



**Civic Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society:
The Role of Nonprofit Organizations in Canada's
Four Most Diverse Cities**

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Abstract¹

Newcomer engagement or participation in the nonprofit sector has been shown to be an important pillar for upholding democracy, linked to voting behaviour and political participation; the creation of social capital; and enhancement of newcomer involvement in local decision making. This paper presents results of a study that focuses on two ways in which immigrant minorities have their interests represented in community decision-making: the first through the formation of ethno-specific voluntary organizations that represent their specific interests; the second via participation as leaders, board members and volunteers in ‘mainstream’ nonprofit and public organizations.

Introduction

Increasing waves of immigration in Canada are rapidly changing the ethnic and cultural environment in the country. More than 200 different ethnic origins were identified by Census Canada in 2006. The ethnic character of recent waves of immigration to Canada has shifted from predominantly European to predominantly Asian. Visible minorities account for 75% of immigrants who have arrived to Canada since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2010). The integration and inclusion of these newcomers in all aspects of Canadian society is a primary goal of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) whose policies and programs are aimed at creating welcoming communities for these immigrants.

Canada’s 161,000 nonprofit and voluntary organizations (Imagine Canada, 2005) play a central role in Canadian society. The sector is at the forefront of the processes of newcomer integration and inclusion into Canadian society. Voluntary/non-profit organizations partner with all levels of government to provide settlement and integration, as well as human and social services for various minority groups in the Canadian mosaic. Newcomer engagement or participation in the nonprofit sector has been shown to be an important pillar for upholding democracy, linked to voting behaviour and political participation (Putnam, 2001); the creation of social capital (Putnam, 2001); and enhancement of newcomer involvement in local decision making (Fennema & Tillie, 2001). For immigrants, engagement in non-profit organizations, whether as leaders or as volunteers, is also a way to learn about Canadian democracy and feel more connected with the country (Berger, Foster & Meinhard, 2008). Voluntary/non-profit sector organizations have to keep pace with the growing diversity of Canadian communities if they are to serve their communities effectively, and to contribute to the larger social goals of newcomer integration and inclusion.

Although many nonprofit organizations work in and with immigrant communities, research indicates that there is a lack of minority representation on the boards of nonprofit agencies (Daley, & Angulo, 1994; Daley & Marcisiglia, 2001; Fredette et al, 2006). According to statistics collected in the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (Imagine Canada, 2005), most of Canada’s immigrant minorities are volunteering and participating at

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lower than average rates. There has been little systematic assessment of participation rates of immigrant minorities in Canadian nonprofit agencies. But interest in this important area is growing. A recent study by HR Council for the Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector (HRCVNPS, 2008) found that ethnic minorities comprise only 2.5% of the non-profit labour force. This corresponds with findings by other studies that ethnic minorities are also poorly represented on the boards of non-profits (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Cukier & Yap, 2009).

This paper presents results of a study that focuses on two ways in which immigrant minorities have their interests represented in community decision-making: the first through the formation of ethno-specific voluntary organizations that represent their specific interests; the second via participation as leaders, board members and volunteers in 'mainstream' nonprofit and public organizations. To answer the first question, organizational density scores for ethno-specific charities were calculated for four of Canada's most diverse cities where 72.5% of Canada's 5.5 million visible minorities live: Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal (listed here in order of their diversity). Results indicate that compared to their numbers, immigrants are organizationally under-represented in Canada's nonprofit sector. To answer the second question, a sample of mainstream (non-ethnic) nonprofit organizations in each of the four cities was surveyed to determine the extent of participation by immigrant minority groups. Here too, the results indicate that visible minorities are under-represented on the boards of mainstream organizations.

One question this research attempts to answer is whether there is a correspondence between the density of ethno-specific organizations and the participation of immigrant groups in mainstream organizations. In other words, are ethno-specific organizations the stepping stones for moving into leadership positions in mainstream nonprofits, private corporations and government offices as women's organizations were for women in the latter half of the 20th century (Meinhard & Foster, 2003)? Or does involvement in ethno-specific organizations suffice the needs of immigrants, and decrease their involvement in mainstream organizations?

