Personal Identity and Volunteering

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Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of two major themes – identity and volunteering – and explores the drivers behind long-term volunteering, the experiences throughout the process and the associated emerging dynamics. The study was conducted across two countries, Australia and Bulgaria. The primary argument that volunteering is a multidimensional process is understood through the socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky and Bandura, who emphasise human agency, mediating social factors and environments. The research outlines that veteran volunteers have a salient volunteer identity, revising and reinventing their cultural space directly and the social order in indirect ways. The study exemplifies volunteering as an active mechanism through which individuals shape their own personal identities and environments. The results outline the specific impacts of sustained volunteering on aspects of identity relating to volunteer's satisfaction, retention, support and networking. The findings of the study provide important insights that have the potential to inform public policy relating to volunteering.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: ……………………

Name: Lyubka Lazarova

Date: January 2020

Acknowledgments

This work is dedicated to all volunteers everywhere who spend years of their time for causes they firmly believe in. They are the inspiration of this study. I appreciate their generosity of sharing valuable stories and stimulating observations. In this process of writing their stories always came first to my mind and the concepts, reflecting their inner consistency, formed later.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background to the Study

This research project was inspired by my long-term volunteering experience and humbling encounters with the dedicated fellow volunteers who I have had the honour to meet over the past 15 years in Australia and Bulgaria. These encounters have led me to a gradual awareness of the ways volunteering can reflect and transform identity through changes of the self and that of peers.

While volunteering, I observed that people join volunteer teams and organisations for various reasons and lengths of time. For some, it was a single initiative and event or casual attendance of two to three meetings. Such short-term volunteering efforts tended to be initiated through curiosity and were usually encouraged by a friend. These volunteers sometimes left without notice. Perhaps they had other priorities or they did not like something in particular or the overall volunteering experience; perhaps they just were not 'volunteer material', as some of the team-leaders used to comment. Others came and stayed with the team and organisation for months or years and then eventually moved away from volunteering towards other interests. There was also another less common type of veteran volunteer who interested me the most: those who volunteered intensely for many years, sometimes decades, and seemed to have made a life-time commitment to these efforts. I decided to undertake the current research project in order to explore these veterans' passion and self-identification with their volunteer role.

Purpose, Aims and Significance of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to understand the participants' perspectives on the volunteering process and to explore their views on the nature of volunteer identity. The aim of this thesis is to provide greater understanding about the personal identity features that were strongly associated with sustained volunteerism. The study also seeks to investigate whether volunteerism generated significant influences on personal identity, its agency and its social environment. Participants' conceptualisations offered reflective understanding on how various expressions of agency were experienced, including dimensions relating to personality, personal resources, strategies for overcoming obstacles, and acting towards desired results. Although these expressions of agency seemed evident and empowering; others were less obvious. For

example, self-regulation when resisting exhaustion, overcoming incomprehension and manipulative behaviours.

The research approach is qualitative, drawing on in-depth interviews with 20 long-term volunteers. The interviews reveal the first-hand experiences of the research participants from the two case study countries of Australia and Bulgaria. The project explores the personal aspects of volunteer's identity; that is, the core features with which volunteers identify. It demonstrates how volunteers voice their memories of lived experiences and their perceptions and opinions on a wide spectrum of volunteering related issues.

Overall, this project provides insights into how volunteers exercise their agency and self-efficacy beliefs. It illuminates the questions it seeks to examine and enriches the applied social science within the larger context of the identity/volunteering interface. It outlines the importance of personal volunteer identity as one of the drivers sustaining ongoing involvement in volunteering activity.

Thesis Outline

Over the remainder of this chapter, I provide an overview of the main structure of the thesis. Chapter Two investigates the theoretical framework of the current project by briefly examining the literature that discusses the main conceptual approaches to identity, volunteerism and their interface. The chapter considers the different heritage from which volunteerism stems in both Australia and Bulgaria and explores the social forces that have shaped both societies, providing ideas about their implications for contemporary volunteering. It also presents the research questions around the topic of self-identity as a driver to volunteerism and the multidimensional impact of volunteering on volunteers and their environment.

Chapter Three outlines the research approach and methodology. It discusses the relevant epistemological considerations and the research design utilised in this project, providing information about participants, sample, data collection and analysis. Chapter Four consists of the results and focuses on the personal identity drivers behind long-term volunteering. Chapter Five explores the results further and analyses the impact of volunteering evidence. Chapter Six completes the thesis by revisiting the main themes that emerged through the research. It draws conclusions from the findings in this study. The limitations of the study are also considered. The brief summary outlined the implications of the current thesis results for applied theory in recognition and representation of long-serving volunteers and better

conceptualisation in this research area. It is hoped that the findings will benefit the volunteer management and policies that are engaged in provision of individualised support for volunteer identity and agency. The data contributes to the body of literature pertaining to volunteering and also identity.

Chapter Two

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter explores the conceptualisation of identity, volunteering and their intersection in theory and previous research. The leading principle was, that multifaceted phenomena as volunteering might be understood fully only if based on equally complex theory of (volunteer) identity. Therefore, the chapter presents a brief overview of identity approaches – epigenetical (Erikson), cultural-historical (Vygotsky) and contemporary socio-cognitive (Bandura) – to outline the approach utilised in this study. The chapter examines further the main theoretical perspectives on volunteer work and the variety of volunteer related terminology, including wide-ranging typologies. I compare previous research on volunteering, which has explored issues of identity, and contrast their outcomes in order to define the perspective adopted for the thesis.

In this chapter, particular attention is given to the recent trends in the social sciences oriented towards identifying and cultivating prosocial behaviours that produce strengths and open up new perspectives for groups and communities. The trends focus on the social phenomena that bind people together and enable the normal development of communities, groups and individuals, despite existing deficiencies and risks. As a positive (prosocial) activity, volunteerism naturally interlinks with other activities that entail same direction of conduct. This chapter outlines the complexity of volunteering as a concept and the lack of agreement in the social sciences on how it is related to similar theoretical concepts. Self-efficacy beliefs (general and specific) are explored as being essential for volunteering to occur and be sustained as part of life time perspective. The perceived advantages and disadvantages of the context/environment in which volunteering unfolds are considered for their identity-building potential and impact on performance.

The Concept of Identity

My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else.
(Amin Maalouf, 1996/2003, p. 10)

Identity: an historical overview

Identity defines the most essential aspects of human individuality through integrating the simultaneous experiencing of self-sameness on the one hand and self-distinction on the other. This dualistic meaning can be seen to stem from its origins in two Latin terms: *Idem* and

Ipse. The former means 'same', 'the exact likeness'. It suggests that the identical entity has permanence in time, does not easily change and, if it does, the changing is in gradual and partially overlapping ways, preserving its central, essential being (core) intact. Paul Ricoeur (1992, pp. 2-3) suggests that the concept of 'identity' has in fact more complex origins. He regards it as determined as well by the Latin term *Ipse*, which addresses a quite different aspect of the word sameness – the sense of selfhood, and the derivative *ipseite* – meaning the more intimate, 'who the Self is' type of self-identity (Meltzer, 2010, p. 517) with antonyms the Other(s) and the Different. Thus, according to the first (*idem*) derivation, the general philosophical understanding of the concept 'identity' assumes reference to the more general categories of 'essence', 'being' and 'change'. The second (*ipseite*) derivation of the term, refers to the individual in contrast – oneself as opposed to the other(s): Ego-Alter Ego, Us-Them, Oneself-Another, and even in contrast to the individual; that is, 'Oneself as Another' (Ricoeur, 1992; Dauenhauer & Pellauer, 2014). The main concern within this stream of philosophical thought is the building and sustaining of human identity in the context of society.

