

## ABSTRACT

*A shift is taking place among organizations that utilize volunteer services as more leaders recognize the benefits of incorporating diversity. Yet many volunteer managers are not sure how to recruit and retain volunteers of diverse backgrounds, and become frustrated with short-lived successes. In this article the authors introduce a model, the Diversity Diamond, that provides a simple, visual way to take an overview of the complexity of organizational diversity. The model directs attention to the multiple aspects of a diversity initiative and is useful for conducting a comprehensive assessment and planning coordinated action steps. The article provides explanations of each facet of the Diversity Diamond and then considers implications for taking action. A key conclusion reached is that initiatives that focus on only one facet of diversity work, such as outreach or awareness training, will do little to promote diversity in the long run.*

## Ethnocultural Communities and Formal Volunteering: An Exploratory Study

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Although there has been much research on formal volunteering in Canada, very little has been written about the volunteer work of ethnocultural communities. This paper reports the results of face-to-face interviews and focus groups involving fifty members of Latin American and Somali communities who had volunteer experience with a variety of mainstream organizations. The findings of this study indicate the presence of a distinct set of factors influencing their approach to formal volunteering, their motivations and resources, and their choice of organizations. The desire to integrate into Canadian society motivated them to become volunteers for mainstream organizations. Their formal volunteering was hindered by factors such as unfamiliarity with the concept of formal volunteering; language and cultural differences; lack of information and resources; losses resulting from migration; and discrimination. Their

choice of a particular organization was influenced by professional interests; ideological values; and multicultural character of organization and the clients it served.

Volunteers make an extraordinary contribution to the well-being of Canadian society. According to the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997, approximately 7.5 million Canadians aged 15 and over contributed as volunteers to community organizations and charitable groups. Time spent in this way totalled more than 1.1 billion hours, the equivalent of 578,000 full-time, year-round jobs (Statistics Canada, 1998). Despite the steadily increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of Canada's population, there are few statistics about the volunteer contributions made by members of ethnocultural communities to mainstream organiza-

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tions. The 1987 National Volunteer Activity Survey reported that 25 percent of Canadian volunteers came from a cultural background other than English or French (Ross & Shillington, 1989), but the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating did not provide any information on the ethnic backgrounds of volunteers (Statistics Canada, 1998). Two other sources state that members of ethnocultural communities do not volunteer in mainstream organizations in numbers proportionate to their presence in the general population (Duncan & Galvin, 1988; Pike, 1990). However, the authors did not provide statistical evidence in support of these statements.

Similarly, very little is known about the factors which prompt members of ethnocultural communities to volunteer for mainstream organizations or about the differences between their volunteer activities and those of mainstream Canadians. Considering that organizations rely more and more on the contributions of volunteers and that members of ethnocultural communities make up a significant proportion of the Canadian population, this paucity of information is surprising.

To successfully recruit volunteers from ethnocultural communities, and to ensure that those who are recruited remain committed, it is important that mainstream organizations recognize the factors which both encourage and hinder their participation. To this end, an exploratory study of formal volunteering in the Latin American and Somali communities in Ottawa-Carleton region was conducted in 1998-99. This paper reports the findings of face-to-face interviews and focus groups involving fifty members of Latin American and Somali communities who had volunteer experience with a variety of mainstream organizations.

In this paper, formal volunteering is approached as a process consisting of several stages that one has to go through in order to become a formal volunteer. According to this framework, formal volunteering does not just happen. It is the

outcome of a multi-stage process. One becomes a volunteer by going through several stages. The passage from one stage to another stage is conditioned by a broad range of personal, situational and organizational factors. Such framework not only helps researchers to identify factors hindering and facilitating the passage from one stage to the next, but also to note differences and similarities between different groups of people.

This paper consists of three major sections. In the first section, the literature is reviewed from the perspective of volunteering as a multi-stage process. The findings of the study are discussed in the second section of the paper. In the third of the paper, the suggestions made by study participants on how to recruit and retain volunteers from Latin American and Somali communities are presented.

