

Nurturing immigrants' social capital and collective voice: NHs as place-based community organizations

A6: NH as a Place-based Policy Mechanism to Support Immigrants' Settlement

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Overview

- 1. Conceptualizing place-based governance
- 2. Building capacity for newcomers at NHs: social capital through community engagement (social integration)
- 3. Placed-based, community centred engagement and political advocacy (political integration)

Background: Research Project on NHs in Greater Vancouver

- Four years, collaborative, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (lead: Miu Chung Yan, UBC)
- First systematic study of NHs in Canada; key research question:
 - “How do neighbourhood houses, as place-based, multi-service, community-governed, non-profit organizations, affect social equity, collective efficacy, and inclusion, based on the cases of Metro Vancouver?”
- Project Website: <http://nhvproject.ca>



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From centralized to place-based governance: the role of civil society organizations

Empowering the community: Non-government actors providing an institutional infrastructure for building and strengthening urban communities and nurturing their collective capacity;

Building social capital: Building social capital as a key component of democratic and socially sustainable civic communities; response to growing social inequality and alienation in urban communities;

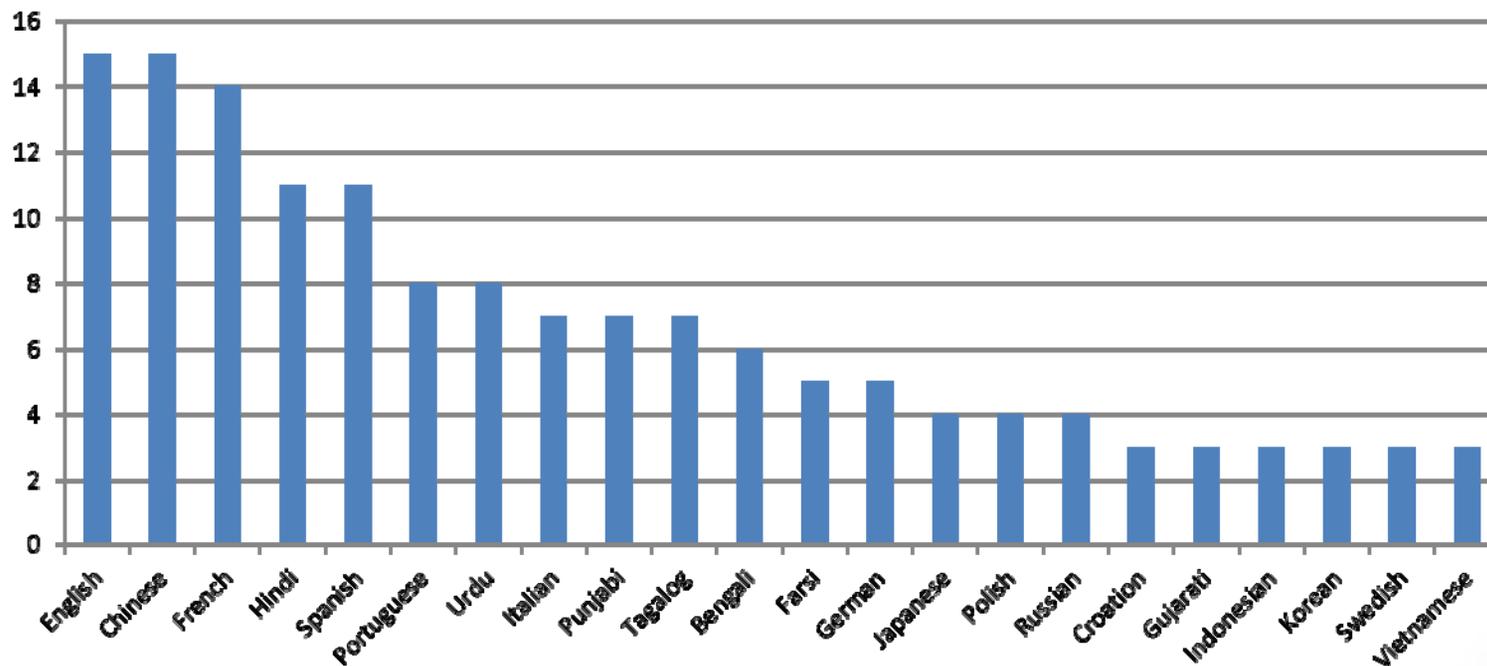
Policy competence: Place-based organizations as part of addressing the increasingly complex challenges of urban communities (joint government-civil society problem-solving; horizontal and vertical coordination as key to effective policy making).

