

# Making friends at community organizations: How do place-based community organizations promote friendship formation?

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
Executive Summary .....	3
Background.....	3
Objectives .....	3
Results and Key Messages .....	3
Methodology .....	4
Making friends at community organizations: How do place-based community organizations promote friendship formation? .....	5
Background.....	5
The Challenges of Urban Community.....	5
Friendship Formation .....	6
Forming Diverse Friendships .....	7
The Social Infrastructure and Organizational Embeddedness Framework .....	8
Parks, Plazas and Commercial Establishments.....	8
Community Organizations and Friendship Formation .....	9
Methods: An Integrated Review .....	9
Results: The Situational Dynamics of Community Organizations .....	11
1. Place-based community organizations provide services and satisfy the needs and desires of participants through structured programming and activities that bring people together and facilitate interaction. Over time, with regular interaction, these programs create opportunities for friendship to emerge. ....	11
2. Place-based organizations design programs and activities to provide opportunities to make new friends, such as someone new to a neighbourhood looking to meet their neighbours, a young person trying to fit in, or a senior experiencing social isolation.....	12
3. Place-based community organizations that successfully promote friendship formation balance structured programs and activities with a safe space for informal interaction where conviviality, trust, and support allow a sense of mutuality to develop among participants.....	13
4. Staff and other leaders contribute to friendship formation by creating atmospheres that are safe, welcoming, convivial and supportive. Atmospheres that promote a sense of belonging among participants..	15
5. The physical structure of the place-based organizations successfully promotes friendship formation when they include both physical space for formal programs and activities, and physical space for informal conversations that go beyond immediate activities and allow participants to get to know one another. ....	17
6. Place-based community organizations promote friendship formation by providing opportunities for participants to meet others with similar experiences, backgrounds, and interests.....	19

7. Place-based community organizations promote diverse friendship formation when they attract a diverse mix of participants to the programs and activities of the organizations. Cultural differences of race, ethnicity and religion predominate, but making friends across age and class differences are also documented. ....	20
8. Regular interaction over time allows participants to recognize shared values, experiences and desires across differences of race, ethnicity, age and class. In addition, mutuality emerges as participants develop new interests together as a result of their participation. ....	22
Conclusions: Research Strengths and Gaps.....	24
Neighbourhood Houses: Community Building and Friendship in Diverse Contexts .....	25
A Closer Look: Programs and Activities at Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver.....	30
Conclusion .....	33
References .....	35
Appendix A .....	43

# **Making friends at community organizations: How do place-based community organizations promote friendship formation?**

## **Executive Summary**

### ***Background***

Neighbourhoods are often in flux. High residential mobility means neighbours often leave communities for new destinations. When new residents arrive, they may come from across town, across the nation, or across the ocean. This increased mobility brings strangers regularly into contact and introduces a diversity of backgrounds and experiences all of which creates challenges for building social connections. ***This report explores making new friends through participation in place-based community organizations.*** Friends comprise one of the core components of our intimate and social lives. They improve happiness and life satisfaction levels and provide support, services, and emotional and financial aid. The Emerging A-social Society includes individualizing pressures that contribute to loneliness and isolation with direct consequences for health and well-being, and indirect consequences such as attraction to conspiracy theories and anti-immigration attitudes. Social infrastructure, and place-based community organizations, in particular, provide a mechanism for promoting interaction and making new friends. Our review considers how situational factors including the physical spaces, regular programming and activities, and staff contribute to friendship formation.

### ***Objectives***

This report addresses the core question of how participation in place-based community organizations contributes ***to making new friendships within diverse local contexts.*** We provide a synthesis of the state of knowledge since 2010 and up to July 2022 concerning friendship and community building through participation in place-based community organizations. Our review focuses on academic research published in peer review journals. In addition, we provide a case study of neighbourhood houses as an example of a place-based community organization and take a closer look at the programming and activities of neighbourhood houses in the context of friendship formation.

### ***Results and Key Messages***

- Place-based community organizations provide services and satisfy the needs and desires of participants through structured programming and activities that bring people together and facilitate interaction. Over time, with regular interaction, these programs create opportunities for friendship to emerge.
- Place-based organizations design programs and activities to provide opportunities to make new friends, such as someone new to a neighbourhood looking to meet their neighbours, a young person trying to fit in, or a senior experiencing social isolation.
- Place-based community organizations that successfully promote friendship formation balance structured programs and activities with a safe space for informal interaction where conviviality, trust, and support allow a sense of mutuality to develop among participants.

- Staff and other leaders contribute to friendship formation by creating a safe, welcoming, convivial, and supportive atmosphere; Atmospheres that promote a sense of belonging among participants.
- The physical structures of place-based organizations successfully promote friendship formation when they include space for formal programs and activities and space for informal conversations that go beyond immediate activities and allow participants to get to know one another.
- Place-based community organizations promote friendship formation by providing opportunities for participants to meet others with similar experiences, backgrounds, and interests.
- Place-based community organizations promote diverse friendship formation when they attract a diverse mix of participants to the programs and activities of the organizations. Cultural differences of race, ethnicity and religion predominate, but making friends across age and class differences are also documented.
- Regular interaction over time allows participants to recognize shared values, experiences and desires across race, ethnicity, age and class differences. In addition, mutuality emerges as participants develop new interests together through their participation.
- Neighbourhood houses provide an example of a place-based community organization model that has been operating for over 100 years around the world. These organizations do not focus on a particular demographic group or a single activity. Instead, they appeal to a diversity of backgrounds and cater to a variety of interests. This model provides the opportunity for new, diverse friendships to emerge.

### ***Methodology***

We conducted the review in three steps. First, we discussed identifying keywords. We included keywords about people participating in place-based community organizations and programs and keywords that address making new friends and friendship formation among diverse groups. We did not consider literature about online organizations or programs. Second, we conducted a search using all identified keywords using *Summon*, the selected database of our university. Finally, we hand-searched the reference lists of selected articles and drew on the relevant knowledge and expertise of the research team to include additional literature.

Using Covidence, a literature review management software, we conducted two screening levels regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Two team members independently screened the title and abstract in the first screening level. In the second screening level, two team members independently screened the full text of the selected literature. In each level of screening, when there was a conflict, three team members would discuss resolving the conflict.

We found 786 items from the initial database search and through hand searches. After two levels of screening, we selected 36 items. We mapped the literature by domains: author, year of publication, location/country, target group, element of diversity, community organization or program, major effects on friendship and diversity, situational factors promoting friendship formation, and methodology of the study. After selecting the articles for review, at least two members of the team reviewed each article, noting key themes and selecting illustrative quotes. Nine results and key messages are listed above.

## **Making friends at community organizations: How do place-based community organizations promote friendship formation?**

Neighbourhoods are often in flux. High residential mobility means neighbours often leave communities for new destinations. When new residents arrive, they may come from across town, across the nation, or across the ocean. This increased mobility brings strangers regularly into contact and introduces a diversity of backgrounds and experiences all of which creates challenges for building social connections. *This report explores making new friends through participation in place-based community organizations.* Friends comprise one of the core components of our intimate and social lives. They improve levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Demir et al. 2015) and provide support, services, and emotional and financial aid (Wellman and Wortley 1990). The Emerging A-social Society includes individualizing pressures that contribute to loneliness and isolation with direct consequences for health and well-being, and indirect consequences such as attraction to conspiracy theories and anti-immigration attitudes (Hertz 2021; Hutson 2017; Messing and Sagvari 2019). Guided by the core question, *how does participation in place-based community organizations contribute to new friendships within diverse local contexts*, this report provides a synthesis of the state of knowledge since 2010 concerning friendship and community building through participation in place-based community organizations.

### **Background**

#### **The Challenges of Urban Community**

The challenges to friendship and social connection in complex urban contexts motivated early social scientists concerned with social change and urbanization (Simmel 1950; Wirth 1938; Durkheim 1975). These scholars observed the growing number of a person's encounters with strangers and many neighbours having little more than a passing familiarity with each other. Under these conditions, how can a sense of cohesion and solidarity emerge and be sustained? This early recognition of challenges associated with urbanization looked for solidarities developing through functional interdependence or direct social relations (Calhoun 2002).

These early scholars could not have anticipated the rich, complex, and varied types of diversity common in urban centres today. Vertovec (2007, 2019) describes these urban centres as super-diverse, reflecting changes in migration patterns unique to contemporary contexts. Initially, based on research in post-millennial London, the concept has been used in the immigrant-receiving countries of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Vertovec, Hiebert, Gamlen, and Spoonley 2020). Super-diversity describes a greater variety of ethnicities and complex diversities and divisions within ethnicities through intersections with sub-ethnicities, religious commitments, gender, age, and immigrant statuses. These new patterns bring new divisions. For some scholars, super-diversity creates possibilities for a convivial social life in urban neighbourhoods (Wessendorf 2016; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). Wessendorf (2016), for instance, finds that a commonplace sense of diversity emerges where residents take the differences of others for granted in encounters as a shared experience. Although some research suggests that increasing diversity raises concerns about declining social cohesion, civic and political engagement, and social interaction in local neighbourhoods and communities (i.e. Putnam 2007), Van der Meer and Tolsma (2014), in a review of 65 studies from around the world, find only limited support for this more pessimistic proposition.

In Canada, there appears to be evidence for both optimistic and cautious positions on the contributions of diverse neighbourhoods to friendship and social connection. Some research challenges the proposition of diversity leading to a decline in social cohesion (Harell and Stolle 2014; Harell and Deschatelets 2014). Diverse environments are not associated with declining social solidarity (Soroka et al. 2007), and youth with diverse networks are more trusting (Stolle and Harell 2013). There is, however, some evidence that the optimistic view of Canada is fragile. Stolle and Harell (2013) find less trust among adults with diverse networks and Hou and Wu (2009) find minority concentrations are associated with declines in social trust of neighbours among white residents. Recent public developments are also less optimistic. These include increases in anti-Asian violence and prejudice in cities like Vancouver during the global pandemic (Takeuchi 2020; Wu, Qian, and Wilkes 2021; Ho 2021). These concerns question the optimistic view of social cohesion in Canada.

## **Friendship Formation**

Theoretical approaches to friendship formation typically use an abstract sequential model to describe the process of making friends. Small and Adler (2019:113) suggest the probability of two strangers forming a relationship relies first on their coming into contact, and second on their decision to associate. This simple model preferences propinquity, or the nearness of people, in an environmental or territorial sense, which creates possibilities for them to meet (McPherson et al. 2001; Rivera et al. 2010; Fehr 2008). Past research has found that within residential buildings, residents on the same floor are likely to develop friendships (Festinger, Schacter, and Black 1950), and within residential neighbourhoods, neighbours on the same block develop closer friendships (Campbell 1990; Verbrugge 1979). In organizational settings, the proximity of offices and cubicles increases the likelihood of interaction and friendship (Kabo 2017; Davis et al. 2011). Propinquity, of course, does not guarantee the decision to associate.

