What affects perceptions of neighbourhood change?

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Key Messages

- Residents of Halifax do not perceive economic or social and cultural changes in their neighbourhoods; however, they do perceive those to the built environment.
- When residents of Halifax perceive changes in their neighbourhoods, they tend to be positive about them.
- Tabular and regression analysis show that sense of belonging increases positive perceptions of neighbourhood change and older age decreases positive views of change.

Common stereotypes portray Atlantic Canadians as resistant to change. Our survey of Halifax residents challenges that view by assessing openness to three broad measures of neighbourhood change. Although most Haligonians do not perceive changes in their neighbourhoods, those who do generally perceive them for the better. Data show that sense of belonging to neighbourhoods and respondent age have a positive effect on perceptions of change. As Halifax neighbourhoods are transforming physically, economically, and socially, few Haligonians see that as problematic.
Keywords: neighbourhood change, perceptions, Halifax, Atlantic Canada

Quels facteurs agissent sur la perception des changements dans le quartier ?

Les Canadiens de la région atlantique sont stéréotypés comme étant réfractaires au changement. Une enquête menée auprès des résidents de Halifax remet en question ce stéréotype en mesurant leur degré d'ouverture à trois types de changement au niveau du quartier. Si la plupart des répondants ne perçoivent pas de changements au niveau de leur quartier, ceux qui en perçoivent trouvent que ces changements améliorent les choses. Les données démontrent que le sentiment d'appartenance au quartier et l'âge des répondants ont un effet positif sur la perception du changement. Alors que les quartiers de Halifax sont en mutation sur les plans physique, économique et social, peu de Haligoniens y voient un problème.
Mots clés : changements au niveau du quartier, perceptions, Halifax, Canada atlantique

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Atlantic Canada has experienced some of the most profound demographic, economic, social, cultural, and physical changes in the country's recent history. The region has faced massive out-migration (Corbett 2005; Akbari and Dar 2005; Akbari 2005, 2008, 2011) as well as chronic in-and-out migration of people working outside the province (MacDonald et al. 2012). These trends have led some journalists and demographers to the alarming claim that the region is facing a "demographic tsunami" (Campbell 2011; Haan 2013). At the same time, the region has transitioned from resource-based industries such as fishing (Binkley 1996, 2000; Apostle et al. 2002) and forestry (Stedman et al. 2005), toward oil and natural gas production (House 1986, 1999; Sinclair 2011), tourism (George and Reid 2005; George et al. 2009; Baldacchino 2012; Stoddart and Sodero 2014), call centres, banking (Lamer 2002), and most recently, heavy industry. Atlantic Canadians are also more religious and more socially conservative than the rest of the country and, consequently, are seen as less open to change (Brym 1979; O'Neil and Erikson 2003) and even unwelcoming to outsiders (Baldacchino 2012). Yet recent public opinion data show that the region's citizens express some of the most liberal views towards immigration and out-siders (Quell 2005) and are among the most environmentally progressive of Canadians (Bricker and Wright 2010). Moreover, the region has shunned provincial and federal Conservative governments in recent elections, has experienced increasing immigration (Akbari 2005; Ramos and Yoshida 2011), and is seeing a shift in population to Halifax, its biggest city.

Halifax, which is home to 40% of Nova Scotia's population, has undergone equally pronounced change. The city's economy has traditionally revolved around a significant military presence, the provincial capital's civil service, varied port activities, and involvement in such industries as forestry, fishing, and petroleum. The economy is increasingly defined, however, by creative and knowledge industries (Grant and Kronstal 2013), as well as offshore banking and finance (Deneault 2015). The city is seeing an increase in international students coming to the city's five universities (Chira and Belhodja 2012), complemented by a rise in immigrants arriving and settling in Halifax, bringing social and cultural change. In some areas of the city, the longstanding African Nova Scotian communities as well as other working-class populations are experiencing the stresses of gentrification. According to the *Halifax Housing Needs Assessment* (SHS Consulting 2015), the city's population is also increasingly aging. As the city changes, so too has its built environment, with construction of high-rise buildings in the core and new suburbs on the city's edges. The city thus provides an interesting case study to evaluate change because after decades of relative stagnation, it has experienced significant shifts to its economy, social and cultural profile, and built physical environment.

