

Le rôle du bénévolat parmi les nouveaux
arrivants : Une voie contradictoire vers
l'intégration et la participation

Newcomer Volunteering: A Contradictory
Path Toward Integration and Participation

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Context

- Migrant volunteering as a path to integration, participation and engagement in Canadian society?
- Contradictory nature of volunteering
- Immigrant employment strategies
 - Down-skilling, underemployment, self-employment, alternative vocation training (Creese & Wiebe 2009; Türegün 2013; Reitz *et al.* 2014)
 - Volunteer work to gain experience, access networks and referrals, and improve language skills (George & Chaze 2009a; Slade *et al.* 2013; Türegün 2013)

Objectives & Research Questions

- 1) Critically improve understanding of the complex and contradictory role of volunteering as a mechanism for newcomer integration, participation and civic engagement in Canadian society by:
 - 1) Bringing to the forefront the agency of newcomers, their innovation, motivations and expectations of volunteering, and its potential role in their long-term settlement and integration.
 - 2) Examining the implications of differences in legal/migrant status, class, gender, ethnicity/race, and language skills in shaping newcomer practices, experiences and outcomes of volunteering.

Literature Review

- Most work is US-based
 - Limited work on migrant volunteering in Canada
 - Dominant theoretical framework: Social network analysis
 - Individual characteristics (ethnicity, gender) seem to play a role...
 - Methodologies: mostly quantitative approaches (census data, large surveys)
- Why, how, when and where do migrants volunteer? And *who* volunteers?

The “Volunteer Process”

- Omoto & Snyder (2002)
 - How volunteering unfolds in time and space
 - The role of individual differences
- 3 stages of volunteering
 - 1) The *antecedents*
 - 2) The *experiences*
 - 3) The *consequences*
- Multiscalar
 - Individual
 - Organization
 - Community
 - Society

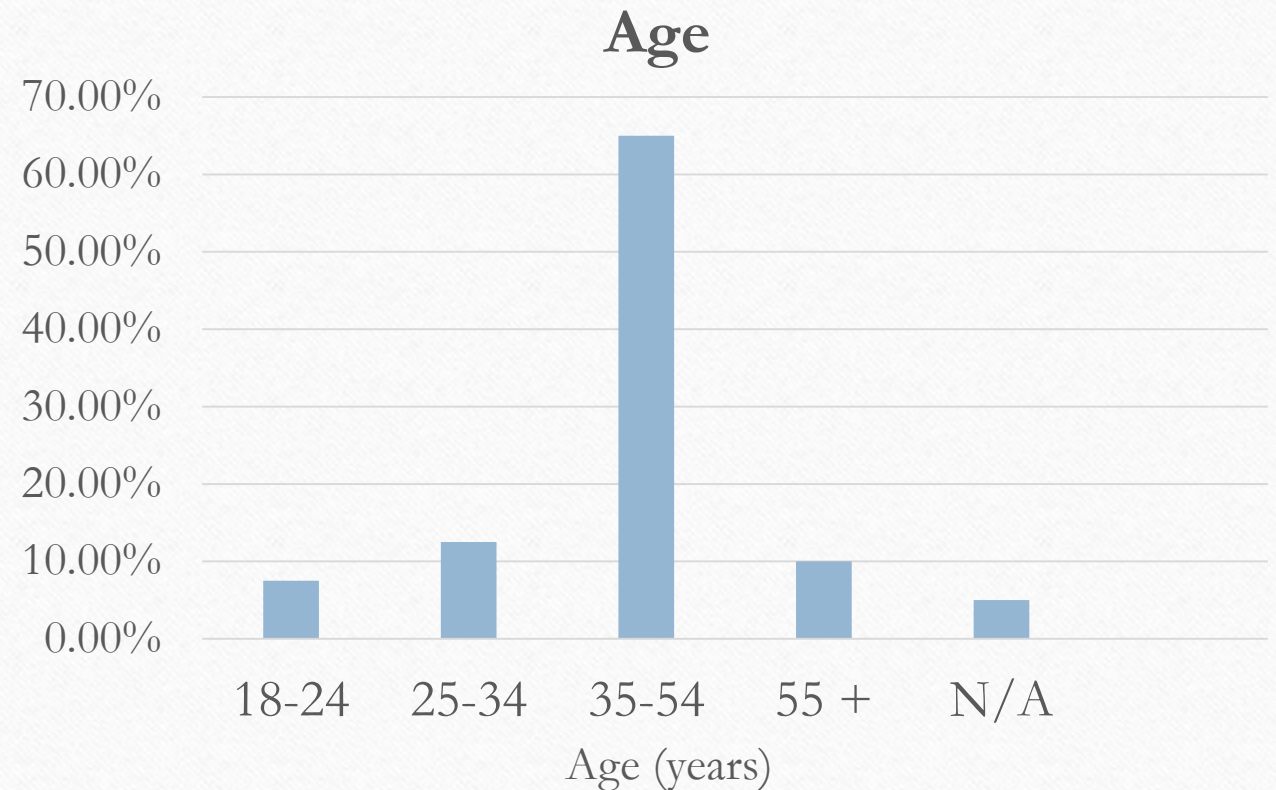
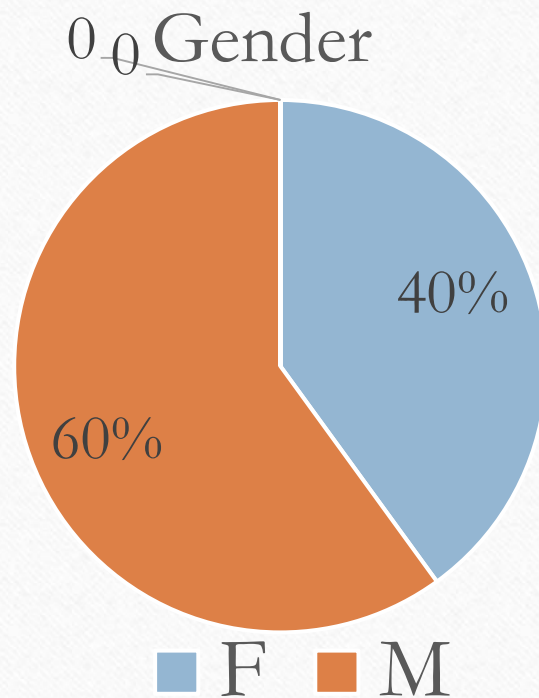
Methodology

