

IN THE KNOW: RESULTS OF A THREE-YEAR STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH-SPEAKING, BILINGUAL AND ETHNO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY GROUPS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

Frances Ravensbergen (PhD) & Sandra Sjollema (MSW)
Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) (www.coco-net.org)

ABSTRACT

There has been a scarcity of documentation about English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec. The community-based action research project *In the Know: Identifying multiple aspects of Quebec's community sector* aimed to fill this gap by conducting a three-year study that identifies these groups, portrays their characteristics, and explores their relationship with the Government of Quebec, especially in terms of funding possibilities. The methodology, historical context of the study and a literature review are provided here. This article discusses the relevance of the results of the research for the groups and communities in question. Four findings, presented at the *Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas)* Conference in May 2012, are elaborated upon: they offer a profile of these groups, and explore communication difficulties, funding challenges and participation in network affiliations. Suggestions for follow-up action are discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Il y a un manque d'informations sur les groupes communautaires anglophones, bilingues et ethnoculturels au Québec. La recherche action En savoir plus : découvrir les multiples facettes du secteur communautaire au Québec a eu pour but de combler cette lacune en effectuant une étude de trois ans qui identifie ces groupes, leurs caractéristiques et leurs relations avec le gouvernement du Québec, surtout en ce qui concerne le financement. La méthodologie, le contexte historique de l'étude et une revue de la littérature sont fournis ici. Cet article traite de la pertinence des résultats de cette recherche. Quatre de ces résultats, présentés au congrès de l'Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas) en mai 2012, sont élaborés dans cet article afin de discuter plus amplement du profil de ces groupes, des difficultés de communication, du financement et des affiliations de réseau. Les implications par rapport aux mesures de suivis sont discutées.

INTRODUCTION

Little documentation exists about the community sector in Quebec that serves English-speaking and ethno-cultural communities or about those groups that work bilingually. As these are the groups that make up its network, in October of 2008, the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) launched *In the Know: Identifying multiple aspects of Quebec's community sector*, a community-based action research (CBAR) project to document the diversity of these community groups and to understand more clearly the work they do to promote social change in Quebec. Data was collected between 2009 and 2011. The survey, launched in regions of Quebec where there is a presence of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups, was developed using the online survey administration service, Survey Monkey¹. Altogether, groups from 14 regions of Quebec took part in the study (groups serving all of Quebec are counted as one region).

The results discussed here cover all three years of the project and were reported on at the Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas) Conference in May 2012. The results given at the Acfas Conference were preliminary. As a final analysis of all three years of the research has been completed, additional results are reported on here.

THE CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (COCO)

COCO is a Quebec-wide, nonprofit organization that promotes social justice, active citizenship and just socio-economic development by encouraging healthy community groups in Quebec. Since its inception in 2000, COCO has identified trends within the groups that are part of its network, self-described "ethno-cultural, bilingual and English-speaking community groups." These are groups that operate in English at some level if not fully (services, staff and/or board functioning). They can be informal groups of people or incorporated nonprofit organizations. These groups were the focus of the study. Trends were identified through the contact COCO has with the 3935 addresses that receive its monthly e-bulletin and the specific contact the organization has with approximately 400 groups per year through made-to-measure training, free information sessions, consultation meetings, and community learning events. The interactions with the groups in its network led COCO staff to reflect upon the differences between these groups and their sister French-speaking organizations. Staff arrived at a variety of hypothesis: the groups in its network tend to be more diverse in terms of offering a wider variety of services and programs, they are not as involved in the formal network structures in Quebec, and they do not receive as much government funding.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the 1980's, a mobilization of Quebec community groups called for a policy that would recognize and support the work of grassroots and other community groups in Quebec (McAneely, 2007). In response, the Government of Quebec created the SACAIS (Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales)². In collaboration with the community sector, SACAIS provides leadership for the implementation of the *Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien à l'action communautaire* – more commonly known as the *Politique* – a policy whose main objective is to provide recognition and financial support to the community sector. More specifically, the policy was designed to support community groups across the 22 Quebec ministries, primarily in the form of core or global mission funding³ which covers salaries, rent and the basic activities of fulfilling the mission of an organization. Community groups are housed with a “home ministry” (COCO, 2012, p. 5) according to their main sphere of activity. This re-organization of funding for the community sector occurred, unfortunately, with limited participation from English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011).

