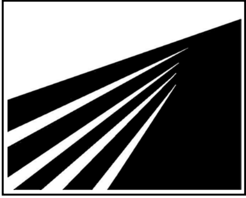

SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF OTTAWA

The Civic Participation of Visible Minority Canadians: A Literature Review

By:

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For The Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa

This literature review is part of a larger project entitled Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa, undertaken by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa and the Centre for Social Welfare Studies at Carleton University.

The purpose of the project Communities Within is to document the nature and extent of social exclusion experienced by the ethnic and visible minority populations residing in Ottawa, in all aspects of life including employment, income, education, housing and civic participation. The focus of this review is on the latter with special reference to ethnic and visible minorities and gender issues.

Copies of this literature review are available only electronically and in English

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Civic Participation: Exercising Citizenship Rights at the Local Level

A Literature Review

> When communities of people cannot recognize themselves in public institutions … [they] feel that they are strangers in society, that the society is not *their* society.[1]
>
> Raymond Breton

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian government introduced a Multiculturalism Policy and appointed a Secretary of State for Multiculturalism in 1971 in order to address the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. This was followed by the passage of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988. While Canadians are right to be proud of these and other progressive actions on behalf of the state, the struggles and efforts of different immigrant, ethnic and visible minority groups leading up to these state sanctioned efforts and still continuing should not be overlooked. Full citizenship, inclusion, and access continue to be elusive for many groups including visible and ethnic minorities in Canada.

Literature and theory on the meaning of citizenship, inclusion, and the importance of civic and political participation in democratic societies has increased dramatically over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Academics have engaged in long debates on the nature and meaning of citizenship and the inherent conflicts of full citizenship in liberal societies that privilege individual merit over collective recognition. Further, interventions by feminist and post-colonial theorists, among others, have called attention to gaps in earlier theory and the limitations of previous definitions of citizenship. The contributions of these writers have enriched the debate on the meanings of citizenship and put a fine point on the realities and effects of exclusion in Canada, past and present, despite newer well-intentioned, but often ineffective, government policies.

Initiatives such as the Metropolis Project, a partnership between academic researchers, government and community organizations demonstrate the will behind determining the roots, manifestations, and effects of exclusion. Jeff Bullard, Manager of Strategic Research and Business Planning in the Multiculturalism Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage, named three program goals at the Second International Metropolis Conference in Montreal in 1997:

> ***Identity***: fostering a society that recognizes, respects, and reflects a diversity of cultures such that people of all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and attachment to Canada;

[1] Raymond Breton, "Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building," in Alan Cairns & Cynthia Williams (eds.) *Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, no. 34, 1986.

> ***Civic Participation***: developing, among Canada's diverse people, active citizens with both the opportunity and the capacity to participate in shaping the future of their communities and their country; and
>
> ***Social Justice***: building a society that ensures fair and equitable treatment and that respects the dignity of and accommodates people of all origins. (Bullard)

These three broad goals identify some of the most significant attributes of a democratic and plural society. It is important to break these goals down into meaningful components that go beyond theory and can be addressed at a practical level. Policymakers, community leaders, and government officials, among others, must ask how these goals translate to the practical level, and how they will be achieved.

Although these three goals are interconnected, this paper will focus on the second of the three – i.e. civic participation. For the purposes of this review, the terms "civic participation," "political participation" and "civic engagement" are used interchangeably, and are drawn from others' definitions. As one of the goals of this study is to determine the experience of exclusion of minority communities in Ottawa, the participants of the 'Communities within: Diversity and Exclusion project will have an opportunity to frame their own definition and understandings.

II. PROBLEMATIZING THE CONCEPT OF "CIVIC ARTICIPATION"

The booklet *A Look at Canada*, offered to new citizens by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and given to persons applying for Canadian citizenship, states that "being a Canadian citizen is more than voting and obeying laws" as "being a citizen also means **getting involved in your community and your country**." (as quoted in Shugurensky, 2003: 10).