Other, sequential models of friendship formation delve deeper into the decision to associate. Hallinan (1978:194) divides the decision to associate into four parts – a person desires a new friend, then acts to initiate a friendship, the potential new friend must recognize the overture, and then reciprocate the initiative. Perlman et al. (2015) summarize these early steps of friendship as *awareness* between two people of their friendship intentions. Network theorists, such as Johnsen (1986), view awareness as more than a dyadic process. Transitivity, for instance, suggests that if a person has two friends those two friends are also likely to form a friendship. Similarly, balance theory suggests that friends are likely to balance their attitudes about significant others – if one friend holds either a positive or negative view of a third person, the other friend is likely to adopt the same opinion of this third person. This balance of attitudes between friends towards others can make a new friendship more or less likely. Berschied and Reagan (2005) add mutual exchange and self-disclosure to these initial contact and awareness processes. Self-disclosure moves a connection from arms-length or polite towards a stronger bond between friends. Perlman et al. (2015) call this *mutuality* – openness leading to shared personal knowledge of one another, some sense of shared values and attitudes, and mutual support. As mutuality emerges, friends develop a deeper understanding of each other that moves beyond the initial reasons that brought them into contact. Emerging mutuality is a step in the direction of the close, intimate friendships many of us value.

The friendship formation processes of contact, awareness, and mutuality are enhanced by social contexts that include regular contact and interaction between two potential friends. Fehr (2008) describes the social context as a complex of situational

dynamics that affect contact and regular interaction of potential friends. These situational dynamics include structural aspects of interaction within contexts such as the frequency of interaction, familiarity, and the probability of future interactions (Fehr 2008:35-36). Network theorists add the importance of a shared focus of attention to the situational dynamics that affect friendship formation (Small 2009; Feld 1981; Feld & Carter 1998). Discussions of social infrastructure draw attention to how the physical arrangements of spaces guide and limit interaction, thereby affecting opportunities for friendship to emerge (Klinenberg 2018; Latham and Layton 2019; Lauer 2021). These situational factors guide interaction processes and thereby make friendship formation more or less likely.

### **Forming Diverse Friendships**

Friendships between people who recognize a similarity between themselves occur at higher rates than among those who are dissimilar. This is the well-known process of homophily (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954). Research finds this tendency occurs through the psychological mechanisms of attraction and choice as similarity signals ease of communication, and shared tastes (McPherson, et al. 2001, 435). Vincent, et al. (2018) consider homophily through the lens of Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and the habitus in particular. Bourdieu (1999) has proposed that early socialization shapes whom people see as their peer groups, potential friends, and "people like me." This, combined with his observation that people find it intolerable to be physically proximate and to interact with others who are socially distant from themselves can be seen as an explanation for homophilic tendencies (Bourdieu, 1999:128; Vincent et al. 2018:45). Though he doesn't use the concept, the pressures noted by Bourdieu can be seen to give rise to homophily. Bourdieu is open to the habitus being modified through experiences, and contact theory (Allport 1954; Pettegrew et al. 2011) provides insights into how forming new friendships can transcend these cognitive pressures toward similarity. The theory is primarily interested in positive relationship development, including tolerance and understanding, across race, ethnicity and gender divisions. However, the key mechanisms for reducing prejudices are very similar to those of friendship formation – contact and interaction over time while working on shared activities (Wright et al. 2008). This is an important connection with Fehr's (2008) situational dynamics and Feld's (1981; Feld & Carter 1998) focus theory. Research in contact theory finds that shared time working on collective activities, and the interactions that take place during that work, provide the opportunity for people to recognize similarities that break down typical dimensions of difference. While contact theory remains focused on prejudice reduction, it provides the framework for understanding friendship formation across differences.

Contact theory also includes a focus on the institutional context of friendship formation. In particular, organizational authority figures – their values and the direction they provide – can support or discourage the likely development of friendships that cross boundaries of difference. When intergroup interaction is supported by organizational authority figures, it is more likely to develop among participants. Similarly, Marwell and McQuarrie (2013) have pointed out that institutional structures – the formal and informal rules of the organization – add complexity and dynamic understanding of the contributions of organizations to social life. An organization's strategic mission or the priorities of its leaders may make diverse friendships and connections a priority and result in programs and activities with this explicit goal in mind.



## **The Social Infrastructure and Organizational Embeddedness Framework**

Social infrastructure described the variety of neighbourhood spaces that provide a context for sociality – informal encounters, the initiation of new connections, and the maintenance of existing friendships (Lauer 2021). In his book, *Palaces for the People*, Klinenberg (2018) uses the concept to describe the physical places and organizations that guide interactions in a community. Social infrastructure describes the physical surroundings that provide opportunities for connection. Small and Adler (2019) call this the spatial composition of neighbourhoods. Examples include public spaces like local parks and public markets, commercial establishments such as cafes and restaurants, and community organizations like churches, community centres and neighbourhood houses. Latham and Layton (2019), in a recent review of the literature, establish the importance of social infrastructure for local connection and integration. In our framework, people come together in these places, often for extended periods. Sometimes they engage in shared activities. This activity allows for relationships to form and persist. As Klinenberg (2018:5) suggests, robust social infrastructure, “fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbours.”

### ***Parks, Plazas and Commercial Establishments***

When located within diverse neighbourhoods, social infrastructure in the form of parks, plazas, and commercial establishments provide opportunities for encounters with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. For instance, Neal, et al. (2015) examined the social life of public parks, observing activities that include enjoying the fresh air, relaxing, taking children out, exercising, meeting friends, being among other people, experiencing nature, and eating/picnicking. They describe what they call ‘doing’ amongst ethnically different populations (468). This includes innumerable mundane, micro-social encounters with differences that occur regularly, such as a white British woman out walking her dog and saying hello to a Punjabi man whom she sees exercising regularly in the park. Other descriptions include people observing the activities and practices of those different from themselves as they socialize in the park or pursue other activities. These observations of difference by participants resemble what Anderson (2011) calls folk ethnography. Anderson finds folk ethnography important as it provides a level of understanding of difference and tolerance that may change the feeling of discomfort around differences and recognize similarities with others.

Anderson (2011) conducts his research in a diverse context within small commercial establishments such as cafes and restaurants. In these settings, he finds proximity can lead to longer, more in-depth conversations. For instance, he details a conversation he had with a white man who admitted to holding some racist attitudes. As an African-American man, Anderson found the conversation stimulating and considered it an example of the positive, and honest encounters with differences that can take place in these settings. These are not exactly the difficult conversations of living together that Amin (2002) describes, but they step in this direction by including potentially divisive topics. Like public spaces, commercial establishments create opportunities for encounters that can lead to conversations and increased understanding of those different from ourselves. However, they offer fewer opportunities for forming new connections and friendships. Neal et al. (2015) document many occasions for friends to use parks to maintain existing friendships, but few encounters that lead to new friendships. The informal qualities of activities in these spaces do not lend themselves to the friendship formation processes described above. Community organizations, in contrast, do often create the situational dynamics that lend themselves to making new friends.

## **Community Organizations and Friendship Formation**

The organizational embeddedness perspective (Small 2009a; Marwell and McQuarrie 2013; Lauer 2021) suggests that we view community organizations as potential producers of social connection and integration. From our perspective, the activities, programming, and goals of community organizations bring people together into repeated interactions, often for extended periods and with a shared focus of attention creating the situational dynamics that encourage friendships to emerge. In addition to structuring situational dynamics, community organizations also include an institutional dimension including formal and informal rules and practices that guide the day-to-day practices of staff and the interactional dynamics of members (Small 2009; Marwell and McQuarrie 2013).

### **Methods: An Integrated Review**

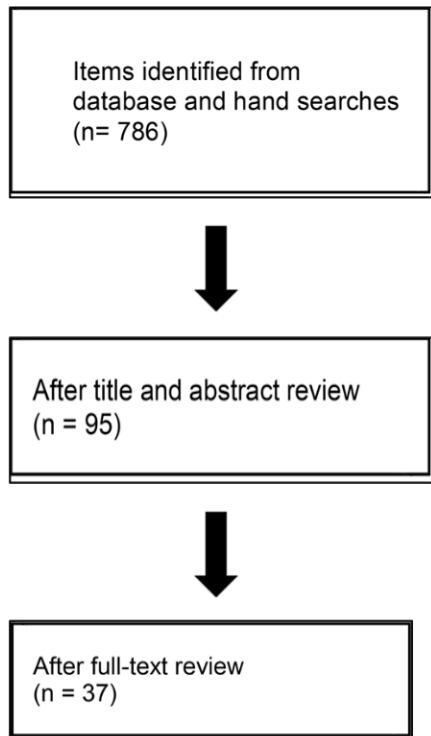
The guiding question of our review is: How do situational factors in place-based community organizations promote friendship formation among diverse groups? All authors participated in the review conducted from June to August 2022. We included keywords about people participating in place-based community organizations and programs and keywords that address making new friends and friendship formation among diverse groups. This review considered any literature about community organizations or programs which promote friendship formation among diverse groups. We did not consider literature about online organizations or programs.

**Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
Literature about place-based organizations or programs	Literature about online organizations or programs
Literature about friendship and social ties	
Literature about diversity	
Literature since 2010	Literature before 2010
Peer-reviewed literature	Non-peer-reviewed literature
Literature in English	Literature in languages other than English
Literature in the fields of Sociology, Geography, Social Work and Welfare, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Sciences, Social Sciences	Literature in fields other than Sociology, Geography, Social Work and Welfare, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Sciences, Social Sciences

We conducted the review in three steps. First, we discussed identifying keywords. Second, we conducted a search using all identified keywords using the selected database of our university. Finally, we hand-searched the reference lists of selected articles and

drew on the relevant knowledge and expertise of the research team to include additional literature. We uploaded all identified literature into Covidence, a literature review management software, and deleted the repetitions. We conducted two screening levels



regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Two team members independently screened the title and abstract in the first screening level. In the second screening level, two team members independently screened the full text of the selected literature. In each level of screening, when there was a conflict, three team members would discuss resolving the conflict. We included literature since 2010, peer-reviewed, and in English only.

We found 786 items from the initial database search and through hand searches. After two levels of screening, we selected 37 items. We excluded items because they were not about place-based community organizations or programs, were not related to friendship formation, or did not otherwise fit the review purpose. We mapped the literature by

domains: author, year of publication, location/country, target group, element of diversity, community organization or program, major effects on friendship and diversity, situational factors promoting friendship formation, and methodology of the study. A detailed extraction table can be found at (XXX).

After selecting the articles for review, at least two members of the team reviewed each article, noting key themes and selecting illustrative quotes. From this process, we identified eight key findings from the literature that contribute to the understanding of friendship formation through participation in place-based community organizations in diverse contexts. We elaborate on these eight key findings in the following section.

Table 2. Description of Materials (N=37)

	%
Methodology	
Quantitative	32%
Qualitative	60%
Mixed Methods	8%
National Context	
Australia	22%
Canada	16%
Hong Kong	3%
Ireland	3%
Germany	3%
Spain	3%
United Kingdom	22%
United States	30%

## **Results: The Situational Dynamics of Community Organizations**

### **1. Place-based community organizations provide services and satisfy the needs and desires of participants through structured programming and activities that bring people together and facilitate interaction. Over time, with regular interaction, these programs create opportunities for friendship to emerge.**

If making friends can be examined as a sequential process, the first step in that process is people coming into contact and becoming aware of each other. In this model, contact is more than a simple one-time encounter. For contact to include awareness, and potential friendship formation, ideal situational dynamics include repeated interactions over time with some activity or intention providing a focus of attention. The programs and activities at place-based community organizations provide a context for these types of contact.