A five-year evaluation of the *Politique* was completed in 2008 by sociology professor Deena White and her research team at the Université de Montréal. This evaluation critiques the uneven implementation of the policy and indicates that many community groups are either poorly or not at all known by the Government of Quebec (White et al, 2008). While these groups can include certain French-speaking organizations, White et al stress that, in particular, the specificities of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups are, for the most part, unacknowledged by the government. These “invisible” groups (COCO, 2008, p. 1) whether francophone or anglophone, are usually left out of the *Politique's* funding (White et al, 2008).

After organizing two forums about Government of Quebec funding in 2006 and 2007, COCo staff took note that most groups in their network had little information or understanding of SACAIS, Government of Quebec funding schemes, or the official network system that exists among French-speaking community groups in Quebec (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011). At the same time COCo staff noted that there was a wish on the part of English-speaking groups to be included in the larger Quebec community sector. Discussions between COCo and SACAIS officials identified the need to more fully document the reality of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups. The CBAR project *In the Know* has sought to do this.

THE STUDY

Objectives of the research

- Locate the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec.
- Develop a portrait and understanding of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups working in Quebec.
- Identify the characteristics and patterns that emerge about the recognition of groups by the provincial government, and the types of activities or structures of these groups.
- Test the hypothesis about why these groups are marginalized or excluded.
- Propose strategies to support the recognition and inclusion of these groups in the French-speaking community sector.

Although not a goal at the beginning of the study, an emergent objective of the research was to collaborate with French-speaking community groups who are also experiencing exclusion (Metivier, 2011; RIOCM, 2008; White et al, 2008) to sensitize government decision-makers and to push the government to modify or implement the *Politique*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was undertaken to understand the basic notions that underlie the work that is carried out by English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec. The literature review briefly summarizes what is known about the community sector as a whole, these groups and the populations they serve, in particular, and about Government of Quebec funding programs in relation to these groups.

The community sector is not only big, but very diverse; there are no consistent definitions of it and many aspects of it are not well documented (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011; Fontan, 2012). According to McMullen & Schellenberg (2002), “relatively little is known about how the sector, and organizations within it, is organized” (p. vi). This lack of detailed knowledge certainly applies to Quebec: Deena White and her team (2008) refer to community actors about whom the government has little or no knowledge. While this can include certain French-speaking organizations, it largely applies to English-speaking, ethno-cultural and bilingual community groups (White et al, 2008). COCo, in its proposal for funding for the current research project, referred to these community groups as “invisible” (COCo, 2008, p. 1).

In particular, there appears to be a lack of acknowledgement about the distinctiveness of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec by the government (Jetté, 2008). It has been long been COCo's opinion that a first step in addressing this lack of knowledge is the identification of the specificities of these groups, as well as the characteristics they may share with their French-speaking counterparts. It is only through this kind of exploration that there will be a better understanding of these "other" (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011, p. 6) community groups.

At the same time, the English-speaking community has indicated its interest in belonging to Quebec society. For example, a recent report by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages (2011) notes a desire of the English-speaking population in Quebec to "fully participate in Quebec society" (p. 12). As an expression of this desire to belong, rates of bilingualism among English-speaking populations in Quebec have continuously risen over the years (Statistics Canada, 2010). Most recent statistics have put the overall bilingualism rate of the English-speaking community in Quebec at 70% (CASA, 2012).

The diversity of the English-speaking community sector must also be taken into consideration. The Senate Committee report on the English-speaking populations in Quebec (Senate Canada, 2011) refers to this community as "diverse and multi-lingual" (p.11) and one that has been open to and shaped by immigration. Regional differences also account for the diversity of the sector (Senate Canada, 2011). As such, it is not surprising that the English-speaking community in Quebec has historically not spoken as one voice (Jedwab, 2004, QCGN, 2007). It is COCo's opinion that such a lack of homogeneity is common for cultural communities and that attempting to speak as a collective voice is not mandatory or even ultimately desired (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011).

