



*Governing Urban Diversity:*

*Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

## **Report 2h**

### **Fieldwork inhabitants, Toronto (Canada)**

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<b>Authors:</b>	Donya Ahmadi, Tuna Tasan-Kok
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## 1. Introduction

There is a growing conventional wisdom in writings on European cities that presents them as centres of ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007). This refers specifically to their increasing ethnic diversity and to the demographic diversity between and within such ethnic groups. However, cities are becoming increasingly diverse, not only in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities. To indicate this enormous diversity, we proposed to use the term hyper-diversity (Tasan-Kok, et al., 2013).

Within cities, groups can live segregated or rather mixed. Urban neighbourhoods may be fairly homogeneous residential areas in terms of housing and population, but they may also be heavily mixed with respect to types of housing (tenure, type, and price) and population categories (income, ethnicity, household composition, and age). In addition, individuals who belong to the same ‘official’ demographic category may possess quite different lifestyles and attitudes and involve themselves in a wide range of activities. Some may for example have a very neighbourhood-oriented life, with all their friends and activities in a very small area, while others may have their social activities stretched over the whole city or even beyond. Residents of mixed urban neighbourhoods may happily live together, live parallel lives, or be in open conflict with each other (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

This report is written as part of the EU-FP7 DIVERCITIES project. In this project we aim to find out how urban hyper-diversity affects social cohesion and social mobility of residents of deprived and dynamic urban areas and the economic performance of entrepreneurs with their enterprise in such areas. In this report we focus on the findings from our interviews with residents in which we explored their experiences of living with hyper-diversity and how it affects their lives.

This general aim can be broken down into more detailed and concrete research questions. They are central in the chapters of this report:

1. Why did people move to the diverse area they live in now? To what extent has the diversity of the area been a pull-factor? Or were other aspects (such as the availability of inexpensive dwellings) a much stronger motive to settle in the present area? (Chapter 3)
2. How do residents think about the area they live in? Do residents see their neighbourhood’s diversity as an asset or a liability? (Chapter 4)
3. How do residents make use of the diversified areas they live in? Do they actively engage in diversified relations and activities in their neighbourhood? To what extent is the area they live in more important than other areas in terms of activities? (Chapter 5)
4. To what extent is the diversity of the residential area important for social cohesion? Which elements foster social cohesion, which elements hinder the development of social cohesion in the area? (Chapter 6)
5. To what extent is the diversity of the neighbourhood important for social mobility? Which elements foster social mobility and which elements hinder social mobility? (Chapter 7)
6. How are diversity-related policies perceived by the inhabitants of the area? (Chapter 8)

The research in this report focuses on the city of Toronto, Canada. This city currently has 2.79 million inhabitants (5.5 million in the GTA - Greater Toronto Area). It is considered as one of the most diverse cities in the world in terms of the composition of population. Half of Toronto

residents are immigrants, of which nearly half are members of a racialized<sup>1</sup> group (O.T.F, 2007). According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 46% of the population of the Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA) were foreign-born (immigrants) and 52.4% were Canadian-born (non-immigrants), of which 0.7% had an Aboriginal identity, while non-permanent residents<sup>2</sup> constituted 1.7% of the population (Statistics-Canada, 2011). Toronto is the fifth largest city in North America and an economic powerhouse in Canada, generating 10% of Canada's GDP in 2010. It has been historically the second largest metropolitan city of Canada after Montreal but has become the largest since early 1980s due to a combination of economic and demographic factors like deindustrialisation, shift to service economy, and changing in-out migration dynamics (Hiller, 2010).

In Toronto the research takes place in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, which is located in the northwest end of Toronto, originally developed as a model suburb in the 1960s in response to rapid urban growth. The community was planned to accommodate a socially diverse population and included a substantial amount of public housing and experienced a huge wave of immigration after WWII, with newcomers from the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Africa, and South America. The highly diverse neighbourhood has one of the highest proportions of youth, sole-supported families, refugees and immigrants, people without a high-school diploma, low-income earners, and public housing tenants of any community in Toronto. As well, there is a substantial and ethnically diverse population living in middle class detached and semi-detached houses, townhouses, and high-rise tower blocks.

We conducted 50 interviews with residents of Jane-Finch neighbourhood. These interviews were held during September-October 2014. In the next section, we will first give some more information on the methodology that was adopted. This is then followed by six sections in which we will answer the research questions above. In the conclusion section, we summarise the main results and address our main questions.

## 2. The interviewees

### 2.1 Selection procedure: How did we select our interviewees?

In order to make sure the diversity of our sample reflected that of the area, respondents were mobilized through different channels. Our initial plan was to take community initiatives we were in touch earlier (such as neighbourhood associations, non-profit organizations, etc.) as entry points and then continue by snowballing. Once in the field, we were faced with some degree of reluctance coming from both the sides of Jane-Finch residents and organization members due to 'research fatigue' since Jane-Finch area is heavily researched in the last few years. In order to tackle the issue we attended multiple community meetings<sup>3</sup> using our ties with the community initiatives identified in the previous stages of the DIVERCITIES research (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok 2013). In order to avoid early saturation, we asked for no more than two referrals from any one source while using snowball sampling.

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<sup>1</sup> "Racialized group" is an official term used regularly by human rights and community organizations and adopted by Statistics Canada and also by official documents, like Federal Employment Equity Act, to describe non-Aboriginal people of color instead of using the less popular term of "visible minorities".

<sup>2</sup> Refers to people from another country who had a Work or Study Permit, or who were refugee claimants at the time of the census, and family members living in Canada with them (<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/pop100-eng.cfm>).

<sup>3</sup> Namely meetings of COSTI North York Centre and Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre

## 2.2 Which groups did we miss?

While our sample represents multiple dimensions of the diversity of Jane-Finch, it is composed pre-dominantly of female respondents<sup>4</sup>. Possible explanations for why male respondents proved more difficult to access can be time constraints and less participation rates in local associations. Most interviews were conducted during the day and within working hours when male members of the household were unavailable due to work, school, etc. A particularly hard to reach group turned out to be young racialized males of ages 18-35. This was an interesting finding in and of itself since difficulties in serving and accessing young racialized males was a concern expressed by many of the service providers and youth outreach workers who have been interviewed throughout the DIVERCITIES research process. Many interviewees also contended that the group is considered most at risk of getting influenced by the drug gangs in the neighbourhood.

## 2.3 Some general characteristics of the interviewees

The major characteristics of the interviewees are as follows.

- Most of the respondents (36 of 50) are female;
- The largest group of interviewees belong to 31-45 (16) and 60+ (14) age group, while the rest of the interviewees from 18-30 (8) and 46-60 (12) age groups is 8;
- The ethnic distribution of the respondents shows predominantly Caribbean and Latino interviewees, corresponding to the predominant ethnic group lives in Jane-Finch area. Furthermore, there are some interviewees from Africa, and equally from Asia. We interviewed only 3 white Canadians and 1 European person; as it is a small group which was not easy to track down for interviews;
- Among the interviewees married, single, separated or divorced were almost equally distributed while we have only a few (3) widowers;
- We interviewed some people who were on disabilities but no visibly handicapped persons (e.g. on wheelchair) were interviewed;
- In terms of employment, almost half of the interviewees (22) were employed at the time of the fieldwork, of which only some (9) had full time jobs. Besides the unemployed, people outside the labour market (retired people, housewives, and students) were also interviewed as well as some people who were on a temporary leave from their work;
- Although half of the interviewees refused to indicate income figures, the rest of the group almost equally contained income between \$1001-\$1999, the income lower than \$1000, and the income more than \$2000 per month (of which some has more than \$5000 per month);
- In terms of housing composition, most of the interviewees live in private rental units while considerable amount (one third) are homeowners. Moreover some of the respondents reside in municipal housing units (Toronto Community Housing).

## 3. Housing choice and residential

### 3.1 Introduction

The present chapter focuses on the relocation behaviour and motives underlying the residential mobility of the researched sample. In theory, different sets of reasons have been outlined to explain the housing careers of diverse household. A housing career is defined by (Pickles and Davies, 1991) as the sequence of dwellings occupied by a particular household throughout its histo-

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<sup>4</sup> About 2/3 of the total number of respondents were female.

ry. Housing careers often demonstrate a hierarchical development since many households start on a lower rung of the housing ladder (wherein dwellings are cheaper and of poorer quality) and later on move up to the higher rungs (in which dwellings are of better quality but less accessible) (Bolt and van Kempen, 2002). While the characteristics and quality of the dwellings at the top stage of the housing career highly depend on the occupants' perceptions and preferences, on the aggregate level, households are less likely to move once they reach the higher rungs of the ladder.

Bolt and Kempen (2002: p. 404) argue that differences in housing careers can be related to *resources at the individual level* and the *broader context of the housing system* in which the households are situated. Housing supply characteristics and discrimination in the housing market are two relevant aspects of the context of the housing market influencing housing careers. Similarly, van Ham and Clark (2009) assert that an analysis of the difference between household careers of diverse groups cannot be done effectively without paying attention to the socio-economic resources of households (Bolt and Van Kempen, 2003).

In addition to resources, other examples of individual-level factors impacting housing careers include the influences of 'significant others', life course events (e.g. beginning of a new job or retirement), changes in household characteristics and demographics (such as age, number of children, etc.) and having family and personal ties in a neighbourhood (Kley, 2011). Also neighbourhood characteristics, such as the perceived opportunities, existence of facilities, ethnic concentrations impact the housing careers of current and prospective households in the area (Bolt and van Kempen, 2002; Kley, 2011).

Moreover, according to van Ham and Clark (2009), when making housing decisions, households may have a number of different goals, including moving to an affordable unit, moving to a desirable unit (bearing in mind that what is perceived as desirable again depends on the subjective preferences of the household), and moving to a good neighbourhood. When it comes to relocation behaviour, there is a difference between aspirations and actual decisions made by the households. While all three of these goals may equally shape the aspirations of households, they most likely end up having to prioritize among the three when making relocation decisions due to their resources or the realities of the housing market (affordability, availability, size, quality, etc.).

In the next section we will analyse the data gathered through 50 interviews with Jane-Finch residents to understand the main reasons underlying their different housing careers and how diversity has shaped and continues to shape their relocation decisions.

### 3.2 Why did the residents come to live here?

The housing choices of the residents of Jane-Finch seem to be predominantly influenced by housing conditions in the area although social conditions also played a role. We can group the various motives underlying the settlement of different households in Jane-Finch under housing and social conditions. *Housing conditions* include several factors defined by the respondents including *affordability* of housing and goods in the area; *availability of Toronto housing*<sup>5</sup>, and *size and conditions* of the dwelling. *Social conditions* actually refer to the social ties in the area stimulated by the presence of diverse ethnic, religious or cultural communities.

In terms of *housing conditions* our overall analysis on the basis of the interview material is that the most highlighted motivation to live in this area is the *affordability of housing and goods* in the area. It

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<sup>5</sup> Toronto housing refers to subsidized affordable housing provided by Toronto Community Housing (Canada's largest social housing corporation) to low and moderate-income households in Toronto.



should be noted that over the past three decades Toronto has experienced a persistent trend of segregation by income as the city has polarized into wealthy inner-city neighbourhoods and low-income neighbourhoods in the inner-suburbs (Hulchanski, 2010). The polarization further follows a spatial pattern of race, ethnicity, and poverty, considering as the country's 10 most ethnically diverse federal voting constituencies are located in the suburbs of Toronto, where poverty levels have consistently increased over the past decade (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2013; Hulchanski, 2010; Mustafa, 2013). Thus there has been an influx of minority households into lower-income inner-suburban neighbourhoods like Jane-Finch over the past years, which cannot be explained by the assumption that people 'choose' their neighbourhoods. In Toronto, a growing number of people (many of whom belong to ethnic and racialized groups) have relatively few resources and thus fewer choices in the housing market. This is exemplified by a quote by Julia, an Argentinian mother of two in her early 40s who lives with her family in their privately owned house. She shared that even though her family does not find the area attractive they decided to purchase a house in Jane-Finch because of their limited budget:

*"It was because of our budget that we had to buy in this area, because if we were gonna go to another area it was really expensive but I don't really like the area."*

Moreover, many residents claimed to have moved to the area due to the *availability of Toronto housing units in the neighbourhood*. Among our respondents, many of those who are Toronto housing tenants shared that they simply settled down in Jane-Finch because they were offered a Toronto housing unit that was located in the area.

Another motive playing an important role in the housing decision of inhabitants is the *size and conditions of the dwelling*. Bryah, a Jamaican single mother in her 40s, shared how her dissatisfaction with her previous Toronto Community Housing unit's size and conditions was the main reason why she moved to her current apartment:

*"I came here because that apartment over there [in Etobicoke], had no windows, nothing in the room. So I called enough times, wrote enough letters, complained to Toronto housing and then they moved me to here."*

However, housing units are not always very satisfactory in terms of size and conditions in Jane-Finch area. Odessa, a Guyanese mother of four in her 30s, stated that she expects to move to a new dwelling (in or out of Jane-Finch) since her family has grown in size since she first moved into her Toronto housing unit:

*"Right now I am supposed to be moving because I have 4 kids so they [Toronto Community Housing] are supposed to give me a four bedroom house and not an apartment."*

Thus, expectations from housing units are defined by individual conditions, and relatively bigger or smaller units would be a key reason to move in and out of the neighbourhood.

In terms of *social conditions* availability of social, ethnic or cultural communities that the individual can easily develop is important. Although few respondents referred to the diversity of Jane-Finch directly as an important reason for them to move to the area, the majority acknowledged that the presence of people from their own ethnic, religious or cultural community has influenced their decisions to move there. Some inhabitants see the diversity in the neighbourhood as 'accidental' due to the housing availability and affordability. Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s who works as a service provider in the area, similarly shared the observation that for many Jane-Finch residents affordability often outweighs other pull factors (as well as push factors) when it comes to settling

down in Jane-Finch. He argued that diversity and affordability are connected while responding to the question of why people choose Jane-Finch over other affordable areas in Toronto:

*"I will suggest to you that a lot of people end up living here and you know simply because that's what you can afford...So in that sense yes in many instances you can say that probably people wanna live close to their friends and family but I would say, and you know it is natural that you want to make the best out of the reality".*

Vanessa, an El Salvadorian single mother in her 40s, shared that Jane-Finch was the first area she settled in when she first came to Canada due to its affordable prices. She later on decided to buy a house in the area, partly because she had developed a sense of familiarity towards the neighbourhood over the years and partly due to affordable housing prices:

*"When we bought the first house...we were looking at prices and everything and that was more affordable for us. In order to make the decision where to buy it, it was pricing, it was the size of the houses, I was looking for space because I had, when I got the house I had 3 kids already so I was looking for something that was affordable and had enough rooms for my daughter."*

The quality of the dwelling itself is also a factor impacting relocation decisions but not as primary as affordability and size. Subsequently, some people reported to have maintenance problems or pests (such as cockroaches) but claimed they wouldn't be capable financially of moving out or finding a sizable alternative. Julia, an Argentinian resident in her early 40s who lives with her family in their privately owned house, expressed that while she wishes to move out of the area, she is not willing to relocate to a smaller house in a more desirable neighbourhood:

*"That is a big problem. Because my house is big and we have a big backyard and we love the backyard because in the summer we use the backyard all the time but if we wanna move to another house like new, there is a tiny house and a small backyard, that is a big problem because we don't wanna give that up. So no plans yet. But the area is not good."*

Many interviewees claimed to have sought accommodation in Jane-Finch because they had direct or indirect contacts from their home country already settled in Jane-Finch or had been recommended to move to the area by them. Gita, a female Indian migrant living in a privately owned house explains that she came to the area because of family ties who had settled in the neighbourhood earlier:

*"We have been living here for a long time, since my in-laws came in here, they have been here for 20 years since they came in Canada [...] They came because of their daughter, she lived in this area before, she sponsored them so that is how they came here."*

Based on the findings shared above *housing conditions* (affordability, accessibility and size) seem to be the dominant pull factor for why people select Jane-Finch as opposed to other areas in the city despite its remote location. This is most probably the main reason why diverse groups from similar economic conditions, ethnicity or social status have ended up in the area. Thus we can argue that living in this neighbourhood is a 'choice', which is determined by the social and economic conditions that ultimately have 'pushed people to make that choice'. Thus, very simply put, the area is becoming diverse because it is affordable for people who are non-white Canadians. Especially because of the increasing prices in the central parts of the city neighbourhoods like Jane-Finch are very popular for low-income families, most of which are racialized. Diversity, from this point of view, can be considered as a 'consequence' (of availability of affordable housing, which attracts similar kinds of people to the neighbourhood) not as a 'pull

factor' to the neighbourhood. However, increasing diversity increases the attractiveness of the neighbourhood especially for ethnically diverse newcomers.

### 3.3 Moving to the present neighbourhood: Improvement or not?

Whether or not moving to the area has been an improvement for the residents depends highly on the *perceptions and priorities* held by the households themselves. Jane-Finch is still largely perceived as a lower-income ethnically diverse neighbourhood, thus it is considered by many in-migrant households a suitable starting point once they arrive in Toronto. Large group of our interviewees, roughly two third, especially the newcomers see Jane-Finch as a gateway to Toronto or a temporary place to live, though older (more settled) residents consider it as their home and community. If they find the right combination of affordability, social contacts and living and working conditions they stay and even move to a better unit in the same area. However, the feeling of improvement or not depends on whether the person lived in better or worse conditions before moving to Jane-Finch.