These questions can be stated as alternate hypotheses:

1. The greater the number of ethno-specific charitable organizations representing visible minority groups, the lower the participation of visible minorities on the boards of
2. The greater the number of ethno-specific charitable organizations representing visible minority groups, the higher the participation of visible minorities on the boards of mainstream charitable organizations.

The null hypothesis for both is: There is no relationship between the number of ethno-specific organizations and board diversity in mainstream organizations.

Research Methods

This study is designed to answer some basic questions about representation of visible minorities in the charitable/nonprofit sector in Canada's four most diverse cities. 1) How many ethno-specific organizations representing visible minorities are there in each city? 2) Is the number of organizations serving visible minorities proportionate to the number serving the general population? 3) How diverse are the boards of mainstream charitable organizations with

respect to the presence of visible minorities? 4) Are there differences among the four cities? From the data gleaned from these questions, we will test the hypotheses proposed above.

Calculating organizational density scores

In order to answer the first two questions we consulted two sources of data: Statistics Canada 2006 Community profiles and the Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) listing of charitable organizations. Using the Statistics Canada community profiles, we recorded the overall population, the total population of visible minorities, and the population of the top three visible minorities in Canada for each city. We calculated a *population diversity score* for each city by dividing the population of visible minorities in the city by the total population of the city (Figure 1).

Using the CRA's listing of charitable organizations, we counted and recorded the total number of charitable organizations in each city, excluding hospitals and universities, which are quasi-public institutions. Then in a painstaking and labour-intensive exercise, we identified the ethno-specific organizations (excluding churches mosques temples and synagogues) of all the visible minority groups that were defined in the 2006 census: Chinese, South-Asians, Blacks, Philipino, Japanese, Koreans, Latin-American, South-Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri-lankan, etc); South East Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Latinos, etc.); West Asians (e.g., Turkish, Iranians, Afghans., etc.) and visible minorities not included elsewhere (e.g Guyanese, West Indian, Kurd, Tibetan, etc.). Any organization bearing one of these names was identified as an ethno-specific visible minority organization. We also used language as a criterion for identifying ethno-specific organizations. We followed up by checking their web sites to verify the accuracy.

We are aware that some ethno-specific organizations with English names might not indicate an ethnic affiliation and thus would be passed over. For this reason we caution the reader that the numbers provided are only estimates. This notwithstanding, we believe that using these estimates will not affect the overall validity of the findings and their implications as the margin of error would not be high and would be evenly distributed through the various cities. It should be noted that the ethnic organizations that we included in our sample are only those that are specific to groups identified by Census Canada as visible minorities. That is why we label them as ethno-specific. Needless to say, there are many other ethnic organizations in the CRA listings that are specific to other ethno-cultural groups that are not visible minorities. These organizations were not included in our sample of ethno-specific organizations. So, when we refer to the total number of charitable organizations, these include all ethnic and non-ethnic or mainstream organizations. Ethno-specific organizations refer to ethnic organizations specific to visible minorities.

Once the lists were completed, we calculated an *organizational diversity score* for each city by dividing the total number of ethno-specific charities by the total number of charities (Figure 2). However in order to get a more accurate picture and allow for city comparisons, we calculated an *organizational density score* by dividing the total number of charitable organizations by every 100,000 people. Similarly we calculated an *ethno-specific organizational density score* by dividing the total number of ethno-specific charities by every 100,000 people

defined as a visible minority (Figure 3). Finally we calculated the *ratio of ethno-specific organizations to total organizations* dividing the organizational density score by the ethno-specific organizational density score (Figure 4).

Caveat

The findings presented in this research are based on registered charities only. According to the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, there are approximately 161,000 nonprofit organizations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005), only about half of which are registered charities. It is more difficult to obtain charitable registration in Canada than to incorporate as a nonprofit organization in any of the provinces. Given the lack of resources available to immigrant populations, they may opt to incorporate as a nonprofit without seeking charitable registration. Therefore, using only registered charities in our research results in under-reporting the true number of ethno-specific nonprofit organizations, as well as the true number of total nonprofit organizations. It also results in under-reporting the per capita density scores, since the CMA population figures would remain the same. However, because there is no reason to believe that of the 80,000 or so nonregistered nonprofits, the representation of ethno-specific organizations is any greater than in the charitable list, the ratios of ethno-specific to total organizations are expected to remain the same. It is these ratios that give the truest picture of the visible minority organizational representation *vis a vis* the sector as a whole.