The defining of identity as an independent theme of exploration is traditionally related to the British Empiricists John Locke ('Essay Concerning Human Understanding', 1690) and David Hume ('Treatise of Human Nature', 1793; both essays in Perry, ed., 2008). Although in their work they often used self and individuality together with other terms as synonyms, they mapped the concept of identity and the related process of individuation as autonomous philosophical topics. Later, William James added to the notion of the active, reflexive aspect of identity. He (according to Franzese, 2002) established a certain 'ethics of energy' and action as avenues to identity knowing itself and reflecting its place in the whole of reality. The ideas of the forefathers of identity problematics (Locke, Hume and James, among others) were disseminated and developed further in the twentieth century, particularly in the context of the extreme social realities of the world wars.

Identity as integration of life trajectory

The horrors of war in the twentieth century highlighted the treat to identity posed by extreme harsh realities, as exemplified in the Nazi concentration camps. The need to comprehend and heal the effects of trauma, loss and existential angst provided an impetus to better understand identity issues both within academic and public discourse. The therapists of the psychoanalytic movement outlined the main mechanisms of identity formation (individual and group) and its functioning. The psychoanalysis and psychodynamic (therapeutic) movements emphasised the diachronic nature of identity – the fact that it reflected the entire

life trajectory – integrating past and future. In addition to having sameness and otherness in one, the individual (or group) identity carried out in its 'now' (current identity) a distilled summary of personal, familial and collective past and future prospects.

Synthesis of the psychological and sociological approaches

In the context of healing American war veterans in the 1960s, Eric Erikson developed a comprehensive identity theory that acknowledged identity formation was a result of interaction between psychic and social factors, which were always embedded in a larger cultural context (Erikson, 1968). The socio-cultural patterns appeared organised as an 'epigenetic law' which carried out (with the force of nature, almost genetically) the culturally supported individual development from the infancy to adult identity. The healthy, mature identity was able to integrate and in turn eventually to enrich the culture itself, thus contributing to its survival. Therefore, identity presented the necessary link between 'individuality and communality' (Erikson, 1982, p. 16).

Erikson's epigenetic theory and its further development by exploration of identity statuses (Marcia, 1966; Marcia, Waterman, Matterson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993; Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989; Kumru & Thompson, 2003) informed my perspective on formation of volunteer identity. The further research on hierarchical structure of identity and self-image (Offer, Ostrov, & Howard, 1992) followed Erikson's tradition. Epigenetic theory was insightful for this thesis, as it relates to the theme of volunteering in several ways. First, it regards identity as emerging from active involvement with social realities and their requirements. Second, the individual not only fulfils the normatively prescribed social roles but, from the position of his/her own identity (for example, accumulated sociality), exercises the right to challenge them. Third, personal identity is not just reproduced, but also actively enriches the wider culture. Similarly, a volunteer identity is constructed in interaction with the social environment and oftentimes challenges certain of its patterns. Volunteerism influences not only the individuals directly involved but also their surrounding environments, thereby enriching social life. In the following section, I examine these same prerequisites from a different, socio-constructivist perspective utilising the socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky and Bandura.

Identity as integration of socio-historical aspects

In his socio-cultural theory of the individual's development Vygotsky posited identity as a result of socially and historically sifted activities in a culturally mediated material world (Vygotsky, 1934/1962). The collective past shaped the individual's identity through historical

in their origin and nature social instruments, such as speech, symbols, traditions, rituals, persisting patterns of action and worldviews (Vygotsky, 1927/1982; Luria, 1976; Rieber, 2012). Through his/her identity the individual fitted not only into his/her immediate environment but also into the prospects of the greater whole; that is, into historical time and space. Thus, each identity presented a link with a specific socio-historical past (down to our common human origins) and carried out its representative features.

Furthermore, by managing essential social resources (tools) for self-organisation in the real world, identity gradually develops autonomy. It becomes relatively independent from the immediate stimuli, context and environment. The mature identity authors itself by deliberately acting on the surrounding circumstances in a preselected direction. This self-built and transformed (by social means) identity locates and directs its recourses for self-transformation and cultural change (Vygotsky, 1927/1982; Rieber, 2012; Wertsch, 1985). The socio-historical theory of Vygotsky is part of the base structure of the socio-constructivist approach to identity. This approach changed the focus of analysis from the individual towards the social community and its institutions in a radical way.

This meeting of the personal identity contents with the shaping social-historical instruments happens in the 'zone of the proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1962). It includes not only what the individual contains or is able to achieve, but also what can be accomplished with social help from others (adults, peers, experts) in proximity of optimal social/material interactions. For the present research, the 'proximal zone' theory of Lev Vygotsky is of particular interest, because it points to the fact that identity needs comprehensive social interactions in fostering environments (neither too simple, nor too complex) to develop. Identity has larger potentialities in favourable socio-cultural contexts (zone). This aspect of Vygotsky's theory (1978) shares the same fundamental premises with the complementary, but distinct theory developed later by Alfred Bandura. Bandura's social cognitive theory (2006, 1986) is one of the most influential theories in modern behavioural science. His agentic theory and its self-efficacy concept (2018), underscores the importance of active mediators to human behaviour (such as volunteering).

Both Vygotsky's and Bandura's key-concepts emphasise the power of social structures, active human interactions and the mediating central processes (consciousness) which transform human perceptions in the course of development (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). Vygotsky and Bandura place emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of human consciousness, which mediate the direct impact of the environment, thus opposing biological determinism (Ferrari, Robinson,

& Yasnitsky, 2010, p. 95). Although the continuity between their seminal theories was recognised in the social sciences, it has 'not … been fully appreciated or understood by general audiences' (Zimmerman, 1993, p. 82). Both Vygotsky's and Bandura's theories propose that personal features are developed by social tools, internalised with support of others and then performed independently. Volunteering, as I shall argue later on, is a focal point of social factors. It aims to provide those favourable environments capable of eliciting and facilitating independent (individual and collective) volunteer activities, and thereby bringing about personal identity changes, which the thesis explores further.

Types of identity: definitions

The current study uses the following established subdivisions of identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The first subdivision is defined by the term 'social identity' and includes the most essential social roles and types. The second, denoted by the term 'personal identity', includes the domain-independent personal abilities, traits and styles. These relatively opposing each other terms pointed out to the different aspects of identity spectrum. The current project considers the relativity of this distinction. Volunteer identity is regarded social (in its genesis, functions and regulations) while it is acknowledged that its 'sociality' at the end of the line is always anchored in the concrete human person.