Generally, researchers note that urban change is experienced at the level of specific neighbourhoods (Finney and Jivraj 2013) and economic and social change trigger shifts in perceptions of neighbourhoods. For instance, one study suggests that individuals living in neighbourhoods with high levels of demographic and population change have less attachment to their neighbourhood and a weaker sense of belonging compared to people living in neighbourhoods facing less change (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). In other words, ongoing change affects how people perceive their neighbourhoods and, more broadly, their city. However, few studies have examined how people perceive change in Canadian cities, especially secondary cities such as Halifax. Our aim is thus to analyze perceptions of change at the neighbourhood level in Halifax, in order to reflect on what new data on Atlantic Canadian neighbourhoods might add to our understanding of Canadian cities. This is important because most literature on Canadian cities focuses on the country's largest cities (Prouse et al. 2014), missing trends in smaller cities. Our research also offers data to test the general conception among policymakers (Young et al. 2003; Ivany et al. 2014) and media that Halifax, like Atlantic Canada generally, is averse to change.

What accounts for perceptions of change?

Current research on neighbourhood change largely concentrates on processes of gentrification and stratification (see Sullivan 2007; Goodsell 2013; McGirr et al. 2015); neighbourhood characteristics influencing people's desire to relocate to a different neighbourhood (see Van Ham and Feijten 2008); and to a lesser extent, residents' attitudes towards

change and the characteristics that influence those perceptions (see Spain 1988). Research on perceptions of neighbourhoods generally shows that individuals' feelings of attachment to a place and demographic characteristics affect how they perceive where they live (Friedrichs et al. 2003; Lawless 2011).

According to Forrest and Kearns (2001) and Sengupta et al. (2013), feelings of attachment to place, or feelings of connection or sense of belonging to a neighbourhood, are linked to perceived satisfaction with the area and contribute to increased social capital. Although the concept of "social capital" was originally developed by Bourdieu (1985) to capture how social resources, such as key contacts and relationships, accrue value in the same way that material wealth does, Putnam (1993, 2000) adopted a more pragmatic understanding of social capital that is often cited in literature on neighbourhoods (see Sengupta et al. 2013; Zhang et al. 2015). Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the level of trust and number of reciprocating relationships amongst members of a community. He distinguishes two types of social capital: bridging and bonding (Putnam 2000). Bridging capital is about the ties people have with others across social groups. Bonding social capital, by contrast, focuses on vertical social attachments, or the extent to which people socialize within a specific group or community and have a sense of belonging to it. The literature on social capital and neighbourhoods suggests that the more social capital people have within a neighbourhood, the more likely they will see the area positively and want to remain in it (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Freiler 2004). Others have shown that those with lower levels of social capital in a neighbourhood are less likely to feel they belong, participate in community activities, share values and norms with others in their neighbourhood, and feel safe in their neighbourhood (Zhang et al. 2015). A sense of belonging to a neighbourhood is thus linked to positive perceptions of a neighbourhood. While much literature on social capital links strong ties with sense of belonging, influential work by Richard Florida (2005) emphasizes the importance of weak ties to enhancing economic development in the contemporary economy. Florida suggests that the "creative class" of talented workers prefers contexts of diversity and tolerance, and is reshaping urban neighbourhoods. The implication is that growing local diversity enhances bridging capital as weak ties become more important than the strong ties of bonding capital.

Related to a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood is the length of time an individual has lived in one. There are two possible arguments for how this affects perceptions of neighbourhood change. On the one hand, the longer an individual has lived in a neighbourhood, the more likely they will feel personally invested in it and the more they will perceive change for the better. On the other, the longer people live in a neighbourhood, and more invested they are in it, the less likely they are to embrace change (Sullivan 2007).

