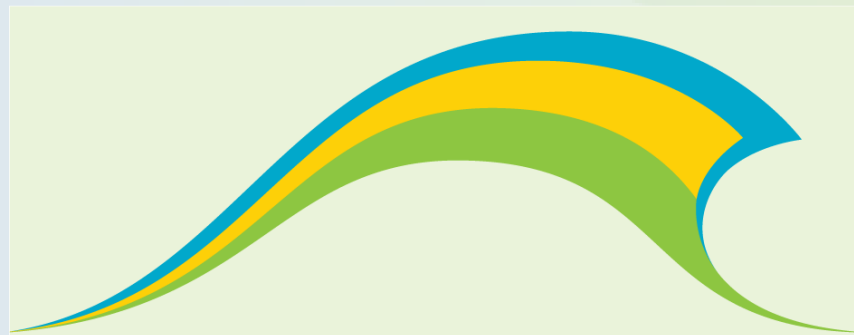


Governing Housing Co-operatives: *Recent Findings*

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la
DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE



Measuring the Co-operative Difference
RESEARCH NETWORK

A project of the

Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network

www.cooperativedifference.coop

in partnership with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada

www.chfcanada.coop

CATHERINE LEVITEN-REID

- Assistant professor in the MBA in Community Economic Development program at Cape Breton University.
- Researches organizational form, housing, social care and governance.



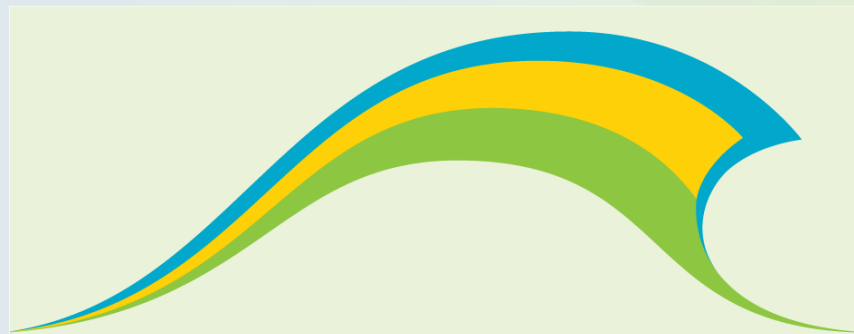
JUSTIN ELLERBY

- Has lived in, worked for, and served as a board officer for California housing cooperatives for 11 years.
- Served as the President of the North American Students of Cooperation, and also of the Davis, California-based Solar Community Housing Association.
- Currently pursuing an MBA in Community Economic Development at Cape Breton University, Nova Scotia.



Participation in Housing Co-operatives: Measuring the Benefits of Member Involvement

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la
DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE



Measuring the Co-operative Difference
RESEARCH NETWORK

Catherine Leviten-Reid

What is this Research About?

- I ask if people benefit when they are involved in their housing co-operatives.
- I look at three types of involvement in housing co-operatives: being on the board, helping with operational tasks (like maintenance) and planning social events.

What is this Research About?

- I am looking at whether or not being involved in housing co-operatives in these three different ways affects the following:
- people's **capabilities** (so whether or not they develop financial skills, operational skills, organizational experience, skills in working with others, and self confidence)
- their social ties (so friendships and stronger personal support)
- the ability of members to influence decisions over their housing.

What is this Research About?

- I am also looking at whether or not there are differing effects of involvement. By this I mean, for example, “Does being on the board benefit people differently from being involved in operational tasks or planning social events?”

What are Your Hunches?

- We typically have hunches, or hypotheses, when we start a research project. What do you think this research will find?
 - Does being involved in a housing co-operative benefit members? If yes, how? (you can draw upon your own experiences being involved in co-ops if you would like)
 - Do you think being on the board versus being involved in other ways leads to different or greater benefits? Why or why not?

Literature

There's a rich literature on the benefits of being involved in associations:

- Volunteering generally results in increased well-being (for example, Bowman et al., 2010; Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Lum and Lightfoot, 2005; Musick and Wilson, 2003)
- Volunteering fosters social connections (for example, Antoni, 2009; Townsend et al., 2014; MacNeela, 2008)
- Volunteering builds people's capabilities, including job-related skills and civic skills (Mündel and Shugurensky, 2008; Verba et al. 1995)

Literature

But there are gaps:

- Volunteering tends to be captured through yes/no variables or by amount of time, so we don't know how getting involved in specific tasks matters, if at all.
- The literature is based mostly on participation in non-profits, not co-operatives.

