# Exploring volunteering experiences of South Asian Indians and their intersections with community identity and daily life in Canada

by

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# Author’s Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

# Abstract

There is abundant evidence that volunteering generates both positive and negative impacts on the daily lives of volunteers as well as individuals in the communities they serve (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Han et al., 2020, p.1732). Volunteering experiences of immigrant communities like South Asian Indians (SAIs) in Canada are not well represented in Western volunteering literature, and this gap is especially concerning in times when there is a worldwide decline in volunteering retention (Stefanick et al., 2020, p.124). To help fill this gap, I interviewed SAIs in Canada to understand what it means to volunteer for them and what constitutes their volunteering experiences. Throughout the research, I became increasingly aware of the importance of a variety of contextual factors that shaped the volunteering experience. Adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I was able to explore the ways in which different contextual factors influenced the volunteering interpretations, motivations, recognition of the SAI community identity, as well as the impact that volunteering created on daily life. The shared conversations with the SAI volunteers revealed four principal themes: (1) volunteering interpretations are different in the native and immigrant country, (2) settlement goals and leisure goals are primary volunteer motives, (3) the SAI community identity emerges when volunteers seek familiarity in the Canadian contexts, and (4) volunteering meanings, motives, and identities interact to have a possible impact on daily life. The findings highlight the interactions between the contexts, volunteers' priorities, leisure outcomes of volunteering, and culture at the volunteering organization, thereby reinforcing the significance of considering the contextual factors in future research. In addition, the study presents volunteer participants' suggestions that can support volunteering organizations in their work to improve volunteer welfare and volunteer retention.

*Keywords:* South Asian Indians, volunteering, immigrant volunteering, volunteering motives, volunteering impact, leisure, community identity, contextual factors, volunteering organizations, hermeneutic phenomenology

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You are, so I am… and together, we are everything.

# Dedication

To my grandmother, Shalini Pant…
*Though you are no longer with us, your love remains eternally in my heart.*

*Thank you, Nani, for the love you gave, the lessons you taught, and the memories you created. Your legacy lives on in the pages of this work. Let this be a tribute to the remarkable woman who sparked my curiosity and fueled my passion for knowledge.*

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

> Volunteering is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon the boundaries of which are unclear. It is comparatively easy to find consensus about what is definitely volunteering on the one hand and what is clearly not on the other hand. But the point … at which an activity ceases to be acceptable as volunteering is a matter of judgement and different individuals and cultures may reach different interpretations of where the boundary lies. (Rochester, 2006, p.6)

The conceptualization of volunteering or volunteerism is complex. Not only does it vary across cultures and societies, but volunteering can be situational and can have different meanings (Chalip, 2000; Davis Smith, 1999; Handy et al., 2009; Keleman et al., 2017; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010; Merrill, 2006; Tuan, 2005). Moreover, the fields of academia, social policy, and business each have their own lens through which to observe and understand volunteering. Although there has not ever been a fully agreed upon definition, volunteering has been understood to revolve around four core elements: (1) motivation (free will and/or coercion), (2) rewards (self interest and/or altruism), (3) organization (formal and/or informal), and (4) proximity to the beneficiaries. The literature, however, is still rather ambiguous with respect to these four elements (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Handy et al., 2009; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010; Rochester et al., 2010).

My experiences as a recent immigrant[1] student in Canada developed interests to observe volunteering from the perspectives of serious leisure, social inclusion, volunteer relationships, and social capital. Adopting a leisure lens to observe the phenomenon of volunteering comes

[1] Language has the power to influence social meanings, trigger stereotypes- and stigma-filled outcomes, and perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. During my study, I was presented with a linguistic conundrum. I realized that the use of the labels, “immigrant”, “newcomer”, “first generation immigrant”, “second generation immigrant”, and also, “South Asian-Indian” in the study may prompt an unintended bias towards certain individuals. However, there are no concrete policies yet on informed language that can be used for activism and changemaking for diverse population groups. For this research, I use the labels that are popularly known by the study participants and also because the language has legal meanings in Canada. As research continues to develop appropriate language for individuals and communities who experience the impacts of being in the minority, marginalized, or stigmatized in Canada, readers should be mindful that the terminologies and understandings will continue to evolve with time and that everyone (including myself) should always realize that words (or labels) matter.

naturally to me. Keeping a leisure perspective in mind, I see Stebbins (2015) view of volunteering "as the absence of moral coercion to pursue a particular activity that brings enjoyment or personal benefit to the individual" as a good starting point for this study (Kelemen et al., 2017). According to Stebbins (2013, 2015), volunteering has the potential of being both "unpaid work" or activity and "attractive leisure" that are "framed in a distinctive context" and "engaged in free time". Volunteering thus can be observed under the theoretical framework of serious leisure as activities and/or experiences of serious leisure, casual leisure, or project-based leisure and there are social, psychological, social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the activity and experience take place (Stebbins, 2013, 2015, 2018). Within serious leisure, volunteering engagement in free time opens up opportunities to explore how volunteering is experienced and featured in daily life, and whether it is in fact perceived by volunteers to be a free time experience or activity.

From the perspective of social inclusion, "volunteering is an investment that prepares individuals for paid work" (McAllum, 2014, p.86) and thereby facilitates entry to society. This preparation takes place in "alternative organizational affiliations" wherein the affiliations may help in skill building, networking, and in furthering the awareness of your skills in the community (McAllum, 2014, p.86). Social inclusion is especially significant when we consider that volunteering is potentially key for any population group that experiences a certain disadvantage or barrier to regular employment and/or does not feel one with society. Then, when we consider the perspectives of social capital and volunteer relationships, we often see references to values such as "care", "empathetic concern", "compassion", "disinterested service", and "self-sacrifice" that drive volunteers' interactions with other community members typically for mutual benefit (Blackstone, 2009; Cheng et al., 2021; McAllum, 2014; Mesch et al., 2006; Ronel, 2006; Wilhelm & Beckers, 2010). Each of these perspectives observes volunteering to be driven by a will to contribute to community development and to build goodwill relationships between the volunteers and the communities of which they are part (Adler & Kwon, 2002; McAllum, 2014; Putnam, 2000). Critics in the literature, however, argue that volunteering can also involve benefits for only the chosen or desired communities and that such volunteering activities may only "reinforce existing power relations" (DeFilippis, 2001; McAllum, 2014, p.87).

In any case, these perspectives help in understanding the volunteering motivations as well as the internal processes (shaped by the individual life experiences and values) that guide these

motivations. Volunteering motivations, thus, can be "intertwined in personal processes" (Grönlund, 2011, p.854) and can be "associated with the identities of individuals" (Grönlund, 2011, p.871). Furthermore, just as identities play a role in elevating motivations to volunteer, volunteering can play a role in further developing or realizing identities. A great deal of research has suggested the role of volunteering in fortifying or/and shaping one's personal and social identities, as well as one's identity specifically related to the volunteering role (Cnaan et al., 2006; Dury et al., 2015; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Gray and Stevenson, 2020; Grönlund, 2011; Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Haski-Leventhal & Cnaan, 2009; Marta et al., 2014; Morrow-Howell et al., 2009; Musick & Wilson, 2003). Not only does one's social identity help contribute to an "individual's sense of attachment to their community", but associating with others in the community has also been linked to developing a "common understanding of the social world" (Gray & Stevenson, 2020, p.344). Further, developing a social identity through such community associations predict volunteering engagement (Gray & Anderson, 2020).

In addition to exploring associations between community identities and volunteering, it is important to note that these community attachments and their resulting nuances in one's identity interact with the *cultural contexts* and other *structural factors* (Ashutosh, 2008; Dei, 2007; Ghosh, 2013; Gosine, 2002). Cultural contexts or values have the potential to inform morality for cultures or groups, however, these values are not uniform within groups or subcultures (Gronlund, 2013; Hodgkinson, 2003; Musick et al., 2008; Ruiter et al., 2006; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2001). These contexts can lead to or be a product of structural factors such as the, "democracy, welfare state, income inequality, economic development, age and ethnic population of the society" (Gronlund, 2013, p.73). Cultural contexts and structural factors can interact differently with individual's internal processes and thus, these can have distinct impacts on individual experiences, further adding to the complexities of interpreting volunteering engagements. Therefore, it is imperative to consider these perspectives in order to present a holistic interpretation of a volunteering experience. This study is a step in this direction to understand: (a) what volunteering experiences actually look like, (b) what the motivations for volunteering are, (c) how the volunteering experiences appear in daily life, and (d) if at all, how one's community identity features in the volunteering experience.

## 1.2 Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of volunteering among South Asian Indians (SAI) in Canada. The research questions guiding this study focused on not only understanding the meanings that SAI associate with their volunteering experiences, but to also know what motivates SAI to volunteer and to explore the intersections of community identity and daily life in SAI's lived experiences when volunteering.

### *Research Questions*

1. How is volunteering experienced by SAI? What meaning do they derive from the experience?
2. What are the motivations for SAI to volunteer?
3. How do the experiences of volunteering connect with daily life among SAI?
4. Does a community identity among SAI feature in their volunteering experiences?

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

I see the study outcomes to be significant if they can answer three main questions: (1) why is it important to explore the different meanings of volunteering?; (2) why should we explore volunteering motivations for communities such as the South Asian Indian community?; and (3) why do we need conversations around intersections of volunteering with daily life?

### *Why is it important to explore the different meanings of volunteering?*

Exploring the meanings of volunteering is important to understand what "constitutes" the phenomenon and what factors influence or interact with the phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to frame a universal definition or understanding for volunteering. There have been scholarly efforts focused on defining volunteering in the past (Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010; Hustinx & Denk, 2009; Latour, 1987; Shachar et al., 2019), but they have been critiqued for limiting volunteering to a "black box that displays only the antecedents and consequences but conceals inner workings, controversial histories, and the commercial or academic networks that holds it in place" (Shachar et al., 2019, p.247).

Therefore, perhaps instead of prescribing definitions of volunteering, efforts should be directed to better understand the contexts and language of how volunteering is shaped,

experienced, and interpreted. Recognizing that much of the earlier literature on volunteering limited its understanding of volunteering to somewhat of a “black box”, scholars have more recently been exploring contexts and language by understanding volunteering experiences through a more holistic theoretical lens. With my efforts in this study, I see myself becoming one of the latter, and I pursued this study with the hope that my insights contribute to better understand what constitutes the volunteer experience that further informs opportunities for learning and theorizing for research, action, and activism.

### *Why should we explore volunteering motivations for communities such as the South Asian Indian community?*

With the study being conducted in Canada involving persons who have immigrated from India, it was of interest to me to see if conversations on the lived experiences of volunteers evoke comments concerning their community identity, and specifically identifying as South Asian Indian. Volunteering motivations and identity are often assumed to be intertwined (Finkelstein et al., 2005; Grönlund, 2011; Laverie & McDonald, 2007), and hence, the scope for critique and deeper insight is even greater if we explore the meaning of these constructs separately as well as the intersection between them. In other words, are the motivations to volunteer inextricably tied to the community or one’s community identity, and does the individual choose to display identity when volunteering? This choice to display one’s identity really depends on whether the individual is aware of the identity processes that are at work, or if the individual undertakes the identity processes and acceptances consciously (Vignoles et al., 2011).

Furthermore, since the multiple facets of identity can be fluid or stable, it ultimately depends on the context of how one makes sense of oneself (Grönlund, 2011). For instance, when it comes to cultural community identity, it may be dominant within homogenous groups, but it becomes more salient with “immigrants within the contemporary world” (Jensen et al. 2011; Smith, 2011, p.262). The nature of relationships between community identity and volunteering can be multi-faceted, so continuing our academic efforts to keep exploring these relationships is important. Doing so may further guide or streamline social action with a community focus, especially for communities like South Asian Indians who have accounted for and are projected to represent one of the highest proportions of the total number of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017).

For this study, the emphasis on SAI was also intended to provide a more focused approach rather than previous research that has tended to examine all immigrants without distinguishing their uniqueness. There is plentiful literature that speaks to the positive role of volunteering in easing immigrant settlement through the enhancement and retention of social, cultural, and human capital. Although these studies incorporate observations related to community's labour market experiences (Schugurensky et al., 2005; Wilson, 2000), volunteering with the religious congregations or mutual- aid fraternal societies (Bankston et al., 2000; Beito, 2000; Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; Ecklund et al., 2007; Foley et al., 2007), services for immigrants in community organizations (Dechief, 2005; Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Helly, 1997; Ksienski, 2004), most of the "discussions on volunteering by immigrants are tangential rather than the focus of the research" (Handy & Greenspan, 2009, p.958). Literature focused on volunteering by the South Asian Indian community is rare to none, and thus this study contributes to the volunteering literature by understanding the unique experiences of this community.

Further, this study helps to unravel factors that drive retention of SAI volunteers. Knowing that volunteering contributes immensely to the world economies and that the decline in volunteering, is a "worrying trend worldwide", (Stefanick et al., 2020, p.124), more studies should explore retention of SAI volunteers by studying the phenomenon contextually. Considering the notion that volunteering phenomenon could mean different in different cultural contexts, that is explored further in the next chapter, SAI's interactions with more than one cultural context may or may not influence a change in how they perceive volunteering and what motivates them to volunteer in Canada. It is important to consider if this change in cultural context is significant, especially if we want to understand what factors sustain motivations and ensure the retention of volunteers.

Sustained motivation and retention is especially critical when studies report that recent SAI experience barriers to securing employment, developing skills, building social networks, and living with satisfaction (Agarwal, 2013; Choudry & Smith, 2016; Ghosh, 2014; Karki, 2020; Lightman & Good Gingrich, 2018) all of which are outcomes often associated with volunteering. Thus, it is important to conduct research on volunteer motivations and retention so that we understand better the buffering roles of volunteering with respect to: integration processes especially for non-dominant communities; overcoming the barriers to engage in and sustain volunteering; reducing everyday stressors; and enhancing overall quality of life.

### *Why do we need conversations around intersections of volunteering with daily life?*

For an immigrant community like South Asian Indians in Canada, daily life is permeated with added struggles and barriers owing to post-immigration stressors, acculturative stress, and in-group and out-group conflicts (Abouguendia et al., 2001; Phan et al., 2015; Vohra & Adair, 2000). In response to these struggles, some immigrants may engage in volunteering to relieve the stressors. Others may not explore volunteering at all because it may be an alien concept or assumed to be an activity for others who may be privileged with time and resources (Crosier & Warburton, 2001). That said, within immigrant communities where individuals do engage in volunteering, there is little to no research on how their experiences volunteering interact with daily life priorities.

Further, the literature suggests there are both positive and negative impact on daily living from volunteering. For instance, volunteering can help to buffer impacts of minor stressors of the day that may otherwise contribute to “physiological wear and tear (i.e., allostatic load), and short-term or long-term health consequences, including mortality” (Han et al., 2020, p.1732). Conversely, other studies argue volunteering acts can become a “challenge” stressor or a “hindrance” stressor diminishing individuals’ emotional well-being (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Han et al., 2020). Therefore, exploring the interactions of volunteering with daily life for immigrants is critical, because understanding the outcomes would help in realizing the nature of and the extent to which volunteering should be advocated for the community.

## 1.4 Outline for the Study

Chapter One has introduced and sets the context for this research on exploring meanings of and motivations for volunteering by South East Asians in Canada, the intersections of volunteering with South Asian Indian identity and daily life. Chapter Two discusses relevant literature on three main themes: firstly, a discussion of the various understandings of volunteering; secondly, a discussion of the motivation to volunteer in both the Canadian and Indian contexts; and thirdly, a discussion of literature exploring community identity and daily life within South Asian Indian community in Canada. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology – hermeneutic phenomenology – and the methods to be used to collect, analyze,

interpret, and represent the data. Chapter Four delves into the findings of the study and Chapter Five offers some conclusions and discusses the directions for future research.

# Chapter 2. Volunteering: Staying close to the context

## 2.1 Volunteering: Shifting gears from definitions to experiences

In the early stages of my research on the topic of volunteering, I was drawn to explore three main arguments: its definitions, common features in the definitions, and the global history of volunteering. Before considering the latter two arguments, a natural step for me was, firstly, to explore the meaning of volunteering. Although an intention of this study is to explore different perspectives on volunteering, I did want to start with attending to what may be understood as universal definitions of volunteering. What I realized at the end of exploring the vast literature was that there is not any universal definition, but various comprehensions of volunteering based on the field of study or the theoretical lens. Secondly, by engaging in the search of definitions, the natural next step was to identify common features in the different definitions. Going through the studies brought me to the realization that each of those features are critiqued in the literature as not being a decisive factor to account for volunteering and that those features are really just the most common features associated with volunteering. Thirdly, the literature brought me closer to understanding the global history of developments in volunteering (including the impact of volunteering), the outcome of which was the insight that the developments differ with cultural contexts and structural factors.

Recognizing that there is not a universal definition, no agreed upon distinctive features for an activity or time that is understood as volunteering, and the various comprehensions and developments of volunteering within different contexts, pointed strongly to the need for exploring volunteer experiences and moving away from just asking "what is volunteering" or "what is the definition of volunteering", and moving to ask "what *can* a volunteering experience look like?" As a researcher, such questions can help understand what separates or connects the *understood* meaning with the *experienced* meaning of volunteering.

Thus, given this insight, for the readers to understand the significance of and the theoretical perspectives guiding this insight, the following review illustrates the literature buttressing these arguments in more detail.

### 2.1.1 Definitions: Has the literature led us to a unique definition of volunteering?

To begin with the word, volunteering, its roots can be traced back to the 1400s' Latin word "voluntarius" that meant "voluntary, of one's free will", and to the 16th century from the French word "voluntaire" that referred to "one who offered himself for military service" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). Up until the 1980s, the word "volunteering" or "volunteer" saw most of its reference with military action and as an "appendage to social services" (Brindle, 2015; Cnaan et al., 1996). It was not until after the 1980s that volunteering began to emerge as a means to address unemployment, civic unrest, and individual freedom (Brindle, 2015; Cnaan et al., 1996; Liu et al., 2017).

The early 1980s saw the most prominent researchers in the field of volunteering, like Scheier (1980), Jenner (1982), Smith (1982), Adams (1985), and Van Til (1988), as well as national organizations like the US President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives (1982), who defined volunteering within the boundaries of organization, nature of benefits, and nature of work. These definitions had almost no scope beyond the boundaries of these characteristics. For example, Jenner and Scheier focused more on the organization with Jenner's (1982) definition being narrower and limited itself to identifying volunteering as an unpaid service within a "not-for-profit organization that is formally organized" (Cnaan et al., 1996; Jenner, 1982). Scheier's definition was broader, in that along with the boundaries of organization, he incorporated the possibility of diversity in benefits. According to Scheier, volunteering is an "unsalaried service" pursued within a structured, unstructured, or a "volunteer spirit" boundary and that the service can be considered as volunteering even if it involves "stipends" or similar "work-related reimbursements" (Cnaan et al., 1996; Scheier, 1980). Then there were Van Til (1988) and Smith (1982) whose definitions for the time are unique in the sense that: (1) they focus primarily on motivations and freedom to volunteer, and (2) they add elements of comparison (i.e., Smith compares volunteering benefits whereas Van Til compares the nature of work). In his definition, Smith goes on to discuss how volunteering is "motivated by the expectations of psychic benefits of some kind as a result of activities that have a market value greater than any remuneration received for such activities" (cited by Cnaan et al., 1996, p.367; Smith, 1982). Similarly, Van Til defines volunteering as "uncoerced helping activity" and further states how the activities "differ from work, slavery, or conscription" (Cnaan et al., 1996; Van Til, 1988).

Some definitions focused on the nature of work where volunteering was primarily defined by identifying all the types of work that can be assumed to be volunteering. For instance, according to US President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives,

> Volunteering is the volunteer giving of time and talents to deliver services or perform tasks with no direct financial compensation expected. Volunteering includes the participation of citizens in the direct delivery of service to others; citizen action groups; advocacy for causes, groups, or individuals; participation in the governance of both private and public agencies; self-help and mutual aid endeavors; and a broad range of informal helping activities. (Shanahan, 1982, p.4)

This definition and some others developed by organizations suggest an emphasis on the quantifiable elements of volunteering. For instance, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1985 identified volunteering acts in terms of hours of service without expectation of any kind of compensation (Cnaan et al., 1996). It can be assumed that much study until the 1990s was to understand volunteering in terms of certain characteristics.