Survey of mainstream organizations to determine board diversity

In order to answer the third question – “How diverse are the boards of mainstream charitable organizations?” - we conducted a survey of a random sample of mainstream organizations in each of the four cities.

Survey instrument

The 28-question survey comprised four sections. Section A sought general information about the organization, asking such questions as: *What is your organization's primary sphere of activity? What are the specific communities served by your organization? What is the current annual budget of your organization?* Section B asked about the characteristics of the organization's employees and volunteers, for example: *To the best of your knowledge, how many people from visible minority groups are members of your board, staff and volunteers?* Section C focused on the topic of Diversity, with questions such as: *Have there been discussions on your board about the need to attract more board members to reflect the ethnic diversity of your community?* In this section, the respondents were also asked to rate barriers they faced when trying to recruit members from minority groups, with possible barriers including ‘lack of board skills’ and ‘gender role restrictions in certain ethnic groups’. Lastly, Section D gathered information about the respondent of the questionnaire; for example, the position they currently hold at the organization and how long they've been associated with the organization. The survey was translated into French.

Sample

The total number of registered charities in the four cities is 19,697. However, our sample was drawn from a population of 13,812 CRA-registered charitable organizations that met the following criteria: they were listed in good standing and were not ethno-specific organizations,

religious institutions, hospitals or universities. The sampling framework for the study was 1,000 organizations. This represents 1/13.8, or 7.25% of the total relevant population. The representative framework identified a total 170 such organizations in Vancouver, 150 in Calgary, 380 in Toronto, and 300 in Montreal. While we wanted numeric representation by city, we were not concerned to achieve a representative distribution of types of charities.

Our final sample consisted of 212 completed surveys, for a response rate of 21.2%. Responses included 39 from Vancouver (23.6% response rate), 29 from Calgary (18.7% response rate)², 79 from Toronto (20.8% response rate), and 65 from Montreal (21.7% response rate). 76.4% of the responses were English, with the remaining 23.6% in French.

Data Collection

Survey invitations were emailed in batches to each of the cities between May 2011 and October 2011. Links to the Survey Monkey site were provided in the invitations. In Toronto and Montreal, the invitation was proffered in both official languages and the respondent was given the choice of linking to the French questionnaire or the English one. Three reminders were sent to each organization surveyed. Once the survey was closed, the data were downloaded and transformed into SPSS data format. The French and English cases were then combined for a total of 212 cases.

Analysis

Data analysis consists mostly of descriptive statistics and comparisons among the cities, mostly using nonparametric statistics because of non-normal distributions. These will be discussed in the findings section.

Research Results

The main thrust of this research is to describe the way in which Canada's visible minorities are represented in the charitable sector, by their ethno-specific organizations and through leadership roles in mainstream organizations. However, because we will present these findings in relative terms, not merely in raw form, we will first describe the demographic characteristics of the cities, which inform our computations of organizational density and individual representativeness.