The thesis applies another operational distinction of the concept of identity: individual and collective (group identity). Previous research on individual identity has focussed on separate individuals with their personal, social and the psycho-social aspects, while research on collective identity refers to groups, their conglomerates and intergroup dimensions.
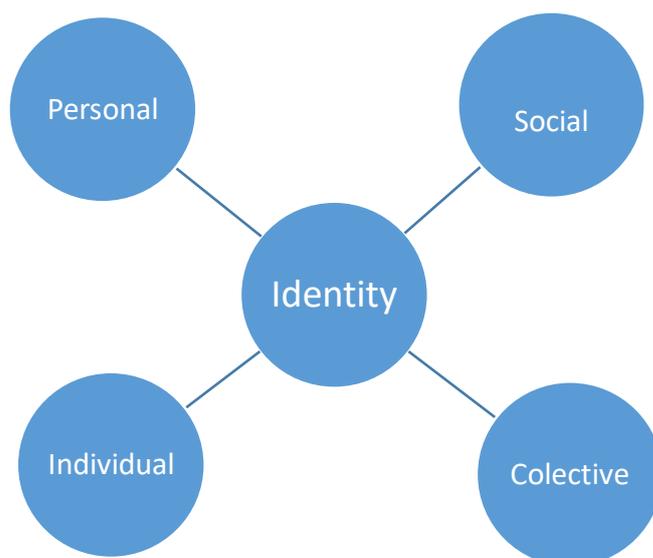
Figure 1: Types of Identity

It seems that collective 'larger identity' concepts that widen the spotlight have remained insufficiently articulated. For example, national identity is described as 'a person's psychological affiliation to their country of residence' (Fuller-Rowell, Ong & Phinney, 2013), but such definitions remained vague, insufficiently distinguishing between psychological and sociological meanings (Mandler, 2006). By contrast, in this study larger, collective identities coalesce around both the personal and social identity characteristics. For example, 'vollies' (colloquial for volunteers) are proud to express the notion of the 'Fair Go' as principle of their social 'Australian identity'.

The analysed identity literature provides many definitions of identity, highlighting its multidimensionality, internal unity, external differentiation, having own history, dynamic, assertion, past, and future perspectives. It is worth noting that each of these identity dimensions includes positive and negative aspects; for example, differentiation versus non-differentiation (from others), dynamic versus rigid structure, and mobilisation versus demobilisation of personal resources (Codol, cited in Silgidjian-Gueorgieva, 1998). Although Erikson's classic definition appears simpler, it is closer to the aims of my research and thesis:

> The term identity expresses such a mutual relation that connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others. (Erikson, 1956)

This definition with a narrower scope captures the essential dynamic between the inner psychological, developmental and social 'sharing' nature of identity. The identity provides essential continuity in human's life. It integrated the changes in its structure thanks to its inherent plasticity.

Identity and volunteering in a modern world of change

This research project acknowledges that the identity/volunteer interface, reflects the circumstances of modern ways of living, characterised with 'flexible social interactions across spatial and temporal boundaries' (Whitley, Gal & Kjaergaard, 2014, p.26). In the contemporary fragmented, globalised and technologised world, it is increasingly difficult to build, sustain, and manifest a steady identity (Calhoun, 1995; Bauman, 2001) and to convey it in interactions with the others (Moller, Deci & Elliot, 2010). These societal factors combine to create a set of conditions that may stretch excessively the inner plasticity of modern personal identities. Facing the impending tensions between multiple electronic identity representations (personal, professional and other social-media identities) the task of the social and behavioural sciences is to indicate the ways of preserving the internal uniqueness and autonomy of individuals (Castells, 2010).

The increasing intensification of the modern life affects human activities on all levels, including volunteering engendering relatively new forms of volunteering such as global (across the countries), corporate (when a corporation volunteers or encourages its employee to do so) (Bussell & Forbes, 2002), and e-volunteering (e-campaigning, data base maintaining, e-recruitment, sponsor fishing, e-counselling). There are branches of volunteerism that are dedicated to closing the IT gap between rich and poor countries and bridging different strata within societies. Specialised volunteer organisations provide the needed technological equipment and expertise for social networking and computer literacy of the deprived (Parthasarathy, 2015). This thesis regards identity and volunteering as dynamic social phenomena that need to be re-examined in light of the changing nature of information systems in communities and the world.

Volunteering

Representation of volunteering in the social sciences

The exploration of volunteering spans multiple fields and disciplines, reflecting the inherent diversity of volunteerism (Acosta, 2012; Wilson, 2012). A substantial number of studies concentrate on volunteering and community development (Brennan, 2005, pp. 20-27;

Chinman, Anderson, Imm, Wandersman & Goodman, 1996), individual's workplace (Teague & Peterson, 2011, pp. 146-161) and family system (Cowlishaw, Evans & McLennan, 2010; Huynh, Xanthopoulou, & Winefield, 2012). The volunteering process reflects the religious life of volunteers (Hustinx, 2015; Wang & Handy, 2014) and expresses their spirituality (Einolf 2011; Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato & Keltner, 2015). There is interest in the educational aspects of volunteering (Son & Wilson, 2011), its role in ecology, sport (Engelberg, Skinner, & Zakus, 2014), and art and culture, among many other spheres of life. Consequently, even the interdisciplinary research covers only specific areas of volunteering and deliberately avoids others (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999, p. 47). The main difficulty is the enormous variety of volunteering behaviours, with true diversity often disregarded in research (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007). Therefore, no one theory is able to bind the fragmented volunteerism studies in a systematic way (Wilson, 2000, pp. 233-234) and being definitive (Hustinx, Cnaan & Handy, 2010a). There is not a standard practice of volunteering or a homogeneous profile of the volunteering individual or group.

Whether organised or spontaneous, the volunteer movements and their various networks are not yet sufficiently studied by social sciences and this impedes the investigation of their interface with identity. Scientific analysis would be much easier if volunteerism could be compartmentalised into smaller standard sectors and studied preferably in portions in which the methods of already well-established organisational theories (for example) could be directly applied. The problem is that the roles of volunteers significantly differ from professional ones. As the extraordinary hybridity and fluidity of the existing voluntary initiatives, networks and roles impedes their systematic observation and theoretical classification, organisational theories are not directly applicable to volunteering. In addition, I argue that the roles of volunteers and professionals differ in relation to identity. The growing interest in 'prosocial behaviours', however suggests that volunteering will receive the attention its significance deserves.

Volunteering: etymology, definitions and similar terms

The noun volunteer comes from Latin *voluntarius*, (pl. *voluntaries*). It suggests someone who acts according to his or her own disposition, will, choice (*volontas*) and perhaps with certain enthusiasm, associated with flow and flight (as in *volatus* – flight). The 'free will' aspect of volunteering is apparent in the etymology of the word. It is valid for the English language as well as for the entire Slavic group of languages, including Bulgarian.

For the purposes of this research I define volunteering as activity which has the following characteristics:

- Is undertaken of a person's own free will.

- Is without concern of financial gain.

- It benefits the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole.

- Is often carried out in support of non-profit organisations or community-based initiative.

