

Living in the Ethnic Neighborhood increases Co-ethnic Interaction: Myth or Reality?

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One of the key assumptions in race and ethnic studies is the association between sharing neighborhoods with co-ethnic members and more co-ethnic interaction (Alba and Logan 1991; Farley and Frey 1994; Massey and Denton 1988; Park 1950). Since the early hypothesis of the Chicago School suggests that physical distance reflects social distance, sharing neighborhoods with co-ethnic members always implies more co-ethnic social interaction. This idea was further forcefully reinforced by Massey and his colleagues in their spatial assimilation perspective (Massey and Mullan 1984). They argued that as individuals move out of their co-ethnic neighborhoods, they have less contact with their own group and more contact with other groups (Charles 2003).

This association has considerable application to the studies of race and ethnic relations. Studies of ethnic businesses have suggested that residential proximity fosters social interaction, which leads to the development of co-ethnic social capital (Nee, Sanders and Sernau 1994). In the study of ethnic conflict, Olzak (Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996) noted that racial and ethnic residential segregation leads to more group conflict as co-ethnic members have more opportunities to interact and can more easily share their grievances. Immigration studies have suggested that when immigrants first arrive in a new country, they stay close to their co-ethnic members for easy access to social support (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008).

Given the importance of this assumption in understanding race and ethnic relations, it is surprising that few studies have systematically examined the relationship between sharing neighborhoods with co-ethnic members and more co-ethnic interaction.

The examination of the relationship not only is relevant to race and ethnic studies, but also fits into the larger debate about social interaction patterns in contemporary society. Since the 1970's, a major theme in the discussion of social interaction patterns in society has been the narrow scope personal connection. Robert Putnam's (2000) publication with the effective analogy of "bowling alone"

gave the topic considerable public attention. In recent decades, people have maintained small numbers of personal connections, and researchers also suggest that they maintain fewer contacts in the community.

In his recent publication, Fischer (2011) succinctly summarized the sources of this limited social interaction at the individual and community levels. He argued that a wide variety of communication technologies makes communication less spatial and more virtual, that delaying marriage implies delaying settling down in a community, and that current job requirements lead to more people working long hours. On the other side of the debate, studies have suggested that individuals still maintain close and meaningful contact with friends and relatives (Fischer 2011). Some studies comment on the resilience of community (Keller 2003). Some even suggest that a gated community in today cities reinforces interaction within the community (Durington 2006). Despite the many publications reflecting this heated discussion, most of the studies do not differentiate ethnic background or immigrant population. Therefore, we do not know the relationship between immigrants residing in co-ethnic neighborhoods and co-ethnic interaction of specific groups.

In this paper, we merged the 2008 General Social Survey with the 2006 Canadian census to explore the relationship between the co-ethnic composition of neighborhoods and co-ethnic interaction among immigrant groups. The analysis is based on two questions in the GSS: "In the past month, have you done a favour for a neighbor?" and "In the past month, have any of your neighbors done a favour for you?" We used the questions on giving and receiving favors because anthropologists have demonstrated repeatedly that reciprocity and "giving gifts" are important elements of maintaining social interaction. In our study, we focused on four major minority immigrant groups (Chinese, South Asian, black, and Filipino) and four European immigrant groups (Italian, Polish, Portuguese, and Ukrainian). The majority of the included European immigrant groups arrived in Canada between 1940 and 1960,

whereas the majority of the included minority immigrant groups arrived after 1970. The study included 48 major cities in Canada.

Our findings show that, controlling for socioeconomic and demographic background, the proportion of co-ethnic members in a neighborhood does not relate to the likelihood of giving or receiving favors. This pattern applies to the immigrant population, Canadian born population, and even to individuals who recently experienced major life events and may need considerable social support. The findings have significant implications for our understanding of the dynamics of sharing neighborhoods with co-ethnic members and co-ethnic interaction.

