of the promised benefits of social diversity. If planners understand their role in promoting social diversity for the benefit of the greater public good, they must confront the challenges posed by residents' resistance to difference.

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Appendix 1: Interview Participant Recruitment Flyer (2012)

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
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RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

What do you like about your neighbourhood? What do you wish could be improved?

We are seeking individuals who:

- Live in this neighbourhood
- Are 18 years or over
- Are renters or owners
- Are willing to provide 45 - 60 minutes of time to be interviewed

The "Trends in the Suburbs" project explores suburban residential trends in Canada. Research has been conducted in cities across Canada, and now we are looking to speak with HRM residents for their perspectives of current development trends and views on living in a new suburban neighbourhood.

We could interview you as an individual, with a partner or a group of neighbours. Interviews may take place at a place of your convenience: at your home, your office, in a public place, or at Dalhousie University, Sexton Campus, 5410 Spring Garden Road.

If you would like to participate, please contact Graduate Student Leah Perrin at PERRINL@dal.ca for more details and consent forms.
For further information on the Trends in the Suburbs project, please visit:
http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/
or contact Dr. Jill Grant at jill.grant@dal.ca.

Appendix 2: Research Ethics and Consent Form

The Dalhousie University *Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans* is guided by principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice. Participation must be free and voluntary, with participants giving informed consent. Consent was obtained from interview participants before the interview process. I provided information for participants to understand the goals of the project and how their data would be used. Protection of privacy and confidentiality is a foremost concern. By designing methods that specifically address the research questions, the study aims to maximize benefit and minimize risk to participants.

The interview process for 2011 and 2012 interviews received approval from the Dalhousie Research Ethics Board under the Trends in the Suburbs project in February 2011 (Interviews from 2010 also received prior ethnical approval). A consent letter was signed by all interview participants prior to each interview. The consent letter explains the nature of the project and ensures confidentiality. Respondents were assured that data is kept electronically in a secure location. To build trust and minimize risk, I assured respondents that they would receive the results of the research. A copy of the consent letter and consent form for the Trends in the Suburbs project is provided below.

DATE
Dear Participant,

Project Titles:
Trends in residential environments: planning and inhabiting the suburbs
Global suburbanisms: governance, land, and infrastructure in the 21st century

Principal Investigator: **Dr. Jill L Grant**, FCIP LPP
School of Planning, Dalhousie University, Box 15000, Halifax NS, B3H 4R2
902-494-6586 fax: 902-423-6672 Jill.Grant@dal.ca

Dear Study Participant:

I **invite you** to take part in a research study at Dalhousie University. The work is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Taking part in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. We will use the information collected only for research purposes. This letter explains what you will be asked to do, and any risk or inconvenience you may experience. Participating in the study may not benefit you directly, but we hope to learn things which will improve understanding of community planning. Please feel free to discuss any questions you have with me, Jill Grant. If you agree to participate, please sign the form at the bottom and return it to me, or to my research assistant, Leah Perrin, at the address listed here.

The **purpose of the study** is to identify recent trends in suburban development. We are especially interested in the implementation of ideas associated with smart growth, new urbanism and sustainability, and also in the widespread growth in private and condominium developments. We focussed our earlier research on communities experiencing rapid growth in three provinces: Alberta,

British Columbia, and Ontario. Now we are examining development in Halifax in order to understand trends in the region.

For this research we are arranging **in-person interviews** with people living and working in the cities selected for analysis. We hope to interview **community planners, council members, and project developers** who have been involved in the process whereby new communities get approved for development. We are also interviewing the **residents** of new developments in these communities for their views. My research assistant, Leah Perrin, will conduct the interviews. We expect each interview to take about **45 minutes to one hour**; it will consist of semi-structured questions about your experience and opinions. (We have attached an outline of the question topics we will discuss.) If you agree, we will tape record the interview; alternatively we can take notes. You may refuse to answer any question, or end the interview at any point. (If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will destroy any data you contributed.)

We recognize that participating in this study may cause you some **inconvenience**, but we will try to minimize that by visiting at a time and place convenient for you. We will try to limit the **risk** that anyone reading the results of the research can identify you from your comments. In publications, we will not use any identifying information other than your type of position (for example, "resident") and the city involved (Halifax Regional Municipality).

We will keep your remarks **confidential**. We will never reveal your identity. We will maintain our interview notes and any analysis based on them in a secure location. Only my research team (myself and students working on the project) will have access. Dalhousie University policy requires that data be stored securely. I will retain the data for long-term study of development trends.