The place-based community organizations in the research we review in this report provide programs and activities with a wide variety of purposes. Many organizations provide services and address needs among particular groups. These include case studies of community centres that serve LGBTQ+ groups (Huynh 2022; Ueno et al. 2012), and centers serving the local community (Colistra 2019; Shinwell et al. 2021; Coll-Planas 2017; Hutchinson and Gallant 2016). There are also close examinations of specific programs taking place at community organizations that serve the needs of groups such as youth (Shinwell et al. 2021; Laurence 2019), refugees and newcomers (Droplet and Moorthi 2018), veterans (Gorman et al. 2018), and seniors (Coll-Planas 2017; Hutchinson and Gallant 2016). Religious organizations such as churches or mosques are important (Campbell et al. 2016; Wilkinson et al. 2016; Oh 2020; Spring et al. 2019; Nguyen et al. 2013). Some studies examine organizations and programs focused on leisure activities (Dolley 2020; Palmer and Kawakami 2014; Tacon 2019).

The wide variety of centres, programs, and activities speaks to the diversity of pursuits that are possible within the broader place-based community organization classification. Participants are drawn to these activities by motivations that provide a focus of attention while interacting with others. These foci, combined with the regularity of participation over time provide the opportunity for friendships to emerge. Colistra et al. (2019) for example, examine regularly recurring programs and friendship processes in their qualitative case study at an urban community center in the Southeast United States. They find friendships are formed through programs and activities that meet regularly - often multiple times a week or even daily. Using in-depth interviews and focus groups among participants at the center, the authors show the many ways participation in regular programming leads to friendship formation. One participant, Barbara, describes how the members of a seniors program that meets multiple days a week have bonded, "I think it is really the program what brings us all together, when we join in and do things together as a group, and that connects us, you know." Jaqueline participated daily in an after-school program with her child. She described a close friendship with another parent with children the same age that formed because they were meeting at the center four or five days a week.

The qualitative research we review documents the processes of friendship formation that follow from programs and activities providing contact and awareness with some depth and understanding from the participants themselves. These patterns are also evident in the quantitative research that examines the importance of regular contact over time through participation in community organizations. A common approach of

quantitative research on participation in community organizations uses large sample survey data to examine respondents' variation in participation in community organizations (sometimes called civic or voluntary associations) without specifying a particular organization (Wang and Morav 2021; Village et al. 2016; Muntz et al. 2022; Benton 2015; Lee and Tan 2019; Lauer 2022). Village et al. (2016) limit their analysis to protestant churches, but similarly, not a specific church. Often these examinations are limited to a comparison of participators and non-participators (Wang and Morev 2021; Lauer 2022; Benton 2015). Other quantitative approaches provide more details on the variety of participatory approaches. Muntz et al. (2022) add a distinction between active and passive participation. Village et al. (2016) capture the length of time since joining and the frequency of attendance. Lee and Tan (2019) similarly distinguish respondents that visit an organization more than once a week and at least once a week from others. Overall, this research finds that respondents who participate in community organizations are more likely to have access to social support (Muntz et al. 2022; Lee and Tan 2019), friendships among people similar to themselves (Village et al. 2016), and friendships that cross boundaries of difference (Benton 2015; Lauer 2022; Wang and Morav 2021). Village et al. (2016) for instance, use the Australian National Church Life Survey, which includes over 60,000 respondents participating in over 2000 Protestant churches. They find that those who have participated in congregation activities are more likely to report that making friends is easy.

Other quantitative projects take a case study approach to examine specific organizations (Nguyen et al 2013; Ueno et al. 2012) to look at a specific program (Coll-Palanas et al. 2017; Temple and Stanish 2011) or a specific program across multiple organizations (Austen et al. 2020; Laurence 2019). These more specific approaches reach similar conclusions about making friends through programs and activities, typically with more detail about participation. Nguyen et al. (2013), for instance, find that among participants at a local Mosque, more frequent attendance and more intense engagement in the congregation is associated with social support from friends.

These quantitative projects provide a sense of the scale at which participation can result in new friendships, and in the case of Laurence's (2019) quasi-experimental design, can suggest the causal connection between regular participation in community organization programs and activities and new friendships formed. The qualitative case studies complement these findings with an in-depth look at regular participation and friendship formation processes. Coll-Planas et al. (2017), for instance, examine a 15-week program for seniors that included weekly meetings of 1.5 hours. After two years, they find that 24 of 25 participants maintained at least one friend from the program and that 17 maintained contact with 3 or more of those new friends. Tacon (2019) examines local sporting clubs where people remain members for many years. Cricket clubs include weekly matches with the same group of players coming together as a team. As one member describes making friends, "I didn't really make an effort at the [cricket club], but it just happened."

## **2. Place-based organizations design programs and activities to provide opportunities to make new friends, such as someone new to a neighbourhood looking to meet their neighbours, a young person trying to fit in, or a senior experiencing social isolation.**

The structured interaction of programs and activities at place-based community organizations provides the foundation for friendship formation, but they are typically organized for other purposes. However, in some instances, these community

organizations have designed programs and activities with the explicit purpose of building new friendships. Ueno et al.'s (2012) study examined gay, lesbian, and transexual youth personal networks. From their study, some gay, lesbian, and transexual organizations provided programs intending to support the youth to make friends with peers coming from the gay, lesbian, and transexual communities. As suggested in the article, "GLB organizations ... explicitly set friendship development as a primary goal in designing social events, workshops and counselling."

The program examined in Coll-Planas et. al.'s (2017) research was a program for seniors in social isolation designed by a senior community centre in Spain. The stated purpose of this program was to build friendships. Through different activities (e.g., gatherings, handcrafts) seniors met and interacted with each other. This resulted in new friendships, as suggested in the article:

*Improvements in social and emotional loneliness suggest the possible efficacy of the intervention in building new and effective friendships. The intervention might also have triggered a change in their perception of social support.*

Through the experience of making friends in the programs, people's friends-making capabilities were enhanced, allowing them to make even more friends.

Hemingway and Jack (2013) examine a network of 'friendship clubs' in southern England. These clubs are targeted at seniors to build local friendships. They meet weekly for two hours. Each club includes a staff member who assures access and transportation for members, trains volunteers and runs the clubs in cooperation with members. Activities are organized, chosen, and co-designed with staff and volunteers. They include card games, guest speakers, and occasional outings. As the authors describe:

*The clubs are therefore in essence, social clubs devoted to giving older people the opportunity to meet new and old friends in order to develop quality, meaningful, reciprocal relationships.*

The authors find that new friendships are formed that provide support in times of grief, provide a sense of belonging when moving to a new location, and in some cases provide a sense of identity and belonging.

These examples show that, although not the majority, programs and activities at place-based community organizations sometimes have making new friends as their primary goal.

### **3. Place-based community organizations that successfully promote friendship formation balance structured programs and activities with a safe space for informal interaction where conviviality, trust, and support allow a sense of mutuality to develop among participants**

Friendships become stronger as people develop a deeper understanding of each other that moves beyond the initial roles or intentions that brought them together. To reach this point, friends engage in self-disclosure, recognition of shared values and mutual support in the relationship. Community organizations that provide safe and trusting spaces and allow for informal interaction and fun are most successful at supporting the emergence of friendships beyond the initial intentions that brought individuals together.

Not all the research we review delves into the deeper elements of friendship that go beyond the immediate context of the programs or activities bringing them together. This

is likely due to the limited time frame of the research. Despite this, discussions of friendships becoming deeper and more intimate are very common across the projects we review. In their examination of Veterans' Coffee Socials organized at local place-based community organizations, Gorman et al. (2018) find that one reason these programs successfully continue is due to the relationships that develop outside of the weekly meetings. These include other informal social activities, like a weekly pancake breakfast organized by one of the veteran participants, and they also include relationships of social support that are active outside of the regular meetings. Hemingway and Jack (2013) found seniors who participated in friendship clubs in the UK developed meaningful friendships that lasted. These seniors not only make new connections but enjoyed the companionship and emotional support such as empathy and space to discuss shared experiences. For instance, some seniors who lost loved ones made new friends after moving to be closer to family and found support throughout the grieving process. They describe feeling that they always have someone to talk to about problems or concerns and viewed themselves as assets for each other offering support, advice, and friendship.

Hemingway and Jake (2013) note that the organizers of the friendship clubs consider the underlying philosophy of the groups to be 'fun and friendship'. They also integrated opportunities for informal conversation over tea and cake into the meetings. The importance of informal conversation allowing for sharing and mutual understanding is clear in Palmer and Kawakami's (2014) examination of knitting groups located in a city in Southwest USA. The knitting clubs included groups of women who met weekly to knit together, share ideas for projects, and give advice or help with knitting problems. In one group, informal conversations while knitting often veered to personal conversations shared with the group. In one meeting, for instance, the conversation surrounded a member's difficulty coping with a medical problem in their family. Other members asked questions, offered sympathy, and made suggestions for how to improve the situation.

Respondents in Collistra et al.'s (2016:9) examination of a community center in the Southeast United States describe these kinds of deeper friendships. Barbara, for instance, says, "I always say she is my friend, she is always thinking of me, she does all these little things, things I don't even expect, it is good to have people who really care." Another participant Karen describes one of her friendships, "anytime I need her or have a question or something new is going on, she always contacts me and lets me know what is going on." Participants regularly expressed the importance of social support and trust in the formation of their new relationships, and trust was one of three core themes the authors found contributed to relationship development at the center.

The importance of a welcoming and trusting atmosphere contributing to the ease of friendships emerging was common in this research. Wilkinson et al. (2017) find a sense of being welcome in their examination of the settlement experiences of Sudanese youth in Australia participating in a youth group organized by a local church. As one youth described (216), "They are really friendly and we get along with each other and we are good friends and all that...when I am with them, I feel really happy and welcome." This sense of being welcome and having fun translated to one participant feeling comfortable sharing with others in the group (2016), "I had a lot of fun in the winter camp, so I was more than happy to tell them what I think about the winter camp - I wasn't so nervous. I usually get nervous when talking in front of everyone."

The importance of having fun is another element of creating informal spaces that allow mutuality to develop. One of Nolan et al.'s (2012: 182) participants in an antenatal class says this plainly, "We actually have a really good laugh together...It's important to

have a lot of fun.” Cantillon and Baker (2022) capture the importance of informal interaction and fun in their case study of a community-based jazz heritage museum in Australia. Using a combination of ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews with 26 participants, they find that the museum builds friendship and community beyond the focus on preserving jazz heritage. One participant found the conviviality of the organization from the beginning of his involvement:

*One of the things I was struck with when I came here was the effervescent style of operation...The people were great to work with, meet, and have a joke and laugh with. We don't take ourselves too seriously here, we have a lot of fun – as I'm sure you would have evidenced when you first came in this morning and heard the laughter and camaraderie that existed between the people.*

The organization is volunteer-run, and this element of fun is what participants say keeps them coming back to do the work. Others describe the lightness of the activities associated with the organization. The authors find the convivial quality of interaction promotes the formation of friendship. The opportunity to have fun together provides participants with a sense of belonging and acceptance. This leads to support among members as they experience grief through the loss of a spouse or other health-related setbacks in their lives. The participants describe this simply as looking after each other, and it extends to support such as taking a new friend to their doctors' appointments and other similar mutual aid activities.

