

# Neighbourhood Houses: Developing Social Capacity Among Newcomers to Canada

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# Overview

- Context for my research with Neighbourhood Houses
- Survey research project showing participation at neighbourhood houses increases in social capacity development – particularly for newcomers to Canada
- A closer look at *Styles of Participation*
  - Developing empirical puzzles around length, intensity, and scope of participation

# Building Social Capacity

- Neighbourhood Houses facilitate working together to achieve collective goals
  - Integrate participants with other individuals and wider society
  - Allow for the learning and practice of important civic and political skills
  - Provide both formal and informal recognition for a person's contributions

# Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver, Canada

- Geographic base
  - Work towards improving the quality of life for local residents
- Participation of community members in the organization's daily activities
- Multi-service organizations
  - Settlement House Movement

# Building Social Capacity

- Survey research, 675 participants from 14 Neighbourhood Houses
- 65% newcomers; 77% women; 54% employed; 30% university degree
- Social capacity: 4 items of self reported change
  - working with people from different backgrounds
  - decision making abilities
  - organizing and managing events
  - speaking in front of others
  - *Stayed about the same, increased a little, increased a lot*

# Bivariate Descriptive Statistics

| Perceived changes in social skills through involvement at neighbourhood houses  |          |       |                |       |                |       |
|---|----------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| (%)   |          |       | Place of Birth |       |                |       |
|   | Total    |       | Canada         |       | Outside Canada |       |
|   | A little | A lot | A little       | A lot | A little       | A lot |
| <b>Increases in social skills through involvement</b>                           |          |       |                |       |                |       |
| <b>Has your ability to work with people from different backgrounds changed?</b> | 42       | 34    | 34             | 29    | 46             | 38    |
| <b>Have your decision making abilities changed?</b>                             | 42       | 26    | 30             | 19    | 48             | 29    |
| <b>Have your skills in organizing or managing events and programs changed?</b>  | 36       | 21    | 24             | 17    | 42             | 23    |
| <b>Have your skills in speaking in front of other people changed?</b>           | 35       | 27    | 22             | 19    | 42             | 32    |

# Multivariate Models

|                     | Model 1 |     |         | Model 2 |     |         | Model 3 |     |         |
|---------------------|---------|-----|---------|---------|-----|---------|---------|-----|---------|
| Age                 | 0.003   |     | (0.002) | 0.001   |     | (0.002) | -0.001  |     | (0.002) |
| University          | -0.067  |     | (0.081) | 0.017   |     | (0.075) | -0.038  |     | (0.074) |
| Employed            | 0.190   | *   | (0.074) | 0.145   | *   | (0.068) | 0.135   |     | (0.067) |
| Sex                 | 0.297   | *** | (0.087) | 0.247   | **  | (0.079) | 0.208   | **  | (0.079) |
| English             | -0.056  | *** | (0.020) | -0.041  | *   | (0.019) | -0.005  |     | (0.020) |
| Length              |         |     |         | -0.001  |     | (0.023) | 0.013   |     | (0.023) |
| Intensity           |         |     |         | -0.050  | *   | (0.023) | -0.045  | *   | (0.023) |
| Variety             |         |     |         | 0.082   | *** | (0.007) | 0.077   | *** | (0.074) |
| Newcomer            |         |     |         |         |     |         | 0.355   | *** | (0.078) |
| Constant            | -0.465  | *** | (0.158) | -0.811  | *** | (0.166) | -0.969  | *** | (0.167) |
| adj. R <sup>2</sup> | 0.032   |     |         | 0.195   |     |         | 0.219   |     |         |

# Key Findings

- Self reported social capacity development increases through neighbourhood house involvement
- Newcomers report larger increases in social capacity development than those born in Canada
  - The relationship holds when controlling for a number of key control variables



# Styles of Participation

- Tenure with the neighbourhood house
  - Length of time participating (months to years)
- Intensity of participation
  - How often participating (multiple times a year to multiple times a week)
- Scope of participation
  - Variety of program participation (from one to many)

