Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership

Income Polarization and Participation in Community Organizations in Calgary

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1. Rationale & Potential Policy Relevance

This project will examine the relationship between income inequality, average neighbourhood income and isolation/inclusion and participation in community-based organizations, and will begin to describe an 'ecology of participation' within Calgary's communities. More widespread/inclusive participation in community-based organizations has the potential to promote positive social change, ensure those organizations are representative of their communities, and reduce social isolation. This project will increase our understanding of the barriers vulnerable individuals face in participating in creating positive change in their neighbourhood through community organizations and activity.

Residents' desire and capacity to work together to improve daily life and promote equity and social justice in their neighbourhood (collective efficacy) is core to making positive change in the community and addressing issues of increasing inequality. Citizen led and Community based organizations are essential to channeling that energy, bringing people together, and creating community leaders in the face of increasing polarization and socio-economic segregation.

Since the 1950's, Calgary has had a system of geographically bounded, neighbourhood-based community associations. This has evolved into a 'built-in' system of community organizations with a focus on social, recreational and quality of life programming. Community associations (CA's) are one of the many community based organizations engaging in a wide range of activity, from social events, inexpensive child care and farmers markets to providing feedback on land use planning developments and policy changes. Such organizations offer the potential to improve neighbourhood social cohesion and improve quality of life for all residents, but can also play a role in social exclusion. Over time, Calgary has grown and become more demographically diverse, meaning the landscape for participation in communities for residents may have likewise changed. As the city as a whole has become more diverse, trends toward increasing polarization mean that many neighbourhoods have become less diverse.   With this change, it is important to understand now how people are engaging on the neighbourhood level, what the opportunities and barriers are for those who do not engage, as well as the implications of isolation and limited engagement might be.

In beginning to describe an 'ecology of participation' in Calgary communities, this research will illuminate the enabling and inhibiting factors in meaningful participation, the forms that community participation takes, and how these various forms of participation relate and interact. A better understanding of this system will help enable community-based organizations in Calgary to become more equitable, inclusive, and effective in addressing the consequences of socio-spatial inequality and income polarization.

2. Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to participation in community based organizations and initiatives?
    a. What barriers and opportunities to participation in community change through community based organizations exist?

b. Is there a correlation between income disparity and inclusivity in community organizations (Is it possible to have participation across the income spectrum within a neighborhood?)

c. What impact does income have on community involvement (type, organization chosen, frequency)?

d. How do community organizations structure interaction between citizens and the institutions of municipal governance? How do community organizations shape governance at the neighbourhood scale?

e. Who are the dominant voices in community life? How is their dominance enabled?

f. How are more vulnerable members of the community participating in community organizations? If they are not, why not?

g. Under what circumstances do community organizations act to promote and enhance neighbourhood diversity? Under what circumstances do community organizations act to discourage greater neighbourhood diversity?

2. How are 'inclusiveness' and 'participation' conceptualized by CAs, other community organizations, and individuals?

a. What are CAs and other community organizations doing to address barriers to inclusion?

b. Perception of change- is participation today perceived to be different than it was 20 years ago? If so, in what ways?

3. What influence do community based organizations have on the social fabric and built form of neighbourhoods?

a. Is level of influence related to average neighbourhood income or income disparity?

b. What are the implications of isolation/inclusivity on neighbourhood form (affordable housing options, transit, public spaces)?

c. How do organizational resource levels relate to levels of participation?

4. What organizational forms might be most effective in promoting collective efficacy?

a. What are the most accessed channels for participation in Calgary communities?

b. What role does the CA play in the constellation of community based organizations?

c. What are the characteristics of effective community organization networks?

d. How might neighbourhood-scale institutions be structured to promote broad, inclusive, and representative participation by neighbourhood residents in social and political processes?

3. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions

This research closely aligns with NCRP objectives and research questions:

- The research will highlight the consequences of changes that have led to socio-spatial inequality and polarization.
- The research will contribute to the development of programs and materials that will help to improve the efficacy and inclusivity of community-based organizations in response to the consequences of socio-spatial inequality and polarization.

This research will also align with the NCRP Collective Efficacy Working Group. By examining the factors that promote and inhibit resident participation in community-based organizations, we will gain a better understanding of how to encourage neighbourhood collective efficacy through more inclusive, equitable community-based organizations.

4. Research Design & Methods

1. Phase 1: Develop a typology of Calgary neighbourhoods:

Using income data (Census data and/or custom taxfiler data), Calgary's neighbourhoods (Census Tracts) will be mapped on a simple two-dimensional rubric according a) to average household income and also level of income diversity/inequality within the neighbourhood. The latter will be measured by

either the census-derived CT-level Coefficient of Variation (CV) for average household income, or by a simple index of diversity (Equation 1) computed across income categories within the community.

$$\text{Diversity} = \left[1 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i^{\,2} \right] \div \left[1 - n \left(\frac{1}{n} \right)^2 \right]$$

and n= number of income categories,
p=is the proportion of households in the ith category.