The idea of citizenship being a practice as much as a status has evolved through the twentieth century. The work of theorist T.H. Marshall can be described as an important "point of departure" in 1950. While many writers have been critical of Marshall's work, his concept of citizenship as "full membership in a community" comprised of civil, social and political rights and accompanying responsibilities has gained wide acceptance. (Yuval-Davis, 1991: 59). However, theorists such as Nira Yuval-Davis have noted that there were many assumptions explicit in this and other attempts at theorizing the citizen, including the assumption of an "organic wholeness" and a "given collectivity" thus assuming homogeneity. (Yuval-Davis, 1991: 59) Feminist and anti-racist critics have challenged concepts of citizenship that have been based upon a male-centred model. However, the experience of men is not homogeneous either, and thus it is challenging, if not impossible, to create a universalistic model. Class, gender, ethnicity and 'race' do matter, as do context. (Yuval-Davis, 1991: 64)

Thus citizenship is bound with rights and obligations with civic participation being both a duty and a manifestation of belonging. However both 'citizenship' and 'civic participation' are loaded terms for those studying the relationship of the individual, communities and the state. The language itself makes many assumptions, based in a liberal conception of the individual and society. Feminist theorists have noted that the requirements of membership in Western liberal democracies are based on the subordination of "[..] specific bonds of gender, race and class – indeed, all particularized identities – in

favour, most often, of a national identity and loyalty to the state." (Jones 1990: 785). A discussion on civic participation framed in a study on exclusion of visible minorities and immigrants in Ottawa can hardly ignore the innate contradiction of belonging and making oneself a part of a larger community where the elite, white, male is the standard and norm. Ideas of citizenship and forms of participation, then, are molded in ways that may not reflect the reality of most Canadians.

One aspect of a bias in the concept of civic participation is the 'public/private' bias, or the binary of political participation versus "non-political" activities such as volunteering. Theorists, academics and activists often advise caution when defining political participation in order to avoid reproducing marginalization. At a conference held in Ottawa in 2002 entitled *Bringing Worlds Together: The Study of the Political Participation of Women in Canada and Lessons for Research on Newcomers and Minority Political Participation*, participants recommended the problematization of political participation. There has traditionally been an arbitrary divide between the political and the non-political, the formal and the informal, political activity and community and/or religious activity. This, participants stressed, has caused the underestimation of the effectiveness of community groups in achieving political ends. (Burt, 2002: 122) Further, political participation too narrowly defined may exclude women and others who are oppressed within their communities, who are on unequal footing when it comes to avenues of formal political participation (Anthias, 2002: 285).

Thus, definitions of political participation must take into account that participation can take place on a number of different levels which may focus on the individual, the family, the community, the city, the province, the country and/or these within an international setting. Finally, it is important to note that activities may take place at work, school, community organizations, volunteer organizations, or other locales that may either be secular or religious. (Frideres, 1997) As Burns, Scholzman and Verba have stated, "[v]oluntary activity in both the religious and secular domains outside of politics intersects with politics in many ways." (2001: 58, as quoted in Jenkins: 2).

For the purposes of this paper and of the broader study, the term 'civic participation' will be applied to a broad range of activity. Members of communities also hold multiple identities and subjectivities and rely on a variety of networks. It is important, then, to not become categorically fixated when in reality, civic participation can involve a range of activities on the political participation continuum. This can mean anything from engaging in discussions of a political nature through to becoming elected for office at any level of government, as well as participating in activities such as voting, educating oneself about the political system and current issues, writing letters to government, communicating with politicians, becoming active within a political party whether becoming a member and/or assisting with campaigns, running for office at any level of government or decision-making body, and other similar activities. The literature shows that,

> [c]ivic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. (Delli Carpini, 2005)

Therefore, a study of civic participation must take a complete continuum of participation into consideration, from voting to volunteering, while acknowledging that individuals locate themselves within organizations and communities that are multiply connected to one another. Civic participation is multifaceted and complex, representing the "synergistic linkage between the individual and the social

structure in which [she] operates." (Frideres, 1997). It is with this in mind that the main actors of this study will define their own communities and the civic participation that occurs within them, including distinctions between certain types of activities. However, this location also occurs at the individual level, which shapes larger community involvement. Often referred to as "*translocational positionality*", it is the "complex nature of positionality faced by those who are at the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialisation." These positions can often have contradictory effects and elude generalization. (Anthias 2202: 276)

III. DEFINING 'CIVIC PARTICIPATION' AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Civic participation is multiply known as 'civic engagement,' 'political participation,' and 'political engagement' among other labels. Equally, the definition is subjective, comprised of different ways of categorizing activity. In the application of a liberal lens, participating in a church group in our society may not be seen as civic participation or a 'political' activity. However, those who are part of it may say differently, according to their, and their communities', concept of civic participation. A study of civic engagement among visible minorities is also made difficult by the terminology employed by different theorists, writers, and academics. Terms such as immigrant, visible minority, and ethnic group are often used interchangeably, at the sake of clarity. In addition, the failure to further clarify terms has the effect of homogenizing groups in Canadian society. It is important to remember that not all visible minorities have had the same experience: new or established immigrants, refugees, or Canadian-born citizens may understand, experience and participate in civic engagement differently from one another.