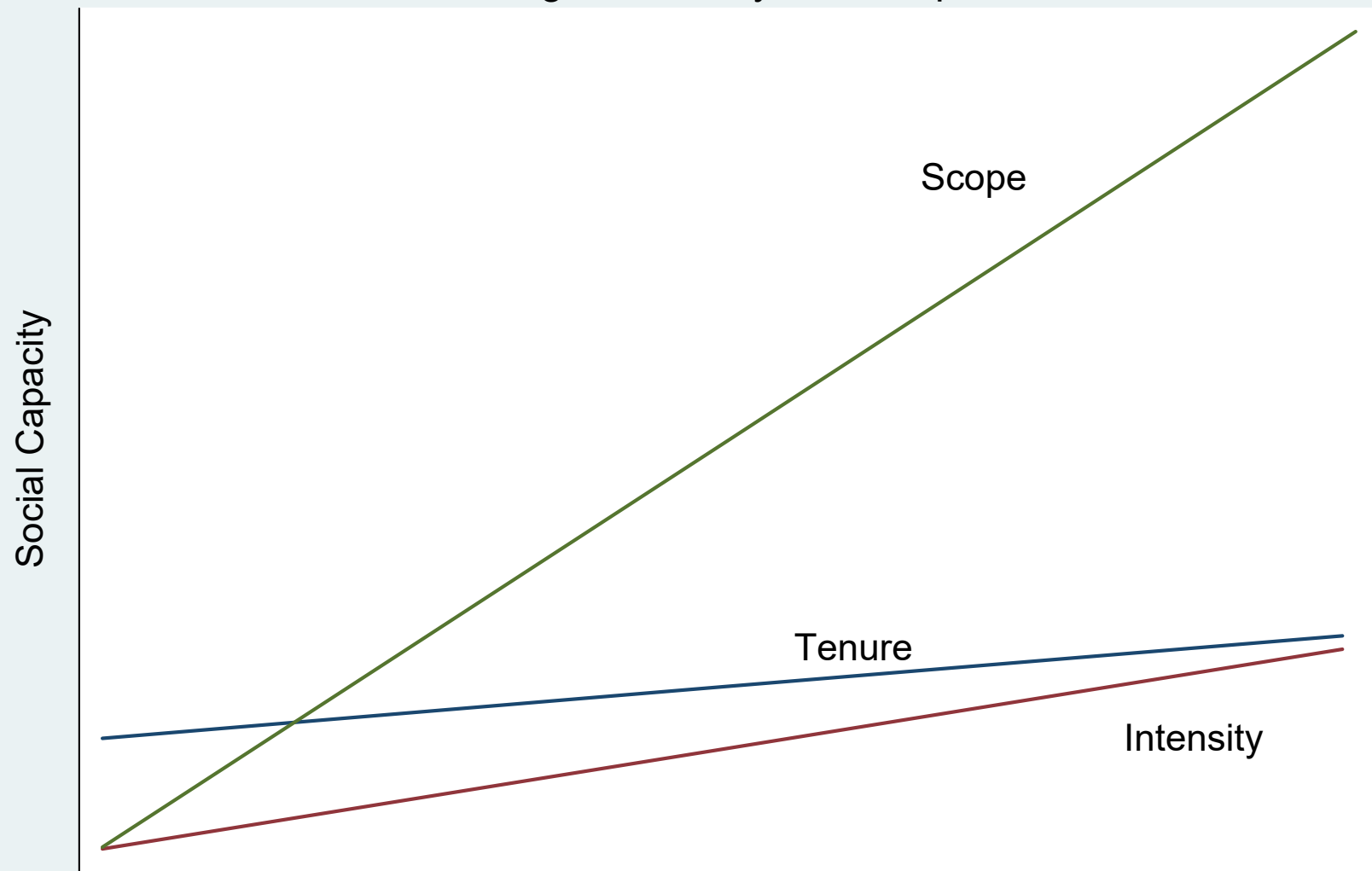
# Developing Social Capacity

- ***Varied Style of Participation***

- ***Length***: length of time participating in NHs is not associated with social capacity increases.
- ***Intensity***: more frequent participation associated with social capacity increases.
- ***Scope***: a wide variety of program participation is associated with social capacity increases.

# Participation Style and Social Capacity

## Length, Intensity and Scope



# Developing Diverse Ties

- Survey research, 351 new immigrants to Canada (Lauer and Yan 2013)
- Developing cross-ethnic friendship and helping ties through NH participation

# Developing Social Capacity

- ***Targeted Style of Participation***
  - ***Length***: a shorter tenure with the NH is associated with more diverse ties.
  - ***Intensity***: more frequent participation associated with more diverse ties
  - ***Scope***: a limited variety of program participation is associated with more diverse ties increase

## Key Findings

- Self reported social capacity development increases through neighbourhood house involvement
- Newcomers report larger increases in social capacity development than those born in Canada
- *A varied* approach to participation is associated with larger increases in social skills and capacity

# Thank You!

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