We are happy to share the results of the research with you, as we hope that you may find **benefit** in knowing more about the topic. We post the results of our research on our project web site at http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/html/suburbs_project/suburbs_index.html . We hope that you may find it helpful to learn about experience in other regions. The work contributes to general knowledge about recent trends in Canadian urban development. (Should any new information arise which may affect your decision to participate in the study, we will let you know immediately.)

In the event that you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Integrity Coordinator at Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics and Integrity for assistance. (902-494-1462, catherine.connors@dal.ca)

If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form attached, and check the boxes to signal your preferences. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely yours,

_____ _____

Dr. Jill L Grant, School of Planning Date

Research assistant: _____

Leah Perrin, Master's Student

Contact information: PerrinL@dal.ca

Phone: 902-981-5361

School of Planning 902-494-3260

Dalhousie University

Box 15000, Halifax, NS

B3H 4R2, Canada

PLEASE READ AND SIGN IF YOU AGREE: <u>Consent form</u>

I have read the description of the project and agree to participate as set out in this form. I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

_____ _____ _____

Name Signature Date

I agree that you may record my remarks for transcription:

[ ] Signature or initials: _____

I agree that you may use brief quotes from my remarks:

[ ] Signature or initials: _____

I agree to be contacted for additional information during the course of the study, should that prove necessary.

[ ] Signature or initials: _____

I would like to be informed of the preliminary results of the research:

[ ] Mailing address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Email:

Keep one copy of this form for your records, and **return a signed copy** to:

Jill L Grant, School of Planning, Dalhousie University,
Box 15000, Halifax NS, B3H 4R2, Canada
fax 902-423-6672
jill.grant@dal.ca

Visit our website for further information on the research:

http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/html/suburbs_project/suburbs_index.html

Appendix 3: Interview Guide (2012)

The interview guide used for in-person interviews in Halifax during June and July 2012 is provided below. This interview guide is similar to those used in Halifax in 2011, and Barrie, Markham, Calgary, Airdrie, Surrey and Langley in 2010. The order of questions varied between suburban areas, but the content of the questions remained largely the same. Questions specific to this interview guide, asked only in Halifax in 2012, are highlighted.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. We're trying to understand current planning and development trends in the suburbs of Canadian cities. We're hoping that you can help us learn more about residents' perspectives on those trends here in Halifax.

- Can we start by you telling me a little about your neighbourhood? (such as its name, size, character, etc.).
- How long have you lived in your home?
- Do you own or rent your home? Is it a condominium unit?
    - If it is a condominium unit:
        - What attracted you to living in a condominium?
        - To what extent are you involved in the condo association?
- Where did you live prior to moving here?
- How does this home differ from your previous place of residence?
- What factors were most important to you in choosing to live in this neighbourhood?
- What do you see as the best features of this neighbourhood?
- What do you think are the worst features of this neighbourhood?
- How would you describe the social characteristics of the neighbourhood?
- How would you describe the physical characteristics of the neighbourhood?
- How does your neighbourhood differ from other new developments in this area?
- In what ways would you say your neighbourhood is well-planned and designed?
- What could be improved in the neighbourhood?
- To what extent is your community a healthy community?
- To what extent are you involved in local community activities and associations?
- To what extent do you interact with other residents of your neighbourhood?
    - Can you show me (on the map) where you have close friends that live in the neighbourhood?
    - Can you show me (on the map) where you have acquaintances that live in the neighbourhood?

- How would you describe social interactions on your street?

I'd like to ask you a few questions about your travel behaviour:

- How do you get to work (or school) most days?
- How long does it take you to get there most days?
- How do you travel to do your shopping most often?
- When was the last time you walked to a local store?
- When was the last time you drove to a big box retail outlet?
- When was the last time you used public transportation?
- How convenient is public transportation from your home?
- What characteristics in your neighbourhood affect your decisions about how to travel where you need to go?

I'd like to ask your views of suburban neighbourhoods and suburban trends in Canada:

- How would you characterize the rate of growth in HRM compared with other parts of Canada?
- How do suburban development patterns and characteristics here compare to trends in other parts of Canada?
- What new development trends do you see appearing in the suburbs here?
- What do you see as the key concerns for the future of Canadian suburbs?
- What do you see as the long-term challenges to planning and developing sustainable communities?
- How effective are local efforts to make the city more sustainable?
- To what extent do the suburbs here in HRM try to accommodate a variety of households – different types of residents living in the same neighbourhood?
- What do you see as the benefits of promoting a mix of housing types?
- What are some of the challenges of a mix of housing types?
- Can you comment on how you think the recent economic crisis has affected development in this region?
- How do you think the recent economic crisis may affect suburban areas or future suburban growth?
- Is there anything you would like to add before we wrap up?

  Is there anyone else in the neighbourhood that you think I should talk to from a residents' perspective? *Thank you for your help.*