In many ways, Quebec's community sector represents an ideal to other provinces in Canada and other countries in the Western world: it has more nonprofit organizations per capita than any other province in Canada (Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale [ARUC-ÉS], 2006), a large proportion of the funding for these groups comes from the Government of Quebec (ARUC-ÉS, 2006) and the *Politique* represents one of the most enlightened and advanced State-third sector relations in Canada (White, 2001) and is progressive within the rest of the Western world (Sotomayor & Lacombe, 2006; White et al, 2008). At the same time, however, White et al pinpointed some important challenges to overcome in its implementation (via its working manual: the *Cadre de référence en matière d'action communautaire*, 2004)⁴: concerns that are in line with

observations made at COCo. The following are some of the challenges noted:

- The *Politique* is only a policy. Government departments are therefore not mandated to implement it. This has resulted in discrepancies in its application and uneven accessibility.
- To receive funding, groups must be aligned with a specific ministry, which has also been referred to as the “sectoralization of groups” (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011, p. 8). Many English-speaking and ethno-cultural groups do not operate as single issue organizations, hence making it difficult for them to attach themselves to a home ministry. (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011).
- There is a lack of knowledge and information among some French-speaking (White et al, 2008) and many English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011) about the *Politique* and the *Cadre de référence*. As there is no official English version of the *Cadre de référence*, many non-French-speaking groups have difficulty grasping the more technical terminology used in French (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011).

There are also concerns raised that, despite the progressive nature of the funding, community groups can become an extension of the State (Choudry, Hanley & Shragge, 2012; DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010; Shragge, 2013) and community work can become less mobilizing and de-politicized (Lachapelle, 2007).

In addition, the French-speaking community sector in Quebec is very institutionalized (Deslauriers & Paquet, 2003). For English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups, simply being part of these networks can be challenging because they often do not know where or how to get involved, and a lack or limited capacity to work in French can shut these groups off from the broader sector (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011).

METHODOLOGY:

A COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH

COCo decided that a community-based action research (CBAR) approach would reflect not only its interest in documenting the relationship between the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups and the Government of Quebec, but its desire to see that relationship change for the better. Community-based action research can be defined as “research rooted in the community, serving community interests” (Flicker, Savan, McGrath, Kolenda and Mildenerger, 2008, p. 241). As COCo staff wanted the study to be geared to producing change, a plan for action research was

set in motion: it would include significant participant involvement in each step of the research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Jordan, 2003), it would be an emancipatory and empowering experience for those involved (Boog, 2003), and the emphasis would be on action (Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Jordan, 2003), not only on research.

COCo effectively put into place a CBAR project by integrating the basic principles of this type of research in terms of time, money and leadership: a three-year timetable, sufficient funding, and a plan for follow up action. As community group, COCo was the clear leader of the research with support from other groups in the community sector, government and an academic partner. In addition, a questionnaire was created, underwent a test (pilot), and was analyzed by a team consisting of potential research participants, representatives of head organizations in the English-speaking sector, the funder of the research, researcher Deena White, and COCo staff.

The self-reporting survey asked information about the following areas: region of Quebec the groups work in, demographic information of the groups, language capacity of the organization, legal status, sources of funding and network affiliations.

The questionnaire was first launched with a mailing to COCo's monthly e-bulletin list in April 2009 and was also disseminated through other networks. This probability sampling approach (Engel & Schutt, 2009) was followed by a more targeted approach – repeated in all three years of the study – where a specific list of community groups was compiled and phone calls to specific organizations were made. Altogether, close to 800 community groups were identified and 290 completed the questionnaire. Results of the survey were then analyzed by focus groups, comprised of COCo staff, groups that had taken part in the survey, the funder, and several individuals with an extensive knowledge of the community sector.

FINDINGS

Close to 800 English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups were located in 14 regions of Quebec. A total of 290 completed questionnaires were analyzed. Respondents were asked to identify which region of Quebec their organization worked in. Montréal had the highest level of participation with 146 groups responding to the survey. This number accounts for slightly more than half of the participating groups. **Table I** gives a full summary of the number of participating groups from each region.

Four preliminary themes were presented at the Acfas Conference. The following section reports on these themes along with supplementary findings from the final analysis. The results of the study are presented

here briefly to be followed by a more thorough analysis which will discuss the wider implications of the findings.