Tacon (2019) finds something similar in his examination of recreational sports clubs in the UK. In his interviews with members of a cricket club, one participant specifically addresses the opportunities for fun outside regular activities for building stronger relationships. He points out that, despite the emphasis on league standings, etc. he thinks the most important part of the club is a long weekend tournament getaway each year. At his second tournament he explains the moment when he felt his relationship with other members became more intimate:

*We basically got absolutely wasted every night...we had a great time. And we won the tourist of the year award [laughing], which is normally a cricketering award for being the best cricketer on the tour. It wasn't, it was basically for Jill and me being the best tourists, for getting absolutely hammered! I think that was when I thought I was part and parcel of the team.*

These opportunities to step away from the core activity of the organization, in this case playing cricket competitively, allow members to have fun and build relationships beyond the specific activities and interests that brought them together.

#### **4. Staff and other leaders contribute to friendship formation by creating atmospheres that are safe, welcoming, convivial and supportive. Atmospheres that promote a sense of belonging among participants.**

Staff and other leaders in community organizations provide another unique contribution to successful friendship formation taking place in these locations. On one hand, these leaders initiate, design, and implement the programs and activities that bring people together. The veterans' groups examined by Gorman et al. (2018) trained veterans to be peer facilitators of the groups. These facilitators then organized and lead new



veterans' groups by making connections with local service organizations and making personal invitations to veterans they knew.

Staff and leaders make additional contributions by creating safe, welcoming, convivial, and supportive atmospheres, which facilitates a sense of belonging and friendship. In some cases, this work is as simple as improving accessibility. The staff and volunteers in Hemingway and Jack's (2013) study about older adult friendship clubs provided these simple supports as illustrated in this paragraph from the article:

*Through the way the clubs are organized they provide the means (transport, accessible locale, and support) for the older age group to meet up and engage, so that they may form significant friendships and support each other.*

This support, including providing seniors with transportation to the clubs, set up a supportive atmosphere. Under this atmosphere, older adults came together, supported each other, and built new friendships.

In other studies, the staff and volunteer contributions came from the interaction strategies designed as activities in the program. In Nolan et al.'s (2012) study about mothers' experience of making friends in an antenatal class, many of the research participants mentioned the facilitators. These facilitators used different ways to encourage members to connect with each other. This built a supportive environment and enjoyable experience for the mothers, as mentioned below:

*The formation of friendships and group bonding during classes were assisted by the use of interactive teaching methods such as "working in pairs . . . mini discussions in the group" (Claudia), "group work" (Jessica), and being given opportunities "to speak to the others" (Lucy). The attitude and behavior of the facilitator were critical.*

In their organization of the time in the program, these facilitators encouraged participants to engage in the kind of self-disclosure that allows deeper friendships to form. Sometimes this engagement spilled over to interactions outside of the program:

*Lucy's facilitator had made particular efforts to encourage the group to meet after classes had finished. She was very keen on discussing with us the benefits of this kind of group and how useful we might find it and enjoyable . . . she even gave us some dates [to meet] then and there so we could pencil them in our diaries. (Lucy)*

This engagement outside the structure of the program encourages the deepening of friendship beyond the core activities of the program that brought the group together.

Staff and leaders also create the context for friendship to flourish by encouraging an atmosphere of fun and belonging. The study by Palmer and Kawakami (2014) examined two knitting groups, with one led by Kay. The authors found Kay's informal approach to creating a welcoming and fun atmosphere important. When a new member was joining the group, Kay used her sense of humour to create a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. This made everyone laugh and helped the new member feel welcome. A sense of cohesiveness developed in the group. The following paragraph captures the ways Kay created this atmosphere by making everyone in laugh by "teasing" a new member for not knitting the right way:

*The Fiber Fun group was inclusive of newcomers and old members. On the first day of attending the group for participant observation, Kay teased the*

*senior author for not knitting the "right" way soon after she sat down with the group. Everyone laughed and a few people said that Kay tells everyone they're not knitting correctly unless they are knitting continental style (knitting with the yarn in one's left hand, a European method). This type of teasing, about not knitting the "right" way, was observed at several different meetings and with other first-time visitors. Kay's recurring teasing helped old and new members of the group feel more connected and part of the group, in the same way, the senior author felt accepted by the group immediately after Kay's teasing followed by everyone's cheerful laughter. Just as management gurus use humor effectively to build cohesiveness in their audiences (Greatbatch & Clark, 2003), Kay uses humor to help group members feel included and create a stronger sense of cohesiveness.*

The importance of this atmosphere is clear in their comparison with the second knitting group. There, the leaders were not able to cultivate a welcoming context which made new friendships uncommon. Other studies find similar examples of leaders cultivating a welcome sense of belonging and fun. In their examination of participation at a heritage museum, Cantillon and Baker (2022) note the many respondents who mention Mel as being a "Particularly caring person" who "Looks after everyone's health and welfare." In Dolley's (2020) examination of community gardens, garden leaders are similarly noted by participants: "Daisy is a real sweetie. She holds everybody together." "Mandy's really been the leader and she's great. She's really friendly." Staff and leaders not only create the structural context of regular interaction that allows the potential for new friendships to form, they also create the social atmosphere that allows mutuality to emerge between new friends.

**5. The physical structure of the place-based organizations successfully promotes friendship formation when they include both physical space for formal programs and activities, and physical space for informal conversations that go beyond immediate activities and allow participants to get to know one another.**

Social infrastructure describes the spatial composition of the neighbourhood and includes those physical places in the community where people come together in interaction. Despite this emphasis on the physical space and the location of the organization in a neighbourhood or community, only a few articles address these aspects of social infrastructure directly.

Dolley (2020), for instance, in a study of three community gardens in Australia, finds that being centrally located and easily accessible contributes to vibrant social life at the gardens. Her research involved direct observation and in-depth interviews with members of three community gardens located in three different cities. Members of these gardens found participation created a sense of place and belonging in the local neighbourhood. Dolley (2020) describes a dynamic social life at these gardens that contribute to the sense of community and local belonging of members. For some, particularly those new to the area, this social life leads to emerging new friendships. One participant described this process directly, "The way we met when we first moved here was through the garden. One of the girls got married and we went to the wedding. One plays in a band and we go and see them. We go bushwalking together (150)." In this way, friendships at these gardens appear to move from compartmental friendships to close, intimate friends.

Easy accessibility appears to be one of the factors leading to regular, repeated interactions which contribute to the friendship formation success of these organizations. Members describe the ease and pleasure of walking home from work and stopping at the garden. This might include a chance to decompress while watering and weeding, or a chance to pick up some items for the evening's dinner (Dolley 2020:148). The central location of community organizations makes access easy, increasing the regular interactions of members, which allows for friendships to form. Maintaining a community garden requires work and shared tasks, but members also share the fun of spending time together. Dolley notices many toys scattered around the space, and members share their enjoyment of spending time together outside. As one member says, "It is pleasant to come and talk to people."

Interestingly, one of the gardens Dolley observed was less accessible. Visiting required a short drive for most members and a steep embankment made walking to the garden difficult for residents. While Dolley still found this garden contributed to a sense of community and built friendships, she could also recognize the different social dynamics this lack of accessibility had on the social life of the organization. The social outcomes of different physical space arrangements were also a focus of Palmer and Kawakami's (2014) comparison of two knitting clubs located in a city in Southwest USA. The knitting clubs included groups of women who met weekly to knit together, share ideas for projects, and give advice or help with knitting problems. The authors find that these groups developed elements of compartmental friendships as regular participants are familiar with each other after regular participation, and they easily engage with each other around the tasks and challenges of knitting.

Interestingly, one group was more successful in transitioning to casual and close friendships. They attribute this, in part, to the physical setup of the knitting spaces. The members of Fiber & Fun all sat in a large circle facing each other. Chairs, a sofa, and a loveseat all faced the centre and assured that all conversations were heard by all those present. When newcomers arrived, space was made in the circle. The space was also small so members sat quite near each other. Conversations involved the whole group, and the intimacy supported conversations beyond knitting that allowed for mutuality to develop among members. The members of Yarn & More did not sit in a circle, but rather at a few separate tables. There was also more space, which allowed for the spreading out of those tables. Overall, the social life at Yarn & More was less inclusive of the whole group. The result was fewer conversations among the whole group, and compartmental friendships were more common. One group of close friends did emerge (the Lace Ladies), but the physical setup limited the size of this group.

Tacon (2019), in a study of two voluntary sports organizations in the UK, draws our attention to flexible spaces for informal interactions. Conducting a comparative case study of a tennis and cricket club, he engaged in participant observation at both clubs and a series of 23 in-depth interviews with members. He finds many examples of members developing close friendships with other members. As one member says, "Like Marion, she joined around the same time as me and I know her really well. I've been on holiday with her on numerous occasions. So, there are people like that who I know really well, and, you know, would expect to see in my house from time to time (891)." The formal activities of the clubs bring people together into interaction regularly over time with a shared focus of attention that allows for the potential of friendships to emerge. However, this formal regularity benefits from physical spaces that allow for more informal interactions as well. As one respondent says, "One aspect of being a member of the club is that often people just sit down and talk after matches and things like that [...] there's a

whole process of social interaction which wouldn't take place if you weren't a member." Informal spaces appear to provide opportunities for mutuality to emerge between members who engage in regular activities over time at the club.

These examples show that the material structure of community organizations – their geographic location, arrangement of space, and informal spaces – have an important impact on friendship formation outcomes. Perhaps it is important to note that the physical and material factors described here are not solely natural constraints. Where to locate a community garden and the setup of a meeting space both reflect planning decisions. Proper attention to these physical components of community organizations can improve friendship formation opportunities for participants. Given that social infrastructure describes physical spaces, perhaps it is surprising that more research does not focus on this aspect of community organizations. This is something future research can address.

## **6. Place-based community organizations promote friendship formation by providing opportunities for participants to meet others with similar experiences, backgrounds, and interests.**

We know that people are more likely to develop friendships with others whom they consider similar to themselves. Known as homophily, this may be the result of the ease of communication and recognized shared interests in the moment, or perhaps reflect deep-rooted understandings of whom we are based on our upbringing. Place-based community organizations provide a mechanism for bringing people together that allows for these recognitions of similarity to occur and for friendship to emerge.

Friendship and homophily are common in the literature we review (Wessendorf 2016; Oh 2020; Campbell et al. 2016; Nolan et al. 2012; Colistra et al. 2019; Nguyen et al. 2013; Village et al. 2016). Colistra et al. (2016) for instance document the friendship processes at an urban community center in the Southeast United States that develop through programs and activities that meet regularly - often multiple times a week or even daily. Using in-depth interviews and focus groups among participants at the center, the authors show the many ways participation in regular programming leads to friendship formation. Often, these friendships are built around similarity. The authors describe this as a shared identity, noting that most participants at the Center spent some or all of their childhoods in the local neighbourhood and that emotional and symbolic connection eases mutuality in the friendship formation processes at the Centre.