Academics have suggested different models and definitions in order to address the problem of defining civic participation. Jenkins et al., have posited three types of political behaviour: **electoral activity, civic activity**, and **political voice**. Electoral behaviour is understood to be that which is involved with voting and political office. Civic activity, they state, is based upon problem-solving and helping others in the community, including volunteering. The goals of collaboration in this sense may be similar to goals sought in an explicit political setting or via political means. Finally, political voice is those activities that allow for political expression which may include communicating with those in power or decision-making positions, participating in boycotts, petitions and other demonstrations. These types of political action are also sometimes known as "unconventional." (Jenkins, et al, 2002: 1-2) Novella Keith has defined political participation more simply as: "1) actions that are related to the government and public policies, and 2) involvement in our communities and in issues that affect us personally." (as quoted in Russell, 135).

James Frideres gave the following definition at the Second National Metropolis Conference held in 1997:

> Civic involvement (some might say civic culture) represents the patterning of how we share a common space, common resources, and common opportunities and manage interdependence in that "company of strangers" which constitutes the public (Selman, 1991). It represents a tangle of human connections, past and future; at the same time it defines entitlements and responsibilities. We are concerned with how we manage that

> inter-dependence in Canada and about the role of individuals, acting singly or in concert with others, as participants or citizens within that process.[2]

According to the World Bank, "[c]ivic participation is the process by which citizens' concerns, needs and values are incorporated into governmental decision making. It is a two-way communication…with the overall goal of better decisions, supported by the public"[3] Finally, Longford (2005) gives a longer definition and goes beyond the relationship between citizen and state to privilege community when he states that civic participation

> refers to individuals' active engagement with and involvement in their communities. Common forms of civic participation include, among other things: donating time and/or money to charitable organizations; belonging to and/or participating in community groups; attending public meetings; voting in elections; attending religious services; and maintaining social networks with friends, neighbours and co-workers. Civic participation can also be broken down into three distinct categories or areas of participation: community service (volunteering and charitable work); political participation (voting, attending public meetings, etc.); and cultural participation (participating in arts and crafts guilds or cultural groups, communal storytelling, etc.). (5-6)

However, the intent of this review is not to provide an exhaustive list of all the working definitions of civic participation but to highlight the complexity of defining it for individuals and communities and locating it within a larger community context. Analyses of social exclusion must go beyond a simple definition. For civic participation is also an important "key determinant and indicator of both individual and community development and well-being." (Longford, 2005: 5-6) Engagement in civic activities and processes relies on social capital, which "signals a certain level of trust in people, confidence in public institutions, and a sense of belonging on the part of community members." (*Ibid*). The concept of social capital has captured the minds of politicians and policymakers in recent years. However, unlike indicators related to financial capital or educational attainment, it is difficult to quantify social capital. It does not belong to any individual but is characterized and comprised of relationships between individuals and their communities. Longford offers the following explanation of social capital:

> ***Social capital*** refers to the social networks maintained by individuals and within communities, including ties to family, friends, neighbours, local businesses and coworkers, and the norms of reciprocity and trust which arise from them (Putnam, 2000: 19). High levels of social capital have been linked to a variety of positive benefits, including economic growth, civic participation and individual and community well-being (Woolcock, 2001). Social capital and civic participation are mutually reinforcing. Face-to-face interaction among neighbours and community members involving deliberative and collaborative work within voluntary organizations fosters interpersonal trust and social norms of tolerance and cooperation. (2005: 8)

Theorists such as Robert Putnam have suggested that many benefits flow from social networks such as trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation, leading to greater social capital. However, studies such

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[2] Internet page last consulted nov. 28, 2005 at http://canada.metropolis.net/events/civic/jfrideres_e.html

[3] Chetwynd and Chetwynd, 2001.

as *Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion* are trying to examine social exclusion that occurs in pluralist societies, for although encouraged to become involved in their communities, many groups have struggled to be heard, to be represented, and to play a role in the shape of their communities and greater society. While all Canadians enjoy certain legal rights, opportunities for civic participation have not been shared equally. Minority groups face specific challenges which can include levels of racism/discrimination, "coolness" on the part of political parties and community groups toward visible minorities, a lack of access to funds and networks, a lack of familiarity with political norms and party culture, and linguistic and mobility challenges, among others.