While a sense of belonging and time spent in a neighbourhood are important factors in examining people's perceptions of their neighbourhoods, another influence is age. Research suggests that the older people are, the more averse they tend to be to change in their communities (Burns et al. 2012), as people retire from the workforce and mobility may become more challenging. To meet their needs, older people tend to rely on local institutions and organizations, such as community centres or medical clinics. Their socio-spatial experience is therefore limited, and they become more dependent on their immediate context. As people age, therefore, their immediate environments may become more important. When neighbourhoods change rapidly, the disappearance of familiar institutions and the emergence of new ones evoke a sense of having little control over change, aggravating fear, insecurity, and unease. In their study of how older adults experience and perceive different types of neighbourhood change, Burns et al. (2012, 8) found that most participants experienced feelings of "strangeness, insecurity, and social exclusion" as a result of change in their neighbourhood.

Research shows that marital status is a predictor of perceptions of neighbourhoods. For example, Spain's (1988) study of the effects of household composition on neighbourhood satisfaction found that people who are married are more likely to be satisfied with their neighbourhood's conditions. Partnering status may impact life satisfaction more generally. Bailey and Snyder (2007) found that people who are married or cohabiting, as well as those who are single or never married, tend to report

a higher level of life satisfaction with their neighbourhoods than individuals who are separated, divorced, or widowed. People who are married, cohabiting, and single may be more likely to be satisfied with their life, and thus more likely to perceive their neighbourhood and characteristics favourably.

Individuals' perceptions of neighbourhood and any potential changes within it are correlated to socio-economic status—both of the neighbourhood as a whole and of the individuals who live in it. Feijten and Van Ham (2009) suggest that neighbourhoods with lower socio-economic status—including characteristics such as low income, high unemployment, and low levels of education—tend to have a greater proportion of residents who are unhappy with their neighbourhood. Residents are more likely to leave their neighbourhood when its socioeconomic status falls (Feijten and Van Ham 2009). Likewise, people who perceive themselves as having a higher socio-economic status are more likely to move into a neighbourhood where they perceive others as having a similar socio-economic status, which in turn means higher levels of education, income, and employment attract others who share similar characteristics (Feijten and Van Ham 2009). Higher levels of neighbourhood satisfaction have also been linked with higher levels of educational attainment (Sampson 1991). Thus wealth and education affect decisions to move into and out of a neighbourhood, as well as levels of satisfaction within it. We expect the same to be true of perceptions of neighbourhood change.

In summary, existing research suggests that those with a greater sense of belonging tend to have more favourable views of the neighbourhoods they live in, and changes within them; the length of time one lives in a neighbourhood has an unclear relationship with perceptions of change; older residents tends to be resistant to change; relationship status (more specifically, not being divorced, widowed, or separated) is tied to more positive views of a community; and wealth and education are tied to both positive and negative perceptions of neighbourhoods and change. In the next section, using new survey data collected in the winter of 2014–2015, we examine Halifax residents' perceptions of economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure change in their neighbourhoods. We also explore whether the factors outlined above account for participants' perceptions.

Methods and data

To understand Haligonians' perceptions of neighbourhood change, we conducted a telephone survey of 411 residents between November 2014 and March 2015. The survey had a 95% confidence level and a sampling error of 0.025. We recruited participants through a random selection of telephone numbers assigned to the Halifax Census Metropolitan Area, from a list that included landline and mobile telephone numbers. Only participants over the age of 18 who reside in Halifax were invited to participate. To ensure confidentiality, the names and telephone numbers of the participants were not linked to their responses.