These strong connections to place matter, but also in combination with other mediating similarities. For instance, being a senior provides the familiarity and comfort that allows mutuality to develop among participants. Sandra, for instance, notes that she came to the center looking to connect with other seniors in the area. Barbara, another senior participant, explains how it is easy to be with other seniors, "people that I relate to"; and Alexandria, who had been participating primarily in the senior program for four years, shares the comfort of being with others who "are kind of around your own age." The importance of recognized similarities can also be seen in the close examination of the friendship experiences among mothers participating in an antenatal class provided by Nolan et al. (2012). Here, a group of women share the unique experience of pregnancy and becoming mothers together. These mothers describe the formation of deep friendships in a short amount of time, based on this shared experience: "You have the sort of compassion for each other, don't you? Because you know that you've been through it." However, these women also share more than the motherhood experience. They come from similar backgrounds and share qualities such as age, ethnicity, etc. The respondents

expressed the importance of this similarity often in their interviews. As Esme says about the group, "They are the sort of people you would normally socialize with...the same mindset, the same approach to life."

Several studies show that community organizations also allow participants new to an area to find people like themselves (Campbell et al. 2016; Oh 2020; Nguyen 2013; Village et al. 2016). Campbell et al. (2016), for instance, use cognitive mapping techniques to understand their sense of belonging and place among youth from Africa who have recently immigrated to Canada. One of their key findings shows that the youth make new friends through participation in local community organizations and activities and that these new, local friendships in Canada contribute to their sense of belonging and place. Many got involved with organizations and activities that they already had an interest in, and friendships followed. Others engage in local community organizations and activities primarily to make these new connections rather than for the activity itself. Shandi, for instance, when talking about participating in a soccer program, admitted her indifference to the sport. Playing soccer made her happy, but when asked about the sport itself she admitted, "Actually, I don't like the game that much." Surprised, the interviewer asked, "You don't like the game?". Shandi confirmed that rather than the game, it was the soccer team that made her happy.

The friendships Campbell et al. (2016) observed were primarily based on similarities in ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Natasha and Ahmed, for instance, talked about their involvement with their local church and mosque respectively. For each, the sense of a shared cultural background made their experience in these religious organizations important for developing friendships and feeling a sense of belonging. Nguyen et al. (2013) also find that friendships and support developed through participation at a Mosque in Michigan, where a shared cultural and religious affiliation can contribute to the development of friendships. Village et al. (2016) also find that participation in protestant churches facilitates the formation of new friendships built on their shared religious beliefs and background.

Similarities are important in part for the comfort and familiarity that allows for mutuality to emerge, but there are often practical elements to the importance of similarity to friendship formation. Wessendorf (2016), in her research in the super-diverse neighbourhood of Hackney in London, finds that language is often an essential commonality that allows a new friendship to develop. She describes a friendship that developed at a childcare centre between two Russian-speaking women – one from Georgia and one from Ukraine. The Ukrainian woman was new to London, and her new friend introduced her to a much larger group of Russian-speaking mothers in the area who meet regularly. The two remain friends after several years. The example shows that language is a constraint that makes friendships based on similarity more likely, and can constrain the formation of friendships across language differences. However, as we will see, friendships do emerge across differences, even differences in language.

**7. Place-based community organizations promote diverse friendship formation when they attract a diverse mix of participants to the programs and activities of the organizations. Cultural differences of race, ethnicity and religion predominate, but making friends across age and class differences are also documented.**

Providing opportunities for people to come into contact remains one of the key insights from theory and research about how people become friends. Regular interaction,

over time, and with the shared focus of programs and activities make community organizations ideal locations for making new friends. Building on this insight, the potential of people who are different from one another to become friends begins with the opportunity for them to come into contact. Here, community organizations can also be an ideal location when they bring diverse groups of people into interaction.

The organizations and programs examined in the research we review typically attract participants that get involved due to some shared personal characteristic or motivation, but also contribute some unique diversity to the group of participants. A veteran's group, for instance, attracts members of different ages, gender, and ethnicity (Gorman et al 2018), and a cricket club attracts an ethnically diverse membership (Tacon 2019). Many organizations and programs target specific groups, such as young people while breaking down boundaries of ethnicity (Laurence 2019), sexuality (Huynh 2022; Ueno 2012), and religion (Shinwell 2021; Droplett and Moorthi 2018). Some serve particular needs, such as child care, while attracting a diverse group of participants from the neighbourhood (Wessendorf 2016; Keam 2017). All of these studies show the potential of a diverse membership contributing to new diverse friendships emerging. Perhaps the quantitative research is most explicit in documenting this connection.

The quantitative research takes three different approaches to document this process. The first uses large samples and participation in any community organizations. Benton (2015) uses the nationally representative Social Capital Survey-USA to examine the formation of new ties through participation. Measuring the number of organizations and programs respondents participate in, they find that more participation is associated with ties that cross the boundaries in the occupational hierarchy. Wang and Morav (2021) use the Ethnic Minority British Election Survey (EMBES) to examine the formation of interethnic friendships through participation in civic associations. They find that participation in ethnically diverse associations is associated with having more interethnic friendship groups. Village et al. (2016) use the Australian National Church Life Survey, which includes over 60,000 respondents participating in over 2000 Protestant churches to examine participation and making friends. They find that those who have participated in congregation activities are more likely to report that making friends is easy, although they find this is less so for first-generation Asian immigrants to Australia. This last finding about Asian immigrants highlights that diverse friendship formation processes at community organizations are successful, but that there remain unique challenges for minority groups that make forming diverse friendships a challenge.

One of the core weaknesses of the approaches above lies in the cross-sectional designs, which can only suggest the processes or causal connections of participation and friendship formation. Most notably, we cannot be sure that these respondents' diverse friendships did not precede their participation. Wang and Morav (2021) and Lauer (2022) attempt to address these concerns by introducing longitudinal techniques to the analyses. Wang and Morav (2021) use the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). The longitudinal design allows them to examine changes in the interethnic composition of friendship before and after participation in civic associations. They find that participation does not increase the ethnic diversity of friendship groups. A weakness of this research lies in a fundamental shortcoming in the UKHLS. This data cannot distinguish between participation in ethnically diverse or ethnically homogeneous civic associations – a factor Wang and Morav know is important given their findings from the EMBES. Lauer (2022) addresses this shortcoming using the Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey, which includes a retrospective question about friendship group composition before participation. Lauer (2022) finds that there is indeed a selection effect – those with more ethnically diverse

friendship groups are also more likely to participate in ethnically diverse organizations. But in addition, those participating in ethnically diverse associations are more likely to increase the ethnic diversity of their friendship groups.

A third quantitative approach takes a case-study approach to examine specific organizations or programs. Ueno et al. (2012) for instance, find that shared participation in an LGBTQ organization increases the likelihood of more integrated friendships. Using a cross-section of participation in the organization with detailed social network measures, they find that friends-of-friends become friends when they are also engaged in the same organization regardless of sexual orientation. Laurence (2019) provides a particularly important quasi-experimental examination of connection and friendship formation through participation in a youth engagement program, giving specific attention to the formation of interethnic connections. The program had groups of 12 to 15 youth participating in team-building activities over 4 weeks, and making a commitment of 60 additional hours spent working to design a social action project of their choosing. The research design used a pre and post-test strategy, with the post-test measurement taking place 4 to 6 months after the completion of the program. A control group was selected from a pool of youth that expressed an interest in participating in the program but did not finally participate. Though not a randomized assignment, researchers use propensity score matching and difference-in-difference techniques to approximate a random assignment design. The research shows that participants reported an increase in interethnic connections 4 to 6 months after completion of the program and that the increase in having diverse friends was particularly notable for those living in ethnically segregated neighbourhoods.

**8. Regular interaction over time allows participants to recognize shared values, experiences and desires across differences of race, ethnicity, age and class. In addition, mutuality emerges as participants develop new interests together as a result of their participation.**

The quantitative findings discussed above show that having diverse participants leads to making diverse friendships. In addition, a number of qualitative approaches that make in-depth observations of a particular organization or program provide a deeper understanding of the importance of a diverse setting to participants. This research shows that through participation in diverse programs and activities shared values, experiences, and desires emerge across differences. This mutuality found through regular interactions promotes friendship. In their study of community playgroups in Australia, for instance, Keam et al. (2017) find mothers both value the diversity of these playgroups and make friendships that help them feel connected to the local community. Community playgroups have operated in Australia for over forty years, and more than half of all families with children aged 2-3 participate in these groups. They range in formality from those with paid coordinators and certified staff to those run by parent volunteers (66). Keam et al. (2019) interviewed 33 mothers in Victoria who were currently participating in playgroups. One mother described her playgroup as very involved in the local community and, "a really connecting place" that served as a "good starting point for making friends and being part of the community (67)." As the authors state, the diversity of the groups was an important element of this sense of belonging and connection:

*Several women spoke about the diversity of parents attending playgroups that they would not otherwise have any interaction with. This experience enhanced their connections to their community. Olivia, an Anglo-Saxon participant, noted that her playgroup made her feel "part of the*

*community” as her group had “people from different walks of life” such as “English as a second language [mums].”*

These playgroups show the potential of community organizations for bringing people from diverse backgrounds together into interaction, creating the potential for new diverse friendships to emerge. The women in these groups may not normally come into contact if not for the group itself. They are brought together through the needs and desires as mothers with children, and through the group can come to recognize their underlying similarities across differences.

In their examination of Holiday Clubs in Northern Ireland, Shinwell et al. (2017) find that participation in the clubs resulted in children making new friends that live in the same community, but attend different schools. These Holiday Clubs were designed to address food security in the country. For many school-aged children, school attendance provides essential access to meals throughout the year. School holidays put some children at risk as a result. Holiday Clubs are designed to address this risk. They are common across the country, with over 80 local community organizations organizing a Holiday Club. In addition to providing regular meals, the clubs provide opportunities for physical, creative, and educational activities. The authors interviewed participants across three different Holiday Clubs and found that making friends in a fun atmosphere was considered one of the major benefits of participating in the clubs. One student, after participating in a drama class as part of a Club shared, “I used to be really scared to make new friends and this club really helps you make new friends and now, I’m more confident to make new friends.” Other older students expressed the value of diversity in these clubs as a chance to, “get to know different people instead of the same people that they see in school every day and they can make new friends and have fun basically.” These differences in everyday interactions are important as they cross the important Protestant and Catholic divide in Northern Ireland. The youth participants recognized this value. As one shared:

*“I think it’s good. It’s important because you’re, you and your family, are one religion and one culture and if you’re only going to stick with that you’re not going to meet any other religion, but then if you come here and meet another religion, then they learn about it and that, so that’s another culture and they learn more about that instead of just knowing the one and sticking to the one, they know more about different ones.”*

As one participant shared, the club they participated in was different because, “They don’t make it like the main focus, so this is like a Protestant person and this is a Catholic person, be friends. It’s just like, so you are different. They just let people exist.” Differences in religious background are core to Northern Ireland, but the Holiday Clubs also introduce more complexity than the Catholic and Protestant differences:

*I mean, like some of the kids are like, they come from different countries and like this is their first time spending time with people from Northern Ireland because usually, they would just stay in their own wee groups. So, it’s really good to see them come together.*

An older peer mentor at one club spoke about these newcomer youth specifically saying the club “helps them to make new friends, helps them learn about new cultures and just helps them gain their confidence in talking to people outside of their own community.” The qualitative and quantitative research complement each other showing the value of bringing diverse groups of people together for making friendships that cross salient boundaries of difference in local communities.