Although the definitions of volunteering in the 1990s to mid-2000s were also mostly restricted to characteristics (Anheier & Salamon; 1999, Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994; Cnaan et al., 1996; Ellis et al., 1990; Freeman, 1997; Handy et al., 2010; Shure, 1991; Tremper et al., 1994; Wilson, 2000), there was a growing realization for the need to take into consideration newer perspectives. For example, a definition of volunteering could acknowledge who within society is impacted by volunteering, rather than solely defining volunteering based on the characteristics of and perspective of volunteers (Shure, 1991). Moreover, studies started to highlight that volunteering was not "isolated from the social, political, and cultural repertoire of the political contexts" and that they are all, in fact, interrelated (Anheier & Salamon, 1999; Handy et al., 2010). Volunteering started to become an "international phenomenon" (Anheier & Salamon, 1999, p.45), with definitions of volunteering adapting to incorporate linkages to "private benefits" (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 415) such as developing social capital, "enhancing social status and opportunities" (Cnaan et al., 1996, p.374), leisure (Henderson & Presley, 2003), "community building, lifestyle, and recreation" (Anheier & Salamon, 1999, p.65).

Consequently, in the later years, noticing how the literature is lopsided, and that much of it has foundations in "western samples", western traditions and history, research started to emerge on defining volunteering with respect to cross cultural perspectives (Dekker & Halman,

2003; Handy et al., 2000; Hodgkinson, 2003; Kerr et al., 2001; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2001; Wilson & Musick, 1997). These cross-cultural perspectives are shaped by the cultural values and structural factors that exist in the different societies. These factors are discussed in more detail in Section 2.1.3.

Amongst researchers during the 1990s and 2000s, the definition cited most often and used in studies of volunteering was developed by Cnaan, who continues to work in the field today. His definition of volunteering includes four main components: (1) free will, (2) absence of tangible monetary awards, (3) activity at a formal organization, and (4) performed for the purpose of helping others (Cnaan et al., 1996; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019). Cnaan and his research team in the 1990s considered volunteering on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis whereby the higher the net costs (i.e., the work done) by the person, the greater the likelihood the person is a volunteer or is engaged in a volunteer activity; that is, higher net costs gets one closer to "pure" volunteering (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994; Cnaan et al., 1996; Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010).

After 2005, Cnaan looked beyond the boundaries of a cost-benefit approach and other unidimensional and static frameworks of understanding volunteering and instead viewed it as something of a "kaleidoscope which gives us different pictures each time the field of vision shifts, and in each, there is color, clarity, and coherence" (Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010, p.85). Like Cnaan, many other researchers continue to realize the importance of focusing on experiences of volunteering and moving to explore multiple facets of volunteering instead of striving to identify a universal definition of volunteering (Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010; Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010). Following this perspective led some researchers to regard volunteering as a continuum wherein:

> At the narrow end, volunteering is conceptualized as an activity with no coercion; involving no reward or personal interest; it is undertaken through a formal organization or group and involves no relationship or shared interests between the volunteer and beneficiary. Broader definitions of volunteering, such as informal volunteering, included activities that involve degrees of coercion (e.g., mandatory service learning in schools, court-ordered community service); remuneration is below the value of paid work provided; are undertaken outside of formal

organizations, performed directly with recipients as informal volunteering. (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019, p.32S)

Thus, in the last fifteen years, different frameworks have been developed to define volunteering in terms of its multiple facets. Definitions of volunteering often regard it as an umbrella term that may encompass several different types, variously described in the literature as *fields*, *durations*, *spaces*, *profiles,* and *engagements*. Thus, volunteering is now often defined according to:

1. *field of work* such as online volunteering (Amichai-Hamburger, 2008; Liu et al., 2016; Nor et al., 2019), environmental volunteering (McDougle et al., 2011; Measham & Barnett, 2008; Pillemer et al., 2009), tourism volunteering (Holmes et al., 2010), sport or special events volunteering (Gallarza et al., 2013; Güntert et al., 2015; Kay & Bradbury, 2009), medical volunteering (Hayes et al., 2020; Reynolds, 2006), and emergency response volunteering (Aguirre et al., 2016; McLennan et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2018);
2. *duration of volunteering engagement* such as episodic volunteering (Cnaan et al., 2021; Handy et al., 2006; Holmes, 2010; Hyde et al., 2016) and interim volunteering (Bryen, 2007; Rochester et al., 2010);
3. *space of work* such as heritage or museum volunteering (Ashley, 2012; Holmes et al., 2009; Orr, 2006; Stamer et al., 2008) and railway volunteering (Rhoden et al., 2009);
4. *profiles of volunteers* based on such characteristics as age, profession, immigrant status, and gender, with the focus then on engaged volunteers such as senior citizens (Ho, 2017; Rosenberg & Letrero, 2006), students (Handy et al., 2010; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010; Hustinx et al., 2012), parents (Hamlin & Li, 2020; Wang & Fahey, 2011), employees (Barkay, 2012; Lukka, 2000; Rodell et al., 2016), and immigrants (Baert & Vujić, 2016., Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Lee et al., 2013); and
5. *religious, cause-directed, and cultural engagements* such as religious volunteering (Cnaan et al., 2016; Qvist, 2021; von Essen et al., 2015) and ethnic volunteering (Sinha et al., 2011; Lee & Moon, 2011).

It should be noted here that the types of volunteering are of course not limited to the ones mentioned here, and with time, newer avenues of exploring and defining volunteering may emerge.

From this literature review, I increasingly realized that a universal definition of volunteering was not evident, but nevertheless, research efforts have now dedicated themselves to explore the diverse forms of how volunteering can exist and be experienced. Such explorations bring attention to the significance of having a theoretical lens to understand what volunteering is and how it might be delineated. As Haski-Leventhal et al. (2019), rightly puts it, “What is volunteering? It depends on whom you ask” (p.31S). Even among the more popular definitions used by scholars and the components of volunteering they emphasize may be specific to the researcher’s lens. Given that the components used to define volunteering remain flexible, its definition continues to be uncertain.

### 2.1.2 Common (or Popular) Features of Volunteering

As noted above, there may be some understood common features of volunteering, but depending on the theoretical or researcher lens, most continue to get refined or critiqued with time. Nevertheless, several characteristics of volunteering have frequently recurred in the literature and show up in most definitions. Not all of these characteristics are understood in the same way and indeed are occasionally disputed. I have summarized the principal characteristics below, along with the debates concerning them. In addition, I have included specific reference, where relevant, to those aspects reflective of my theoretical lens guided by serious leisure, social inclusion, social capital, and volunteer relationships.

1. **Free will**. Free will or non-coerced engagement is widely considered a volunteering feature (Cnaan et al., 1996; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Henderson, 1984; Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010; Wilson, 2000). However, there have been increasing voices against free will as a feature arguing that there is a room for some degree of obligation in one’s freely chosen engagement. In addition, there is a possibility of some degree of “disagreeable obligation” in volunteering and hence not be considered as driven entirely by free will (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010; Stebbins, 2015). Furthermore, there is scant literature that focuses on connecting free will and volunteering, and what literature is available, does not consider social and cultural contexts that may understand “free will” differently (Haers & Von Essen, 2015; Shachar et al., 2019)

2. **Unpaid**. Volunteering is mostly associated with experiences that are not remunerated financially or are remunerated with a less than market value to somehow transcend that the activity is morally good (Cnaan et al., 1996; Shachar, 2019; Stebbins, 2013). However, researchers more recently have critiqued this characteristic, suggesting that volunteering with no or less remuneration could be regarded as hope labour or free labour and that it can often have some things "in common with other forms of unpaid labour, such as slavery, feudalism, as well as conventional reinventions of unpaid work such as internships, job placements, and workfare"; and that perhaps makes the "un- and under-employed" more susceptible to exploitative labour (Allan, 2019; Kuehn & Korrigan, 2013; Overgaard, 2019, p.138).
3. **Organization**. Discussions of volunteering typically refer to "organization" as whether it is taking place in a formal or informal setting, and/or whether it is done with an organized social group, social movement, community, or government. This characteristic continues to be accepted as it accommodates the historical, social, political, and cultural contexts of the volunteering experience (Mejis et al., 2003; Stebbins, 2013). That said, researchers do argue that volunteering organizations are not always distinct, and that there can be hybrid organizations that involve third party and multiple actor networks (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010; Shachar et al., 2019). Additionally, it is now believed that a complete association of "volunteering to an organizational setting fails to account for important and beneficial voluntary activities occurring in communities where the infrastructure of not-for-profit organizations is underdeveloped" (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019, p.32S; Wilson, 2000). For instance, the 2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report stated the COVID-19 pandemic shook the existing non-profit infrastructure and disrupted in-person volunteering engagement. Consequently, most people continued to volunteer informally where their volunteering also included activities like helping friends and neighbours. (UNV, 2021).
4. **Altruistic motives**. Volunteering is popularly referred to as experiences driven by altruism (Burns, 2006; Scheie, 1980; Smith, 1982; Stebbins, 2013), however, just like the experience of volunteering, the universal motive of altruism is similarly nuanced for volunteers. Volunteering is composed of both selfish and unselfish motives in that volunteers can also have personal interests in mind (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Cnaan et al.,

1996; Stebbins, 2007; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2015). Additionally, similar to the critiques raised by researchers concerning the role of organization, the existing literature does not "acknowledge the variety of altruistic behaviors in non-Western countries and cultures" (Butcher & Einolf, 2017; Shachar et al., 2019, p.258).

5. **Benefits**. Although most purist definitions of volunteering do not associate any rewards or personal gains to the volunteer (Cnaan et al., 1996; Corpus Juris Secundum, 1994), there are many that consider volunteering to be a contributor of something of value for both self and others (Barnes & Sharpe, 2009; Stebbins, 2013; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2015). Researchers argue the value of the experience for the beneficiary and volunteer depends on the social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, and that whether the value is significantly good or not is weighed against the perceived morality of a context. There are studies that support both normative and non-normative understandings of this morality and the implications for volunteering benefits, wherein the normative approach examines morality in "people's behaviour and social arrangements through universal standards" (Kahana, 2021, p.511) and the non- normative approaches see the morality standards developed by the individuals who are assumed to be "capable of understanding moral codes" and who employ these codes by evaluating their authentic selves (Kahana, 2021, p.512). Thus, critics continue to find that that "the relations between volunteering and the more transcendental notion of morality remains a conceptual and empirical problem" more so because much of the literature is contextualized in only Western samples (Fassin, 2012; Shachar et al., 2019, p.258).

Some other researchers have suggested similar typologies of volunteering characteristics that focus on specific dimensions of the experience. For example, Brudney et al. (2019) and Haski-Leventhal et al. (2019, p.31S) identified these dimensions of volunteering: (1) *object* or organization that is the conduit of volunteering; (2) *time* devoted to volunteering; (3) *nature* or the way volunteering is conducted; (4) *environment* or broader ecosystem in which the volunteering occurs; (5) *abilities* required to pursue volunteering; and (6) *social* or people with whom volunteering takes place. The characteristics and the ones described earlier are often used interchangeably in the literature and are often modified to adapt to the type of volunteering under study (Adams & Deane, 2009; Holmes et al., 2010; Paxton et al., 2014). Consequently, the interchangeable use of these characteristics again bolsters the argument that meanings and

interpretations of what volunteering experience looks like depends on the theoretical or researcher lens.

Further and of particular importance to this study, it is important to note that a majority of the literature is based on Western and, to some extent, European sources, which constitutes the majority of volunteering literature. Such limits in the literature continues to limit our understanding of the contextual factors and theoretical lenses associated with volunteering experiences in non-Western or non-European settings. Therefore, researchers must build on arguments from different contexts using different theoretical perspectives in order to contribute to globally relatable literature. In an effort to do so, the next section introduces a broader understanding how volunteering is experienced specifically in an Indian context.

### 2.1.3 Indian Contexts of Volunteering: Structural and Cultural Factors

Owing to the diversity in cultures and sociopolitical contexts, volunteering can be understood to emerge and function differently around the globe. To elaborate, possibilities and requirements of volunteering are regulated and driven by the continuous interplay of: (1) *cultural contexts or cultural values* that can influence morality for a society and that are "never completely uniform, but include subcultures and groups that have different values" (Gronlund, 2013, p.72; Hodgkinson, 2003; Musick et al., 2008; Ruiter et al., 2006; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2001); and (2) *structural factors* such as the nature or degree of "democracy, welfare state, income inequality, economic development, age and ethnic population of the society." (Gronlund, 2013, p.73). For example, volunteering is less frequent in Francophone regions of Quebec than in Anglophone regions elsewhere in Canada and this difference "can be traced back to the interplay between individuals' linguistic socialization and the politico-cultural context in which a person lives" (Stadelmann-Steffen & Gundelach, 2015, p.21).

Thus, due to the diversity in the structural factors and cultural contexts, while it may be possible for volunteering experiences to have some thread of similarity with each other (Musick & Wilson, 2008), there is likely not much scope for complete generalizability concerning the meaning of volunteering experiences (Anheier et al., 1999; Dekker & Halman, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008). If the meaning of volunteer experiences cannot be generalized, the question then emerges concerning how they compare, but the literature is conflicted on this point, too. For instance, some studies suggest that cultures that are exposed to longer periods of political

democracy allow volunteering to flourish (Curtis et al., 2001; Halman, 2003) whereas some other studies suggest the opposite – volunteering flourishes in cultures with shorter periods of exposure to political democracy (Ziemeck, 2003). Given such discrepancies, we cannot expect that volunteering experiences would take on the same form and function across different cultural contexts. Therefore, rather than try to compare and contrast understandings of volunteering in different contexts, I illustrate and further the significance of experiences and reveal diverse voices of volunteering experiences that can be multi-faceted, subjective, contextual, and open to different interpretations.

Consequently, there can be endless possibilities to explore volunteering in all different contexts, and therefore, I focus on volunteering literature on the Indian context. Having said that, I want to emphasize that even though my review considers volunteering just within the Indian context, I am not suggesting there is homogeneity in experiences *within* cultures and communities in India (or across Indians). Homogeneity in volunteering experiences within a culture is unlikely primarily for two reasons: (1) cultural values and structural factors continue to evolve with time (Handy et al., 2011; Inglehart, 2018; Lane et al., 2017; Ozer et al., 2017; Rochon, 2000; Yeganeh, 2017); and (2) an individual may or may not belong, choose to portray, or be aware of a within group identity (e.g., culture or community identity), or an individual may identify with a different or hybrid identity that further diversifies the context for volunteering experiences (Grönlund, 2011; Vignoles et al., 2011). Identity, thus, becomes an important consideration along with context in interpreting volunteering experiences, and will be discussed later with specific reference to the South Asian Indian community in Canada.

With respect to structural factors of volunteering in India, volunteering has historically been synonymous with concepts prevalent in religious scripts dating back to 1500 BC and social movements of pre-independence India (Handy et al., 2011). In fact, freedom struggles against English power and religious impetus for social service are regarded as key factors driving volunteering before 1947 (Ghose & Kassam, 2014; Handy et al., 2011; Sunar, 1996). As a result, volunteering was associated with concepts derived from religious and socio-political contexts of India before 1947, such as "seva" (service), "sadaqah" (charity), "sadhana" (spiritual preparation) or "serve jiva" (seeing God in every human being), and "sarvodaya" (service in mankind) where volunteering was entirely associated with charity and service to people (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Beckerlegge, 2015; Handy et al., 2011).

The more institutionalized form of volunteering in the Indian context today is more a result of the influx of Christian missionaries and missionary work in India that involved voluntary charitable and social development initiatives such as setting up schools, hospitals, and orphanages (Handy et al., 2011). That said, for most of the 19th century, whatever was known of volunteering tended to be linked to religion or self-imposed religious duties to serve. It is only with the rise in leaders driving the freedom struggle, like Mahatma Gandhi, and their efforts that volunteering started to be associated with a more political context. Voluntary acts were believed to not only serve mankind, but also to further efforts to remove the British from power (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Handy et al., 2011; Pandey, 1998).

"Post-independence, voluntary agencies were considered to be an integral part of the nation building process, and their number increased considerably" (Chakrabarty, 2004; Handy et al., 2011, p.6; Sen, 1992). Policies such as the National Policy on Voluntary Sector, National Youth Policy 2014, *Rashtriya Sadhbhawana Yojana* (National Goodwill Scheme), and policies for National Cadet Corps (NCC), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs) now receive more federal attention and as such, volunteering is promoted through these initiatives. This additional support is a result of the recognition of these institutions' abilities "to provide services to areas unreachable by and unattractive for the government", and thus they have positioned themselves to be eligible for national and international funding (Handy et al., 2011, p.6; Kassam et al., 2016). Post independence, the first ruling government and through until today, have realized the importance of such institutions in decentralizing the government's development strategy. However, the autonomy and governance of volunteer institutions – especially on operations, funding, and volunteering acts – keep changing government's view based on how radical or harmless the volunteer institutions' activities pose for the ruling government (Handy et al., 2011; Sen, 1992, 1999).

These historical and political factors take centre stage for a majority of the literature that attempts to understand volunteering within Indian contexts (Ghose & Kassam, 2014; Handy et al., 2011; Sen, 1999). Today, these factors, along with high economic inequalities in India that has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic (Berkhout et al., 2021; Dev & Sengupta, 2020) and diversity in caste, religions, and languages across India are considered significant structural factors in conversations on volunteering in India.

As structural factors keep evolving, they interact with changes in cultural values that, like most cultures, have evolved in India due to such forces as globalization, modernization, technological and media growth, awareness and exposures to more cultural systems and social constructs, and cross-culture and within culture movements (Inglehart, 2018; Lane et al., 2017; Ozer et al., 2017; Rochon, 2000; Yeganeh, 2017). For instance, volunteering has not typically been culturally understood within India as a form of engagement that benefits personal agency. This is especially true for older women in India who are predominantly seen as "caregivers and bearers of family responsibilities even in the later years" (Pandya, 2016, p.441), where the roles may involve characteristics similar to volunteering, but these may be considered as obligations that doesn't encourage benefit-seeking actions within the culture. However, a recent study discussed how older women from privileged classes, higher educations, and good career histories in India saw scope for "me time" in volunteering engagements that they saw as leisure, meaning making, and socializing opportunities, without feelings of guilt (Pandya, 2016, p.441; Palanivel et al., 2012). Similarly, such contextual factors are also likely to play a role in comprehension of volunteering for immigrants from India, who have to navigate cultures of both the host and home countries where volunteering notions may be very different (Greenspan et al., 2018; Voicu, 2014).

Thus, cultural values and structural factors are different and evolving depending on the context, and hence, questions of "what is volunteering?" and "how is it experienced?" will not have uniform answers for different societies, including the Indian context. By adopting a research focus on individual volunteering experiences and understanding them within the context of the various cultural values and structural factors that serve to shape those experiences, we are closer to understanding the culturally specific meanings of volunteering. Doing so would ensure that the volunteering experience would be appropriate for different communities, such as the South Asian Indian community, and that those experiences translate into effective community action and policy directions.

## 2.2 Motivations to volunteer

To better understand how meanings of a volunteer experience are interpreted and realized, an important step is to first examine the motivation to volunteer. Research suggests that these differences are influenced by the social dynamics like religion, region, age, gender, and

sexuality (Anderson & Moore; 1978; Berger, 2006; Chum et al., 2015; Clark & James, 2021; Einolf, 2011; Gates & Lillie, 2021; Gillespie & King, 1985; Hwang et al., 2005; Petrovic et al., 2021; Sinha, 2015; Stefanick et al., 2020; Taniguchi, 2006; Vezina & Crompton, 2012; Wymer & Starnes, 2001). In addition, what is important to note is that just as the volunteering experiences and the meanings derived from them differ across cultures (Section 2.1.3), the motivations to engage and sustain in volunteering may also differ across cultures. However, even though there is ample research that explores volunteering motivations with respect to the social dynamics in Canadian contexts, there is insufficient literature that supports or contradicts the link between volunteering motivations and cultural contexts within Canada.

Thus, despite studies in Canadian contexts that highlight volunteer motivations are driven by an interplay of altruistic or personal benefits (i.e., even selfish) or both, there is lack of research on understanding whether these benefits influence volunteering motivations across cultures, or for that matter, ethnocultural communities within Canada. Therefore, with this research, I hope to keep the cultural perspectives in mind and attend to the research gap by focusing on one ethnocultural community (i.e., SAIs) in Canada, to better understand the motivations, and volunteering experiences within a community context.