- It can be both formal and informal in nature.

- It does not replace professional, paid employment. (Ragonnaud, 2009, pp. 1-2)

For the current project, the third point is particularly important, due to its emphasis on benefitting the 'common good' and the larger social context implicit in the notion of volunteering. The last point is also an important defining feature of 'true' volunteering. For instance, this study did not recruit participants for whom volunteering was bound with unemployment welfare payments or job training. While this is often the practice in Australia (Warburton & Smith, 2003), the UK (MacDonald, 1996) and Belgium (De Waele & Hustinx, 2019), it is not in Bulgaria. This practice will be discussed further in the next chapter. The current research supports the understanding that volunteering is also non-coerced activity; therefore, it does not include any military or wartime volunteerism. For the purpose of this research project it was not considered 'volunteering' when formal or informal kinds of pressure were applied as it overshadows the exercising of one's own free will and identity.

Investigating the social profile of volunteering, Musick and Wilson (2008, p. 11) mentioned that it is difficult to demarcate volunteering because this requires to 'group together actions that belong together and are [hardly] distinguishable from similar, but theoretically different actions'. Therefore, it is complicated to distinguish the concept of 'volunteering' from other familial and overlapping social practices and their terms, such as 'altruistic behavior' (Haski-Leventhal, 2009), 'pro-social and helping behavior/orientation' (Kahana, Bhata, Lovegreen, Kahana, & Mildarsky, 2013), 'generosity, philanthropy and donation of time and goods' (Darling, 2011; Hortt, 2015; Keely, 2006; Maki & Snyder, 2017), concept of 'activism' (Curtin & McGarty, 2016) and its different types.

The situation is compounded further by the fact that often in the social science literature volunteering type of activity is named otherwise: 'building capacities and social capital'

(Bjørnskov, 2006; Kerr & Tedmanson, 2003) or 'building enabling community/social structures' and 'mitigating negative social phenomena' (such as AIDS and other stigmatised conditions). To avoid terminological fragmentation, for the purposes of this study I follow Dekker and Halman's holistic *civil society* concept, which is 'seen as the exclusive societal sphere of voluntary involvement' (2003, p. 8). Its derivative concepts include *civic engagement* (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, pp. 159-179; Foster-Bey, 2008), *citizen participation* (Ohmer, 2007), *civic participation* (Eliasof, 2013, p. 129), *civic duty* (Hortt, 2015, p. 95), and *civil education* (Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008, pp. 49-60), among others.

Volunteering in Bulgaria: historical and cultural overview

The phenomenon of volunteering is strongly influenced by the history, culture and politics of the country in general and the local social communities in particular. By reason of having Australian and Bulgarian participants in the study, a short overview of the historical and cultural roots is needed and presented here in brief. For centuries, Bulgarian society has maintained patriarchal values, and been quite united and close knitted (Hadjiiski, 1937/2002). It has had rich democratic traditions cultivated in an atmosphere of relative equality, without big economic and class divides (Irechek, 1930) until recent decades. The ethics of work, mutual help and assistance, many of which in modern day terms would be classified as community or religious based volunteering, were just casually expected and performed, regulated by cultural norms.

Formal volunteering in Bulgaria (and in Australia) emerged more than a century ago, at the end of the nineteenth century. The first official volunteers in (Bulgaria and in Australia) were recruited by community charities and organisations for humanitarian help. Although we do not have statistical and sociological surveys from this period, the existing historical documents provide testimony and valuable information about the early days of organised volunteering. One of the largest humanitarian organisations in Bulgaria that recruits formal volunteers is the Bulgarian Red Cross established in 1878. Similar was the role of the Australian Red Cross, which dates from 1914 (Australian Red Cross, 2017). The first Bulgarian volunteers were engaged in helping those in need, both nationally and internationally, during the wars of the twentieth century (Bulgarian Red Cross, 2017).

Soon after the Second World War, for a period of just over 40 years (in between 1948-1989) Bulgaria had a totalitarian form of government – '*pseudo-ideological dictatorship*' (Todorov, 1999, p. 10; emphasis in original) – under the Soviet model. In this period, volunteer movements were under state control, regulations and limitations. Many of the so-called

'volunteer involvements' (such as the student's 'brigades') were seemingly an act of free will, but compulsory in essence. The non-participation in official volunteering initiatives, if repeated systemically, had consequences, among array of political and social criteria. The consequences were most often hidden, indirect and delayed in time (such as an unfavourable comment on the issue in a CV or references, negative effect on students' scholarship applications, work applications, career promotions and bonuses).

During the last decades, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Bulgaria (as other Eastern European countries) has been in a hard transition from a planned to a market economy (Zlatkov, 2014). David Stark (1990), in the title of his article on the process, captures the true nature of this peaceful, but still uncompleted dismantling of the totalitarian system in his reference to it as 'from Plan to Clan'. The facts show that the ex-party nomenklatura (that is, those who were in command of various bureaucracies) used their privileged positions in the state and not without the active mediation of foreign financial circles and institutions took abroad the country's capitals. This left the state 'amidst the political, economic, ecological, social and moral wreckage' (Pundeff, 1992, p. 112). Part of the capital was later returned for privatisation of the previously nationalised industries, banks and media, thus control over the country's economy, media and, to a huge extent, politics, remained within the same lineage (such as clans) (Stark, 1992; Ners, 1995).

During the troubled years of the post-transition period, the state was weakened and could not provide proper services to its vulnerable citizens. Although the social need for volunteering re-emerged, in Bulgaria – as in the entire Eastern and Central Europe – volunteering was in decline (Silló, 2016). The main reason was that the idea of unpaid work was heavily compromised by the previous regimes. Nevertheless, volunteering in Bulgarian slowly re-emerged in its original form, stimulated by various European exchange programs. Now, it includes just above 10 per cent of the adult population and is slowly increasing (see Appendix F). It is still below the average proportion for the EU, which is about 33 per cent (Ragonnaud, 2009, p. 2). For comparison, Australian volunteering is close to the EU average at 31 per cent, though slowly decreasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2015). I would argue that this statistic captures only the formal, organised sector of volunteering. Moreover, it includes volunteering that is tied to unemployment and welfare benefits, popular in Australia and some EU countries (De Waele & Hustinx, 2019), but not in Bulgaria. I am convinced that the percentage gap would be lower if the informal volunteering is included in the analysis and work-for-welfare is excluded as a form of volunteerism.

The uniqueness of Australian volunteering: historical overview

Historically and culturally based, volunteerism may differ not only between countries (for example, distant ones like Australia and Bulgaria), but also between the multiplicity of contexts within the same country. While Bulgaria is a territorially and ethnically compact country in Europe, Australia is a large, multicultural continent with a federal system of government; it is this combination of factors that determines the wide variety of Australian volunteering. For example, country side volunteering or 'the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concept of volunteering are very different to, but not less important than, those of other Australians' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 12).