## A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Formal volunteering is generally defined as providing services to others without coercion and expectation of direct monetary reward, in a coordinated way within an organizational context, and often on a regular or planned basis (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993; Ilsley, 1990; Rice, 1990). In contrast, informal volunteering is defined as providing services to others without the assistance of an intermediary organization (Ilsley, 1990). To become a volunteer, one must first be ready to volunteer. That is, the prospective volunteer must be motivated, ready to act, and be able to dedicate personal resources such as time, energy, and skills to an organization. Second, the individual must know which organizations need volunteers and, before choosing and approaching them, must have a basic understanding of their mission and activities. Third, the prospective volunteer's initial contact with an organization's representatives must be satisfactory and his/her offer received and acknowledged in a cordial and professional manner. Fourth, having become a volunteer, satisfaction with the assigned

task and with the work environment determines his/her degree of commitment to the chosen organization. In the rest of this section, formal volunteering is discussed along these identified four stages.

### **Readiness**

Studies show that volunteers are motivated by a combination of altruism and personal interest. Some want to help other people, to support a cause, to do something they enjoy, to learn new skills, to enhance their job opportunities, to fulfill religious obligations, and/or to meet people (Rice, 1990; Schram, 1985; Statistics Canada, 1998).

Although motivation impels people to volunteer, it does not entirely explain why some volunteer and others do not. One person may be motivated to volunteer, but unable to do so due to health problems, lack of time or a language barrier. To help others, a person needs resources such as time, money, energy, and skills. There is evidence that people with more education, higher incomes, higher social status, and better health are more likely to volunteer than other people (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993; Rice, 1990; Robichaud, 1985; Statistics Canada, 1998). Conversely, people who do not volunteer, or who discontinue volunteer activity, have mentioned lack of resources such as time and money as factors affecting their behavior (Carter, 1975; Statistics Canada, 1998).

Moreover, with respect to formal volunteering, it is important to keep in mind that the concept itself is unknown in many countries and therefore may not be an attractive activity for members of all ethnocultural communities. Furthermore, in some countries, volunteer work for an organization is perceived as unpaid work or free labor (Bergin, 1989; Duncan & Galvin, 1988). In their study on German and Pakistani-Canadians, Duncan and Galvin found that, for these two groups, "the idea of volunteering somewhere every week seemed more like 'work without pay' than lending a helping hand" (1988).

### **Selection of an Organization**

The lack of information about the need for volunteers and about how to become a volunteer has been identified as a barrier to volunteering (Carter, 1975). Surveys of non-volunteers suggest that one reason for not volunteering is that "no one asked me" (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). According to the 1997 National Survey, approximately one-third of non-volunteers explained that they did not volunteer because no one whom they knew had personally asked them to do so (Statistics Canada, 1998).

Social ties and interpersonal networks of kinship, friendship and occupation have an important role in this respect. People who volunteer tend to recruit family members, friends and co-workers into the organizations with which they are associated (Carter, 1975; Ilsley, 1990; Smith, 1985). In fact, the 1997 National Survey found that 44 percent of volunteers began to volunteer as a result of being approached by someone in an organization (Statistics Canada, 1998). It is important to note, however, that social ties can have a negative impact on a person's involvement in volunteer activity. Just as the encouragement of friends, relatives and colleagues influence the decision to engage in volunteer activity, their disapproval can lessen or prevent a person's involvement and commitment (Schindler-Rainman & Lippitt, 1971).

Research also shows that people are attracted to a particular organization if there is some compatibility between their values and interests and the organization's mission and activities (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993; Pearce, 1993). Information about an organization is often provided by networks of friends, relatives or colleagues, or accumulated through years of socialization. Immigrants and first generation Canadians are disadvantaged in this regard because their social networks and knowledge of system are often limited.

## **Approaching an Organization**

At this stage, factors such as the friendliness and courtesy of staff, as well as general organizational ambience, can have a significant impact on prospective volunteers. In the case of immigrants and minority groups, language and cultural differences and racism (perceived or real) are factors determining the outcome of this stage. A study conducted in England found that white applicants were more likely than blacks to be given a favorable response when they enquired about volunteer positions. Black applicants were more likely to be discouraged, either by being told no positions were available or by being assigned to uninteresting volunteer tasks (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). Pakistani-Canadians reported that they did not get involved in mainstream voluntary activities because they did not want "to put themselves in a situation where they would experience discrimination. There was a strong feeling expressed that they would not be allowed (by voluntary organizations) to be involved" (Duncan & Galvin, 1988).

## **Experiences with an Organization**

Volunteers remain committed to an organization when they are given meaningful tasks to do; when their relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and clients are satisfactory; when they are allowed to engage meaningfully in decision-making; and when their contributions as volunteers are acknowledged and appreciated by the organization.