The participants of the project *Inclusion for all*, undertaken by the *Policy Research Initiative,* agree that trust, networks and bonding are social capital resources.[4] These elements are part of social participation but are also strengthened through social engagement. Social capital takes on the forms of bonding and/or bridging. The first can be compared to glue in the sense that it helps people within a community stick together and for each other, and the second is compared to lubricant in the sense that it help members of a community have smoother intergroup relations. Bonding helps communities get by and bridging helps communities get ahead at levels such as economics, politics, housing, and education, among others.

As aptly argued by Hooghe (2005), the mainstay of social capital whether it be within a social group or across groups is trust and as consequence of such trust, collaboration. Trust, however, is more easily created within homogeneous societies as it is often easier to anticipate reciprocal patterns of thought and actions.

Social capital within diverse societies, characterized by differences of culture, values and norms, is more challenging and should then, if not more so, depend on the level of reciprocity rather than on trust. (Hooghe, 2005) Feelings of trust can only settle in when individuals feel they are being treated justly, or with reciprocity. When communities have the same rights and resources as others, trust may no longer be an issue, and we may then refer to social capital which should translate into civic engagement. However, valid reciprocity means that equality and justice is not only for the rich and powerful (Rawls cited by Hooghe, 2005). Researchers must keep in mind that generally individuals participate most easily within their respective communities. Feelings of belonging to a community occur more naturally and spontaneously for any individual when he she perceives acceptance and recognition from others. It is only within an environment of mutual recognition and reciprocity that immigrants and ethno-cultural minority Canadians can find and build upon the social capital that reinforces the feeling of inclusion in the wider community. After awhile, social links and engagement may pass beyond racial and ethnocultural frontiers (Breton, 1997) if Hooghes' idea of reciprocity is felt by the individual.

This study on the social exclusion experience of visible minority residents of Ottawa is important for its specific focus on selected communities and the heterogeneity of groups is recognized. If intra-group relations (bonding) do not extend to other social groups (bridging), it is difficult to imagine that minority groups will feel full inclusion in Canadian society at different levels.

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[4] The different experts and acknowledged leaders include senior policy makers in the federal government, senior federal government researchers and research directors, front-line and community agency practitioners and researchers and non-governmental research organizations and academic researchers.

The next sections of this paper will look at two broad areas of civic participation: politics, representation and voting; and volunteering.

Politics, Representation and Voting

As Sidney Verba, et al., have commented in their work on African-Americans and Latinos is the United States, the "issue is not one of the extension of the rights of participation to these groups…[it] is the use of political rights once achieved, the extent to which these groups take full advantage to participate in political life." (Verba et al: 1993: 454) The authors argue that rather than an issue of a "particular strategy," it "depends upon the availability of resources derived from economic and social institutions." (Verba et al, 1993: 454) Theorists have long looked access as an explanation and an essential piece of the equation for varying levels of civic participation. Without the political, social and economic means, strategy may not result in implementation.

While all Canadians have the right to participate in the political process by voting, running for office, or other activity that is traditionally considered part of being politically active (ie. writing letters to politicians and representatives and marching in political protests), this does not naturally translate into participation. In fact, the narrow definition of what is ascribed as traditional political activity is circumscribed by a Western liberal inheritance that often does not consider alternate modes of participation. Further, rights- and citizenship-based arguments are innately exclusive: for in a country such as Canada that receives large numbers of immigrants and refugees every year, there are a number of persons who do not "qualify" for these rights. It is for this reason that civic participation must include a broad spectrum of activity that is not defined by a binary of "political" and "volunteer." It is the meaning and goals of the participation and the social capital that it creates, rather than the definition that will provide useful analysis and debate.

Voter turnout is more easily quantified and analyzed as an indicator of political engagement, however, and decreasing voter participation has been a topic of concern in the Canadian polity. In an effort to include ethnic and cultural minority communities in the election process, Elections Canada provides election information in a variety of different languages which can be found on their website.[5] There are also information pages for Aboriginals and young voters. In *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters*, Pammett and LeDuc conducted a survey of nonvoting Canadians to determine major factors in their non-involvement.[6] While socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, place of birth, education, income and mobility were all studied, the authors posited, and found that age is one of the strongest correlates in failing to vote. Voting turnout percentages lower for younger cohorts. This is a concern for all groups in Canada, however, as combined with other correlates barriers to certain groups may be that much more difficult to overcome.