Geographic region represented	Number of groups n = 290	Percent
Montréal	146	50.3
Laval	18	6.2
Estrie	21	7.2
Outaouais	10	3.4
Montérégie	7	2.4
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	2	.6
Capitale-Nationale	12	4.1
Laurentiens	4	1.3
Lanaudière	2	.6
Chaudière-Appalaches	2	.6
Côte Nord	18	6.2
Gaspésie	6	2.0
Îles de la Madeleine	10	3.4

Table I. *Number of participating groups from each region*

Portrait of the groups

The groups participating in this research have existed for many years, with a majority of them in existence for 11 years or more (69% or 188 out of 281 reporting groups). See **Figure I**. At the same time, they are small in size, as most groups have between 0–5 full-time and part-time employees (130 groups out of 240 have between 0–5 full-time employees and 113 out of 231 groups have between 0–5 part-time

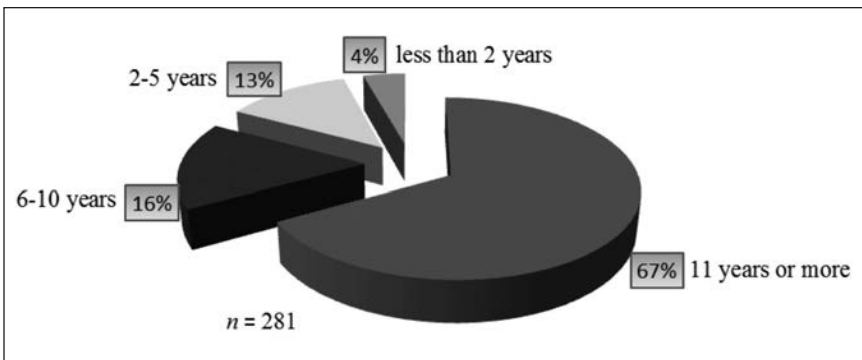


Figure I. *Length of existence of groups*

employees). Many groups appear to rely on volunteers: 90% of 275 reporting groups have 6 or more volunteers.

The groups serve a variety of populations, respond to many different social needs, and involve a wide range of sectors of activity. Of the 230 reporting groups, 109 chose to describe their sectors of activity in their own words. Answers such as “a mix of everything” or “all of the above” (the government categories offered as choices) indicate the complexity of needs that these groups respond to. As well, 33.9% (95 out of 280 reporting groups) also have the capacity to work in another language in addition to French and/or English. Some of the most common other languages are detailed in **Table II**.

Spanish	36 groups
South-Asian languages (Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Bengali)	21 groups
Arabic	13 groups
Filipino dialects (Tagalog and others)	10 groups
Creole	9 groups

Table II. *Examples of other languages used by groups*

Communications

Statistics from all three years of the study indicated that 34% of groups do not have a website (99 out of 290 groups). This result could represent a communication challenge in that a significant minority of groups surveyed does not seem to extensively reach out and promote their existence. Given the small budgets most groups work with (65.8% of groups have budgets under \$250 000), it could be assumed there is little funding for promotion and perhaps a concern that promotion will increase what might be an already full workload (COCO, 2012).

On another communication note, many of the groups surveyed appear to have the capacity to speak, read and write in French: for example, 65.7% of respondents (182 out of 277 reporting groups) are very able to provide services in French while 28.2 % (78 groups) are somewhat able. See **Figure II** for full details on language capacities in French. These results seem to concur with overall bilingual levels of the English-speaking community in Quebec, currently at 70% (CASA, 2012).

However, another question in the survey asked what populations the groups primarily serve, and many groups chose to use the “Other” option provided in the survey, therefore going beyond the government categories offered to them: 80% of the reporting 208 groups chose this option. These groups, therefore, do not appear to categorize their work in the same way the Government of Quebec classifies community