The survey took between 10 and 55 minutes for respondents to complete and included questions on how residents of Halifax define their neighbourhood and how they perceive economic, social, cultural, physical, and tenure changes, as well as several demographic questions. The first part of the survey asked participants to name and define their neighbourhood using geographical boundaries. The survey did not provide a definition for the term "neighbourhood," but instead left it open for the respondents to use the term as they saw fit. This proved useful because the concept of neighbourhood is difficult to define and efforts to do so may stop respondents from using the idea of neighbourhood that is most meaningful to them (Parkes et al. 2002; McGirr et al. 2015). Subsequent sections of the survey asked respondents about the physical infrastructure and residential tenure patterns of homes in the neighbourhood; the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of their neighbourhood; and the changes that took place along these dimensions over the past five to ten years. For physical and tenure patterns, we asked respondents questions such as what kinds of buildings predominated in the neighbourhood; whether they were in good repair; what proportion of residents were homeowners or renters; and, crucially, whether these had changed in the last five to ten years. For economic conditions, we asked respondents their perceptions of employment and income levels of residents in the neighbourhood as well as its general affordability, as well as their perceptions of change in these characteristics. Questions about social and cultural patterns asked residents to gauge the proportions of racialized minorities, immigrants, households with children, senior citizens, and

people with university degrees in the neighbourhood; they were also asked social capital questions about interactions with neighbours and questions about change in these social and cultural elements. Most questions were answered on 5-point Likert scales, but we also used dichotomous and multiple-choice questions. The final section of the survey asked participants for demographic information.

Our analysis began with simple tabular and graphical analyses, followed by logistic regression to assess what factors coincided with residents of Halifax having positive perceptions of neighbourhood change. We explored how residents perceived changes in their neighbourhood by focusing on 14 questions from the survey, including three dependent variables and 11 explanatory factors. Our three outcome measures looked at how participants perceived economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure change in their neighbourhood over the past five to ten years. Participants were asked whether they believed changes in their neighbourhood were for the *better*, *remained the same*, or had gotten *worse*. We began our analysis examining each category and then turned the variable into dichotomous categories exploring self-reported perceptions of change for the *better* versus other perceptions. This dichotomization facilitated the use of logistic regression to understand which factors were significantly associated with positive perceptions of neighbourhood change.

The literature review of perceptions of neighbourhood change outlined above suggested that a strong sense of belonging, age, marital status, and socio-economic status all affect how people perceive their neighbourhoods. *Sense of belonging* was measured by asking participants to rate how much they felt they "fit in" to their neighbourhood on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the strongest sense of fitting in or belonging. For our cross-tabular analysis we recoded this variable into a three-category ordinal variable indicating whether the participant's level of fitting in to their neighbourhood was "low" (0–3), "moderate" (4–6), or "high" (7–10). In the regression analysis we used the un-aggregated measure. Another important factor is the length of time an individual has lived in his or her neighbourhood; this variable was grouped into those who *lived in the neighbourhood for less than 5 years* versus those who have been living there longer. We measured *age* by an aggregate of participants' reported age, with categories of youth

(18–30 years old), middle age (31–50 years old), older age (51–64 years old), and senior (65 years of age and older). The variable of *marital status* grouped participants into single, cohabiting/married, separated/divorced, and widowed. In order to examine socio-economic status, we looked at the *proportion of income spent on housing,* measured in thirds, as well as participants' *level of education*, which included high school or less, trades or apprenticeship certificate/college degree, university (including those with only some university), and professional degrees. In addition to these measures, the logistic regression models controlled for moving to the neighbourhood from within the city, gender, immigrant status, visible minority status, and whether participants had children living with them. The following section reports on our analysis of what affects perception of neighbourhood change in Halifax.