Some researchers have examined the link between visible or ethnic minority representation and the development of programs and policies that will help minority communities. (Simard, 2002) A related question asks: to what degree do minority politicians actually 'represent' their communities? What are "their" communities? This speaks largely to where the representatives find their constituency and how

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[5] http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=vot&document=index&dir=eth&lang=e&textonly=false
[6]http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=loi&document=summary&dir=tur/tud&lang=e&textonly=false

they locate themselves. Representatives may or may not consider themselves as representative of any ethnic or minority community, although ascribed as such. Further, they may be unable or unwilling to push for reform once they have been elected, recognizing their own difference from their mainstream colleagues. (Simard, 2001) Studies on women in politics have shown that representation and numerical parity do not guarantee institutions that are representative nor responsive to their particular constituency's needs. (Erickson as noted in Tolley, 15). Ascribing group rights may also silence different voices within that group such that issues of class, gender and other inequality may not be brought to the fore. Individuals must be considered in terms of the complexity of their identities and in the context of power relations. (See Anthias, 2002: 277).

Institutional remedies are often applied in the attempt to create a more representative system in certain areas. The redrawing of electoral boundary lines is an example of this type of remedy, wherein catchment areas are redefined. The province of Nova Scotia created an Electoral Boundaries Commission in the 1990s, which redrew boundary lines and created four "protected constituencies" in order to encourage representation by members of certain minority communities, primarily Acadians and Blacks. (Tolley, 14) However, this in itself was not successful in increasing representation for the Black community as many had moved out of the electoral district. In addition, there are other historic and structural barriers to equality in that province that also need to be addressed in conjunction with any formal attempts to change the electoral system. (Kelly, 2003: 22)

Policymakers should also be aware of the subjective nature of participation, which varies not only on an individual level but also on a larger group and cultural level. In a study of Latin American newcomers to Canada from Spanish-speaking countries, the author considered both modes and nature of participation. The former included conventional participation/electoral politics and unconventional participation/grassroots politics, and the latter was the "affective nature of participation" or what positive or negative emotions were associated with different types of participation. Results of the study showed that country of origin and culture have an important effect on perception and subsequent political participation, as immigrants of Latin American origin identify more easily with grassroots politics. The researcher stated that this was more evident in first generation immigrants than their children. (Long: 2002) An individual's sense of the meanings and modes of participation is derived from a number of different sources. Further, cultural ideas about participation are not homogeneous, with generation, gender, class, and other identifiers playing a role.

In their study on non-voters, Pammett and LeDuc suggest remedies for increasing political participation. These include improvements in education (including education in civics in schools) and the dissemination of information about politics and civic culture. There was also an interest among respondents in changes to the electoral system such as proportional representation, a debate that is occurring presently in Canada. This may address the feelings of hopelessness and futility that respondents expressed when questioned about their failure to vote. This also signals the important issue of representation that should be problematized when it comes to representation of all groups in Canadian society, including ethnic and cultural minority groups. Finally, the authors of the study stated that administrative changes may affect levels of voter turnout, and suggested technological change as a remedy. First, being able to register online in the National Registry of Voters would ensure that more voters are on the list, and that their information remains current. Secondly, many respondents – primarily from the younger age cohort – stated that they would be more likely to vote if they could do so online. (LeDuc and Pammett, 2003)

It is clear that political participation is not – and has never been – limited to modes ascribed to Western liberal ideals, however it was those modes that were given legitimacy and offered access to only a small proportion of society. As the nature of the Canadian population changes, the meaning of political participation should also evolve to recognize varying forms of civic participation that often have political goals. One such example is the often undervalued work of volunteering and contributions made through volunteering.

Volunteering

Volunteering is increasingly becoming a significant form of civic participation. According to the National Survey of Giving Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP), immigrants to Canada volunteer marginally less than the Canadian population as a whole (21% vs. 27%). For the immigrant population, the probability of volunteering and number of hours volunteered increase with the length of time spent in Canada (25% for established immigrants vs. 18% for new immigrants). Immigrants devote more of their time than the general Canadian population to religious organizations (28% vs. 16%).[7]. We found no literature on the volunteering patterns of visible and ethnic minority populations.