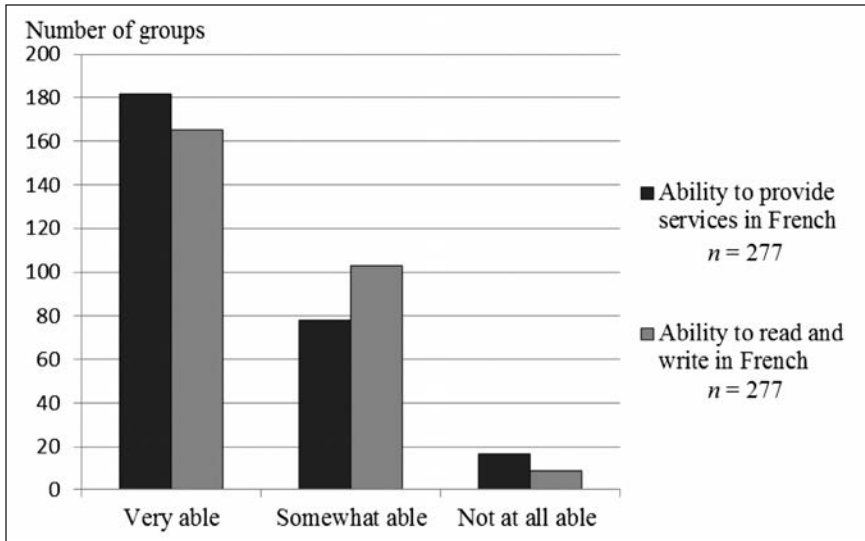


Figure II. *Language capacities in French*

work (COCO, 2012). These results seem to imply that – beyond strict language capacity – many groups speak a different language from the government when it comes to the use of bureaucratic terms.

Global mission funding

Global mission funding is a recurring source of core funding that covers the basic maintenance (salaries, rent, etc.) of an organization, and as such, decreases the dependence on more precarious types of funding (irregular, project or service-based funding) that many groups are forced to survive with (Scott, 2003; Wayland, 2006). Qualifying for global mission funding is therefore highly advantageous for most groups. Of the 243 reporting groups, 40.3% (98 groups) receive global mission funding. This was a pleasingly unexpected finding.

On the other hand, 128 respondents do not receive global mission funding. These results suggest that dialogue is needed between the government and these groups to understand why they are not receiving global mission funding. Of these 128 groups, 106 answered the questionnaire to see if they respond to the criteria for global mission funding and 76 (71.7%) of these 106 groups appear to meet the criteria for global mission funding. The reasons that these 76 groups are not receiving funding are varied. On one hand, many groups do not seem to be aware of the funding and its requirements and, on the other hand, there have been few new funds available since 2003 to allow new groups into the funding envelopes.

COCo researchers looked closely at the survey questions concerning populations served, sectors of activity and the mission statements supplied by the survey respondents to be able to classify these groups as ethno-cultural if they mentioned serving a specific ethno-cultural community, or offer support or services to immigrants or to new arrivals. After careful scrutiny, it was determined that 30 (39.5%) of the 76 groups mentioned work with ethno-cultural groups. This result indicates that almost 40% of groups qualifying for but not receiving global mission funding work with ethno-cultural communities. See **Table III** for summary.

Global Mission Funding	n=243
Groups receiving funding	98
Groups not receiving funding	128
Groups not receiving funding that expressed interest in knowing about criteria	106
Groups which appear to qualify for funding	76
Groups that may qualify for funding that appear to work with ethno-cultural groups	30
17 groups responded that they did not know if they received funding	

Table III. Global Mission Funding

Network affiliations

Before beginning this research project, COCo staff suspected that many English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups have a low level of participation in networks generally, and even more specifically at the Quebec-wide level, e.g. at Quebec-wide coalitions or *regroupements* (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011). Involvement in these Quebec-wide networks is an important way to discover what funding opportunities exist and to be informed of changes in government policy pertaining to community organizations.

For the sake of this study, networks were divided into five categories: local networks (i.e. neighborhood tables), regional networks (i.e. south-west of Montréal or Lower North Shore), English-speaking networks, Quebec-wide networks (often known as *regroupements* or coalitions) and pan-Canadian networks. The results of the research were somewhat mixed: the data suggests that the groups surveyed do indeed seem to be very active in networks: of 290 groups, 75.2% (218 groups) indicated belonging to a first network, 55.5% (161 groups) to a

second network, and 41.4% (120 groups) to a third network. However, the primary locations of involvement are at the local and regional levels (383 mentions combined); this activity does not seem to include a strong participation in Quebec-wide networks (73 mentions). In addition, involvement in English-speaking networks was second only to regional network involvement (COCO, 2012).