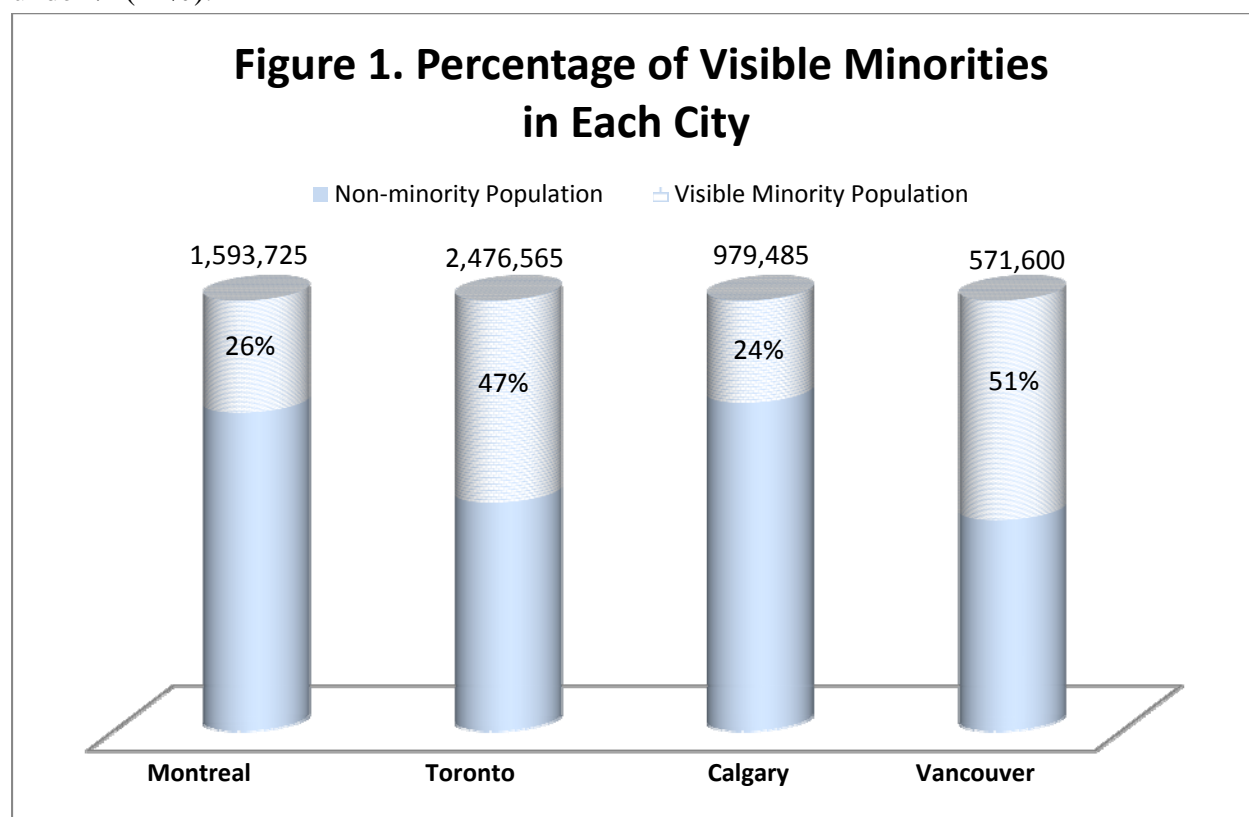
Five and a half million Canadians defined themselves as visible minorities in the 2006 Canada Census. They comprise 16.2% of Canada's total population. The three largest ethnic groups among the visible minorities are: South Asian 4.2% of the total population, Chinese 3.9% and Black 2.5%. The overwhelming majority of visible minorities (95%) live in metropolitan areas, as defined by Census Canada (2006). The four cities in this study are home to 72.5% of them.

Visible minority populations of the four target cities

Figure 1 depicts the percentage of visible minorities in each of the cities. A city-wide comparison of the presence of visible minorities indicates that Vancouver is Canada's most ethnically diverse

² The actual sample for Vancouver and Calgary varied slightly from the representative sample, with a total 155 invitations sent to Calgary and a total 165 sent to Vancouver. Response rates given for these cities are calculated on the basis of the actual sample.

city, closely followed by Toronto. In each city, around half of the population self-identify as visible minorities – 51% and 47% respectively. (These are references to the core cities, not the metropolitan areas where Metropolitan Toronto is slightly more diverse than Metropolitan Vancouver - 43% and 42% respectively.) As the nation's most populous city, Toronto boasts almost half of all of Canada's visible minorities as residing within its Metropolitan area. In Montreal, Canada's second largest slightly more than ¼ of the population (26%) is non-Caucasian while in Calgary the smallest of the four cities, the visible minority population is just under ¼ (24%).