Volunteering seems to be practiced for personal reasons (Street, 1994) such as human contact, feelings of accomplishment and well-being, or to gain skills and work experience. But motivation for volunteering might also be altruistic, as some do volunteer work to improve their communities or simply based upon principle. (Batson, Ahmad, Tsang, 2002)

It is important to note that the volunteering patterns of first generation immigrants are often informed by their cultural origins, socio-political experiences of their countries of origin, and their current and local circumstances of life in Canada. In Stoparczyk's (2005) study on immigrants and voluntarism, based on surveys, focus groups and interviews, 65 new canadians, it was reported that voluntarism, as it is organized and practiced in Canada, is a new activity for 80% of the study participants. In certain countries, government or educational training is required in order to volunteer. In other countries, helping in the neighbourhood or community is not seen as voluntarism per se, but as part of belonging. Stocparczyk further notes that many new immigrants do not understand that volunteering is an option available to all, no matter the socio-economic or cultural background, but they do recognize that this type of engagement represents a positive way in which they could help others and be involved in the wider community.

In addition, Stoparczyk's study has shown that immigrants need more information and support before engaging in volunteer activities. Approximately one quarter of respondents believed that only Canadians who were students, were unemployed or who were retired did volunteer work. A minority of respondents were afraid that they would be taken advantage of as unpaid labour. Even if more than two thirds of respondents had heard mention of volunteering over three times since their arrival in Canada, the majority believed that they needed more information.

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[7]NSGVP of new canadians at
http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/factsheets/Giving_and_volunteering_of_New_Canadians.pdf

According to regional statistics (Parmegiani, 1997), the Ottawa-Carleton area has more that 35% of residents who have volunteered for a non-profit organization. The most common form of volunteering relates to organizing or supervising activities or events. The *Central Volunteer bureau of Ottawa-Carleton* (1990) found that there was an increase in the number of members of ethnic minority groups who are interested in volunteering, as well as a higher demand for volunteers coming from mainstream organizations. However, even if there is enough demand to accommodate the supply, matches between volunteers from minority groups and mainstream organizations have been unsuccessful. "The primary reason seems to be that the majority of mainstream voluntary organizations have not altered or adapted their procedures and practices to reflect changes in the community. They have difficulties in providing access for the multicultural community into their organizations."(p.6)

In response to mainstream organizations being unclear on how to adapt or modify their volunteer recruitment procedures and practices, The former Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton, in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the United Way of Ottawa have published a manual for engaging minority volunteers, entitled *Stronger Together.* The document gives tips on preparing the organization to diversity such as cross cultural training for staff and volunteers, making sure the organization has multicultural policies in place or making sure ethnic groups are invited to functions. Tips are also given on how to better recruit ethnocultural volunteers such as going to places where organizations are likely to find ethnic minority volunteers, visit ethnocultural centers or invite members from a minority community to come to an open house at the organization, *show possible candidates that your organization is sensitive to cultural differences. Stronger Together* also gives tips on how to interview minority volunteers such as finding an interpreter if necessary and on orientation considerations. Part of the training should stress that *all* volunteers receive training and should underline the joys and stresses of cultural diversity in the workplace. "Be open about cultural differences and their impact on the workplace. Talk about tensions that can occur as well as some of the humorous things that can happen as a result of misunderstandings between people. Humour can be a valuable tool."(p.22) Finally, the document looks at how mainstream organizations should support, supervise, evaluate and recognize the work of their new recruits. An example of recognition consists in asking minority volunteers to participate in the planning of events to ensure that they are "culturally sensitive" or organizing recognition awards in different languages. The overall goal of the recommendations is to help minority volunteers and mainstream organisations be *stronger together*.

Benefits of Civic Participation

Meaningful participation and inclusion mean having the opportunity to become engaged at all levels of society and in decision-making processes that will affect the citizen and her community (Dickout, 2004). Community engagement can affect feelings of belonging among citizens and affect feelings of exclusion, whether real or imagined. (Breton, *Social Participation*: 1997) Ability and desire to participate in and belong to a social network is at the foundation of social inclusion. (Policy Research Initiative)

Civic participation holds important value related to how individuals and society define citizenship – citizens are divided from non-citizens in their ability and willingness to fulfill what is considered a civic duty (Tolley, 2003: 13). There are many benefits to participation, including

i) Political socialization: wherein citizens become familiar with the political process and systems and can often mobilize around an issue;

ii) Legitimacy, authority and better policies: citizens are more likely to respect government and its decisions if they have had the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the process;

iii) Integration: political participation is an indicator and affirmation of citizenship; and

iv) The building and maintenance of social capital: networks and collaboration (Tolley, 2003: 13)

Civic participation means that citizens are active members of their community, for their community, and within their community. Civic participation determines and is a good indicator of individual and community well-being and development. Shugurensky states that among the benefits of civic participation are social connection and related physical well-being. These generate a sense of attachment to the community and a sense of satisfaction in working toward a shared goal (Shugurensky, 2003: 12).