The historian of Australian volunteering Melanie Oppenheimer argued that there is a unique Australian way of volunteering 'that lies at the core of our Australian culture and identity' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 24). According to her, this distinctive Australian volunteering is determined by three main factors. The first refers to the strong involvement of the state in volunteering from the establishment of Australia as a penal colonies up to the present. In the beginning, it was the British government, through the first governors and their wives, actively promoting private philanthropy, mutual aid and social infrastructure developments. Further, the relationship between Australian governments (local, state and federal) and the voluntary sector has changed with each generation, large immigration influxes or wars (Oppenheimer, 2002; Willis, 2004).

The second main factor concerns the impact of the harsh Australian environment on volunteering. Australian 'types' of emergency and/or disaster volunteering were 'developed through necessity' and the need for 'just getting on with it' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 26). Good examples of the continuity of this tradition are the volunteer support in times of natural or man-made disasters (such as floods and oil spills); the recent local nature conservation projects (Conservation Volunteers Australia, 2018); natural resource management initiatives (Cass, 2015); water cleaning and care initiatives; and emergency help for humans (e.g., Royal Flying Doctors Service, 2018). When needed overseas, Australian volunteer help is extended internationally. The specificity of these emergency relief efforts requires diverse, episodic and spontaneous volunteering styles. When faced with natural and human-made disasters the challenge is to harness the potential of social-networking and available skill-based volunteers. It requires development of flexible volunteering styles that engage the risk-management capacities of local communities (McLennan, Whittaker & Handmer, 2016).

The third distinctive factor refers to the Australian federal structure and the Commonwealth agenda concerning social organisations, which constantly change the volunteering environment (Overgaard, 2016; 2019). For instance, government regulations 'required volunteers and their organizations to be much more professional and businesslike in their operation and activities' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 181). Being closely involved in the voluntary sector, Australian governments serve 'both to assist and hinder the specific structures of Australian volunteerism' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 27) and 'continue to use the volunteering for their own political needs', often 'taking it for granted' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 207). Arguing that indeed there is a unique Australian way of volunteering shaped by Australian history, Oppenheimer acknowledges that its contemporary diversification, 'is not only about social welfare and disadvantaged communities, it is about the environment, sport, literature, the arts and heritage – the things that make life worthwhile' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 207). Nevertheless, she concludes that there is a lot yet to be done for rising the 'volunteering literacy' at all levels of society for 'volunteering to become not only visible, but valued' (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 209). I suggest that these ongoing debates extend beyond Australia, being universally important for the present and future development of volunteerism in general.

Typology of volunteering

Volunteering is widely categorised in alternative ways: formal (involvement through an organisation) from informal (without any organisational membership); individually executed (individual) or in a team (collective); personal or corporative; casual or regular; global or within national borders; and in person or e-volunteering. Apart from these, there is little further agreement on the typology of volunteering. Most research (including this thesis) only investigates formal, collective and regular volunteering forms, while other major types remain undifferentiated and unexplored. Thus, in its national surveys, the ABS classifies volunteering according to the sector of organisational involvement (ABS, 2015). Its main categories are sport and recreation; religious volunteering; welfare/community; education and training; health; emergency services; environment and animal welfare; arts and heritage as main categories (ABS, 2015). Based on the same principle of the type of organisational involvement, the Special Eurobarometer 2007 gives similar, but nonetheless different (European) classification including volunteer categories such as trade union work; defence of the interest of patients/disabled; and leisure associations for the elderly (Raggonaud, 2009). The Bulgarian volunteering organisations follow these EU typologies. According to concrete activities (operations) inherent for each type of volunteerism, the ABS outlines a different range such as

fundraising and sales, training, teaching/providing information and food preparation/serving among others (ABS, 2015).

A series of smaller scale studies provide different typologies. For instance, Kelemen, Mangan and Moffat (2017) in their qualitative study based on 30 interviews in Staffordshire, UK, explored volunteering from the perspective of it being work (unpaid), unfolding in daily practices. The study proposed the following typology of volunteering work: altruistic, instrumental, militant and forced (that is work-for-benefits) or voluntolding (Kelemen et al., 2017). Trying to overcome the actual exclusion of major volunteering types (such as informal volunteering) from research attention (as in the ABS type of surveys), Petriwskyj and Warburton (2007) proposed a measurement matrix for research on volunteering based on three dimensions: formal organisation, group status and activity type.

Other research, following the specifics of their object and samples provide even more fine-grained taxonomies of specialised sectors of volunteering. For instance, narrowing the focus to sport volunteering, Engelberg et al. (2014, p. 52) describe four types of volunteers: 'Mums and Dads', 'Specialists', 'Uber-volunteers' and 'Uber-volunteers team-oriented'. In the case of Holdsworth's (2010) study on Youth (students volunteering) in the UK, there are 15 types listed based on activities such as 'leading a group, visiting people, campaigning and carrying out research' (p. 424).

The reviewed literature on volunteering shows that there is a lack of consensus around existing typologies based on organisational involvement, social sector and concrete activities/operations as well as a lack of consensus across countries and disciplines. This project was informed by the thoughtful analysis of Wilson (2000, p. 234) who concluded that all 'taxonomies of volunteering that are used to disaggregate volunteer work are folk categories' and 'there is little reason to believe these categorizations are sociologically useful'. The current thesis follows Hustinx, Handy and Cnaan (2010b, p. 77) who recommended exploration of new classification frameworks, which focus on the 'length of service, intensity of involvement, organizational commitment, motivation to volunteer, and so on'. Therefore, I argue that the investigation of the volunteering process in terms of intensity levels, styles, stages and transitions captures better its inherently multidimensional nature. In the study by Shye (2010), for example, the main criterion used to define volunteers was that of 'Depth/Intensity of Involvement'. Similarly, the length of volunteering was an essential classifying principle for my research as I considered that the length, depth and the intensity of volunteering were mutually related with identity. The literature review shows that research may outline and

explore particular categories of volunteers in their own right. For example, Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee and Riches (2011) explore 'extraordinary volunteering', which includes volunteers awarded for special merits (from various sectors and organisations). I present that this concept of 'extraordinary volunteering' partially overlaps with the long-term volunteering I investigate. Although the long-term volunteers are often awarded and could be classified as extraordinary in a way, it does not exhaust all the possible forms of their extraordinariness.

Following on with the trend to develop a new typology, Maki and Snyder (2017, p. 16) use a 'conceptually-driven way' of defining volunteerism according to the 'organizing interest in different types of volunteer activities'. They argue that volunteers experience different interest levels and satisfaction across the different types of volunteering positions. Therefore, Maki and Snyder, (2017) place the socio-psychological interests of the volunteering person at the core of their volunteer interest typology (VIT). Their inventory includes types of volunteer behaviours, which equates to the problematics of the identity-volunteering interface that is central for my study.

Current research sample consists of active volunteers in formal organised contexts, who have chosen to engage (rather than been obligated to through welfare and education). Nevertheless, due to the fact that that they all were long-term volunteers, most of them reported a rich history of volunteer engagement of various types and styles, such as informal, individual and casual engagements. Accounts of 'other forms' of volunteering were also taken into consideration as evidence enriching the research perspective on identity and volunteering.

