

# **Understanding The Role of Volunteerism In Creating Social Inclusion**

**Report Prepared For  
SouthWest Communities Resource Centre**

**September 2011**

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***Volunteering is a nursery for citizenship...  
we learn to participate by participating***

– James Kearny, *Centre for Voluntary Action Studies*<sup>1</sup>

### **I.0 Introduction and Theoretical Background**

Citizen participation is essential to a socially sustainable and healthy democratic society. The Statistics Canada's 2000 report *Patterns of Citizen Participation and the Civic Core in Canada* identifies the three principal forms of citizen participation as volunteering, charitable giving, and membership in community and charitable organizations. In Alberta, the Family and Community Social Services Act specifically encourages citizen participation, self-help and volunteerism as part of a funding agreement with municipalities under which locally-driven preventive initiatives can be developed to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities. Citizen participation increases the capacity of communities to act to promote their own best interests. "Participation is at the heart of reforms in [representative democracy] to.... offer real possibilities for the enrichment of local political and administrative life, as well as for improvements in the responsiveness of public services to the needs of citizens."<sup>2</sup>

Putnam points out that "a society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter .... Trustworthiness lubricates social life. Frequent interaction among a diverse set of people tends to produce a norm of generalized reciprocity. Civic engagement and social capital entail mutual obligation and responsibility for action".<sup>3</sup> Through involvement in voluntary organizations, community groups and/or charitable organizations, citizens in a democratic society can create the bridging, bonding and linking social capital necessary to ensure safe, sustainable and vibrant communities. Wilson and Musick point out that "voluntary associations [are] essential intermediary bodies between the mass of individuals and their institutions of government. Active membership in a voluntary association [creates] the generalized trust—a trust that extends beyond the boundaries of kinship and friendship—on which democratic political life depends."<sup>4</sup>

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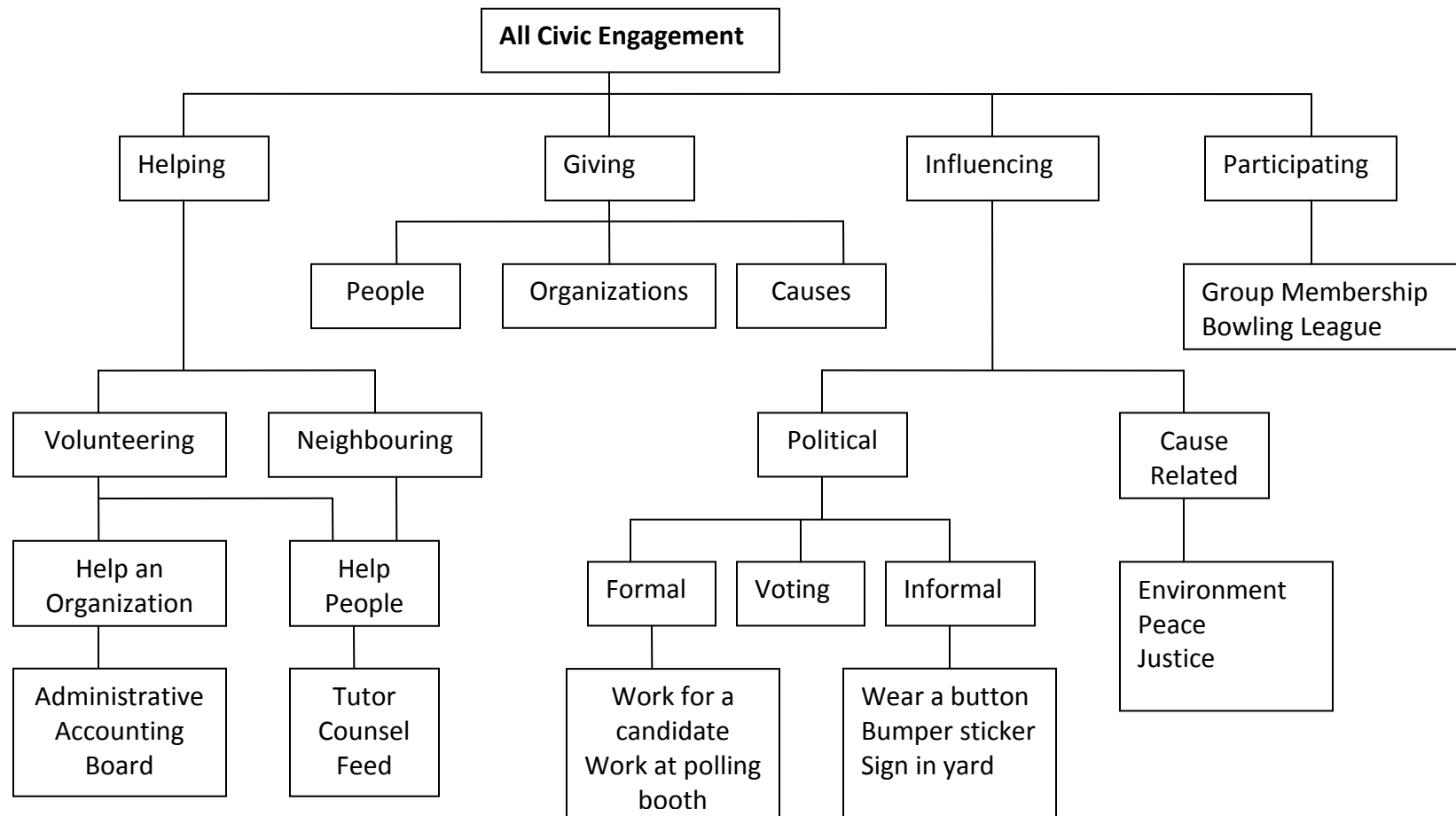
<sup>1</sup> Kearney, James. (2003) "Volunteering: Social Glue for Community Cohesion?". *Voluntary Action*. Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 45

<sup>2</sup> Bucek, J. & Smith, B. (2000) New Approaches to Local Democracy: Direct Democracy, Participation and the Third Sector. *Environment and Planning C, Government and Policy* 18: 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Putnam, Robert.(2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon & Schuster) Page 21.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, John and Marc Musick. (2000) "The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer". *Law and Contemporary Problems*. Vol. 62, No. 4, p. 142

## A Paradigm for Studying Civic Engagement<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Copyright Points of Light Foundation, 2006

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Recent research shows that involvement in “active voluntary work correlates with levels of education, family (or economic) status and household income. As a consequence, personal resources have a strong impact on volunteering...”<sup>6</sup> This is supported by findings from the *Patterns of Citizen Participation and the Civic Core in Canada* research which indicates that “individuals [described] as significantly civically engaged lie toward the upper end of the age spectrum, typically 35 to 40 years old or more; have a strong religious component in their lives;...have a relatively high level of education; have higher-status occupations; have a number of children between ages 6 and 17 years at home; [and] have relatively higher household incomes than average...”<sup>7</sup> Further, Statistics Canada found that citizens who were participating civically were concentrated in what has been termed a ‘civic core’. In 2000 in Canada it was noted that this civic core represented “a small proportion of Canadian adults who are responsible for more than two-thirds of all giving, volunteering and civic participating. Overall, this civic core contains 28% of adult Canadians”.<sup>8</sup> This leaves a significant proportion of the Canadian population who are not participating civically through formal volunteering and/or membership in a community or charitable organization.

Those people who, for individual or systemic reasons, are not able to fully participate in civil society can be described as *socially excluded*. According to the Institute for Volunteering Research, social exclusion is influenced by many aspects including, though not limited to, poverty and income, unemployment, housing and environment, disability and chronic illness, crime, and discrimination.<sup>9</sup> Other vulnerabilities may include age, education, literacy level, poor health and isolation. Some researchers believe that “the root cause of social exclusion is, in fact, inequality: the inequalities of power, status and resources that are at least partly a function of a person’s gender, race, disability and social class. It is a dynamic process, emphasizing relations – inadequate social participation, lack of social interactions, and lack of power.”<sup>10</sup> Vulnerable or marginalized populations may include persons who fall into one or more of the following categories: new immigrants, youth, elderly, disabled/chronically ill (including mentally ill), economically disadvantaged (e.g. homeless, low-income etc), and inmates. Aboriginal persons in Canada are often particularly vulnerable due to the systemic and historic discrimination and mistreatment of this group. When vulnerable or marginalized populations are excluded from civic participation through volunteer experiences they are further disadvantaged by not experiencing the benefits of increased social capital, social networks, skills and contacts.

Another way of conceptualizing social exclusion is through identifying different states of disadvantage. Billis suggests that four states of disadvantage leading to social exclusion are:

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<sup>6</sup> Naegele, Gerhard and Eckhart Schnabel. (2010) “Measures for Social Inclusion of the Elderly: The Case of Volunteering”. *Eurofound Working Paper*. Page 34.

<sup>7</sup> Reed, Paul and Kevin Selbee. (2000) “Patterns of Citizen Participation and the Civic Core in Canada”. *Statistics Canada*. Pages 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Page 2.

<sup>9</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004) “Volunteering for All? Exploring the Link Between Volunteering and Social Exclusion”. London, UK. p 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Pages 19-20

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- “financial disadvantage – individuals who lack the purchasing power to seek solutions in the market;
- personal disadvantage – potential users who cannot articulate a coherent preference from the organization in question [e.g. people with learning difficulties, mental health problems, young children, confused elderly people];
- societal disadvantage – individuals and groups who are blamed or stigmatized; [and]
- community disadvantage – people who suffer primarily from the fact that they live in a particular community and face the absence of the usual institutions of civil society”.<sup>11</sup>

A model that helps us to understand the elements necessary to social inclusion is the Circle of Courage developed by Brendtro and Brokenleg in their work with at risk youth.

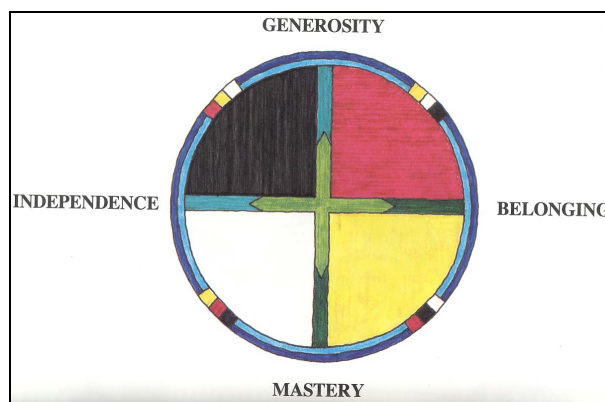


Figure 1: Circle of Courage<sup>12</sup>

In this model, individual social inclusion is built on a balance of four key elements: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. A sense of belonging means a healthy and meaningful connection to other people, including not only immediate family or close friends but also people in the community more broadly. Mastery refers to the development of skills, creativity, and talents that enable full participation in society. Independence points to confidence, leadership and healthy self-esteem. And finally, generosity means the empowerment people experience when they feel as though they have something to contribute and give that is valuable to those around them.

It is important to understand from these models for conceptualizing social exclusion/inclusion that social exclusion is not a permanent state. The factors related to social exclusion can be addressed both systemically and individually to help increase the meaningful inclusion of all citizens. As Strauss has indicated “the dynamic conceptualization of *social inclusion* stresses that social inclusion or exclusion should be considered as a stage in individual lives which is

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<sup>11</sup> Billis, David. (2001) “Tackling Social Exclusion: The Contribution of Voluntary Organizations”. *Voluntary Organizations and Social Policy in Britain*. Margaret Harris & Colin Rochester Eds. (New York: Palgrave): 42

<sup>12</sup> Brendtro, Larry K., Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern. (1990) *Reclaiming Youth At Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. (Indiana: National Educational Service): 51a

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subject to change over time.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, it is both individually desirable and beneficial to society to attempt to increase social inclusion. Specifically, as the City of Calgary has indicated, focusing on increasing social inclusion in communities “is a major method for improving the quality of physical environment, enhancing services, preventing crime, and improving social conditions”.<sup>14</sup>

One way to increase social inclusion is through increasing overall civic participation, where participation includes volunteering as well as membership in community and charitable organizations.<sup>15</sup> In particular, the Institute for Volunteering Research found that “volunteering alleviates the symptoms of social exclusion both for individuals and communities, and can also help in the fight against its causes”.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Musick and Wilson have illustrated how the lack of social, human and cultural capital amongst socially excluded populations leads to barriers to volunteerism.<sup>17</sup> While recognizing the overall benefits of volunteering for increasing social inclusion in communities, it is equally important to identify ways in which barriers can be deconstructed to facilitate the participation of vulnerable populations.