At the broader macro-level, participatory processes and civic participation can create:

a) "..better socio-macroeconomic policy content based on better information;
b) Social consensus on policy priorities because of civic involvement in the discourse;
c) Equitable policies and distribution of benefits to the vulnerable, such as the poor;
d) Accountable and responsive government; and
e) Better implementation of policy and programs." (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, as quoted in Malik and Wagle, 10).

Finally, although civic engagement brings benefits at the micro- and macro-levels; it does not not happen automatically and it does not come without costs. Researchers have stressed concerns about participatory processes that include "costs in terms of money, time and management (high transaction costs); the possibility of instability; and legitimate representation." (Ibid, 8) Also, "participatory processes may also result in policy delays and unrealistic expectations on the part of those involved." (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2000, as quoted in Ibid)

Factors Affecting Participation

Although civic participation is a voluntary obligation, it is usually fostered by active policies that encourage the engagement of communities and specific population groups. Since participation is not obligatory, individuals have the responsibility to develop a civic conscience that should eventually

evolve towards civic participation. However, this represents an ideal situation when in reality the opportunity and the capacity are not always there for all member of Canadian society.

While there are many benefits to becoming involved in political participation, the ability to do so is often not simply a question of individual motive, but is also influenced by a number of institutional and contextual issues. James S. Frideres (1997) has posited that people become involved in their civic communities based upon cost and benefit, and lists three factors that influence individuals based upon a "cost-reward" model. These are:

- Perception of environment,
- One's social relations, and
- Perceived control and empowerment.

As much as these may be 'pull factors,' and the motivation to participate may be high, there are important 'push factors' which will deter or prevent participation. These include receptivity of the society towards minority populations, levels of racism/discrimination, the beliefs held by mainstream society about immigrant groups, "coolness" on the part of political parties toward visible minorities, and few methods that encourage participation by ethnocultural groups and visible minorities in the electoral process. (Frideres, 1997; Simard, 2002) Tolley has added covert barriers to this list, including "differential access to the financial resources and social networks that are needed to win elections, a lack of knowledge or information on how political processes function, an inability to penetrate political parties, a lack of familiarity with political norms and party culture, discrimination, and linguistic and mobility challenges. (2003: 15) There tends to be higher voter participation by individuals who have resided in certain communities for longer periods of time, as opposed to those with higher mobility (Tolley, 14) .

Political participation among first-generation immigrants is relatively low in Canada, as well as other countries who accept immigrants (Simard, 2002). Time, then, is an important variable as new immigrants become adjusted to the community, become educated, gain status, knowledge, awareness and skills. This occurs gradually through associational and daily life. (Frideres, 1997) Research has shown that there is a small "generational effect" in that the children of immigrants will tend to participate more than their parents. Not least of the correlates is the fact that the parents may motivate their children to become politically active. (Tolley, 14)

Personal beliefs, attitudes and circumstances must also be taken into account when determining reasons for participation, as individuals act within their own context. Many individuals choose to not participate or come from a "culture of silence" which may prevent them from participating (Frideres, 1997).

Anver Salojee has offered four sets of factors in the political participation of newcomers and racialized communities:

1) Individual resources (ie. age, marital status, education, income);
2) The trajectory of settlement and integration (ie. length of residence, language proficiency, knowledge of the political system and knowledge of tactics of political influence);

3) Relationship between formal political participation and participation in ethno-cultural organizations (ie. social capital); and
4) The interplay between social identity and the "persistence and reproduction of racial oppression and discrimination." (Saloojee, 2004: 3)

There are also many obstacles to volunteering in the community (See Hall, Davidman, McKechnie and Leslie : 2001, 30-33). In Canada, respondents identified a lack of time as the major obstacle (Halba, 2004). Other barriers listed include the commitment required to volunteer, a lack of opportunity, not knowing how to get involved (NSGVP), cost of transportation, poor management of volunteer programs, language and level of education of new Canadians, (Juliusson, 2004), lack of training and not feeling appreciated by the organization. (Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, 1992). Further, tension in the relationship between paid staff and volunteers is also considered a barrier. (M.H. Hall, K. Davidman, A.-J. McKechnie and Leslie)

Another obstacle to volunteering lies in the way that it is defined in different communities and among different groups. The mainstream society and mainstream organizations may assume that they hold the same definition of volunteering as minority groups, or may not be cognizant of the barriers to volunteering experienced by specific minority groups. In a document on civic engagement of aboriginals and minorities in Québec, Meintel states that "Family, church and ethnic minority associations are more likely to engage the energies of these young people without their work being labelled as 'volunteering'". (Meintel, 2005: 17).