### 2.2.1 Volunteer motivations among diverse ethnocultural communities

Some ethno-cultural communities may be primarily driven by altruistic motives of serving their community and giving back to the society, whereas some other communities may see personal benefits as the main driving force for volunteering engagement, and for others, both motivations drive their volunteering. For instance, Motia (2021), an Iranian immigrant in Canada, talks in her autoethnography about doing good for the community as one of her major motives, but also mentions that “seeking personal growth and self-actualization were an impetus to initiate as well as sustain volunteering” (p.300). However, within Aboriginal communities in Canada, volunteering motives are mostly driven by altruistic goals of service provision within their respective Aboriginal communities, and these motives are influenced “by both a sense of obligation and necessity” (Hoeber, 2010, p.346; Little, 2005; Little et al., 2005; Mowatt et al., 2006).

Within Asian communities in Canada, several studies have reported the motives of Chinese and Taiwanese immigrant volunteers to be rooted in such goals as developing social

capital by building strong ties within the community, improving one's own skills, and giving back to the community (Chiang, 2009; Guo, 2014; Xie & Ross, 2012; Yuen, 2013). Building networks for paid employment and acquiring work experience are also major motives, especially in some studies. For example, in Wilson-Forsberg's (2015) study, two immigrant volunteers (originally from Philippines) reported their volunteering motives as rooted in getting "the job to her potential so that she can fly like the white swan" (p.97) and "to improve her likelihood of getting a job in the engineering field" (p.100).

Similar goals were also observed as motives for some African and South Asian ethno-cultural communities in Canada. According to studies available on African immigrant volunteers, volunteering is primarily considered for building resumes, getting integrated into the Canadian labour market, and giving back to their community as well as other underprivileged in Canada (Chareka et al., 2010; Creese & Weibe, 2012; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2019). Another motive identified is the wish to be included genuinely in the friendship circles and to become true friends with the Canadians (Chareka et al., 2010). Just like these communities, South Asian immigrant volunteers are often described in studies to be driven by motives of obtaining Canadian experience and learning new skills for professional development and better paid opportunities (Bauder, 2003; George & Chaze, 2009a, 2009b). In addition to these motives, which appear to be fairly common across diverse communities, other reasons for volunteering that appear to distinguish many ethnocultural groups are maintaining transnational linkages and ethnic networks that further help in continuing their cultural and religious traditions and in their settlement in Canada (Ford-Jones & Daly, 2017; Ranu, 2013). Based on these studies, we may infer that non-Western, ethno-cultural communities volunteer in part out of the need to integrate in the Canadian labour market and Canadian society, to maintain ties with their respective ethno-cultural communities, and to give back to the society.

Nevertheless, given the lived experiences of non-Western communities such as SAI, the question remains whether SAI volunteers do indeed have similar motives as those noted above, and whether they express other unique motives reflecting nuances in their ethnocultural background. A further question concerns the role that community identity plays, either consciously or subconsciously in manifesting and sustaining the motives. Some motives may be shaped by volunteers' exposure to and experiences in their country of origin (i.e., India) or with people of Indian origin who pass along to other generations the ethno-cultural heritage,

traditions, and practices of knowing, acting, and meaning making. To know if the meaning making of volunteering and motivations to volunteer for SAI in Canada reflect the influence of Indian heritage, a closer look at common volunteer motives of communities in India is warranted.

Compared to the extensive literature on volunteering in Western societies, the literature exploring volunteer motivation in India is fragmented and scarce. Of the research that is available, volunteering motives are mostly discussed for groups such as students and community health workers (George et al., 2017; Ghose & Kassam, 2014; Gopalan et al., 2012; Jha, 2020; Marwah, 2021a, 2021b; Perić et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2015; Wahid et al., 2020). Motives tend to be discussed principally with respect to individuals who engage in episodic volunteering such as participation in clinical studies, disaster relief, or other cause-driven engagements (Alam et al., 2021; Doshi et al., 2013; Gunessee et al., 2018; Ranjan et al., 2019). Further, like the western literature, the already relatively small amount of literature on volunteer motives in India did not identify volunteers on the basis of cultural background or location of origin. A notable exception is the study by Rajan (2014) who distinguished motives among volunteers in Tumkur, Karnataka, India as “rooted” versus “layered”. Results of her study highlighted that the motives of rooted volunteers, who were individuals “from the same community as the one being rehabilitated” in Tumkur, were more driven by “giving back to community” than the layered volunteers, who were individuals “from a different community than the one being rehabilitated” in Tumkur. Layered volunteers found “learning about new cultures and ways of living” as a major motive to volunteer. Monetary gain was not found to be a motive to volunteer for any of the study respondents (Rajan, 2014).

Although Rajan’s study involves volunteers with different community backgrounds, her study also examines the relationship between volunteers’ motives and their cultural or community identity. Her work is one of the few relevant studies available that help explain relationships between volunteering and community identity within India. Without sufficient research insight, knowing whether exposure to more than one culture within India can produce a significant change in volunteer motives remains unclear, and if any changes are significant enough to transcend the influence on volunteering motives in different cultures or community settings.

Setting aside a focus on cultural background and community identity, volunteer motivation has been studied in the Indian context and the most commonly cited volunteer motives are the goals associated with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards are tied to realizing some meaning from volunteer engagement and as such, satisfaction, emotional fulfillment, joys of giving back, happiness, meanings to sacred or faith-based calls to volunteer, and perceived impact of one's prosocial behavior are among the major motives for volunteer engagement (Marwah, 2021a, 2021b; Muckaden & Pandya, 2016; Pothof, 2011; Rajan 2014). Extrinsic rewards obtained through volunteering can include monetary or material rewards, social contacts, career networks, job training, and future career opportunities. Of these, monetary or material rewards are the principal motives among episodic volunteers (e.g., clinical trial participants) (Doshi et al., 2013; Ranjan et al., 2019) whereas building career networks and seeking job prospects are more important motives for younger population groups (e.g., students) (Ghose & Kassam, 2014; Peric et al., 2021).

The motivation to volunteer can also be influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, and in some scenarios, this combination of rewards may lead to sustained engagement in volunteering. For instance, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), who are appointed by the state and work as community workers in their respective resident communities, are motivated by goals of seeking happiness in giving back to their community and achieving satisfaction in perceived impact of their prosocial behaviours when there is simultaneous benefit of monetary or material gains, networking with authorities, self-empowerment, and/or attainment of social power or standing in the community (George et al., 2017; Gopalan et al., 2012; Jha, 2020; Marwah, 2021a, 2021b; Wahid et al., 2020).

More recently, some volunteer motives appear to be driven by malicious intentions, which may be the case in other countries as well, whereby volunteers in India who are motivated to provide service or consider action that may be detrimental for others. Ideologies of faith-based extremism, fascism, and misplaced nationalism or ultranationalism influence motives to volunteer for formal organizations (e.g., National Volunteer Organization or the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* [right-wing organization], *Bajrang Dal* [nationalist militant organization], *Popular Front of India* [extremist religious organization]). Some of these organizations and volunteers may proclaim to work for society, but some remain in the news for notoriety. The motives driving such notoriety have significantly exposed their

presence in the country, and the current governance either encourages, ignores, or does little to control such motives. (Falak, 2017; Frayer et al., 2019; Friedrich, 2019; Kumar, 2021). As noted earlier, structural factors (such as the politics in the country) and cultural factors can shape volunteering motives, even in these controversial forms. Thus, it is especially important to understand all types and sources of emerging volunteering motives of natives in India.

For SAI in Canada, no studies appear to be available that explore their volunteering motives. Consequently, we have little insight on if and how factors associated with cultural and community identity may influence their volunteering motives. As a first step in filling this gap, an exploration of literature on the complexities of defining and understanding SAI identity in Canada is warranted.

## 2.3 Identity and Daily life of South Asian Indians in Canada

### 2.3.1 How people identify as South Asian Indians in Canada

In the last decade, the use of the term "South Asians" has been questioned and criticized for being blind to the heterogeneity within the South Asian community – its history, politics, society, economy, culture, and language. Many argue that focusing on defined identities such as South Asians or South Asian Indians highlight the importance of "some phenotypic occurrences" and in doing that, studies and policies will "ignore" other "historical, religious, political, and linguistic diversities" (Ghosh, 2013, p.48), that would further reinforce colonial constructs instead of moving away from them (Colombo & Senatore, 2005; Ghosh, 2013; Malhi et al., 2009). At the same time, other researchers have argued that complete eradication of the term is also not justified because it would mean a complete disregard for "the ways the term has been refashioned, reinterpreted, and radicalized toward counter-hegemonic activities in Canada, South Asia, and the South Asian diaspora" (Ashutosh, 2008, p.144). Therefore, when it comes to using community identities based on race, ethnicity, or nation of origin, it may be more productive "to examine and interrogate its multiple deployments along the diverse paths of diasporic solidarities and difference" (Ashutosh, 2008; Dei, 2007; Gosine, 2002).

To understand these complexities in community identity and how they shape the nature of volunteering experiences, emphasis should be on using interpretive methodologies that study the lived experiences of volunteers. Doing this, the goal would shift from ascertaining the specific identities, exclusively, on the basis of the set constructs like race or ethnicity; to

discussing identities based on the interpretations of the lived experiences. Additionally, since community identity may feel and be realised differently for first and second-generation SAI in Canada (Shariff, 2008a, 2008b; Sharma, 2004; Sundar, 2008), ascertaining identities based on interpretive methodologies are more sensitive to the heterogeneity within a community. With this perspective in mind, this review focuses on studies that have used interpretive designs to explore ways in which people identify as South Asian Indians (and South Asians) and conduct daily life in Canada.

Studies find that people identify with a community identity when the discourses refer to "being", "doing", and "feeling" the particular identity (Malhi et al., 2009; Tsang et al., 2003; Ullah, 1990; Verkuyten et al., 2002). Participant discourses of "being" the South Asian identity, are often associated with references to "essentialist" or "biological" terms such as "My roots are in India" spoken by one of the participants in Malhi et al.'s (2009) study (p.269). Discourses of "feeling" the particular identity are often made with references to one's "internal psychological beliefs" such as "I define myself as an east Indian" spoken by another participant in the same study (p.269). Further, individuals may refer to how they stick out in certain contexts, such as "When I'm here, when you say 'Canadian,' usually you're talking about . . . white people, and here I'm brown. If people ask me here, 'What are you?', I'll be like 'I'm Indian'" (Sundar, 2008, p.262). Discourses of "doing" a particular identity are mostly references to individuals who base "their ethnic identification on possession of certain attributes that are defined as critical or typical of the culture, such as speaking the language" (Malhi et al., 2009, p.263), participating in cultural functions, customs, consumption of ethnic goods, or lifestyle behaviours. For example, in Malhi et al.'s (2009) study, one participant described identity positions as "on occasions I do like to get dressed up in a shalwar [the shalwar kamiz in South Asian clothing consists of tunic and pants]" (p.272).

Due to the heterogeneity of structural and cultural factors for SAI communities in Canada, the "being", "feeling", and "doing" of identities can have multiplicities, deliberation, dynamism, and contextual elements. For example, when it comes to multiplicities, SAI identity may not be exclusive, but instead, may be an additional identity, having branches with other South Asian Indian identities or intertwining with other ethno-cultural or community identities. For example, Rajiva and D'Sylva's (2014) study included SAI participants in Canada who identified as Goans, but also "called themselves Indian to identify which part of the world they

came from, for those who might not know where Goa is located" (p.161). In another study where multiplicities, dynamism, and contextual elements are highlighted by Sundar (2008), a participant said, "But if I go to the States, I'll say I'm Canadian. It's really strange . . . When I'm here, it's weird . . . I would never say I'm just Canadian. I'd say I'm Indian-Canadian, or South Asian-Canadian . . . The hyphen is always there. When I'm somewhere else I'm just Canadian" (p.262). In both the above examples, participants adopt different community identities in different settings.

Some research has pointed to deliberate, goal-driven efforts to adopt SAI identities within specific contexts. For example, a participant in Ray's (2003) study talked about adopting SAI identity for self-preservation: "I experienced a lot more racism from Indian people, than I did from Black people. So, I didn't really want to identify with being Indian" (p.66). Similarly, other contextual elements can be situations in the research space or during data collection that influences discourses on SAI identities. Further, in Malhi et al.'s (2009) study, they point to the possibility of participants identifying with SAI community because of interviewer's ethnicity (p.271).

Even though the literature has examples of what could be inferred as SAI identity in Canada, what is also evident is that SAI identities can be fluid and interchangeable. This represents another challenge in understanding the diverse nature of the volunteering experience and motivations for SAI in Canada. Thus, by adopting a more interpretive approach, and by recognising the complexities of identity within the community, the understanding on how identity plays out in the experience of volunteering can be furthered.

### 2.3.2 Priorities and scope for volunteering engagements in day-to-day life

To better understand volunteering experiences and their driving motivation, we must examine what volunteers aspire from their experiences and what needs they are fulfilling, and whether these aspirations are influenced by their community identity and by cultural, and structural factors. For SAI in Canada, like many other immigrant communities (especially recent ones), SAI prioritize the "good life" in Canada and mostly seek that through fulfilment of basic needs, desired employment, good lifestyle, trustworthy relationships, and professional and spiritual growth. Such aspirations have been observed to be a combination of "cultural narrative-based expectations, consolidated fragments of past experience, and current emotional and

attitudinal states" (Blackmore, 2000; Bonn & Tafarodi, 2013, p.1842; Gilbert, 2007; Schacter et al., 2008; Schacter et al., 2007; Wilson & Gilbert, 2005) and these are "continually reproduced through day-to-day cultural practices and activities" (Bonn & Tafarodi, 2013, p.1842). The literature does not attend to communities within South Asians as much, and hence, very little research on the "good life" aspirations among SAI in Canada is available. That said, it may be possible for the aspirations to be similar with some differences based on community identity as well as structural and cultural factors and personal experiences. With these aspects in mind, it raises the question whether SAI see volunteering as a stop or journey towards living a good life based on their own aspirations and motives at that point of time.

Day-to-day living and priorities are different among SAI based on their age, gender, time in Canada, employment status, and geography, which in turn, are influenced by various structural and cultural factors, as noted earlier. For example, South Asian women, whether or not they have regular paid employment or working hours outside the home, are responsible for daily home chores and primary care of children and elders, and these responsibilities can be both pleasurable and strenuous. As reported in Dyck's (2003) study, women feel the scarcity of time in daily life that starts with "rising early in the morning to make breakfast and lunches, going to work, making the evening meal, doing housework, looking after their children, et cetera, in households adhering to a division of labour on gender lines" (p.4) and that whatever time that could be taken out for leisure was usually spent by watching television. Dhillon and Humble's (2021) study highlights older South Asian women "enjoying care activities as they were perceived to give them a sense of control over their daily schedules" (p.447), especially when the women had minimum social connections outside home and financial autonomy. The other important aspect in day-to-day life of South Asian women is practicing religion and praying everyday, and it is something that is perceived to be a "distraction from everyday concerns" (Dyck, 2003, p.4). Practicing religious ways in daily life is also a feature for mid-life and older South Asian women (Alvi & Zaidi, 2017) that, besides buffering for stress, also helps in "in mitigating realities of becoming older" (Zou et al., 2021, p.11).

For SAI students, the biggest desire in daily life is to achieve a "balance between social life, schoolwork, and personal development" (Bonn & Tafarodi, 2014, p.750) and how they tend to hold back on socializing if it appeared to be taking time away from studying on an everyday basis (Bonn & Tafarodi, 2013). There are also a few examples in the literature of how place

impacts daily living for South Asians. For example, studies on older SAI women in Nova Scotia revealed how they felt uncomfortable going out of their homes in their regular cultural clothing (Dhillon, 2019; Dhillon & Humble, 2021). However, studies like Ng et al.'s (2004) inform us of factors that can serve to buffer such concerns regarding engagement; in their study, dwelling in Nova Scotia allowed SAI to "maintain their culture" (p.81). In the same study, participants reported engaging in community work (mostly volunteering in cultural, community or temple activities) and use of recreational services (mostly library use and physical exercise) depending on weather and transportation services in Nova Scotia (Ng et al., 2004, p.143).

As we have seen, volunteering, in general, has been linked to many positive outcomes such as improved "self-rated health" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2005; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Van Willigen, 2000; Wu et al., 2005; Yuen et al., 2004), "ability to carry out activities of daily living without functional impairment" (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001), "life satisfaction/quality of life" (Black & Living, 2004; Coppa & Boyle, 2003; O'Shea, 2006; Wu et al., 2005; Yuen et al., 2004), "physical health" (Librett et al., 2005), "adoption of healthy lifestyles and practices" (Ramirez-Valles & Brown, 2003), and "family functioning" (Casiday, 2015, p.3; Jirovec, 2005). Consequently, to ensure we realize these benefits, we must understand: (a) whether through volunteering, SAI in Canada realize these benefits in their daily life and get closer to fulfilling their "good life" aspirations, and if they do, (b) how do factors of community identity, and cultural and structural factors interact with these aspirations, and (c) what is the scope of volunteering engagement in daily living for SAI in Canada.

## 2.4 Summary

This review has revealed significant gaps in the literature on the motives for and meanings of the volunteer experience, and its links with community identity and daily life among SAI. Much of the extant literature on definitions and meanings of volunteering has shown its dynamic and interpretive nature. This dynamism and multiplicity in interpreting the nature of volunteering is revealed in its more common features such as free will, organization, altruistic motives, and benefits. For members of the SAI community, the volunteering experience is made more complex by structural and cultural factors associated with their community identity.

Beyond the importance of considering contextual factors, the review emphasised the importance of both individual experiences and researcher lens in understanding the nature of volunteering in the SAI community. These aspects laid the groundwork for the first research question that seeks to understand how volunteering is experienced.

Informed with these insights, specific motives to volunteer for communities within both India and Canada were examined and compared. Motives fell broadly into personal benefits (i.e., extrinsic rewards) and altruistic benefits and goals (i.e., intrinsic rewards), and were often apparent together for many volunteers. However, the degree to which they appeared was largely dependent on diverse contextual, social dynamics. Further, the heterogeneity that exists within the context of diverse communities complicates our understanding of how volunteering and motivation play out among and within different communities and especially for individuals who may strongly with one – or more – community identity.

These aspects, then, form the foundation for the two research questions that explore the nature of volunteering motives among SAI and the degree to which these motives interact with volunteers' community identity. Indeed, what role community identity could mean for SAI in their volunteering and their underlying motives for doing so is still not well understood. The scant literature suggests that SAI identity is interchangeable and fluid, and often depends on context, and to date, there are no studies exploring SAI's consciousness of community identity in their volunteering experiences.

Finally, the priorities and scope of the daily lives of SAI was explored and examined in the context of volunteering. Of the few studies that highlight daily life and priorities, most describe how they are dependent not just on structural and cultural factors, but on personal and social factors as well. However, little to no research is available on how daily life and priorities among SAI interact with their volunteering experience and motives. These aspects provide the foundation for the last research question that explores interactions between daily life and volunteering.

# Chapter 3. Methods

## 3.1 Methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology

Given the literature review's identification of the importance of understanding context and meaning in the experience of volunteering among SAI, as well as my theoretical assumptions, phenomenology provides the most appropriate philosophical lens and methodological orientation to guide my research. The advantages of phenomenology include its closeness to raw data (and hence to the interpretative design), subjectivity, as well as relatively accessible language and the style of text (Edwards & Titchen, 2003). Phenomenology involves studying the lived experiences of a phenomenon and arriving at its "essences" that are essentially created in the "lifeworld" (Husserl, 1970; van Manen, 1997a). This lifeworld is co-created by dialogues between the individual and the world, and phenomenology seeks to understand to how the lifeworld contributes to the commonalities and differences or the essences in lived experiences (Husserl, 1970; Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1997a). Edmund Husserl, who is regarded to be the father of phenomenology, referred to these essences as the structures of consciousness that make a specific phenomenon or experience identifiable and unique from other lived experiences (Edie, 1987; Husserl, 1970; Laverty, 2003).

While Husserl had a Cartesian sense of looking at the world where consciousness is separate from the lifeworld, Martin Heidegger, who was Husserl's student and the torch bearer of phenomenology after him, identified the Dasein sense. He believed that the lifeworld and consciousness were not separate but "constituting each other" and thereby dependent on each other for existence (Laverty, 2003, p.27; Heidegger, 1927/2010). In his view, Husserl focused more on epistemological aspects and understood that "individuals were capable of a direct grasping of consciousness, the essences of whose structures could be seen in intentionality and bracketing" (Laverty, 2003, p.27; Polkinghorne, 1983). In contrast, Heidegger believed in including ontological questions in phenomenology that are based on the understanding that being cannot be "outside the pre-understandings and historicality of one's experience" (Heidegger, 1927/1962 in Laverty, 2003, p.27).