Results and findings

Figure 1 examines general perceptions of economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure change in respondents' neighbourhoods. It shows that most Haligonians did not perceive change over the last five to ten years. Of those who perceived changes in their neighbourhoods, a greater proportion felt those change was for the better. For example, 32% felt that the economic change in their neighbourhood was for the better, while 10% felt they it was for the worse. A similar pattern is seen with social and
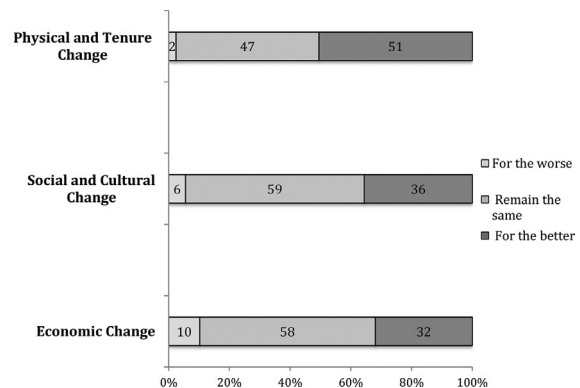

Figure 1
Perceptions of neighbourhood change (%).

cultural change, where 36% of participants perceived these changes for the better, compared to just 6% who believed they were for the worse. Looking at physical and tenure change, we find that by contrast with other variables, a slight majority of participants felt this change in their neighbourhood was for the better (51%), while only 2% believed it was for the worse. Generally, it appears that most Haligonians did not perceive significant change in their neighbourhoods over the last five to ten years; however, when they did perceive changes, they were not averse to them. We also found that physical and tenure changes were both more noticed and perceived more favourably than economic or social and cultural changes. For the most part, then, Haligonians perceived neighbourhood change as either neutral or for the better.

We explored perceptions further with basic tabular analysis looking at the relationship between positive perceptions of economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure change with measures of sense of belonging, age, marital status, and socio-economic status. In Table 1 we show how perceptions of change for the *better* relate to three aggregated levels of participants' *sense of belonging* to their neighbourhood. The data in Table 1 generally show that the more individuals feel they belong to their neighbourhood, the more likely they are to perceive change as being for the better. For instance, 34% of participants who fall within the "high" level of sense of belonging felt economic change was for the better compared to just 11% who had a low sense of belonging and 24% with a moderate sense. Similar patterns are seen with respect to social and cultural change and physical and tenure changes, where those with higher degrees of sense of belonging have higher rates of perceiving change for the better. Generally, the greater the sense of belonging to a neighbourhood, the greater the chance of perceiving change in the neighbourhood to be for the better.

In Table 1 we also examine the relationship between perceptions of change for the *better* and the number of years participants have lived in their neighbourhoods. The results show no clear pattern. For instance, 32% of respondents who lived in their neighbourhood for five or more years viewed economic change positively, compared to just 13% who lived in their neighbourhood for less than five years. However, when social and cultural as well as physical and tenure change are examined, we see the reverse, with 44% of participants who lived less than five years in their neighbourhood perceiving social and cultural change for the better, compared to 35% of those who lived there for five years or more. Among participants who had lived in their neighbourhood for less than five years, 60% perceived physical and tenure change for the better compared to 50% of those who have lived there for five years or more. Our findings suggest no clear relationship between length of residence and perception of neighbourhood change.

We next examined participants' age. Here we see a clear pattern emerge: 42% of youths (aged 18−30) felt that economic change was for the better, compared to 35% of seniors (aged 65 and older) while 46% of youths felt the same about the social and cultural change, compared to 41% of seniors. With regard to perception of physical and tenure changes, 61% of youths felt these changes were for the better, compared to 62% of seniors—but only 47% of middle-aged participants (aged 31−50) and 46% of older-aged (aged 51−64) participants felt this type of change was for the better. The data seem to partially fit the expectations raised by the literature that older people are less supportive of change.