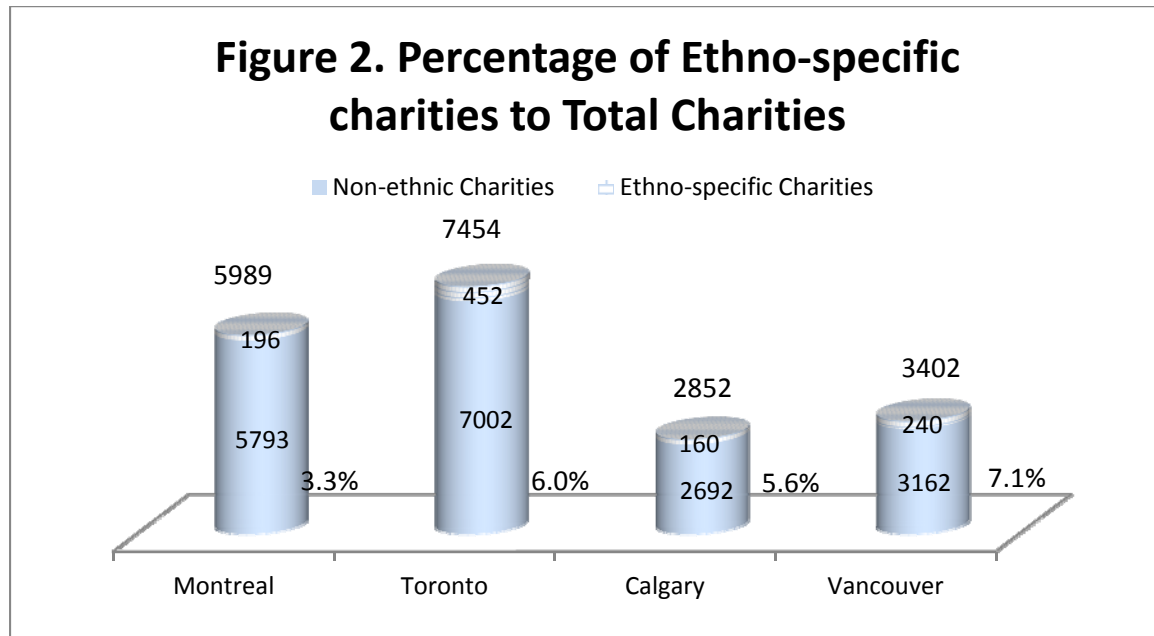
Ethno-specific charities in the four target cities

Figure 2 presents the total number of charities in each city, as well as the number of ethno-specific charities representing visible minorities. Not surprisingly, the largest number of charities (N=7454) and ethno-specific charities (N=452) are located in Toronto, Canada's largest city. However, as a percentage of the total number of charities in the city, Vancouver has the highest percentage of ethno-specific charities, at 7%, followed by Toronto, at 6% and Calgary, at 5.6%. And although Montreal has the second highest number of charities (N=5989) among the cities, only 3.3% of them are ethno-specific.

But the true measure of the extent to which visible minorities are represented by their ethno-specific organizations is depicted in Figure 3. Here we present the number of ethno-specific charities for every 100,000 people who identify as a visible minority. The result is somewhat unexpected; in Toronto, which has the highest number of charities, there are only 39 ethno-specific charities serving every 100,000 visible minorities (the lowest of the four cities).

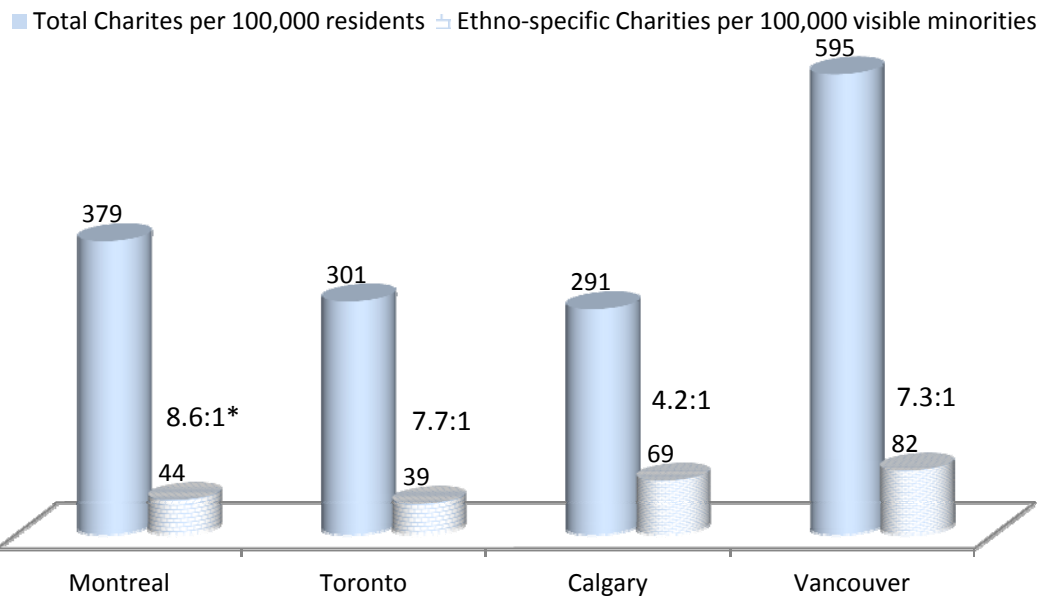
Vancouver has the highest per-100,000 capita rate at 82, followed by Calgary (69) and Montreal (44).