Heidegger's phenomenology can serve to find essences of lived experiences of volunteering, but Gadamer's (1998) theoretical extension of hermeneutics to Heidegger's

phenomenology provides a methodological "interpretive process" that includes "explicit statements of the historical movements or philosophies that are guiding interpretation as well as the presuppositions that motivate the individuals who make the interpretations (Barclay, 1992; Polkinghorne)" (Laverty, 2003, p.27). Furthermore, Gadamer, and later van Manen, connected the ontological layers of the theory with language and saw the "inextricable" linkage between "language, understanding, and interpretation" (Langdridge, 2007; Rapport, 2005; Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p.1294). So, while phenomenology helps in isolating themes of the lived experiences of volunteering, hermeneutic phenomenology helps in being mindful of the language used to describe those experiences and exchanges with the "historical meanings of experience and their developmental and cumulative effects on individual and social levels" (Laverty, 2003, p.27). Such a foundation will allow for not only discovering something telling, meaningful, and thematic about the lived experiences of volunteering (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, van Manen, 1997a), but it will also align the research process with the research questions and with aspects revealed in the literature concerning dialogues on the structural and cultural factors, identity, and daily life priorities.

Hermeneutic phenomenology therefore was chosen, as it provided a guiding methodological stance for this study, but it was not necessarily the *method* for this study. I did not intend to confine myself to the exact knowledge and procedure of this method, but instead, I pursued a method that engaged a creative process of understanding" in designing the research process. Such an approach enabled me to be flexible, exercise good judgement, and adopt responsible principles in using strategies most suitable to advance the research exploration (Laverty, 2003; Madison, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1983). Furthermore, adopting a more open method promoted the practice of being "reflective, insightful, sensitive to language, and constantly open to experience" in this study (Laverty, 2003, p.28; van Manen, 1997a).

In adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological framework for this study, I embraced key concepts of "fusion of horizons" and "hermeneutic circle" in the methodology. Fusion of horizons refer to the interplay of horizons, wherein horizons are the preconceived notions or positions that the researcher and the participant respectively use for their own meaning making or understanding. Fusion of horizons involve mixing of these positions and meaning making through the use of language (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Suddick et al., 2020).

Hermeneutic circle refers to continually, attentively, and circularly connecting the particulars and the whole meaning of a text (e.g., an interview transcript), right from the beginning and as understanding becomes more complete (Gadamer, 1998; Schleiermacher, 1998; Suddick et al., 2020).

> Gadamer viewed the hermeneutic circle as a process of movement between the aspects of the text and the interpreter of the text, in this movement; the preconceptions of the interpreter are fused into the process and transferred from preconceptions to new understandings as the interpretive process progresses onwards (Suddick et al., 2020). (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021, p.2)

The hermeneutic interpretation within these circles involves ongoing conversations between horizons of understanding, construction of meanings, attention to text or language, and self-reflexivity that questions these constructions (Hertz, 1997; Laverty, 2003). These interpretations go on until "one has reached sensible meanings of the experience, free from inner contradictions" (Laverty, 2003, p.30), but not leaving the awareness that the "place of understanding and meaning is tentative and always changing in the hermeneutic endeavor" (Caputo, 1987; Kvale, 1996; Laverty, 2003, p.30).

By embracing the tenets of this perspective on methodology, this study used multiple stages of data collection, interpretations, and reflexivity throughout the research process. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used in the data analysis and interpretation stages thereby ensuring rigour in the hermeneutic interpretation.

## 3.2 Participants and Recruitment

The study was based on the experiences of SAI volunteers in Canada. SAI adults who were currently volunteering weekly or more often with a formal or informal organization were recruited to participate in an interview about their volunteering experience. To be eligible for an interview, participants had to be:

1. at least 16 years of age,
2. born in India or have parents who were born in India,
3. a resident of Ontario, and
4. a citizen of Canada or in the country on a temporary or permanent basis

5. currently volunteering in Canada and have at least 6 months of experience volunteering in Canada

These criteria ensured that the participants had a reasonable amount of time as volunteers and had characteristics that allowed me to explore their motives and the ways in which their identities as SAI living in Canada could have affected their volunteering experiences. I also anticipate the criteria allowed the sample to be comprised of volunteers with a wide array of experiences, including different responsibilities from within different sectors. Sampling continued until some degree of saturation in themes is reached. Theoretical sampling was introduced during the data collection when certain topics emerged that warranted identifying other potential participants with relevant, specific characteristics who then provided further depth of insight into emergent issues.

Based on these criteria for participation, purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. Because of my experiences and relationships in the volunteering sector, I identified four volunteers who met the essential criteria for the study. These participants also acted as key informants who helped in recruiting more participants for the study. With the help of key informants, the recruitment and contact information of the participants were received via snowballing techniques.

All the participants were sent an invitation to participate in the study via email (see Appendix A). The invitation provided details about the purpose of the study and specific information concerning the process of the study, including: why they have been contacted, what they are being asked to do, what benefits they might accrue from their involvement, what the next steps will be after accepting the invitation, my ethical responsibilities towards the participants, details concerning providing informed consent, and my contact details. The consent form (see Appendix B) was attached to the invitation email. For any queries and clarifications from the participants, I truthfully answered all concerns and questions. All interviews were conducted virtually, over Zoom, and audio-recorded with the permission of each participant.

Based on the sampling criteria and recruitment procedures, the final sample of nine participants were interviewed twice for the study. All participants of the study were volunteering in the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, Canada at the time of the interviews. Table 1 presents the demographic and volunteering characteristics of the study participants.

**Table 1.** Demographic and volunteering characteristics of participants

| | | | | | Volunteering characteristics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Participant** | **Sex** | **Age** | **Years in Canada** | **Status** | **In Canada** | **In India** |
| Chandra | Female | 28 | 2 | Temporary visa, study permit | Formal, community work | No experience |
| Varun | Male | 43 | 9 | Permanent resident | Formal, community work | Informal, occasional, family-driven, community work, religious |
| Anand | Male | 25 | 7 | Temporary visa, work permit | Formal, community work | Informal, occasional, religious, episodic during high school |
| Radha | Female | 47 | 20 | Canadian citizen | Formal, community work | Informal, occasional, family-driven, religious |
| Sheena | Female | 43 | 6 | Permanent resident | Formal, academic, senior care | Informal, educational |
| Sharon | Female | 26 | 6 | Permanent resident | Informal, environment, gardening and food production, food bank | Informal, occasional, family-driven, environmental, religious, community work |
| Faiz | Male | 39 | 10 | Canadian citizen | Informal, environ-mental, animal rescue and care | Informal, occasional, family-driven, rural developmental |
| Reema | Female | 33 | 5 | Permanent resident | Formal, community work | Informal, occasional, family-driven, religious, community work |
| Aishwarya | Female | 19 | 5 | Permanent resident | Formal, academia | No experience |

Of the nine participants, three identified as male and six identified as female. In terms of age, participants ranged in age from 19 to 47 years and were fairly evenly distributed across these years. Three participants immigrated to Canada under 5 years ago, five participants immigrated 6 to 10 years ago, and one participant has been in Canada for more than 10 years. Of the nine participants, two were on a temporary visa (Study and Work Permit), four were Permanent Residents (PR) of Canada, and three were PR-turned-citizens of Canada.

Two participants did not have any experience of volunteering in India. Four participants had occasional informal experiences of religious volunteering in India and one participant had experience in the volunteering field of environment in India. One participant had experience in the volunteering field of rural development in India. Three participants had experiences in the

field of community volunteering in India and another three had episodic volunteering experiences as high school students in India. Five participants indicated that their volunteering experiences in India came about because their families were involved in volunteering. For those participants who had volunteering experiences in India, those experiences occurred approximately 5 to 10 (or more) years before the time of the interview for this study.

All participants of the study were volunteering in the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, Canada at the time of the interviews, and most volunteered in some aspect of community work. One participant volunteered in academia, while another one participant volunteered in both academia and senior care. One participant volunteered in field of animal rescue and care, and one participant volunteered in the field of gardening and food collection for food banks. As noted in Table 2, participants brought unique demographic profiles and volunteering backgrounds to the study, and all these characteristics are reflected in the study findings.

## 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Guided by the IPA approach, data was collected using an in-depth, long interview. In a long interview, "an interviewer will likely start with one broad question and some affiliated follow-up topics, but must follow the participant's lead to a greater extent, focusing on the details of an experience that are most important to the individual" (Guest et al., 2013, p.119). As the interviewer, I exercised reflexivity and I was open to significant aspects in participant's experiences (Guest et al., 2013). Long interviews are essentially a series of interviews with participants, for which I used conversation-starting interview guides (McCracken, 1988). Such interviews helped the participants to narrate their volunteering experiences in their own way, and by including probes, participants were able to better articulate what they might otherwise take for granted (Genoe, 2009). Furthermore, long interviews allowed me to attend to contextual factors better, and facilitated in reaching shared meaning instead of individual affective states (Genoe, 2009; McCracken, 1988). While the questions in the initial interview guide ensured continuity in the topics to be discussed, it evolved during the interview process to reflect participant discourses.

There were two interviews with each participant. The first interview involved two components. First, it aimed at building rapport with the participant as well as gather some basic biographical information and details about their volunteering, such as sector within which they

volunteer, the time they commit each week, their principal responsibilities, and so on. These latter details gave a window into the context of each individual's volunteering. The second component of the first interview focused on exploring the nature and meaning of their volunteer experience as well as their underlying motives for volunteering and their perspectives concerning identity (see Appendix C). The second interview was conducted after I compiled the findings of my analysis and interpretation. During the second interview, I invited the participants to provide feedback and reflections on the preliminary themes I identified. The participants also had the opportunity to confirm or challenge the interpretations. I also used the second interview to probe some themes more deeply for greater clarity and insight. At this point, participants also had the opportunity to select their pseudonyms that were used to reference participant quotes in the study.

The interviews were audio-recorded, with the permission of each participant. The interviews were conducted in English; however, when a participant preferred to speak in another language such as Hindi, I encouraged the participant to do so, as I can converse in the language fully. When an interview was conducted in a different language, it was transcribed into English. Throughout the interview process, I made observational notes in my reflexive journal and tried to capture every notable utterance, body language, and emotion. I also maintained memos to record the details of the research process in sequence. These served as useful guides during the interview process, especially in the second interview, that helped me in ensuring I re-visit issues that I noted during the interviews.

At the analysis stage, I again kept the perspective of IPA in mind that "respects the principles of the hermeneutic circle", and that considers "contexts at all times through moving between parts and the whole" (Fendt, 2015, p.66). After an initial read through of all the transcripts, I began the analysis by reading the entire transcript of each participant in detail and began making note of major themes that emerged. Relatedly, I recorded my personal reflections, reactions, and initial thoughts in my reflexive journal.

This journal was also viewed as data and therefore, was analysed in conjunction with the transcripts. After considering my reflections in the journal, I repeated the process of reading and analysing the transcripts and began highlighting pieces that may be relevant to understanding the meaning and experiences of the participants. Those highlighted pieces were then juxtaposed with the reflections in my journal to ensure I am fairly representing the voices of the participants. I

then grouped the quotes under relevant themes, eliminated overlapping or vague statements, and created an “unlisted” document with constituents that don’t fit elimination or grouping. Once the initial themes were identified, I considered the transcripts to eventually arrive at what I hope/believe are the essences of their volunteering experiences. By obtaining feedback on the emerging themes from participants in the second interview as well as their further reflections on their experience based on hearing the collective meaning derived from all of the interviews, I then followed with a re-examination and consideration of the initial themes. Once satisfied that I have achieved a reasonable representation of the meaning of the volunteering experience based on all of the participants input, the essences of the experience became the basis for discussion of findings. Direct quotations taken from the interviews were used to exemplify the themes.

### 3.3.1 Rigour in research

My study attempted to qualify Tracy’s (2010) eight-point qualification of a strong qualitative study (see Table 2) according to which “high quality qualitative methodological research is marked by: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigour, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence” (p.840) (Tracy et al., 2017, p.2; Tracy, 2013, 2010). Although there are various frameworks for assessing the quality of research, this qualification has “advantages of being parsimonious and promoting dialogue amongst qualitative scholars from different paradigms” and thus “it has been cited over 1300 times” in a variety of qualitative ventures (Tracy et al., 2017).

To further solidify the rigour in, especially the interpretive phenomenological aspects of the research process, I was also mindful of Madison’s (1998) and van Manen’s criteria for judging rigour in interpretive phenomenological research, that includes- balanced integration (congruence of the theory, the researcher, and the research topic), openness (to scrutiny and presenting the decision trail) , concreteness (situating in contexts), resonance (presenting texts that invoke epiphany or sudden grasp of meaning), and actualization (potential of the study to be interpreted by future readers) (de Witt & Ploeg, 2006; Koch, 1996; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Madison, 1998; Sandelowski, 1986; van Manen, 1997b; Whitehead, 2004). The above criteria, more than often, run parallel to Tracy’s criteria (and, most times, refer to the same criteria).

**Table 2**. Tracy's (2010) 8-point qualification of a strong qualitative study guiding this study

| Qualification | Definition |
|---|---|
| Worthy topic | Research topic is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting |
| Rich rigour | Use of sufficient, abundant, appropriate, & complex – theories, data and times in field, sample(s), context(s), data collection and analysis processes |
| Sincerity | Ensure self- reflexivity and transparency |
| Credibility | Focus on showing than telling, triangulation or crystallization, multivocality, member reflections |
| Resonance | Influence, impact, or move readers |
| Significant contribution | Significant either conceptually/ theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically, or/ and heuristically |
| Ethics | Consideration of procedural ethics, situational & culturally specific ethics, relational ethics, and exiting ethics |
| Meaningful coherence | Study achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures as stated, meaningfully interconnects research steps |

## 3.4 Positionality

> Researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal. (Berger, 2015, p.220)

It is important to briefly highlight how I identify myself, my philosophies, and their origin as I consider how my positionality may have played out in this study. As the data flows through me, it is imperative to realize that my experiences and learning inevitably reflects in my interpretations. Similarly, diversity in interpretations based on different positionalities of readers who consume this research are quite likely. Consequently, I appreciate the possibilities of discourse and observations emerging from this study to register and impact differently for the researcher and readers, I do not insist on rationalizing this research to be bias free. By being reflexive, I made every effort to avoid imposing my beliefs or perspectives, and rather, privilege the participants' perspectives. Therefore, I present this positionality statement to further the goals of reflexivity, rigour, trustworthiness, and transparency.

I want to discuss my stance on identity positions in this statement in particular.

> Scholars have noted that it is not only important to note how collective identities are imposed, but also to understand how individuals, as members of the collective, make sense of and navigate through these images to create their own identity positions. (Ghosh, 2013, p.42)

I identify as a female, South Asian Indian immigrant, postgraduate student, researcher, and a volunteer for a non-profit community organization. I came to Canada from India in 2019 to pursue my postgraduate degree program in recreation and leisure studies, and to build my life in the country. I base the realization of my identity as South Asian Indian on my subjective understanding of ethnic origin (often interchangeably used with country of birth) and culture (the language, values, and traditions that I and my family experienced and continue to experience, and that have foundations in historical and sociopolitical contexts). In addition, acknowledging my identify serves to even more so give a context of my background to the other (Farver et al., 2002; Iwamoto et al., 2013). While in India, I never discussed my South Asian Indian identity as I was among the dominant ethnicities in India. In Canada, I would not necessarily place an emphasis on introducing myself with this identity (my accent and colour would probably be sufficient to make the other guess my collective identity) as I believe that the conflicted imaginations of 'South Asia' or 'India' as one region, and "partial unrealistic claims about 'South Asians' or 'South Asian Indians' in the Canadian diaspora can create insurmountable barriers for intellectual understanding of the diverse communities caught up in this terminology" (Ghosh, 2013, p.48).

Nevertheless, I do want to identify as South Asian Indian as I feel a sense of belongingness within the community in a relatively new country, and more so than any other reason, I do feel that if I appropriate and internalize the symbols of the identity, and therefore receive additional grounds of relatability to orient the people to work for the community. These ideas may be the roots for my aspirations to become a volunteer with a cultural community organization. Furthermore, identifying with the community identity gets even stronger for me when the feelings of empathy, sadness, and angst take over, such as now when the community (including the community in India) is going through struggles with the socio-political climate and the pandemic. Thus, instead of abandoning an aspect of my collective identity from my consciousness, I embrace it so that I play a role in furthering the knowledge on diverse

experiences (as somewhat of an insider) that happens to have an inkling to India or South Asia, deflecting stereotypical ideas of national identities, and supporting work for the community.

Apart from working on my postgraduate studies last year, I also directed efforts to build a network of people around me and to seek income generating opportunities. When the world was hit by the pandemic in early 2020, my daily life, leisure, and work was mostly at home. I cannot pinpoint what it was, but between a need to commit to a new pursuit, want to be closer to the community, interest in working for the community, newfound availability of time and ways of access (digital) to new pursuits, or non-availability of time and resources to allow commitment to other pursuits, I became a volunteer for a community organization in mid-2020. Back in my native land, India, I did not pursue volunteering on a regular basis or very often, and only did it for charitable causes that mostly required me to spend time with the beneficiaries. As a teen, I was briefly a part of *The Bharat Scouts and Guides*, a national volunteer program that runs on the mission of working for the constructive good of the country and helping people. The program ran high on physical fitness, camp experiences, and some charitable engagements; but I do not remember the impact being significant enough for me to continue the program in later years.

Since the time I began ideating my study in 2020 until today in 2023, my volunteering commitments have changed from being extremely involved to being involved only if I have the time apart from my study, research, and part-time jobs. I also got married in 2021, which may be a reason for more time and efforts being directed towards settling down personally, instead of committing more to volunteering. I do hope to get back to my regular volunteering hours next year once I wrap up my study program and have more time. Although I am not a volunteer at the time of defending this study and I will not be working as a volunteer during the remainder phases of the study program, I am aware that all of the aforementioned aspects may have influenced my interpretations of the participants' volunteering experiences. However, along with being reflexive throughout the research process, I acknowledge that my positionality is also an advantage. By having a shared conversation and arriving at a collaborative understanding of the experience (as well as the role that motivations and community identity might have played), I believe my past experiences and perspectives would have contributed to arriving at a better and co-created understanding of the participants' volunteering experiences.

# Chapter 4. Volunteering Stories of South Asian Indians in Canada

This chapter discusses the four key themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants. These themes appear to capture the fundamental nature of participants' volunteering experiences: (1) Volunteering Interpretations- Different in native and immigrant countries, (2) Settlement goals and leisure goals are primary volunteer motives, (3) The SAI community cushion, and (4) Interactions of volunteer meaning, motives, and identities on daily life. A further group of sub-themes surfaced that provided some nuance to the nature of the participants' experiences and also conveyed a deeper contextual understanding of these experiences. These themes and sub-themes were incorporated into the framework that structured the representation of findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

## 4.1 Volunteering Interpretations: Different in native and immigrant countries

In the participants stories of what it means to volunteer, it was evident that the understanding of what it means to volunteer in Canada is different from what it is in India. To arrive at volunteering interpretations in both contexts, participants invariably chose to discuss the factors that contributed to meaning- making and the ways in which volunteering emerged into consciousness. The following section describes how these factors were experienced by the participants and the description will be supported by relevant participant quotes.

### 4.1.1 Meaning making and emergence of volunteering into consciousness

For the participants, the meaning making and the conceptual emergence of volunteering in consciousness often occurred simultaneously. On one hand, meaning making happened by considering the nature of the volunteering activity, the benefits of engaging in the activity, factors influencing free-will that drove the engagement, gauging if the engagement was a formal or an informal one, and the interpretations of others in the community. On the other hand, volunteering as a concept was brought to consciousness depending on how popular volunteering

was in the surroundings, how important was it to be aware of volunteering in one's life, how important was it to be included in the daily life, and how easy was it to access the volunteering opportunity. Although similar factors emerged in the discussion of what volunteering was in the Canadian and Indian contexts, the influence and interaction of these factors with each other were different in both contexts.

***Meaning making:***

When participants made meaning of volunteering in Canada, they envisioned the role of benefits more than the nature of the volunteering activity, whereas the latter would be considered more in the narratives of what volunteering was in India. Participants saw an experience as volunteering in Canada if it presented any benefits for self and the other. Volunteering was more than often perceived as an opportunity ladder that could help in securing a desired job, a professional network, platforms for professional skilling and growth, etc. all of which that could further help in achieving some or all of an individual's settlement goals.