Table 1. means or proportions of variables

Gave favours	0.608
Received favours	0.558
Proportion of own-group neighbours	0.104
Chinese (reference)	0.172
South Asian	0.138
Black	0.114
Filipinos	0.056
Polish	0.139
Ukrainian	0.159
Italians	0.181
Portuguese	0.040
Age	44.5
Women	0.572
Married (reference)	0.561
Widowed	0.053
Divorced or separated	0.103
Single	0.283
With a university degree (reference)	0.336
Some post secondary education	0.394
high school graduation only	0.113
Less than high school	0.157
Lowest income	0.087
low-middle income	0.135
Middle income	0.163
High-middle income	0.201
income missing	0.209
Highest income (reference)	0.205
Immigrant	0.511
In neighbourhood < 3 years (reference)	0.233
In neighbourhood 3 to 5 years	0.128
In neighbourhood over 5 years	0.267
Length of residence not stated	0.372
Toronto (reference)	0.341
Montreal	0.102
Vancouver	0.133
Other large metropolitan areas	0.222
Small metropolitan areas	0.153
Other cities	0.049
Proportion of immigrants in the neighbourhood	0.332

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

Table 2. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among selected minority groups in Canada

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.610 ***	0.571 ***	0.534 ***	0.566 ***	0.624 ***	0.626 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.202 ***	-0.026	-0.067	-0.159 **	-0.021	-0.019
South Asian		0.069 *	0.069 *		0.065	0.065
Black		0.095 *	0.096 *		0.102 *	0.102 *
Filipinos		0.048	0.043		0.027	0.027
Polish		0.104 *	0.104 *		0.119 *	0.119 *
Ukrainian		0.150 ***	0.153 **		0.193 ***	0.193 ***
Italians		0.111 **	0.116 **		0.143 **	0.142 **
Portuguese		0.075	0.077		0.003	0.002
Age		0.001	0.001		-0.001	-0.001
Women		-0.014	-0.015		0.014	0.014
Widowed		-0.147 *	-0.149 *		-0.117	-0.117
Divorced or separated		-0.087 *	-0.089 *		-0.133 **	-0.133 **
Single		-0.142 ***	-0.144 ***		-0.144 ***	-0.144 ***
Some post secondary education		-0.008	-0.008		-0.033	-0.033
high school graduation only		-0.039	-0.039		-0.038	-0.038
Less than high school		-0.016	-0.016		0.008	0.008
Lowest income		0.005	0.004		0.018	0.018
low-middle income		-0.036	-0.038		-0.065	-0.065
Middle income		-0.048	-0.049		-0.055	-0.055
High-middle income		-0.019	-0.019		-0.060 *	-0.060 *
income missing		-0.060 *	-0.060 *		-0.050	-0.050
Immigrant		-0.035	-0.038		-0.022	-0.021
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.128 ***	0.128 ***		0.031	0.031
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.083 **	0.083 **		0.012	0.012
Length of residence not stated		0.093 ***	0.093 ***		0.024	0.024
Montreal		-0.174 ***	-0.159 ***		-0.083 *	-0.084 *
Vancouver		-0.116 ***	-0.111 ***		-0.067 *	-0.067 *
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.057 *	-0.037		-0.079 *	-0.080 *
Small metropolitan areas		-0.019	0.004		-0.037	-0.038
Other cities		0.013	0.040		0.005	0.004
Proportion of immigrants			0.098			-0.005
N of observations	2572	2572	2572	2572	2572	2572
Adjusted R-squared	0.004	0.061	0.061	0.002	0.038	0.038

Note: p\*\*\* <0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

Table 3. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among selected European minority groups in Canada

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.652 ***	0.679 ***	0.712 ***	0.609 ***	0.681 ***	0.776 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.044 **	-0.019	-0.006	0.002	0.049	0.087
Age		0.001	0.001		0.000	0.000
Women		-0.012	-0.011		0.006	0.009
Widowed		-0.057	-0.056		-0.080	-0.076
Divorced or separated		-0.073	-0.071		-0.098	-0.092
Single		-0.145 ***	-0.143 ***		-0.150 ***	-0.145 ***
Some post secondary education		-0.028	-0.028		-0.025	-0.024
high school graduation only		-0.120 **	-0.122 **		-0.055	-0.059
Less than high school		0.000	0.000		0.040	0.039
Lowest income		-0.160 *	-0.160 *		-0.156 *	-0.155 *
low-middle income		0.019	0.021		-0.055	-0.049
Middle income		-0.009	-0.008		-0.059	-0.057
High-middle income		0.025	0.025		-0.035	-0.034
income missing		-0.038	-0.037		-0.059	-0.057
Immigrant		-0.104 **	-0.099 **		-0.114 ***	-0.100 **
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.083	0.083		0.060	0.063
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.049	0.050		0.023	0.026
Length of residence not stated		0.050	0.050		0.032	0.032
Montreal		-0.138 **	-0.154 **		-0.015	-0.063
Vancouver		-0.065	-0.071		0.010	-0.007
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.018	-0.037		-0.004	-0.060
Small metropolitan areas		0.017	-0.004		0.046	-0.018
Other cities		0.101	0.076		0.111 *	0.039
Proportion of immigrants			-0.090			-0.266 *
N of observations	1337	1337	1337	1337	1337	1337
Adjusted R-squared	0.000	0.052	0.051	0.000	0.028	0.031