The literature on formal volunteering shows that one of the major sources of disappointment for volunteers is the discrepancy between what they have found in their volunteer activity and what they anticipated it would be like. The discrepancy "may be discovered in the amount of time required for the activity, the type of work, the amount of support from the professionals, the type of clients, and the available facilities" (Schindler-Rainman & Lippitt, 1971; Tomeh, 1981; Ilsley, 1990; Davidhizar & Bowen, 1996). Volunteers

must also feel their work has positive effects. They want proof that their efforts have helped the organization to achieve its goals and purposes (Schindler-Rainman & Lippitt, 1971; Smith, 1985).

The organizational context in which volunteers work is another crucial factor in their retention. Tension and conflict between volunteers and staff can be a serious problem in this respect. Further, volunteers remain with an organization when they are encouraged to take part in organizational decision-making and to participate in the formulation of organizational policies and procedures (Ilsley, 1990).

Finally, it is important to note the positive impact of an organization's multicultural character on the recruitment and retention of volunteers from ethnocultural communities. Minority volunteers in an organization dominated by mainstream volunteers and staff are likely to feel marginal and peripheral (Tomeh, 1981), a feeling which can lead them to leave the organization. For instance, it is reported that an organization recruited a few Spanish-speaking volunteers and placed them in positions with staff, clients, and other volunteers who spoke only English. The Spanish-speaking volunteers did not stay with the organization long because they had no one with whom they could socialize and exchange friendly conversation in their native language (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993).

## **STUDY FINDINGS**

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study was to identify factors that influence the decision of Latin Americans and Somalis to become and remain volunteers for mainstream organizations. More specifically, the research questions were: Why do Latin Americans and Somalis become formal volunteers? What helps or hinders them from becoming formal volunteers? Why do they choose, and remain committed to a particular organization? How can a mainstream

organization best recruit and work with volunteers from these communities?

Drawn in equal numbers from the two communities, a total of 50 Latin Americans and Somalis participated in the study. The study participants had lived in Canada for at least three years and had volunteered for Canadian mainstream organizations. Data were collected in two stages. First, forty-five face-to-face interviews were conducted. Of the 45 interviewees, 51 percent were male. The majority of the interviewees were married (71 percent), were aged 25-49 years (71 percent), had completed college or university studies (75 percent), and had lived in Canada for five or more years (78 percent). At the time of interviews, 36 percent of them were unemployed, 29 percent were employed full-time, and 24 percent had part-time work. The rest were students and retirees.

For validation purposes, and to gather supplementary data, the findings were summarized and circulated to the interviewees along with an invitation to attend one of two focus groups. Twenty-three of the interviewees, plus five people who had not been interviewed, attended the focus groups. Data collected from study participants (i.e., from the 45 interviewees and from those present at the two focus groups) are summarized below.

### **Reasons for Volunteering**

Study participants became formal volunteers with mainstream organizations for a variety of reasons, often overlapping. Many of the reasons given relate to altruism, the desire to help society-at-large and/or to address the needs and interests of the Latin American and Somali communities. Other reasons related to the benefits which participants felt would accrue to themselves and to their families. Their accounts indicate that they engaged in formal volunteering for more than one reason. For the purpose of this report, however, the reasons are presented in separate categories.

### *General Concern for Others*

Some participants volunteered simply to improve the lives of others, or of the community in general. Of this group, it can be said that volunteering is a way of life.

### *Latin American and Somali Communities' Needs and Interests*

A desire to promote the needs and interests of the Latin American and Somali communities was prominent among the reasons participants gave for volunteering. The primary motivation of many was to assist their own ethnocultural community. This they did by facilitating access to resources; acting as a bridge with the mainstream community, interpreting the culture of their community to the mainstream and vice versa; and by advocating for the needs and interests of their community.

Volunteering was perceived by some participants as a way to learn about services and resources so they could relay the information back to their communities. Some participants believed that through volunteer work they would be able to mitigate misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. For instance, by explaining the cultural values of their community to mainstream educators and by explaining the Canadian educational system to members of their own ethnocultural communities, they acted as a bridge between the two cultures. However, the motivation of some participants went beyond making it easier for members of their communities to gain access to mainstream resources and services. They wanted to shape the policies and change the practices of mainstream institutions, to prompt them to become more sensitive to the needs of ethnocultural communities, and to encourage them to offer more culturally appropriate services. For this reason, they volunteered as directors of boards of directors of mainstream organizations.