Equation 1.

Such a rubric will generate a framework (Figure 1) for selecting areas of Calgary for in-depth analysis based on the levels of income level and also income disparity within the CT. The municipal Community Districts (approximately coincident with CT boundaries), will be mapped onto these CTs to determine which CAs should be surveyed. Four communities will be selected from each quadrant of this rubric and be invited to participate in the study. The PI, co-investigator, as well as partners from FCC and Calgary United Way will develop this typology. It is important to note that in the selection of neighbourhoods, the United Way neighbourhood strategy and the neighbourhoods they work in may influence the choices made in which neighbourhoods this research will focus on.
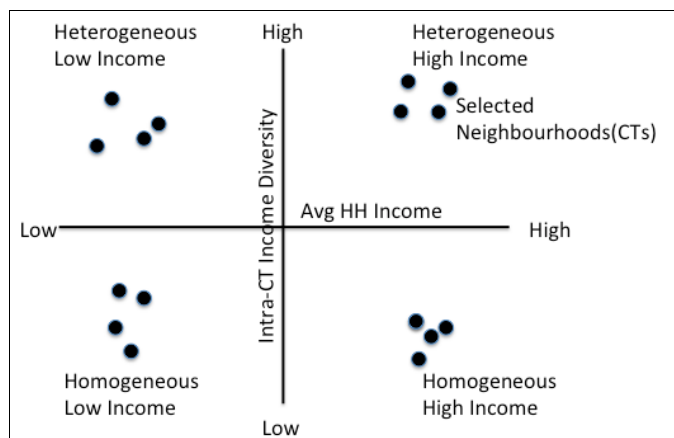

Figure 1. Rubric for Case Community Selection

2. Phase 2: Perceived Isolation and Barriers to Participation: Macro Level.

To generate a macro-level or non-resident appraisal of the perceived social, participatory, and isolation characteristics of residents with these CAs from the perspective of the community associations, city government, and from local community service workers, 20-30 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews will be carried out with Community Association executive membership and staff, City of Calgary Neighborhood Partnership Coordinators (responsible for multiple community areas) , other agencies such as the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary, and faith based communities within neighbourhoods. Interviews will be recorded and coded for key themes and issues. The PI, co-investigator, student RA, as well as partners from Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) and Calgary United Way will be involved in phase 2. However, expert guidance, supervision and training of the student RA in interviewing techniques and coding will be provided by FCC (Dan Godin) and United Way (Bodil Dronkers) who will also provide a home base, office space, and meeting room facilities during the project.

3. Phase 3: Perceived Isolation and Barriers to Participation: Micro Level.

An in-depth study of residents within selected neighbourhoods will provide the micro-level perspective---the voices of local area residents. From the subset of 16 communities identified in stage 1, we will use the interview in stage 2 to isolate 8 of these deemed to experience high levels of "isolation".

In this context we define isolation as perceived or real barriers to participation, feelings of exclusion, and sense of resident isolation. Within these communities we will interview residents to understand the experience, processes, and perceptions of isolation from full participation in local CAs, and what factors are important in reducing isolation and fostering inclusivity. With the assistance of community workers (e.g. neighbourhood partnership coordinators, City of Calgary Community Social Workers, United Way, other social agencies) we will solicit one or two resident seed contacts and then use a snowball sampling method to conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with approximately 8 individuals representing the diversity within each of the isolated communities (potentially 64 interviews). Interviews will be recorded and coded for key themes and issues. The PI, co-investigator, student RA, as well as partners from FCC and UW will be involved in phase 3. Expert guidance, supervision, and training of the student RA in interviewing techniques and coding will be provided by FCC (Dan Godin) and Calgary United Way (Bodil Dronkers) who will also provide a home base, office space, and meeting room facilities during the project.

4. Phase 4: Concordance

In the final phase we will examine the extent to which the findings / themes/ issues derived from the macro and micro perception, understanding, and experience of isolation/participation are concordant. This is particularly relevant for the understanding and design of appropriate intervention strategies, revision of current practices, and for the development of community resources to alleviate isolation.

5. Role of Community Partners

1. Federation of Calgary Communities: The FCC will play a major role in the in the academic as well as practical development of the project. They will be the key contact for liaison between the different parties, and will provide expert guidance in the design of the interview schedule and the training of students. They will assist in neighbourhood selection; coordinate community association interviews; advise on analysis of qualitative interviews; and provide office space for student researcher. The FCC will also play the lead role in adapting the findings to produce a community-based resource document of findings, best practices, and advice for local community associations. FCC will provide office space and admin support (telephone, computer, printer, photocopier etc. to student) and meeting space for project.