How this Research was Done

- I used a dataset from the Co-operative Housing Programs Evaluation conducted in 2001 and 2002 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2003) provided by CHF.
- 221 co-operatives across the country were randomly selected, as were members living in these co-ops.
- Survey participants (N=2,410) were asked if they, or someone in their household, had participated and how. They were also asked to speak to the perceived benefits related to their participation.
- Data were analyzed using logistic regression, which looks at the relationship between two variables while taking into account other ones (called control variables). The control variables included the length of time the household has lived in the co-operative, whether the household falls below the LICO, whether there is a member of a visible minority group in the household, and the size of the community in which the housing is located.

The Sample

Characteristics of households:

Length of time in housing: 15% less than 2 years; 42% between 2 – 7 years; 43% greater than 7 years

Living below the LICO: 52% of households

Member of a visible minority in the household: 11%

Size of community: 47% living in a community greater than 500,000; 21% between 100,000 and 500,000; 32% less than 100,000

Types of participation:

Served on the board: 52%

Helped with operational tasks: 66%

Organized social events: 45%

Results

Do members benefit when they participate in operational tasks?

Yes, they do. Specifically, they report that they gain:

- Organizational experience (25% greater odds of reporting this if they participate in operational tasks versus if they don't, $p < .05$)
- Financial skills (110% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Operational skills (421% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- An ability to influence decisions over the housing in which they live (39% greater odds, $p < .05$)

Results

Do members benefit when they participate in planning social events?

Yes, they do. Specifically, they report that they gain:

- Organizational experience (149% greater odds of reporting this if they participate in planning these events versus if they don't, $p < .001$)
- Financial skills (46% greater odds, $p < .01$)
- Operational skills (34% greater odds, $p < .05$)
- Skills in working with others (64% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Self-confidence (66% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Friends and strengthened personal support (96% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- An ability to influence decisions over the housing in which they live (80% greater odds, $p < .001$)

Results

Do members benefit when they are on the board of directors?

Yes, they do. Specifically, they report that they gain:

- Organizational experience (261% greater odds of reporting this if they are on the board versus if they aren't, $p < .001$)
- Financial skills (254% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Operational skills (204% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Skills in working with others (97% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Self-confidence (107% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- Friends and strengthened personal support (48% greater odds, $p < .001$)
- An ability to influence decisions over the housing in which they live (171% greater odds, $p < .001$)

Results

The second question I had was if members gain more from being involved in certain tasks. *The answer is yes.*

Financial skills, organizational experience, skills in working with others and self-confidence had the highest odds of being experienced if one served on the board of directors.

Gaining an ability to influence decisions over housing also had the strongest odds of being reported if an individual served on the board.

Developing operational skills was the exception, and had the highest odds of being experienced if one was involved in operational activities.

Gaining friends and a stronger support network was most likely to be experienced if a member organized social events.

What Does This Mean?

Overall, members do gain by being involved in their housing co-operatives.

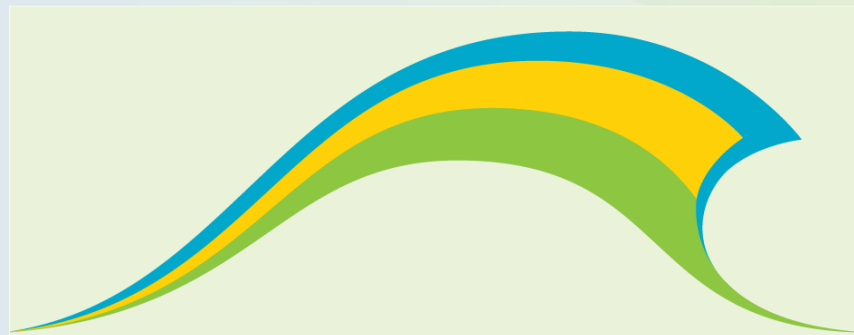
- Being involved in operational tasks leads to fewer outcomes, but it still has matters in terms of developing members' capabilities and their ability to influence decisions over their housing. This is important to think about as co-operatives consider reducing the amount of member involvement in day-to-day aspects of their associations.
- Engaging members through social events shouldn't be dismissed or overlooked either, as members gain through their involvement in these tasks.
- If the goal is to maximize the development of people's capabilities, then these results suggest it is through board involvement.