There is a lack of knowledge on how ethnic minority groups wish to volunteer and participate in society. Barriers to immigrant civic participation need further investigation. (Workshop 3, Metropolis) Researchers need to look at how official discourses, stereotypes, level of education and employment affect civic engagement. Furthermore, they should look into how, when and why ethnic minority groups participate in the mainstream society in general and specifically how, when and why they might consider volunteering. (Workshop 3, Metropolis)

Breton sites two major barriers to social participation in general. The first being the opportunity to participate, and the second, access to activities. The level of participation also depends on secondary individual factors such as education, social class, religion, and personal motivation.

The Internet is also considered as a possible barrier to civic participation. (Putnam, 2000) However, internet use via community networks has the potential to revitalize civic participation and community engagement (Longford, 2005). Community networks consist of community organizations that use TIC to promote social and economic development as well as civic participation at the local level. (Ibid) They aim at reinforcing social cohesion within the community and to overcome social exclusion, poverty and illiteracy? [8]

It is said that preferred methods of communication among minority groups are word of mouth and community newspapers (SPC, 2004). Although cited, the Internet did not rank as highly. It has yet to be studied whether technology encourages communication or whether it is a barrier to social participation among visible minority groups.

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[8] Canadian community networking initiatives include, among others, Ottawa's National Capital FreeNet (NCF).

IV. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In a summary of the *Bringing Worlds Together* seminar, Sandra Lopes outlined the recommendations of the participants with regard to further research on political participation. The following areas for further research were suggested:

- While developing broad categories is important in the beginning stages of research, heterogeneity within groups (ie. *mixed identities*) should be addressed. Who is excluded, why, and what from?
- Self-identification vs. ascribed identities should be taken into consideration in determining political participation;
- Institutional, structural, cultural, and/or religious barriers and incentives to political participation by different groups should be identified. Minorities and newcomers should be represented on school boards, ESL funding should be increased, and resources distributed fairly in order to address exclusion.
- How has political participation changed or how is it changing with regard to generational differences, technology such as the Internet, and changing government and/or policy directions? (Lopes, 2002: 121)
- More social indicators are needed to define social participation;
- There is a lack of research on leisure and recreational activities and organizations and on volunteer work in general;
- More research is needed on religious organization and on the role religion plays in social participation in the volunteer sector;
- How should immigrants and participation be defined (the need to distinguish *the* community and *community work)*
- The majority group defines terms and research issues;
- Immigrants' perceptions and definitions of social participation need to be valued (the definition of social participation is not neutral but cultural);
- Should the researcher participate in the community?
- How should volunteering be measured?
- The impact of ethnocultural organizations on Canadian ethnic politics is considered as an area of research that needs to be further explored. (Putnam, 2000)

The group also identified the following key indicators to political participation:

Individual Level

- Interest in politics
- Desire to participate
- Feeling rewarded

- Marital status
- Gender
- Socio-economic status
- Civic literacy

Community Level_(in 'mainstream' organizations such as political parties, government, media and education system)

- Number of minorities and newcomers who participate
- Manner in which their views are considered
- Whether their views are sought
- Whether they feel like active contributors
- Structure of the organization
- Culture of the organization as compatible with that of the newcomer
- (This category also included the more identifiable forms of participation such as voting, running for office, etc)

Community Level (in ethno-specific organizations)

- Religion
- Resources
- Value of these organizations to the 'mainstream'
- The relationship with the 'mainstream' (Lopes, 2002: 121)

It has yet to be studied whether visible minorities who do not identify as immigrants encounter the same challenges as immigrants, as not all visible minorities are immigrants. Generational differences cannot be discounted, insofar as younger generations may not possess the same level of belonging or identification with religious, ethnic or racialized communities as their parents and grandparents. Is belonging first to an ethnic community a necessary or useful first step in civic participation for those generations that are not immigrants? The results of this study may help to answer these questions, among others, as well as offering insight to other studies on the inclusion of visible minorities.

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VII. APPENDIX 1: Figure 1 : Civic Participation

Drawn from Gagnon and Pagé, 1999