Exploratory qualitative mixed-methods and multi-stage project

- Stage 1: Organizational context
 - Semi-structured interviews with key informants (n=13)
- **Stage 2: Why newcomers volunteer?**
 - **Focus group discussions with immigrants and refugees (n=40)**
- Stage 3: The lived experience of volunteering
 - Semi-structured in-depth interviews with immigrants and refugees (*ongoing*)
- Stage 4: Policy tool
 - Town hall meeting and workshop

Stage 2: Socio-demographic profile

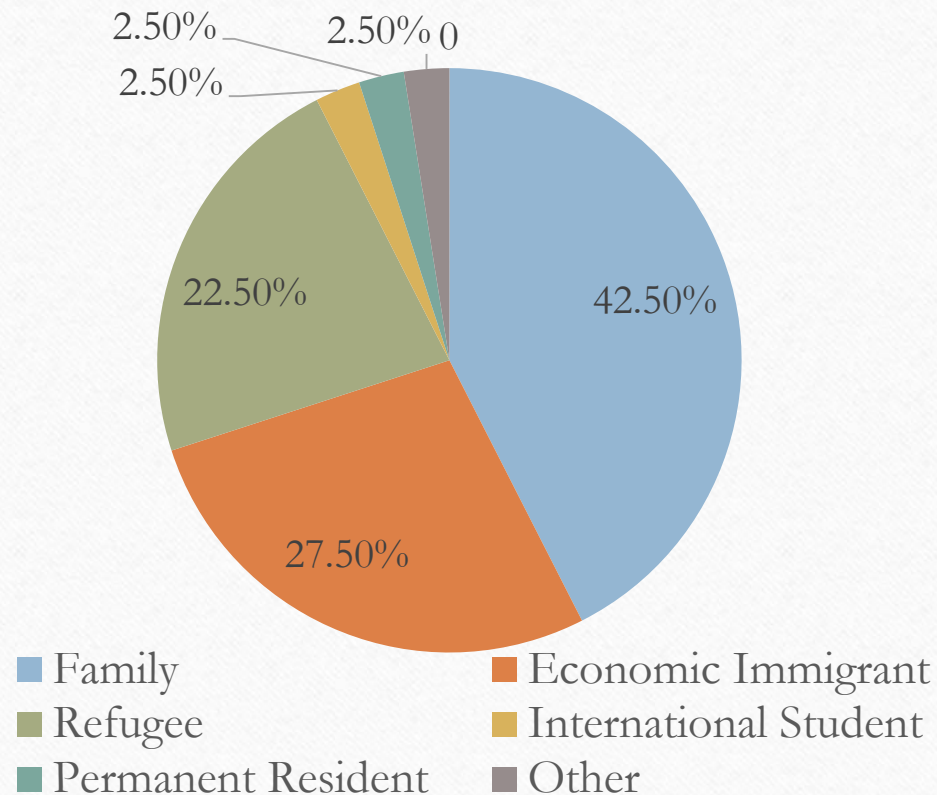
Focus group participants (n=40)