Wessendorf's (2016) research in the super-diverse neighbourhood of Hackney in London demonstrates the important balance of similarity and difference that allows people from diverse backgrounds to build friendships together. She finds that newcomers primarily make friends with other newcomers to the London borough. These friendships are diverse, though they are often based on some form of similarity as well. Wessendorf (2016) examines children's centres, which she describes as microspaces of conviviality. These are places where people engage in conversations and activities that allow for friendship to emerge. In the following example from the article, two Muslim women from diverse national and linguistic backgrounds started their friendship at the Muslim Community Centre because they found their mutuality through an interest in cooking.

*In a Muslim Community Centre, there was a mix of white women of primarily British backgrounds, and Muslim women of various national and linguistic backgrounds. I joined a conversation between a woman from Somalia and a Turkish woman who both spoke good English, although it was not their mother tongue. They were exchanging recipes, and the Somali woman was raving about how much she liked Turkish food. She told the Turkish woman that her husband really enjoyed it when she cooked the recipes which 'my Turkish friend from the children's centre gave me'. Although these women only see each other once a week at the children's centre, they have formed a friendship not only via the shared experience of having children of the same age, but also on the basis of their interest in cooking. The fact that they both spoke enough English to talk about food and children, as well as the sharing of the weekly routine of coming to the children's centre, enabled them to form this close bond.*

Wessendorf's (2016) research shows that even in very diverse contexts, some form of similarity often draws people together. Shared religious background, having a shared language, or having children the same age can provide the initial basis for a meeting or conversation. However, it is through regular interaction over time with the focus and structure of a program or activity that an initial connection can develop into a stronger friendship. A shared interest in cooking may not be immediately apparent, but for these women, this interest is forming the basis for a stronger friendship to emerge.

## **Conclusions: Research Strengths and Gaps**

The research reviewed here includes strong examples of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examining the formation of friendships in diverse contexts. Those quantitative approaches that incorporate quasi-experimental designs stand out (i.e. Laurence 2019) as do those qualitative approaches that delve deeply into the challenges and opportunities of diverse friendship formation processes (i.e. Wessendorf 2016). Viewing the research as a whole, three gaps stand out.

First, there is limited research that allows for time in the research design that reflects the friendship formation process. This leads to a slight bias towards documenting more casual and compartmental friendships rather than the establishment of deeper friendships that move beyond the circumstances of the community organization or program under study. Future research can address this with designs that incorporate this aspect of time and friendship depth.

Second, there is limited research that takes the physical space of place-based community organizations into full consideration. This is perhaps surprising given that one of the defining features of social infrastructure is its physical character. Future research can address how accessibility within neighbourhoods, the spatial aspects of meeting places, and spaces for informal interaction contribute to friendship formation.

Third, the role of staff and other aspects of organizational structure contribute to friendship formation receives less systematic examination than we might expect. If we take seriously the idea that organizations can be actors in neighbourhoods and communities, we need more research on how organizational dynamics contribute to friendship formation processes.

### **Neighbourhood Houses: Community Building and Friendship in Diverse Contexts**

Neighbourhood houses are a widely adopted form of social infrastructure that can be traced back to the Social Settlement Movement in the late 1880s. The first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, was established in 1884 in East London in response to growing urbanization, industrialization, and immigrant concentrations in neighbourhoods in London. Its founders, Henrietta and Rev. Samuel Barnett invited university students, who came mostly from a well-off backgrounds, to settle at Toynbee Hall as residents to serve and to learn from the local people. Rev. Barnett conceptualized the quintessential nature of settlement houses as a "machinery of connection" (Meacham, 1987). The connection was reciprocally beneficial: educating members of the upper class about the local conditions based on their personal observations and mobilizing them to help where help was needed (Matthews-Jones 2017, 35). However, Barnett's vision was beyond class difference. As Meacham (1987) notices, his intention was also to make it an inclusive place to reach residents who were from different Christian denominations or who had a different faith, such as the Jewish immigrants in the neighbourhood.

Rev. Barnett's conception of reciprocal connection was further articulated and actualized by Jane Addams, a famous pragmatist thinker and the founder of Hull House in Chicago (Schneiderhan, 2011). Addams believed and offered a humanistic philosophical ground for the settlement movement by summarizing the major philosophy of the movement as "the solidarity of the human race" (Addams, 1999) which is embedded in human interaction. As Nina Eliasoph (2011, 2013) suggests, the settlement house in Jane Addams's vision was to provide opportunities for new connections and shared experiences among diverse others. As Schneiderhan (2011) suggests, using Addams's articulation, reciprocal *in situ* interactions between residents of Hull House and residents of the surrounding neighbourhood coming from different backgrounds, gain a new perspective of the shared surroundings. Addams described these experiences as perplexing to participants, creating situations that can no longer accommodate non-thinking and habitual behaviours in the community. The reciprocity nurtured by the settlement house was also a foundation of community building.

The success of Toynbee Hall attracted international attention and the adoption of this new form of place-based social infrastructure across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1887, Neighbourhood Guild, the first US settlement house, was set up in New York City by Stanton Coit, a resident of Toynbee Hall. In Canada, with the support of the University Young Men's Christian Association, the University Settlement opened its doors in Toronto in 1910. Soon this form of social infrastructure spread globally. Riding the ebb and flow of the Settlement House Movement, the "settler" tradition is no longer common and most settlement houses have adopted the name of neighbourhood houses or centres (Landers, 1998, cited in Koerin, 2003, p. 55). Today, the International Federation of Settlements

and Neighbourhood Centers, an international umbrella organization which was established in 1949, has thousands of members in over 30 countries. Ranging from small self-help groups to large community organizations, they are performing an active role as social infrastructure in addressing the different needs, social, economic, cultural, educational and environmental, in their local communities (IFS, n.d.). While sharing the early settlement house's idea of a two-way, reciprocal exchange with the local community, many of them have successfully incorporated local residents into their governance and operational structure (Yan, Lauer, & Riano-Alcala, 2016). In other words, they have become part of the local community.

Despite its longstanding record in serving local communities all over the world, neighbourhood houses have not received much attention in the public discourse or the English language scholarly literature. This may be a result of their success; while being successful in serving the local community, their reputation is often confined to the community that they serve (Yan & Lauer, 2021). Based on the limited literature (Chesler, 1996; Hirota, Brown, Mollard, & Richman, 1997; Koerin, 2003; Lauer and Yan 2013; Yan & Lauer, 2008; Yan et al., 2016; Yan & Sin, 2010), we can summarize at least seven distinctive features shared by most contemporary neighbourhood houses situated in urban centres across North America:

- 1) located within walking distance to most residents,
- 2) having an explicit neighbourhood-based focus, mandate, and vision,
- 3) a strong commitment to nurturing a sense of ownership in the neighbourhood,
- 4) a large representation of local residents on governance boards,
- 5) operated by a small team of paid staff in collaboration with a large number of volunteers who are mostly residents,
- 6) offering multiple services at low costs for multi-generational residents
- 7) a strong sensitivity to and respect for diversity.

In a nutshell, governed by local people, NHs bring and connect people within a specific geographical area together while meeting their needs through services, programs and activities.

Empirical studies of the neighbourhood houses' role in generating social ties are limited. Several studies (e.g., Cordero-Guzman, 2005; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001) on community organizations, which share many similarities with NHs, in the United States indicate that these organizations function to build social ties for residents in ethno-racially diverse communities. However, it is not clear how NHs nurture social ties among residents. Drawing on the findings of three studies of neighbourhood houses, we outline several strategies of neighbourhood houses in connecting people of diverse backgrounds in the community. The first study took place in San Francisco, where neighbourhood houses have been in operation since 1874. At the time of the study, there were eight identifiable neighbourhood centres in San Francisco. Two subsequent studies took place in Vancouver, where the first neighbourhood house was established in 1938. Currently, there are 11 neighbourhood houses in the City of Vancouver and three in other cities within the Metro Vancouver area. All of these 22 Neighborhood Centers and Houses have an explicit mandate of serving a specific neighbourhood, which is mostly immigrant-concentrated, ethno-racially diverse, and economically deprived, in their city.

First and foremost, these neighbourhood houses are physical spaces in the community and a service hub where people can find resources to meet their needs. Their open-door policy, long opening hours and low cost have made them a natural focal point

and meeting place in the local community. Their multiple-service approach provides a wide variety of programs and activities that meet the needs of people from different backgrounds and generations. Details of the variety of programs and activities can be found in *A Closer Look* below. Meanwhile, NHs institutionally connect local residents to a vast network of resources within and outside the neighbourhood (Yan, 2021). This makes neighbourhood houses an important service hub where strangers meet other strangers who have common needs. As a participant of the SF study states,

*[The NC] is not a problem-oriented organization. It's more to provide support and activities and just a lot of different things to people in the neighbourhood. So . . . it provides something positive for people to do instead of people staying in their own little world close to home, and so it's a nice way also to create links. (Yan and Sin, 2010, page 113).*

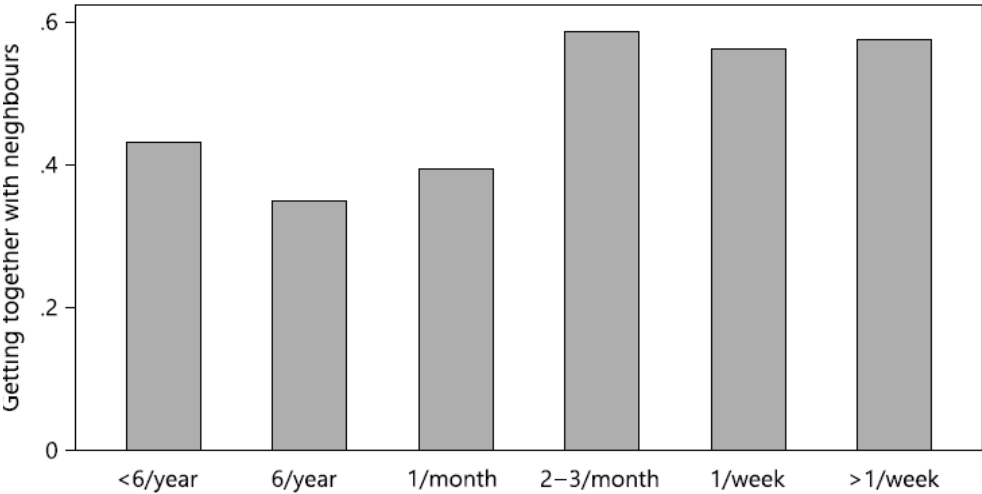
In addition, residents are not treated as clients at neighbourhood houses. Unlike many other service organizations, which require pre-screening and assessment, neighbourhood houses are open to everyone in the neighbourhood and no intake assessment is needed. "You don't have to be pre-qualified to come into the House," said a staff member from the North Shore Neighbourhood House. "It is a neutral place for everyone in the neighbourhood where they will not be judged (Yan, 2021)." With a strong tradition of grassroots democracy inherited from early settlement houses, residents are welcome to contribute their talents and time as volunteers in daily programming and board-level governance. For instance, among all the neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, in the 2012–2013 fiscal year, 360 (83%) of the 444 programs had used volunteers, a great majority of whom are themselves service users of neighbourhood houses (Yan et al., 2016). This not only reflects the strong tradition of reciprocity in early settlement houses but also indicates a strong sense of belonging and ownership among their service users.