> … I feel like here in Canada, it's [volunteering is] a lot more about building your CV and like networking. At the end of the day, it kind of helps you in some way because you have done volunteering for this organization, or then there may be somebody who may hire you because they will probably appreciate the skills used in that volunteer work. They may look at your volunteering experiences and relate with some. So that will basically help them in understanding what skills you can work with... things like that are considered here in Canada. (Chandra)

When volunteering wasn't discussed about professional opportunities, volunteering was observed as medium to obtain leisure benefits in Canada. Formal unpaid engagements where individuals gained a sense of community, cultural leisure, stress-relief, hobby-like leisure, etc. were considered volunteering in Canada.

> … I wanted to be involved in all things Malayali [a specific Indian community] or all things Indian, because I want to enjoy that part of my life and not be too detached from it, now that I'm in Canada … And I knew that if I join it

> [volunteering organization], I'll be connected with the community and I'll be able to do something for the community. (Varun)

Participants recognized the volunteering engagements as leisure mediums in the Indian context as well. However, those engagements were often referred to as leisure activities and seldom as volunteering. In contrast with what volunteering in Canada meant in terms of benefits, no participant understood volunteering in India as a means to obtain professional benefits.

> … I have always been interested in community work and but in India it's not really called volunteering, it's really doing something for your leisure. (Varun)

In fact, more than the benefits, volunteering in India was understood in terms of the nature of the activity. What typically may be recognized as volunteering in Canada was more commonly associated in India with expressions like "social service", "non-governmental organization work", "philanthropy", "charity", and religious service or "*seva*".

> … It was volunteer work, but I never guessed that it was called volunteer work or that I recognized myself as a volunteer. It's not like I didn't understand the meaning of the word volunteering, but we just called it social service ... (Anand)

Activities that involved religion-driven service and community service were acknowledged as volunteering in India. These meanings became more prominent for volunteers who shared volunteering experiences with their family members.

> … I wasn't going to a different place to kind of do volunteering. I mean, we just go to temple and do whatever charitable stuff we have to do and that was really it. So, people around me would also do a lot of charity work and, you know, volunteer their time and people contribute their time to make temple food for all the people who come there and for homeless people, and, you know, do all of that. So, I've done that. But that's really it. So I've went with my parents, helped

> out, and then ya [yes], that was the kind of volunteering I did back in India. (Radha)

The SAI participants recognized volunteering in Canada as a platform to serve the community, but they did not see this as a key tenet of volunteering in Canada. Community service was observed as a later thought or as a by-product of volunteering.

> I do feel good to volunteer and in realizing that the community is benefitting too, but I have to say, this feeling is good and like a sweet by-product of volunteering work [in Canada]. (Sheena)

In addition to the consideration of benefits, the nature of volunteering activity, and the level of organization; the meaning making of volunteering also had to do with how volunteering was perceived to be interpreted by others. The volunteering-like activities in India are perceived to be respected by the other because the community in India was observed to value altruistic engagements more than the engagements done for personal benefits. There was more respect for individuals who volunteered as an additional activity in their busy lives that, because of the perceptions that volunteering was done for religious or altruistic purposes and no prospect of any professional or materialistic gain.

> And if not all, some are very actively involved. Through word of mouth, people learn about it, and everyone then wants to do it because it's seen as a work of God. So even if people have other things in their life, and volunteering options ... the proper organization [formal organization] ones aren't much around, whenever it is possible, people will go to religious places and contribute money or help people in any way that is possible then. (Sharon)

For some of the participants, volunteering in Canada was understood as a way to achieve settlement goals (see later in Section 4.3). According to them, the individuals who volunteered and were yet to achieve the settlement goals, such as income generating employment, were given less regard by the community. Despite the participant experiences that highlighted volunteering as quality work in Canada and as something that asked for a lot of efforts as well as time,

volunteering in Canada was not realized as an engagement that got the same respect as a paid job from the community.

> But, you know, as a newcomer, just most of my friends and relatives were wary of volunteering [in Canada]. They told me ... No, you should not waste your time doing volunteering. Instead try to find a job and make money. That's what you have to do. (Sheena)

> Yes, some of my friends think it's easy and when I talk about volunteering responsibilities, they do not give it as much respect as what a paying job conversation would get. But that's okay, I must have felt the same way about volunteering [in Canada] too before I was one. So, I can understand where they are coming from. (Anand)

The other factor that impacted the understood meaning of volunteering was free will. The participants understood the engagement to be voluntary or based on choice in both the Indian and Canadian contexts. However, in the Canadian contexts, free will was tied with a life-need to achieve settlement goals in Canada. Attaining this life-need was more significant to free will than the consideration of how one will fit volunteering in daily routines in Canada.

> So, when I came here and I started searching for job, someone told me that you need experience before, to get hired in some jobs. So volunteering was the best option. I was a newcomer, and I came to know that although volunteering is unpaid and we have to devote our time, that will give me experience. I had to do it ... I had to take out time to do this. (Sheena)

Similarly, when volunteering in Canada was observed as leisure medium, volunteering was referred to as an engagement driven by free will where the willingness was tied to achieving leisure. However, such meanings of volunteering in Canada emerged when volunteers had either achieved a sense of control over their daily routines and/ or had achieved a sense of settlement in Canada.

> It was natural for me to kind of join it. There wasn't too much thought into it. And I engaged in volunteering [in Canada] because this was something that I would be doing anyway. It's just that I finally have the time and space in life to volunteer, and be more regular. (Varun)

For some contexts, free will was not only influenced by motivations to achieve respective leisure or settlement goals, but it also interacted with how volunteering emerged as a concept into consciousness. For instance, participants identified daily routines in India to be busy and the leisure motivations not strong enough to sustain regular volunteering engagements in daily life. In such cases, volunteering was understood as leisure-motivated engagements pursued out of free will wherein the willingness to volunteer wasn't definite, but sporadic.

> … So back in India, the life was very busy, but I have volunteered in India on a very informal basis… With time, I was also involved with it [volunteering], although not like consistently … office, home, family, office, home, family … It was mostly that. (Faiz)

***Conceptual emergence of volunteering in consciousness:***

From the participant narratives, it was evident that volunteering emerged into consciousness when there was a certain level of popularity, accessibility, relevancy to life stage and relevancy to the daily routine in both contexts. All these factors interacted with meaning making and eventually contributed to volunteering interpretations. When it came to the factors of popularity and accessibility, volunteering was recognized as an established concept in Canada, more so than in the Indian contexts. This was because volunteering was observed to be more popular, diverse, and easily accessible in Canada.

> … I've never had to, like, look too hard here [Canada]. Everywhere you look, there's always people asking for volunteers. And then once you volunteer, you somehow remain connected because people add your name to their subscriptions and lists... in their network … (Chandra)

> … In Canada, there is volunteer work of all kinds, with big organizations, private organizations, with the government, with the community, independent setups, and online or remote volunteering options are also many here … (Reema)

Moreover, as opposed to the Indian contexts, volunteering received direct attention right from an individual's teenage years in Canada. For instance, one of the participants did her senior year of high school in Canada and was exposed to volunteering as part of the school curriculum.

> I actually learned about it [volunteering] when I started high school because I had to get 30 to 40 hours of volunteer hours in order to graduate high school. So that is when I first heard about volunteering and actually started looking for places to volunteer to complete hours. (Aishwarya)

In comparison with the Canadian context, when the participants discussed the concept of volunteering in India, they recognized the different volunteering-like activities in India, but found the terminology "volunteering" to be less popular in India. Additionally, despite some awareness of formal volunteering in India, most participants experienced informal volunteering in India.

> … I know, like during the pandemic or after that, there are people who were supporting others in the community, but the term, volunteering, is not that popular. You know, they are helping the community and that is unpaid work. They're attending to the community ... offering services, but the term volunteering is not widely used [in India]. They would just say that they are like a group or association working for others. That's it ... (Sheena)

> … Volunteering is not common in India as a conversational topic… charity or philanthropy yes, but not volunteering. This is in spite of the fact that there are thousands of NGOs and organizations that work for the community. They have

> volunteers, and the volunteers work for the love of doing social service, and that's the only reason in my opinion. (Faiz)

Reasons expressed for less awareness of volunteering as a concept in India were busy life and everyday routines that had no space for any other engagement apart from home and work duties. In fact, most participants who had awareness and/ or a history of volunteering in India were because they had family members who engaged in volunteering.

> … I was basically studying or working. So, I was very busy, my everyday routine had no space. So, I never got the time to actually go out and do volunteering [in India]. (Varun)

> … So I've went with my parents, helped out, and then that was the kind of volunteering I did back in India. (Radha)

The other reason why volunteering was observed to be more established as a concept in Canada than in India was the popular relationship of professional or personal benefit with volunteering in Canada. These benefits can appear so relevant to an individual's life stage and to what the individual wishes to achieve then, that it allows volunteering to catch attention in daily routines.

> It was so hectic then. I went to university … I did my part-time job … I took care of my kids. There was no time in my life for another full-time commitment. Volunteering was the only way to gain experience and have something on the resume. (Sheena)

On the contrary, volunteering doesn't seem to be a regular engagement in the busy daily routines in India. This is because the leisure benefits, altruistic motives or religious sentiment-driven goals weren't perceived to be significant enough that they attract more frequent and regular volunteering engagement in daily life in India. This is one of the reasons why volunteering was understood as engagements that occurred intermittently and that depended on other factors contributing to an individual's daily life.

> We never think so seriously about volunteering in India because everybody is engaged somewhere or the other. Life is so fast and busy, especially for working class people. When people get time, they will do volunteering type things. I don't think many do it consistently. I can say for myself that I didn't. Generally, people in their twenties and thirties are more concerned about job and income then. (Faiz)

From the findings described so far, it may imply that volunteering interpretations vary with subjective processes of meaning- making and how volunteering emerges into consciousness. When it came to meaning- making, the participants considered the nature of volunteering activity, the benefits of engaging in the activity, factors influencing free-will that drove the engagement, if the engagement was a formal or an informal one, and the interpretations of others in the community. All of these factors appeared and interacted differently to contribute to meaning making processes, and these processes further interacted with the dynamics of how volunteering emerges into consciousness. Volunteering as a concept was brought to consciousness depending on how popular volunteering was in the surroundings, how important it was to be aware of volunteering in one's life, how important it was to be included in daily life, and how easy it was to access the volunteering opportunity. What the findings also present is that the emergence of volunteering in consciousness did not happen in isolation with meaning making, instead it often occurred simultaneously with meaning making processes to develop a sense of what the volunteering experience is. Moreover, both these processes appeared differently based on whether the individual volunteered for leisure or to achieve some sort of settlement goal. Thus, it became vital to consider the volunteering motivations to better understand the diversity in how volunteering interpretations look for SAIs.

## 4.2 Settlement Goals and Leisure Goals are primary volunteer motives

As evident from the findings discussed in the previous section, the most common volunteering motivations for the participants were settlement goals and leisure goals. Depending on the individual's demographic characteristics, professional desires, time since immigration,

satisfaction with lifestyle, and daily routines, motivations to volunteer vary. The following sub-section provides a detailed description of how participants discussed volunteering motivations and how these varied based on leisure and settlement goals.

### 4.2.1 When volunteering competes or complements settlement and leisure goals

When motivations were steered by settlement goals, volunteering was more of a need-based engagement to achieve desired professional opportunities, professional skills, income-generating employment, professional and community networks, pre-set living standards or lifestyle, financial security, contentment with routine life, and so on.

> I wasn't looking only for volunteering work. I was looking for any job or anyway where I can be a part of a more recognized setting and build skills. I just didn't want to be a student the whole time. If it was pure interest based, I would have joined acting classes or some volunteer theatre group. But I wanted something that can be later applied in a more professional or job-related context. So, my criteria was job [volunteer role] profile, you know, what the work involved … (Anand)

Whereas when leisure goals were motives, volunteering was more of a choice-based engagement to obtain a sense of leisure, stress- relief, therapy, freedom, enjoyment, etc.

> I don't expect any pay out of it [volunteering]. I enjoy doing this. (Varun)

Settlement goals and leisure goals emerged differently for SAI participants who were newcomers (less than 7 years of residence in Canada) or were new-in-profession in Canada, and for participants who achieved a sense of settlement (or achieved their settlement goals) in Canada.

***Volunteers yet to achieve settlement- Volunteering to obtain what's vital in the vision board***

For newcomer or new-in-profession SAI volunteers, settlement goals drove volunteering motivations. Some participants volunteered to obtain knowledge, networks, and work experience that would eventually help in securing paid employment.

> But, you know, as a newcomer … I want to get to know more about the community and involve with the Canadian culture by volunteering … and all this because I need to add it to my resume. (Sheena)

> I would say when I started, my main goal was that I have to learn. And I wanted to make connections and I wanted to get a job, so I would say all the boxes were checked when I thought of volunteering. (Reema)

For some participants, it was critical to choose volunteering roles that offer experience specific to the professional field and that can support career development in the preferred field.

> I would like to sign up for more volunteer work and maybe engage in something related to what I want to pursue as a career. I am still finding my way here in designing and marketing. That would be better because I want to do something related to, like, maybe marketing or illustration or graphic designing or something like that from which I can actually gain more experience in my field ... It's great volunteering for [this organization], and I did manage to have some contacts here because of volunteering. But yes, I now want to have more hands-on work experience in designing. (Chandra)

Some newcomer participants identified themselves as part of the larger immigrant community and discussed volunteering motivations to be similar for their community. These motivations were primarily driven by settlement goals.

> Well … I can say for immigrants like me you know … work permit or international students … temporary residents ... Reasons to volunteer can be

> different for people who are natives or have been here for most of their life. People like me are looking for solid grounds first, you know … money, job, family, friends, home, etc. and these are on our mind even when are searching for volunteer work ... can this role help me in meeting the right people? can this help me find a good job? can this make be capable of getting a skilled job? can I make connections with people here? ... (Anand)

Settlement goals also included acculturation goals in Canada. Some of the participants volunteered to develop their communication abilities with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

> … like the communication part of it, talking to different people, that is basically one of the main reasons I became a volunteer so that I can meet people and get out of my shell really, and talk to different people, and learn how to start a conversation basically. Because at the end of the day, if I work somewhere or just like, if I attend university too, I cannot just sit and not talk to anyone. When I am volunteering, and when we are all sitting in a room waiting for the supervisors to tell us what we're supposed to do, we can't just like be looking at each other's faces right, so there are so many opportunities for me to like, actually talk to different people and basically make new friends. I made quite a few friends volunteering and they're all from different diverse backgrounds and different sexual orientations. And it's been a huge learning experience. (Chandra)

For newcomer or new-in-profession SAI volunteers, leisure goals were either not discussed or were secondary motives to volunteer.

> This experience has been very helpful. I have become more confident in teaching and managing a room full of kids. It is also rewarding when you help the kids and they would just like, stick around you and just be friendly. And then when I go there, they would say things like, I'm glad you're here or if you skip someday, they see you and say things like, I missed you, where were you... It is rewarding

> to see that they care. So, the work becomes really enjoyable for me, and I look forward to working there. (Aishwarya)

Leisure goals also emerged when there were contextual determinants, for ex. when one of the participants had legal work restrictions because of being a temporary resident in Canada, volunteering was done primarily to avoid having a professional gap in the resume and to find happiness in being occupied. In other words, leisure motives for volunteering were responses to contextual barriers that came in the way of achieving settlement goals in Canada.

> I wanted to work but I couldn't get paid. I couldn't look for a job because I was not allowed to. It was not legal, but I wanted to work. I have always been working. I wanted to feel that happiness when I do those things ... when I am active and working. I am not used to being a homemaker all the time … So, I thought why don't I volunteer and utilize my time because there is always opportunity to learn. I think in volunteer work, there are a lot of opportunities especially in US and Canada. So, I started doing that. (Reema)

> I can't say for residents or citizens of Canada, but from my experience, when one is a student or on a work permit here, especially when one is a student, I mean on an international student visa, options are really not much. There are work restrictions, work-hour restrictions, so how do you build your skills … Forget skills, how do you make networks here? I am an introvert and as much as I want to be with people, it's not in my nature to go to cafes or events and just start up talking to strangers. Volunteering is really the only way where people like me can build networks [social] and understand culture here … how people talk, how people work, etc. etc. And so, I joined [this organization] as a volunteer for the same reason. (Anand)

When it came to the number of years of being a resident in Canada, a greater number of years did not always mean that the individuals would have achieved a sense of settlement in Canada (for ex. achieving the ideal professional status did not depend on the number of years of

residence in Canada as the ideal status can be subjective, everchanging, and dependent on other life factors). Consequently, in such situations too, volunteering was driven primarily by settlement goals. For instance, one of the participants with over 20+ years of residence-history in Canada volunteered to build her entrepreneurial future.

> It took me time to find my groove professionally and the way that I found it was by quitting my job, following my entrepreneurial interests, and by volunteering with [this organization]. (Radha)

When the volunteering motivations were driven by settlement goals, participants considered the organizational factors and volunteering workload. The organizational factors included relationships within the organization (ex. with colleagues and supervisors), and the organization's policies catering to the volunteers. Firstly, as far as the relationships are concerned, when volunteers had a good camaraderie with their colleagues, volunteering motivations were sustained. For some participants, good camaraderie was also perceived to be a result of identifying the colleagues as SAI. With the supervisors, when volunteers felt that their opinions were given regard, they had regular check-ins, and they received appreciation for their work; volunteering motivations were furthered.

> Also, one of the other main factors that I really enjoy volunteering is that I have a lot of fun with the people I am volunteering with. We get along really well, and we have similar interests in art, and we have good conversations. We keep trying to encourage each other to go talk to people and figure out how to do our jobs. I feel like we all work really well together, and we are really friendly. (Chandra)

> If in case you're not being appreciated for your work, or not even getting a verbal appreciation or written appreciation is not there, because see, it's a volunteer thing. You can't get paid for it, but we don't do anything without any kind of reward, be it monetary or any kind of reward. So, if that is not there, then I think that a sense of willingness or motivation goes away. (Reema)

And secondly, when it comes to organizational policies; volunteering motivations were affected when the volunteering contracts were ambiguous, there were no policies that accounted for volunteer's welfare, and there was no internal system regulating these policies within the organization. The participants expressed that organizations often fail to give clear guidelines on volunteer roles and responsibilities, all of which impact the volunteering experience negatively.

> So probably when it's like in a formal setting, and there is no cohesiveness of terms, I don't like it. Or like there should be an initial contract with terms and conditions which was not there for these places that I volunteered with. (Radha)

The ambiguity in the volunteer contracts was also discussed to be misused, wherein volunteers were expected to commit to more work or volunteering time.

> I think people like me, who are non confrontational and who can't say no, need to be in volunteer organizations that are caring and don't use their volunteers. Organizations in my experience have taken me for granted at times. More work, and recognition that doesn't feel always from the heart. (Reema)

In addition, the participants shared that the organizations usually lack an internal body that considers volunteers' grievances. The participants discussed how the absence of strong policies can promote systemic barriers and extreme situations wherein volunteers can feel indifference, negligence, disrespect, and in some cases racism.

> So, we invested a lot of time in preparing the resource materials and … I think there was racism. That's within the system like it was very much evident that this was one of the many reasons why a group of Members did not want us to come up with this project… That was a tough time. You know, we talked just in our group, we were just talking back and forth, but because of the hierarchy … those people on the top, they were from particular ethnic group, and they wanted to keep their work at front. They put us down completely. (Sheena)

***Volunteers with settlement satisfaction- Volunteering to obtain what's luxury in the vision board***

For SAI participants who acknowledged a sense of control and satisfaction with their daily lives in Canada, settlement goals did not drive volunteering motivations. Such participants volunteered to achieve leisure goals. When such was the case, on one hand, there were participants who were aware of the leisure benefits that volunteering can offer.

> I actually joined this place after I lost my family dog and then I didn't want to own a dog … it is all very therapeutic for me and that is why I do it. (Faiz)

On the other hand, there were some participants who discovered that volunteering can not only support settlement goals, but it can also result in leisure. And so, for some participants, leisure goals as motives emerged when participants had positive experiences of volunteering that involved positive interactions with the benefactors and attainment of leisure in the experiences. With such experiences, participants considered leisure goals in selecting later volunteering roles.

> There was a transition in the purpose because I said my initial purpose was to get familiar with this Canadian culture and to get a good job. But gradually there was a shift. I started feeling like I should do something to support the community. I should break away from the routine of going to work and then home and the same thing everyday. I felt that I should do something for the community. That is something more rewarding. And I took volunteering as a passion. Now I volunteer because I actually find personal satisfaction in it. (Sheena)

When the volunteering motivations were driven by leisure goals, participants also considered aspects such as the authority and autonomy that they had as a volunteer. It was important for the participants to have decision-making responsibilities in their volunteering roles.