This report will explore the ways in which volunteering can contribute to increasing social inclusion which in turn helps to build social sustainability within communities. First, a discussion of the benefits of citizen participation for the community, the individual and the voluntary sector will be presented from a social inclusion perspective. Next, an exploration of how social inclusion can be increased specifically through volunteering and how barriers to the inclusion of marginalized populations can be broken will be presented. Finally, different methods of measuring the impact of volunteering with respect to social inclusion will be examined before conclusions are discussed.

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<sup>13</sup> Strauss, Susanne. (2004) *Volunteering and Social Inclusion: Interrelations Between Unemployment and Civic Engagement in Germany and Great Britain*. (Germany: VS Research): 254

<sup>14</sup> Cooper, M.; D. Bartlett. (2005) *Strong Neighbourhoods: Building the Foundation for a United Way Neighbourhood Investment Strategy*. (Calgary, AB: United Way of Calgary and Area).

<sup>15</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009) “Addressing Social Disadvantage Through Volunteering”. (The Centre for Social Impact)8

<sup>16</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004) “Volunteering for All? Exploring the Link Between Volunteering and Social Exclusion”. London, UK. Page 64.

<sup>17</sup> Musick, Marc and John Wilson. (1997). “Who Cares? Toward An Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work”. *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 62, pg 694-713.

### 2.0 Benefits of Volunteering

In its broadest sense, “volunteering is a form of civic engagement through which individuals can make meaningful contributions to their own visions of societal well-being”.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, according to Williams, volunteering can be defined as “any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives, or to benefit the environment... Voluntary action, therefore, covers a heterogeneous range of activities”.<sup>19</sup> The concept of volunteerism can be further broken down into formal and informal volunteering. *Formal volunteering* as described above is focused on doing something that benefits someone “other than, or in addition to, close relatives”. Formal volunteering is most often structured through an organization which mediates the exchange relationship between the volunteer and those benefiting from the volunteer activity. The Institute for Volunteering in the UK expands the definition of volunteering to describe *informal volunteering*, sometimes referred to as “neighbouring”, as any activity meeting the broad definition of volunteering but outside an organizational context – such as neighbour helping neighbour.<sup>20</sup>

While some people may consider volunteering just a form of altruism<sup>21</sup>, Musick and Wilson insist that even though volunteers freely *give* their time to others, the essence of volunteerism is *not* just altruism, but rather the contribution of services, goods or money to help accomplish some desired end.<sup>22</sup> In this way, while volunteering means that compensation for work/action is not explicitly given in a material or monetary sense, benefits are still gained by society, individuals and organizations. In fact, many volunteers cite the non-material benefits they expect to receive from volunteering as a primary reason for engaging in such activity. This section will explore the benefits that voluntary action creates for the community, the individual and the voluntary organization. These benefits will be examined with a particular focus on the way in which they relate to the goal of decreasing social exclusion and increasing inclusion of vulnerable or marginalized populations.

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<sup>18</sup> Brown, Eleanor. (1999) “Assessing the Value of Volunteer Activity”. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Vol. 28, No. 3, P. 3

<sup>19</sup> Williams, Colin. (2003) “Cultivating Voluntary Action in Deprived Neighbourhoods: A Fourth Sector Approach”. *Voluntary Action*. Vol. 5, No.3, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004) “Volunteering for All? Exploring the Link Between Volunteering and Social Exclusion”. London, UK.

<sup>21</sup> **Altruism** can be defined as the disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others

<sup>22</sup> Musick, Marc and John Wilson. (1997) “Who Cares? Toward An Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work”. *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 62, pg 695



### 2.1 Benefits to the Community

In the most general sense, volunteering benefits communities as “active membership in voluntary associations generates the trust necessary for people to organize effectively and act collectively.”<sup>23</sup> This is otherwise known as ‘social capital’. Social capital comes in two forms: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is what holds groups with similar interests, the same gender, or the same ethnicity, together. Within these groups members know a lot about each other’s lives, they trust one another, they support one another and they stick together for the long-term. Bridging social capital on the other hand connects diverse individuals and groups making it possible for them to work together. Within these connections, the people are less similar and the people involved do not know each other very well. They are, however, connected despite their differences and feel inclined towards working together and helping one another.<sup>24</sup> As Putnam has discussed, “bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity....Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion”.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the development of social capital within communities through the promotion of volunteerism is a desirable outcome that promotes the overall social sustainability and vibrancy of communities. In the tradition of De Toqueville and Putnam, Kearney elucidates that:

...volunteering plays a crucial role in helping to build a society that is cohesive and connected. Volunteering involves grass-roots participation and provides a network of social relationships that connect people to their own communities – a connection that is vital to building democratic, healthy and self-sustaining communities. In other words, volunteering helps to build social capital in its bonding, bridging and linking forms ...Research studies have confirmed that high levels of associational activity (that is, bonding social capital) and also a dense network of crosscutting ties among groups (that is, bridging social capital) are needed to realize the benefits of social capital to best effect.<sup>26</sup>

Emanating from the overall benefit of increased social capital due to volunteering within communities is a wide range of other benefits. These might include things like a stronger sense of community, a safer community where neighbours watch out and are concerned for one another, and greater concern for elderly persons in the community.<sup>27</sup> It would also include things like decreased vandalism and violent acts in the community as well as fewer people preying on or taking advantage of others in their community.<sup>28</sup> Further, it means greater economic prosperity, a more equitable distribution of wealth and greater policy innovation for

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<sup>23</sup> Musick, Marc and John Wilson. (2000) “The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer”. *Law and Contemporary Problems*. Vol. 62, No.4, pg. 142.

<sup>24</sup> Krile, James, Gordon Curphy and Duane Lund at the Blandin Foundation. (2006) *The Community Leadership Handbook: Framing Ideas, Building Relationships, and Mobilizing Resources*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data. Pg. 13

<sup>25</sup> Putnam, Robert.(2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon & Schuster): 22

<sup>26</sup> Kearney. (2003): 46.

<sup>27</sup> Diers, Jim. (2004) *Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press): 20

<sup>28</sup> Musick & Wilson. (2000): 148.

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the community as well as higher levels of electoral turnout, political interest and overall trust within the community.<sup>29</sup> But are these benefits spread throughout the community, or are they concentrated, leaving some parts of the community socially excluded?

When considering the benefits of volunteering in the community, in particular with respect to the building of social capital, it might be argued that only non-vulnerable persons will be benefiting, since these are the people who are volunteers. As these, already socially included people engage in voluntary activity, they build social capital with one another, and create networks that may reinforce the social exclusion of those people not engaging in voluntary activity – people who are often socially excluded in other ways.<sup>30</sup> This argument, however, focuses on the bonding social capital being fostered through volunteering and ignores the bridging social capital that is also possible. While volunteers may be primarily part of one socio-demographic (usually privileged) group and will therefore create bonding social capital amongst themselves, it is also possible that bridging social capital is being built simultaneously either between different (diverse) volunteers, or between volunteers and vulnerable community members. According to Kearney, “Through real and holistic responsibility in and for one another, people can be connected in new and often unexpected ways to people who are from different backgrounds or from different parts of society...Volunteering provides a way to contribute to social cohesion without making people self-conscious”.<sup>31</sup> While Weisinger & Salipante indicate that bonding social capital is more easily formed than bridging social capital within voluntary organizations, they insist that voluntary action is an ideal opportunity to consciously create bridges between different groups.<sup>32</sup>

Volunteering can help dispel prejudices, challenge stereotypes and create acceptance of diversity. Volunteers may find that the frames through which they see the world become more inclusive as they experience a greater range of diversity and interact with other community members who are very different from themselves.<sup>33</sup> This leads to more integrated and inclusive communities as well as increased opportunities for creation of social capital and a building of the community’s resiliency and capacity. Overall, “by providing services, in many cases to socially excluded groups, by challenging stereotypes, and by bringing people from different backgrounds together, volunteering [has] a wider impact on the symptoms and causes of social exclusion”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Tossutti, Livianna. (2003) “Does Volunteerism Increase the Political Engagement of Young Newcomers? Assessing the Potential of Individual and Group-Based Forms of Unpaid Service”. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. XXXV, No. 3, p.71

<sup>30</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009): 7; Naegele & Schnabel. (2010): 35.

<sup>31</sup> Kearney. (2003): 47

<sup>32</sup> Weisinger, Judith and Paul Salipante. (2005) “A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations”. *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Vol. 34, pgs 29-55.

<sup>33</sup> Mundel, Karsten and Daniel Sugurensky. (2008) “Community Based Learning and Civic Engagement: Informal Learning among Adult Volunteers in Community Organizations”. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Vol. 118, p. 54-55.

<sup>34</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research (2004): 10.

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It is apparent, then, that volunteering is of immense benefit to the community. Points of Light Foundation notes that “among the most undervalued of [community] assets are the naturally occurring networks through which neighbors and residents volunteer to address and resolve common problems. Strategic attention to, and more intentional nurturing and use of, these networks could be a major contribution to sustainable, resident-driven community transformation.”<sup>35</sup> Through the building of social capital, volunteering creates community cohesion that also increases links between different, otherwise separate, community members. Volunteerism can increase the prosperity of a community and create more responsive, context-appropriate and inclusive services. Finally, volunteerism can help break down some of the systemic roots of exclusion within communities, leading to greater participation by all groups. Volunteering not only benefits the community, however, it also impacts the lives of individual volunteers.

### 2.2 Benefits to Volunteers

While in the past the notion of volunteering had connotations of purely selfless acts and altruism, in more recent years it has become widely accepted that volunteering provides a multitude of benefits to the volunteer themselves as individual persons. These benefits are wide-ranging and include specific learned skills/activities, emotional and physical health benefits, and important social network creation.

Some concrete effects of volunteering on the volunteer are seen in the skills volunteers learn through their unpaid participation. Skills related to social interaction, particular computer or technical skills and job-related skills can all be acquired through volunteering. These skills, in turn, can help volunteers become more employable and can help them to discover new interests or directions for their lives. However, as Bowgett has indicated, “focusing solely on employability [and hard skills] denies us the full picture of the benefits of volunteering”.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous studies have shown that volunteers may derive physical, mental and emotional health benefits from volunteering. In terms of physical health, for example, otherwise inactive or under-active individuals have the opportunity to increase their mobility and overall physical well-being by engaging in volunteer activity in the community.<sup>37</sup> There are a multitude of psychological effects of volunteering that increase the overall well-being of volunteers as well. Many volunteers find that volunteering helps them to feel as though they have a purpose in life and they experience increased feelings of meaning, structure and direction in their life.<sup>38</sup> For various individuals, “being a volunteer brought many positive experiences into their lives: enjoyment, pride, self-respect, confidence, empowerment to bring about change, and a

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<sup>35</sup> Points of Light Foundation (2000) *A Matter of Survival: Volunteering By, In and With Low Income Communities*. p. 9

<sup>36</sup> Bowgett, Kate. (2006) “Homeless People and Volunteering”. *Voluntary Action*. Vol. 7 No. 3, pg.19

<sup>37</sup> Musick & Wilson. (2000): 150

<sup>38</sup> Greenfield, E. and Marks, N. (2004) “Formal Volunteering as a Protective Factor for Older Adults’ Psychological Well-Being” *Journal of Gerontology*. Vol. 59, No. 5 Pgs. 258; Institute for Volunteering Research (2004): 31.

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welcome release from the stresses of their own problems”.<sup>39</sup> According to Sherr, “by volunteering, people can also develop a sense of generativity by which they feel useful to society in a way that goes beyond their occupations.... volunteering can also prevent people in stressful occupations from burning out and help them maintain a healthy perspective on all the areas in their lives”.<sup>40</sup> Further, volunteers benefit as they gain “opportunities to express or demonstrate their beliefs; learn new things; fend off feelings such as guilt, shame and isolation; and enhance their self-confidence and sense of efficacy”.<sup>41</sup> These improvements in physical, mental and emotional wellbeing derived from volunteering, may create further positive impact on overall determinants of health for the individual.

Volunteering also presents the opportunity for individuals to create social networks. While this increased social networking contributes to the overall social capital of the community, it also benefits volunteers on an individual level. The creation of social networks for individual volunteers leads to new career opportunities, greater supports and resiliency, and reduced loneliness or isolation.<sup>42</sup> Overall, then, “volunteering empowers people to fulfill their potential and acquire new skills and knowledge, building their own capacity and creativity to contribute to the health and vibrancy of their own communities”.<sup>43</sup>

The benefits listed above are not only relevant to volunteers within socially included groups. In fact, these benefits may be felt to an even greater degree amongst those who are in vulnerable or marginalized groups. In particular, if we re-visit the Circle of Courage model for understanding ways to increase social inclusion, a significant factor is the opportunity to express generosity to others. As Bowgett has indicated the sense of reciprocal benefit gives volunteering a unique advantage in combating social exclusion as “the experience of actively choosing to help someone increases self-worth and helps people to recover their self-esteem”.<sup>44</sup>

The Institute for Volunteering Research has published an in-depth inquiry into the effects of volunteering on social exclusion. This report states that “by providing people with skills, knowledge and personal development, volunteering helps people to help themselves. On a more personal level, volunteering provides a vital source of social interaction for many people, reducing their sense of isolation, which has been identified as an important element in social exclusion for some people (see for example Morris, 2000). Volunteering is also a source of pride and dignity, enabling people to make an important contribution to a community from which they may previously have been excluded”.<sup>45</sup> Kearney states this in more specific terms saying that, “for people facing social exclusion in other aspects of their lives, volunteering offers particular benefits including access to social networks, opportunities for empowerment,

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<sup>39</sup> Boneham & Sixmith. (2003): 58.