### *Concern for the Younger Generation*

Participants considered formal volunteering as an activity that would benefit the younger generation. A relatively common reason for becoming a volunteer was to be a positive role model for children and youth in the Latin American and Somali communities. Volunteering was a way of encouraging the youth themselves to become volunteers and thereby to use their spare time effectively while learning new skills. Moreover, participants reported that the youth feel part of mainstream society when they see their parents volunteering for mainstream organizations. Furthermore, they reported that the self-esteem of youth improves when their unemployed parents engage in volunteer activities.

### *Integration into Canadian Society*

An important reason for volunteering was to integrate more quickly into Canadian society. Participants said that volunteer tasks that brought them into contact with staff, other volunteers and the public allowed them to learn about the Canadian system and culture. They also had the opportunity to meet established Canadians and practice their spoken English or French.

### *Work-Related Reasons*

Many participants undertook volunteer activities to improve their chances of getting a job. Work done on a volunteer basis provided them with the opportunity to practice or acquire work or career-related skills, to gain Canadian experience, and to get letters of reference. It is noteworthy that some of the participants who, despite several years of formal volunteering had no success in getting work, still considered it to be a way of getting employment. Moreover, they recommended that other members of their communities also become volunteers.

### *Personal Growth and Well-Being*

Other reasons which participants gave for volunteering relate to their personal

growth and emotional well-being. Some of the benefits reported included: improved communication and social skills; opportunities to socialize; make new friends and join social networks; and feeling better about themselves. Volunteering gave some participants the opportunity to feel like working persons again after being out of the labor force, either because of child care responsibilities or because they have been unable to find work in Canada. It recalled and re-established the self-confidence they had when they worked every day and in this way it was a boost to their self-esteem. All of these had a positive effect on volunteers' emotional well-being.

### **Barriers to Volunteering**

Participants were asked a series of questions about what made it difficult for members of the Latin American and Somali communities to volunteer for mainstream organizations, and to remain committed to volunteering. A wide range of barriers was cited. They included: unfamiliarity with the concept of formal volunteering; lack of information and resources; losses resulting from migration and resettlement; and discrimination.

### *Formal Volunteering as a New Concept*

Formal volunteering as practiced in Canada was a new concept for most of the participants when they came to Canada. While informal volunteering, or helping family and friends, was an integral part of the culture and of everyday life in their countries-of-origin, only a few participants spoke of having been involved in formal volunteering prior to their arrival to Canada. According to participants, in Latin America and Somalia, formal volunteering is done only by particular groups of people (e.g., university students, activists, and rich people). If others do volunteer formally, it is usually only on a short-term basis in response to major crises (e.g., a major earthquake).

In fact, formal volunteering can have negative connotations for some members

of Latin American and Somali communities. In the countries from which they migrated, this type of volunteering was often imposed on the general population by government. Because of this, people eventually came to see it as an unpaid job and a form of exploitation. Therefore, some members of their communities look unfavorably on volunteering and they may discourage friends and relatives from this activity.

Finally, participants pointed out that mainstream organizations can be intimidating because many are large, formal and bureaucratic. As well, some people feel intimidated when they are asked to complete application forms and present resumes and letters of reference.

#### *Lack of Information*

Participants mentioned lack of information as another barrier that prevents Latin Americans and Somalis from becoming volunteers. They pointed out that mainstream organizations do not always advertise their need for volunteers, do not highlight specific jobs that need to be done, and do not make clear the benefits of formal volunteering. Therefore, many members of their communities do not know that organizations use and need volunteers, or that volunteering brings rewards and benefits.

#### *Lack of Resources and Skills*

Lack of time, money and skills constitute another set of barriers to formal volunteering mentioned by participants. Family and work responsibilities, along with informal volunteer commitments, leave little or no time for many of them to participate in formal volunteer activities. Lack of money for transportation and, sometimes, lack of appropriate clothing (e.g., business wear) prevent others from volunteering. Other identified barriers include lack of familiarity with Canadian culture and system, lack of language skills, and the lack (or perceived lack) of the skills which mainstream organizations require of volunteers.

#### *Migration and Resettlement Issues*

Participants emphasized that the time and energy required to settle in Canada, and the losses associated with migrating to a new country, may prevent Latin Americans and Somalis from volunteering. The drop in their socio-economic status, unemployment, poverty, and family dislocation can drain their energy and damage their self-esteem. Moreover, some members of their communities may consider their residence in Canada as temporary and look forward to returning to their countries-of-origin. One or more of these factors can discourage them from formal volunteer activities.