Previous studies have been based around different constructs of volunteering (e.g., Keely, 2006) and different disciplinary viewpoints. This brief literature review highlights the divergence in volunteer classifications, typologies and their limitations. It is not intended to present a definitive theory or typology of volunteering. Moreover, there are theoretical perspectives and classifications that have been omitted as they were not directly relevant to my research focus such as those based on social perceptions about volunteering, on ways of recruitment and communication, on sponsors and support structure and on the organisational infrastructure. It is evident that there is no generally accepted typology of volunteering that fits all definitions, research foci and practical purposes. Although I acknowledge the lack of a ready-to-apply theory or typology of volunteering, I have been informed by attempts to overcome theoretical fragmentation and the sectors' disaggregation of volunteering practice. Therefore, following these attempts I have delineated my cohort of volunteers as those who willingly engage in organised (formal) activity in groups, on a regular and long-term basis

without any connection to welfare, training, or employment requirements. The selection criteria will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Interface of Identity and Volunteering: Research Questions

The exploration of mutual relationships between volunteering and identity observed in practice and investigated in the literature has informed my research questions. The thesis sets out to answer two research questions about sustained volunteer experiences:

What are the key identity related drivers of volunteering?

What are the implications of volunteering behaviour for the self and significant others?

Although I have utilised background information from other perspectives and findings whenever my data necessitated, it is the socio-psychological perspective, which emphasises the intimate link between the social and the personal that is central to this study.

Socio-psychological dimensions in the interface of identity and volunteering

Volunteering, as any other social activity, is influenced by general societal principles such as those cited in Volunteering Australia (2009), along with ties and existing network patterns including those facilitated by the International Association for Volunteer Effort (2017). These immediate environmental factors are determined by the larger socio-historical context (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006), which has received less scholarly scrutiny. Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010a) define two emerging theoretical macro approaches: the first is focused on the rate and type of volunteering as determined by history, political and economic development/stability and culture of any given nation and region, while the second is focused on 'how volunteering *itself* is undergoing radical change as a consequence' (Hustinx, Cnaan & Handy, 2010a, p. 23, emphasis added) of societal changes. This second approach uses volunteering on individual and microstructural (Sokolowski, 1996), levels, as in individual life narratives, to explain the process of volunteering in general. The present study outlines the cultural macro-system (in Australia and Bulgaria) for their impact on volunteering. It contrasts the role of present-day volunteering in both countries, different as it is, to reveal how it transforms the volunteering individual. For this thesis, I use individual narratives about personal identity of volunteers as a source of deeper understanding of volunteerism itself, in line with the second approach put forward by Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010a).

Volunteering engagement is influenced by the general sociodemographic characteristics of its participants; for example, in respect of age, volunteering provides

mechanisms for the socialisation of youth (ACMI, 2016; Houldsworth, 2010; Zimbardo, 2011) and the inclusion of the elderly (Fraser, Clayton, Sickler, & Taylor, 2009; Kahana et al, 2013). In terms of gender, women volunteer more (Musick & Wilson, 2008; ABS, 2015) particularly in the informal sector (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2006). Country dwellers volunteer more than the urban citizens in Australia (ABS, 2015). Furthermore, volunteering is influenced by other characteristics such as ethnicity and race (Foster-Bey, 2008); religiosity or secularism (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006); being native to the country or an immigrant (Wang, L. & Handy, 2014); a new immigrant or already settled (for more than 10 years); education level (Wang, L. & Handy, 2014) and family status. Consequently, research on volunteering tends to control for relevant demographic-related characteristics and the linkages among them (e.g., age and gender). In their study of informal volunteering among older women, Warburton and McLaughlin (2006) emphasise that aging 'is not gender neutral'. They found that existing policies and social comments tend to ignore, even denigrate, the contributions of elderly women volunteers, which nevertheless remain important pillars for their identity (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2006. p. 55).

Under the impact of intersected socio-demographic factors, volunteering behaviour develops psychological determinants. Clary et al. (1998) define six major functions behind volunteering behaviour: expression of values, social adjustment, understanding, career building, protective and self-enhancing. Shye (2010) applies a different type of holistic approach to investigate 'to what extent the volunteering rewards the individual' and the assumed individual differences in perceived benefits (Shye, 2010, p. 183). His results 'imply that the boundaries of human individual extend beyond his/her isolated self' and consequently include also the wellbeing of one's human environment (Shye, 2010, p. 199).

This thesis takes into account previous research, which explores the key relationship between volunteers and the volunteer organisations, and the stages of volunteer socialisation (as defined in Haski-Leventhal et al. 2008). It considers the key relationship between the volunteers and the recipients of their service, which is an aspect that is not sufficiently explored in the literature. For instance, from one perspective, the help could be received with gratitude, appreciation and a desire to reciprocate. From another, it could be perceived as patronising and forced, pointing to the recipient's weakness and deficiency. In reality, the effects of these mutual relationships, which researchers strive to operationalise, are mixed and not easily defined.

The thesis acknowledges that in democratic societies, an individual and groups have the potential to create their own volunteer-led organisation. Thus, the individual ensures direct (and organised) participation in community life and takes the initiative to integrate, even on a global level, in larger communities of choice. Through the volunteering organisation a single person may acquire social authority and can fight, if needed, with government administrations and big corporations (such as Big Pharma groups) for social justice, minority issues, animal rights, and environmental causes. Therefore, volunteering as a socio-psychological phenomenon manifests the dialectical unity between person and society; community and environment; and demonstrates the potential to enhance further the democratic processes. It is worth mentioning that, due to the context of volunteering, this potential oftentimes does not unfold or is misused (Bessant, 2010). Volunteering does not always live up to the overly optimistic expectations of individuals and groups when 'endorsed as a panacea for broad spectrum of social problems and issues' because 'it is unlikely that one activity can meet such an impressive range of outcomes' (Holdsworth, 2010, p. 422).

This thesis project considers that volunteerism combines the strengths of many people to pursue improvements, valid not only for the particular individual, but for larger human groups and ecology. This autotelic activity, even if not necessarily aiming to make the world the proverbial 'better place', certainly benefits the world to some extent. Therefore, whether this entire process is deliberate or not, it evokes intentional self-amendments which influence each individual volunteer. By undertaking one type of activity (i.e., volunteering) instead of another, the volunteer not only chooses the resulting kind of practical outcomes, but also the building blocks of their identity.

The relevance of agency and self-efficacy perspectives to volunteering

As agency and self-efficacy perspectives have proved to be explanatory for volunteering behaviour they are significant for the current research. They display the dialectic between the personal motives of action (agency) and social interests (communion). Frimer et al. (2011) compared recipients of national awards for extraordinary volunteerism with a control sample of demographically matched participants. The results showed that the volunteers had both more agency and more communion motives than did the comparison sample. Hence, they were more likely to integrate these themes within their personality. The authors named this deeply personalised symbiosis of agency and communion motives 'enlightened self-interest' and provided a conceptual replication of their study in different contexts. They concluded that

this enlightened self-interest characterised the 'extraordinary volunteers' and was an essential indicator for being a moral personality (Frimer et al., 2011).