At the same time, an undercurrent of difficulties was expressed by the groups in regards to network participation, especially through the qualitative data. Many groups, in writing their own responses (text response), expressed cultural and language problems, communication difficulties, and a lack of acceptance in their network affiliations.

ANALYSIS

The results discussed here bring to light some critical considerations for the ongoing relationship between English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups and the Government of Quebec. These considerations and their wider implications to English-speaking Quebec include the specificities of these groups that the research has highlighted, the communications difficulties expressed, funding challenges, and the ongoing struggle to be part of a larger French-speaking network.

The specificities of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups need to be recognized and responded to by the Government of Quebec

English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups are well rooted in Quebec and appear to have a tenacity to continue to exist despite limited resources (COCO, 2012).

Given the oft-minority status of citizens these groups tend to work with and the multiplicity of needs of these citizens, these groups appear to have developed many services to respond to the needs of their specific community. Specialization of programs and services appears to be, for the most part, a luxury that small groups in often isolated areas do not allow for (COCO, 2012). As funding from the Government of Quebec is through a home ministry that focuses on one area, the realities of these groups do not seem to be taken into account. The current funding structure does not appear to respond to the needs of these groups.

Many of the groups participating do not appear to promote themselves beyond their local constituency

Only 23% of the 559 groups identified in the first year of the *In the Know* CBAR project indicated having access to a website. Statistics from

all three years of the study reveal that 34% (99 out of 290 groups) groups did not have a website when they completed the survey. Although this one fact may not be indicative of a lack of interest in promoting a group's existence, the fact that many groups work with ethno-cultural and other specific communities may indicate that potential members or participants at the local level may hear about them through word of mouth. The lack of promotional activities may therefore imply that there is little need to reach beyond the specific group of citizens that the groups are currently serving. At the same time, the lack of a website may exclude others (e.g. funders) from knowing about the group and its work (COCO, 2012). This lack of promotion, then, may be especially problematic on a larger scale because many of the groups participating in the survey are unknown to the Government of Quebec (COCO, 2012). Many groups who participated in the survey, especially those not receiving Government of Quebec funding, also reported having little contact with Government of Quebec officials (COCO, 2012).

Many staff and/or volunteers speak French but may not be understanding and using terminology in the same way as the Government of Quebec

This research, and moreover the qualitative data, indicates that communication between the groups and the Government of Quebec is problematic. There is a difference in being able to provide services in French – which most groups seem to be able to do – and understanding and using key bureaucratic words in communicating with government officials or network representatives in French. It is obvious from the survey results that many groups appear to categorize their work in a different manner than the Government of Quebec and do not see their work as fitting into strict government classifications. It is also obvious that many groups lack knowledge of crucial terminology. For example, during work on the *In the Know* CBAR project, when asked if their group is a 'community action group' or an 'autonomous community action group,' most group representatives had no idea what these terms referred to (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011). Also, when comparing mission statements between those groups that work with ethno-cultural groups and receive global mission funding and those that do not, it was noted that groups receiving global mission funding used the word "integration" (COCO, 2012, p.37) twice as often as groups without global mission funding. The groups receiving global mission funding may know that "integration" is a key term to obtain funding from the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC).

It appears that speaking the same language is not enough (COCO, 2012). Understanding the bureaucratic terminology is just as important. This lack of linguistic know-how impacts the ability of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups to cultivate a significant connection with key officials in the various ministries (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011) which can lead to future communication challenges in the relationship with the Government of Quebec when trying to identify possible funding sources. In addition, it can inhibit the overall building of relationships between the State and the groups to foster a deeper understanding of each other and to collaborate to address social issues.

Although a significant number of groups do not appear to understand the Government of Quebec's funding structure, many expressed interest in knowing if they qualify and many seem to qualify for global mission funding

Another consideration raised by this research pertains to the groups' lack of knowledge and understanding of the Government of Quebec's funding structure. This is understandable to a certain extent given that the *Cadre de référence* that explains the *Politique* is voluminous and available only in French, and little if no information about global mission funding is available in English. Many of the groups surveyed seem to have no awareness whatsoever of the *Politique's* existence, or know or understand little about it (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011). This can also be true for certain French-speaking groups (White et al, 2008). Despite this lack of knowledge about global mission funding, 76 (71.7%) of the 106 groups interested in knowing about the criteria for global mission funding appear to meet the criteria. These numbers suggest that, despite a lack of current understanding, groups are interested in acquiring knowledge about global mission funding, and potentially, a significant number of them could qualify for it. At the same time, some groups may remain cautious about receiving government funding, as they do not want to become extensions of the State and lose their freedom to mobilize politically.