#### *Experiences of Rejection and Discrimination*

Personal experiences of rejection and discrimination were mentioned by participants as reasons why Latin American and Somalis did not volunteer. Prospective volunteers who are not made to feel welcome when they enquire about volunteering, or who are told that volunteers are not needed, are unlikely to return to that organization.

#### *Choice of an Organization*

Participants' responses indicate that their choice of a specific organization was related to professional interests and aspirations. They wanted to volunteer for an organization or program that allowed them to use or up-grade the professional training they currently have, or to test out a new professional field. As well, the choice of an organization can be influenced by personal values, or preferences for certain types of volunteer work. For example, the mission and reputation of an organization were important considerations for some people. Others were attracted to a particular organization because of its multicultural character and the client group it served. Seeing and talking with staff, volunteers and clients from their own ethnocultural community gave some volunteers a feeling of comfort. Finally, some people felt more comfortable about volunteering in an organiza-

tion with which they were familiar (e.g., the school their children attend) or which was within walking distance of their home.

### **Commitment to an Organization**

Participants' commitment to a particular organization was influenced by many factors. They looked for gratification and satisfaction from the work they did. These feelings were more likely to occur when there was a match between the work assigned and the volunteers' interests and skills (including their level of language proficiency). They were also more likely to occur when volunteers were assigned jobs that were meaningful and challenging, yet feasible.

The quality of volunteers' relationships with staff was also important; the understanding staff showed for volunteers' personal situations and the support they offered them all influenced their commitment. Participants' accounts indicate that volunteers like to be respected as persons and to feel part of the organization. They do not like to feel unappreciated, unwelcome or exploited. They like to be consulted about important decisions, and to have their contributions acknowledged and appreciated.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING FORMAL VOLUNTEERING**

Study participants were asked how mainstream organizations could promote volunteering in the Latin American and Somali communities and how they could retain volunteers once they were recruited. Suggestions fell into three broad topics: the need for mainstream organizations to prepare themselves to recruit and support volunteers from the Latin American and Somali communities; the recruiting practices of organizations; and how they work with volunteers from these communities.

### **Organizational Prerequisites**

Before a mainstream organization begins to recruit volunteers from the Latin American and Somali communities, it is imperative that board and staff prepare themselves adequately. Having clarified their reasons for wanting volunteers from these communities, and having adopted relevant corporate policies and strategies, the organization must ensure that staff members have the information and sensitivity needed to work effectively with Latin American and Somali volunteers. The organization must also take the steps necessary to create a welcoming atmosphere.

#### *Corporate Readiness*

As a first step, mainstream organizations should articulate clearly their motives for recruiting and using volunteers from the Latin American and Somali communities. Further, board and staff must become familiar with the cultures and histories of these communities and seek to understand how community members view the practice of formal volunteering and their reasons for wanting to volunteer. It is also important to train staff to work effectively with volunteers from these communities, and to develop policies and procedures for working with volunteers from these communities. Finally, mainstream organizations should employ an experienced volunteer coordinator who is culturally sensitive.

#### *A Welcoming Atmosphere*

Members of the Latin American and Somali communities are more likely to volunteer for a mainstream organization, and to remain committed, when the atmosphere is welcoming. Pleasant, courteous and patient staff help to create this feeling. Further, the multicultural nature of an organization helps members of ethnocultural communities to feel welcome. Therefore, mainstream organizations are advised to employ members of ethnocultural communities in positions where they have contact with the public. It is



also advised to accept placement students from a variety of ethnocultural communities. As well, the organization should post signs and hang pictures and posters that reflect its linguistic and cultural diversity. Finally, the organization is advised to publish documents in Somali and Spanish.

### **Recruiting Practices**

A mainstream organization wishing to recruit volunteers from the Latin American and Somali communities must understand that this is a multi-faceted undertaking. It involves advertising the need for volunteers in a variety of ways and educating community members about the organization, about how formal volunteering is done in Canada, and about the benefits of volunteering. As well, an important part of recruitment is responding appropriately to people who want to volunteer and having a fair and simple interview process.