The role that marital status plays in the perception of neighbourhood change is less straightforward than that of age. Although 31% of single, cohabitating, and married participants perceived the economic change in their neighbourhood as for the better, a larger percentage of those who were separated (44%) or divorced and widowed (33%) viewed it as positive. When asked about social and cultural change, 28% of single and 37% of cohabiting or married individuals perceived it as positive, compared to 27% of widowed participants. However, the largest percentage of people who perceived social and cultural change in their neighbourhood as positive were those who are separated or divorced (42%). When physical and tenure change of the neighbourhood is examined, a higher percentage of those who were separated or divorced (59%) and those who were widowed (69%) viewed such change as positive compared to 44% of those who were single and 50% of those who were married or cohabiting. These mixed findings differ from expectations of the relationship between marital status and perceptions of neighbourhoods found in the literature.

We also examined the proportion of income spent on the cost of housing as a proxy for

Table 1
Overall change for the better

	Economic change better Model 1	Social/ cultural change better Model 2	Physical/ tenure change better Model 3
Sense of belonging			
Low (0−3)	11%	30%**	38%
Moderate (4−6)	24%	18%**	38%
High (7−10)	34%	39%**	53%
Years lived in neighbourhood			
5 or more	32%	35%	50%
Less than 5	13%	44%	60%
Age			
Youth (18−30)	42%	46%	61%*
Middle age (31−50)	25%	32%	47%*
Older age (51−64)	34%	34%	46%*
Senior (65+)	35%	41%	62%*
Marital status			
Single	31%	28%	44%
Cohabiting/married	31%	37%	50%
Separated/divorced	44%	42%	59%
Widowed	33%	27%	69%
Proportion spent on housing			
About one third	33%	38%	49%
About two thirds	29%	29%	58%
Almost all	10%	33%	50%
Level of education			
High school or less	26%	36%	50%
Trades or apprenticeship certificate / college degree	37%	37%	54%
University	30%	33%	50%
Professional degree	38%	39%	47%

* $p< .10$ ** $p<.05$ *** $p< .01$

measuring income. "Housing" included rent, mortgage, heating and electric utility bills, and other such household costs. Table 1 shows that 33% of those who spent about a third of their income on housing costs felt the economic change in their neighbourhood was for the better compared to only 10% of those who spent almost all of their income on housing. Similarly, 38% of those who spent a third of their income on housing felt the social and cultural changes in their neighbourhood were for the better, compared to 33% who spent almost all of their income. We found little difference in perceptions of physical and tenure change, relative to the amount of income spent on housing. The results for perceptions of economic and social and cultural changes to a neighbourhood are in line with most previous studies, which suggest that those who are more economically advantaged are more likely to view neighbourhood change positively than those who are not. The data show little discernable difference for physical and tenure change.

Table 1 analyzes material wellbeing further by looking at level of education. While 26% of participants who have a high school education or below perceived the economic change in their neighbourhood as for the better, 38% of those who held a professional degree perceived it positively. Similarly, 36% of those who have high school or less education viewed the social and cultural change in their neighbourhood favourably, compared to 39% of those with a professional degree. However, for physical and tenure change, 50% of participants with high school or less education perceived it positively compared to 47% of those with a professional degree. Generally speaking, participants' perceptions of the economic change and the social and cultural change in their neighbourhoods in relation to both measures of material wellbeing coincide with findings from other studies. The

higher one's socio-economic status, the more likely one is satisfied with changes in one's neighbourhood. This is not the case for change in the physical conditions and tenure patterns of the neighbourhood.

When we consider statistical significance, we see that the only statistically significant relationships in Table 1 are those between sense of belonging and positive perceptions of social and cultural change and between age and positive perceptions of physical and tenure change. It appears that sense of belonging and age have unique relationships with positive perceptions of change.