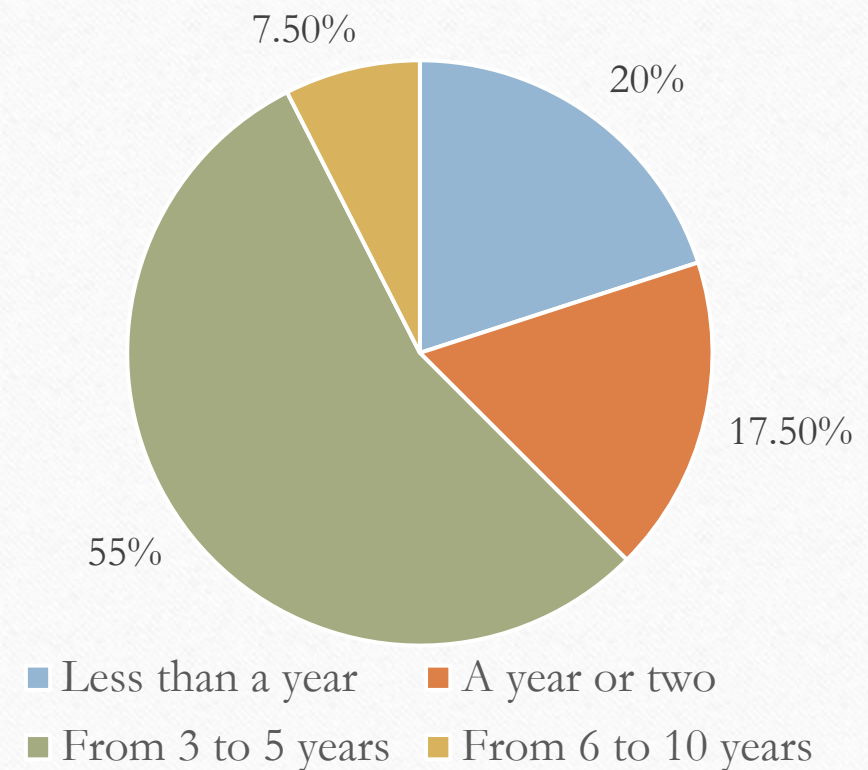
Stage 2: Socio-demographic profile

Focus group participants (n=40)

Immigration category



Number of years since arrival in Canada



Preliminary findings – Main themes

- Motivations to volunteer
- The experience of volunteering
- The outcomes of volunteering
- Challenges and barriers

The Organizations' Perspective

Organizations are depending on volunteers because...

- Demand of services exceeds staff capacity;
- They are extremely helpful and versatile.

According to organizations, newcomers should volunteer because...

- They are lonely and isolated at home;
- They realize integration will not happen by itself;
- A type of training (especially for soft skills), it is unpaid because the system cannot afford it;
- Part of the “hidden market”;
- They have to gain Canadian experience.

Motivations to Volunteer

- Build a professional and personal network
 - Learn/practice the language
 - Getting involved in the community
 - Escape isolation
 - **Gain Canadian experience**
 - **Integrate in Canadian society**
- “[R]eference is very important to get a job. And **volunteering can help you get people say a word for you.**”
 - « C’est bon pour s’intégrer, **pour connaître des gens, les Canadiens, et connaître la langue – l’anglais.** Je pense que c’est bien pour l’apprentissage de la culture, c’est bien pour la langue, et pour m’adapter à une société. »

Experiences of Volunteering

- A contradiction:
Volunteering for fun vs. obligation
-
- Ambivalence: both positive and negative experiences

“For me there are two kinds of volunteering: for pleasure and to gain experience. In either way, the feeling is different.”