<sup>40</sup> Sherr, Michael. (2008) *Social Work with Volunteers*. (Chicago: Lyceum Books, Inc): 41

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Centre for Social Impact. (2009): 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Kearney. (2003): 48.

<sup>44</sup> Bowgett. (2006): 19.

<sup>45</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004): 65

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opportunities to learn and develop skills, improved physical and mental well-being and the chance to experience the satisfaction of making a contribution. Volunteering can also provide a crucial way for people who have been voiceless to reshape the way in which they have been perceived by others".<sup>46</sup> In this way, the benefits of volunteering to the individual are particularly relevant to volunteers from vulnerable populations. Research into the effects of volunteering on particular marginalized populations has revealed many group-specific benefits that result from volunteering.

One area of research examines the group specific benefits for seniors involved in volunteering. Tang (2003), Greenfield and Marks (2004), and Naegele and Schnabel (2010) (among others) have recently looked at the effects of volunteering by older adults on these same individuals. These authors found significant evidence to suggest that voluntary action taken by older adults led to decreased feelings of isolation, increased feelings of purpose and meaning in life, greater levels of mobility/activity, increased feelings of self-confidence and self-worth as well as feelings of connection to the community and contribution to society. These benefits are all significant for building the resiliency of older adults, making them less vulnerable and more able to fully participate in their communities.

In a similar way, youth, who are a potentially a vulnerable population, gain significant benefits from being volunteers. According to Sherr, "volunteerism can help improve predictable life transitions [e.g. school to employment]. Volunteering can help teenagers develop positive self-identities and place young adults in intimate situations with a larger, more diverse group of people."<sup>47</sup> Authors like Hamilton and Fenzel (1988), Tossutti (2003), Karafantis and Levy (2004), and Brewis *et al* (2010) have all specifically studied the effects of volunteering by young people on young people and found that volunteering can be an important stepping stone into full civic participation as an adult. In addition, youth gain important employment skills, references related to employment and contacts/networks that help in transitioning into employment. Beyond the career-related benefits of volunteering, volunteerism amongst youth "can serve as a primary prevention tool, breaking the vicious cycle of prejudice and buffering volunteers against later negative outcomes such as delinquency...Furthermore, the positive benefits of early volunteering may translate into volunteering throughout adulthood and modeling volunteerism for one's children".<sup>48</sup>

Another vulnerable group that can benefit significantly from involvement in voluntary activity are those persons with mental health problems. The Institute for Volunteering Research (2004) and Howlett (2004) (among others) have explicitly pointed out the benefits of volunteering for people with mental illnesses. By conducting in-depth interviews with volunteers having mental health issues, the Institute for Volunteering Research found that volunteering had "given structure, direction and meaning to [the volunteer's] life, widened their social networks,

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<sup>46</sup> Kearney. (2003): 47

<sup>47</sup> Sherr. (2008):41.

<sup>48</sup> Karafantis, Dina and Sheri Levy. (2004) "The Role of Children's Lay Theories About the Malleability of Human Attributes in Beliefs About and Volunteering for Disadvantaged Groups". *Child Development*. Vol.75, No.1, P 248.

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improved their vocational and interpersonal skills and helped them to gain access to employment, education and training”.<sup>49</sup>

Other vulnerable populations who benefit from involvement in voluntary activity include homeless persons, inmates, newcomers and Aboriginal persons. Bowgett (2006) has indicated specific benefits to homeless people, including building confidence, forming social networks and increasing employability, while the National Offender Management Service states that volunteering helps offenders reduce re-offending activities, gain employment, and lead law-abiding lives. With respect to vulnerable new immigrants in Canada, Woodwill found that “newcomers have reported positive gains from volunteering, including (but not limited to): gaining Canadian experience and a Canadian reference that can be used in job searching, reducing social isolation through making new friends, practicing English, and learning more about social service work in Canadian society in general”.<sup>50</sup> Through interviewing Aboriginal women who were identified as volunteers, Mowatt and Young discovered that benefits included gaining “a sense of personal fulfillment, a sense of respect, an opportunity to give, building resume, knowledge and skills, an opportunity to socialize and an opportunity to participate and contribute to the community”.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to note that many of these benefits are the same benefits experienced by volunteers from mainstream populations. As Haski-Leventhal at the Centre for Social Impact has indicated, “when socially disadvantaged persons do not volunteer, they are further excluded from the additional benefits and opportunities of volunteering”.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to remember the discussion above with regards to the importance of involving both vulnerable and non-vulnerable populations in volunteer activity in order to create bridging social capital, dispel stereotypes and prejudices and create community inclusion and cohesion. Strauss notes that since anyone can become “vulnerable” due to a change in life circumstances (e.g. unemployment, illness, age, etc.), it is important to remember that “volunteering by non-vulnerable populations can serve as a type of “protective factor” against the possibility of becoming socially excluded . . .”<sup>53</sup> Also, without opportunities to build bridging social capital through volunteerism, mainstream populations may themselves experience a type of reverse exclusion as they miss the opportunity to engage with and understand those individuals from marginalized groups. Volunteerism can be considered reciprocal in nature, with both the volunteer and the person engaging with the volunteer benefiting from the exchange. For example, a well educated young person new to Canada volunteers to tutor another youth in math, in exchange for an opportunity to practice his/her English language skills. Overall, then, while volunteering can be an effective way to foster social inclusion and can address some of the challenges faced by vulnerable populations, the benefits of volunteering for non-vulnerable populations should not be overlooked. In the end, “volunteerism may simply be an activity that

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<sup>49</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004) *Volunteering for Mental Health*. (London, UK) P 1.

<sup>50</sup> Woodwill, Jennifer. (2007) “Questioning Volunteer Management”. (St. Christopher House)

<sup>51</sup> Mowatt, Brandy and Jacqueline Young. (2006) *Volunteerism in Aboriginal Communities: Volunteer – Who Me?* (Imagine Canada): 19-21.

<sup>52</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009): 7.

<sup>53</sup> Strauss. (2004): 257.

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

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allows people to experience self-actualization and self-transcendence. Volunteerism provides people with opportunities to experience dignity, justice, meaning, mastery, and love for others.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.3 Benefits to Organizations

The benefits of volunteering extend not only to the community and the individual, but also extend to the organizations which serve vulnerable populations and in which volunteers work.<sup>55</sup> Non profit organizations rely on volunteers from the community to serve as Boards of Directors in order to create a legally constituted organization as required by the Societies Act and the Charitable Fundraising Act. Without this primary volunteer commitment the organization could not operate.

One of the more traditional views of how volunteers benefit organizations is to consider the time and money that the organization can save by having a community member do work free of charge. While this is a benefit to organizations, research has shown that this is not necessarily always the primary benefit for organizations since often the work assigned to volunteers would not be assigned to a paid staff member, and since often a 'volunteer coordinator' position needs to be established in a paid capacity to help organize volunteers.

Involving volunteers in an organization can also help to increase the legitimacy and long-term sustainability of the organization within the community. According to Haski-Leventhal, volunteers can help to "legitimate the organization and signal its trustworthiness, so further resources can be recruited".<sup>56</sup> Further, as volunteers become intimately involved in the operation of an organization, they form attachment to the organization and work towards the long-term continued operation and improvement of the organization.<sup>57</sup> In other words, whether at the Board level or on the front-line, volunteers develop a stake in the organization to which they donate their time. This commitment can result in increased advocacy and resource connections (e.g. fundraising/donations) for the organization.

Volunteers can also improve the effectiveness of an organization by bringing with them their own experiential knowledge of the community and its needs. By including volunteers, an organization can improve the quality of its services and ensure "goodness of fit" for the community in which it operates.<sup>58</sup> Further, volunteers can help with issue-identification based on their lived experience, and can increase the reach of an organization through their personal networks. The inclusion of vulnerable volunteers, in particular, can help raise awareness about issues related to social exclusion, including a deeper understanding of their lived experience, thereby increasing the organization's ability to develop and provide relevant services. This increased awareness and understanding can help to further the organization's mission to help

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<sup>54</sup> Sherr. (2008): 43.

<sup>55</sup> Billis. (2001): 42.

<sup>56</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009): 6.

<sup>57</sup> Sherr. (2008): 42.

<sup>58</sup> National Offender Management Service. (2007): 15.

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people. However, Woodwill cautions that, “while volunteering has the potential to be a “win-win” strategy for both organizations and volunteers in terms of social change and community development, it cannot meet this potential when the tables are turned to only benefit organizations, at the expense of citizen engagement and inclusion”.<sup>59</sup>

In the broadest sense, volunteering within organizations by both mainstream and vulnerable persons leads to effective action and community engagement around an organization’s mission. As indicated by Sherr, “collective action must grow out of living experiences shared by individuals who are willing to work together to address a common social problem. The process of individuals sharing information and collective experiences related to a social problem is called raising critical consciousness”.<sup>60</sup> Raising critical consciousness includes increased in-depth understanding and exposure of social issues, as well as the increased action to address social issues based on that understanding.

Volunteerism benefits the community as a whole, through an increased “critical consciousness” of social issues, the development of social capital, community cohesion and vibrancy, while also benefiting the volunteer personally and benefiting the voluntary organization. In particular, with respect to social inclusion, volunteer activity can be a useful tool for the fostering of inclusive communities as “volunteering reduces social exclusion and alienation and can empower clients to give, and not only receive”.<sup>61</sup>

### **2.4 Benefits of Volunteerism Overview - Revisiting the Circle of Courage**

Looking back to the theoretical Circle of Courage model presented above, it is possible to view volunteering as a key element to the four components of the model: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Volunteering can help people to have healthy and meaningful connections to others in their community, fostering a stronger sense of belonging. Through volunteering people gain mastery as they develop skills, creativity and talents that help them to participate in their communities and society more generally. Volunteering leads to greater confidence, and healthy self-esteem, and encourages citizens to be leaders in their own communities. This leads to increased independence amongst people who volunteer. Finally, volunteers are empowered through giving to others around them and feeling the value of their contribution to society. This relates to the ‘generosity’ element in the Circle of Courage. In this way, it is clear that volunteering can be a valuable tool for reducing social exclusion and increasing participation by all members of society.

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<sup>59</sup> Woodwill. (2007): 4.

<sup>60</sup> Sherr. (2008): 35.

<sup>61</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009): 6.



## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

The following chart summarizes some of the benefits that accrue from volunteering.

<b>THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING</b>		
<b>Benefits to Community</b>	<b>Benefits to Individuals</b>	<b>Benefits to Organizations</b>
Bonding social capital Bridging social capital Overall trust Acceptance of diversity Social sustainability Vibrancy of community Stronger sense of community Greater concern for others Safer communities Decreased vandalism & violence Greater economic prosperity More equal distribution of wealth Greater policy innovation Higher electoral turnout & political interest Culture of volunteerism and philanthropy	Skills/experience Opportunity to share expertise Physical Health Psychological/emotional health Sense of purpose/meaning Sense of belonging Increased social networks Reduced loneliness/isolation Structure/direction Enjoyment/fun Support Pride/self-respect Confidence Empowerment Resiliency Leadership skills & opportunities Perspective/increased awareness New career opportunities Opportunity to express generosity Opportunity for continuous learning	Board of Directors provides legally constituted organization Increased networks of support for organization's mission Increased effectiveness Improved quality of service Improved issue identification and understanding Increased reach Increased awareness of social issues Increased ability to provide relevant services Increased legitimacy Long-term sustainability Community engagement around organization's mission Saved time and money

### 3.0 INCREASING SOCIAL INCLUSION

As discussed above, volunteering can help address the social exclusion that diminishes citizen participation in society, thereby working as a “critical catalyst in wider civic engagement”.<sup>62</sup> Further, it can build social capital within communities, leading to stronger bridges between diverse groups and ultimately creating a more inclusive society.