Our interviews show whether or how households prioritize among different factors (i.e. desirability of the neighbourhood, affordability and household size) when making housing decisions again depend heavily on their characteristics and perceptions. For example, changes in the size of one household (due to the birth of new kids or older children moving out) impact its relocation decisions. Thus, for that particular household and at a certain temporal point, moving to a larger or smaller dwelling becomes more of a priority than living in a better neighbourhood. Subsequently moving to a different-sized unit is experienced as an improvement even if the neighbourhood is not deemed desirable. Sarah, a native Canadian single mother of two in her early 20s, explains how she prioritizes living in a larger unit in Jane-Finch over a smaller unit in a more reputable neighbourhood:

*"I don't pay a lot for what I get. I have 3 bedrooms, 2 floors, and 2 bathrooms. And I pay 1255\$. So for 1200\$ where I used to live in Bathurst and Steeles, like more upper class Jewish neighbourhood, 1200\$ was only a 2 bedroom apartment one floor. That is it! So that is why I think paying that for this is a good deal."*

Similarly, some households may prioritize affordability above any other factor upon relocating. Eva, an Ecuadorian mother of two in her 40s, shared that after losing her husband in an accident, she was no longer able to afford their privately rented apartment. She expressed that even though the new unit is smaller; she considers it an improvement since it is more affordable.

*"I was moving from Lawrence and Keele because it was too expensive for me. I don't have any husband now or a boyfriend you know? No. It was very hard for me. [...] I want to apply for government housing because it is a good plan. Like for a single mother, it is good. I am talking about 600\$. Now here is 1095\$. There I was paying 1260\$. Now here is really not that much cheaper but it is better for me."*

Moreover, for households with school-aged children, the availability and quality of schools become important factors. Moreover, given that youth (especially racialized males between ages of 16 and 30) are considered at risk group in Jane-Finch (since they are more likely to get influenced by drug gangs and the violence inherently created by them), most respondents who were parenting racialized male youth showcased strong aspirations to move out of the area before or once their children reach adolescence. For example, Delilah, a single mother from Guyanese-Jamaican background in her 40s, shared that she wishes to move out of the area soon since she feels that raising her sons in the area may impact their future opportunities negatively:

*“Now I’ve gotten to a level where it is decent financial-wise I could reconsider moving to a different area and just saving so that when I do move at least it is a place where I can say okay I am gonna raise my kids here, it is a decent area. I don’t want them getting to a certain age and thinking that oh we are just bound. [...] Like if my kids grow up here I feel like they are at risk of being caught into friends who are not doing anything with their life and have no headway or any type of goals.”*

Considering all these factors, for many first-generation migrant families, settling in Jane-Finch is perceived as an improvement in their housing situation. Some respondents belonging to such households claimed to have not found Jane Finch a desirable neighbourhood from the beginning, however they felt like they have moved up to a higher rung of the housing ladder since they had managed to find affordable housing or had succeeded to settle in Canada.

### 3.4 Conclusions

Based on our analysis we cannot regard diversity as a direct pull factor, much rather a *de facto* outcome of lower-income ethnically diverse communities moving into the neighbourhood. Respondents’ main motives for moving to Jane-Finch included affordability of housing and goods in the area, availability of Toronto housing, having social ties in the area, and size and conditions of the dwelling. While for some respondents motives such as proximity to members of the same ethnic group or personal ties factored into their decisions, the majority still contended that affordability was the main reason why they chose to relocate to Jane-Finch. Individual resources and characteristics of the housing market thereby seem to outweigh diversity when it comes to motives underlying the housing choices of the majority of our respondents.

Our analysis further reveals that measuring improvements in housing careers cannot be achieved without paying attention to the perceptions and preferences held by the households themselves. These perceptions are highly subjective according to their demographics, characteristics and also temporal factors (e.g. different phases of the life course, stage of immigration<sup>6</sup>, etc.). Many households, whose few resources do not allow for much manoeuvre in Toronto’s housing market, end up having to prioritize between the affordability of the unit, its quality and the desirability of the neighbourhood wherein it is located when making housing decisions. Based on our observations and interviews in the area we can conclude that any analysis of housing careers should be grounded in a close understanding of the characteristics and resources of the household whose relocation behaviour is being studied.

## 4. Perceptions of the diversity in the neighbourhood

### 4.1 Introduction

The following section explores the perceptions of Jane-Finch residents of their own neighbourhood, in particular their experiences vis-à-vis diversity. When analysing perceptions of diversity we should distinguish them from practices. Existing theory shows a complex and at times contradictory interplay between the two (Blokland and Mitzman, 2003; Clayton, 2009; Fortier, 2007;

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<sup>6</sup> Kley (2011) distinguishes between three different life course phases and 4 different stages in the migration process. Phases in the life course include early adulthood (comprising young adults without children), the family phase (adults with one or more children in the age below 10) and the phase of consolidation (adults over the age of 30 without children or with one or more children at least 10 years of age and no younger child). The 4 migration stages are classified as the pre-decisional phase (considering migration), the pre-actional phase (planning migration), the actional phase (realizing migration) and the post-actional phase (living at destination). A person’s goals, perceptions and aspirations may vary considerably across different stages.

van Eijk, 2012; Watt, 2006). Narratives and discourses regarding diversity influence but do not determine how diversity is experienced in daily practice by local residents. This contradiction is exemplified by how people may express very positive opinions about diversity but take little initiative to interact with different people or experience tension when doing so. In fact, positive relations and tensions often exist side by side in diverse neighbourhoods (van Eijk, 2012). Similarly, in many contexts wherein diversity is commonly celebrated as something positive or remarkable, racial distinctions and stereotyping remain by and large intact (Clayton, 2009). Thus it is difficult, if not counter productive, to make a dichotomous distinction between what is considered a positive relation to diversity and what is not.

It is important to note here that Jane-Finch suffers from a long-standing stigma, which contributes a great deal to shaping negative perceptions of the neighbourhood. The stigmatization mainly derives from the association of the area with crime, violence, poverty and despair in the media after decades of branding and stereotyping (Royson, 2012). For many Jane-Finch residents this creates an ongoing tension between the negative stereotypes (to which many of them also subscribe) and their lived experiences with diversity and sense of belonging towards the area. Another important factor worthy of addressing here is that diversity is by no means a new phenomenon in Jane-Finch. The area's long experience with accommodating a diverse population, coupled by the legacy of the Canadian multiculturalism policy has resulted in a general civility towards diversity. Wessendorf (2013) uses the term common-place diversity to refer to a situation wherein diversity is experienced by local residents of an area as a normal aspect of their social lives. Common-place diversity emerges overtime as an outcome of processes of neighbourhood diversification (Wessendorf, 2013). People get used to what may be perceived as an exceptional socio-demographic situation in another context by virtue of their everyday lived experiences with diversity. Meanwhile, the normalization of diversity can manifest a somewhat superficial acceptance of difference. It does not necessarily entail an appreciation of diversity nor a disdain for it. In fact, common-place diversity is more often than not coupled by an indifference towards different cultures, lifestyles and backgrounds, whereby not dealing with difference is interpreted as a strategy to avoid conflict and tension (Wessendorf, 2013).

The following sections explore the extent to which diversity has become common-place in Jane-Finch and how this has in turn impacted residents' experiences regarding living in a hyper-diverse neighbourhood. The perception of diversity is tackled by asking the residents about the perceived boundaries of their neighbourhood, perception of their neighbours, and the perception of their neighbourhood so as to understand how they think about the area they live in. Our analysis raises the question of whether diversity is the main point of contestation in Jane-Finch or whether there are other underlying issues more at stake.

## **4.2 Perceived boundaries of the neighbourhood**

The majority of the respondents in Jane-Finch regard the vicinity of their homes as their neighbourhood. However, our research demonstrates that there are still a variety of ways in which residents define the boundaries of their neighbourhood and variety of references they use to define these boundaries. However, the stigmatization of the neighbourhood due to the presence of different social and ethnic groups plays a great role in defining underlying factors in relation to which perceptions of neighbourhood boundaries are shaped. Most of our respondent's opinion is influenced by the stigma of the neighbourhood and they limit themselves to the certain parts of the area because of that. Gita, who is a 37 year old woman from India, even if she never had any bad experiences or treats in the neighbourhood herself, does not go to the certain parts of the Jane-Finch:

*"I like my street mostly and the nearby area here. I don't like to go close by to the Jane-Finch area, I don't know, because of crime, the black people live there, they bother the people sometimes"*

Thus, most of our respondents mostly defined the neighbourhood boundaries based on emotional aspects like this even though 'close vicinity of home' appears to be the most common definition of the neighbourhood provided by many of them. Neighbourhood, in this respect, appears to be a place where people feel 'comfortable, safe and familiar' but what makes this feeling is not exactly defined by the diversity in the area.

Normalization of diversity contributes to the acceptance of difference, which makes people comfortable in their environments, though this did not come out very strongly out of the interviews. Some of our respondents refer to social and physical factors that play a role in shaping emotionally defined, perceived neighbourhood boundaries, some of which are related to perception of diversity and some simply to the social and physical attributes of the living environment. For instance, *sense of belonging and familiarity*, *sense of safety* and *stigma* have been influenced by diversity depending on the personal experiences in the neighbourhood, while *everyday activities* and *physical entities* are simply related to the conditions provided by the neighbourhood, which have nothing to do with diversity:

- *Sense of belonging and familiarity*, which help defining boundaries of attachment to a certain area;
- *Sense of safety* helps to pinpoint areas where people feel at home, which is a very important factor in defining the boundaries of the living environment;
- *Stigma*<sup>7</sup> limits the perceived boundaries of the neighbourhood and of activity spaces for residents;
- *Everyday activities* take place in certain areas where people call their neighbourhood;
- *Physical entities* that keep people within a certain territory also help define the boundaries of the neighbourhood.

For many respondents their perception of what is their neighbourhood was closely interconnected to their *sense of belonging, attachment and familiarity* towards the area, which may or not be connected to the attachment to the people. This feeling can derive from social and physical factors like familiarity with people on the street or familiarity with places in the area. Fernando, a York university student from El Salvadorian background, does not regard the broader Jane-Finch area as his neighbourhood since he does not feel connected to it:

*"I am not usually in the Jane-Finch area, like the Jane-Finch intersection and that community over there. I am usually just in this area like Downsview so I feel more of a sense of belonging to the university part."*

Jim, a Ghanaian male in his early 40s, on the other hand, refers to the familiar faces on the street to define his sense of belonging to the area:

*"When I walk, I see that even if I am far from where I stay, I can see that I am still connected because you see familiar faces and sometimes you are walking down the street and someone will know you, stuff like that. But all of this, from here (Jane-Finch crossing) to Sheppard to Keele is home."*

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<sup>7</sup> Stigma is a strong factor that influences the perceptions of the residents not only in terms of the perceived boundaries of the neighbourhood but also of the neighbours and the neighbourhood itself, as can be seen below. The impact of stigma upon the experiences and opportunities of residents is explored further in chapter 7

*Feeling of safety* is something that greatly influences the perceptions of the neighbourhood boundaries. Residents of Jane-Finch easily differentiate between zones of comfort in which they can easily get around and feel safe and zones wherein they do not feel at ease. These boundaries are very much connected to the above topic on 'belonging, attachment and familiarity'. Our general observation is that when residents have some positive encounters with each other, these feelings are easily created no matter the ethnic background or skin colour of the person. Thus the personal safety zones can be defined even in the most stigmatised parts of the neighbourhood which have connotations to ethnic background, race or skin colour. Celine, a Caribbean-Canadian single mother in her late 40s, underlines how she feels comfortable in the whole Jane-Finch area despite its bad reputation because she feels safe in the large part of the area:

*"All of it is my neighbourhood. Like sometimes when I hear, you know what? You always hear the media! But it goes in here out here cause unless you live here you don't know. Yes you have got crime all over, the rich areas, the poor areas, it does not matter. There is crime everywhere."*

Likewise, Amida (18 year old girl from Tanzania, who lives with her parents), indicates that this is her neighbourhood, even though it is one of the most stigmatised neighbourhoods due to its connotation to crime, without any hesitation:

*"Everybody is nice and friendly. Even though we had some shootings around there. But yeah. You know you don't feel safe these days...but I don't know. I guess you just get used to it. Some people get scared when you say Driftwood. [You say] come into Driftwood: [they say] Oh my god"*

However, we also observed that ethnic diversity in the neighbourhood may influence defining larger 'comfortable, safe and familiar' boundaries since people cannot relate to any of the diverse cultures surrounding them. This, we observed, may limit the perceived boundaries of an individual to his/her personal networks and immediate surroundings. As mentioned above, since the boundaries of the neighbourhood are defined by certain emotions and feelings, stigmatization of the neighbourhood is a great underlying factor influencing the social and physical factors.

The *stigma* impacts residents' perceptions of neighbourhood boundaries in different and sometimes contradictory ways. Some respondents actively tried to dissociate themselves from the most stigmatized part of the area which is the Jane-finch intersection, often while making references to reported crime, shootings, gang presence, etc. In most cases when negative stereotypes were reproduced by respondents, we followed up by asking whether they had experienced any such threats first-hand. This was done so as to understand whether these sentiments derive from personal experience or reproduction of common negative stereotypes. In reality there were few instances whereby respondents had actually come face to face with shootings or gang violence in the Jane-Finch crossing. It is important to once again emphasize the difference between narratives and practice, exemplified here by people living in very close proximity to the crossing while distancing themselves from it (by means of reproducing negative narratives about the area) in order to avoid being associated with the stigma. This creates a kind of 'micro hierarchy' within the neighbourhood with good and bad parts as Wakefield and McMullan (2005) also refers.

This often happens when negative representations are internalized by the residents of the area themselves. Gita, a first generation female Indian migrant living in a privately owned house a few minutes north of the crossing expressed clear disdain for the stigmatized part of the neighbourhood:

*"I like my street mostly and the nearby area here. I don't like to go close to the Jane-Finch area, I don't know, because of crime, the black people live there, they bother the people sometimes."*



When asked Gita indicated that she did not experience anything herself but she heard rumours on the basis of which she does not go to that part of the neighbourhood. On the contrary, another group of respondents expressed feelings of deep attachment towards the Jane-Finch crossing in particular, often with utmost disdain for the stigma surrounding it. Emotions often escalated when the subject of stigma was brought up during these interviews. Chelsea, a single mother on Jamaican decent who has raised her son in the San Romanoway towers on the Jane and Finch crossing expressed a sense of pride in declaring the stigmatized part as her neighbourhood:

*“Yes! All of it is my neighbourhood. You know what? You always hear the stuff on the media! But it goes in here and out of here cause unless you live here you don't know. Yes you have got crime all over, the rich areas, the poor areas, it does not matter. There is crime everywhere. You probably don't know about it, you don't hear about it but if anything goes on here it will get sensationalized.”*

The stigmatization of the Jane-Finch crossing does not only influence the perception of the neighbourhood in the minds of its residents but also of many others living in the close vicinity or even other parts of the city.

*Everyday activities* in the neighbourhood and use of spaces, facilities and community organizations are also important factors shaping perceptions of boundaries. For Alejandra, an Ecuadorian single mother in her early 50s, the perception of boundaries is closely interlinked to the activities of her and her son:

*“I have been here since 2007 so it is 7 years that I am living in this corner. So [the boundaries] would be this area, Sentinal and Finch. My son used to go to the school across the street and I went to the church so yeah! And I work in a company north of Steeles and Keele, 10-15 minutes from here.”*

*Physical entities* such as streets, parks, buildings especially like schools, malls and community centres and intersections were commonly referred to when defining neighbourhood boundaries. Most of the time, however, these physical entities are linked to the feeling of familiarity. Holly, a Jamaican Toronto housing resident and single mother of 2, explains the boundaries of her neighbourhood in reference to a park and a building:

*“This is the first place I used to go, right around Gosford right here. A park right around there. I never know where I am going and I am looking and I say okay it is a big park here, we could come here you know! And then finally my son's cousin who lives in the building told me about all the community centre. Because I just wanna know what's going on over there and then she told me that they do programs and stuff like that so I go over there. But right here I am okay. No problem, everything is easily accessible. It's okay”.*

Since the physical elements that define Jane-Finch (creeks, bridges, big intersections, waste green spaces, low-density strip malls, high-rise apartment buildings, etc.) restrict the physical feeling of attachment, emotional sentiments play a great role in defining the boundaries of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood. These feelings of belonging appear to be a very important factor in the perception of neighbours as well.