### *Community Outreach*

Outreach is an essential strategy for a mainstream organization hoping to recruit volunteers from the Latin American and Somali communities. In addition to using flyers, posters, brochures, the ethnic media, and/or the Internet to advertise the need for Latin American and Somali volunteers, it is important that a mainstream organization use word-of-mouth advertising. It is suggested that advertising be done strategically by posting notices in places frequented by members of these communities (e.g., places of worship, soccer fields, community centers, ethnic food stores) and to use Spanish or Somali as well as English or French in the advertisements.

Another suggestion is to hold informal and formal community events (e.g., a health promotion day, a festival) to let the communities know the organization exists, to inform them about its services and mandate, and to give community members the opportunity to meet the staff. The organization should explain why volunteers are needed, what they

will be doing, and how they will be selected. The organization is also advised to explain the benefits of volunteering — for the organization's clientele, for the volunteers, for the Latin American and Somali communities, and for the mainstream community. Since Latin Americans and Somalis may not be familiar with the concept of formal volunteering, it is important that a mainstream organization explains how established Canadians understand the concept of formal volunteering and what formal volunteers do.

To establish a relationship with the Latin American and Somali communities, it is also suggested that the needs of the communities in question be investigated from the perspective of their members and that knowledgeable community members be involved in finding and implementing ways of addressing the needs identified. One effective method of doing this is to form partnerships with organizations and groups in the Latin American and Somali communities to assist them in meeting their own unmet needs.

Finally, to ensure the success of its efforts, the mainstream organization is advised to seek input and assistance from organizations in the targeted communities, respected leaders in those communities, and professionals who work regularly with ethnocultural communities. It is suggested that members of these communities be invited to run for the board of directors and to join board committees (e.g., the program committee, the community liaison committee).

### *Respond Appropriately*

Mainstream organizations should ensure that staff respond professionally to people who want to volunteer. That is, staff should not brush off inquiries made in person and they should return phone calls. In response to a request, the staff person responsible is advised to describe the opportunities available and to find out what the person has to offer. If opportunities are available, it is important to

explain the selection process. On the other hand, if no opportunities are available, that should also be explained clearly. If the person wanting to volunteer does not have the needed skills, it is incumbent on the staff person to suggest volunteer opportunities in other organizations or make a referral to the Volunteer Centre.

### *Interviewing*

To recruit volunteers from Latin American and Somali communities, a mainstream organization may have to adapt its standard procedures. For example, the interview/selection process should be as non-bureaucratic, simple and flexible as possible. Otherwise, it may be impossible for prospective volunteers to complete detailed applications and to provide references.

### **Working With Volunteers**

Working with Latin American and Somali volunteers is much the same as working with volunteers from the mainstream. The basic steps include: orientation to the organization; placement in a position with specific duties under the direction of an understanding supervisor; and volunteer recognition. It is important that volunteers feel part of the organization for which they volunteer, and are given personal support as well as money to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

### *Orientation*

It is important to explain the personal qualities which volunteers need, and to offer training for those who need to upgrade their skills. To avoid misleading new volunteers, it is important to emphasize that being a volunteer for a mainstream organization will not automatically lead to employment with that organization. Another part of orientation is to tell volunteers about the organization and to explain how and where the volunteer's job fits into the organization's mandate and operation. Finally to ensure that all volunteers are dealt with in the same way, it is suggested that a mainstream

organization have a multilingual booklet on formal volunteering with the organization.

### *Placement*

When assigning Latin American and Somali volunteers to specific volunteer positions, it is important to determine their motivations and expectations (e.g., to get work-related experience, to occupy leisure time), to place them in jobs that match their interests and skills (including languages), and to make sure they are not isolated in a boring job. It may be unwise to assign a volunteer with a great deal of related professional experience to a staff member with limited training and experience in the same field. It may be desirable to give volunteers from the same ethnocultural community the opportunity to work together, thereby to support one another in their first language. Finally, cultural practices may be an important consideration (e.g., women may want to work with other women).

### *Supervision*

Supervisors are advised to negotiate short-term contracts (e.g., three months) with volunteers, with built-in opportunities to review their performance and 'exit options'. In this way, both the volunteer and the supervisor have the opportunity to give feedback, and to reconsider their commitment. If assignments must be terminated, the supervisor should do so professionally, giving a clear explanation of the reasons. Finally, a supervisor should be alert to conflict between staff and volunteers and, if it occurs, should deal with the conflict quickly and fairly.