#### 3.1 Barriers to Volunteering

While the benefits of volunteering are many, particularly with respect to encouraging social inclusion, there remain significant barriers to volunteering for vulnerable or socially excluded persons. The Institute for Volunteering Research explains this in their report on volunteering and social exclusion, saying:

Volunteering is not yet fully inclusive, and so its contribution to combating social exclusion is being limited. A number of barriers prevent people from volunteering in formal, organizational, settings. These barriers are both psychological and practical. They affect people’s willingness and ability to volunteer at different points in time: some operate when an individual first thinks (or doesn’t think) about volunteering, others operate when they attempt to take their first steps into volunteering, and yet others operate after they have become involved.<sup>63</sup>

It is important, then, to examine the ways in which volunteering can become a more inclusive activity, so that no members of society are excluded from reaping the many benefits of voluntary action.

One of the primary ways to discover how to make voluntary action more inclusive is to examine the reasons why certain people feel as though they do not wish to, or simply cannot, volunteer. Haski-Leventhal suggests that an overarching way to look at barriers to volunteering could be through assessing ‘volunteerability’ and ‘recruitability’ of volunteers. Within these categories are willingness, capability, and availability to volunteer as well as accessibility of potential volunteers, the resources of the organization and the networks/cooperation possible in the community. Significantly, she identifies general barriers to the willingness to volunteer as “having [had a previous] bad experience, emotional difficulty, lack of time, misalignment of expectations, and attached risks”.<sup>64</sup> Research conducted by Volunteer Calgary (2006) found that in addition to lack of time, volunteers face a number of practical barriers including inflexible schedules, not being aware of their abilities as a volunteer, complicated application processes, and difficulty getting around (i.e. transportation).

Considering vulnerable populations in particular, and the barriers they face with respect to volunteering, there may, in fact, be different reasons why different groups choose not to

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<sup>62</sup> Kearney. (2003): 47.

<sup>63</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004): 66.

<sup>64</sup> Haski-Leventhal. (2009): 10-11

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volunteer. Bowgett found, for example, that “the barriers to volunteering that homeless people face are largely attitudinal: either their own perception that they have nothing to give and would not be welcomed as volunteers, or the perception of volunteer-involving organizations that homeless people would not make good volunteers. The biggest practical barrier was the fear that volunteering would affect welfare benefits.”<sup>65</sup>

For people with mental health issues, the Institute for Volunteering Research identified a number of potential barriers to volunteering including lack of money to cover expenses, concerns about impact on benefits entitlement, social attitudes toward those with mental illness, personal motivations, self confidence, opportunities to volunteer and the quality of support available to the volunteer.<sup>66</sup>

As for youth, Bewis *et al* found through surveying college students, that the main barriers to volunteering included lack of time, fear of risk and liability, lack of information, concern that they did not have the right skills/experience, and worries about becoming overly involved.<sup>67</sup> In a similar study conducted by Mowatt and Young, the top five obstacles to volunteering for Aboriginal women were identified as lack of time, need for child care, lack of awareness of opportunities, discrimination against Aboriginal people and lack of family support.<sup>68</sup>

Some vulnerable communities hold different perceptions of volunteerism. For example, several authors have discovered that many vulnerable or marginalized groups are not participating in formal volunteering, but that this does not mean they are not giving their time and resources in different, informal, ways.<sup>69</sup> For example, “through planning and giving of their time, Aboriginal people volunteer without seeing their actions as such. In fact, the idea of volunteerism within Aboriginal communities is not outwardly acknowledged or defined.”<sup>70</sup> In their study on volunteerism in low-income communities, the Points of Light Foundation explores concepts of formal and informal volunteering, noting that “the term volunteer is a culturally-specific term and, by definition, excludes many populations, while the terms “neighbouring” and “community involvement” expand the meaning of volunteering to all sectors of society.”<sup>71</sup>

Overall, then, while different excluded groups may face different specific barriers to the motivation or ability to volunteer, there are some common reasons including lack of awareness, lack of information, lack of time, lack of self-confidence, lack of opportunity and general fear surrounding volunteering.

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<sup>65</sup> Bowgett. (2006): 23

<sup>66</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004): 3-4.

<sup>67</sup> Brewis, Georgina, Jennifer Russell, and Clare Holdsworth. (2010) *Bursting the Bubble: Students, Volunteering and the Community: Full Report*. London, UK: Institute for Volunteering Research. Pg 37

<sup>68</sup> Mowatt and Young. (2006): 19.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Tossutti (2003)

<sup>70</sup> Mowatt and Yong. (2006): 1.

<sup>71</sup> Points of Light Foundation (2000) *A Matter of Survival: Volunteering By, In and With Low Income Communities*.

### 3.2 Strategies for Social Inclusion Through Volunteerism

There are many different strategies discussed in the literature on volunteerism that suggest ways to address social exclusion issues and to increase the possibility of voluntary action amongst marginalized populations. Kearney indicates that fundamentally, “we need to change the widely perceived view of volunteering as conforming to a traditional philanthropic model of better-off people wanting to do good for the less fortunate, or the strong helping the weak or the well-off the poor...The challenge here is how we attract people who may feel that they have nothing to give or who may have been conditioned by society to regard themselves as receivers or as being helped rather than as givers or as helping others”.<sup>72</sup> This involves changing the attitudes of both the people/organizations seeking volunteers, who might have previously overlooked potential volunteers from marginalized groups, and also changing the attitudes of people in these groups, who may feel as though they are not capable or desired as volunteers, or do not see themselves in formal volunteer roles. For example, Bowgett found that “the most effective way to support homeless people to volunteer is via the agencies that are already supporting them. [They] need to be connected with the networks that actively recruit volunteers”.<sup>73</sup> Overall, one of the most important strategies discussed in the literature for including vulnerable populations in voluntary action was ensuring that organizations, other volunteers and social workers made the effort to ask or invite people to join in. Several authors also recognized the need to create inclusive spaces within voluntary organizations where all volunteers, including those from vulnerable or marginalized populations, can participate, feel welcome and experience empowerment. A concerted effort to avoid stereotypes, discrimination and prejudice is important in making voluntary action more inclusive. In addition, research shows that for people with mental health issues, regular support and supervision by people with good interpersonal skills and knowledge of the implications of mental ill health can improve the engagement and retention of these volunteers.

Both intra-generational and inter-generational volunteer experiences are useful in helping increase the social inclusion of the vulnerable groups involved. For example, research has found that “voluntary activity in the community promotes adolescent development more broadly. And working with adults and peers to meet real needs helps adolescents master their own developmental tasks”.<sup>74</sup> And in addition to the benefits gained by youth, “volunteering allows people in late adulthood [e.g. seniors] to remain useful and active.”<sup>75</sup> Points of Light Foundation notes that in low income neighbourhoods “family volunteering helps revitalize the social bonds through which children learn to care, adults exercise social responsibility, young people can be leaders, family members can be resources for social change, and community residents can build connections with each other.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kearney. (2009): 52.

<sup>73</sup> Bowgett. (2006): 23.

<sup>74</sup> Hamilton, Stephen and Mickey Fenzel. (1988) “The Impact of Volunteer Experience on Adolescent Social Development: Evidence of Program Effects”. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. Vol. 3 No. 1, pg 66.

<sup>75</sup> Sherr (2008): 41.

<sup>76</sup> Points of Light. (2000) *Matter of Survival: Volunteering In, By and With Low Income Families*.

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The Centre for Volunteering Research cautions that “policy-makers and practitioners cannot go on asking ever more people to volunteer by launching ever-larger campaigns. Instead efforts need to be made to dismantle the wider barriers that prevent people from volunteering. This is not a simple task – which may explain why it has so far been somewhat neglected.

There is a need for a far more comprehensive program of challenging people’s perceptions and building their capacity – many people may have to experience a “pre-volunteering” stage during which their confidence and skills are developed”.<sup>77</sup> Use of a Community Participation model (Appendix E) recognizes the importance of “pre volunteering” activity as a strategy to engage with potential volunteers and draw them into more formal volunteer roles. This approach could include informal accompaniment (i.e. working with) as well as more formal mentoring, task assignment and formal volunteer role assignment strategies.

There are many advantages to engaging individuals in formal volunteer roles within an organization or community. Formal volunteering makes someone part of an organization and involves them in a social mission. It fosters at the same time a sense of belonging and a sense of social purpose. While social workers and voluntary organizations can be encouraged to be more inclusive in their invitations of excluded people, there are also systemic roots to social exclusion that must be addressed more broadly in society.

### **3.3 The Role of Organizations<sup>78</sup>**

The organization plays a key role in furthering social inclusion through volunteerism. The organization can create and manage the volunteer experience, from engagement, assignment, training/mentoring, through to supervision and recognition. Conceptualizing formal volunteering as an exchange relationship points to the important role of the organization in mediating this exchange, with attention to the needs of both the volunteer and the recipient of the service. Recipients of a volunteer’s time and effort could be a person(s), a community, an organization or all of these.

The organization can create opportunities to build bonding and bridging social capital in a number of ways. For example, the organization can facilitate inter-group interaction by mediating the exchange relationships between the organization’s client populations (the majority of whom are vulnerable) and the organization’s volunteers. Or a volunteer program might facilitate strategic inter-group interactions (i.e. bridging social capital) by recruiting volunteers from different age, ethnic, socio-economic and ability groups to create a socially inclusive experience.

Through effective volunteer programs, non-profit organizations can help raise consciousness of social need and bring people together to address it. Non-profit organizations and their

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<sup>77</sup> Centre for Volunteering Research. (2004): 67

<sup>78</sup> Wharton, M. (2010) Key Concepts for Volunteer Program Outcomes Indicators. SouthWest Communities Resource Centre. Prepared for FCSS Calgary. (unpublished)

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volunteers are important contributors to the building of a democratic and compassionate civil society, prerequisites for social inclusiveness.

Organizations can help build community capacity and strengthen neighbourhoods, by promoting closer-to-home or neighbourhood volunteering and providing volunteer opportunities within the local community. Strategically networking the volunteer programs of organizations with volunteer opportunities in a defined geographic area is one way to promote, harness and distribute the human and social capital within that area.

Thus, the organization can play a key role in removing barriers to volunteerism, engaging and supporting volunteers and strategically organizing volunteer experiences in ways that create social inclusion and build social capital.

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

<b>Summary of Barriers to Volunteerism and Strategies for Inclusion</b>	
<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Strategies for Inclusion</b>
Lack of Time Inflexible Schedules	Make volunteering a priority for the community Create volunteer opportunities with shorter time commitments and more flexible schedules
Lack of child care Lack of transportation Lack money to cover expenses	Provide financial or practical supports to reduce instrumental barriers/expenses
Lack of Self-Confidence  Unaware or unsure of personal abilities/talents and what one has to offer, feel they have nothing to give	Ask/invite marginalized persons to participate Develop welcoming, inclusive processes, environments, and experiences Ensure adequate, good quality support is available to volunteers from vulnerable populations
Lack of Opportunity  Unaware of opportunities	Changing the attitudes of both the people/organizations seeking volunteers, who might have previously overlooked potential volunteers from marginalized groups Reach out to marginalized groups
Previous bad experience, Complicated application processes, Misalignment of expectations, Concerns about risk/liability	Ensure well designed streamlined volunteer management structures and processes and supports
Accessibility issues	Pay attention to facilities and volunteer opportunities to make them “accessible” to those with physical, sensory or mobility issues
Exclusion of Marginalized Groups  Stereotypes, discrimination, prejudice	Change the perception of volunteering as the “well-off” helping the “poor” and making it more inclusive. Incorporate informal types of volunteering (e.g. participation, helping activities) as well as formal volunteering Have marginalized groups volunteer and participate in the organizations created to strengthen their very communities and demographics. Provide mainstream populations with exposure to vulnerable populations through mixed volunteer experiences and/or inter-generational volunteering

### 4.0 Options for Measuring Volunteer Outcomes

While the literature above demonstrates the widespread recognition of the social, organizational, and individual benefits that are provided by volunteerism, the task of providing quantitative statistical measurements of these outcomes remains difficult, with different organizations and bodies using different tools of reference.<sup>79</sup> Certain benefits, such as social capital, increased issues-identification, and positive effects on volunteers do not lend themselves easily to evaluation. Because of this difficulty in measuring certain elements of volunteerism, traditional approaches to evaluation have tended to focus on the financial benefits of volunteer activity, particularly the financial benefits to the organization. Financial measures have become a popular means of evaluation due to their ability to satiate the “demand for headline figures that evidence the impact of volunteering”.<sup>80</sup> In order to develop initiatives that strengthen the benefits of volunteerism and reduce social exclusion, it is important to have the tools available to accurately and consistently measure the full value that volunteering contributes to all actors involved.<sup>81</sup> This section will outline various options and methodologies that have been used to measure a range of volunteer outcomes.