> I mean ... if I don't feel I am making direct contribution to community by using my leadership or I don't get platform to do what I want to do for the community,

> why associate with the volunteer organization. I can very well do my own thing for the community or give my time to where I am needed more. It's not like my way or highway situation... but I have realized that I volunteer with more excitement when I know that my thoughts are required and are important for the decision-making of projects. (Radha)

The absence of some of these factors had the potential to question volunteering engagement entirely. In addition, what influenced volunteering sustenance were factors that impacted daily-life and that can be very individualistic, such as the weather, which was also discussed to influence leisure-motivated volunteering engagements.

> I get affected by how the weather is. I remember this one time, when it was so hot here, peak of summers, that I couldn't enjoy being on the fields. I was sweating, and I just couldn't feel comfortable working outside. That's my least favorite experience of volunteering … I didn't go [volunteering] for a couple of times after that day. (Sharon)

Looking at these findings, what emerges isthat irrespective of their demographic characteristics, individuals who continue to envision the accomplishment of their respective settlement goals concerning survival, lifestyle, networks, profession, etc. in Canada primarily volunteer to achieve these goals. On the contrary, the individuals who acknowledge relatively little to no worry about achieving settlement in Canada volunteer for leisure-motivated reasons. Not only this, but their volunteering experiences can carry the consciousness of an individual's SAI community identity, which in turn interacts with and influences the volunteering motivations for some participants. Therefore, it became imperative to explore the role of the SAI community identity in the participants' volunteering experiences.

## 4.3 The SAI Community Cushion

As discussed in the previous section, when individuals are driven by settlement goals, they often look for some sense of familiarity in the volunteering contexts. Out of the many factors, one that appears to impact familiarity more vividly for the participants of this study was

the SAI identity. In addition to the participants who volunteered to achieve settlement goals, some participants who volunteered for leisure also strived for familiarity in volunteering engagements. These were volunteers who engaged in volunteering specifically to obtain leisure from engaging with the SAI community. Other than these individuals, the volunteers who did not actively seek SAI community connections did not discuss any benefit in achieving a sense of familiarity with the SAI identity in their volunteering contexts. The next section discusses the situations when the participants of this study required the cushioning support of the SAI identity and the situations when the SAI identity did not matter as much in volunteering decisions.

### 4.3.1 Donning the SAI community identity to seek familiarity in Canadian contexts

Depending on volunteering motivations, participants were either not bothered about the cultural community context or were cognizant of the SAI community context. When the SAI community contexts emerged, they appeared as one that offered familiarity or relatability to the volunteers. This came about more in two situations, firstly, when volunteer motivations were driven by settlement goals (and primarily professional goals) in Canada. And secondly, when the volunteers wanted to meet leisure goals by getting involved with their SAI cultural community and cultural practices. The SAI community contexts were not a consideration for volunteering when the participants did not actively seek any connections with the SAI community or cultural practices. In such situations, the expectations from volunteering were not to have leisure out of culture- specific practices and SAI community connections but to obtain leisure by engaging in other personal interests, hobby-like activities, new experiences, and in developing new personal relationships (with no cultural or community context undertones).

When participants looked for familiarity and relatability to help achieve their respective settlement goals, they chose to volunteer with the SAI team, SAI organization, or/ and SAI beneficiaries. Some participants were conscious that by choosing to volunteer with people from the SAI community, they may have better chances of landing the volunteer role, they may have a smoother volunteering journey, and they may have an easier learning curve with people who they can relate with in terms of their cultural identity.

> I have another level of understanding and friendship with the team here and maybe its because we all have similar background. I may have been able to develop similar friendships if people in the team were not Indians or South Asians, but it would have gone through an initial phase of hesitations and you know, gauging when to say something, what not to say, and things like that. (Anand)

What was apparent in the volunteering stories of these participants was that; it was a conscious decision to identify self with the SAI community and to volunteer with the SAI community before searching for volunteer roles. This was because the SAI community contexts were perceived as factors that may cushion their volunteering experience that had been undertaken to achieve settlement goals.

> So yes, association with Indianness plays a role when I chose volunteering roles or organization. (Reema)

> But [this volunteering organization] especially, I came to know that it worked with South Asians. So, then I applied to become a volunteer there and there like I told you ... so all of them were Indians. (Sheena)

For some participants, considerations of SAI community contexts were an afterthought and emerged during their search for volunteer positions. For example, participants shared that there are volunteering roles that specifically mention the eligibility preferences of SAI or South Asians in their advertisements. Even though the volunteers may not be looking for familiarity or relatability from SAI contexts, such adverts catch attention. In some cases, participants apply for such roles thinking that this may be easy to get because of the eligibility criterion, or because of subconsciously or consciously hoping to benefit from the SAI community cushion.

> I was looking for volunteer work to gain experience of tutoring. I applied to [this organization] that wanted Indian tutors with Hindi or Malayalam language abilities. I mean, that was their preferred criteria. So, I knew I can get this easily.

> So as a volunteer tutor for English language, they [organization] pick volunteers from like different ethnicities and match them with kids of the same ethnicity. So, I get matched with people who are also South Indians. And it is like that for other volunteers. They [organization] match them [volunteer tutors and beneficiaries] accordingly to make sure both tutor and learner speak this language, and so that tutor can communicate with the parents if need be. (Aishwarya)

The other reason why participants exhibited their SAI identities and consciously volunteered with the SAI community was that participants wanted to be in touch with their culture (cultural community and cultural practices). Participants did not want to be too detached from the cultural contexts. They discussed that it was important for them and their respective families to be connected with the SAI community in Canada.

> I guess the most important criterion was to volunteer for community stuff because I wanted to be involved in all things Malayali or all things Indian, because I want to enjoy that part of my life and not be too detached from it especially now that I am in Canada. I have been away from India for so long, and have children who are growing up and need to know their roots. (Varun)

When participants did not have people from the SAI community in their close circle, they shared how their life would seem incomplete or that they would feel loneliness.

> Without having our 'desi log' [slang for SAI people], it can be so lonely here ... 'khali, khali' [Hindi for empty, empty] feelings. Before this work, I missed home all the time. Now it's better. (Reema)

Practicing the cultural ways (ex. celebrating culture- specific festivals) and having conversations about it (ex. about traditional food recipes and clothing, religious rituals, cultural arts and movies, etc.) were events that were perceived to not feel the same if they happened in solitude or outside the SAI community. Participants observed volunteering as a way to connect

with the SAI community in Canada and in hopes to continue their respective cultural ways in Canada similar to what they would do in India.

> … we mostly get South Asian community folks at our events. People get so much joy and satisfaction in participating in these cultural events and they join the events with their family and friends. So, it's great to see that. I get to be a part of the culture doing these events too. If not for this volunteering role, I would have missed such events. In India, this was such a regular thing, so if not for this, I would have constant 'FOMO' [acronym for "fear of missing out"] (Anand)

In situations when the expectations from volunteering were to obtain leisure from interests other than SAI culture- specific practices and SAI community connections, SAI community contexts were not important in the volunteering experience. Participants did not reflect on their community identity when searching and choosing for volunteer roles.

> … it doesn't really matter where you come from or what your background is, right, because there will be some people in every culture who will love to play with dogs or be with dogs or be there for dogs. (Faiz)

Not only was SAI community identity irrelevant in choosing volunteer roles, but the volunteering experiences allowed the participants to be oblivious to their SAI community identity.

> I think volunteering is one of the experiences which makes me feel even less aware of who or how I am. (Sharon)

During the interviews, some of these participants talked about liking their experiences of working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. While appreciating this diversity, some participants may have realized their own SAI community identity.

> It makes me feel more inclusive and more devoted towards the cause because it is only in volunteering activities that I've seen people from all backgrounds. We all

> feel so united towards that certain cause that we forget whatever differences we all may have. And that I think is a very special and positive thing. (Sharon)

The findings under this theme seem to indicate that volunteering motivations help to determine the significance of community identity in volunteering experiences. When individuals want to achieve their settlement goals in Canada or when individuals want to connect with the SAI community, identifying with the SAI community identity becomes an essence of the overall volunteering experience. In contrast, when participants volunteer to achieve leisure that is not specific to connecting with the SAI community, identifying with the SAI community becomes insignificant to the overall volunteering experience.

What can be seen from the findings of the themes described so far is that volunteering experiences may entail an impact on one's daily life. The experiences have the potential to either deter or further the goals of achieving happiness with everyday living. As it started to become apparent that the volunteering experiences create an impact on life beyond volunteering contexts for some participants, it became imperative to explore such findings further.

## 4.4 Impact on Daily Life

Volunteering experiences involve interrelated factors of volunteering motivations, leisure or stress outcomes, impact on daily life, and continuing engagement. Volunteering was observed to impact daily life both positively and negatively. The impacts on daily life were positive when the volunteering motivations were sustained or enhanced. On the other hand, when the motivations to volunteer faded, volunteering experience led to stress that translated into daily life. And for some participants, these positive or negative impacts on daily life were consequently responsible for sustaining or quitting volunteering. Irrespective of whether volunteering motivations were driven by settlement goals or leisure goals, leisure outcomes from the volunteering experience translated into positive outcomes in daily life and sustained volunteering engagement. Similarly, negative outcomes like stress from the volunteering experience resulted in negative outcomes in daily life, that consequently led to intermittent volunteering or quitting volunteering entirely. The next section presents the findings specific to the impact of participants' volunteering experiences on daily life.

### 4.4.1 Interactions of volunteer meanings, motives, and identities on daily life

When motivations were driven by settlement goals and volunteering experiences facilitated in getting closer to, or achieving, or enhancing those goals, participants experienced contentment from the experiences. Such experiences were observed to impact critical aspects of daily life (e.g., getting a desired job).

> I knew that people who are part of the organization had contacts who could be my clients in the future. So, I thought that this would be a great way to network and also like build my skills. I'll have the time to do all that by doing this volunteer work. So, I joined the organization … and it was a great learning experience. I had a very successful stint there. I learned so much. You know my creative skillset kept building every time. I found new clients. There were problems there but all in all it was very helpful too. (Radha)

When other aspects (home chores, work-time, relationships, etc.) of daily life were stressful and did not allow opportunities for stress-relief, socializing, and leisure indulgence, volunteering was observed to play a buffering role and facilitate positive outcomes in daily life.

> And just when I feel whatever stress that I have from my job or any kind of issues that I have, I just go there to refresh myself and to just forget all those issues that I may be having on those days. And then I just be with the dogs [during volunteering] and come home happy and relaxed. (Faiz)

Similarly, when participants couldn't utilize their time or skills in other aspects of life because of context-specific reasons (such as temporary visa restrictions on work), that in turn threatened their self-image and mental health, volunteering offered platforms to feel valued and have positive mental health outcomes.

> Like I said, I have always been a working woman. Sitting at home and just doing home things … to each his own, but I don't feel like my best version when that

happens. I start losing confidence. So, I knew I had to do something. Volunteering kept me busy, and it was good work. So, I didn't miss working a lot. (Reema)

The context-specific reasons also included the pandemic for some participants. Volunteering presented opportunities to experience outdoors and nature when other life aspects became restricted to indoors during peak COVID-19.

> I was so happy … just to go outside and do this. We had our distancing and everything … COVID and all right! I mean, I was working from home, gymming at my building, ordering grocery online, UberEats, video calls with friends and everyone … if not for this [volunteering] ... last year, I think I would have missed fresh air and sun for days together. It's funny but really that was the scene a while ago. It affects you also, just mentally ... and you don't realize. (Sharon)

When volunteering motivations are leisure goals and volunteering is experienced as leisure without any negative impacts on daily life, engagement is sustained as volunteering continues to look like a leisure-opportunity.

> I'm putting in the time and efforts, but it doesn't feel like work to me, or it doesn't stress me out too much because I enjoy doing this work. In fact, I look forward to volunteering time in the week. (Varun)

For some participants, volunteering is sustained because it is observed as the only way to achieve leisure goals. For instance, some participants wanted to help the community and/ or wanted to shake their otherwise monotonous routine, they saw volunteering as the way to do that.

> But gradually there was a shift. I started feeling like I should do something to support the community. I should break away from the routine of going to work and then home and the same thing everyday. I felt that I should do something for the community. That is something more rewarding. And I took volunteering as a

> passion. Now I volunteer because I actually find personal satisfaction in it. (Sheena)

Among the participants of this study who volunteered with leisure goals exclusively as motivations, there was no experience of any negative impact of volunteering on daily life. Experiences that impacted negatively on daily life were only with the participants who volunteered with motivations to achieve their settlement goals. Participants discussed four volunteering situations (that do not necessarily occur exclusively), that impacted negatively on daily life. One situation was when negative impacts were a consequence of engaging in volunteering activities that did not incline with their settlement goals.

> I kind of go with the flow anyway because I know that there is no point … because it's volunteer work. So, I am ready to do whatever they are asking me to do. But at the end of the day, I get a little disappointed that I cannot take more charge because we are not given proper instructions on how to do things. So that is the most disappointing part of it. It is because I expect them to give me better … And I am like why are we even here wasting our time? … That is super sad. And so, I don't know ... that is one of the reasons why I think I will quit for now, because it's not doing anything for me. (Chandra)

The second situation when there were negative impacts of volunteering on daily life was when participants experienced strain as a result of their relationships within the organization. Participants preferred not to volunteer in such situations, especially when the friendships at the organization weren't exclusive to the volunteering part of life.

> Being with friends in the organization sometimes is not the best idea because you get taken for granted. When you're thinking of a volunteering opportunity, you would think that you would be in control of how much time and how much effort you're going to give. But when you have friends where you volunteer and especially when you are friends with people who run the organization, there are chances of you being taken for granted and I realized that I was becoming a

> pushover for quite a few things. It reached to a point when I was so stressed because I couldn't say no. And I couldn't really cope with the amount of work that was given to me and despite, you know, trying to bring it up quite a few times, I wasn't really heard and so those times were really stressful, and it sometimes also messes up the friendships that you have. So, I am not sure whether to work with people you know, but for me, I think that was not the best idea. (Radha)

The third situation when there were negative impacts on daily life was when the organizational environment wasn't supportive of their volunteers. Participants experienced stress when: (1) they were not recognized for their work, (2) the workload was a lot, (3) there was no internal system that managed volunteer concerns, and (4) when organizational expectations crossed ethical boundaries. Participants found less value in continuing volunteering in such situations. For example, volunteers did not find tangible or monetary benefit as essential to continuing volunteering but the expectations to receive value and recognition in some form for their volunteering work was critical to sustaining volunteering engagement.

> So, if your organization doesn't give you that kind of respect and value or recognition, it does make you lose interest. And that may be happening now. This may be one of the reasons because of which I will think twice before signing up for volunteering next. I don't enjoy it a lot. I have been doing it for so long, and yeah, it gets you in a downward spiral thinking at times. Like okay, was I just wasting my time? Is my work not worth being appreciated? How will I know if I learnt something or not? What will I take from this when I apply for jobs? (Reema)

Another example of when volunteering wasn't sustained was when the volunteers did not see a robust internal body at the organization that managed volunteer concerns such as the concern about the unfair distribution of volunteer responsibilities among different volunteers.

> Also, there are a lot of people who are volunteer leaders of these organizations and who help to get funds in order to do things. And they are all volunteers as well, but they come into these roles to have respectable positions in the society … not naming anybody … but I've seen people who have been part of an organization and don't do anything. They just come for the photo-op events and that is ridiculous. So that is something that is bad, but I believe this happens with a lot of organizations … So, who to tell in these situations … And for volunteers like me who actually work more than we signed up for... it becomes unfair, it becomes toxic and because of all these reasons, I had to quit there. (Radha)

When volunteers experienced unfair distribution of volunteer responsibilities, it often translated to feeling overburdened with the additional workload. In such cases, volunteers preferred to switch to a full-time job instead of continuing volunteering at an organization that had no tangible benefit or appreciation but added stress for the volunteers.

> I had so much work and it stressed me out so much that I was always thinking about it and in times when I should be using my mind elsewhere, you know. That is something I would say we should change in the volunteering environment and because people … if they want that same stress level or burden … they will go for a full-time job rather than going for volunteer work. Volunteering should be more relaxed and easygoing to balance that stressed life that we generally have outside the volunteering environment. (Reema)

In addition to when the volunteers felt overburdened and a lack of empathetic support from the organization, some volunteers experienced subtle manipulation on the hands of superiors at the volunteering organization that made it difficult for volunteers to decline additional work. In such situations, the stress of volunteering work translated to other aspects of daily life.

> I remember a time when the workload was so much. I was doing one thing after the other without having the time to reflect on what I was doing. I wasn't enjoying

> it at all. It conflicted with my other life ... I was sleeping 4 hours everyday because I did not have the time to manage everything. And then I felt there was less empathy from our heads who just bombarded us with work. Their tone was almost begging … and not harsh … they must be under pressure too … but then who decides how much work the volunteers are supposed to do and who is accountable. Of course, I could have said No, but I couldn't at that point. Those were definitely … I wouldn't say the worst days, but those days were one of the most stressed times as a volunteer for me. (Anand)

The fourth situation when participants experienced stress during volunteering was when volunteering interfered with committing time and efforts to other aspects of daily life such as work-life, family-life, etc. Consequently, continuing volunteering wasn't observed as a priority when it threatened time away from other aspects of daily life.

> That happens to me, especially if you are a socialite. It will be like … you'll have to socialize with people. You will have so many different groups and then you want to give time to your interests... do things you like to do. And then comes your own family … your work … Everything together becomes very difficult to manage at times. So that is the reason that I am considering to stop volunteering now because it is getting too much for me. It is too overburdening at times. So, I will take a break from it and just focus on other things. (Reema)

The findings of this theme suggest that the SAI volunteers sustain volunteering engagements only: (1) when the outcomes of the experiences match their expectations or motivations, and (2) when the volunteering experiences do not have any negative impact on daily life in Canada. On one hand, volunteering sustenance depends on whether by volunteering, one is achieving or on the way to achieving settlement goals or leisure goals (as also observed in Section 4.2). On the other hand, sustenance is threatened if volunteering results in any negative impact on daily life and this is more likely to happen in contexts concerned with settlement goals. Leisure-motivated volunteering contexts rarely have any volunteering-led negative

impacts on daily-life and thus there are not many episodes of quitting volunteering in such contexts.

Thus, considering the evidence under all the themes and sub-themes that explored volunteering experiences through interpretations, motivations, SAI community identities, and impact on daily life, it was apparent that there are varied ways of how volunteering is experienced. What the findings also illuminated were the contextual factors that influenced not only the volunteering experiences, but also the overall life of SAI in Canada that contained the volunteering and other sub-contexts. Such findings had the potential to get back to the overarching reasons for pursuing this study. Thus, in the final chapter, I take the opportunity to return to the research questions by critically reflecting on the evidence.

# Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

With this study, I explored the volunteering experiences for the SAI community in Canada. Existing literature on the theme initially guided my research journey and I realized that to appreciate the volunteering experiences myself, it was imperative to consider participant perspectives on how they reflect on their volunteering experiences. The processes of conducting the participant interviews and analyses presented revealed varied interpretations of volunteering experiences that had unique nuances with respect to motivations, SAI community identities, and impacts on daily life. In addition, while the study findings attended to the research questions to a great extent, what the study also brought about were contextual shades in volunteering experiences that have the potential to direct changemaking.