Figure 3 also presents the total number of charities per 100,000 residents. In order to fully understand how well visible minorities are represented by their ethno-specific organizations in each city, we calculated a ratio of total organizations to ethno-specific organizations. One in



every four charities in Calgary is ethno-specific, one in every eight in Montreal and Toronto, and one in every seven in Vancouver. Thus the two most ethnically diverse cities in Canada, are also the ones in which visible minorities are most poorly represented through formal ethno-specific charitable organizations.

Figure 3. Ethno-specific and Total Charities by 100,000 Population

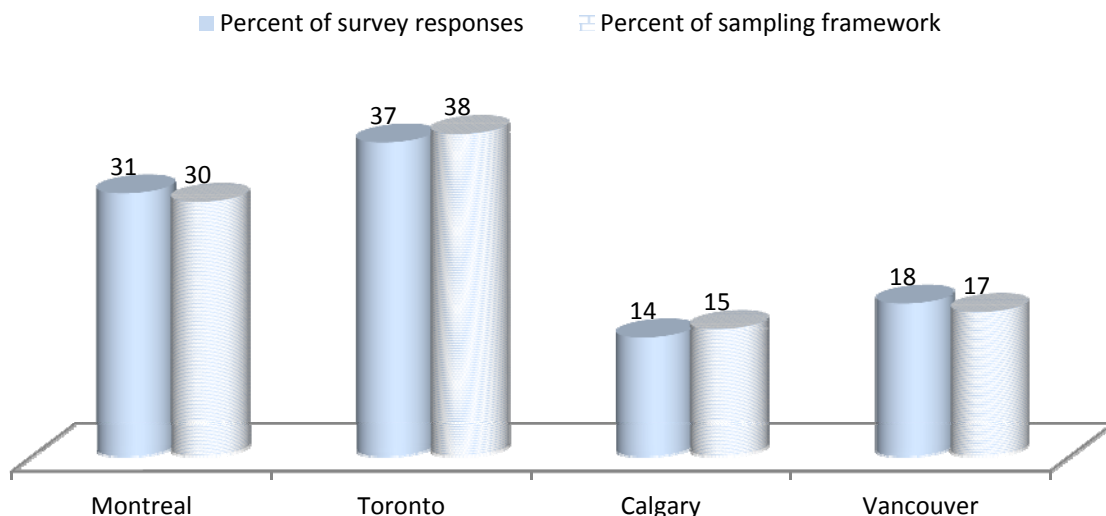


* Ratio: 1 in every 8.6 charities per 100,000 people is ethno-specific for visible minorities

Visible minority representation on the boards of mainstream charities

In this section we present results from the survey. Bearing in mind that although the sampling framework was a true stratified random sample, the response rate was only 21%, varying from around 19% to 24%. However, the distribution of actual responses by city to expected responses is almost identical. They are presented Figure 4.