#### 4.1 Measuring Benefits to Communities

As was mentioned earlier, volunteer activities have the capacity to increase a community’s social capital, both in terms of the social capital that bonds similar societal groups together, and capital that bridges differences between diverse components of a community. This social capital, and the various communal benefits that emanate from it, can be measured in a variety of ways. One standard national measure of the impact of volunteering on social ties can be found in the Canadian Community Health Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada. This survey seeks to measure the support available to individuals, both volunteers and non-volunteers, by asking how often they can count on someone to provide company and affection, to help with personal problems, to be there to assist in daily chores or emergency situations, or to attend to family members.<sup>82</sup> Based on the answers to these questions, data can be collected as to whether those who volunteer can be said to have a stronger support network than those who do not. However, as Kearney argues, volunteering does not only provide stronger bonds between familiar groups who already have some social ties. Volunteerism also has the capacity to cut across disparate elements of society who may otherwise have little or no contact with one another.<sup>83</sup> In order to determine whether this capacity for bridging social capital is actually realized in volunteer situations, Statistics Canada provides a number of relevant questions in the General Social Survey. These questions address the number of contacts made by an individual with those who spoke a foreign language, who were of a different ethnicity, or who

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<sup>79</sup> Kearney (2003): 46

<sup>80</sup> Gaskin, Katharine. (2011) *The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit: A Self Help Guide*. (London: University of London)

<sup>81</sup> Independent Sector. (2001) *Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit*. Washington, D.C. 8

<sup>82</sup> Statistics Canada. (2002) *Canadian Community Health Survey Questionnaire*. Ottawa, Canada. 224-228

<sup>83</sup> Kearney (2003): 47



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come from a different educational or financial background, as well as those who would be able to assist the individual professionally or financially.<sup>84</sup> These survey questions can then be used to gather data on whether a person who engages in volunteerism is more or less likely to socially venture beyond associations with people similar to themselves, thereby increasing social cohesion through bridging. Taken together, these two Statistics Canada questionnaires make up an important tool for measuring social capital.

The standard measurements listed above, however, do not necessarily capture the full range of societal benefits that volunteerism may provide. They largely measure social capital in terms of direct experience of interpersonal contact between members of a community. However, as sociologists Narayan and Cassidy point out, everyday sociability is only one of the many dimensions that make up social capital, both in terms of bridging and bonding.<sup>85</sup> A person may have relatively low everyday sociability for reasons entirely separate from the bond that they feel with their community, such as time constraints, disabilities, or family size. As a result, intergroup trust, the perception of others, and generalized norms must be recognized as elements of social capital as well, and they may be influenced by the provision or reception of volunteer services. In terms of measuring bonding social capital, Narayan and Cassidy suggest survey questions that ask a person's level of trust of people in their own race, religion, and ethnic group, while measuring bridging social capital through evaluating trust an individual has for those outside such groups.<sup>86</sup> The authors also develop questions asking the degree to which an individual identifies with a particular group, and whether they are proud to belong to that group.<sup>87</sup> Finally, Narayan and Cassidy measure social capital through the examination of generalized social norms, asking respondents whether people are in general trustworthy and helpful.<sup>88</sup> (See APPENDIX A)

Sense of community belonging has also been associated positively with several network-based social capital measures.<sup>89</sup> The following definition of "sense of community" was proposed by McMillan & Chavis (1986):

*Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together.<sup>90</sup>*

A survey conducted by City of Calgary in 2004 found that when citizens were asked, "what do you think gives you the most sense of community," responses included attributes such as connection and involvement; contribution to community efforts, finding a niche in the

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<sup>84</sup> Statistics Canada (2008): 25-27

<sup>85</sup> Narayan, Deepa and Michael Cassidy. (2003) "A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and Validation of a Social Capital Inventory". *Current Sociology*. Vol. 49 No. 2. 68

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.: 96

<sup>87</sup> Ibid:97

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 93

<sup>89</sup> Carpiano RM, Hysatd PW. (2011) Sense of community belonging in health surveys: what social capital is it measuring? *Health Place* Mar 17(2): 606-17. Epub 2011.

<sup>90</sup> McMillan D, Chavis, D. (1986) Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory. *Journal of Community Psychology* (Vol. 14, p. 6-23).

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community, getting support, and feeling safe<sup>91</sup>, all of which can be directly linked with and/or influenced by experiences of volunteerism.

So while daily community interactions are an important measurement of social capital, incorporating additional questions explored above could broaden a survey's ability to assess the impact of volunteerism on social capital.

### 4.2 Measuring Benefits to Volunteers

Of the different types of benefits that volunteerism can provide, the most wide-ranging may be the benefits individual volunteers receive that allow them to be more socially included. Indeed, it could be argued that any increase in social capital that volunteerism fosters can be seen as a benefit to the individual as well as to the community.<sup>92</sup> However, as Wilson and Musick note, there are also specific benefits that apply to volunteers alone that can be identified and measured, regardless of whether they are an intended or unintended consequence of volunteering.<sup>93</sup> Such measures are generally taken twice, before and after a volunteering experience, in order to determine whether the benefit was specifically associated with that experience.

The most common measure of potential benefits to individuals is the capacity for volunteer work to provide useful skills. The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating provides a number of pertinent questions. Respondents are asked whether volunteer activities have provided them with skills that could be transferred to their regular jobs or businesses, or whether their volunteering has helped them to find a new job. More specifically, the survey asks individuals whether their volunteerism has provided them with fundraising, technical, office, organizational, communications, or other skills or knowledge sets that could be of use.<sup>94</sup> These questions, which cover a wide range of possible skill benefits, provide a good measure of one type of benefit volunteers may receive from their activities. (See APPENDIX B)

However, as Bowgett reminds us, the benefits that volunteers receive in terms of new or strengthened skills are not the only positive effect that can come from an individual volunteering.<sup>95</sup> There are psychological, physical and social benefits that can be associated with volunteer activity as well, particularly for more socially excluded populations that engage in volunteering. The City of Calgary FCSS provides some measurement tools based on questions from the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth that could be used to evaluate non-skill benefits to youth volunteers. These include questions about constructive use of time, self-esteem, self-confidence, and measurements of pro-social attitudes.

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<sup>91</sup> City of Calgary. Sense of Community On-Line Survey Results. Retrieved at <http://content.calgary.ca/CCA/City+Hall/Business+Units/Community+and+Neighbourhood+Services/Social+research+h+policy+and+resources/Sense+of+Community/Sense+of+Community+Online+Survey+Results.htm>

<sup>92</sup> Kearney (2003): 48

<sup>93</sup> Wilson & Musick (2000): 167

<sup>94</sup> Statistics Canada. (2000) *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating Questionnaire*. Ottawa, Canada. 13-15

<sup>95</sup> Bowgett (2006):19

In order to measure psychological, physical, and social benefits for older volunteer populations, additional questionnaires would be useful. With regards to the possible benefits to mental health, the British National Center for Volunteering conducted a survey of volunteers with a history of mental health problems, as a significantly marginalized social group, and asked about the impact their experience had on these problems.<sup>96</sup> In terms of measuring the physical benefits of volunteerism, the existing data from large national surveys, such as the *Americans' Changing Lives* or the Public Health Agency of Canada's *Volunteering as a Vehicle for Social Support and Life Satisfaction*, provides a good tool of measurement, asking questions about individual levels of activity and chronic illnesses, as well as questions about stress, self-esteem and mastery amongst volunteers and non-volunteers.<sup>97</sup>

A broader composite measure of benefits to volunteers was used by AmeriCorps Community Service Program in a longitudinal study of over 2000 volunteers.<sup>98</sup> This set of measures covers areas such as connection to community, community problem identification, neighborhood obligations, personal effectiveness, personal growth, appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as some social skill sets such as constructive group interactions and personal behavior in groups.

### 4.3 Measuring Benefits to Organizations

Finally, there are the benefits that volunteer activities provide to organizations. Measures of volunteer impact on organizations have been most often centered around the financial and objective benefits for an organization (e.g. hours of service and dollar valuation). There are many examples of how to place a financial value on volunteerism. The *Volunteer Investment and Value Audit* from the Institute on Volunteering Research provides guidelines for this type of valuation.<sup>99</sup> A new and broader approach to valuing volunteer contributions is the Social Return on Investment which places financial value on both typical market measures such as hours of service, but also “assigns value to items that do not involve market transactions”.<sup>100</sup> For example, benefits such as personal growth and development experienced by the volunteer or service recipient might be included as part of the overall “value added” for the organization or for the community. (See APPENDIX C)

In terms of benefits such as increased effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability, the effect that volunteerism within an organization has on public perception of that organization is one of

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<sup>96</sup> Clark, Sherry. (2003) *You Cannot Be Serious! A Guide to Involving Volunteers with Mental Health Problems*. National Centre for Volunteering, London.

<sup>97</sup> Ayers, David. (2007) *Benefits of Volunteering: A Presentation for the Oceanside Volunteer Association's Volunteer Fest*. British Columbia. 1

<sup>98</sup> Jasterzab, J. (2004 – updated 2007) *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps – Appendices*. Corporation for National & Community Services. Retrieved at [www.americorps.gov/pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/pdf) p 204 - 208.

<sup>99</sup> Gaskin, J. (2011) *The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit*. Institute for Volunteering Research. London UK

<sup>100</sup> Mook, L. Quarter, J. Richmond, B.J. (2007) *What Counts. Social Accounting for Non Profits and Cooperatives*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Sigel Press. London England.

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the elements that can be measured. Legitimacy and public image can significantly affect organizations' long term sustainability, so developing an assessment tool to ascertain the nature of an agency's public image can be helpful. McCurley and Vineyard have developed an assessment tool for organizations that rely on high numbers of volunteers to deliver service, including questions on general public perception of trustworthiness, ethical practice and financial responsibility.<sup>101</sup> (See APPENDIX C).

Other possible organizational benefits such as increased reach and increased ability to provide high quality and relevant services can be assessed through annual program reviews and/or client satisfaction surveys.

### 5.0 Conclusion

Volunteerism offers the opportunity for civic participation and social inclusion of all individuals in our community. Research demonstrates the multitude of benefits resulting from volunteerism for individuals, communities and organizations. It is important that all citizens have the opportunity to experience the benefits of volunteering. Organizations can play a key role in fostering social inclusion by recognizing those groups of people who volunteer and those who are underrepresented in the volunteer roster, then consciously reducing barriers and implementing strategies to increase social inclusion of vulnerable or disengaged populations. Social inclusion strategies can include a broad range of engagement activity leading to formal volunteering and community leadership roles. By understanding the outcomes we wish to create, and the barriers, motivations and needs of specific vulnerable populations, organizations can carefully design volunteer processes, programs and opportunities that increase engagement, participation and volunteerism, build social capital, and address the goal of social inclusion.

*It is time we both recognize and accept that we are all born 'in'... Inclusion means recognizing that we are 'one' even though we are not the 'same'.<sup>102</sup>*

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<sup>101</sup> McCurley, Steve and Sue Vineyard. (1997) *Measuring Up: Assessment Tool for Volunteering Programs*. Heritage Arts, Illinois. 43-44

<sup>102</sup> Points of Light Foundation (2000) *A Matter of Survival: Volunteering By, In and With Low Income Communities*.

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## 7.0 Terminology

**Altruism:** selflessness, renunciation of the self, and an exclusive concern for the welfare of others

**Social Capital:** the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social Capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through the network.<sup>103</sup>

**Bonding Social Capital:** inward-looking networks bringing together similar kinds of people, reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000)<sup>104</sup>

**Bridging Social Capital:** outward-looking networks and connections among different kinds of people, spans “diverse social cleavages” (Putnam, 2000)

**Critical Consciousness** is a popular education and social concept developed by Paulo Freire. Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of perceived social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness also includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding. In this way, individual consciousness helps end the “culture of silence” in which the socially dispossessed internalize the negative images of themselves created and propagated by the oppressor in situations of extreme poverty.<sup>105</sup>

The following definitions were taken from the Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004) “*Volunteering for All? Exploring the Link Between Volunteering and Social Exclusion*”. London, UK.

**Formal Volunteering:** any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment..

**Informal Volunteering/Neighbouring:** any activity meeting the broad definition of volunteering but outside an organizational context – such as neighbour helping neighbour.

**Mainstream Populations:** refers to the general community rather than specific identified vulnerable groups

**Social exclusion:** an individually perceived or experienced state of disconnection from mainstream society. What can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

**Social inclusion:** a process which restores broken links between the individual resident and the community and encourages participation in community affairs; OR an individually experienced feeling or state .(Kinds, Munz, Horn, 2000) of being included in the mainstream society

**Marginalization:** a facet of social exclusion where people who do not necessarily feel socially excluded, nevertheless feel that access to areas of social, civic and economic life, which may be taken for granted by others, are restricted.