### 4.3 Perceptions of neighbours

In Jane-Finch living with diversity (in particular with regards to culture and ethnicity) is a daily reality. The majority of respondents regard the diversity in their immediate surrounding as a positive trait. They are often aware of their neighbours' cultural backgrounds. Most respondents claimed to get along fine with their neighbours despite their differences. However, when people



define their neighbours, 'ethnic characteristics or background' did not appear as an important factor to influence their perceptions, most probably because these characteristics are normalised and people do not pay much attention to them. What actually mainly influence the perceptions was their 'social relations' with their neighbours no matter their backgrounds. If these relations are defined by positive experiences perceptions were mainly positive, if not, negative observations replaced the positive perceptions. Below there is a list of factors highlighted during the interviews that influenced the social relations of the respondent with his/her neighbours, and their perceptions on their neighbourhoods respectively:

- *Daily encounters* have positive and negative impacts on residents' feelings towards their immediate neighbours;
- *Prejudice and stereotyping* create negative expectations and distrust;
- *Civility towards diversity* creates more positive feelings or perhaps repression of negative feelings like fear;

*Daily encounters* appear to be the most dominant factor that influences the perception of one's immediate neighbours. Meeting neighbours in public spaces, in the building or at places for common activities like school or shopping create fear or appeal towards the neighbours. Friendly attitude (like greeting each other and showing respect in public spaces) is appreciated and indicated by most respondents as an important characteristic of the people in their immediate surroundings. When there is friendliness in the daily encounters, the positive perceptions towards diversity are more highlighted and visa versa. Anna, a Jamaican single mother in her mid-40s, for instance, indicates how comfortable she feels with her diverse neighbours:

*"I am comfortable with people living around here. It is not just one culture, we have a multi-culture neighbourhood so you can learn from different experiences from people or children play with all different kinds of people outside so it doesn't matter who lives in the building the children will play with them. So even if as an adult you don't talk to your neighbours or you don't talk to people in the building, your children will bring you closer to different cultures because you see them talking to so they can introduce them to their parents and you know that is how parents get involved with parents by saying hi I am such and such mother".*

However, friendliness alone does not seem to create strong ties between the residents even if they appreciate diverse cultures. Most respondents indicated that these interactions usually stay at the level of greeting and do not go further to create friendship, with the exception of a few who have established close bonds with their immediate neighbours. Fear, on the other hand, appears to be a stronger feeling that influences how people perceive one another. In some cases the fear derives from negative daily encounters (bullying) or ignoring the presence of one another (for instance, not greeting each other). Ria (single mother from Jamaica, who has a single parent household), for instance, appreciates the existence of people from different countries in her neighbourhood but also things her neighbours are not nice as they pass by without greeting her:

*"To be honest I don't have a lot of neighbours here. I don't really know them! And if I see them when I am here they don't say hi and I don't say hi. They are not friendly."*

In many cases prejudices also play a great role in creating feelings of fear. *Prejudice and stereotyping* thus contribute to the negative perceptions of neighbours. Stereotyping on the basis of race and religion is a very important reason for perceiving diversity negatively. Eva, an Ecuadorian mother of two in her 40s, clearly indicates this while insisting that she does not have a problem with diversity:

*"Too many black people here! I don't have problem but if it was fifty percent I would have a problem".*

Heba, an Egyptian woman in her 50s, on the other hand, feels that she is affected by the prejudices by the neighbours:

*"No, I am not similar to lots of people in Jane-Finch because of my culture and my religion. I am different because you know, I'm a Muslim. They are Christian and have different religions. Some people mind or don't agree that I wear that [points to her scarf]"*.

Thus, diversity is good if it does not exceed a limit; beyond that it becomes a negative element in the perceptions of neighbours. It is also of importance to note here that the existing stock of Toronto housing in Jane and Finch accommodates predominantly ethnically diverse households, many of which are female-headed. Thus, essentialization<sup>8</sup> and negative stereotyping of these households happen at the intersection of race, class and gender. While other factors namely sexuality, age, physical ability, and so forth also come into play in processes of essentialization, here we limit our analysis to these three as they were highlighted most in our empirical findings. Stereotypes projected towards working class residents, in particular those receiving social assistance, were especially prevalent to the slightly more affluent parts of the area. For Johnny, a middle-aged man of Indian background who lives in his privately owned house in the north west of the Jane and Finch crossing, there was a clear distinction between how he perceived his immediate neighbours who were homeowners and those living in Toronto housing:

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

We use this quote to show how essentialized characteristics are attributed to welfare recipients, especially regarding notions such as civic consciousness, responsibility and entitlement. The latter part of the quote further exemplifies a sense of superiority coupled with feel-good paternalism when the respondent stresses the need for people living on welfare to *be educated into civic responsibility*, which to him comes naturally.

People generally act with *civility towards diversity* (Wessendorf 2013), meaning that they acknowledge and talk about their differences but at the same time are aware of the fact that these differences factor into their perceptions of neighbours. Furthermore, civility towards diversity does not entail an absence of tensions. Neither does it mean that stereotyping based on race, religion, class and so forth does not take place among residents. In fact, the seeming commitment to remain *civil* towards diversity often does not go beyond paying lip service to the notion. Respondents commonly made contradictory statements when talking about diversity, particularly when addressing the tensions present in their daily experiences. For example Gloria, an elderly first-generation Jamaican migrant, opened up about how she had a falling out with a Muslim neighbour with whom she worked in a resident advocacy group. While she expressed very posi-

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<sup>8</sup> Essentializing means attributing natural and essential characteristics to members of certain groups (gender, age, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, linguistic...) and assuming that individual differences can be explained by inherent and biological characteristics shared by members of a group.

tive sentiments towards diversity, she struggled to put the tensions she was experiencing into context without adhering to stereotypes. Highlighting the religious identity of the person, she contended:

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

Note how the expression ‘using the Muslim card’ trivializes the issues of orientalism, Islamophobia and discrimination towards Muslims (Hooks, 2003). Being a Muslim is further emphasized above any other aspect of the neighbour’s identity when she tries to explain the root causes of the tension.

We can say that Jane-Finch residents generally perceive each other on the basis of these daily encounters and stereotypes based on categorizations like race, culture, religion and socio-economic class.

#### 4.4 Perceptions of the neighbourhood: Positive and negative aspects

There are several factors that influence the positive and negative perceptions of the neighbourhood as our interviews highlighted. These include both social and spatial qualities of the neighbourhood including:

- *Access* to goods and facilities influences the perception of neighbourhood positively;
- *Spatial qualities* of the area influences the perception of neighbourhood negatively;
- *Ethnic, social and cultural diversity* in the area influences the perception of neighbourhood positively though it may be superficial.

On the basis of the interviews, the most highlighted positive aspect of the neighbourhood is *good access to goods and facilities* such as schools, grocery shops, hospitals, pharmacies, churches, etc. Most respondents claimed to have such facilities in their immediate vicinity. This is quite surprising, as Jane-Finch neighbourhood does not appear as an appealing place. Yet, access to services is highlighted as an important factor for the respondents to live in this area. Jim, a Ghanaian male in his early 40s, highlights the availability of diverse shops and other facilities:

*“You have a lot of shopping, the food is nice, there is a Chinese market and they have this milk factory. I buy milk and it is really good. And it is really good to have this community centre and people do stuff there. It is good”.*

Moreover, community centres and events and facilities organised by them are indicated as very important aspects in relation to the positive perceptions of the neighbourhood and its diversity.

*Spatial qualities of the neighbourhood* constitute another important factor influencing these perceptions. The neighbourhood’s fragmented spatial structure divided by creeks, bridges, big intersections, waste green spaces, low-density, almost empty strip malls, and high-rise apartment buildings does not give the impression of a cosy and friendly neighbourhood in the first instance. These spatial qualities obviously play a role in the perception of the neighbourhood as a living space. Meanwhile, the most commonly raised negative aspects of Jane-Finch included *poor mainte-*

nance of public and semi-public spaces, vandalising and littering, lack of services<sup>9</sup> (in particular after-school programs, recreation facilities and insufficient public transport capacity, especially over crowdedness and irregular schedules which result in long waiting time at bus stops), *stigma* and *gang violence*.

*Diversity* is highlighted often as a positive trait although there are several ways diversity is approached by the respondents in relation to the perception of their neighbourhood. First of all, as mentioned above, *civility towards diversity* influences how people expressed their opinion of others, although in reality, segregation and exclusion of different groups may happen even though people interact with each other on a daily basis. In other words, positive daily encounters are not enough to create strong bonds or to create positive perceptions of the neighbourhood. Secondly, residents often claimed that living in a diverse neighbourhood creates *opportunities for increasing tolerance and knowledge sharing*. Kelly, an Afro-Canadian female in her early 20s, regards diversity as an important positive aspect of Jane and Finch:

*"It is a positive thing because you learn about various cultures, you are able to not be culture shocked when you go to a different area or different place and you are surrounded by people of different ethnicities or racial backgrounds. [...] There are always festivals and things going on here that you can go out and find information or learn something new about a culture that you didn't know about."*

Gloria, a Jamaican senior and long-time Jane-Finch resident similarly contended that living with diversity has broadened her horizons as she has been able to draw parallels between different cultures through having intercultural exchanges with neighbours:

*"I talk to the Vietnamese ladies, I talk to the Indians, the Egyptians and guess what? I feel like we were all brought up the same! The food is the same, we just call it different names! It was so funny when you really think, I'm from Jamaica, you are from Vietnam, you are from India but the bringing up of our generation was the same! So I feel like we are not that much different except from the fact that we speak different languages, we are all human beings and we were all brought up with our values."*

Thirdly, diversity does not seem to be a very positive asset in the neighbourhood when there is too much concentration of one group in the area, which increases the risk of segregation and exclusion. Rebeca, an 18 year old girl from El Salvador who grew up in the area, indicates how it felt to live in an Italian 'pocket' in the area:

*"I kind of felt isolated, discriminated against. I was discriminated against by an Italian teacher in grade 6 and it was hard, I was bullied a lot by a lot of the kids there, and not everyone was friendly. So it was hard to grow up. So I thought it was not diverse, a lot of the teachers were Italian, only one time in grade 4 there was a black teacher but he had to leave because a lot of the people were racist towards him and all the kids were protesting against him and it wasn't nice. It was very cruel. And so up until this date there is still an Italian community, like a lot of the candidates in our area are Italians. It is run by Italian people".*

The appreciation of diversity sometimes remains superficial whereby the merits of diversity are limited to consumption of goods and commodities. Johnny, a middle-aged Indian resident, appreciates the availability of different types of food in the area:

*"The food and the culture and the diversity you get is big, if I was only to get burgers I would be disappointed. We are enriched by all these, you know the Italian wine and the Portuguese pastries, the Middle Eastern breads and different things from there."*

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<sup>9</sup> These factors are further elaborated upon in chapter 8

Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s who works as a service provider in the area, refers to this superficial approach to diversity as ‘glamorization’:

*“...some ways the glamorization [of diversity] is like those Benetton ads right? It is the glamorization of poverty, this is a wonderful ground for academics to come and do research”.*

Overall, our observation is that Jane-Finch neighbourhood is positively perceived by its residents when it comes to the social aspects (feeling of the community, relationships with neighbours, social bonds, availability and appreciation of services, etc.) but negatively perceived when it comes to the physical aspects (infrastructure, public transport, physical quality and facilities, etc.).

#### 4.5 Conclusions

Perceptions of diversity in the neighbourhood are very much influenced by characteristics of the respondents such as age, life-phase, socio-economic status, physical ability, etc. However, reflecting back on the questions of how residents think about the area they live in and whether they see their neighbourhood’s diversity as an asset or a liability, a few common points can be highlighted on the basis of our analysis.

First of all, when asked about their perceptions of neighbours, respondents express a general civility towards diversity although tendencies towards isolation, segregation and exclusion are also visible. Daily encounters seemingly do not increase positive perceptions unless there is an activity involved (like being present at school, the community centre, etc.) providing a common ground for people to connect to one another.

In particular raising children factors significantly into how people experience and perceive diversity in Jane-Finch. While cross-cultural contacts are commonly believed to increase tolerance, many respondents shared that they do not necessarily have meaningful contact with people from other cultures. However, our data shows that parents encounter more opportunities for cross-cultural contact by virtue of having to take their kids to school or using services in the community such as childcare, playgrounds and afterschool programs. Nonetheless, while raising children increases opportunities for encounter among people from diverse backgrounds, meaningful contact will most likely not be achieved unless residents actively seek after it.

Secondly, it should be emphasized that these perceptions are not static and change over time. The majority of the long-term residents in our sample identified increased diversity as the primary change they have witnessed over the years in the area. However, as to whether or not that has been a positive development, there were variations in answers. Most people still tend to regard increased diversity as more positive while contending that in some cases it has also resulted in increased tensions. For example, in some parts of the neighbourhood increased diversity has interrupted the domination of one group (marked by ethnicity, language, age, etc.), while in other parts it has facilitated it.

Another important point to be highlighted concerns social cohesion (see more detailed elaboration in section 6 on social cohesion). With regards to neighbourly relations, most respondents claimed to have friendly contacts. This mostly has to do with finding the right balance, what is friendly and what is intrusive. Respondents often claimed they were apprehensive about *mixing* (which functions as a barrier to making connections). However, our analysis indicates strong ties between the groups from the same ethnic, racial or religious origin may create pockets of segregated areas in the neighbourhood. The contribution of such segregated groups (‘Italians’, ‘blacks’,

etc) to the perception of diversity in the neighbourhood is not very positive as they may be very exclusive and isolated, setting their own rules of social conduct.

Lastly, our analysis renders clear that there indeed has been a normalization of diversity in Jane-Finch. Much like inner city Toronto, embracing diversity as a positive notion is very much common-place in the area. Our findings do not confirm the assumption that common-place diversity is accompanied by indifference towards the notion. We did observe a relative mismatch, however, between the reproduction of positive narratives about diversity and residents' experiences in relation to diversity in daily practice. In fact, in Jane-Finch *civility towards diversity* happens parallel to *essentialization* and *stereotyping* on the basis of race, class and gender. While diversity is generally acknowledged and perceived positively, dominant racist and classist representations still play a large role in shaping the perceptions people hold of themselves, each other and the neighbourhood. Thus the subject matter most relevant to Jane-Finch residents is perhaps not diversity, but rather the systemic issues of racial and socio-economic inequality.

## 5. Activities in and outside the neighbourhood

### 5.1 Introduction

There is a body of literature underscoring the importance of neighborhood institutions and public spaces in creating social bonds and opportunities for cross-cultural interactions among neighbors (Curley, 2010; Small, 2006; van Bergeijk et al., 2008; Völker et al., 2007). Neighborhood resources such as libraries, community organizations, social services, recreation facilities, parks, grocery stores, etc. can provide a platform wherein neighborly interactions and contacts across diverse cultures and backgrounds can take place (Curley, 2010). Völker et al. (2007) similarly stress that neighborhood facilities have a positive impact upon the creation of *community* (i.e. meaningful contact among residents, feelings of safety and respect, and neighborhood vibrancy). Neighborhood resources provide spaces wherein people can congregate formally and informally and observe, share knowledge, and familiarize with one another. Thus, repeated encounters among residents in shared public spaces can potentially result in increased public familiarity, sense of community and feelings of trust (Blokland and Nast, 2014; Curley, 2010). Neighborhoods can thereby function as the context for socialization (across gender, age, ethnicity and class). Studying the everyday interactions and activities of residents may help unravel the precise ways in which neighborhood spaces work as *sites for socialization* (Blokland and Nast 2014).

Neighborhoods can offer a range of spaces for recognition, encounter and redistribution (Fincher and Iveson, 2008). Oldenburg and Brisset (1982) use the concept of '*Third Places*' to refer to such spaces wherein people gather primarily to casually socialize. Third places are public settings, which exist outside of the realms of home and workplace but in any case accommodate activities that let people recognize each other's existence (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982).

The following section aims to explore the activities of Jane-Finch residents inside and outside the neighborhood and the extent to which neighborhood spaces and resources are used by residents in their daily routines. We explore how important Jane-Finch is for the residents and how they make use of the areas they live in. More specifically, we examine the availability of public places in Jane-Finch and the extent to which they play a role in fostering interactions across different groups and catering to the diversity in the area.

## 5.2 Activities: Where and with whom?

Based on our data, the range of activities in which Jane-Finch residents engage in their life routines is wide. Many respondents shared that they tend to spend time mostly in the area. Particularly, given the geographic and spatial characteristics of the neighborhood (large surface area, insufficient walking and cycling infrastructure, vast derelict open spaces and greeneries, and distance to inner-city Toronto) coupled with inadequate public transportation, travelling far distances within and outside the area is perceived by many as a costly and time consuming ordeal. People with limited mobility options do not tend to travel outside of the area if they don't have to. As a result, those who drive are much more likely to engage in activities outside of the neighborhood than those who rely solely on public transit for basic mobility. Sarah, a 24 year old single mother of two toddlers, explained that she is able to engage in activities far outside the area by virtue of having access to a car:

*"I go downtown because I drive so I could go. So for example now that the fall is here I want to take the kids apple picking and pumpkin picking and I could do that, I can drive an hour up North."*

Most of our respondents thus claimed to spend a substantial part of their time within the broader Jane-Finch area. With regards to activities inside the neighborhood, in spite of the variety in answers, we were able to identify the following common activities among residents:

- *Running daily errands* (e.g. grocery shopping and laundry);
- Engaging in *community* activities (religious, educational, physical, recreational, and volunteering organizations);<sup>10</sup>
- *Socialization* activities in private, semi-public<sup>11</sup> and public spaces;
- *Recreational* use of open public spaces (parks and greeneries)<sup>12</sup>.

Our general observation is that the activities that require more active use of common public spaces may initiate active and open encounters between diverse people, like community activities or socialization activities, while more passive activities like running daily errands and recreationally using public spaces initiate passive and temporary encounters between the diverse people.

The most common activity in the neighborhood consists of *running basic daily errands*. In the previous chapter we also mentioned that respondent commonly identified the availability of basic services such as grocery stores and malls in their vicinity as the most important positive characteristic of the neighborhood. Malls are of particular importance in Jane-Finch because they provide a variety of resources ranging from basic retail spaces to social services, recreation facilities and third places<sup>13</sup>.