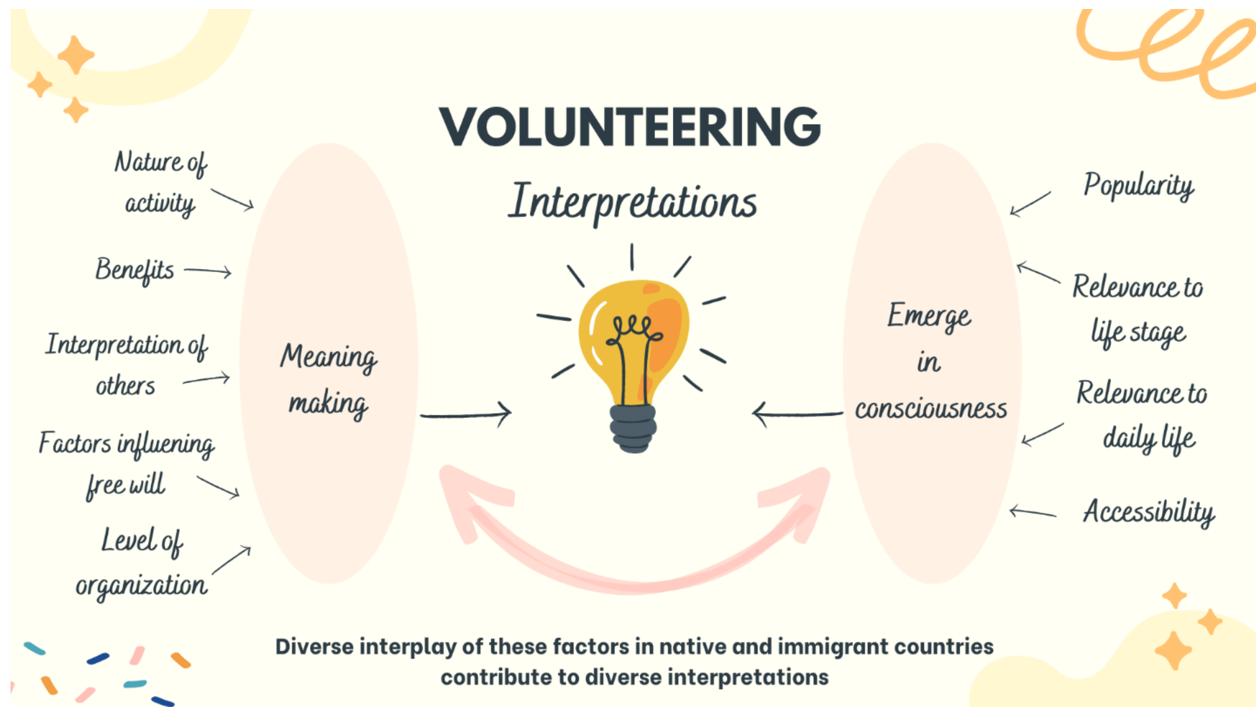
The next sections, Section 5.1 to 5.4, critically reflect on the emergent themes. In addition, the concluding Section 5.5 elaborates on recommendations for changemaking following a note on my personal experiences conducting this study.

## 5.1 Volunteering Interpretations: Different in native and immigrant countries

The participant stories of what it means to volunteer clearly revealed their interpretations of what it means to volunteer in Canada are different from what they were in India. This was primarily because of the varied ways in which volunteering emerges in consciousness and how different factors influence meaning making (see Figure 1).

Reflecting on the existing literature and the findings under this theme bring about three key discussion points. Firstly, the findings support the notion that we must not apply homogenous interpretations to volunteering experiences, as there is no unique way of predicting how the determining factors will manifest in native and immigrant countries. The determining factors are dynamic and dependent on unpredictable external factors (e.g., popularity of volunteering in the surroundings) that may in turn be specific to the structural and cultural contexts. Moreover, according to the literature, no two individuals will have precisely the same structural and cultural contexts because these are constantly evolving (see Anheier et al., 1999; Dekker & Halman, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008).

**Figure 1.** Factors influencing volunteering interpretations




However, just as the literature review also suggested, there may nevertheless be some similarities within contexts. Indeed, the study findings highlight some comparable aspects of participants' experiences within similar looking contexts. For example, almost all participants identified volunteering's role in achieving settlement goals in Canada. However, we still should not generalize the commonly appearing aspects and state that all volunteering experiences in Canada entail professional benefits because there is multiplicity and dynamism in how these common or uncommon aspects interact with each other. For instance, even though all participants identified professional benefits of volunteering owing to its certain popularity in Canada, the professional benefits from volunteering were not relevant to the lives of some participants in Canada; instead, their interpretations of volunteering experiences were more about obtaining leisure benefits. Such findings seem to validate discussions in the literature review that argued volunteer meanings are popularly obtained on the basis of common features, such as free will, organization, altruistic motives, and benefits, and that such meanings cannot be generalized (Adams & Deane, 2009; Allan, 2019; Barnes & Sharpe, 2009; Brudney et al., 2019; Burns, 2006; Butcher & Einolf, 2017; Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Cnaan et al., 1996; Corpus Juris Secundum,

1994; Fassin, 2012; Haers & Von Essen, 2015; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Henderson, 1984; Holmes et al., 2010; Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010; Kahana, 2021; Kuehn & Korrigan, 2013; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010; Mejis et al., 2003; Overgaard, 2019; Paxton et al., 2014; Scheie, 1980; Shachar et al., 2019; Smith, 1982; Stebbins, 2013, 2015; UNV, 2021; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2015; Wilson, 2000),. Hence, instead of focusing solely on meanings, it is just as important to examine individual experiences of volunteering, as interpretations are ultimately dependent on whom you ask what volunteering is (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019).

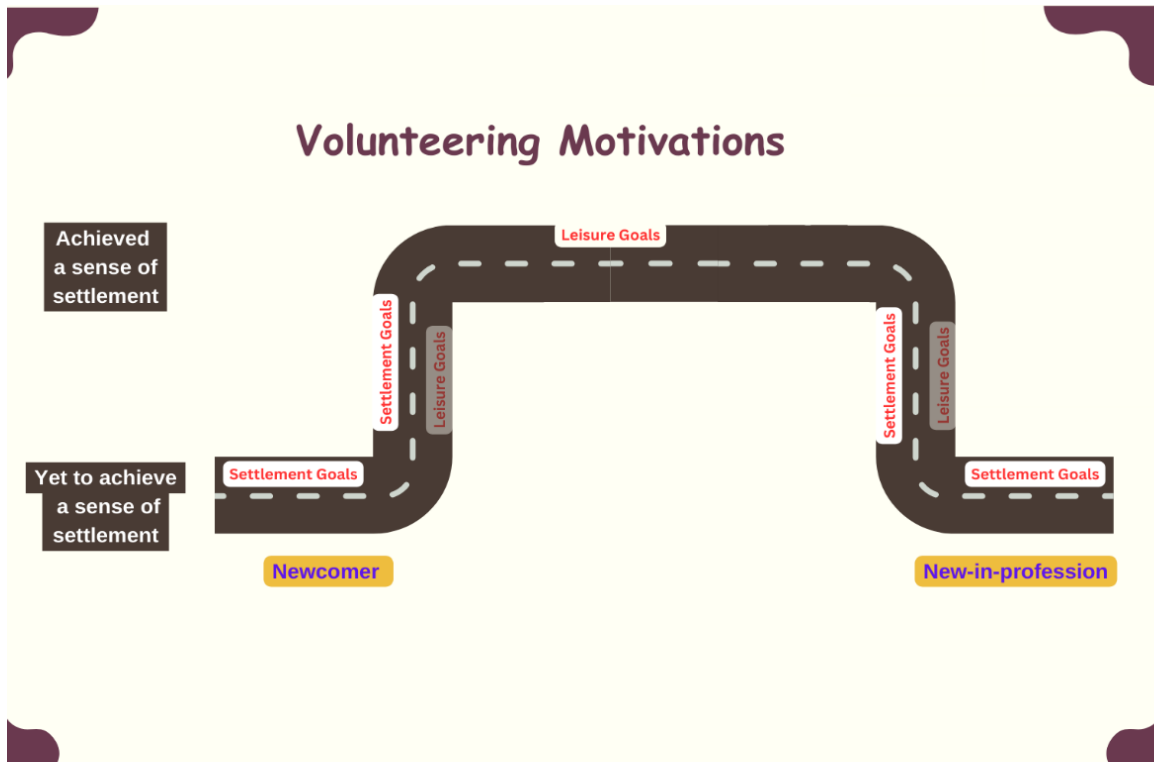
Secondly, what adds to the complexity of predicting interactions between factors influencing interpretations is the emergence of factors that may be exclusive within certain contexts. For the participants of this study, the perception of what the community thinks of volunteering is significant to understanding what volunteering is. In the existing literature, a community's perceptions do not effectively emerge as a consideration in interpreting volunteering experiences. This may be because much of the earlier research is rooted in the Western contexts, and so unique factors such as the community's perception of volunteering have not been illuminated that considers their specific contextual implications of volunteering experience.

Thirdly, the findings seem to highlight that there are rarely any independent determining factors to identify something as volunteering. For instance, free-will is regarded as one of the most popular features of volunteering (see Cnaan et al., 1996; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Henderson, 1984; Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010; Wilson, 2000) and is presumed to be interlinked with the volunteering motivations (leisure and/or settlement goals) of participants in this study. This further highlights the relevance of examining the motivations of participants along with contextual factors (such as community identity and daily-routines in this study) to better understand how volunteering is experienced in specific contexts (such as the SAI community in Canada).

## 5.2 Settlement Goals and Leisure Goals are primary volunteer motives

Volunteering motivations are contingent on how accomplished or settled the volunteers feel with their life in Canada (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Volunteering motivations




Literature that examines volunteering motivations in the Canadian context discusses motivations to be driven by an interplay of altruistic and personal benefits (see  Bauder, 2003; Chareka et al., 2010; Chiang, 2009; Creese & Weibe, 2012; Ford-Jones & Daly, 2017; George & Chaze, 2009a, 2009b; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Guo, 2014; Hoeber, 2010, p.346; Little, 2005; Little et al., 2005; Motia, 2021; Mowatt et al., 2006; Ranu, 2013; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2019; Xie & Ross, 2012; Yuen, 2013). Based on the narratives of the SAI volunteers in Canada personal benefits, on the one hand, did emerge as motivations in terms of achieving settlement and leisure goals. On the other hand, altruistic reasons did not emerge as strongly for the SAI volunteers in Canada. One might argue altruistic benefits are a type of leisure benefit, but in this study, the participants distinctly discussed their volunteering to be driven primarily to obtain leisure for themselves. If altruistic benefits were involved at all, such as doing good for others' welfare, they were the secondary reasons to volunteer. For example, one participant in the study, after suffering a personal loss, was driven to volunteer to obtain a therapeutic benefit for one's self. Besides achieving the main goal of therapeutic benefits, the volunteering engagement also

provided satisfaction by doing unselfish deeds for the beneficiaries, but achieving this satisfaction was not discussed as the primary motivator. Therefore, the findings of this study imply that the personal benefits are the key motivations for the SAI community in Canada and the nature of these personal benefits depends on how accomplished or settled they feel with their lives in Canada.

That said, predicting indicators or timelines for when volunteers feel accomplished is difficult because, in addition to the demographic factors contributing to a sense of accomplishment, some factors are very context-specific and individualistic. Consequently, there cannot be set indicators that predict when an individual volunteers to achieve their settlement goals or leisure goals. For instance, in the findings of this study, a longer history of living in Canada since immigration did not always mean that individuals felt settled or that they always volunteered to achieve leisure in Canada. Some of the individuals who had a longer history of being in Canada were yet to achieve their respective settlement goals (e.g., when they wanted to pursue a new profession) and were motivated to volunteer to achieve those settlement goals. Even though demographic, context-specific, and individualistic factors complicate expectations of accomplishment and motivations, researching such factors can be significant in understanding what makes an individual volunteer out-of-choice and when an individual volunteers out-of-need. Based on whether volunteering is choice-based or need-based, there are different implications for the overall volunteering experience.

From the findings, it can be inferred that when individuals feel they have sufficient resources to live, maintain, and sustain life (and/or a desired lifestyle) in Canada, volunteering becomes driven more by choice. In contrast, when individuals are working towards building and securing resources to enhance satisfaction with their life in Canada, volunteering is driven more by need. Moreover, when volunteering is choice-driven, individuals mostly volunteer to achieve leisure goals, whereas when volunteering is need-driven, individuals mostly volunteer to achieve settlement goals. When volunteering was need-based and driven by motivations to achieve settlement goals, participants' attitudes were more about "what I should do and what others want", whereas when volunteering was choice-based and driven by motivations to achieve leisure goals, participants' attitudes were more about "what I want and what others should do".

In other words, when leisure goals were primary motivators, volunteers gave importance to autonomy and authority in their volunteering roles as well as other daily-life factors that may

have an impact on their volunteering engagement. Most of these factors were non-negotiable in choosing and sustaining volunteering roles. There was no discussion of negative experiences when volunteering was done for leisure, probably because the choice to quit volunteering was relatively easier because there was less concern about implications on settlement in Canada. However, when volunteering was need-based and driven by settlement goals, the volunteering experience was impacted by the organizational factors and people at the volunteer organization. The narratives were more about how an individual's action, reaction, and navigating situations were dependent on these external factors instead of purely operating by self's choices. Negative experiences emerged for participants when volunteering interfered with the settlement motives that drove volunteering; for instance, volunteering experience was overburdening when volunteering duties took time away from seeking paid employment opportunities. However, when implications for settlement goals were considered, individuals preferred to sustain volunteering for some time more often than individuals who volunteered for leisure. Additionally, there were rarely any conversations about quitting volunteering, even when those conversations included negative experiences owing to organizational factors or because of interactions with colleagues. Therefore, these findings not only illustrate the power dynamics that contribute to the volunteering experiences, but also suggest how the shifts in volunteering contexts can nudge volunteers and people in-charge at the volunteering organizations on different ends of the power spectrum.

Depending on where the individuals see themselves on the power spectrum in the volunteering context as well as what motivates them to volunteer, they think about supports tp their volunteering experience. For example, some participants in this study recognized familiarity – and especially familiarity with SAI community contexts – as supports in their volunteering experience. Going back to the questions raised by existing literature in Section 2.2.1 that asked if community identity played a role in manifesting and sustaining motives, findings of this study do point towards ethnocultural community factors playing a role in shaping motivations wherein familiar contexts cushion specific volunteering experiences..

## 5.3 The SAI Community Cushion

The study findings support the observations from the reviewed literature (Ashutosh, 2008; Colombo & Senatore, 2005; Dei, 2007; Ghosh, 2013; Gosine, 2002; Malhi et al., 2009;

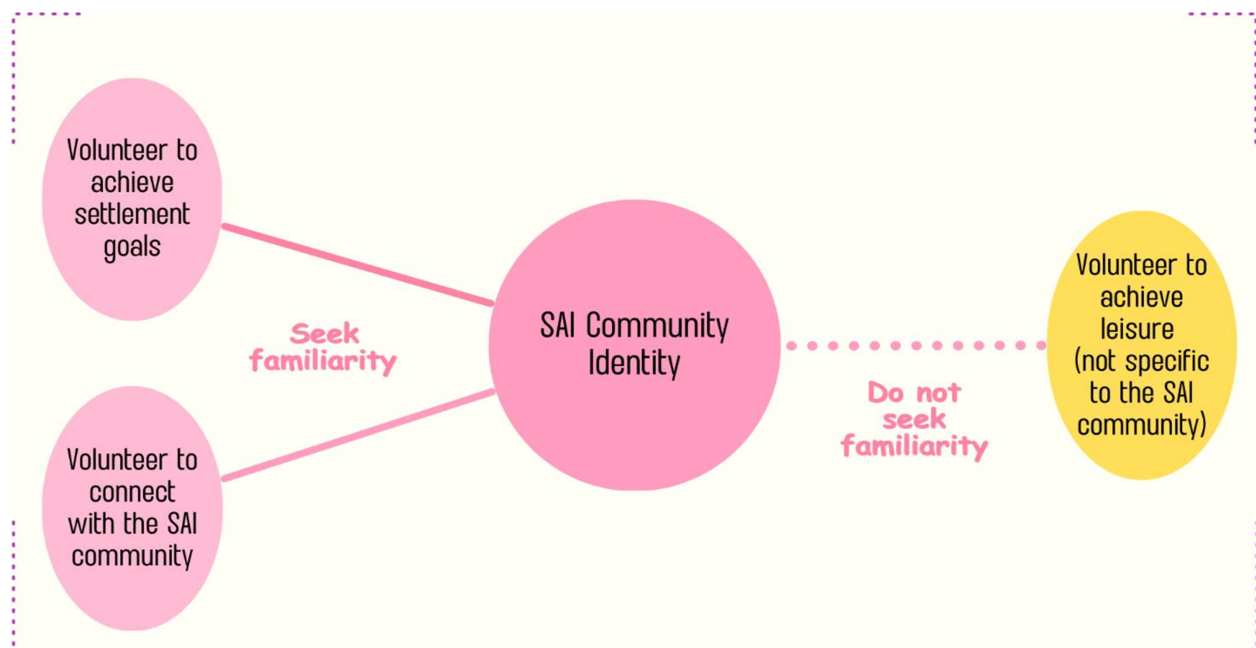
Rajiva and D’Sylva, 2014; Ray, 2003; Shariff, 2008a, 2008b; Sharma, 2004; Sundar, 2008; Tsang et al., 2003; Ullah, 1990; Verkuyten et al., 2002) that identified the exploration of community identity to be more authentic when lived experiences are contextually interpreted instead of when the identities are solely based on set constructs of ethnicity, immigration history, and so on. For example, if community identities of participants of this study were to be understood just on the basis of set constructs such as immigration history, all participants would have been assumed to identify as SAI in Canada, irrespective of whether the SAI identity references were brought into their narratives of volunteering experiences. However, this was not the case and upon examining the lived experiences contextually, there were some participants who did not recognize their community identities in the volunteering contexts. As the literature suggests, this may be because of the heterogeneity in structural and cultural factors for SAI communities in Canada, which has the consequence of the “being”, “feeling”, and “doing” of identities to have multiplicities, deliberation, dynamism, and contextual elements (Malhi et al., 2009; Tsang et al., 2003; Ullah, 1990; Verkuyten et al., 2002).

In this study, when participants brought up the SAI community identity, they primarily grounded those discourses on what they are “doing” that made them identify as SAI in Canada. For example, references to their SAI community identity were brought up when some participants discussed celebrating cultural events with their ethnocultural community. Some participants based their references on “being” and “feeling” the SAI community identity. This was more evident when participants shared whether their volunteering experiences were positive or negative. For example, one of the participants realized self to “be” or “feel” the SAI identity when the volunteering experience entailed racism and the overall experience was negative. Similarly, another participant realized self to “be” or “feel” the SAI identity when the volunteering experience was positive within SAI community relationships that made the overall experience positive. No matter how the participants brought up their SAI-community-identity references in their volunteering experiences, what this study affirmed was that identifying with the SAI community identity is not constantly present. Instead, references to SAI community identity emerge depending on the individuals’ expectations from their volunteering experiences at different points in their life. For example, a participant who wanted to achieve settlement goals saw self’s SAI-community identity to be advantageous in obtaining initial volunteering roles;

however, the SAI-community identity did not appear in the discourses of the latest volunteering engagement that was pursued for leisure.

Additionally, the study points out that when individuals are seeking familiarity in their volunteering contexts, identifying with the SAI community identity can be helpful, especially in the volunteering contexts that have other people from the SAI community who can supposedly make their journey of achieving settlement goals relatively shorter, easier, or more enjoyable. Similarly, when individuals do not necessarily seek familiarity in their volunteering contexts, there seems to be no need to identify with SAI community identity because the goals are not as life changing and essential to survival or daily life in Canada (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Emergence of the SAI community identity in volunteering experiences




There were some participants who despite volunteering for leisure (not specific to the SAI community-contexts) discussed community identity to some effect. When I revisited the transcripts again, I realized such references may have appeared because of my questioning as the interviewer. For example, some participants who volunteered for leisure (not specific to the SAI community-contexts) appreciated the diversity in their volunteering contexts or reflected on how

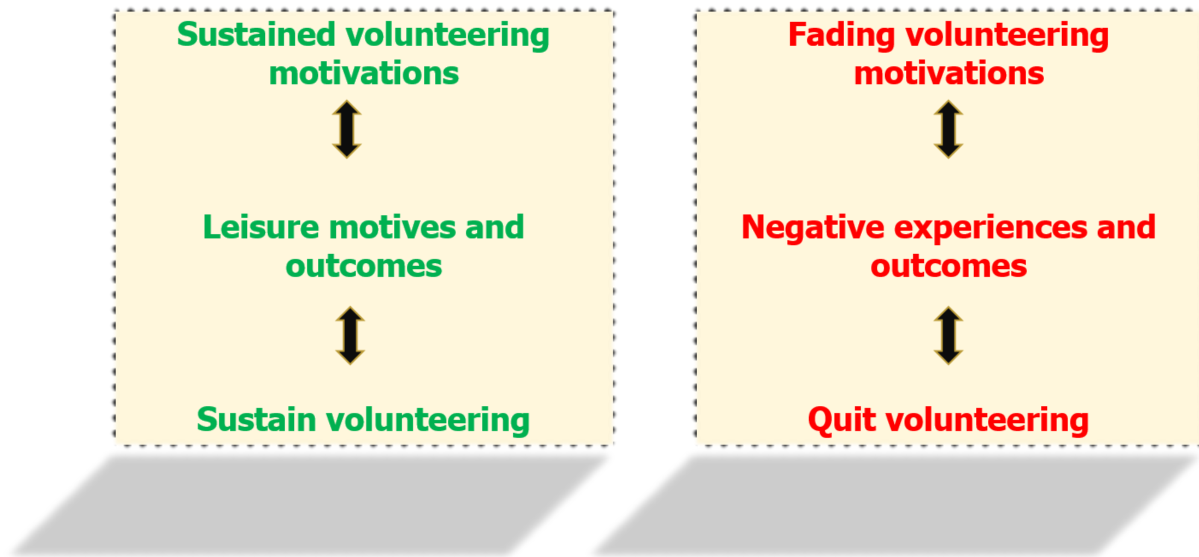
the experience made them forget their identity. These participants shared the identity aspects in response to my probing into the identity factors, and they did not emerge right away in their narratives of volunteering experiences. Irrespective of this consideration, I continue to argue that the SAI community identity references may not be as relevant to the participants' overall experience especially because these do not come up in participants' narratives of volunteering motivations or volunteering activity/time.