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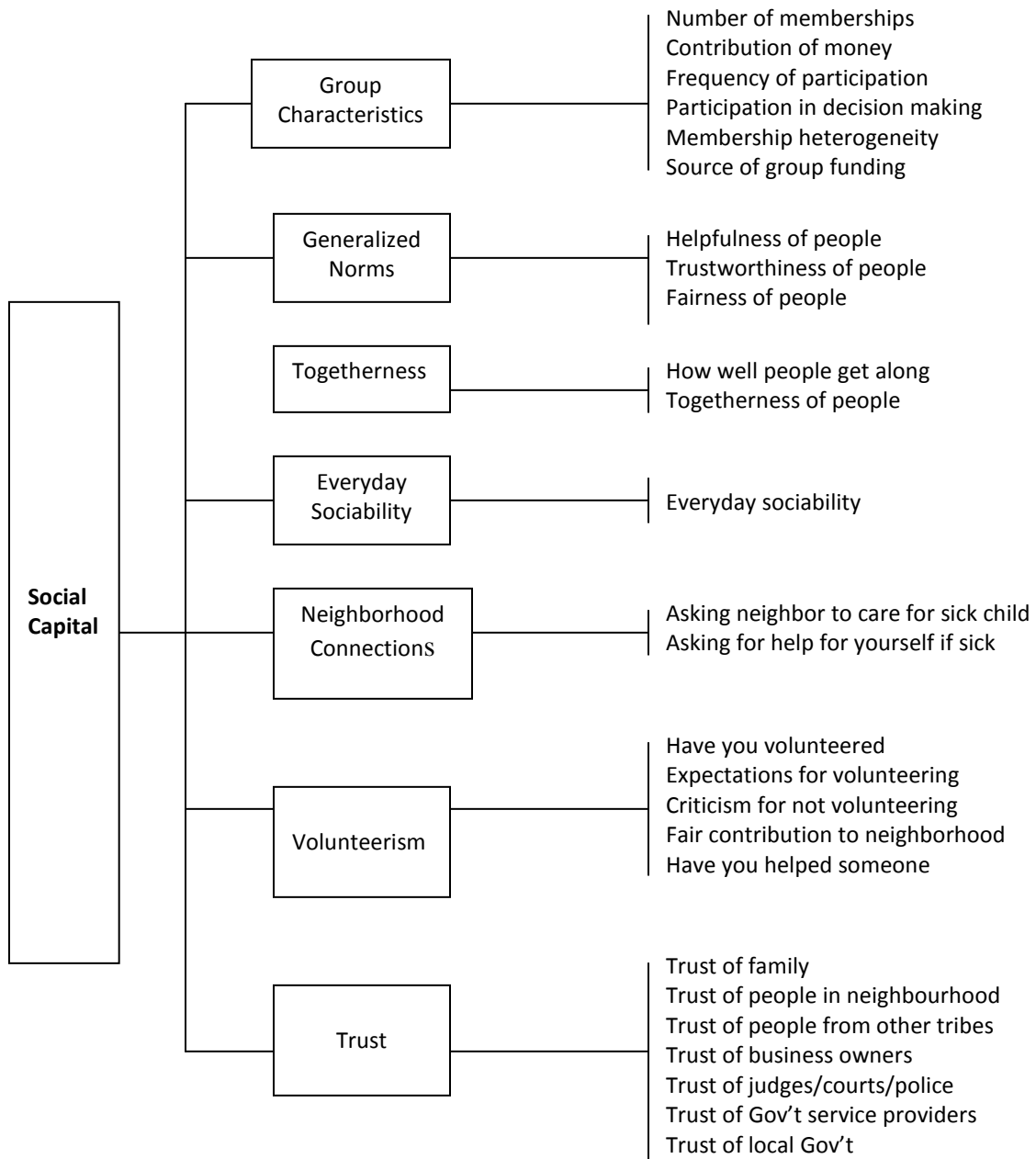
<sup>103</sup> Nahapiet, J. Ghoshal, S. (1998) Social Capital, Intellectual Capital and the Organizational Advantage. The Academy of Management Review. Vol. 23, (2) p.243.

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## APPENDIX A:

### The Dimensions of Social Capital – from Global Social Capital Survey<sup>106</sup>



<sup>106</sup> Narayan, Deepa and Michael Cassidy. "A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and Validation of a Social Capital Inventory". *Current Sociology*. Vol. 49 No. 2.

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## Sample Questions for Measuring Social Capital

These measures of social capital are targeted to a population level survey rather than measures at the program level.

### Generalized Norms

1. Generally speaking, would you say that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, or that most people can be trusted? 1) You can't be too careful, 2).. 3).. 4).. 5) Most people can be trusted
2. Would you say that most of the time people are just looking out for themselves, or are they trying to be helpful? 1) Are looking out for themselves, 2).. 3).. 4).. 5) Are trying to be helpful

### Trust

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means to a 'very small extent' and 5 means to a 'very large extent', how much do you feel you can trust the people in each of the following groups?

1) To a very small extent; 2) To a small extent; 3) Neither small nor great extent; 4) To a great extent; 5) To a very great extent

1. People of your race, religion or ethnic group?
2. People of other races, religions or ethnic groups?
3. People in your neighbourhood?
4. People who belong to the same clubs, organizations, or groups as you?
5. People in your family?

### Pride and Identity

1. We have talked to many people about their sense of identity – that is, who they are, where they come from, and their sense of belonging. Using a 5-point scale, where one means having a very weak sense of identity and 5 means having a very strong sense of identity, how would you rate your *own* sense of identity?
  - 1) Very confused about who I am; 2) Somewhat confused about who I am; 3) Neither clear nor unclear about who I am; 4) Somewhat clear about who I am; 5) Very clear about who I am
2. We are also interested in how proud you are of who you are and the larger group to which you belong. Using a scale where 1 means very ashamed and 5 means very proud, how would you rate your own sense of pride?
  - 1) Very ashamed; 2) Ashamed; 3) Neither proud nor ashamed; 4) Proud 5) Very proud

**Taken from:** Narayan, Deepa and Michael Cassidy. "A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and Validation of a Social Capital Inventory". *Current Sociology*. Vol. 49 No. 2.

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The following measures take a geographic neighbourhood or community focus rather than a personal focus.

### Sense of Community Index – City of Calgary

**Scoring:** 1) Disagree completely, 2) Disagree somewhat, 3) Neither disagree nor agree, 4), Agree somewhat, 5) Agree completely

1. I feel very much like I belong in Calgary
2. When I travel, I am proud to tell others where I live
3. I like living in this city
4. There is a strong sense of community in Calgary
5. It would take a lot for me to move from this city
6. I help out by volunteering in Calgary
7. I borrow things from or trade favours with people in my neighbourhood
8. I recognize a number of adults and children in my neighbourhood
9. I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood
10. I could count on people in my neighbourhood for help in an emergency
11. My neighbourhood is a safe place to live
12. I feel like I belong in my neighbourhood
13. If there were a problem in receiving some service from the city, people in my neighbourhood could get the problem solved
14. I help out in my neighbourhood by volunteering
15. I get involved in neighbourhood events or activities
16. I have influence in changing my neighbourhood for the better
17. I would like to stay in my neighbourhood for many years
18. Living in my neighbourhood gives me a sense of community

The following questions measure impact at a personal level.

### Bonding Social Capital<sup>107</sup>

How often is each of the following kinds of support available to you if you need it?

1. Someone to have a good time with?
2. Someone who shows you love and affection?
3. Someone to turn to for suggestions about how to deal with a personal problems?
4. Someone to take you to the doctor if you needed it?
5. Someone to prepare your meals if you were unable to do it yourself?
6. Someone to help with daily chores if you were sick?
7. Someone to look after your child(ren) for several hours if needed?
8. Someone to look after your spouse for several hours if needed?
9. Someone to look after your parent(s) for several hours if needed?

Scoring: 1) None of the time; 2) A little of the time; 3) Some of the time; 4) Most of the time; 5) All of the time

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<sup>107</sup> Taken from Canadian Community Health Survey 2010, Social Support Scale

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### Bridging Social Capital<sup>108</sup>

Think of all the friends (*reference volunteer role*) you had contact with in the past month, whether the contact was in person, by telephone, or by e-mail. Of all these people:

1. How many spoke a language different from your own mother tongue (the language you first learned in childhood)?
2. How many come from an ethnic group that is visibly different from yours?
3. How many have roughly the same level of education as you?
4. How many are from a similar household income level as you?

Scoring for questions above: None; A few; About half; Most; All; Don't know

5. How many would be good contacts if you were looking for a job? Write in number \_\_\_\_\_.
6. How many would be willing and able to lend you \$500 if you needed it? Write in number \_\_\_\_\_.

### Social Inclusion – Participation<sup>109</sup>

1. Are you a member of any voluntary organizations or associations such as school groups, church social groups, community centres, ethnic associations, or social, civic or fraternal clubs?  Yes  No

If you are a member of any voluntary organizations or associations such as those described above:

2. How often did you participate in meetings or activities of these groups in the past 12 months?  
At least once a week; At least once a month; At least 3 or 4 times a year; At least once a year; Not at all
3. In the past 12 months, did you do unpaid volunteer work for any organization?  Yes  No
4. If you did any unpaid volunteer work for any organization, on average, about how many hours per month did you volunteer? over 15 hours a month; 5–15 hours a month; 1-4 hours a month; less than 1 hour a month; I did not do any volunteer work
5. If you did any unpaid volunteer work for any organization, have you made any new friends through volunteering?  Yes  No
6. If you did any unpaid volunteer work for any organization, did you do this volunteer work in your own neighbourhood?  Yes, all of it  Yes, some of it  No

### Social Inclusion – Participation in Neighbourhood<sup>110</sup>

1. Would you say that you know most, many, a few or none of the people in your neighbourhood?  
no one else in your neighbourhood; a few of the people in your neighbourhood; many of the people in your neighbourhood; most of the people in your neighbourhood
2. About how many people in your neighbourhood do you know well enough to ask for a favour? (e.g. picking up the mail, watering plants, shoveling, lending tools or garden equipment, carrying things, feeding pets when neighbours go on holiday, shopping)? none; 1 to 5; 6 to 10; over 10
3. I get involved in neighbourhood events or activities. 1) strongly disagree; 2) disagree; 3) neither agree nor disagree; 4) agree; 5) strongly agree
4. I help out in my neighbourhood by volunteering. 1) strongly disagree; 2) disagree; 3) neither agree nor disagree; 4) agree; 5) strongly agree

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<sup>108</sup> Taken from the General Social Survey Statistics Canada 2008

<sup>109</sup> Taken from Canadian Community Health Survey 2010

<sup>110</sup> Taken from the General Social Survey Statistics Canada 2008, and City of Calgary Sense of Community Index

### Social Capital Benchmark Survey

The Social Capital Benchmark Survey was developed and conducted by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and the effort was largely spearheaded by Robert Putnam. The resultant data from the survey is archived at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, and their documentation states that a primary purpose of the benchmark survey is "...to measure various manifestations of social capital" in order to "provide a rich database for analysis by interested researchers who wish to better understand social capital." The publicly available SCBS provides survey data for all 29,233 individual respondents from 41 communities surveyed in the US in 2000.

### Component variables of Social Capital Composite Indices<sup>111</sup>

#### I. Social Trust Composite Index

As noted by The Roper Center, this index is calculated as the mean of the standardized responses to the following questions:

i) Generally speaking do you think that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful?

How much can you trust:

- ii) people in your neighborhood? (a lot, some, a little, not at all)
- iii) people you work with?
- iv) fellow religious congregants?
- v) store clerks?
- vi) local police?

#### II. Diversity of Friendships Composite Index

As noted by Roper, this index is a count of how many different kinds of personal friends the respondent has amongst the following set of 11 types of people:

Do you have a personal friend who:

- i) owns their own business?
- ii) is a manual worker?
- iii) has been on welfare?
- iv) owns a vacation home?
- v) has a different religious orientation?
- vi) is white?
- vii) is black?
- viii) is Latino or Hispanic?
- ix) is Asian?
- x) is gay or lesbian?
- xii) you would describe as a community leader?

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<sup>111</sup> Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. 2001. "Social Capital Benchmark Survey: Methodology and Documentation". Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut.