In light of the fact that more than half of our sample composition consists of people who do not have formal employment, many of our respondents claimed that their daily routines are not entirely fixated. However, for residents who are employed full time or have multiple part-time jobs (and probably parental responsibilities on the side), their daily routines most likely resembles the restrictive two-stop model of office-home with the ordeal of commuting in between (Oldenburg

<sup>10</sup> Further elaboration on this in subchapter 5.4

<sup>11</sup> Further elaboration on the definition of private, semi-public and public spaces can be seen in subchapter 5.3

<sup>12</sup> Further elaboration on this in subchapter 5.3

<sup>13</sup> More detail elaboration on the function of malls and other public and semi-public spaces as well as the role of community associations in shaping activities of residents will follow in sections 5.3 and 5.4 respectively.



and Brissett, 1982). As Jose, an El Salvadorian man in his late 50s working full time as a Welder, explains:

*"I am used to coming from my job to my door here and from here to my work. You know I leave at 6.30 and I come back at 6.30 or 7 at night so I don't know what happens with my neighbours or my neighbourhood. That is my life. For me that is everything. This is my job and my life for 14 years."*

*Community activities* mainly include organized activities in community centers in Jane-Finch or elsewhere for people who live in the surrounding area. These are activities like community gardening, fitness and wellbeing, diverse supportive classes (nutrition, swimming, etc.), which attract people from different backgrounds and ages.

Another regular activity common among many residents is the use of religious facilities, in particular churches in the neighborhood. Religious spaces like churches and temples, in addition to their primary religious function, play an important role in the neighbourhood as places for gathering, meeting people, organising support activities, and knowledge share. While interaction in these spaces sometimes happens across different cultures, more often than not they function as places wherein people seek homogeneity rather than diversity. Amanthi, a Sri-Lankan woman in her late 40s, explains how she gets connected to the Sri-Lankan community in Jane-Finch through volunteering at the Hindu temple:

*"There is a Hindu temple here where I go to volunteer and help. There I've met lots of Sri-Lankan people. They are my friends, my temple people."*

Furthermore our research shows that the nature and location of activities, apart from those pertaining to daily living, are largely determined by residents' egocentric networks. We have categorized these activities under *socialization activities*, which can take place in residents' homes, semi-public and public spaces inside and outside of Jane-Finch. For those of our respondents whose close social contacts also reside in Jane-Finch, socialization activities happen mainly inside the neighbourhood. Some residents showcased a preference for meeting their ties in their private spaces while the majority claimed to spend time with family and friends both inside and outside the private boundaries of their homes. Ria, a Jamaican single mother in her early 30s, shares:

*"We usually go to the mall and the restaurant and stuff. And at the mall, I like to shop! I meet them in the park or I will go to their houses and stuff. I don't really meet outside otherwise. And sometimes [my brother and his wife] come and pick me up and we go to the mall."*

Julio, an El-Salvadorian senior, similarly engages in socialization activities inside and outside his home:

*"I have my friend whom I regularly see. I go to his house or we go to the Jane Finch plaza to take coffee. Sometimes we go out to play pool. I have another friend, which I sometimes talk to in the Tim Hortons but it is not a close relationship. We only know each other from that cafe because she is also from El Salvador, that is the reason we get together sometimes!"*

Activities of residents thus vary depending on a number of factors such as their demographic characteristics, their financial and mobility means, employment status and so forth. Despite living in a very diverse neighborhood, some residents tend to value socializing with people from the same origin when it comes to activities they take part voluntarily (like going to church with their own kind, having coffee with a person from the same background etc.). In such cases, daily encounters and passive collaborations do not bring people closer than greeting one another and



acting with civility towards each other. Real bonding activities still take place through personal networks that are sometimes independent from the neighborhood.<sup>14</sup> Activities are further shaped based on the availability of spaces and resources in the neighborhood, which is explored further in the following section.

### 5.3 The use of public space

Public spaces are usually defined by their physical characteristics that accommodate diverse activities of people in the public domain. They are most commonly understood as spaces for social contact, sense of freedom or political representation, and symbol for collectivity (Banerjee, 2001; Varna and Tiesdell, 2010). However, as Galanakis (2013), referring to Mitchell (2003)'s work, argues what marks a space as public space is the actions of the people in it. Thus, activities that take place in an area that are dedicated to common use define the characteristics of a space as a public space. As briefly mentioned in the previous subchapter, the activities of people in Jane-Finch include activities that *actively* (engaging in community activities, socialization) or *passively* (*running daily errands, using open public spaces*) influence the encounters between diverse people. This section reveals where these activities take place.

Activities of Jane-Finch residents take place not only in public spaces but also in private and semi-public spaces inside the neighborhood. *Private spaces* mean places that are entirely owned by individuals and enterprises. Thus the activities that take place in these places are controlled and regulated by the owners. The *semi-public spaces* refer to places that accommodate activities in private spaces for public purposes. The *public spaces* most commonly referred to by our respondents include open spaces like parks and greeneries (especially the Black Creek trail), and playgrounds; as well as public spaces like libraries and community centers; *semi-public places* include plazas inside the malls and urban gardens, and *private spaces* include malls and private homes. Activities, which take place in these spaces differ, though sometimes also overlap (for instance socialization can take place in all of them in different ways). In the case of Jane-Finch, these spaces mainly function like third spaces as mentioned above. In light of our observations and interviews, we can identify a (limited) set of available third places in Jane-Finch. Here we use the concept of third spaces to refer to sites in the area wherein inhabitants interact across diverse background, cultures and experiences.

Among the *public spaces* parks are of particular importance for Jane-Finch inhabitants since they are used for multiple purposes. They function as meeting places as well as spaces where unintended encounters between diverse groups take place. They are sites for leisure, sports and recreational activities. Although limited, some respondents also claimed the presence and dominance of gangs in some of the parks. Our research demonstrates a relatively high level of satisfactions with parks. It is usually because parks provide activity spaces. However, even though reference to ethnic diversity was given by some of the respondents, it was not connected to positive or negative neither to intended or unintended encounters between diverse groups or individuals. Since Jane-Finch area's scattered and fragmented urban landscape prevents creation of public spaces parks, though very limited, became very important places especially for young parents to bring their kids or elderly people. Respondents generally regarded parks as safe and pleasant spaces and some claimed to have witnessed improvements in the overall quality of parks and green spaces over the years. While the majority of our respondents seem to use the parks on a regular basis, the most frequent users are evidently parents with young children. Anna, a Jamaican single mother in her mid-40s who has raised two young sons in Jane-Finch, shares that she finds less reasons to go to the park now that her children are grown up:

<sup>14</sup> This will be further explored in chapter 6

*"The parks are okay but I don't really go to the parks, I just pass through when I am doing my walks and that is it! I guess when your kids were younger we'd go there. I think certain things I just don't do anymore because I have no reason to go there."*

For Mauricio, an El Salvadorian senior, the availability of parks and greeneries in the neighborhood, particularly the greenway along the Black Creek, is an important positive characteristic of the neighborhood, given that he regulars these spaces on a daily basis:

*"I like [the availability of green spaces] for many reasons, why? Because it allows me to do my daily walk during the summer by the ravine. There is a ravine that runs from York University all the way down to, close to Jane and Sheppard and it is at least 4 km long and that you see nature, you see deers! It is a walking trail, it is just beside the creek."*

Our general observation is that the role of public spaces like parks in Jane-Finch is very limited in creating lasting encounters between diverse ethnic groups or individuals. This is mainly because of the physical composition of the area (fragmented modernist urban landscape) that limits access for everyone. Moreover, littering, insufficient maintenance, congregation of youth, alcohol and drug use, and (perceived) presence of gangs and violence also limits the encounters between diverse people.

Plazas are a good example of *semi-public spaces* in Jane-Finch. They are located inside malls. The function of these plazas as third places is somewhat accidental and can be regarded as an unintended consequence of insufficient planned social infrastructure in the neighborhood. With the exception of a few chain fast food restaurant and coffee shops, the neighborhood does not really offer indoor spaces wherein people can casually congregate and interact. Plazas, however, provide a space wherein a diverse group of people, male and female (mostly middle-aged and senior residents) from all different cultural and ethnic backgrounds gather and interact. Maurice, an El Salvadorian Senior resident who also works as a youth counselor in a Jane-Finch based community organization, shares the following observations underscoring the lack of available social infrastructure in the area:

*"I do not hang out at any of those places myself, I just go there do my shopping and go. Though I know these guys that hangout there, you go there after work you see them there, you go there on Sunday you see them there hanging out you will see the same guys until the security guy comes and tells them you guys move. They are hanging out and they get up and walk and stand by Tim Hortons and after half an hour they come back and sit! But then the thing I wanna tell you is that on this table we will have Latin Americans and south East Asians and Asians. I would say mostly people in their late 40s. Not too many youth. [...] everybody is co-existing and because I will say that it is the only affordable place for people to come and hang around."*

Malls and commercial spaces are also among the most commonly used *private spaces* by Jane-Finch inhabitants. We observed the dominant presence of elderly people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, simply hanging around passively in food courts or sitting areas of malls in the area. While such spaces are used for formal activities (commercial and consumption), the lack of planned social infrastructure has also resulted in the creation of informal third places in *private spaces*. A unique example of such space is the so-called "private bars", which essentially consist of private residential dwellings, which also function as informal enterprises wherein locals can purchase and consume alcohol. There was not explicit indication whether these private places influence the encounter between diverse ethnic groups. They seem to function as affordable spaces of consumption. Our respondent Maurice, explains this phenomenon in the following quote:

*“That is an apartment and you just go there and you drink there! You buy beer or wine or hard liquor, illegal of course and there are several of them out there.”*

There is certainly a correlation between the lack of social infrastructure and facilities and informal and criminal activities in the area, in particular in relation to youth and drug gang. We will further elaborate on this correlation in chapter 8. Meanwhile, many of our young respondents claimed that there are not enough resources and activities for them to engage in in the neighbourhood. Amidah, an 18 year old female from Tanzania who grew up in Jane-Finch shares how she finds fewer things to do in the neighbourhood as a young adult:

*“When you get older you get bored of the neighbourhood. Because you are not a kid anymore you are not gonna be playing in the park, running around, you are mature, you know? You just wanna do other stuff. So yeah you don’t hang out as much. Since I have been growing up, I don’t really hang outside anymore. The only time I hang outside is as if I am taking my little siblings to the park or chilling with my friends outside and that is it.”*

Jake, a 24 year-old native Canadian student at York University similarly shares his concerns about lack of available spaces for youth in the area:

*“You know what? They don’t have a lot of facilities for young people. Like they have the malls yeah but after hours they don’t really have any bars or any kind of social areas where people can go to. There is one just east of Keele and Finch, but that is a little bit out of Jane-Finch. So sometimes they have good Kareokey there but in Jane-Finch, there don’t really have anything.”*

Thus, our research reveals that people generally tend to make use of the available *public spaces*, but at the end of the day there are not enough available resources and spaces to function as third places in the community, especially those catering to young people. The use of *private* and *semi-private spaces* is the outcome of the evident lack of spatial infrastructure. In either case, spatial organisation of the neighbourhood has been limiting the encounters between difference groups in public spaces in Jane-Finch, which are very limited in quantity and scattered between large housing estates (Tasan-Kok, forthcoming). In this respect there is room for improvement to create active spaces of encounter in Jane-Finch.

## 5.4 The importance of associations

Neighborhood associations (like community centers, neighborhood associations, public-service organisations, etc.) play a very important role for activities of the Jane-Finch residents in a range of ways:

- They function as *third places* as they enable the socialization activities in the neighborhood;
- They function as *welfare service instruments*;
- They provide space and services for *recreational activities*;
- They also accommodate *volunteer work*, which is crucial for residents to receive public services.

A rather interesting finding of our research is that associations can also foster social integration and socialization in the neighborhood. Nicholas, an Italian senior and Toronto housing residents, describes how he spends time at the Jane-Finch community and family center so as to socialize with other residents:

*“Nicholas: I spend time in Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre all the time. Over there when somebody needs help I go and help. They call me and I go over there! Why stay here [in the apartment]? I am here alone, I go crazy!”*

*Q: so if you go down there what can you do there?*

*Nicholas: Nothing I just sit down. People talk to me. I need somebody to talk to.”*

The function of neighborhood associations as third spaces was also validated by the many observations we had in these spaces over the course of the two months spent in the field.

Furthermore, neighborhood associations also function as *welfare service instruments* to provide space and services for a range of purposes including meeting basic needs (using food banks), seeking specific services (paper work, filling in taxes, employment services, mental health support, and so on), using services for children (child care, day care programs, after school programs), and recreation (sports, fitness, arts and crafts, etc.).

Evidently, neighbourhood associations also provide a place for *voluntary work*. Contrary to the common negative stereotypes associated with people on welfare, in particular single mothers on welfare; our research shows that Toronto housing residents commonly engage in volunteer activity at local associations. This pertains specially to females who are housewives and/or have part time jobs. Meanwhile, having spare time is a necessary but not sufficient condition for doing volunteer work. In fact, it is highly unlikely that residents engage in any activity concerning the community (be that paid or volunteer) if they do not feel a strong emotional connection to their neighborhood, regardless of what their daily routines, employment status and socio-economic conditions are like.

Neighbourhood associations also accommodate *recreational activities* like public events such as parties, BBQs and festivals organized by local associations in the area play an important role in creating opportunities for encounter and interaction among residents. Jake, a native Canadian York University student in his early 20s, shares his observations on the importance of these events for diversity while doing volunteer work with neighbourhood associations:

*“With the associations I do a bunch of various tasks but I helped them organize the BBQ last year especially. We got a whole fashion show going. I brought people from YORK. I brought the Chinese, Ghanaian, Sri Lankan community and they modelled their ethnic clothes. It wasn’t as organized as we would like but it was fun and the residents liked it.”*

In some instances, such events are initiated by locals in order to counter the problem of insufficient social infrastructure in Jane-Finch. Leah, a Canadian-Trinidadian single mother who was born and raised in Jane-Finch, talks about one such example and the importance of such events in bringing inhabitants together:

*“Well thank god that we have a lot of community events happening lately so we all get to communicate that way. There are a couple of guys that are you know maybe in their late 40s, and I think they are really fed up with the way they see the community and they have started doing a lot of events and BBQs and fundraisers where we all go. And they are like you have to go because it is your community so we get to communicate that way. These are unity BBQs, from people from my part of Jane-Finch that grew there. There is father’s day BBQ that all the fathers bring their children to. Like little things like that, that we look forward to every year.”*

Our analysis shows that associations do play an important role in shaping the daily activities of residents, in particular regarding enabling encounter among diverse inhabitants. However, the

extent to which the associations are used by inhabitants varies quite a lot. Furthermore, there are existing services and spaces offered by associations are not sufficient and there seems to be a gap particularly in programs targeted at youth and middle aged inhabitants. Thus they tend to not make use of associations as much as kids and seniors. The current state of programs and services in the community will further be explored in Chapter 8.

## 5.5 Conclusions

Our analysis shows that neighbourhood *does* play an important role in shaping the daily activities of its inhabitants. Residents use the area for a range of activities including targeted activities (i.e. running daily errands, engaging in community activities, and socialization) as well as recreational activities in open public spaces. Residents do engage undiversified relations and activities inside their neighbourhood however diversity does not have a direct impact upon shaping inhabitants' daily routines. The available resources in Jane-Finch, in particular the formerly outlined third places function as sites wherein interactions among diverse inhabitants take place and community is created. However, the resources currently available in the area are not sufficient. While in some cases the visible lack of planned social infrastructure has resulted in a number of de facto creative responses (such as resident-organized events, 'accidental' third places, etc.), it has also brought about informal activities, nuisance and crime. We thus argue that the provision of viable public and semi-public spaces, social infrastructure and sites of socialization can have a strong positive impact upon the creation of social capital and stimulating interactions among Jane-Finch inhabitants of diverse backgrounds.

## 6. Social cohesion

### 6.1 Introduction

The present chapter explores the relation between diversity and social cohesion. Social cohesion is a complex concept, which is not easily operationalised. In a general way, social cohesion can be defined as the glue that holds a society together (Maloutas and Pantelidou Malouta, 2004). Social cohesion comprises the existence of the following interconnected factors: social contacts and social networks, social solidarity, social control, shared values and norms, place attachment and a shared identity (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

Existing scholarship on the relationship between diversity and social cohesion suggests two conflicting theories: One is grounded in the argument that increasing diversity (in particular with regards to ethnicity and socio-economic class) undermines social capital and connectedness (Kearns and Mason, 2007; Putnam, 2007) while the other suggests that diversity improves tolerance and contact among different groups (Graham et al., 2009; Marschall and Stolle, 2004). The two lines of theory, however, need not be approached as irreconcilable. In reality the relationship often proves to not be straightforward, and both patterns can be observed at the same time (Laurence, 2009). For instance, while diversity may cause tensions and distrust among certain individuals or groups, it can simultaneously increase cross-cultural and cross-ethnic encounters, thereby enhancing cohesion (see also chapter 4). Similarly, Bridge et al., (2014) contend that residents in diverse neighborhoods tend to develop '*partial exit strategies*' by means of which they can select the dimensions of their lives they are willing to share with other groups, and ones in which they would rather cluster in segregated social circles.