Social Capital and immigrant integration: Clearinghouse Survey Results

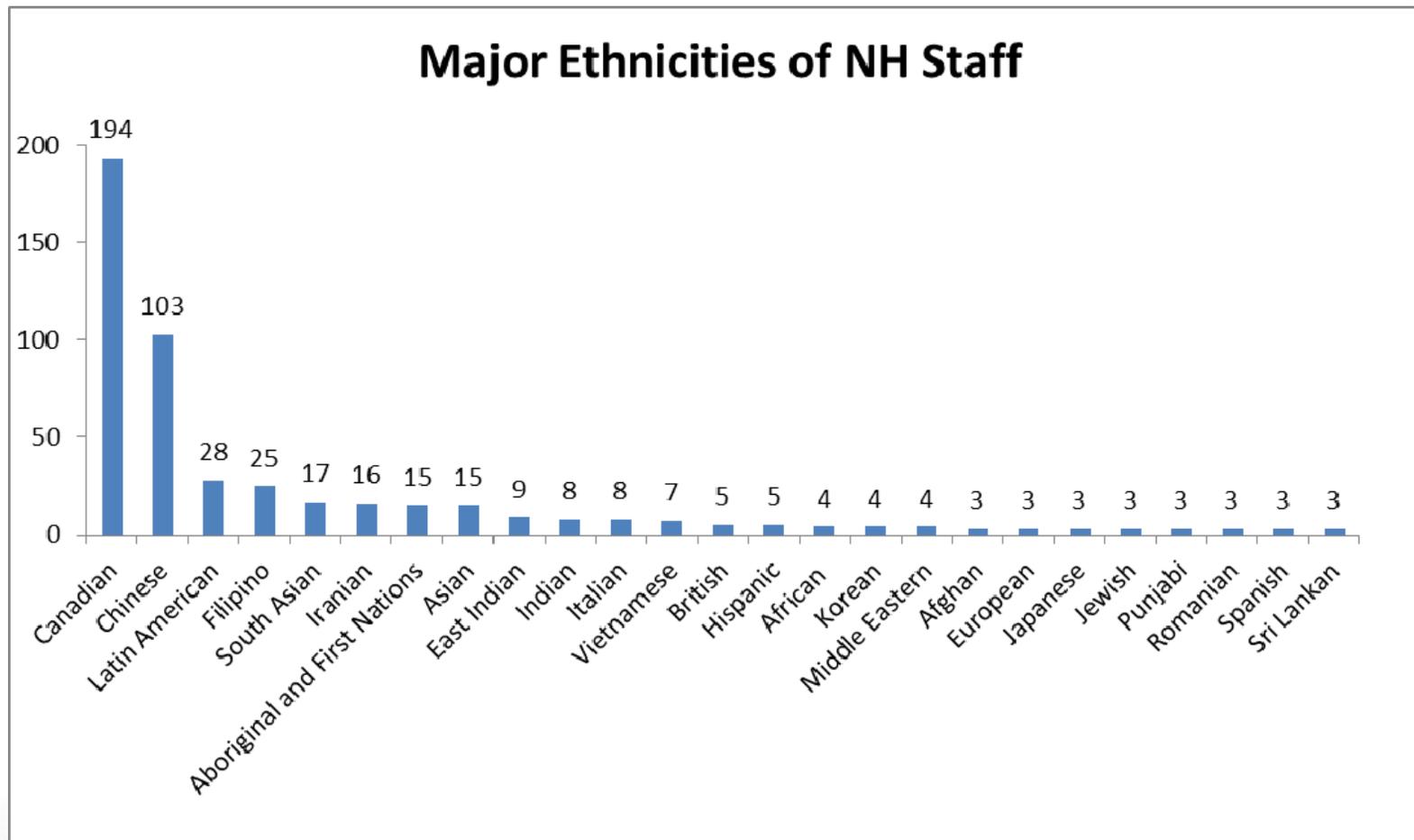
- Target population: Users of the services of neighbourhood houses in Metro Vancouver
- 675 respondents from 14 NSs
- 65% newcomers; 77% women; 54% employed; 30% university degree

RESULTS: Social diversity of staff at NHs

Languages Spoken By 3 Or More Staff Members At Metro Vancouver NHs



Social diversity of staff at NHs



NHs as a site for building social capital

Perceived changes in social skills through involvement at neighbourhood houses

	Total		Place of Birth			
	Canada		Outside Canada			
(%)	A little	A lot	A little	A lot	A little	A lot
Increases in social skills through involvement						
Has your ability to work with people from different backgrounds changed?	42	34	34	29	46	38
Have your decision making abilities changed?	42	26	30	19	48	29
Have your skills in organizing or managing events and programs changed?	36	21	24	17	42	23
Have your skills in speaking in front of other people changed?	35	27	22	19	42	32

Placed-based, community centred engagement: the role of NHs

- Capacity building
 - at **individual level**: site of social capital formation: overcoming social isolation, encouraging engagement, practice of civic skills
 - at **collective level**: collective-communal empowerment
- Establishing link between governments, people, and private stakeholders ('network builder').

Role of NHs in providing community/newcomers with a political voice

- NHs provide the social infrastructures and networks of democratic participation:
 - Concrete incentives to overcome alienation from political process in particular for those who have a more precarious social status (low income, seniors, immigrants/ minorities) through services and initiatives;
- NHs as critical for effective policy initiatives and implementation (decisive: local knowledge and competence): “eyes and ears in the community”;
- Contested idea whether NHs have a mandate to be a political advocate of the community (growing financial dependency as recurrent issue).

Thank You!

- Social Science and Humanities Research Council for its financial support
- All 14 neighbourhood houses in the lower mainland for their time and support of our research
- Project website: www.nhvproject.ca