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## III. Group Involvement Composite Index

This index is calculated as a count of yes answers to the following questions:

Have you been involved in the past 12 months with:

- i) any organization affiliated with religion, such as the Knights of Columbus, B'nai Brith, or a bible study group?
- ii) an adult sports club or league, or an outdoor activity club?
- iii) a youth organization like youth sports leagues, the scouts, 4-H clubs, and Boys and Girls clubs?
- iv) a parents' association, like the PTA or PTO, or other school support or service groups?
- v) a veterans' group
- vi) a neighborhood association, like a block association, a homeowner or tenant association, or a crime watch group?
- vii) clubs or organizations for senior citizens or older people?
- viii) a charity or social welfare organization that provides services in such fields as health or service to the needy?
- ix) a labor union?
- x) a professional, trade, farm, or business organization?
- xi) service clubs or fraternal organizations such as the Lions or Kiwanis or a local women's club or a college fraternity or sorority?
- xii) ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations?
- xiii) other public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees?
- xiv) a literary, art, discussion, or study group, or a musical, dancing, or singing group?
- xv) any other hobby, investment, or garden club or society?
- xvi) a support group or self-help program for people of specific illnesses, disabilities, problems, or addictions, or for their families?
- xvii) any group that meets only over the internet?
- xviii) any other kinds of clubs or organizations?

## IV. Giving and Volunteering Composite Index

This index is calculated as the mean of the responses to the following questions:

In the past 12 months have you done any volunteer work for:

- i) any arts or cultural organizations?
- ii) health care or fighting particular diseases?
- iii) any neighborhood or civic group?
- iv) your place of worship?
- v) school or youth groups?
- vi) any organization to help the poor or elderly?
- vii) How many times in the past 12 months have you volunteered?
- viii) During the past 12 months, approximately how much money did you and the other family members in your household contribute to all religious causes including your local religious congregation?
- ix) During the past 12 months, approximately how much money did you and the other family members in your household contribute to all non-religious charities, organizations, or causes?

Note: additional components of this Social Capital Benchmark Survey include the Faith Based Engagement Composite Index; Electoral Politics Composite Index and the Protest Politics Composite Index. These sections were not included here.

### APPENDIX B:

#### Measures of Individual Benefits to Volunteers

##### Skills Benefits

1. Have your activities as a volunteer given you any new skills that you can apply directly to your job (or business)? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK

Have your volunteer activities provided you with:

2. ...fundraising skills? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
3. ...technical or office skills, for example first aid, coaching techniques, computer, how to do the books or catalogue in a library, etc.? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
4. ...organizational skills or managerial skills, for example, how to organize people or money, to be a leader, to plan, to run an organization, etc. 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
5. ...increased knowledge, for example, about health, women's issues, political issues, criminal justice, the environment, etc.? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
6. ...communication skills, for example, public speaking, writing, public relations, conducting meetings, etc.? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
7. ...interpersonal skills, for example, understanding children or other people better, to motivate them, to deal with difficult situations, confidence, compassion, patience, etc.? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
8. ...some other skill or knowledge? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
9. Do you think your volunteer activities have helped your chances of success in your paid job? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK
10. Do you think your volunteer activities will help your chances of finding a job? 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) DK

Taken From: Statistics Canada. (2000) *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating Questionnaire*. Ottawa, Canada. 13-15



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### General Benefits to Volunteers

The **Essential Volunteer Management booklet**<sup>112</sup> offers some suggestions for assessing general benefits that might be experienced by volunteers. No scoring is provided but the items may provide ideas for survey development. Items could be developed into a survey format that helps to identify the volunteers' motivations or goals at the beginning of their involvement and then assess whether or not those expectations were met.

**Discuss with the volunteer their rating of the relative importance of the following in terms of their own satisfaction:**

- Gain knowledge of community problems.
- Maintain skills no longer used otherwise.
- Spend time with members of the family by volunteering together.
- Get out of the house.
- Make new friends.
- Be with old friends who volunteer here.
- Gain new skills.
- Have fun.
- Meet a challenge.
- Improve my community.
- Work with a certain client group.
- Be in charge of something.
- Be part of a group or a team.
- Get experience to get a job.
- Meet important people in the community.
- Gain status with my employer.
- Get community recognition.

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<sup>112</sup> McCurley, S. Lynch, R. (1989). Essential Volunteer Management. P. 110

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## Composite Measures used by AmeriCorps Community Service Program<sup>113</sup>

The following section presents the individual items that entered into each composite measure. An asterisk (\*) indicates that a reverse measure was used for the item. These survey questions are intended to be used pre and post. Comparative data results based on 2000 surveyed volunteers is available online.

### Connection to Community

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the following statements (Strongly Disagree=1, Strongly Agree=5)

- 1) I have a strong attachment to my community.
- 2) I often discuss and think about how larger political issues affect my community.
- 3) I am aware of what can be done to meet the important needs of my community.
- 4) I have the ability to make a difference in my community.
- 5) I try to find the time or a way to make a positive difference in my community.

### Community Problem Identification

How much do you feel you know about problems facing the community such as (Nothing=1, Great deal=5):

- 1) The environment?
- 2) Public health issues?
- 3) Literacy?
- 4) Crime?
- 5) Lack of civic involvement?

### Neighborhood Obligations

Do you feel that each of the following is not an important obligation, a somewhat important obligation, or a very important obligation that a citizen owes to the country (Not important=1, Very important=3)?

- 1) Reporting a crime you may have witnessed.
- 2) Participating in neighborhood organizations.
- 3) Helping keep the neighborhood safe.
- 4) Helping keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful.
- 5) Helping those who are less fortunate.

### Civic Obligations

Do you feel that each of the following is not an important obligation, a somewhat important obligation, or a very important obligation that a citizen owes to the country (Not important=1, Very important=3)?

- 1) Serving on a jury if called.
- 2) Voting in elections.
- 3) Keeping informed about news and public issues.

### Personal Effectiveness of Community Service

Thinking about all of your voluntary community service or volunteer activities over the past 12 months, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (Strongly disagree=1, Strongly agree=5):

- 1) I felt I made a contribution to the community.
- 2) I felt like part of a community.
- 3) I felt I could make a difference in the life of at least one person.

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<sup>113</sup> Jasterzab, J. (2004 – updated 2007). *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps* – Appendices. Corporation for National & Community Services. Retrieved at [www.americorps.gov/pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/pdf) p 204 - 208.

# Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

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## Personal Growth Through Community Service

Thinking about all of your voluntary community service or volunteer activities over the past 12 months, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (Strongly disagree=1, Strongly agree=5):

- 1) I re-examined my beliefs and attitudes about myself.
- 2) I was exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world.
- 3) I learned about the "real" world.
- 4) I did things I never thought I could do.
- 5) I changed some of my beliefs and attitudes.

## Local Civic Efficacy

Think about how hard it would be for you to accomplish each of the following activities (I would not be able to get this done=1, I would be able to get this done=3):

- 1) Getting the local government to fix a pothole on my street.
- 2) Getting the local government to build an addition to the community center.
- 3) Getting an issue on the ballot for a state-wide election.

## Grassroots Efficacy

Think about how hard it would be for you to accomplish each of the following activities (I would not be able to get this done=1, I would be able to get this done=3):

- 1) Organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization.
- 2) Starting an after-school program for children whose parents work.
- 3) Organizing an annual cleanup program for the local park.

## Community-Based Activism

How often do you do each of the following (Never=1, Always=5):

- 1) Participate in events such as community meetings, celebrations, or activities in my community.
- 2) Join organizations that support issues that are important to me.
- 3) Write or e-mail newspapers or organizations to voice my views.

## Engagement in the Political Process

How often do you do each of the following (Never=1, Always=5):

- 1) Vote in local elections.
- 2) Try to learn as much as I can about candidates or ballot questions.
- 3) Keep informed about local or national news.

## Basic Work Skills

For each skill area, indicate how much experience you have (Little or none=1, A lot=3; Not important=1, Very important=3).

- 1) Solving unexpected problems or finding new and better ways to do things.
- 2) Knowing how to gather and analyze information from different sources such as people/organizations.
- 3) Listening and responding to other people's suggestions or concerns.
- 4) Stopping or decreasing conflicts between people.
- 5) Leading a team by taking charge, explaining and motivating co-workers.
- 6) Negotiating, compromising, and getting along with co-workers, supervisors.
- 7) Learning new ways of thinking or acting from other people.
- 8) Adapting your plans or ways of doing things in response to changing circumstances.
- 9) Managing your time when you're under pressure.
- 10) Dealing with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions.

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

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### **Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity**

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree):

- 1) If people from different backgrounds took the time to understand each other, there wouldn't be so many social problems.
- 2) Some of my friends are of different backgrounds from me: racial, cultural, ethnic or language.
- 3) Racism affects everyone.
- 4) I feel comfortable belonging to groups where people are different from me.

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = not very interested and 5 = very interested, how would you describe your:

- 1) Interest in forming friendships with people who come from a different race or ethnicity from you?

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree):

- 1) Diverse viewpoints bring creativity and energy to a work group.
- 2) Multicultural teams can be stimulating and fun.
- 3) People are more motivated and productive when they feel they are accepted for who they are.
- 4) Diversity improves the work of organizations.
- 5) Diversity brings many perspectives to problem solving.
- 6) I am comfortable interacting with people from a different racial or ethnic background.

### **Constructive Group Interactions**

How often have you been in a group situation with others where the following things have occurred (Never=1, Always=5)?

- 1) We discuss issues and problems and share ideas.
- 2) We involve everyone and avoid favoritism.
- 3) We can disagree and be different from one another without fear.
- 4) We take time to work out any conflicts.

### **Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups**

Please answer how often you do the following (Never=1, Always=5):

- 1) I try to understand other team members' ideas and opinions before arguing or stating my own.
- 2) I try to present my ideas without criticizing the ideas of others.
- 3) I encourage different points of view without worrying about agreement.
- 4) I try to consider all points of view or possible options before forming an opinion or making a decision.
- 5) I encourage the participation of other team members and support their right to be heard.
- 6) I help find solutions when unexpected problems arise.

## APPENDIX C:

### Measures of Volunteer Benefits to Organizations

#### Questions re Program Effectiveness

Based on an understanding of the program's goals, intended outcomes and indicators for those outcomes . . .

Rate the impact you had on the client.

1. Very successful
1. Fairly Successful
2. Uncertain (explain)
3. Not too successful
4. Unsuccessful

Taken From: United States Department of Health and Human Services (1997). *Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Project Managers*. Washington, DC.

#### Questions to Assess Public Image

Give Agency/Program Name . . .

- 1. Have you heard of this organization before?**
- 2. What do you know/ think it does?**
- 3. Who does it serve?**
4. Does it use volunteers in doing its work?
5. Where is it located?
6. How long has it been in business?
7. Who runs it? Do you know the name of one of its leaders? Who?
8. How is it funded?
9. Is it a private, governmental or non-profit organization?
- 10. Does it have a good reputation?**
11. Has any scandal ever been attached to it that you can personally recall?
12. Does it produce any products? What?
13. What services does it perform?
- 14. Is it important to the overall well being of our community?**
- 15. If a group or individual wanted to become involved as a supporter or volunteer, how would they?**
- 16. Is this an ethical group?**
- 17. Does it use its money well?**
- 18. Does it sponsor any events in the community? Which ones?**
- 19. Do you trust this organization?**
20. Would you like more information on this organization?
21. What is your general opinion of this group and what it does?

Taken From: McCurley, Steve and Sue Vinyard. (1997) *Measuring Up: Assessment Tool for Volunteering Programs*. Heritage Arts, Illinois.

# Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

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## Measuring Impact of Organization (Affiliate) on Volunteer<sup>114</sup>

These measures were used by Points of Light to assess the impact of “affiliates” (organizations with formal volunteer programs) on the volunteer experience. It is divided into two sections, first measuring the personal impact of the volunteer experience and then asking about the impact of mediating role played by the “affiliate” or organization.

### Personal Impact Questions

1. I improved people’s lives
2. I met a real need in the community
3. Volunteering increased my awareness of community issues
4. Volunteering increased my life satisfaction
5. Volunteering increased my skills in work, school, civic, or personal life

### Affiliate Impact on Personal Volunteer Experience

1. Affiliate contacted me to ask if the volunteer experience was worthwhile
2. Affiliate offered me support throughout volunteer experience
3. Without Affiliate, I would not have found opportunities as rewarding

### Affiliate Impact on Others and the Community

1. Affiliate increases the chances of people finding a regular volunteer opportunity
2. Affiliate increases the chances of people finding an opportunity that matches skills and interests
3. Affiliate meets a real need in the community
4. Would recommend Affiliate to other people as a place to get started or to continue volunteering

### Value Added to the Organization

To assess both financial and social value added, see

- **What Counts. Social Accounting for Non Profits and Cooperatives.** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Mook, L. Quarter, J. Richmond, B.J.
- **The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit.** By Gaskin, J. (2011). Institute for Volunteering Research.