When assessing the impact of diversity upon social cohesion, it is fruitful to take into account different forms of social ties, namely strong ties (strong forms of social interactions) and weak ties or *low-profile* social relations in the neighborhood (Bridge et al., 2014). While strong and weak

ties derive from different levels of interaction, both set of social relations play a role in providing the basis for social cohesion (Blokland and Nast, 2014; Vranken, 2001). Some exclusionary dynamics can be created if the existing strong ties are too strong in a neighborhood though if the ties are too weak there is no real bonding and real social cohesion. Thus, some equilibrium between strong and weak ties or rather a combination of both (or bridging and binding forms of social cohesion) is needed.

In the following section we explore the diverse forms of connections between residents of the Jane-Finch area (networks, bonds, ties, etc.) in order to make clear the extent to which the diversity of the residential area is important for social cohesion. Our general observation is that *experienced diversity*<sup>15</sup> among neighbours is an important characteristic of ties, bonds and networks expressed by our respondents. Moreover, we analysed the importance of the neighbourhood for establishing egocentric networks and other forms of ties. In the conclusion we will further reflect on the elements, which foster social cohesion in the area as well as the ones that hinder its development.

## 6.2 Composition of interviewees' egocentric networks

Our empirical findings demonstrate a great degree of ethnic and cultural diversity in residents' egocentric networks. However, this is not a surprising outcome given the high levels of ethnic diversity experienced in the neighbourhood. Inhabitants' egocentric networks consist predominantly of family members and close friends, with whom our respondents indicated to have strong ties. In some other cases, respondents also listed neighbours, co-workers, classmates, and community figures (e.g. pastors) as people in their close network, though demonstrating relatively weak ties with them. Some of our respondents consisted of people who have already existing ties with the people living in the area like family members or very close friends before moving to the area. However, this is not a very dominant group. Overall, the impact of egocentric networks in professional matters (finding a job, solving financial problems, helping with procedures, etc) appears very insignificant in the neighbourhood, while these networks seem mainly influential in personal matters (emotional support, household support or practical matters like babysitting).

Our research shows that individuals may develop strong ties or mutual support with people from diverse ethnic or cultural backgrounds who are outside their family and close friendship networks when there are *commonalities* or *shared activities*:

- *Commonalities* such as language, personal interests or shared similar experiences;
- *Shared activities* including work and school.

In a diverse area like Jane-Finch, we observed, individuals usually develop strong ties with people who are physically living or working in a close proximity (neighbour or colleague) and support each other only when these commonalities or shared activities exist.

### *Commonalities*

While many residents appreciate diversity and in some cases seek after it proactively in their close networks, our research shows that close bonds are likely to be established when there are *commonalities* present among them. These commonalities include common background (ethnic background, country of origin, or language) or similar cultural characteristics (religion); shared positive

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<sup>15</sup> Experienced diversity refers to the everyday encounters of residents with people from diverse backgrounds. These encounters help normalizing diversity and creating a civility towards it as well.

(success) or negative experiences (crime, security issues); and common interests (music) in establishing strong ties between people.

*Common background* or similar *cultural characteristics* help people build strong ties with one another. Julia, an Argentinian mother of two in her early 40s explains how she has established close bonds with people in the neighbourhood from other Latin countries:

*"The closest people to me are my husband and my kids but I have good friends. I have known them since I came here the first time. They are like family for me. I met them here. [...] One of them is from El Salvador the other one is from Ecuador and the other from Chile and I have a few friends from Argentina but the closest of my friends is from El Salvador. She is really nice."*

Speaking the *same language* definitely contributes to the establishment of strong ties. While many cultural differences exist between different Latin American countries, the common spoken language is a key factor stimulating cross-cultural contacts within the Hispanic community in Jane-Finch. In another quote, Rebeca, an 18 year old girl from El Salvador who grew up in the area, explains how sharing the negative experience of being bullied at high school created a strong connection between her and another classmate:

*"Now I just have one friend from my high school who was also bullied and we are like two in one. We are always hanging out together. And she feels the same way as I do, it is hard to make friends. She is a year younger than me and lives in Etobicoke. Because I was a year behind in school due to my personal situation and being bullied and all that stuff, I was in the same class as her. It was in the French class and that is how we met. She was being bullied because she was from Iraq. They would call her terrorist and things like that."*

Sharing *common interests* is another reason why people from different backgrounds create ties. Celine, a long-time resident in her late 40s from a Dominican background, shares how her passion for gardening in the area has been the reason bringing her close to a friend in the neighbourhood:

*"Ada is my girl, she gardens in the back, she and I basically made that garden in the back except for people who have their spots. There is the garden on the other side and she said oh I don't have any energy and I said okay no problem! And then I started and then the two of us, it is a lot of work in the beginning but when you get to tomatoes and the peppers coming in and the collard greens and the shallots, it's like wow!"*

Leah, a Canadian-Trinidadian woman in her 40s who grew up in Jane-Finch, on the other hand, explains how differences in interests (in particular regarding music) have undermined cohesion and solidarity across different groups in her experiences while growing up:

*"The best thing [about Jane-Finch] was just the unity, it is since then kind of broken up. Jane-Finch is also a diverse community but there are people who are Caribbean and there are also just Canadians and there became a separation between people who listen to Reggae vs people who listen to hip-hop and reggae kind of took over for a while and that became the way of Jane-Finch. And there is a small group of individuals who would still be into this hip-hop but because the reggae clans were so big they were frustrated and it is just a lot of things and I think that, the culture separated between the reggae and the hip-hop. [...] it was in the era when the Jamaican possies came around [...] and they ended up dominating the rest right? And it became the way of Jane-Finch. I think that is definitely what separated us all."*



The quote above again shows how domination of one group (ethnic, social or in this case cultural) mainly caused by the strong ties among members of the group, is perceived to have a negative impact on solidarity and cohesion across diverse groups. The bridging ties between strongly connected groups, thus, are needed in a diverse neighbourhood like Jane-Finch to create more cohesion within the neighbourhood as strong ties may lead to segregation dynamics.

#### *Shared activities*

As mentioned earlier in chapter 5, *activities* play an important role in the creation of ties especially if they are targeted activities like running daily errands, engaging in community activities, or socialization activities in private, semi-public and public spaces. Among these, work and school seem to bring people together and help them establish networks. These networks are at times based on strong ties between colleagues or parents but sometimes on weak ties as well. Diversity seems to be a common characteristic of these networks due to the diverse population living in the area. For instance, we have observed that residents who are parenting children (especially those in school ages) generally tend to have higher levels of diversity in their close social networks. Neda, an Iranian mother of two school-aged girls, explains how she has made close ties with some of the other parents at the school where her children study:

*"I have a lot of friends here from other cultures. I have a Pakistani friend, I was just at her place this morning, she is sewing me some dresses! I have friends from Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy [...] For instance I met my Iraqi friend because her daughter was in the same class as my daughter. So we little by little got close. It was hard in the beginning for me because there are no Iranians here and you don't know the culture of the other person. Sometimes I was shocked by some of the things they did. You know us Iranians, we are very mindful of our guests! Like sometimes I'd call my [Iraqi] friend and ask if I can go visit her at her place and she'd say no it's my quiet time, I want to go to Tim Horton and relax! We [Iranians] would never say such a thing! So yeah in the beginning it was hard but then I realized I have to accept other people's cultures. And now I am kinda like that too. I say no more easily! I have adapted!"*

Interactions created by such networks across different cultures can result in the establishment of shared norms. Socialization is another form of targeted activity that leads to the creation of egocentric networks based on strong ties. People often tend to establish connections with people from diverse backgrounds by virtue of living in a diverse neighbourhood. Heba, an Egyptian woman in her 50s and long-time Jane-Finch residents, explains that her bond with a friend from a different background in the building has resulted in sharing of cultural knowledge and values:

*"My friend and I used to eat breakfast together because our [Egyptian] breakfast is feta cheese, when I told her in the beginning do you eat feta cheese, she was like no no no! And I said don't say no till you've tasted it! And she tasted it. And now she buys it! Because I make feta, I put olive oil and cut tomatoes. I cut hot peppers. I make tea and alfalfa beans because we have our breakfast like home and we still do it. And we boil eggs and we sit and talk and if I have a secret I tell her because I trust her. And she does too, we are so close."*

Sharing commonalities and activities are key to the establishment of strong ties. Whereas sometimes sharing these notions derive from belonging to the same group (ethnic, socio-economic class, age, etc.), our observations show that there are many cases in which commonalities and activities are shared across these diverse groups and in spite of their differences. High levels of diversity are visible in egocentric networks as a de facto outcome of living in a diverse neighbourhood like Jane-Finch. People may unwittingly establish ties with people from other backgrounds when they have to share a common activity or need to socialize. Our observations reveal that creating ties among diverse inhabitants is not a goal per se, but it is an outcome of commonalities or shared activities. Some of these ties turn into egocentric networks, especially when a



targeted activity is shared like school or work. However, voluntary socialization may only lead to a real relationship based on the context. In either case, these ties do not really help the individuals to have better conditions, jobs or opportunities. They seem only to give people support to carry on their lives. In the following section we further explore these dynamics in relation to strong ties as well as weak ties among neighbours and their impact upon the different dimensions of social cohesion.

### 6.3 Living together with neighbours: Bonds and forms of mutual support

In the previous subchapter we focused on egocentric networks of inhabitants based on strong ties in Jane-Finch. Living close to each other also generates bonds between the neighbours as people seek support from their immediate environment. In this section we look at the main factors influencing:

- Bonds and forms of mutual support *within the neighbourhood*;
- Bonds and forms of mutual support *outside the neighbourhood*.

Thus, we will analyse to what extent the neighbourhood and its diversity are of importance in the creation of these bonds and networks of support. Before going into the analysis of these factors it is important to understand what mutual support means for the people living in Jane-Finch area. Evidently, there are variations in the ways in which respondents define support. For some residents neighbourly support could be limited to lending goods and giving one another an occasional hand when encountering household problems (e.g. repair, exchange of tools, etc.).

For another group support among neighbours transcends such basic encounters and requires a deeper connection based on trust and care. Odessa, a Guyanese mother of four in her 30s and Toronto housing resident regards trust as a central element establishing a network of support in the building:

*"I trust my neighbours. You have to trust someone, especially where I am living, my husband at work, it is just me and my baby, you have to trust somebody. Suppose I have to run off for some reason, my neighbours here, I ask could you please keep an eye on the baby or if I do laundry downstairs, so this is trust, you have to trust someone."*

Heba, an Egyptian woman in her 50s similarly stresses how she will not seek support from neighbours who she does not trust:

*"I don't wanna ask them because you know I don't trust people, I don't want the people to come close to me and my home to know something, I don't want that. But this lady, she is the only one I trust. I ask her sometimes to come help me clean the apartment and she does it. Just me and her."*

Thus the ways in which residents define support impact how they perceive their neighbourly relations, feelings of community and solidarity. However, these different attitudes can also be associated with different characteristics of the respondents. For instance young people tend to put emphasis on trust, or people who moved in the area recently hesitate to seek support from neighbours etc.

#### *Bonds and forms of mutual support within the neighbourhood*

While sometimes interactions among neighbours are limited to daily encounters, many respondents also reported to have made intimate social ties with neighbours. In fact, among our respondents very few claimed to receive no support from neighbours and in general there seems to be a

culture of neighbourly support among Jane-Finch inhabitants. Our interviews point out two main factors that influence the bonds and support systems within the neighbourhood:

- Like with the egocentric networks *commonalities and shared activities* play a role in the establishment of long lasting bonds and mutual support networks;
- *Living close to each other* also creates conditions to bond and support, though a balance is needed between closeness and intrusiveness.

*Influence of commonalities and activities on bonds and support networks*

Similar to our observations regarding the egocentric networks, we witnessed that *commonalities* are a strong reason for neighbours to form bonds and mutual support ties. While discussing her immediate neighbours Vanessa shared that she always found her (predominantly elderly Italian) neighbours to be friendly, however, she felt a sense of support and community from them in particular when the area was affected by flooding.

*"Just last year we had a flood that affected out backyards so there is a big hole in our backyard, so the soil just dropped and the city was involved, they came in to do their thing. I am surprised how we all got together! So the neighbours, there were 10 houses affected and we have all been working together so it is nice to have neighbours like that. We are all trying to work together, any information we find out that can be useful for the rest we all share that information. So it is nice to be together as a community in situations like this."*

Thus, having a problem in common, the countering of which required a collective effort, created solidarity and support bonds among neighbours. While Vanessa did not claim to have close ties with any of her neighbours, the low-profile interactions such as exchange of information increased her sense of community and solidarity.

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, inhabitants raising children in the area often create egocentric networks of support on the basis of issues, interests and concerns they share in common regarding parenting. Given the large numbers of female-headed households in the area, in particular the concentration of single mothers in the Toronto housing buildings, many young single mothers create networks of support in light of having in common many experiences and barriers. Holly is a Jamaican single mother of 2 in her 20s who lives in a Toronto housing unit and occasionally works night shifts for a cleaning agency. In the following quote she shares how as a single mother she has come to rely strongly on the network of support existing between her and other single mothers in the building.

*"One of my friends, she lives upstairs and one time she said to me that she has 3 kids and she never had a baby shower. So the last baby she just had, I threw one for her in my house and she was so happy! Everybody deserves a baby shower. You wanna experience everything, when you have a kid! So I'll help her and another single mom in the building too. We're helping one another you know. Sometimes I'll pick up her kids I'll drop them to school in the morning if I can't make it she will pick up my kids. You have to do it because you never know when you're gonna need help. You have to help people."*

Moreover, neighbours who have young children often tend to share *commonalities* as well as *activities*. Kellisha, a Guyanese mother of 3 in her 50s who lives in a Toronto housing unit shares that she regularly interacts with some of the other parents even though they have different backgrounds:

*"It's not like because you don't come from my country I don't talk to you, you know! We have kids going to the same school. Sometimes we walk down to the park there when the weather isn't cold, we sit down and hang out and then when we are ready everybody goes to their homes, right? See you next day."*

Leah, a Trinidadian-Canadian single mother in her 30s who grew up in Jane-Finch similarly shares how she experienced a strong culture of helping and supporting among parents in the neighbourhood while growing up:

*"I tell you we more did that [provided support] for the children, I think the neighbours helped each other out as far as watching the children, kids can stay out until 11 at night cause they know they are gonna be safe cause it is a community, yeah. People helped each other out."*

The quote clearly demonstrates how mutual help and support among neighbours can create and foster a sense of community among inhabitants.

#### *Living close to each other*

Living close to each other may create tensions as well as bonds and support mechanisms given the context. Jane-Finch neighbourhood demonstrates strongly both existence of supportive mechanisms with a strong community feeling and tensions between diverse groups. As briefly mentioned in sub chapter 4.5, establishing networks of support and trust among neighbours is about finding the right *balance between closeness and intrusiveness*. The closeness may lead to tensions and problems between people. However, people still seek support from their immediate surroundings. Delilah, a Canadian born single mother from Guyanese-Jamaican background in her 40s, shares an experience in which her bonding with a neighbour was broken when she felt that certain boundaries were crossed:

*"Sometimes I just feel like it is best to keep to yourself. In the past I have got close with somebody and it did not turn out right, it turned out she was just a psycho. Like I just met her for example just today! And then tomorrow she wants me to tell her about my relationship and if the person hits me and to open up to her and she held my jacket and she didn't wanna give it to me. And then because I did not tell her about my business she called CIS workers on my kids, telling them a bunch of stuff, like I did not even know the lady! And then CIS workers came and all that drama! So after that experience I kinda took distance. It was crazy."*

Our Tanzanian respondent Amidah (18 years old) clearly distinguishes between neighbours who she considers 'helpful' and those who she refers to as 'nosy':

*"There's new people coming in and even the neighbours are changing too. Sometimes they get to be so into your business, like you know, they just wanna know what you are up to. Very very nosy! But when you get the good neighbours, they are really good. Like I have these neighbours right next to me and they're very very helpful. They really come in handy."*

Heba, who is a Muslim Egyptian woman in her 50s, explains how she generally withdraws from asking for support from neighbours since she does not want to get 'too close' to neighbours who are from different cultural and religious backgrounds:

*"To tell you the truth I was always a private person. I don't like people to know about my personal life. Because the problem starts if you get too close with the people, because for me we don't have the same mind with my neighbours. I have my own mind, you have your own, my religion, my culture and what I believe. And what I believe is different from what my neighbour believes. And I don't put people in my business, I find everything by myself. We don't go to nobody. I figure it out myself."*

As mentioned earlier in the report, Heba revealed in conversation with us that she has faced stigmatization and discrimination on the basis of her religion (especially because of her veil). This again provides an example for how diversity (especially when negative essentialized stereotypes about different groups are common place) can seriously hamper social bonding among inhabitants.

*Bonds and forms of mutual support outside the neighbourhood*

As mentioned in the introduction, an analysis of within-neighbourhood social networks requires taking into account also inhabitants' social ties outside of their area of residence. In some cases not having close ties in the neighbourhood motivates inhabitants to seek support from people in the area who may not necessarily be from the same background. Nicole, a Filipino mother of one in her 30s who lives with her husband and young, shared that her lack of support as a mother (given that she does not have any close friends or family members living in the area) has led her to proactively seek after networks of support outside the neighbourhood.