As an example of social infrastructure situated in ethno-racially diverse urban centres, neighbourhood houses in both SF and Vancouver have hired a correspondingly diverse group of staff members from the local community who have a firsthand understanding of the needs and challenges of local residents. To many ethnic minority service users in Vancouver, psychologically they trust and feel close to the staff members. As a service user of Burnaby Neighbourhood House shared:

*[The NH is] a trusting place, so you can come here and feel safe. It's like home. It's a warm feeling when you walk in the door ... It's just very comforting to know that you can come somewhere and your kids can hang out together and meet new people in the neighbourhood house".*

As an ED of an SF neighbourhood center said, they are an emotional rock to local residents (Yan and Sin, 2010).

**Figure 1: Relationship between getting together with neighbours and the intensity of participation in the neighbourhood house (Lauer, 2021, p. 150)**



The relationship-building opportunities accumulate as a person passes through each activity, spending time with a different set of people focused on a different shared activity. As shown in the most recent study on neighbourhood houses in Metro Vancouver, there are many pathways of participation among service users (Lauer, 2021). A typical example is a mother might first join a mother-and-toddler drop-in program, and later learn about other activities they are interested in joining a cooking course or volunteering in a lunch program.

When people gather and interact friendship forms. When increasing their participation, service users also have more opportunities to form personal relationships at the houses and in the neighbourhood, as more people from the local community make friends and acquaintances, and meet the friends of friends (see Figure 1).

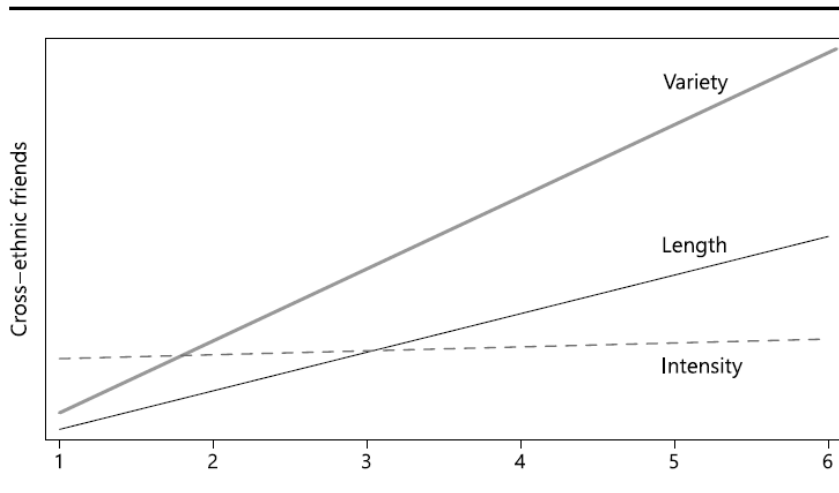
As found in the first study in Vancouver, many service users have also generated cross-ethnic close ties with others through participation in NHs (see Table 3). These ties are also functional. Although 26.6% of respondents did not make any exchanges with people associated with NHs, it does appear the Houses do play a role in forging ties for the reciprocal exchange of favours. Over 50% make some of these exchanges with people associated with the NHs, and 20% made all or most of their exchanges with those associated with the NHs.

Table 3: Neighbourhood House Social Capital (Yan & Lauer, 2006, p. 33)

<i>Make Cross Ethnic Ties</i>	%
Strongly Agree	37.1
Agree	45.0
Disagree	10.9
Strongly Disagree	7.1

In the second Vancouver study, Lauer (2021) finds that taking different approaches to participation in neighbourhood houses is associated with having cross-ethnic friendships. The figure below shows that participating in several different programs and activities is associated with reporting more cross-ethnic friendships:

**Figure 2: Relationship between Intensity, Length and Variety of participation at the neighbourhood houses with the number of cross-ethnic friends reported (Lauer, 2021, p. 148)**



This variety of participation appears more important than the intensity or length of participation.

In sum, the place-based focus of NHs discourages focus on a narrow set of programs and activities and encourages the attraction of a diverse set of participants from varied backgrounds and from across the life course. These characteristics of neighbourhood houses enable participants to engage in a variety of different activities and to come into contact with the demographic variability of participants at the NH. These unique aspects of NHs provide opportunities for community-building through the maintenance and development of relationships and the development of social capacity.

## A Closer Look: Programs and Activities at Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver

With the assistance of Neighbourhood House staff in Metro Vancouver, we compiled a list of the programs and activities taking place at neighbourhood houses in the month of July 2022. Our motivation is to provide a cross-section of the day-to-day activities that take place at neighbourhood houses. These programs and activities provide the structure for interaction at neighbourhood houses and friendship formation opportunities.

**Table 4. Programs and Activities, Metro Vancouver Neighbourhood Houses**

Programs and Activities	Distribution	Meet Weekly	Meet In-Person	Hybrid Format
Programs for Children	10%	91%	87%	-
Adolescents and Youth	15%	80%	86%	14%
Family Programs	6%	57%	93%	7%
Adult Programs	6%	40%	33%	47%
Seniors Programs	22%	65%	73%	12%
Community Programs	11%	44%	76%	4%
Programs for a variety of participants	28%	55%	66%	18%
Other	2%	20%	40%	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>15%</b>

We have broken down programs and activities into six different types. **Community programs:** Neighbourhood houses host or support a range of workshops, trainings, social gatherings, celebrations and other events as part of its diverse programming for adults or everyone in the community. Examples include Community BBQ (Burnaby), Art in the Park (Frog Hollow), White Rock Pride (Alexandra), and The Urban Farm (DTES). **Programs for children:** Neighbourhood houses provide childcare and recreational and educational programs for children. Examples are Out of School Care, Children Recreation Summer Camps (Collingwood), and Summer Preschool (Burnaby). **Programs for adolescents and youth:** Neighbourhood houses organize programs for adolescents and youth supporting their development and training them to be future leaders. Examples include Youth Action Council (Little Mountain), Indigenous Youth Drop-in (Collingwood), Preteen Girls Group (South Vancouver), Newcomer Youth Leadership (South Vancouver), and WorkBC Youth Outreach (Frog Hollow). **Family programs:** Neighbourhood houses

## **A Closer Look: Programs and Activities at Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver**

offer programs to families such as learning parenting skills, as well as getting information and support. Examples include Food Skills for Families (Little Mountain), Papas in the Park (Little Mountain), and Family Drop-In (DTES). **Adult programs:** Neighbourhood houses provide programs for adults to develop life skills and skills for job seeking. Examples include Financial Literacy (Little Mountain), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (Collingwood), and Job-Hunting Skills Training (Burnaby). **Seniors programs:** Neighbourhood houses develop programs supporting seniors so that they can live in the community independently, maintain holistic well-being, and have life-long learning. Examples include Seniors Shopping and Meal Delivery (Burnaby), Seniors Tai Chi (Frog Hollow), Intercultural Wellness Group (South Vancouver), South Vancouver Seniors Hub Council (South Vancouver), Seniors Supper Club (Cedar Cottage), and Digital Literacy Classes (Collingwood).

The varied needs and desires addressed by these programs and activities attract participants from different ages, gender, class, race and ethnic backgrounds to the neighbourhood house. Like other programs described in our review, these programs are often built on some similarities, but also attract a diversity of participants. Taking a step back, the varied programs and activities assure the physical space of the neighbourhood house is full of a wide diversity of people. These factors allow for contact and awareness among diverse people to take place within the space of the neighbourhood house. In addition, the variety of programs and activities includes a mix of structured activities with more informal opportunities for self-disclosure, socialization, and fun.

The table also captures the structured interactions that result from program participation. The majority of programs meet at least once a week, and many meet multiple times a week. This is the type of structured, regular interaction with a shared focus of attention or interest that over time lends itself to friendship formation. In-person programs and activities also predominate the activities of neighbourhood houses, while some hybrid and online-only programs are operating at the neighbourhood house. Despite the changes in remote work and increased online activity since the start of the pandemic, in-person activities are persistent at these place-based community organizations.



## **Where Do We Go from Here? Implications for Policy and Future Research**

- Many processes associated with the Emerging Asocial Society take place at the local community and neighbourhood level. The local community, largely the neighbourhood, is an open system that is aligned “with larger areas such as metros and regions and the geography is embedded in market forces and public policies” (Ferris & Hopkins, 2015, p. 100). To combat the emerging asocial society, concerted efforts of all levels in our society is needed to minimize the challenges confronting local community. As many proponents of a place-based approach (e.g., Bradford, 2005; Shugart & Townsend, 2010; Yan, 2021) suggest, a neighbourhood is not only a place as where people live but also where social problems are manifested and policy should take effect. Thus, we need a renewed attention to place-based approaches in public resources distribution and programming to address outcomes such as isolation, loneliness, and lack of social cohesion.
- Place-based community organizations form an essential part of the local social infrastructure. The service functions of these organizations make them the place through which local residents can be connected to the hard-to-reach public resources. As reflected in the bridging functions of neighbourhood house, place-based community organizations have been the linking pin that institutionally bridges local residents with public organizations. Often these organizations, which hold rich public resources, are operated in silos and difficult for everyday people to reach (Yan & Lauer, 2022). Encouraging and strengthening the service functions of place-based organizations can successfully address elements of the Emerging Asocial Society at the local level.
- Urban planning can provide space for place-based organizations to provide services for local people and increase local social interaction. We found above that the material structure of community organizations – their geographic location, arrangement of space, and informal spaces – have an important impact on friendship formation outcomes. These physical and material factors are not simply natural constraints. Where to locate a community garden or provide infrastructure for a community center reflect planning decisions. Proper attention to these physical components of community organizations can improve friendship formation opportunities for participants.
- Funding place-based programming through community organizations directed at local residents will enhance friendship formation. These programs can successfully facilitate connections and friendships either directly or indirectly. However, under the neoliberal public policy, most public funds that are accessible to community organizations are program-based, problem-oriented, short-term and unstable (Fabricant & Fisher, 2002; Yan & Lauer, 2021; Yan et al., 2016). To strengthen these organizations capacity in tackling the emerging asocial society, governments need to consider offering sustainable funding for them to programmatically (re)build sense of community.
- Despite the potential of community organizations for friendship formation, there remains a limited amount of research in this area. Looking at research on friendship formation in schools provides an example of what this research area could achieve (McFarland et al. 2014). Community organizations offer an opportunity to observe friendship processes throughout the life course. These research traditions often flourish when provide financial support. Support for more research on place-based community organizations will help fill this gap in our understanding of friendship.