Figure 4. Actual Response Rates vs Sampling Stratification



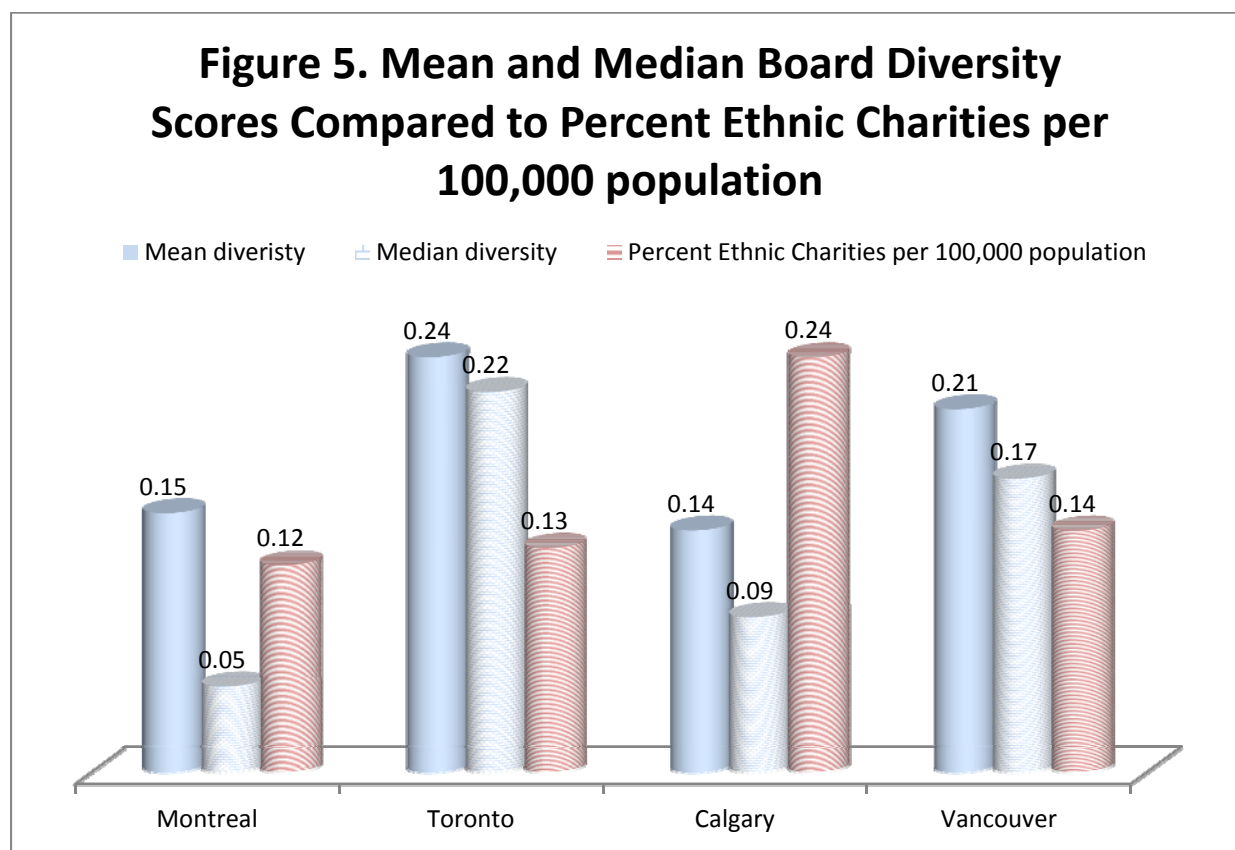
Description of the sample

The responding organizations ranged in size from very small to very large as measured by their annual budgets. The median budget is \$500,000 – \$999,999, and the mode is \$1,000,000 - \$5,000,000. There is no significant difference in the distribution of organizations by size among the cities (Chi Sq. = 6.78, $p = .342$). The respondents represent the gamut of nonprofit organizations (aside of religious institutions, which were deliberately eliminated from the sample). One quarter of the respondents represent arts and culture organizations and another quarter come from the social service sector. Thirteen percent of responses represent health organizations and ten percent education and research. These four types of charitable organizations comprise just under $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sample. There is no significant difference in the distribution of types of charities among the four cities (Chi Sq. = 14.28, $p = .283$). The median board size across the entire sample is 8-9 board members and that represents the mode too. There is no significant difference in board size across the cities (Kruskal-Wallis test $p = .221$).