To examine what affects positive perceptions further—that is, perceptions that economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure change are for the better—we ran three logistic regression models, presented in Table 2. Model 1 looked at perceptions of economic change. Three variables (sense of belonging, age, and education) have statistically significant effects on the odds of positive perceptions of that change. An increase of sense of belonging to a neighbourhood increases the odds of seeing economic change in the neighbourhood for the better by 19%, while controlling for other factors in the model. Being in the middle-age range (31–50 years old), compared to being in the youth category (18–30 years old), decreases the odds of perceiving the economic change in a neighbourhood for the better by 61%. Having a certificate for a trade or apprenticeship or a college degree, compared to having a high school degree or less, increases the odds of perceiving economic change for the better by 128%, while having a professional degree increases the odds of perceiving the economic change positively by 129%. These are the biggest effects of all variables in the model. In Model 2 we regressed perceptions of social and cultural neighbourhood

Table 2

Regression of perceptions of overall economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure chang**e**

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Overall economic change			Overall social and cultural change			Overall physical and tenure change		
Variables	**Odds**	**S.E.**	**P-value**	**Odds**	**S.E.**	**P-value**	**Odds**	**S.E.**	**P-value**
Sense of belonging	1.19	0.09	0.02**	1.22	0.09	0.006***	1.03	0.06	0.67
Lived in neighbourhood less than 5 years	0.33	0.37	0.32	2.34	1.88	0.29	2.40	1.88	0.26
Age (Reference: Youth [18–30])									
Middle age (31–50)	0.39	0.22	0.092*	0.30	0.16	0.028**	0.42	0.22	0.11
Older age (51–64)	0.57	0.30	0.29	0.28	0.15	0.016**	0.54	0.27	0.22
Senior (65+)	0.46	0.27	0.18	0.38	0.21	0.083*	0.99	0.55	0.99
Marital status (Reference: Single)									
Cohabiting/married	0.93	0.37	0.86	2.47	1.03	0.03**	1.34	0.48	0.41
Separated/divorced	1.82	0.96	0.26	2.37	1.29	0.11	1.61	0.80	0.34
Widowed	1.10	0.70	0.88	1.10	0.76	0.90	2.34	1.40	0.16
Proportion spent on housing (Reference: about one third)									
About two thirds	0.87	0.28	0.65	0.77	0.24	0.40	1.46	0.42	0.19
Almost all	0.51	0.60	0.57	0.73	0.71	0.75	1.42	1.20	0.68
Level of education (Reference: high school or less)									
Trades or apprenticeship certificate / college degree	2.28	0.87	0.031**	1.36	0.49	0.39	1.37	0.46	0.35
University	1.68	0.63	0.17	1.25	0.44	0.53	1.16	0.38	0.65
Professional degree	2.29	1.00	0.056*	1.38	0.57	0.44	1.04	0.40	0.93
Moved to neighbourhood from inside city	1.27	0.36	0.40	1.23	0.34	0.46	0.26	0.26	0.93
Female	0.83	0.22	0.48	1.01	0.25	0.96	1.02	0.24	0.93
Immigrated to Canada	0.93	0.47	0.88	1.20	0.60	0.72	0.88	0.41	0.78
Identify as visible minority	1.81	1.06	0.31	2.14	1.31	0.21	1.26	0.69	0.68
Children under 18 living with respondent	0.91	0.34	0.80	0.74	0.26	0.39	1.67	0.56	0.13
Constant	0.13	0.10	0.01	0.11	0.09	0.01	0.73	0.55	0.67

* *p*< .10 ** *p*<.05 *** *p*< .01

change on the same variables, and again three variables show statistical significance. This time, however, the variables are sense of belonging, age, and marital status. Socio-economic measures do not attain significance in this model. As in Model 1, we see that the stronger a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood, the greater the odds of perceiving the social and cultural change in that neighbourhood as being for the better. More specifically, sense of belonging increases the odds by 22%. When age is considered, using youth (18–30 years old) as the reference group, we find that being in the middle-age category (31–50 years old) decreases the odds of an individual perceiving social and cultural change as positive by 70%; being in the older-age category (51–64 years old) decreases the odds by 72%, while being in the senior category (65 and older) decreases the odds by 62%. When marital status is examined, we find that cohabiting or being married, compared to being single, increases the odds of perceiving social and cultural change in their neighbourhood as being for the better by 147%, which is the biggest effect in the model. The final regression we examine is reported in Model 3, which looks at perceptions of physical and tenure change. Unlike Models 1 and 2, which looked at economic change and social and cultural change, none of the variables in Model 3 achieved statistical significance.