## Conclusion

Social scientists with an interest in complex urban contexts have been documenting the rich, complex, and varied types of diversity that characterize urban centres today. This parallels individualizing tendencies that include the growing number of a person's daily encounters with strangers and that many neighbours have little more than a passing familiarity with each other. These trends raise questions concerning shared local identities, and making connections in local contexts. Perhaps, the growth of digitally connected chosen communities challenges the importance of local connections all together?

With these processes and questions in mind, we turned our attention to friendship formation within the day-to-day workings of place-based community organizations. We know that friendship formation follows a path of contact, awareness, and establishing shared, reciprocal, mutual relationships. Situational dynamics can encourage individuals through this path. These include regular interaction, collaborative activities, and opportunities for self-disclosure and personal sharing. We began with the expectation that the regular programming and activities of place-based community organizations would nurture the situational dynamics that lead to friendship formation. The place-based character of these organizations uniquely contributes to their contribution to neighbourhoods and communities.

Our review of the most current research resulted in eight key takeaways:

- Place-based community organizations provide services and satisfy the needs and desires of participants through structured programming and activities that bring people together and facilitate interaction. Over time, with regular interaction, these programs create opportunities for friendship to emerge.
- Place-based organizations design programs and activities to provide opportunities to make new friends, such as someone new to a neighbourhood looking to meet their neighbours, a young person trying to fit in, or a senior experiencing social isolation.
- Place-based community organizations that successfully promote friendship formation balance structured programs and activities with a safe space for informal interaction where conviviality, trust, and support allow a sense of mutuality to develop among participants.
- Staff and other leaders contribute to friendship formation by creating a safe, welcoming, convivial, and supportive atmosphere; Atmospheres that promote a sense of belonging among participants.
- The physical structures of place-based organizations successfully promote friendship formation when they include space for formal programs and activities and space for informal conversations that go beyond immediate activities and allow participants to get to know one another.
- Place-based community organizations promote friendship formation by providing opportunities for participants to meet others with similar experiences, backgrounds, and interests.
- Place-based community organizations promote diverse friendship formation when they attract a diverse mix of participants to the programs and activities of the organizations. Cultural differences of race, ethnicity and religion predominate, but making friends across age and class differences are also documented.

- Regular interaction over time allows participants to recognize shared values, experiences and desires across race, ethnicity, age and class differences. In addition, mutuality emerges as participants develop new interests together through their participation.

The research included strong examples of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examining the formation of friendships in diverse contexts. Those quantitative approaches that incorporate quasi-experimental designs stand out as do those qualitative approaches that delve deeply into the challenges and opportunities of diverse friendship formation processes. We also identified three research gaps.

First, there is limited research that allows for time in the research design that reflects the friendship formation process. This leads to a slight bias towards documenting more causal and compartmental friendships rather than the establishment of deeper friendships that move beyond the circumstances of the community organization or program under study. Future research can address this with designs that incorporate this aspect of time and friendship depth.

Second, there is limited research that takes the physical space of place-based community organizations into full consideration. This is perhaps surprising given that one of the defining features of social infrastructure is its physical character. Future research can address how accessibility within neighbourhoods, the spatial aspects of meeting places, and spaces for informal interaction contribute to friendship formation.

Third, the role of staff and other aspects of organizational structure contribute to friendship formation receives less systematic examination than we might expect. If we take seriously the idea that organizations can be actors in neighbourhoods and communities, we need more research on how organizational dynamics contribute to friendship formation processes.

We round out our reporting with a case study of one form of place-based community organization: neighbourhood houses. Neighbourhood houses follow from the Settlement House Movement, which began in 1884 with London's Toynbee Hall. Today they can be found in urban centres around the world. With a mission to build community and connection in local neighbourhoods, these organizations do not focus on a particular demographic group or a single activity. Instead, they appeal to a diversity of backgrounds and cater to a variety of interests. This model provides the opportunity for new, diverse connections to develop into new friendships.

As we emerge from the challenges of the pandemic, neighbourhood houses have reopened their doors to local residents. They continue to provide programs and activities that appeal to participants from varieties of backgrounds, and from across the life course. Most are offered weekly, and in-person. Support for place-based community organizations like this will contribute to the social vitality of local neighbourhoods and communities, and supporting research on organizations like this will continue to build our understanding of local friendship formation processes.

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## Appendix A

Authors		National context	Methods	Target groups	Community Organization	Friendship/Diversity
Austin et al.	2020	United States	Quantitative Survey	mentors mentoring youth mentees	mentoring programs for mentors and mentees, training and support programs for mentors	mentor and mentee built relationships, and mentor further supported mentees to expand their social networks
Benton	2015	United States	Quantitative survey	Adults	Civic / voluntary organizations	Participation increased people's access to social capitals and strengthen ties with people in higher social status
Campbell et al.	2016	Canada	Interviews	African Canadian Youth Newcomers	Religious groups (e.g., church, mosque), and YMCA	The youth made friends with other newcomers and the locals
Cantillon and Baker	2022	Australia	Qualitative Case Study	Volunteers	Australian Jazz Museum — a DIY popular music heritage institution	Volunteers built friendship through volunteering
Colistra et al.	2019	United States	Qualitative interviews	Visitors to the community centre	Public community centre	Visitors to the centre built and maintained relationships
Coll-Planas et. al.	2017	Spain	Quasi-experimental design	Older people suffering from loneliness in the community	Group-based program by community senior centre aiming to reduce loneliness	Older people built friendships
Dolley	2020	Australia	Qualitative case study	Community members	Community gardens with community garden committee / clubs	community gardeners built up friendships
Droplet and Moorthi	2018	Canada	Mixed method	Syrian refugees / newcomers	Settlement service organizations and community organizations (including religious institutions)	Refugees made friends with other refugees and people from the mainstream
Forrest-Bank et al.	2014	United States	Interviews, semi-structured	Elementary and middle school children	Afterschool programs	Children met friends and developed relationships
Gorman et al.	2018	United States	case study	Veterans	Peer support groups for veterans	Veterans built friendships with each other
Hawkins and Ryan	2013	Australia	Mixed Methods	People who went to the festival	The Falls Music and Arts Festival	The people who went to the festival built friendships
Hemingway and Jack	2013	United Kingdom	Participant observation and individual/focus group interviews	Older adults. Mostly women (80%)	Friendship clubs	Older adults made new friends and maintained relationships with old friends

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Hutchinson and Gallant	2016	Canada	Qualitative participatory research	Seniors	Seniors centre	Senior members built friendships
Huynh	2022	United States	Ethnographic	LGBTQ Vietnamese American	LGBTQ Vietnamese American community organization	LGBTQ Vietnamese American built friendships
Johnsons and Halas	2011	Canada	Case study	High school youth and university young people volunteer as mentors; early years children as mentees	After-school programs	Friendships were built between youth/young people mentor and children mentee, or between youth/young people mentors
Keam et al.	2017	Australia	Interviews	Mothers	Playgroups and playgroup committees	Mothers built friendships
Lauer	2020	Canada	Quantitative Survey	Newcomers	Community organizations and other voluntary associations	Newcomers built cross-ethnic friendships when participating in diverse organizations
Laurence	2019	United Kingdom	Quasi-experimental design	Youth	National Youth Engagement Scheme (like a summer camp) under National Citizens Service (NCS), a national non-profit organization	The scheme increased interethnic ties, even after 4 to 6 months of the program, particularly benefited those who come from more residentially segregated areas
Lee and Tan	2019	United States	Quantitative survey	Older adult homeowners	Third place (e.g., church, community centre). Listed on p.7	Third places were positively related to social networks
Meshram and O'Cass	2013	Australia	Qualitative Case Study	Seniors	Seniors' clubs	Seniors built friendships with each other and would share things close to them e.g., family.
Mutz et al.	2022	Germany	Quantitative survey	General public	Civic associations	People built friendships through participation in the civic association
Nguyen et al.	2013	United States	Quantitative Survey	Young Muslim Americans	Mosque	"Mosque attendance and level of congregational involvement positively predicted receiving, giving, and anticipated emotional support from congregants"
Nolan et al.	2012	United Kingdom	Interviews	Mothers in the third trimester	Antenatal classes	Mothers developed friendships. They felt the friendships were deep and unique.
Oh	2020	United States	Interviews	Members going to the church	Korean-American church	Members built friendships in the church
Palmer and Kawakami	2014	United States	Qualitative case study	Knitters	Knitting groups in stores	Knitters built friendships in the groups
Pearce and Lillyman	2015	United Kingdom	Mixed methods	Older adults	Art projects by The Courtyard, Hereford's Centre for the Arts	Older adults made new friends and built new networks

Ruan and Zhu	2015	Hong Kong	Quantitative Survey	College students	Local organizations	College students from Mainland China and local Hong Kong built friendship
Shinwell et al.	2021	Northern Ireland	Interviews	Primary school and secondary school children	Holiday Club Programmes funded by Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), a charitable body	Children made and maintained friendships
Spring et al.	2019	United Kingdom	Interviews, semi-structured	Refugees and asylum seekers	Community-based drop-in services in the church	Refugees and asylum seekers from diverse backgrounds came together
Tacon	2019	United Kingdom	Qualitative case study	Members of the sports clubs	Voluntary sports clubs	Members formed weak, strong, or very strong new ties. Different degree of ties in the same club.
Temple and Stanish	2011	Canada	Quantitative survey	Adolescents with mild–moderate intellectual disability and youth volunteers	Peer exercise group at YMCA	Both youth with intellectual disability and youth volunteers felt that they made new friends
Ueno et al.	2012	United States	Quantitative survey	GLB youth	A community organization which supports GLB youth	GLB youth made friends in the community organization
Village et al.	2016	Australia	Quantitative Survey	First generation Asian migrants (FGAM)	Protestant churches	Congregation increases both bonding (building social ties within the church) and binding (building social ties outside the church / in the wider community) of churchgoers. FGAMs had fewer social ties and slower bridging than ABOAPs.
Wang & Morav	2021	United Kingdom	Longitudinal and cross-sectional survey data	Minority groups	Civil society organizations (CSOs)	"those who participate in mostly interethnic CSOs tend to have significantly more IEF, whereas those who participate in mostly co-ethnic CSOs tend to have significantly less IEF"
Warrell and Ingamells	2014	Australia	Interviews	People who live with mental illness and their significant others	Shining a Light, a community development project under community centres	People met, made friends, and built connections
Wessendorf	2016	United Kingdom	Ethnographic	Recent migrants	Public spaces of the community e.g., children centre	Recent migrants from super diverse backgrounds met
Wilkinson et al.	2017	Australia	Qualitative case study	Sudanese refugee youth	Institutions outside school e.g., church, youth groups, and sporting associations	Refugee youth built connections with people from diverse backgrounds