*"Back home it is different because when you give birth you are surrounded by family, a lot of support, but here I have to find new moms. I started with that for more than 2 years I could not find a set of people who can support me. Online is not enough, meeting is with other moms was what I was looking for. I tried churches but then I could not find commonalities with some of the moms. I started taking to different parenting family centres, programs in the community, I found some group of Tamil moms but I could not find myself bonding with them because of the English language barrier and even interests maybe and educational background. Until I found myself in this family centre where I click in with the facilitator and then I stayed there for more than 2 years. [...] Me and all the Vietnamese moms who come there, once a week we do Zumba and then we make food together, we share crafts or something so it is a way for the moms to bond together."*

The quote above also exemplifies once again the importance of having commonalities in creating ties. Nicole further explained that she considers the network of mothers as not strong but rather weak ties. Nonetheless, she relies on this network strongly for support as a young mother.

Bryah, a Jamaican single mother in her 40s who raised 2 daughters in Jane-Finch, on the other hand, claimed that she and her daughters did not feel the need to interact much with neighbours since she sought support from close family in another Toronto inner-suburb while raising her daughters:

*"I raised my daughters in a way that we didn't go downstairs and hangout. I have people in a nice home in Markham that I have grown up with myself so they were all extended family so to speak. So we would drive up and go there on the weekend. During the week they were at school and in here after, homework and watch TV and make it here. So you wouldn't see me standing out there and I am not downstairs."*

It is important to note here that again the extent to which residents have access to mobility means also influences their ability to get out of the area and seek support from social ties who do not reside in the neighbourhood. For many residents who do not have access to different means of mobility, sustaining ties outside the neighbourhood is difficult. This particularly pertains to lower-income households and Toronto housing residents whose little resources strongly limit their mobility power. Thus, factors such as mobility, socio-economic resources, physical and mental ability, age, etc. all tend to impact the establishment of networks of support and socialization in interconnected ways.

## 6.4 Conclusions

This chapter explored the existing social ties among Jane-Finch residents in order to make clear the relationship between diversity and social cohesion in the area. Based on our analysis we can argue that diversity does not create social cohesion always and everywhere, nor does living with diversity hinder opportunities for the creation of social capital and cohesion among inhabitants. While we did observe many instances wherein diversity contributes to the creation of networks of support, social contact, sense of community and solidarity and shared values among inhabitants, our conclusion is that such positive contribution requires the existence of other factors, namely *shared commonalities* and *activities*. In some cases the two notions derive from belonging to the same group (on the basis of country of origin, age, class, etc.), while in other cases commonalities and activities are shared across different social and cultural backgrounds and identity politics. In other words, inhabitants may find commonalities on the basis of different aspect of their identities. This finding is in line with the concept of hyper-diversity (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013) which is grounded in the argument that inhabitants' identities are dynamic and multi-dimensional and need not be approached merely on the basis of essentialized categories (especially with regards to their ethnicity).

As mentioned before having experienced common problems, similar interests, hobbies, daily routines, etc. can result in the establishment of bonds and ties across different groups. On the other hand, notions such as the barrier of language, perceived intrusiveness (or rather not finding the right balance between closeness and intrusiveness), fear of mixing due to negative past experiences, negative stereotyping, lack of trust, and having egocentric networks and social support outside the neighbourhood can limit contact across different groups and hinder the development of social cohesion.

In the case of Jane-Finch our analysis renders clear that neighbourhood does play an important role in the formation of support groups among inhabitants. Most of our respondents claimed to rely upon networks of support within the area in their daily lives. Our data also shows that inhabitants can both seek interactions with neighbours from different backgrounds on certain subject matters, while withdrawing from it on other occasions. These interactions can further take place at different levels. However, both strong ties and weak ties proved to be of importance in the creation and fostering of the different dimensions of social cohesion.

In conclusion, the relationship between diversity and social cohesion is by no means straightforward. Diversity is neither the necessary nor the sufficient condition for the creation of social cohesion. However, living with diversity can have strong positive implications for social cohesion provided that the formerly mentioned contributing factors are present.

## 7. Social mobility

### 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to understand the relationship between diversity and social mobility of Jane-Finch residents. Social mobility within this project is operationalized as the change over time in an *individual's socio-economic characteristics, such as labour market position and income* (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). The notion of social mobility is strongly connected to social cohesion and social capital, given that the social network resources possessed by inhabitants can have a positive impact on their ability to find employment opportunities. However, the impact of social networks upon social mobility is not always positive. The so-called *dark side of social capital* (Portes, 1998) has received particular attention in the 'neighbourhood effects' literature whereby the unfavourable

outcomes of the social networks of residents on their employment opportunities, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhood have been documented (de Souza Briggs, 1997; Joseph, 2008; Wilson, 1996). In other words, social networks and capital are deemed positive when they enable inhabitants to achieve opportunities regarding housing, education, job, and so forth, but negative when the network becomes restraining due to their limited scope from a socioeconomic perspective as well as negative socialization and the normalization of presumably 'repressive' values (Pinkster, 2014; Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

Moreover, an analysis of social mobility requires an understanding of residents' job searching strategies and processes. Residents may make use of either formal channels (applying for jobs directly, answering ads, using employment agencies, etc.) or informal channels (using strong and weak ties to find jobs, informal referrals, etc.) or a combination of the two in their employment searching strategies (Elliot, 1999). The personal characteristics of residents as well as the general context of their neighbourhoods both influence the ways in which inhabitants mobilize these formal and informal channels in seeking employment.

How does the neighbourhood context and its social and ethnic composition influence residents' social mobility? More specifically, in what ways does diversity play a role in producing social outcomes (in particular with regards to employment and income)? In the following sections we aim to answer these questions by exploring personal variables (inhabitants characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc., their job searching strategies; within and outside neighbourhood social networks including both strong and weak ties) as well as neighbourhood and diversity driven variables (available resources, neighbourhood reputation, etc.) and their impact upon residents' social mobility.

## 7.2 Background information regarding employment

As briefly mentioned earlier in the report, about half of the interviewees (22 people) were employed at the time we conducted the fieldwork, of which 9 had full time employment. The respondents who did not have employment (30 people) also included retired people, housewives, students and people with temporary leave. Many of our unemployed respondents further claimed to be looking for part-time work at the time the interviews were conducted.

Not surprisingly we witnessed a wide variety with regards to resident's fields of employment; however some commonalities were also recognized, most notably among single mothers who work part time as Personal Support Workers<sup>16</sup> (PSW). This has mainly due to the availability of PSW training programs in the area. We further asked respondents about the employment pathways of their partners. Our data reveals that in two-parent households, males are often the main breadwinners by virtue of having full-time or part-time employment while women tend to take up the traditional role assigned to them as 'housewives'. It is important to once again emphasize here that our sample consists mainly of female respondents. While remaining aware of the ways in which this bias impacts our results, in general we can observe that female-headed households are typically poorer and more likely to rely on welfare than their male headed counterparts in Jane-Finch.

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<sup>16</sup> Personal Support Workers (PSW) provides care to those in need in long-term care facilities, palliative care centres and hospitals, and in people's homes. This is a federal government supported program initiated by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) in 2011 to create a Registry of personal support workers (PSWs) to acknowledge the care they provide daily to some of Ontario's most vulnerable populations. PSWs are accommodated by private companies, regulated by the Registry.

Moreover, in light of the fact that only a little number of our sample claimed to have full-time employment, most of our respondents shared that precarious employment magnifies their difficulties in supporting their households (particularly low-income and/or single-headed ones) and undermines their social mobility significantly. The next sub-chapters are dedicated to a closer analysis of such barriers as well as contributors to residents' social mobility. The job searching strategies of respondents as well as the impact of neighbourhood and diversity driven variables upon inhabitants' employment opportunities and social mobility are elaborated upon in such-chapters 7.3 and 7.4 respectively.

### 7.3 Using neighbours and others to find a job: Formal and informal job searching strategies

Our research demonstrates that inhabitants use various formal and informal job-searching strategies, many of which are locally embedded (e.g. using social ties or agencies within the neighbourhood when looking for employment).

#### *Formal strategies*

Formal strategies used commonly by our respondents include:

- *Using employment services* within the neighbourhood;
- *Using programs and trainings* offered by local associations;
- *Self-applying* (via online applications, answering ads, approaching employers directly)

Most respondents claimed to use *employment agencies* in the neighbourhood when seeking employment. However these services were more often perceived to be insufficient and understaffed. *Programs and trainings offered by community organizations* in the area tend to have a more important impact on residents' social mobility. Delilah, a Guyanese-Jamaican single mother in her 30s, shared how she would not be where she is now had it not been for the services in the community:

*"So I used to go to the Toronto employment services across the street and so after like maybe some years of going there they had some programs through the government that was funded like everything was covered. So I went and did a PSW course and we went to Humber College and so that is how I have gotten my job as a direct support professional. So if it wasn't for the resources that I have here I wouldn't be where I am now!"*

Another respondent Leah, a Canadian-Trinidadian single mother in her 40s who grew up in Jane-Finch expressed a strong sense of gratitude for the community programs and youth leadership in the area, claiming that they have been instrumental in her career path and upward mobility:

*"You know what? I was actually able to be mentored at a young age in Jane-Finch and I wanted to become a mentor so you know I could teach others. When you know better you do better, not everybody that I grew around was so lucky I think I am probably the only one that went in a different direction [...] I got my mentoring from community recreation leaders, program leaders who are still program leaders to this day which is awesome. Yorkwoods community centre was the beginning of my future. I got my first job there. [...] I was doing program leading with the kids. recreational stuff. I did that from 15-23 and then I switched career paths and got into customer service and then I went back into social work and then I came back but not fully. But I always had JF in my heart saying I need to go back there and work."*



Many respondents claimed to have found employment through *self-applying* and without seeking help from agencies or social contacts. For instance Ria, a Jamaican single mother in her early 30s, shares how she found her job by approaching the employer directly:

*"I was passing the store one day and I went inside there was a lady who was doing eyebrows and stuff and I asked her if she is hiring people. And she said yeah leave your number. So I left my number there and she called me."*

There were other respondents who similarly shared stories of having found employment by directly approaching the employer, all of which were in retail and service industries. In addition to contacting employers directly, the most common self-applying strategy is responding to newspaper and online ads. Another observation concerns the individualization of responsibilities, which is commonly used within a neoliberal discourse to define good citizenship and who deserves and who does not. Residents often expressed dismay at the notion of seeking help (whether that be from agencies or individuals) since it is perceived as a sign of dependency and at odds with their individual responsibility and agency. This was especially prevalent to our lower-income respondents, many of whom receive social benefits. Given the negative stereotypes surrounding people on welfare (mentioned earlier in chapter 4), it is not surprising that many inhabitants refused to seek help (or reveal that in conversation with us) so as to dissociate themselves from the stigma of receiving assistance or being perceived as needy and lazy as opposed to good, responsible citizens.

#### *Informal Strategies*

The most commonly adopted informal job searching strategy a Jane-Finch is *using social ties to find jobs*. As previously stated in chapter 6, inhabitants commonly seek help from their neighbours and social contacts on different matters including jobs and employment opportunities. Based on our findings, inhabitants support one another in finding employment in the following ways:

- *Exchanging information;*
- *Providing personal support (e.g. emotional support, babysitting, etc.);*
- *Referrals and recommendations;*
- *Hiring each other.*

Our research demonstrates that the most common way in which inhabitants receive support from their neighbourhood ties is via *exchanging information*. Amidah (18 year old, Tanzanian, grew up in Jane-Finch), explains how the scope of support among her local contacts in finding employment is limited to sharing information:

*"Like when they have the numbers and stuff they will give you. If they don't then they are like I'm sorry. But I did that before. Especially if you are close to them you just tell them if you get any numbers or anything can you just give them to me."*

Residents also help each other out by offering *personal support* such as emotional support and encouragement, help with babysitting each other's kids, picking them up from school, etc. Evie, a Jamaican mother of 3 in her 30s and Toronto housing resident, recognizes the emotional support and motivation she received from her mother as central in how she became a Personal Support Worker after years of unemployment:

*"My mom is the reason I became a PSW. She does it herself and she encouraged me to do it so I went to school and I did it. She helped me do it."*



Holly, a Jamaican Toronto housing resident and single mother of 2, explains how the support she receives from her neighbour in babysitting allows her to work night shifts:

*"One of my friends, she live upstairs and she's the one watching my kids in the night for me [during my night shifts] cause she just had a baby too. So once I was like I feel so bad cause 8 o'clock is the kids' bed time and I leave here like 9.15 when they are sleeping already. And she is like don't worry, I will watch them. She is all the time doing stuff like that."*

Respondents are more likely to get actual help with finding employment positions from their strong ties (which are not necessarily bound to the neighbourhood) as opposed to weak ties. Jim, a Ghanaian male in his 40s explains how he has got his current job through the *referral* made by a close friend:

*"I found my job through my friend who lives in the house. He is a dealer for the company I work for and has an office. So he has helped me a lot. And I am always blessed to come across entrepreneurs. Most of my friends are business people, you know? So I am really blessed."*

Jim further shared that he values having friends who have resources (to whom he refers to as *business people*) as he they have had a positive influence on his upward mobility. Similarly, Julia, an Argentinian mother of 2 in her late 30s, explains how she got her job through the help of a close friend who made a referral for her:

*"One of my friends was working in a condo and somebody asked for cleaning service but the company where she was working did not allow her to get into the apartment so she gave him my number and that person called me and then it was like a chain."*

We encountered a few rare instances in which the respondent was offered employment by a close contact. However, such form of support requires that inhabitants are well-connected to people who have high economic and employment resources. Nicholas, for instance, who is an Italian senior living in a Toronto housing complex in Jane-Finch, was hired by a friend who owned a record store in the area:

*"Before I retired I was working at a record store in the Jane-Finch mall, the guy was very good. I spent 25 years there, after this another friend opened a business for lingerie. I worked there for another 4 years. I worked part time in the night at the record store next to my day job where I worked in music, radio, newspaper, TV. The record store was my friend's; he gave me the opportunity to work. My friend asked me why don't you come to my store and help me."*

Considering that the Jane-Finch population consists predominantly of low-income households (some of which live below poverty levels), many of the inhabitants do not have the employment resources to offer one another support beyond passing on information. Hence the limited impact of within neighbourhood social ties (especially weak ties) upon residents' upward mobility. This is exemplified by a quote by Latoya, a York University student in her 20s from a Jamaican-Trinidadian background who was born and raised in a Toronto housing unit close to the Jane-Finch intersection:

*"It is common for people to get help in the neighbourhood from their social contacts but the thing is we are not that well connected but we still have all these networks and what we know is limited so recommending a friend for a job is one of the things that you would say is hard [...] or you just go and help reading each other's resumes, going to workshops together, etc."*

Latoya explains how the limited resources of the individuals in her social network restrict the ways in which they can offer one another help in relation to finding jobs. In the next chapter we will further explore more ways in which the context of the neighbourhood helps or hinders the social mobility of residents.

#### 7.4 Neighbourhood as an asset in upward social mobility?

Neighbourhood context can play a significant role in shaping residents' employment opportunities and social mobility. This part of the research reflected on the feelings of residents on whether living in this neighbourhood helps/hinders their access to important opportunities in life. Based on our research the most important neighbourhood driven factors identified by our respondents that hinder their upward mobility include the impact of *stigma* and *lack of neighbourhood resources*. However, systemic barriers, like the problem of credentials and work experiences of foreigners not being deemed legitimate in Canada, seem to influence the upward social mobility as a general problem beyond the neighbourhood boundaries. Specifically newcomers and first generation migrants are influenced by credentials and work experience expectation.