2. Calgary United Way: Calgary United Way will be a key partner in all stages of the project. They will support the RA in the development of the methodology and implementation. United Way will give the time of a Master of Social Work student, who will support the research and writing of a literature review that highlights trends in participation in community based organizations and processes. They will also advise on neighborhood selection; identify non-CA community organizations that should be interviewed in stage 2, identify and coordinate resident interviews in stage 3 ; advise on research design; and assist in the training of the RA to conduct resident interviews with dignity.

6. Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training

- An RA will be hired (if possible in conjunction with an MA student or U/G Honours Thesis student)
- Conduct interviews with CA, NPC, community groups, and residents
- Perform thematic analysis of interviews
- Assess relationships between neighbourhood income, income diversity, and isolation/barriers/participation.
- Report on findings (potential Honours Thesis).

7. Schedule (timeline of research tasks, including deliverables submission dates)

Jan – April 2016
- Phase 1 described above; Develop interview questions / interview schedule; Ethics approval

May – Aug 2016
- Training RA in interview methods; Phase 2 described above.

Sept – Dec 2016
- Phase 3 described above

Jan – April 2017
- Phase 4 described above; Preliminary Research Findings Report; Community Forum

May – Aug 2017
- Academic article(s); Plain language report for community partners, including CA's, faith groups, citizen organizations, and social agencies engaging in community development work

8. Outcomes / Deliverables

Academic deliverables:
- A journal article describing the ecology of participation in Calgary community-based organizations, and implications for collective efficacy research

Community deliverable:
- An accessible summary 'plain language' report on the research
- A resource for community-based organizations providing:
  - practical strategies for encouraging inclusivity
  - Barriers and enablers of inclusion
  - Indicators of social isolation
  - Best practices in encouraging inclusive, equitable community-based organizations
- Feedback to communities part of the research through Community Dialogue

9. Budget Explanation

- Much of the costs of this project will be for student RA expenses, and have been budgeted as a standard stipend for a one masters RA as per previous sub-grants. Reimbursement costs for professional /consulting expertise by FCC and UW staff (e.g. training, interviewing, and production of deliverables) for involvement with literature reviews, interviews, liaison with subjects, etc. is budgeted at $75/hr x 200 hours with 75 of the 200 hours as in-kind contribution from FCC. United Way is contributing $10,000 as in-kind service contributions (approx. 133 hrs at $75/hr).

- $2000 is included for a Community Forum following the project. This will cover space rental, transport, printing, advertising, facilitator, snacks, etc. $1000 of this cost will be –in-kind contributions from partners.

- Travel cost include a) $1000 regional conference/dissemination for either PI or RA, and b) 9 visits for PI to travel to Calgary for meetings, project interviews, coordination, etc. The latter includes mileage (9x434km x $0.49/km =1913.94) and PD meals (9x$50/day=$450) and accommodation (9x$100/night=900) for PI to travel to Calgary for meetings. Total travel = $3263.94.

- Student travel includes estimate of $1000 for mileage to travel to interviews (exact costs unknown).

☐ Sent to the NCRP's Research Advisory Board for comment: date __Dec 2015__ deadline: _____
☐ Funding approved by the NCRP's Board: $__33,135.__ date__10 December 2015__

Principal Investigator

SSHRC Budget Worksheet

	Amount requested from NCRP	Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)	Contribution source	Total Project Cost
Personnel costs				
Student salaries and benefits/Stipends				
Undergraduate *				
Masters *	620 hours @$25.00/hr plus 10% benefits= $17056.20	$9000 RA office space at FCC	FCC (partners)	$26056.20
Doctorate *				
Non-student salaries and benefits/Stipends				
Postdoctoral				
Other	$9375 (125 hrs)	$5625 (75 hrs) $10,000	FCC- Planner total of 200 hrs @ $75hr United Way Strategy Lead/others- services donated in-kind	$15000 $10,000
Travel and subsistence costs				
Applicant/Team member(s)				
Canadian travel	$4263.94 (see notes)	$1000	Univ Lethbridge travel fund	$5263.94
Foreign travel				
Students				
Canadian travel	$1000			$1000
Foreign travel				
Other expenses				
Non-disposable equipment (specify)				
Voice recorder	$140			$140
Other expenses (specify)				
Workshop for Community organizations including CA's	$1000	$1000	Facility space and equipment from FCC /UW	$2000
Printing	$300			$300
Total	**$33,135.00**	**$26,625.00**		**$59,760.00**