Board Diversity

Board diversity score was calculated by dividing the total number of reported visible minorities on a board by the total number of board members. The mean diversity score was 20%, the median was 12.5% and the mode was 0. Thirty-three percent of organizations have no visible minorities on their boards, while 3% have only visible minorities. These 7 boards are all very small, with fewer than 6 board members. Board diversity is not related to the size of the organization, as measured by budget (Kruskal-Wallis $p = .259$; median test $p = .521$). Type of organization is also not related to the diversity of the board (Kruskal-Wallis, $p = .790$; median test $p = .872$). Thus the distribution of visible minorities is the same across all types of boards and all sizes of organizations. Board size, however, is related to diversity (median test, $p = .036$). Larger boards tend to be more diverse. City is also significantly related to board diversity (Kruskal-Wallis, $p = .005$; median test, $p = .009$), with Toronto and Vancouver being the most diverse (see Figure 5). Pairwise comparisons indicate that boards in Toronto are significantly more diverse than boards in Montreal ($p = .016$) and Calgary ($p = .04$), but not Vancouver. Montreal and Calgary are significantly different from Toronto (as indicated above), but not from Vancouver or each other. Vancouver is not significantly different from any other city. Figure 5 depicts these differences graphically.

Since both city and board size were significantly related to diversity, we wanted to see whether the city variable continued to be significant when board size was controlled. Unfortunately we could not use the nonparametric Chi Square test because there were too many empty cells. So, even though our data do not conform to the normal distribution, we ran an analysis of variance controlling for board size. Board diversity scores continued to be significantly different across cities ($F = 2.65$, $p = .05$). We found main effects for only for city, none for board size, and there was no significant interaction.



Testing the hypotheses

Just from looking at the striped bar in Figure 5, it is evident that Calgary is different from the other three cities. In Calgary almost 1 in 4 charities are ethno-specific, per 100,000 people, almost twice as high as the other cities. Also Calgary is the only city in which the proportion of ethnic to total charities is higher than the proportion of visible minorities sitting on boards of mainstream organizations. However, we do not know whether this difference is significant. In order to test the hypothesis, we created a variable measuring the difference between the ethno-specific organizational density ratio (striped cylinder in Figure 5) and the board diversity score. As the Levene homogeneity of variance test proved non-significant when using this variable, we were able to do an analysis of variance with cities as the independent factor and the difference score calculated. The null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the number of ethno-specific organizations and board diversity in mainstream organizations is rejected ($F=5.88$, $p=.000$). Post hoc testing of homogeneous subsets indicated that Calgary differs significantly from the other three cities (Tukey B, $p<.05$), as is evident in viewing Figure 5, and that Hypothesis 1 is supported over Hypothesis 2

In other words:

The greater the number of ethno-specific charitable organizations representing visible minority groups, the lower the participation of visible minorities on the boards of mainstream charitable organizations.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this study raise more questions than they answer. First, why are there relatively so few ethno-specific charities? Although we did not expect a direct correspondence of charities to size of visible minority population, we were surprised at the low average percentage, especially in the more diverse cities. We recognize that mainstream organizations also serve ethnic minorities, but with large immigrant populations, we expected greater numbers. One of the reasons that the numbers are so low may be a result of a trend for serving new immigrants in large multicultural organizations as opposed smaller ethno-specific organizations; smaller ethno-specific immigrant serving organizations cannot compete for funding with the larger multicultural agencies (Richmond & Shields, 2005; Sadiq, 2004; Wang & Truelove, 2003). Another reason may be related to length of time in Canada. Most visible minority groups are relatively new to Canada, and they may not have the financial or human resources necessary to establish an organization with a charitable registration. Their networks may not be sufficiently dense to access donors and foundations, thus their donor base may be very small. A recent study in Washington, D.C. found that more established ethnic minorities boasted greater numbers of organizations than groups whose arrival to the US was more recent (de Leon, et al., 2009). This assumption can be easily checked in future research by counting the number of ethnic groups from earlier waves of immigration to Canada, for example Jewish, Italian, Portuguese and Hungarian organizations, and compare them to the newer immigrants.

The second question arising from the data is: Why, in relative terms does Calgary have a higher proportion of ethno-specific organizations per 100,000 people, than the other three cities? And why is this higher proportion related to a lower rate of diversity in mainstream boards? These questions are topics for future research.

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