This issue is not confined to the boundaries of Jane-Finch only and is prevalent to the broader city and national scales as well. In an earlier publication (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2013), we identified the so-called Canadian Experience or credentials issue as an important under-lying systematic barrier to newcomer participation in the labour market in Toronto. Newcomers face challenges when applying for jobs on the basis of lacking work experience in Canada or their non-Canadian educational certificates not being recognised as equivalent to Canadian certificates by employers. The problem of 'Canadian experience and credentials' is predominantly faced by ethnic immigrants, as it does not pertain to newcomers coming from the global North (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2013). This is exemplified by the experience of Chioma, a Nigerian journalist in her 30s who recently migrated to Canada with her husband and 3 children. In the following quotes she expresses how her family struggles to make ends meet while her and her husband seek suitable employment in Toronto:

*"Right not I am just doing a training. I discussed with them [employers] yesterday, she said if you want to practice journalism you really need to know your environment so I told them I don't wanna start all over again, it takes time for me to adapt. I have a masters in English literature that I would like to go into teaching, or probably if they allow me to go into research, I would go for my PhD. [...] My husband has his masters in criminology, For now he doesn't really have a job. Not yet. So he is kind of asking people. The government gives you 2000\$ a month and we are paying rent which is 1000+ so basically you are left with nothing."*

This issue is further addressed in a quote provided by Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s who has worked as a service provider for the Latin American population in the area for many years:

*"We have the notion of Canada being a fair country that is receptive to newcomers and where you find support in terms of services and the government helping you and all of that is really gone right now so you have newcomers coming here within the last years and they are surprised to find such amount of difficulty particularly people who are professionals and people who wanna transition in their fields of interest and that is very difficult."*

Another systemic problem hindering the social mobility of residents who are receiving social benefits (welfare as well as housing) derives from the way the welfare and subsidised housing systems are structured in Toronto. There were various instances, resembling the well-known

poverty-trap (Banerjee and Newman, 1994), in which residents expressed that they do not seek after full time employment or higher-paid jobs because they fear losing their benefits or affordable housing. Our respondent Kellisha shared how she would lose part of her benefits if she takes up a full time job:

*"I work part time and then I stay home. Because right now I am on welfare, so even if you work 3 or 4 days, you have to fill in a paper and they will deduct the money so they won't give you the full money."*

At the time of the interview, Kellisha lived in a Toronto housing unit with her husband and 3 kids and her household income below poverty levels. Given the complexity of her problems, including her age, household responsibilities and the precarity of the job market, getting a higher-paid job or working longer hours would more likely have a reverse impact on her upward mobility. Anna, a Jamaican single mother in her mid-40s who has raised two young sons in a Toronto housing in Jane-Finch similarly shared:

*"Basically social services they don't give you anything really and if you are making another 200, they clear that 200 so they are gonna withdraw that money from what they are giving you but at the same time [when you work] it still makes you feel like you are useful to the community, you are useful for life and doing something for yourself. I'd rather do that than sitting down and wait for a lousy 500 or 400\$ a month."*

While Anna expressed concerns about having limited financial resources, she was assertive that working part-time contributes to her personal well-being even though it does not enhance her economic conditions. Furthermore, while among our respondents, Toronto housing residents, especially single mothers on welfare are the most economically marginalized; our data demonstrates high levels of involvement and participation among them in community-related activities on a voluntary basis (e.g. food banks, events, outreach, etc.). Our aim here is not to by no means sentimentalize the poverty in area, however, our observations strongly counter the pervasive dehumanizing stereotypes portraying people on welfare as lazy and undeserving. The structure of the welfare and subsidized housing system in this case thus perpetuates cycles of poverty and undermines inhabitants' social mobility. In this context, neighbourhood-driven variables tend to function more as liabilities than assets in inhabitants' social mobility.

### *Stigma*

Earlier in the report we discussed how that the stigma surrounding the Jane-Finch neighbourhood and the notion of *cultural contamination* impact inhabitants' perceptions of the area. Stigma also has a considerable impact upon residents' opportunities and upward mobility. The majority of our respondents shared that they do not find the stigma to be true, however, they still feel like get affected by it. Various respondents shared that they have faced discrimination or had negative sentiments expressed towards them in the job market because of their neighbourhood of residence. As mentioned before (in section 3.2) Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s, pointed out how the postal code would make a difference in getting a job.

*"So we can try to justify this in different ways but at the end of the day if somebody was saying if I wanna find a job I cannot use the postal code of my home because if people know I live there, I will not get the job."*

When asked whether living in Jane-Finch impacts inhabitants' opportunities, Evie, a Jamaican Toronto housing resident in her 30s responded:

*"Yeah because once they know you are from Jane-Finch they think you are bad. That there is nothing good in Jane-Finch."*

Another respondent Maurice who is an El Salvadorian Senior working as a youth-councillor in a Jane-Finch based community organization, further expanded on this:

*"We hear people in the community saying when they go look for jobs, they don't write their address in Jane-Finch, because once you write San Romanoway or whatever; they say oh you are from that community. They usually don't get jobs because of the stigma that Jane-Finch is dangerous place, and if it is dangerous then everybody must be dangerous."*

The quote underscores the pervasiveness of the notion of cultural contamination, that people who live in a bad neighbourhood are bad or have low morals, in the public perceptions of Jane-Finch. Jake, a native Canadian York University student in his early 20s, further expresses how such perceptions are common place at the University Campus, which is adjacent to the area:

*"See that's where it is kind of, there is a grey area. Because there are robberies on campus and then they are affiliated with the Jane-Finch community. But I don't think that they're mostly or even all affiliated with the Jane-Finch community but there is a stereotype there because of the media that is portraying it in a certain way so it is kind of sad to see in a way. That this community that really needs support from the university is so marginalized."*

Vanessa, an El Salvadorian single mother in her 40s shares another example for how the stigma has impacted her and her family negatively:

*"I don't like the fact that [the stigma] is affecting us in every sense. My daughter has car insurance and just because we live in Jane-Finch her insurance is double the rate because of the stigma. They said that it is because of accidents but there are more accidents in this area? No! She drives to work every day and she uses her car to go to work and she works close to Lawrence and Keele. Just because we lived in Jane-Finch, she is being penalized and she pays double the rate. Once I wanted to see how much the difference would be and it is exactly double. Because I gave them the address for a friend who lives close to Keele and Annette and I was surprised to hear that her insurance would be 240 \$ and so now that we gave them this address it is 500\$. Outrageous, it is double!"*

While many inhabitants feel that the stigma impacts them negatively in one way or another, some respondents believed that the stigma does not have a direct impact on their employment opportunities and factors such as good upbringing, hard work, and good values outweigh the negative influence of the stigma. Vanessa further shared that while she feels affected by the negative sentiments she receives because of her neighbourhood, she does not feel that it directly limits her job opportunities:

*"In terms of looking for work and finding jobs, whether that will affect me, no I don't think so. People don't look at where you live. It's like my co-workers were surprised to hear that I live here but they were surprised because they were like how could you live there? It is so dangerous and I go you know I have been living there for so many years but I have never seen or been involved in anything."*

Thus we have witnessed a duality in answers regarding the impact of the reputation of the neighbourhood upon inhabitants' opportunities. One group tends to feel directly influenced whereas another group, while expressing contempt or disdain towards the stigma, tends to put more emphasis on personal variables. Eva, an Ecuadorian mother of two in her 40s, does not believe that living in Jane-Finch per se will limit the opportunities of her daughters:

*"No because they can be good students everywhere. They have to be focused. Doesn't matter if you don't live in a high quality area, no! They can be quality persons everywhere. They have to start to be good persons at home to go outside as good persons."*

Again we see that people are very invested in the notion of individual agency and responsibility. This idea prevents people from seeking help in social services and also makes them hesitant from seeking help in their social networks. Respondents might share that they feel marginalized by the stereotypes, that resources are limited, that they are not satisfied with schools or they have to commute long distances to reach their job or other services but nonetheless the notion that 'it all comes down to who you are' seems to be the dominant internalized belief.

#### *Lack of neighbourhood resources*

Lack of resources in the neighbourhood is another commonly identified factor undermining residents' social mobility. *Lack of employment opportunities* in the neighbourhood coupled with *insufficient public transit* hinders the upward mobility of residents, particularly those whose mobility options are limited to public transportation. For instance, Kellisha, a Guyanese mother of 3 in her 50s and Toronto housing resident faces multi-faceted barriers in sustaining her employment given her restricted mobility options, her age and being responsible for the kids:

*"I still go out and do one job [in Mississauga]. But Mississauga you know it is so far. [...] It is because I don't drive. Because lately we had this girl she used to take me and another friend. But now she doesn't go that way anymore, it's far so we gotta catch the bus. We gotta leave early because the job starts at midnight and if we miss the bus we are not gonna get there. You see going is not the problem, we can get people to drop us off but it is the coming back in the morning. You gotta catch the bus, I have to come get my kid. From 12 at night to 7am. So it is hard to travel. But besides that it is okay but I still need to travel so I can work. Here it is like, they have jobs but I have applied lots of times for jobs here but maybe it is because of my age, because I will be 55 in December. But I don't think they should look at the age, they should see what I can do."*

Single mothers specially suffer from the lack of services available to them in the community, given the compoundedness of their problems. *Lack of affordable childcare* is another issue commonly stated by our respondents.

Maurice, an El Salvadorian Senior working as a youth-councilor in a Jane-Finch based community organization shares in the following quote how his clients often feel affected by the lack of resources in the area, particularly regarding employment:

*"We recently had this meeting in which people were talking about violence, talking about the lack of opportunities, because they are from Jane-Finch they cannot get training, talking about the area being so much in need, there is not enough funding, they were talking about unemployment so people were saying there should be some fund for entrepreneurship cause there is nothing there and it is true there is nothing."*

Our general observation is that due to both factors (stigma and lack of neighbourhood resources) and the combination of systematic barriers, Jane-Finch does not really a place where people move on the social ladder. In that respect it is questionable whether it is an 'arrival city', as Saunders' (2011) work suggests. Saunders argues that some areas with high levels of diversity provide a better environment for newcomers to become creative, start businesses or find easier access to opportunity structures, thanks to the well-developed networks in these areas. This aspect will be tackled in the next stage of the research.

## 7.5 Conclusions

The chapter aimed towards exploring the relationship between diversity and social mobility in Jane-Finch. Our analysis shows that residents tend to adopt a variety of locally embedded job search strategies (formal and informal) when seeking employment. With regards to formal strategies, residents often make use of employment agencies, programs and trainings offered by associations in the area. Self-applying is also a commonly used strategy. Informal strategies often revolve around using social contacts for finding jobs and opportunities. This is the area wherein the role of social networks as well as diversity in residents' upward mobility can best be explored. Residents help one another by exchanging information, offering personal and emotional support, making referrals, and in a few instances hiring one another. We observed that while within neighborhood diverse networks consisting of strong and weak ties do play a role in residents' mobility (mostly by providing support and contact), respondents are more likely to land concrete job opportunities via close ties who have access to employment resources. In our case study, some evidence emerged to suggest that many of these ties proved to be located outside the area. Thus, ultimately having strong egocentric networks with formal employment resources is more important than diverse informal within-neighborhood ties, especially given the low resources of the inhabitants within the area.

In the case of Jane-Finch, the reputation of the neighborhood indeed does not play a positive role in inhabitants' upward mobility. In this context, diversity is perceived to have an indirect negative impact upon social mobility because of the stigma surrounding the area and the poor people of color that reside in it. Among neighborhood-driven factors, those which seem to have a more significant impact upon social mobility than diversity, are the resources available in the community and issues more at the systemic level, namely discrimination in the job market especially targeted at newcomers and first-generation migrants, and the structure of the welfare and subsidized housing systems. Local resources, opportunity structures and networks can help the individual to go against these systemic barriers. However, our observations in Jane Finch suggest that combination of stigmatization of the neighbourhood in the labour market and lack of resources and infrastructure to fulfil the expectations of the competitive labour market seriously blocks the Jane-Finch residents' opportunity to break these barriers. In conclusion, our analysis of personal and neighborhood-driven variables renders clear that diversity can influence social mobility in both positive and negative ways. However the impact is often indirect and not significant. The more important issues at stake in neighborhoods such as Jane-Finch are rather the structural problems that perpetuate segregation along socio-economic and racial lines and cycles of poverty.

## 8. Perceptions of public policies and initiatives

### 8.1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to make explicit the perceptions of public policies and initiatives in Jane-Finch among inhabitants. Jane-Finch is home to a range of local initiatives and community based programs. The area was among the 13 neighbourhoods identified by City of Toronto in 2005 as 'priority areas', a program which aimed towards attracting services, resources, and funding towards high-need neighbourhoods. In light of the Priority Neighbourhoods strategy, a range of funding streams and services were brought into the area. However, precarious and insufficient funding as well as fragmentation and competition among agencies in Jane-Finch have significantly undermined the success and effectiveness of the existing programs and initiatives in the area over the years (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2014).

In the next sections we aim to find out to what extent residents are aware and make use of the existing policies and initiatives in the neighbourhood and whether the existing services are perceived to have an impact upon the lives of inhabitants in their own eyes. We will further make explicit the current insufficiencies and priorities identified by our respondents.

## 8.2 Perception and evaluation of existing policies and initiatives: What do residents know?

The extent to which residents are aware of policies and initiatives is very much interconnected to their level of involvement in local associations. Among our respondents, residents who showcased a higher level of acquired knowledge regarding services in the community were the ones who were actively involved in the community (through volunteering, attending meetings, using specific services, etc.). In other words, residents who do not pro-actively seek after services often showed little or no awareness of the services and programs existing in the community. It is important to stress here that since we used local associations and initiatives as our entry points into the community, many of our respondents, especially in the early phases of the fieldwork, were residents who were well connected to local organizations and had a high level of involvement in the community. Thus, part of the sample expressed vast knowledge of existing services and programs while the other (consisting of respondents found through other channels than local associations) demonstrated a significantly lower level of awareness and involvement.

Some of the policy initiatives that we have analysed earlier (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2014) were mentioned by the respondents, including the Spot (*Where YOU(th) Wanna Be*), Black Creek Farm, and Black Creek SNAP (*Black Creek Sustainable Neighbourhood Retrofit Action Plan*), as well as some others that we did not research earlier like ACORN Canada (*Uniting Communities for Justice*), Access Alliance (specialised in community health), and ANC Canada (business support services). Our observation on the basis of the interviews and observations that programs that are provided through community centres reach out people better when they provide a space that people can relate themselves and also accommodate wide range of activities. Also ‘belonging’ is an important element in these communities if the spatial characteristics of the place make it attractive and flexible to reach out different target groups and the location is easily accessible. For instance, the Spot, a programme targeting young people in Jane-Finch as part of the JFCFC (*Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre*) is mentioned several times during our interviews, not only because of its services for youth but also because of its easy location in the mall providing a safe atmosphere for the families to feel comfortable to send their children. Obviously these communities and other forms of policy initiatives fill the gap in public service provision. Also, especially for the newcomers, community centres provide a platform for support and advise. Our interviews highlighted the importance of these services especially for those who are new and/or alone in the area. Another important outcome is that, as also highlighted by the people who work for service providers and communities in our earlier study, the community centres come across financial limitations that are also felt by people who live in the area. Our research further shows that policies and initiatives are found useful when they:

- Address *basic needs* (e.g. food and childcare);
- Provide *information and referrals*;
- Provide *affordable recreational and educational services*

Respondents in general tend to show more knowledge regarding *services that address basic needs*, such as food banks, affordable child care and day care services, especially given the concentration of low-income households and high need in the community. Jake, a 24 year-old native Canadian



student at York University who is raising a young son in Jane-Finch positively highlighted the availability of affordable childcare services in the area:

*"I think there is a good amount of services like a lot of day care subsidized, which helps a lot of people and especially this community has a lot of young parents too. So the day care is huge here and I think it helps out."*

However, considering that lack of affordable childcare is indicated as an issue by some of our respondents (see section 7.4), access to information on the available services seems to be a problem in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood services are further deemed helpful by residents since they are often a *source of useful information*. Anna, a Jamaican single mother in her mid-40s and long-time Toronto housing resident shares how the community organization in her building has been of help to her by making effective referrals to different services that are not offered at the centre:

*"If you have a problem with how can I get a babysitter, how can I get help from the government in such and such a way if I want a bed, if I want help with my children because I have a problem, the child has given me problems, they might not have the resources downstairs but they can refer me to somebody. So even if I go to the front desk and they don't understand what I am taking about they say okay let me give it to a social worker to talk with and there is a social worker inside that office that will sit down and listen to what I am saying. If I can't explain it properly, they will pick what I am saying out of it and refer me to the right person. So they are very good."*

As stated earlier, neighbourhood programs are also deemed useful since they provide *affordable recreation opportunities and pastimes*. Celine, a Caribbean-Canadian single mother in her late 40s spoke of how affordability is an important factor in whether or not residents make use of recreational services in the area:

*"There is some stuff because we used to have an exercise program and they used to be free and we had pretty good instructors but when the city decided that they were going to put the fees on there a lot of people shied away, because I used to go to belly dance, to cardio, to all kinds of classes at the Oakdale community centre but once they stopped subsidizing the fees and the fees were, if you wanted to go to a class 3 times a week, you would have to pay a 102\$ a month and then people didn't go back."*

The perceived limitations of the programs commonly stated by respondents are *insufficient and understaffed services*<sup>17</sup> and *poor outreach*. The majority of the respondents regarded the existing services as insufficient. Rebeca, an 18 year old student from El Salvador who grew up in the area, shares that even though she feels that services in the community have improved over the past years, there are still insufficiencies:

*"Before this public library wasn't there, it is new in our area. And I feel like now they have free passes to the museum and I guess they have that because of priority neighbourhoods [...] so now I go to the library and I feel like that helps but it is not enough. Like I wish there were more resources."*

Many residents are further unaware of what programs exist in the community. Amidah (18 year old female, from Tanzania, grew up in Jane-Finch) expressed how she has a hard time finding out about programs due to their poor outreach:

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<sup>17</sup> The specific areas in which services are lacking are elaborated on in sub-chapter 8.3

*"I think they need to do their best, their hardest to get it out there cause I don't really hear about these programs in the neighbourhood and I wanna be able to know these programs so they should do something about that because the other day I found out that this program that was happening, I could have joined that if I had found out about it earlier but I am too old now. So I'm like they need to really think about how are we gonna send the message? How are these people gonna know about these programs? Cause there's people out there who really wanna join these programs, especially the arts programs like music, drama, painting, all these kinds of things."*

Delilah, a Canadian born single mother from Guyanese-Jamaican background in her 40s, also addresses the issue of insufficient outreach, but from a different viewpoint. She emphasizes on the importance of taking agency in actively seeking after programs that exist in the community:

*"There is a lot here, once I move I will miss all the advantages here because trust me there is a whole lot of resources here but there's a lot of people that don't take advantage of them and some programs you don't know about! So you could either choose to leave it and let it go or you could grab it and run with it. Like I think this neighbourhood will make you or break you! And that is a true fact."*

Thus while there seems to be a range of services in the community that are deemed useful by residents, insufficient or ineffective outreach undermines the impact and success levels of existing programs.