Note: p\*\*\* <0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

Table 4. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among selected visible minority groups in Canada

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.548 ***	0.628 ***	0.539 ***	0.503 ***	0.693 ***	0.627 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.095	-0.100	-0.211 *	-0.050	-0.123	-0.206
Age		0.000	0.000		-0.001	-0.001
Women		-0.017	-0.021		0.015	0.013
Widowed		-0.189 *	-0.194 *		-0.114	-0.118
Divorced or separated		-0.085	-0.091		-0.147 *	-0.152 *
Single		-0.144 ***	-0.148 ***		-0.135 **	-0.139 **
Some post secondary education		0.011	0.013		-0.040	-0.039
high school graduation only		0.032	0.032		-0.034	-0.034
Less than high school		-0.009	-0.010		0.001	0.001
Lowest income		0.086	0.083		0.116	0.114
low-middle income		-0.086	-0.094		-0.075	-0.080
Middle income		-0.081	-0.083		-0.054	-0.056
High-middle income		-0.068	-0.070		-0.098 *	-0.100 *
income missing		-0.076	-0.074		-0.040	-0.038
Immigrant		0.032	0.022		0.053	0.045
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.154 ***	0.156 ***		0.015	0.016
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.108 **	0.110 **		0.014	0.016
Length of residence not stated		0.137 ***	0.133 ***		0.033	0.030
Montreal		-0.193 ***	-0.163 ***		-0.121 *	-0.098
Vancouver		-0.159 ***	-0.146 ***		-0.119 **	-0.109 **
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.105 *	-0.059		-0.145 ***	-0.111 *
Small metropolitan areas		-0.056	0.004		-0.133 *	-0.089
Other cities		-0.235	-0.162		-0.224	-0.170
Proportion of immigrants			0.234			0.175
N of observations	1235	1235	1235	1235	1235	1235
Adjusted R-squared	0.0004	0.054	0.057	0.000	0.028	0.029

Note: p\*\*\* < 0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census



Table 5. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among selected Canadian born ethnic groups in Canada

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.647 ***	0.687 ***	0.678 ***	0.604 ***	0.742 ***	0.759 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.414 ***	-0.253 *	-0.261 *	-0.342 **	-0.180	-0.164
Age		0.001	0.001		0.001	0.001
Women		-0.023	-0.024		0.005	0.005
Widowed		-0.192	-0.192		-0.223 *	-0.222 *
Divorced or separated		-0.054	-0.055		-0.130 *	-0.129 *
Single		-0.154 ***	-0.155 ***		-0.149 ***	-0.147 ***
Some post secondary education		0.044	0.044		-0.034	-0.035
high school graduation only		-0.037	-0.036		-0.063	-0.064
Less than high school		0.075	0.075		0.074	0.074
Lowest income		-0.070	-0.070		0.013	0.013
low-middle income		-0.002	-0.002		-0.040	-0.040
Middle income		-0.087	-0.087 *		-0.088	-0.088
High-middle income		0.006	0.006		-0.019	-0.019
income missing		-0.036	-0.036		-0.007	-0.008
Visible minority		-0.111 **	-0.112 **		-0.150 ***	-0.148 ***
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.189 **	0.189 **		0.034	0.034
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.070	0.070		0.001	0.000
Length of residence not stated		0.070	0.071		-0.016	-0.017
Montreal		-0.177 ***	-0.173 ***		-0.045	-0.054
Vancouver		-0.090	-0.089		-0.021	-0.024
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.087 *	-0.082		-0.071	-0.081
Small metropolitan areas		-0.042	-0.036		-0.041	-0.053
Other cities		0.008	0.015		0.000	-0.013
Proportion of immigrants			0.025			-0.049
N of observations	1257	1257	1257	1257	1257	1257
Adjusted R-squared	0.0112	0.086	0.085	0.002	0.053	0.052

Note: p\*\*\* <0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

Table 6. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among selected immigrant born ethnic groups in Canada