Overall our analysis shows that a small majority of Haligonians report perceiving no change in their neighbourhoods. However, when they do recognize change—counter to popular stereotypes of the Atlantic region as stuck in its ways or averse to change—they largely see change as being for the better. This is especially the case for physical and tenure change. Like previous neighbourhood research studies, our analysis shows that sense of belonging and age are robust predictors of perceptions of change, with sense of belonging and youth being associated with perceiving neighbourhood change for the better. Education seems to affect perceptions of economic change, with higher education levels increasing positive views of it, and marital status seems to affect perceptions of social and cultural change, with those cohabiting and married being more positive about that type of change in a neighbourhood. Marital status and socio-economic status have less consistent effects on neighbourhood perceptions of change in Halifax. Our analysis found no statistically significant relationship with positive views of tenure and physical change. Instead, those appear to be viewed positively across all groups in the sample.

Conclusion

Our research examined perceptions of economic, social and cultural, and physical and tenure changes occurring at the neighbourhood level in Halifax. We found that a slight majority of residents reported perceiving no change in their neighbourhood, save those related to the built environment and housing tenure patterns. The lack of self-reported perception of economic change and social and cultural change is surprising given that in the last decade the city has experienced growth in the banking sector (CBC News 2012a), the analytics sector (Bundale 2012; Trade Centre Limited 2015), and is home to a $25 billion shipbuilding contract (Visser 2011). Debates over gentrification of some of the city's most marginal neighbourhoods are also on the rise (Beaumont 2013; Prouse et al. 2014), with many downtown neighbourhoods becoming increasingly wealthy and young (Grant and Gregory 2016). Halifax has also seen rapid growth in the numbers of international students at the city's universities (CBC News 2012b; Chira and Belhodja 2012). However, indicators of these changes may be rather intangible. Interestingly these kinds of changes are also linked to the rise of what Florida (2005) labels a "creative class" and are linked to vibrant post-industrial cities. Change to the built infrastructure are harder to miss, as residents have witnessed a spike in construction (Taylor 2012), with many new high-rises in the core of the city as well as the expansion of suburban subdivisions. Why people do not perceive change in their neighbourhood should be investigated further. It could be because they see change at other geographic scales, such as the city as a whole, or perhaps it is because indicators of economic and social and cultural change are subtle, or because residents welcome certain kinds of change.

Although many reported perceiving no change in their neighbourhoods, those who did tended to see such changes favorably, particularly physical and tenure change. Residents were also positive about the economic and the social and cultural changes they noticed. In the analysis we explored positive views of change further by looking at what is associated with those perceptions. We found that

sense of belonging and age had consistent impacts on perceptions of change. The stronger the sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, the more positive people's self-reported views of change. In contrast, older residents were less likely to hold positive views of change. Both findings are seen in other research on neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Freiler 2004; Burns et al. 2012; Sengupta et al. 2013). The roles of relationship status and socio-economic status were less clear-cut. As a whole, we find that in Halifax—a city that has had moderate growth compared to others in Canada but significant growth for the Atlantic region—residents largely see changes in a positive light.

Overall, our findings challenge the stereotypical narrative on adversity to change in Atlantic Canada. Despite the rapid changes occurring in the region, the Atlantic region is largely still considered "stuck in its ways" (Ivany et al. 2014) and averse to change. In Halifax, pundits and media have pointed to mobilization against the construction of tall buildings or tensions over gentrification as evidence that influential groups in the city block change. However, the data offered in our analysis challenge such popular mischaracterizations of the region and the city. Rather, we find that when Haligonians perceive change, they largely see it favourably. The question remains whether this is the case in other secondary cities across the region and country as a whole.

Acknowledgements

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