Self-efficacy is a constituent concept of the agentic theory of Bandura (2012; 2018), which was reviewed briefly in comparison with the Vygotsky's model of symbolisation and identity development. It focuses on the seminal, underlying belief (individual or collective) and perception of a person's (or group's) own efficacy. Bandura asserts that the agency principle and the conviction of self-efficacy (pursued individually or working collectively for a common goal) are primal forces in human life: 'Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief, that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions' (Bandura, 2008, p. 171).

Self-efficacy might be general (sustainable) and specific (domain or context oriented), and both aspects are applicable to volunteerism. General self-efficacy encapsulates what a person can/cannot do, and is closely tied with the concept of self and identity. Both answer the question of 'Who am I? / Who are we?' General self-efficacy has been experimentally investigated in many countries and particular contexts. Specific self-efficacy is more situationally/context oriented and determined; that is, 'Who am I in this particular context?' General positive self-efficacy could coherently coexist with negative situational self-efficacies and vice versa. They are independent, although related concepts.


Figure 2: Types of Self-efficacy

Stirin, Ganzach, Pazy and Eden (2012) complement Bandura's concept by finding experimental proof for the existence of external (means) versus internal self-efficacy dimension, defined previously by Eden, Ganzach, Granat-Flomin and Zigman, (2010), among others. The 'locus of resources' for external self-efficacy is in the environment (Stirin et al., 2012, p. 82) and includes 'externalities such as tools, equipment, effective guidance or support, favourable working conditions, a superior starting point, or other facilitators' (Stirin et al., 2012, p. 82). In terms of this thesis I accept that volunteering in many of its forms facilitates the formation of internal strengths by providing external resources; thereby, offering more advantageous life conditions for the disadvantaged. The enhancement of external resources in consequence facilitates the self-efficacy of volunteering beneficiaries and the efficacy beliefs of the wider community.

A number of studies have found that self-efficacy predicts the intentions and outcomes of volunteering. Using verbal and modelling techniques, Eden and Kinnar (1991) facilitated volunteers' self-efficacy, which in turn increased volunteering. Participation in the everyday activities of neighbourhood organisations (in Pennsylvania, US) strengthened individual self-efficacy in leadership, neighbourhood policy-control, knowledge and skills, and the organisation's collective efficacy (Ohmer, 2007). The concept of self-efficacy has been successfully applied in volunteering promotion and has proven capable of increasing the willingness (of men) to volunteer (Lindenmeier, 2008). Research on volunteering in China, has found that self-efficacy mediates the relationship with the volunteering organisation and accounts for variance in volunteer intention (Wang, J.W. et al., 2011, p. 177). While Bathini and Vhora (2014) argue that self-efficacy beliefs and values mediate the role of personal traits in volunteering.

In this thesis, the activity principle and the general self-efficacy beliefs (individual and collective) are considered prerequisites for volunteering and the common denominator behind the enormous variety of volunteers' involvements and forms. This thesis identifies self-efficacy as an endeavour that often requires sacrificing of one's own immediate interests. The exercising of volunteer self-efficacy demands a significant contribution of time, effort and other personal and material resources. It is necessary because 'without a resilient sense of efficacy, people are easily overwhelmed by adversities in their efforts to improve their lives and that of others' (Bandura, 2008, p. 172). Therefore, I contend that although on a smaller scale, certain elements of secular sacrifice is inherent to the volunteer practice.

Chapter Review

Sustained volunteering requires adequate recognition of its value, which can be achieved if volunteers feel supported to invest their personal identity in the process. The thesis argues the overall experience of volunteering cannot be understood in full without being anchored in a comprehensive theory of identity. The brief historical overview and literature review of volunteerism identity approaches highlights that a mature personality is an achievement, built later in life and remains 'a work in progress' throughout an individual's life. A mature identity is regarded as an active agent with self-efficacy conviction, self-aware of essential characteristics, unique past and plans for the future. It recognises differences and respects diversity in itself and others; hence, opposes merging social pressures. Identity is regarded as a dynamic unity, which is able to maintain plasticity reflecting the changes in itself, others and the environment while at the same time keeping its autonomy from the surrounding social contexts.

In this project, volunteering is studied as a prosocial activity, which embodies human agency into the world. Therefore, it is guided by social theory and previous research that regards the activity principle as fundamental for human being, learning and work in all spheres of life (including volunteering). Whether fully conscious or just intuitive, self-efficacy beliefs are the foundation on which volunteering intimately cultivates identity aspects. The literature review highlights volunteering as an avenue through which the individual (or team) realises the potential of social and personal change into practice. Contemporary social sciences have indicated the need for developing unified interdisciplinary theory and comprehensive conceptual typology of volunteerism. This study acknowledges the value of establishing richer volunteer identity concepts that may include personal identity to facilitate the design and validation of more comprehensive cultural models of volunteerism.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Chapter Three defines the research field and design of this project. The focus is on 'volunteering and identity' from a sociological perspective. This chapter summarises the methodology used for building the theoretical foundations of this study and its core concepts, and overviews the specific methods applied for gathering, analysing and presenting the data. Ultimately, by focusing on emerging data and their reiteration, consistent patterns of the larger themes were outlined. Their interpretation was a source of the expected results.

Epistemological Considerations

The emphasis of this research is on the active role of people (such as volunteers) in construction of their identity by social action within the objective limits of environment. Yet, environments are not monolithic (Bandura, 2018); therefore, each dominant culture and sub-culture is not lived in the same way by all its members (individuals or groups). All of them have their unique standpoint on experienced common social phenomena. I am convinced, that narrations of veteran volunteers can reveal more perspectives on volunteerism than the readymade clichéd scripts often circling in the public space. Navigating the less known, sometimes hidden aspects and cultural spaces of volunteerism they can draw the research attention and the public consciousness towards previously tacit, salient issues in volunteer social realms.

Research Design, Objectivity, Strategy and Type

This research has an international component as it was conducted in Australia and Bulgaria. It supports the statement that 'internationalization is moral, professional and intellectual imperative' which 'makes better practice' (van de Vijver, 2013, p. 762). It is a bi-lingual study conducted in two languages (English and Bulgarian). It investigates 20 long-term volunteers from Australia and Bulgaria and focuses on the impact of long-term volunteering on their identities.

It explores whether the volunteers, originating from countries whose culture is sufficiently different from one another, experience in a similar way and value the same aspects of volunteering. Further, I chose its cross-national approach for two more reasons. First, prior to the beginning of my research, I already had a rich experience of working and volunteering

in both countries. Second, examining the existing literature, I found that the macro approaches comparing volunteers in different countries were the least developed aspect of volunteering research that represented a gap in the literature. Huslinx et al. (2010a, p. 410) claims that 'good theory' is multidimensional; therefore, the theories of cross-national variation of volunteering are an indispensable part of establishing multidimensional and hybrid theory of volunteering (Huslinx et al., 2010a; see chart on p. 413). Consequently, each step in this direction represents a contribution with original significance.