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.568 ***	0.622 ***	0.569 ***	0.521 ***	0.694 ***	0.693 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.059	0.006	-0.051	-0.020	-0.007	-0.008
Age		0.001	0.001 *		-0.001	-0.001
Women		-0.002	-0.003		0.020	0.020
Widowed		-0.124	-0.129		-0.065	-0.065
Divorced or separated		-0.101	-0.104		-0.123 *	-0.123 *
Single		-0.122 **	-0.124 **		-0.125 **	-0.125 **
Some post secondary education		-0.037	-0.036		-0.013	-0.013
high school graduation only		-0.040	-0.039		-0.020	-0.020
Less than high school		-0.062	-0.060		-0.015	-0.015
Lowest income		0.045	0.042		0.008	0.008
low-middle income		-0.058	-0.063		-0.091	-0.091
Middle income		-0.028	-0.030		-0.057	-0.057
High-middle income		-0.047	-0.049		-0.117 **	-0.117 **
income missing		-0.070	-0.071		-0.091 *	-0.091 *
Visible minority		-0.004	-0.009		0.003	0.003
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.079	0.079		0.017	0.017
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.094 *	0.093 *		0.014	0.014
Length of residence not stated		0.128 **	0.126 **		0.069	0.069
Montreal		-0.162 **	-0.145 **		-0.093	-0.092
Vancouver		-0.169 ***	-0.164 ***		-0.122 **	-0.122 **
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.044	-0.018		-0.094 *	-0.094 *
Small metropolitan areas		-0.016	0.018		-0.027	-0.026
Other cities		-0.047	-0.006		0.057	0.057
Proportion of immigrants			0.136			0.002
N of observations	1315	1315	1315	1315	1315	1315
Adjusted R-squared	0.000	0.039	0.039	0.000	0.017	0.157

Note: p\*\*\* < 0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

Table 7. Linear probability models predicting giving or receiving favors from neighbors among major minority groups, individuals who recently experience life events

	Giving favors			Receiving favors		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	0.616 ***	0.575 ***	0.536 ***	0.576 ***	0.585 ***	0.571 ***
Proportion of own-group neighbors	-0.152	-0.008	-0.051	-0.148	-0.040	-0.055
South Asian		0.099 *	0.098 *		0.150 ***	0.150 ***
Black		0.148 **	0.148 **		0.177 ***	0.177 ***
Filipinos		0.052	0.047		0.061	0.059
Polish		0.125 **	0.125 **		0.167 ***	0.167 ***
Ukrainian		0.148 **	0.151 **		0.214 ***	0.215 ***
Italians		0.147 **	0.152 ***		0.202 ***	0.203 ***
Portuguese		0.137 *	0.140 *		0.048	0.049
Age		0.002	0.002		0.001	0.001
Women		-0.037	-0.038		-0.001	-0.001
Widowed		-0.171 *	-0.174 *		-0.140	-0.141
Divorced or separated		-0.111 *	-0.115 *		-0.160 **	-0.162 **
Single		-0.155 ***	-0.157 ***		-0.159 ***	-0.159 ***
Some post secondary education		-0.008	-0.008		-0.021	-0.021
high school graduation only		-0.058	-0.056		-0.054	-0.054
Less than high school		0.022	0.022		0.048	0.048
Lowest income		0.073	0.072		0.060	0.060
low-middle income		-0.022	-0.025		-0.031	-0.032
Middle income		-0.019	-0.021		-0.039	-0.040
High-middle income		0.008	0.007		-0.030	-0.030
income missing		-0.037	-0.037		-0.016	-0.016
Immigrant		-0.064 *	-0.067 *		-0.050	-0.051
In neighborhood 3 to 5 years		0.104 *	0.104 *		-0.016	-0.016
In neighborhood over 5 years		0.063	0.064		-0.044	-0.043
Length of residence not stated		0.070 *	0.069 *		-0.023	-0.024
Montreal		-0.225 ***	-0.209 ***		-0.111 **	-0.105 *
Vancouver		-0.140 ***	-0.136 ***		-0.055	-0.054
Other large metropolitan areas		-0.080 *	-0.058		-0.100 **	-0.093 *
Small metropolitan areas		-0.043	-0.019		-0.066	-0.057
Other cities		-0.051	-0.023		-0.030	-0.020
Proportion of immigrants			0.104			0.036
N of observations	1722	1722	1722	1722	1722	1722
Adjusted R-squared	0.002	0.075	0.075	0.001	0.053	0.053

Note: p\*\*\* <0.05, p\*\* < 0.01, p\* < 0.1

Source: 2008 General Social Survey and 2006 Canadian census

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