What Does This Mean?

- The findings also provide evidence that the co-operative model of housing fosters a sense of ability to influence the housing in which one lives.
- Finally, this contributes to our knowledge in the co-op sector about how getting involved in co-operatives leads to outcomes including learning; we often hear this, and this research provides evidence of how this the case.

Young Members' Involvement in Governance of Housing Co-ops

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la
DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE



Measuring the Co-operative Difference
RESEARCH NETWORK

Catherine Leviten-Reid, Assistant Professor
Justin Ellerby, research assistant

Cape Breton University

Research Question

Regarding young members' involvement in governance of housing co-ops, what are the:

- benefits to co-ops**
- benefits to young members**
- means of promotion**

Rationale

ICA's Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade (2013):

Identity

Participation

“... exploring [young people’s] mechanisms for forming and maintaining relationships, and considering whether established traditional mechanisms for participation and engagement can and need to be adapted.”

Rationale

“34% [of responding co-ops...] have 1 person under 30 years of age on their Board; 35% of those have more than one person under 30 on their Board.”

Students Commission report for CHF

Lit Review:

Volunteering among young people

- **Family, work and/or school may deter**
- **Self-oriented > altruism**

Benefits of volunteering in co-op governance

- **Learning in: self-governance, management, context of social housing, confidence**

Lit Review:

Promoting volunteerism in co-op governance

Foster social and educational activities

**Encourage emergent volunteerism, not
pre-formalized**

**Leverage opportunities for personal and
professional development**

Methods: Data

- **Sampling: co-ops and individuals referred to us by CHF**
- **Semi-structured interviews**
- **Among 6 housing co-ops:**
 - 4 staff**
 - 7 members under 30**
 - 7 members over 30**

Findings

Having YM on board is important

- **fresh ideas**
- **continuity**
- **fosters YMs' pride in community**

Findings

Strategies for engaging YM

- **promoting activities for < 18 y.o.**
- **face-to-face personal appeals**
- **little targeted policy**

Findings

Benefits to youth involvement

- **learning how co-ops run (interpersonal, technical, context)**
- **employability**
- **confidence**
- **community ties**

Findings

Barriers to engagement

- **each co-op is different**
- **personal circumstances**
- **initial lack of confidence**

Findings

Advice for fostering engagement

- **“Ask them!”**
 - **early and often**
- **But don't approach as “token young people”**

Discussion

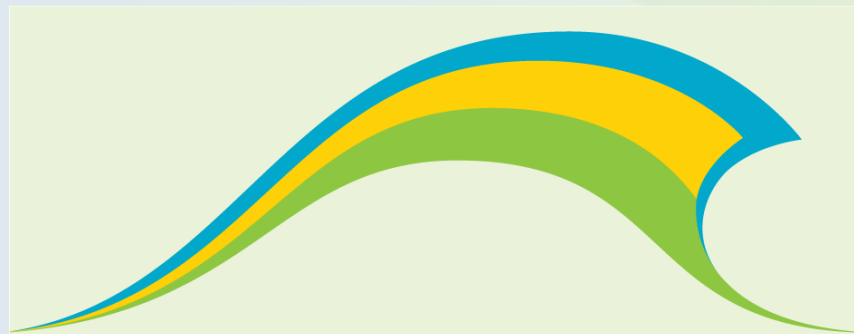
- **Learning outcomes similar to those found in the lit**
- **Enhanced social connections**
- **Part of broader culture of engagement within the co-op**
 - **Everyone has a role to play**

Thank you!

More project info at:

s.coop/1v3j3

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la
DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE



Measuring the Co-operative Difference
RESEARCH NETWORK

A project of the

Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network

www.cooperativedifference.coop

in partnership with the **Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada**

www.chfcanada.coop