## 5.4 Impact on Daily Life

There is ample literature that suggests positive impacts (Black & Living, 2004; Casiday, 2015; Coppa & Boyle, 2003; Fitzpatrick et al., 2005; Jirovec, 2005; Han et al., 2020; Librett et al., 2005; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Ramirez-Valles & Brown, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Van Willigen, 2000; Wu et al., 2005; Yuen et al., 2004) and negative impacts (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Han et al., 2020) of volunteering. With this study, I wanted to know what contexts presents the various impacts and lead to sustenance of volunteering. The findings under this theme seem to highlight that the sustenance and quitting of volunteering engagements depend on whether volunteering motivations are to achieve leisure or settlement, and if the volunteering experiences have an impact on daily life, either positively or negatively (see Figure 4).

What appears to be key is that leisure-motivated volunteering rarely presented any negative impact on daily life. This may imply that outcomes of a leisure-motivated volunteering experience buffer the negative impact of volunteering on daily life. Alternatively, if there is no negative impact of volunteering on daily-life, leisure-motivated volunteering engagements help in buffering negative impacts that other facets of life may have on daily living. For instance, in this study, when getting some sort of therapeutic relief was important for a participant in his or her daily life, he or she volunteered with the goal to obtain therapeutic leisure. And when the participant achieved the desired therapeutic relief, volunteering was observed to help in coping with loss and in relieving stress in his daily life.

**Figure 4.** Interactions between volunteering motives, volunteering outcomes, and volunteering sustenance




Additionally, the findings present four volunteering contexts that present a negative impact on daily life. In the first context, the possibilities of negative impacts on daily life are more likely to occur when volunteering engagements threaten priorities in daily life, especially priorities (such as the settlement goals) that help in achieving the ideal standard of a "good life" in Canada. Just as we saw in the literature (Bauder, 2003; Chareka et al., 2010; Chiang, 2009; Creese & Weibe, 2012; Ford-Jones & Daly, 2017; George & Chaze, 2009a, 2009b; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Motia, 2021; Ranu, 2013; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015) and in the discussion of the findings concerning volunteering interpretations being different within native and immigrant countries (Section 4.2), the priorities to achieve or sustain a "good life" are foremost concerns for immigrant communities like the SAI community in Canada. While leisure goals may support the sustenance of "good life" in Canada, settlement goals are fundamental to structuring a good life in Canada. Additionally, leisure goals mostly emerge once settlement goals are achieved. Therefore, when settlement goals are in consideration and when they are not aligned with volunteering engagements, volunteering becomes a barrier in achieving "good life", and this consequently translates to a negative impact on daily living.

Reflecting on the second and third type of volunteering contexts that present a negative impact on daily life, it can be inferred that the organizational factors like poor supports and

strained relationships at the volunteering organization can impact daily life negatively and, consequently, threaten the sustenance of volunteering engagement. This is more common in contexts wherein volunteering is motivated by settlement goals. In such contexts, volunteers are yet to achieve feelings of settlement in their life in Canada, and they may feel a lack of basic resources to fall back on. Other critical aspects of life (such as work-life) may not offer comfort, stability, or security, and so any negative episode of volunteering can add to the strain so much so that it impacts daily life negatively.

Looking at the fourth type of volunteering context, a negative impact on daily life is experienced when volunteering engagements threaten time away from other aspects of daily life. When these findings are observed in conjugation with the findings on community identity (Section 4.4) and volunteering motivations (Section 4.3), the complexities of interactions between motivations, identities, and impact on daily living are illuminated. For instance, one of the participants who identified as SAI and volunteered to achieve her settlement goals shared about experiencing a negative impact on daily life when volunteering asked for more time away from family. Continuing volunteering engagement to achieve settlement goals became less important than giving time to family in daily life, and so, volunteering sustenance was threatened. This bargaining of time for settlement goals versus family could be ethnoculturally specific. Such negative impacts may not be experienced by other volunteers who do not need to abide by this specific ethnocultural expectation of time for family or settlement goals. Therefore, the study findings also highlight that the "good life" goals and daily life priorities may not always align and that both are continually negotiated based on the motivations and identities, as well as the structural and cultural contexts of individuals.

Reflecting on the discussion of all themes, it appears that the SAI volunteers in Canada experienced volunteering differently because their interpretations of the experiences depended on a diverse interplay of factors that influenced meaning making and the conceptual emergence of volunteering in consciousness. Even when the study findings identified factors that may affect the experiences of the SAI community in Canada in particular, no factor could be recognized as an absolute influence on the experience as these factors functioned contextually. The contexts also influenced not only the volunteering motivations of the SAIs in Canada, but also the impact of these motivations on daily life outcomes and eventually the sustenance of volunteering. When it came to the contextual comprehension of volunteers' motivations, what was interesting to

observe was that the SAIs in Canada mostly volunteered for personal benefits (e.g., settlement goal, leisure), and they were rarely motivated by purely altruistic reasons. To achieve these personal benefits, what shaped the motivations to be choice-driven (leisure goal) or need-driven (settlement goal) were perceptions of how accomplished the individual felt with their life in Canada. These perceptions also became key in considering the value of one's autonomy and authority in the volunteering experiences, which happened more in leisure-motivated volunteering experiences, versus the impact of organizational factors and people on the volunteering experiences, which happened more in settlement-motivated volunteering. When one's autonomy and authority were not preferred over other factors while choosing volunteer roles, SAI volunteers were susceptible to negatively experiencing the power dynamics within the volunteer contexts.

Moreover, these perceptions of feeling accomplished with life in Canada also influenced the SAI volunteer's need for familiarity or relatability with the volunteering context. One way SAI volunteers tried to achieve familiarity with the contexts was by identifying with the SAI community identity. Just as feelings of accomplishment with life in Canada could be dynamic, the need for the SAI community cushion was also dynamic and was based on varied volunteering motivations at differing points in life. It was interesting that the SAI volunteers who experienced volunteering for leisure rarely discussed their SAI community identity. Such findings highlighted the SAI community identity-oblivion that volunteering could create, especially if volunteering was motivated by leisure goals and/or subsequent leisure outcomes. Apart from this identity-oblivion of sorts, volunteering that was leisure driven or that presented leisure outcomes had a positive impact on daily life and thus, a higher chance of sustenance. Moreover, leisure-motivated volunteering also buffered the negative impact of volunteering and other facets of life on daily living. In contrast, volunteering driven by settlement goals presented situations where a negative impact on daily life could be experienced, and thus there was poor sustenance among volunteers if the negative impact of volunteering on daily life was significant or when feelings of accomplishment were not met from volunteering. The findings brought about an additional emphasis on the specific ethnocultural factors (e.g., bargaining of time demands for volunteering versus family) that became the reasons for experiencing a particular kind of impact of volunteering on the daily life of SAI volunteers in Canada.

## 5.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

I stepped into this research journey embracing my identity as a SAI (and a past volunteer) in Canada with the philosophy that such awareness of my identity would help me initiate shared conversations to create collaborative knowledge on SAI's volunteering experiences in Canada. Having experienced volunteering in Canada as an SAI myself, the research was transformative for me. I could not help but connect with some interpretations of the participants' experiences. At some points, I felt as if I was observing my own experience from a distance. It thus became even more important for me to ensure that I did not impose my perspectives on the participants' stories, and therefore among others, the practices of revisiting transcripts and the second interviews with the participants were especially helpful to maintain and enhance reflexivity. That said, I do not believe my viewpoints are entirely removed from the study findings. Instead, I believe that my perspectives and experiences – being somewhat of an insider to the community – contributed to co-creating insights on the volunteering experiences of SAIs in Canada. These insights further helped in envisioning recommendations for future research and policy-level action.

To elaborate on the recommendations for future research, the study recommends employing the theoretical evidence in this study to better understand what constitutes the volunteer experience of immigrant communities like the South Asian Indian community in Canada. For any future research on the volunteering experiences of immigrant communities like the SAIs in Canada, this study can be used as a reference because not only does this study contribute to the scant literature on volunteering by the South Asian Indian community, but the study also highlights the importance of contextually examining the volunteering experiences through a more holistic interpretive lens. In addition, the findings present key principles for future research on how volunteering can be explored contextually in SAI and other communities. The key takeaway from this study is that the structural and cultural contexts color the volunteering experience differently for different individuals. This is because these structural and cultural contexts produce diversity in individuals' ethnocultural or community identities, volunteering motivations, good-life ideals, and daily-life priorities; all of which are inextricably tied to each other. Therefore, no matter what the demographic characteristics of the volunteers are, volunteering experiences are subjective, dynamic, and ultimately a result of how all

contextual factors emerge in volunteering environments as well as in other aspects of life in Canada.

Besides presenting guidelines on examining volunteering experiences, the insights from this study suggest directions for streamlining policy-level action with a community focus. From the study, it was observed that the SAI volunteers can both benefit and lose from engaging in volunteering and thus further action should work towards minimizing the loss and maximizing the benefits from volunteering engagement. Further exploration, especially for the immigrant communities like the SAI in Canada, can be on how organizations and policies produce volunteering environments that offer positive and encouraging volunteering environments.

To support changemaking by organizations, I conclude the study by sharing five key suggestions discussed by the participants during the interviews, which were directed toward volunteering organizations. First, the participants recommended that organizations have robust internal systems that address volunteer concerns. These systems should be able to obtain anonymous concerns, feedback, and suggestions. The volunteers should be notified when these are taken up and how the organization plans to incorporate the volunteers' perspectives. For instance, if a volunteer expresses concern over excessive workload and does not want to confront the supervisors directly, they should be able to communicate and rectify the problem anonymously through a volunteer welfare body at the organization.

Second, the organizations and volunteers should be in agreement on roles, responsibilities, and time commitment. Lacking an agreement on these aspects is often a result of inadequate documentation, which is often not put in place by organizations because there are no material or financial benefits and obligations, unlike paid employment. It is important to have documented agreements on what the volunteer and the organization will expect and deliver, and what will be the ways to resolve issues when expectations and deliverables are not met by both the volunteer and the organization. For instance, if the volunteer wants to discuss navigating stress arising from previously agreed duties, the volunteer should be able to refer to the agreement to understand what they signed up for and who to contact to initiate problem-solving at the organization.

Third, the organization could connect and embed volunteering tasks with leisure outcomes. A meaningful way to do this would be to seek volunteer suggestions before setting up agreements referred to in the previous suggestion. For instance, pre-agreement discussions can

include conversations on what the volunteers like to do in their free time, what social environments are ideal for them to enjoy volunteering, and so on. One of the volunteers discussed the importance of socializing through leisure and suggested that organizations could initiate regular potluck lunch events. Such events may not only enable stronger camaraderie between volunteering colleagues, but volunteers may also have an opportunity to socialize in a leisure space where they are not thinking specifically about volunteering duties.

Fourth, organizations can work on building diversity in the demographic profiles of volunteers and offer more familiarity with the contexts for volunteers. During pre-agreement conversations, it can be important to explore if the motives to volunteer are to obtain settlement-related benefits out of the volunteering experience and to realize if the volunteers may seek additional familiarity with the volunteering or organizational contexts. Attending to volunteers' familiarity needs that may arise from the volunteer's desire to connect with people from familiar contexts, so organizations need to build diversity among their volunteers. For instance, if a volunteer expresses a need to or a gap in using their volunteering experience for skill-building and networking, the volunteer can be assigned to teams or have supervisors who are sensitive to the volunteer's preferences, which may be based on identities or other factors that can provide familiarity to the volunteers.

And fifth, organizations should take steps to ensure volunteers feel appreciated for their time and commitment. Even though these are volunteering engagements that are assumed to be popularly driven by free will and without the expectation of benefits, positive reinforcements in the forms of appreciation and/or dedicated appraisals should be considered for volunteers when these are possible. There should be some way to communicate to the volunteers that their time and efforts are valued. Moreover, feedback on the volunteering tasks should be given especially when the volunteers seek learning goals from the volunteering tasks. For example, bulletin boards at the organization could have a space dedicated to appreciation posts for different volunteers. In addition, one-on-one meetings can be set up to provide feedback on volunteering tasks with the volunteers. One of the participants of this study believed that it would be helpful if organizations could provide referrals and testimonials on LinkedIn (a social networking platform that is popularly used for professional networking and job seeking), especially when a volunteer intends to use the volunteering experience as a means of seeking employment.

In addition to the research and organizational-level recommendations, the study can be referred to all individuals and SAI individuals, in particular, who can use the findings to understand how volunteering can become a positive and fruitful experience for them. Keeping in mind that the volunteering experiences for some volunteers, like in the study, can depend on a multitude of contextual factors that further make the overall experience positive or negative or a bit of both; volunteers can gauge ways to navigate the contexts to make the most of their volunteering experiences in Canada.

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# Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

Subject: Invitation to participate in the research study on South Asian Indian Volunteers in Canada

Dear [name of potential participant],

Greetings! Hope you are doing well. With this email, I wanted to bring your attention to the study exploring the lived experiences of South Asian Indian volunteers in Canada. This study attempts to gather qualitative insights to understand what can enhance volunteering experiences and how the volunteering sector in Canada can retain South Asian Indian volunteers. I seek participants for this study who would agree for an interview to share their lived experiences of volunteering and who, with their participation, may contribute to providing a much-needed representation of South Asian Indian stories in the volunteering literature.

In reference to this study, I have received this email contact from [name of the key informant] for the purposes of inviting you to participate in my research study, titled "*Exploring volunteering experiences of South Asian Indians and their intersections with community identity and daily life in Canada*". You are being invited to participate in this interview-based MA research study led by Aradhana Tewari, under the supervision of Prof. Bryan Smale, at the Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

With the help of interviews for the study, I am seeking stories about your experiences as a South Asian Indian volunteer in Canada and comments on your motivations to volunteer. The interview will also acquire your perspectives on being a South Asian Indian volunteer in Canada and how volunteering features in your daily life. In order to decide whether or not you want to be a part of the current research study, you should understand that if you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to take part in two interviews (primary interview and a follow-up interview) with me as the researcher/ interviewer. The primary interview will last approximately 60 minutes and the follow-up interview can last anywhere between 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in person and/ or virtually, whichever mode is preferred by you as the participant. I am fluent in English and Hindi languages and the interview can be conducted using either or both languages. The interview will be conducted at your preferred in person location or virtual platform (Zoom/ Google Meet/ MS Teams). As a token of appreciation for the time taken to participate in the study and for sharing your perspectives in the interviews, you will receive a $20 Tim Hortons or Starbucks Gift Card. You will also be reimbursed for any receipted study-related costs incurred (e.g., parking, transit, etc.).

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. With your permission, your interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Data collected during this study will be retained for at least 6 months in a locked folder on my Google cloud. Only me and my supervisor will have access to the data. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. If any reflection on experiences leads to any type of emotional upset, I am prepared to provide contact information for community mental health services.

Please note that your responses, identifying information, and other names mentioned would be kelp confidential and anonymous from the transcripts that will be made of the interview. Your names will not be associated or classifiable with your specific responses in any way. Only the major lines of thought that emerge from the interviews will be used to describe important ideas that come out of the interviews. Please take your time to make your decision. Feel free to discuss it with your friends and family, [name of the key informant], my supervisor, Prof. Bryan Smale, or me.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB ####). If you have questions for the Board, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

If you are interested in participating, you may contact me, Aradhana Tewari, using the information listed below. I will follow-up this email with another email within two weeks. Meanwhile if you have decided to participate in the study, I request you to go over the consent form attached with this email. Please let me know if you have any concerns, and if you are ready to participate, please send a signed and dated version of the consent letter confirming your participation in this study.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Aradhana Tewari
**General Contact Information**
Aradhana Tewari
15 Northtown Way,
North York, ON, Canada
Ph: (437) 982 5909
Email: a25tewar@uwaterloo.ca

# Appendix B: Consent Form

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

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I agree to take part in the MA student research project titled "*Exploring volunteering experiences of South Asian Indians and their intersections with community identity and daily life in Canada*" that is being conducted as a part of the MA program at the University of Waterloo under the direction of Prof. Bryan Smale in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB ####). If at any point, I have questions for the Board, I can contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. I am aware that the purpose of this activity is qualifying the MA program while gaining understanding of volunteer experiences in the South Asian Indian community in Canada. I will not benefit directly from this project.

If I volunteer to take part, I will be asked to sit for two audio-recorded interviews lasting to approximately 60 minutes and 20-30 minutes respectively. No discomforts or stresses are expected during the interviews, and I have the option of allowing or declining my interview to be audio recorded. There are no significant risks to participation in the study. If my reflection on experiences leads to any type of emotional upset, the student- researcher is prepared to give me contact information for community mental health services.

I give permission for my collected stories/ observations to be used by Aradhana Tewari for this study only as long as my name is kept confidential. The only people who will know that I am the research participant is Aradhana Tewari. Information provided by me will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law. An exception to confidentiality involves information revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse which must be reported as required by law if the researcher is required to provide information by a judge. I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

Individually identifying information, such as my name, will not be published in connection with this project. All results and all tape recordings from this project will be disguised by a fake name and this name will be used on all of the study purposes. All recordings will be kept in a locked folder on Aradhana Tewari's private Google cloud and can be accessed only be her and her supervisor, Prof. Bryan Smale. Audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the term.

The student-researcher will answer any further questions about the project, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (437) 982 5909 or by email at a25tewari@uwaterloo.ca. My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of the questions to my satisfaction, that I understand the procedures described above, and that I consent to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aradhana Tewari<br>Phone: (437) 982 5909<br>Email: a25tewari@uwaterloo.ca | (Signature) | (Signature) |
| [Participant Name] | (Signature) | (Signature) |

# Appendix C: Interview Guide

**Interview 1 Guide**

Open ended prompts for building conversations:

- Tell me about yourself and your family
- Tell me about your past life in India
- Tell me about your current life in Canada

RQ: Meaning of volunteering

**Lead question 1. Tell me about your first memory of knowing about volunteer work**

Probe 1 – Tell me about your ideas on volunteering in India

Probe 2 – Why do you think people would engage in volunteer work in India

Probe 3 – Did you volunteer back in your country? If yes, what was the experience like?

RQ: Lived experience of what it looks like/ any intersections with community identity?

**Lead question 2. Tell me about the time when you realized you want to be a volunteer**

Probe 1 – What made you aware of this path in Canada?

Probe 2 – What were your requirements of volunteer work?

Probe 3 – What were you willing to let go/ absolute must in the list of requirements?

Probe 4 – How did you land up as a volunteer?

Probe 5 – Did you get to do what you hoped to do?

RQ: Finding references to daily life/ SAI

**Lead question 3. Tell me about the most and least exciting aspects of your volunteer work**

Probe 1 – What did you achieve?

Probe 2 – What aspects do you not enjoy?

Probe 3 – What aspects will you be okay giving up, if things were to change in your life ahead?

Probe 4 – What aspects would you hope to retain, if things were to change in your life ahead?

RQ: finding references to daily life/ SAI

**Lead question 4. Tell me about the best day as a volunteer**

Probe 1 – What was the activity?

Probe 2 – What did you achieve?

Probe 3 – What was the main factor driving that day to be the best for you as a volunteer?

RQ: finding references to daily life/ SAI

**Lead question 5. Tell me about the least favorite day as a volunteer**

Probe 1 – What was the activity?

Probe 2 – Why didn't you enjoy the day?

Probe 3 – If there was anything that could change the event, what would it be?

**Lead question 6. In the coming five years, what do you think your typical day will look like?**

Probe 1 – What are the new engagements/ events?

Probe 2 – Does volunteering feature?

<u>**Interview 2 Guide**</u>

Open ended conversational prompts for reflections-

- What do you think of the themes that are emerging?
- Is there anything that you want to revisit and reflect on differently? If comfortable in responding, why?
- If anything, what do you takeaway from the themes and the reflections?