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<sup>114</sup> MacKey, C.K. Brudney, J. Menoher, B. Ley, D. (2008). *Measuring the Impact of Hands on Network: An Evaluation of Direct and Secondary Impact from the Stakeholder Perspective.* Points of Light Foundation. US

## Organizational Measures of Social Inclusion for Volunteer Programs

### Assessing the Diversity of Volunteers<sup>115</sup>

Based on the "Selecting Facts About Your Organization" exercise from *Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Non-profit Organizations*

1. What is the [agency's] process for recruiting [diverse people] for volunteer positions? Is the process formal or informal? How effective is the process?
2. Does the [agency] have an action plan that upholds inclusion? Does the plan provide direction on recruiting diverse volunteers?
3. How is the current level of diversity of the volunteers different from or similar to its level of diversity in past years? Are volunteer teams or volunteers on committee's more or less diverse than in the past? When and why did changes occur?
4. What do people of [this community group] report about their experience serving as volunteers with your agency? What has been their comfort level in serving the agency in this capacity?
5. What is the annual turnover of non-board related volunteer positions? Is it appropriate to set a numeric goal to ensure that upcoming vacant or new positions are filled by a member of a targeted community group?
6. How does the tenure of people of [this specific community group] compare with the general tenure of people serving as volunteers?
7. To what extent does the board of directors and staff consider issues [relating to inclusion of people from various community groups] when it sets policies regarding volunteer recruitment?
8. What formal and informal mechanisms are in place to guarantee that the operating policies of the library are sensitive to issues regarding [the inclusion of volunteers]?

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<sup>115</sup> Canadian Urban Libraries Council. Question Ten. Social Inclusion Audit.  
<http://www.siatoolkit.com/category/indicators-of-inclusion/question-10/#ixzz1V7cJFmAO>

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

### Appendix D: Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs

These unpublished measures were developed for FCSS Calgary through a community project facilitated by Brenda J. Simpson & Associates 2007.

Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs (2007)		
Outcome	Indicators	Suggested Measure
<b>Personal Development</b>  STO #1: Increased skills, knowledge, experience or opportunity to use my skills/experience	% of volunteers reporting increase in skills/knowledge (ask group to give examples of skills/knowledge)  % of volunteers report having opportunity to use or practice their skills or share their expertise  % of volunteers who report using volunteer experience for improved job opportunities (e.g. use volunteer experience on resume or get reference)  % of volunteers who report increased awareness of their personal talents, interest or skills  % of volunteers who say they are more aware of community resources	As a result of volunteering:  I have increased my skills/knowledge (or name specific skills)  I have had an opportunity to use/practice my skills or share my expertise  I have used (or plan to) use my volunteer experience when seeking employment (e.g. on resume or get reference)  I am more aware of my personal talents, interest, skills  I am more aware of community resources
<b>Personal Development</b>  MTO #1: Increased sense of confidence, competence, self-reliance, independence or feel empowered.	% of volunteers who report feeling more confident, competent, empowered or independent  % of volunteers who say they are more confident using community resources available  For Mentoring & Peer Support Programs: % of volunteers who use their volunteer experience to act as a positive role model (or have better understanding of how to be a positive role model) - can be self reported or reported by staff observation	As a result of volunteering  I feel more confident I feel more competent (able to do ...) I feel empowered . . . I feel more independent  I know how to access and use community resources when that I need them  I am a positive role model for others (e.g. youth, other program participants, etc.) OR Staff observation & report



## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs (2007)		
Outcome	Indicators	Suggested Measure
<p><b>Personal Development</b></p> <p>STO #2: Volunteers increase their leadership skills</p>	<p>% of volunteers who report increased leadership skills OR % of volunteers (reported by staff) who have developed leadership skills</p>	<p>As a result of my volunteer involvement:  I have developed new leadership skills</p>
<p><b>Personal Development</b></p> <p>MTO #2: Volunteers take on leadership roles in the community</p>	<p>% of volunteers who move into leadership roles in their community</p>	<p>I have taken a leadership role in my community OR Staff observation &amp; report</p>

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs (2007)		
Outcome	Indicators	Suggested Measure
<p><b>Social Networks</b></p> <p>STO: Volunteers have increased social networks, decreased isolation.</p>	<p>% of volunteers that say they interact with other people on a regular basis, and/or meet new people, and/or make new friends as a result of volunteering</p> <p>% of volunteers who say the volunteering helps them get out of the house and into social situations more often</p>	<p>As a result of volunteering I interact with other people on a regular basis, meet new people or make new friends</p> <p>Help me get out of the house and into social situations more often (i.e. less isolated)</p>
<p><b>Social Networks</b></p> <p>MTO: Social networks/contacts formed while volunteering provide value to the volunteer (e.g. increased sense of belonging, increased social capital)</p>	<p>% of volunteers who report increased feelings of belonging (social capital)</p> <p>% of volunteers who say they feel more connected, less isolated/alone when they volunteer</p> <p>% of volunteers who say the connections they have made while volunteering have been helpful or “of value” to them (e.g. job ideas/contacts, someone to talk to, etc.)</p>	<p>I feel like part of a team</p> <p>I feel more connected/less alone when I volunteer</p> <p>The connections I have made while volunteering have been of value to me</p>

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs (2007)		
Outcome	Indicators	Suggested Measure
<p><b>Civic Engagement &amp; Social Responsibility</b></p> <p>STO: Increased Participation</p>	<p>% of volunteers who report that volunteering keeps them active in their community and/or increases their participation in their community</p> <p>% increase in volunteer number from previous year</p> <p>Program has met it's target for volunteer involvement for the year.</p>	<p>Volunteering keeps me active in the community.</p> <p>I participate in my community by volunteering.</p> <p>Take number of volunteers this year over number of volunteers last year and calculate the % increase</p> <p>Set target for desired volunteer involvement at beginning of year and test number of volunteers at end of year. Report – met target, over target, under target.</p> <p>Also provide qualitative info re how the volunteer program increased participation (i.e. strategies that worked)</p>
<p><b>Civic Engagement &amp; Social Responsibility</b></p> <p>MTO: Increased sense of responsibility to the community</p>	<p>% of volunteers who report that they want to make a contribution or give back (to their community or the organization)</p> <p>% of volunteers who say they are more aware of social issues (e.g. homelessness, youth, food security, integration)</p>	<p>I feel like I am making a contribution to . . .</p> <p>I am more aware of social issues (<i>or mention specific social issue you are targeting</i>)</p>

## Understanding The Role of Volunteerism in Creating Social Inclusion

Common Outcomes, Indicators and Measures for Volunteer Programs (2007)		
Outcome	Indicators	Suggested Measure
<p><b>Civic Engagement &amp; Social Responsibility</b></p> <p>LTO: Increased Spirit of Citizenship and Volunteerism</p>	<p>% of volunteers who say they take an active role in promoting volunteerism and community involvement</p> <p>% of volunteers who say they believe that volunteering is an important part of being a good community member/citizen (promotes positive beliefs about citizen role in the community)</p>	<p>I encourage my children, friends or others to volunteer</p> <p>I promote volunteering (community involvement) by talking about my volunteer work with family/friends OR I promote volunteering (community involvement) by helping to recruit volunteers for . . . OR I promote volunteering by organizing volunteer activities in my community</p> <p>I believe that volunteering is an important part of being a community member/citizen</p>

### Resources for Setting Up a Volunteer Measurement System

There are many good resources to assist managers with the planning and development of a volunteer measurement system for your organization. For example, see

- United Nations (2001). *Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit*.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services (1997). *Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Project Managers*. Washington, DC.
- McCurley, S. Lynch, R. (1989). *Essential Volunteer Management*. P. 110

### Volunteer Strategies for Working with Vulnerable Populations

See the following documents for examples of strategies to work with specific vulnerable groups.

[Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Youth](http://volunteer.ca/files/NewstratEng.pdf) (<http://volunteer.ca/files/NewstratEng.pdf>)

[Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Older Adults](http://volunteer.ca/files/OlderAdults-Eng.pdf) (<http://volunteer.ca/files/OlderAdults-Eng.pdf>)

[Volunteer Connections: Family Volunteering - Making It Official](http://volunteer.ca/files/FamVolEng.pdf) (<http://volunteer.ca/files/FamVolEng.pdf>)

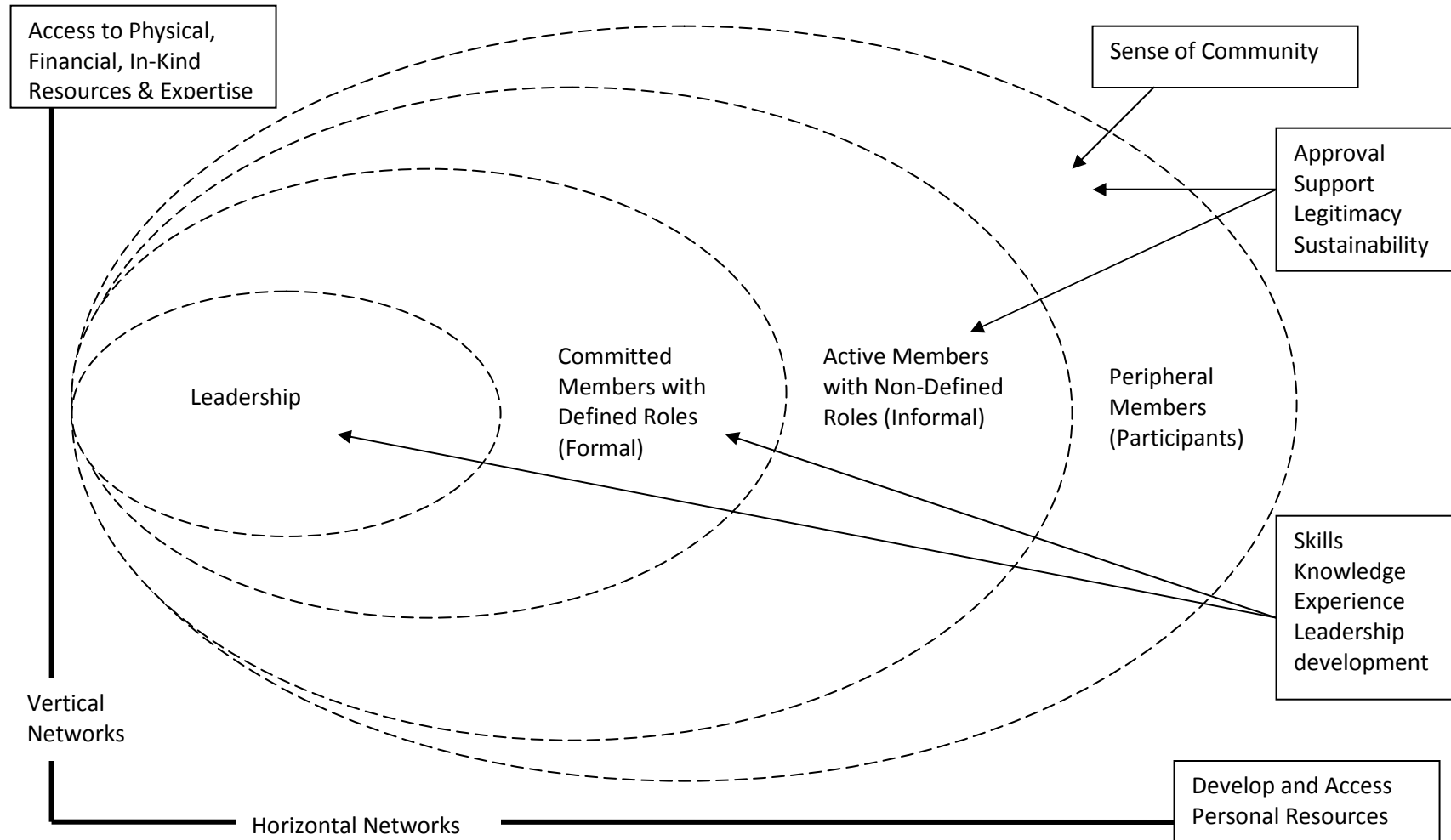
[Volunteer Connections: Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Environment](http://volunteer.ca/files/AccessEnglish.pdf) (for people with disabilities)  
(<http://volunteer.ca/files/AccessEnglish.pdf>)

[Building Caring Communities: The Contributions of Immigrant Volunteers](http://www.volunteerconnections.net/buildingCaringCommunities.pdf), from Community Volunteer Connections  
<http://www.volunteerconnections.net/buildingCaringCommunities.pdf>

Clark, Sherry. (2003). *You Cannot Be Serious! A Guide to Involving Volunteers with Mental Health Problems*. National Centre for Volunteering, London.

Appendix E: Community Participation Concept Map<sup>116</sup>

Understanding Participation, Capacity Building and Sustainability



<sup>116</sup> Simpson, B. Cala, C. (2001). Measuring Community Outcomes. Available at [www.bsimpson.ca](http://www.bsimpson.ca)