Receiving global mission funding is a specific challenge for ethno-cultural groups

In relation to funding, this research suggests that funding, especially global mission funding, is a problematic issue for many ethno-cultural groups (COCO, 2012). When they do not specifically identify their work as "integration into Quebec society" (COCO, 2012, p. 32), they have

difficulty obtaining funding from the MICC and when they identify their work with a specific ethno-cultural community, there is resistance from funders because of the unwillingness to fund specific populations (RIOCM, 2008). These findings imply that global mission funding is harder to come by for groups working with ethno-cultural communities. COCo staff have noted that these groups historically have difficulty obtaining funding from other sources. Funding from the federal government has been cut back (Phillips, Laforest & Graham, 2010; McRae, 2012); few foundations exist to support the efforts of groups working with ethno-cultural communities (Wayland, 2006); and, the communities themselves are often living in poverty as recent immigrants or refugees hence have limited financial contributions to make.

Blumel and Ravensbergen (2011), two COCo staff members, express the “need for funding for ethno-cultural groups that are addressing social change at a local culturally-based level” (p. 20). In their evaluation of the *Politique*, White et al (2008) arrived at a similar conclusion. Many groups continue to work with the integration of newcomers and specific ethno-cultural communities long after the government-determined deadline of five years, as this research has shown. Government funding programs then need to recognize and address the specific needs of groups working with ethno-cultural communities, immigrants and new arrivals.

Groups are involved in the broader French-speaking community sector through participation in networks. However, there may be a lack of participation at the decision-making and policy-influencing levels.

Results from the survey may explain the isolation and marginality of many English-speaking or ethno-cultural groups compared to the formal, French-speaking community network system in Quebec. Although groups are, indeed, quite active at the local or regional level (at the same time, it must be recognized that some groups neither have the means or, in some cases the interest, in participating in networks), participation in Quebec-wide networks is lacking, making influential and engaged participation difficult.

One of the questions these findings raise is whether there is adequate leadership of groups from English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural communities at Quebec-wide levels of networking and coordination (COCo, 2012). Generally, stronger links exist with government policy-makers at the Quebec-wide coalitions levels compared to the local or regional ones. The qualitative data that speaks to a sense of isolation and exclusion still felt by many groups

may be one of the reasons that representatives of these groups may be hesitant to take on leadership roles. This finding about network affiliations speaks to the need for more action research into this area.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The minority status of the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec in relation to the lack of understanding about their work, the underfunding from the Government of Quebec, and low participation levels at decision-making and policy-influencing levels, speaks to potential challenges for other minority groups in Canada.

These challenges may not yet be acknowledged beyond Quebec. The *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada* does not focus on the challenges for minority groups within the broader community sector in their work (<http://www.fcfa.ca>), and Canadian research on minority communities focuses primarily on demographics, education, health and employment, not on the community sector (<http://www.acs-aec.ca/en/publications>).

However, the specific challenges minority community groups face in relation to access to funding has been acknowledged over the years (for example, see Cardinal & Hudon, 2001; Fiore, 2013; Institute for Community Inclusion, 1998; Johnson & Doucet, 2006; Senate Canada, 2011.) The Canada-Community agreements seek to redress the problems of underfunding for official language minority groups (English in Quebec, French in the rest of Canada). However, in providing funding from the federal government, integration into the community sector at the provincial level becomes, at least in Quebec, less important for groups, and involvement in decision-making and policy-influencing at the Quebec level is subsequently not prioritized.

This research highlights the responsibility that minority community groups have in reaching out and explaining the needs and functioning of their communities, and in building bridges for funding and stronger collaboration to address issues of social injustice. It suggests that governments, beyond the federal government, also have a responsibility for recognizing minority groups.