- Feelings of rejection
- The weight of the formal procedures
- Exploitation
- The lack of opportunities in their professional field

Outcomes: Social vs. Economic

- General consensus regarding the social outcomes:

- Building social and professional networks
- Integration

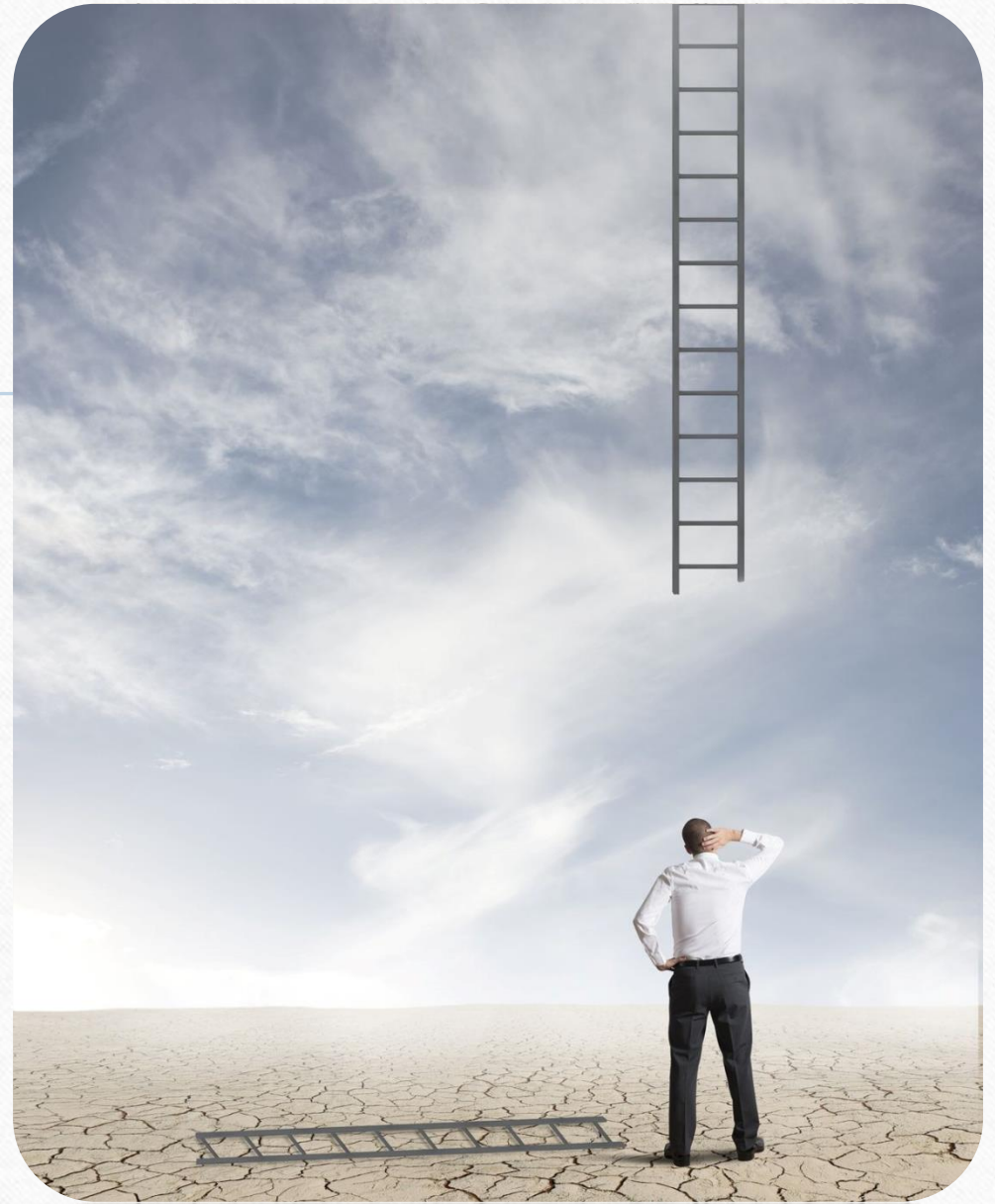
- The economic outcomes are more debatable:

- Benefits in the long run... but when?
- Indirect outcomes

Critical Analysis

- Notions of volunteering in Canada vs. countries of origin
- Volunteering is not “free”
- Various challenges and barriers along the way

Source : www.justmilitaryloans.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/challenges.jpg



Recommendations

To the Canadian Government:

- Provide official source of information regarding the process of volunteering in Canada
- Provide official site where skilled workers can search for paid internships.

To Organizations:

- Organizations should offer workshops discussing the importance of volunteering in Canada.
- Offer childcare and compensation for transportation costs.

To Employers:

- Offer paid internships in professional fields and make sure that these are available accross the country.
- Offer paid jobs to volunteers already working within the institution.

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