### 8.3 Policy priorities proposed by interviewees: What do residents want?

As mentioned earlier, the most commonly highlighted negative aspects of Jane-Finch neighbourhood related to lack of some services and transportation. Our respondents underlined several policy priorities to mainly address these issues:

- *Services for youth (recreational, educational and career-related programs);*
- *After school programs;*
- *Public transportation.*

As mentioned earlier in the report, racialized youth are among the most vulnerable groups in Jane-Finch as they are more susceptible to gang-involvement, incarceration, dropping out of school and unemployment than any other population group in the community. The majority of our respondents thus recognized youth services as a primary area policy should be prioritizing. Amidah (18 year old, female, from Tanzania, grew up in Jane-Finch), shared that there is a general lack of services addressing the needs of youth in the area:

*"I think what really this neighbourhood needs to work on is getting the youth involved. We already have some, but not a lot. So you don't really see people my age really hanging out in this neighbourhood, going to community centre, cause there's only kids' stuff, somethings we are not really interested anymore. I'd rather just go downtown and chill more than stay in this neighbourhood. It is like that."*

Programs that focus on career opportunities for youth were deemed particularly important by many respondents including Amidah who further stressed:

*"At the end of the day, for young people, we wanna have jobs, we wanna have experience so we need these experiences, we need these programs to help us get there. So we should have more career programs."*

Nicole, a Filipino mother of one in her 30s, similarly emphasized the need for educational programs and trainings that would contribute to the upward mobility of Jane-Finch youth:

*“There are lots of programs for kids but mostly in the arts [...] but in terms of like skills, computer skills, programming, we don't see that. I don't see a computer lab dedicated for that. There are a few; they teach some basics but a dedicated thing for youth, like apart for music, I don't think they have that. And we need that cause that will elevate the poverty issues among the people, it is the key to get out of whatever. They need skills.”*

Leah, a Canadian-Trinidadian single mother who worked as a youth outreach worker for many years in Jane-Finch shared the observation that while there are existing programs targeting youth in the area, their effectiveness is limited due to lack of input received from their participants:

*“It is hard to say cause if I say youth programs, there is tons there but the correct type of youth programing and the correct type of youth employment agencies that really work with the youth, don't just get them a job and say this is what we have. Ask them is this what you wanna do. Where do you wanna work. Just getting the right type of youth input.”*

Next to youth services, *after-school programming* was often identified by inhabitants as an area where policy and investments should be focused on. Many parents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of existing after-school programs in the area. Juan, a Chilean resident in his 50s who works as a service provider in Jane-Finch, regards the issue of low-quality after school programming in Jane-Finch as a structural problem which is closely interlinked to the low socio-economic resources held by households and concentration of poverty in the area:

*“One overall problem is after school programs and this is something across the city. Some years ago the board started to cut back on programs and personnel and I think it affected these areas of the city because people cannot contribute direct money to the school system as in other parts of the city because that is a reality here [...] I know schools in this city that raise, fundraise hundreds of thousands a year to sustain their programs. Those schools have exactly the same school learning program that we have here, they are the same everywhere! But the question is how do you support the learning capacities in those schools and here we know that we don't have access to programs, like music, theatre and any of those things that helps you build capacities to socialize and make PR so nothing of that.”*

Lastly, *public transportation (transit)* is another area identified as a policy priority by Jane-Finch residents. Issues regarding limited mobility options and its impact upon different aspects of residents' lives have been previously raised in different chapters of this report. Jake, a native Canadian York University student in his early 20s underscores the need for improving the public transit infrastructure in Jane-Finch:

*“To be honest they have to make it more accessible, the one thing that they are talking about doing is getting LRT on Finch which will help move traffic. I think it is gonna go underground a little bit and that would help people get around. That is the thing, if people have access to go outside the community and work and have access inside of the community that is gonna help a lot.”*

Johnny, a middle-aged Indian resident, further stressed the need for creating alternative modes of transit in Jane-Finch as well as the improvement of within-neighbourhood public transportation:

*“We need good biking infrastructure. [Transit] here relies on too much cars. And if they can bring good biking lanes to safely bike because I am scared. I can't bike to work here, I would love to but there is no dedicated lane and I have to share it with the cars, it is only a matter of time before I get bumped off. [...] like even take just one street, not even all the streets and put up a lane so that we can go safely. And good public transit also, right? Cause now the subway is coming that is a big thing but it is all going down-*

*town, everything is downtown traffic. But for me to go to this side, there is very little, you know! Then I only depend upon my car."*

In addition, there were also some other priorities indicated by our respondents including support for employment opportunities and training, senior citizens, and health services.

## 8.4 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to explore the perceptions held by residents concerning public policies and programs in the area. There was almost no mention of diversity in relation to services and policy priorities in the area, showing once again that diversity is not perceived by inhabitants to be a prioritized notion nor the most pressing issue to be dealt with in the low-income ethnically diverse inner-suburb. Our analysis renders clear that the level of knowledge regarding services and programs depends highly on the extent to which residents are actively involved in the community. This is partly due to the fact that the outreach strategies adopted by local agencies are often perceived to be ineffective or insufficient. Furthermore, while many respondents acknowledge the availability of a range of programs in the area, the extent to which they utilize and make use of them varies. In general, the existing services are deemed insufficient, especially given the high level of need in Jane-Finch.

It is further evident that the perceived areas of importance and priority with regards to policy and services are reflective of the current vulnerabilities and problems in the neighbourhood. Therefore, issues regarding meeting basic needs (food, housing, and childcare) and youth are often highlighted.

## 9. Conclusions

The central focus of the DIVERCITIES research project is to understand the conditions under which urban hyper-diversity can positively affect social cohesion, social mobility, and economic performance of individuals and groups suffering from socio-economic deprivation (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). This report specifically aimed at underlying the conditions that influence social cohesion and social mobility. We explored the experiences of residents in living with hyper-diversity, how it affects their lives, and whether policy interventions at the locale scale made any difference in terms of social cohesion in their neighbourhood and social mobility in their lives.

Ethnicity and immigration are still the most visible forms of diversity in Jane-Finch neighbourhood, and dominate the daily life since 1970s. Today it is one of the most stigmatised neighbourhoods in the city with the largest concentrations of criminal gangs of any area in Canada. Within this framework, we observed that diversity is very much 'normalized' in the neighbourhood, as a positive notion, though this positive approach did not create perception of diversity as 'indifference'. We observed that in Jane-Finch neighborhood people acknowledge and talk about their differences but at the same time are aware of the fact that these differences influence their perceptions of neighbors which leads to *stereotyping* on the basis of race, class and gender.

*To what extent is the diversity of the residential area important for social cohesion? Which elements foster social cohesion, which elements hinder the development of social cohesion in the area?*

How, under these conditions, can we specify the conditions that positively influence diversity? *Social cohesion* comprises elements like the existence of social contacts and social networks, social solidarity, social control, shared values and norms, place attachment and a shared identity (Tasan-

Kok et al., 2013). In our fieldwork in Jane-Finch neighbourhood we came across with all of these elements at diverse scales and forms. However, without *shared commonalities* and *activities* the contribution of diversity on social cohesion is not evident. In other words, diverse people do contribute to networks of support, share social contacts, they may have sense of community and solidarity, and shared values when they have something in common (language, personal interests or shared similar experiences) or they do something together. We can also see that *commonalities* and *activities* help to establish non-conflicting relations between diverse groups at lower spatial levels (like small communities).

Vranken (2004) argued that high social cohesion in the urban system as a whole would be possible when non-conflicting relations at smaller scales exist. It means that if policy initiatives support creating and maintaining relations among people in smaller groups and communities who share common interests, experiences or language, and do activities together, Jane-Finch may have higher level of cohesion in general.

*To what extent is the diversity of the neighbourhood important for social mobility? Which elements foster social mobility and which elements hinder social mobility?*

What are the conditions under which social capital/social networks help residents to move upwards in social mobility in Jane-Finch neighbourhood? When looking for the effects of diversity on social mobility, we paid attention to personal characteristics like age, gender, and ethnic origin in Jane-Finch. The current situation suggests negative relationship between diversity and social mobility in the area. Although strong informal ties within the neighbourhood (*bonding capital*) are important to support each other, when it comes to finding a job, formal employment resources (*bridging capital*) play a bigger role in one's life. However, stigmatization of the neighbourhood and other systemic barriers (for instance discrimination in the job market for newcomers) still play a negative role in residents' social mobility. Immigrant enclaves, as Logan et al., (2002) suggests, are important within the neighbourhood for surviving as a newcomer but the influence of strong ties among people from these enclaves in finding a job (or a better job) or establishing a business is not evident. Our respondents highlighted the importance of local resources, opportunity structures and networks to go against systemic barriers. We observed that moving out of the neighborhood for better housing or employment is an option for a lot of people if the opportunities would emerge, despite their attachment to the neighborhood. In Jane-Finch policy instruments and community arrangements that focus on specific groups (like youth or women) do not only provide social infrastructure, space for socialization and creation of a feeling of belonging, but also support the residents with necessary skills, tools and contacts for gaining self-confidence, going through procedures, making applications, and finding jobs. We came across with more people pointing out the influence of 'formal' employment resources in finding a job than those who received informal support from friends and family. It means that if policy instruments provide support for diverse residents' personal needs for reaching employment resources within or outside Jane-Finch, the social mobility in the neighborhood would increase.

Furthermore, within the general framework of the analysis above, we can conclude with some reflections to the other questions raised in the beginning of this report:

#### *Housing choice*

*Why did people move to the diverse area they live in now? To what extent has the diversity of the area been a pull-factor? Or were other aspects (such as the availability of inexpensive dwellings) a much stronger motive to settle in the present area?*

*Housing conditions* seem to be the dominant pull factor for why people select Jane-Finch. 'Living in a diverse neighborhood' does not appear to be a reason to move to the area except for those who had specific reasons for seeking diversity (being bullied in another area, people speaking the same language living here, etc). Thus, diversity is not a direct pull factor, much rather a de facto outcome of concentration of low-income ethnically diverse communities (experienced diversity) due to affordability of housing in the area as well as income polarization and segregation along ethnic lines in Toronto. In that respect affordability outweighs diversity when it comes to making relocation decisions in Jane-Finch. And finally, improvements in housing careers are interlinked to the perceptions and preferences of households which are highly subjective.

#### *Perceptions of diversity*

*How do residents think about the area they live in? Do residents see their neighbourhood's diversity as an asset or a liability?*

There is a general civility towards diversity in Jane-Finch. Inhabitants often pay lip service to diversity; however, tensions commonly exist. In a way diversity is good if it does not exceed a certain limit; beyond that it becomes a negative element. We also observed that cross-cultural encounters influence inhabitants perception when residents have things in common (e.g. school-aged children). However, perceptions of diversity are not static but dynamic. Diversity is perceived positively so long as it does not entail the domination of one group over others (non-dominant difference is celebrated). A very interesting observation is that diversity is normalized in Jane-Finch, however essentialization and stereotyping based on race, class, gender, etc. still pervasively shape inhabitants' perceptions of one another. The frequency of daily encounters with diversity plays a great role in the normalization of and civility towards diversity. However, the general policy approach that 'glamorizes' diversity also influences this tendency. We also observed that absence of a dominant group creates a more 'open' environment and a more positive perception of diversity. However, the appreciation of diversity sometimes remains superficial whereby the merits of diversity are limited to consumption of goods and commodities as some of our respondents strongly underlined.

#### *Activities in and outside the neighbourhood*

*How do residents make use of the diversified areas they live in? Do they actively engage in diversified relations and activities in their neighbourhood? To what extent is the area they live in more important than other areas in terms of activities?*

Neighbourhood is important in shaping the daily routines and activities of inhabitants. Especially for lower-income households who have limited mobility due to lack of resources and insufficient public transportation services. Moreover, residents encounter diversity in their daily routines, though diversity does not directly shape their activities. Due to the stigma that is attached to diversity sometimes activities or activity spaces of the residents are limited as we displayed above. Improving social infrastructure and public and semi-public spaces in the neighbourhood can have a strong positive impact on stimulating encounter across different groups and fostering diversity.

#### *Perceptions of public policy*

*How are diversity-related policies perceived by the inhabitants of the area?*

Services are generally deemed insufficient by the inhabitants. The most repeating problem during the interviews was the insufficient outreach of current programs and services in the area. Most of the respondents highlighted that they do not know about the available services in the community. Vulnerable groups (especially racialized youth, single mothers on welfare) suffer most from lack

of services. And finally, diversity is not a prioritized concern of inhabitants regarding policies and programs in the area.

Our final general conclusion is that diversity is not appear to be ‘celebrated’ by the residents though issues concerning diversity, such as *poverty and racism*, highlighted heavily in our research in Jane-Finch. The mismatch between the positive perception of diversity and issues like poverty and racism confronting diversity should be further studied and highlighted in Toronto. Diversity can be used to euphemise the structural issues of discrimination, poverty and segregation along ethnic lines especially by the policy makers. In a previous study (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2014), we contended that programmes in the neighbourhood can contribute to social cohesion by providing spaces of encounter and socialization and to social mobility via offering workshops and trainings, creating local employment opportunities and referrals to employment agencies. These community spaces should be further studied to understand their respond to neighbourhood’s needs, and how they can or can not support to redistribution, encounter and recognition among diverse people. We emphasized in this report that commonalities and activities bring diverse people closer but the fight against structural barriers and inequalities to have better economic conditions (gain access to better jobs or housing) would go through tailor-made support programs to enable people to reach employment resources outside the neighbourhood.



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**Appendix: List of the interviewed persons**

N	Pseudo name	Age Group	Gender	Position in household	Household income	Ethnic Group/region
1	Amidah	18-30	f	daughter	U/N	Tanzania
2	Heba	46-60	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 1 child	U/N	Egypt
3	Gloria	61-75	f	single	U/N	Jamaica
4	Vanessa	31-45	f	Single mother in a household with 3 adult children	U/N	El Salvador
5	Rebeca	18-30	f	daughter	U/N	El Salvador
6	Nicholas	61-75	m	single	710.25\$	Italy
7	Kojo	31-45	m	single	U/N	Ghana
8	Kellisha	46-60	f	Wife and mother of 3 children	U/N	Guyana
9	Grace	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	U/N	Jamaica
10	Kim	46-60	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 5 children	U/N	Vietnam
11	Jim	31-45	m	single		Ghana
12	Ria	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 1 child	U/N	Jamaica
13	Delilah	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	35k	Guyana-Jamaica
14	Odessa	31-45	f	Wife and mother of 2 children	U/N	Guyana
15	Holly	18-30	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	U/N	Jamaica
16	Amanthi	46-60	f	Wife and mother of 1 child	1200\$	Sri-Lanka
17	Evie	31-45	f	Wife and mother of 3	1k p/m	Jamaica

18	Anna	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	900 p/m	Jamaica
19	Shantel	18-30	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	1800 p/m	Jamaica
20	Eva	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	U/N	Ecuador
21	Sarah	18-30	f	Single mother in a single parent household with 2 children	12k+	White Canadian
22	Kelly	18-30	f	single	1500-1800 p/m	Caribbean-Canadian
23	Bryah	31-45	f	Single mother of two adult children	700 p/m	Jamaican
24	Elizabeth	46-60	f	single	1200 p/m	Jamaican
25	Jake	18-30	m	single	15k-	White Canadian
26	Alphonse	>75	m	single	U/N	Jamaica
27	Neda	31-45	f	Housewife and mother of 2 children	U/N	Iran
28	Johnny	46-60	m	Father of one	80k	India
29	Nicole	31-45	f	Wife and mother of one	80k	Philippines
30	Julia	31-45	f	Wife and mother of two	40-60k	Argentina
31	Mauricio	61-75	m	Single living with roommate	40-50k	El Salvador
32	Leah	31-45	f	Single mother in a single parent household with one child	8k	Trinidadian-Canadian
33	Ali	46-60	f	Single mother of two adult children	500- p/m	White Canadian
34	Gita	31-45	f	Wife and mother of one	45k	India
35	Latoya	18-30	f	daughter	U/N	(Jamaican-Trinidadian) Canadian
36	Alejandra	61-75	f	Wife and mother of three adult children	U/N	Ecuador
37	Fernando	18-30	m	single	U/N	El Salvador

38	Juan	46-60	m	single	U/N	Chile
39	Samantha	46-60	f	Single mother in a single parent household of one child	2700 p/m	Ecuador
40	Diego	61-75	m	single	1100 p/m	Peru
41	Jamal	61-75	m	husband	U/N	Jamaica
42	Amara	31-45	f	Wife and mother of two	U/N	Nigeria
43	Chioma	31-45	f	Wife and mother of two	U/N	Nigeria
44	Edna	61-75	f	single	60k	St. Vincent
45	Jose	46-60	m	Single living with roommate	40-50k	El Salvador
46	Celine	46-60	f	single	2600 p/m	Dominican Republic
47	Alicia	61-75	f	Single	3k p/m	Jamaican
48	Keela	46-60	f	Wife and mother of two	U/N	Trinidad
49	Tenika	61-75	f	Single	2k p/m	Trinidad
50	Julio	61-75	m	Husband and father of one adult	16k	El Salvador