ACTION RESEARCH

As *In the Know* is a community-action based research (CBAR) project, COCo has found it imperative to act on the results of the study and to recommend future courses of action to support the study's purpose: a deeper recognition and inclusion of these groups in the French-speaking community sector. The following are some of the steps taken and suggestions for further plans of action.

A Google map and other sources of promotion

To respond to the lack of public knowledge about the work of groups participating in the survey, COCo created a Google docs map so that groups could be 'on the web' (see <https://maps.google.ca/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=103546236201983514608.0004704004b59e3619c25&z=7>). Statistics from all three years shows that 249 of the 290 participating groups (86%) have joined this Google map. COCo also shared the emerging data with government staff at a Comité interministériel⁵ meeting in January 2011 and more informally at a SACAIS event in the fall of 2011. Emerging data was also presented to community groups and networking events connected with COCo's work. In addition, COCo presented the data at the Acfas Conferences in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Finally, the results of the survey (the Final Report) have been made available to the survey participants as well as to the general public through COCo's website (<http://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/COCo-In-the-Know-Final-Report.pdf>).

Information on funding from the Government of Quebec

COCo has engaged in multiple activities to inform groups about Government of Quebec funding. Specifically, info-COCo sessions (free consultations) have been given to groups to explain funding requirements as well as 'e-notes (info pieces in the monthly COCo e-bulletin) that served the same function. In April 2010, COCo partnered with the Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA)⁶ to hold an information session on the history and current context of Government of Quebec funding.

Strategies for further action

More actions are needed. This research identifies several potential avenues that COCo would like to explore with its network:

- Do groups see the need for fuller participation or collaboration of members of the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector in places of greater leadership in the French-speaking community sector? What would this look like? How would we get there?
- How to provide more education to interested groups in the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector about the French-speaking community sector.
- How to foster stronger links and dialogue between the Government of Quebec and the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector.

- Do we want to have a more precise idea of who is part of the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector network? Do we need to more fully understand how these groups have emerged, survived and thrive?
- The glimpse that this research has given us into the profile of these community groups underscores the rich diversity and history of this element of the Quebec community sector. Is there an interest in documenting the history and contribution of the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector to the overall development of the community sector in Quebec and to social action in Quebec?

CONCLUSION

Historically, little has been known or documented about the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups working throughout the various regions of Quebec. The CBAR project, *In the Know: Identifying multiple aspects of Quebec's community sector*, has been an attempt to fill these gaps by identifying approximately 800 of these groups and by looking more closely at the 290 groups who took part in the study. This paper has summarized the profile of these groups and the challenges they face in terms of communication (whether it be in terms of self-promotion or with the Government of Quebec), access to government funding, and network affiliations. It has revealed that the groups who took part in the survey are complex and multifaceted, which in many ways mirrors the populations they serve. It has discussed the lack of knowledge by the Government of Quebec of these groups and vice versa, as well as the specific difficulties of ethno-cultural groups in accessing global mission funding. The paper also examined the variety of strategic actions that have been carried out and outlines the suggested steps to be taken in the future.

NOTES

1. Survey Monkey is an online survey administration tool that enables people to create their own surveys and analyze the results. It was chosen because it is low-cost (sometimes free) and user-friendly. It is also easy to fill in and distribute. It allows for in-depth data analysis.
2. SACAIS is the Government of Quebec body mandated to oversee the application of the *Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien de l'action communautaire*. It was created in 1995 because of pressure from community groups and was formerly known as SACA.)
3. Global mission funding is given to autonomous community action organizations. These are organizations which meet specific criteria for funding, including being completely autonomous from government structures, inspired by and reflecting citizen concerns, and working for social change. For more information, see the *Cadre de référence en matière d'action communautaire*. Québec : Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec: Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille. <http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/sacais/action-communautaire/cadre-reference.asp>
4. For more information, see the *Cadre de référence en matière d'action communautaire*. Québec : Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec: Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille. <http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/sacais/action-communautaire/cadre-reference.asp>
5. A committee of the Government of Quebec that brings together representatives from the ministries that fund community work (through the application of the *Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien de l'action communautaire*).
6. RQ-ACA – Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome. A Quebec-wide network of independent community actions that represents over 4000 autonomous community organizations to the Government of Quebec. <http://www.rq-aca.org/>

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