### *Status Within the Organization*

The status of Latin American and Somali volunteers within a mainstream organization has implications for their commitment to the organization. It is essential that they be made to feel part of the organization. To accomplish this, the volunteer coordinator and/or the supervisor should introduce new volunteers to

staff and explain their duties to staff, keep them informed about what is happening in the organization (e.g., upcoming events, new programs and services, job openings), involve them in staff meetings, invite them to participate in decisions relevant to the work they do, give them the opportunity to attend staff training sessions, and, if it is appropriate, to ask them to represent the organization at workshops and conferences.

#### *Personal and Material Support*

The commitment of Latin American and Somali volunteers to a mainstream organization is also influenced by the personal support they receive from staff and the material support they receive from the organization. Staff who have contact with volunteers are urged to take an interest in them personally (e.g., in their settlement needs, their health, their families). Supervisors are urged to give volunteers the opportunity to socialize with staff and other volunteers. They are also urged to give them the chance to learn new skills, including employment-related skills. Organizations can provide material support to volunteers by allowing them to use their facilities (e.g., computers, library resources) and by providing or arranging child care and language classes. Another way of providing material support is to pay volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., transportation, workshop registration fees) or, in lieu of that, to give them an honorarium.

#### *Volunteer Recognition*

Recognizing the contributions of Latin American and Somali volunteers is an effective way of ensuring they continue to volunteer for a mainstream organization. It is important to tell them that they are doing a good job, to give them letters of reference, and to credit them when their ideas are used or implemented. It is also important to hold special group events in recognition of volunteers. This gives mainstream organizations the opportunity to hand out certificates affirming the

value of their contributions and to single out long-time volunteers for special recognition. Mainstream organizations are encouraged to invite the media, both ethnic and mainstream, to these events and to allow for photo opportunities. In this way, mainstream organizations can attract volunteers from all ethnocultural communities.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings of this study indicate the presence of a distinct set of factors influencing formal volunteering of members of Latin American and Somali communities who were not born in Canada. Their first generation status affects their approach to formal volunteering, their motivations and resources, and their choice of organizations and type of volunteer work. Their actions and attitudes are influenced both by their pre-migration and post-migration experiences. Although they left their country, they did not leave their cultural baggage and personal experiences behind. Their lives in the new society are still influenced by values and norms developed as the result of socialization in their country of origin. Therefore, formal volunteering as an activity could be new to many of them, and even be perceived negatively.

Moreover, disruptions and losses caused by migration and re-settlement make it difficult for immigrants and first generation Canadians to volunteer. They need time to grieve for the inevitable losses associated with migration (e.g., the loss of family, friends, socio-economic status), to adjust to their new social environment, and to re-establish themselves as homemakers, parents, and/or members of the labor force. This process of adapting occupies their time, drains their energy and, compared to established Canadians, leaves them with limited personal and financial resources to become formal volunteers.

Many Latin Americans and Somalis volunteer within their own ethnocultural

communities. They want to preserve the cultural and linguistic traditions of their own community and to promote the well-being of its members, in particular, the youth. For these reasons, they become involved with ethno-specific groups, or with ethno-specific services within mainstream organizations. Their involvement in these activities leave them with little time and energy to become formal volunteers for mainstream organizations that serve the general public. Moreover, immigrants and first generation Canadians from these two communities often are among categories of people with few social ties. This limitation and that of the language and cultural differences affect their volunteer work for mainstream organizations.

The desire to integrate into Canadian society motivated the Latin Americans and Somalis surveyed for this study to become volunteers for mainstream organizations. They are concerned about the life conditions of their ethnocultural community in Canada and see volunteering as a way of helping members of their communities to learn about Canada, to gain access to community resources, and to participate fully and comfortably in Canadian society. Analysis of the participants' accounts indicates the presence of three types of volunteers: information collectors and distributors, bridge builders, and advocates.

The findings of this study make it clear that to recruit and retain volunteers from ethnocultural communities, mainstream organizations must pay attention to differences between volunteers from these communities and volunteers from mainstream society. The multi-stage process framework, outlined in this paper, is recommended for this task. Such an approach not only enables researchers and organizations to distinguish different stages of becoming a formal volunteer and to identify factors determining the passage from one stage to another, but also to learn about similarities and differences in needs and experiences of main-

stream and ethnocultural communities.

Finally, given the paucity of relevant research, it follows that there is a great need for studies about volunteering by members of ethnocultural communities. Such studies could establish the scope of the contributions made by members of these communities to Canadian society and could identify ways in which society in general can benefit from the skills and knowledge, and the other untapped resources, which they possess.

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