The study arose from the recognition that both personal identity and volunteering are complex phenomena and little is known about their interface. This under-investigated aspect defined the qualitative design of this current research. The small scale of this study and conceptualisation from the volunteers' perspective is consistent with its qualitative research mode. The volunteers provided evidence of what they regard as meaningful, hard or easy, right, wrong or ambiguous in their practice. The study aimed to see volunteering through their eyes in order to gain insight into many impacts volunteering has on their identities over time. The collegial (co-volunteer) relationships I had with some of the studied volunteers contributed to the deeper understanding of their worldviews. At the same time, that relationship posed challenges to my objectivity.

Objectivity

This research was inspired by and draws upon my own volunteer experience in Bulgaria and Australia. I volunteered for one environmentalist project in Bulgaria for a couple of years, alongside episodic participations in other voluntary initiatives. In Australia I consecutively volunteered for three large volunteer organisations accumulating more than eight years of combined experience. Elaborating on my research neutrality and objectivity I realised that due to my life experience I cannot become (or pretend to be) neutral or objective on each and every topic of volunteering. Nonetheless, I am aware of my own subjectivity and the need to declare it for research transparency. At the same time, reflection upon how my own experience parallels, deviates or contradicts the experience of the participants in the sample provides a valuable point of comparison therefore, 'the mind and body of a qualitative researcher literally serve as research instruments' (Tracy, 2019/2013, p.3)

Identifying a similar problem and emphasising its positives, St. Pierre (2006, p. 257) concludes, that subjectivity in fact may help with thinking differently because the knower can never be separated from the known and the value 'cannot be removed from science (fact/value)'. Moreover, I consider that the diverse spectrum of my own volunteering (in

countries, types and organisations) protects me from over identification with any one mode of volunteering, organisation or group of peers; thereby, providing me with the necessary flexibility and research freedom.

Strategy and type

The strategy for this research is inductive and descriptive. It has the characteristics of being a basic interpretative type of qualitative study in which, as the researcher, I am part of 'how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon' (Merriam and associates, 2002, p. 6).

Owing to its strong theoretical framework, this type of study could unfold into a variant of grounded theory (Tracy, 2019/2013, chapter nine). Its broad theoretical base (reviewed in Chapter Two) allows the application of an 'iterative approach' which 'alternates between considering existing theories and research interests on one hand, and emergent qualitative data on the other' (Tracy, 2019/2013, chapter one). This method from the arsenal of grounded theory consists of 'continually comparing one unit of data with another in order to derive conceptual elements of the theory' (Merriam & associates, 2002, p. 7) and new theoretical knowledge.

Expected results

Although I do not aim to develop new rigorous theory on the basis of this small-scale research, I expect its rich theoretical foundations and findings to allow for theoretical concepts and conclusions important for further research along with identity-informed policy applications in volunteerism.

Theoretical Considerations and Validity

The notion of the gradual unfolding and intersectionality (Phinney, 2008) of volunteer work and networks (Degenne & Forse, 1999) has informed this research. The extent of volunteering is difficult to measure in intensity, time and money as much work is done which is unrecorded and unregulated. Therefore, the volunteering studies have long been underestimated (Oppenheimer, 2002, 2008) and, as a result, little reliable and quantifiable or cross-cultural knowledge has been accumulated. In order to examine the interface of identity and volunteering, this thesis employs the key conceptual theoretical frameworks reviewed in Chapter Two's major sections: 1.the concept of identity; 2. the concept of volunteering; and 3. the interface of identity and volunteering.

The overarching theoretical approaches I follow are the cultural-historic theory of Vygotsky complemented by the socio-cognitive theory of Bandura. The choice of these two theoretical approaches was informed by the social nature of the object of my study. Their consistency from a general framework to specific concepts (such as agency and self-efficacy) and vice versa defines the theoretical validity of my research.

Validity is 'where the qualitative sociologist have the edge' due to the comprehensiveness of their data (Warren & Karner, 2015, p. 236) and there are different routes to it (Merriam 2002, p. 31 and see Table 2.2, found on p. 31). The theoretical validity is one of the five types of validity conceptualised for qualitative modes of research (Maxwell, 1992, p. 50). It 'is the validity of the researcher's concepts and the theorized relationships among the concepts in context with the phenomena' (Thomson, 2011, p.79). The theoretical coherence emphasised in this research guarantees the steadfastness of its foundation.

Method: Participants, Sample and Procedure

This research concentrates upon the experiences of volunteers with different demographic backgrounds and thereby reveals their cultural and generational divides. All participants in the present study are taking part in voluntary work by their own free choice (not related with welfare, job search, training, references or any other external requirements). The main eligibility criterion was extensive involvement in volunteering work of five years or more. The requirement, specific for this research, was associated with steady engagement and stems from the logic of the research topic and paradigm. This threshold set higher standards (than usual in this research field) and I am aware that other studies apply different criteria. For comparison, the ABS national survey (ABS, 2015) defines a volunteer as a person over 18, who has volunteered for an organisation for at least 50 hours in the last 12 months. I hold that although short time volunteering might prove to be a life-changing event, steady impacts on identity become evident in long-term, regular engagements. Thus, for feasibility reasons this thesis examines only participants, whose commitment to volunteering is already practically tested by the length of their service.

The sampling procedure selected only actively volunteering people (at the time of the interview). I am aware that some previous studies involved both active volunteers and ex-volunteers – people who did volunteering work in the past – and do not discriminate among them (e.g., Holdsworth, 2010). In this project, I have followed other research projects that separated and investigated only active volunteers – those volunteering in the last 12 months

(such as the survey of Shantz, Saksvida, & Alfes, 2014). This eligibility requirement may seem a mere technicality, but has further implications that impact the findings. For example, everyone starts to volunteer with a set of expectations that, unfortunately, often remain unfulfilled. Thus, some volunteers cease to be active and while remaining positive towards volunteering in general, prioritise other aspects of their lives. Others, though, become gradually (or suddenly) disenchanted of volunteering for various reasons. Therefore, excluding ex-volunteers (with significant length of experience) from the sample, in fact excludes valued voices and contrasting experiences of the identity-volunteering relationship.

I acknowledge that setting criteria that selected only currently active volunteers focused attention only on those who were (still) finding positive meaning in volunteering, however different these meanings may be. Thus, a certain bias towards the 'positivity' of volunteering-identity link was expected to appear in the findings. Although future research could mitigate this by including disappointed ex-volunteers in the sample, it is outside the scope of this thesis.

All participants in the present study were major city dwellers and volunteers. Although some were born on farms, at the time of their interviews, they were living in Melbourne (Australia) and Sofia (Bulgaria). Unfortunately, my study does not include any rural/regional volunteers due to a lack of resources and feasibility issues. In line with Oppenheimer (2008) view that the rural/regional and indigenous volunteerisms have their own unique characteristics, I consider that their eventual inclusion in future research projects would reveal unexplored volunteer-identity aspects.

For feasibility reasons the focus of the research is on formal volunteering. The samples include only those volunteers who are registered members of voluntary organisations or community centres. Nevertheless, the majority of the studied participants reported being engaged in some kind of informal (episodic or sustained) volunteering actions in parallel to their formal volunteering. These accounts are taken into consideration.

The sample consisted of two national samples (10 people each) including adult volunteers from Australia and Bulgaria. Although not every participant was born in the respective country (only in the Australian sub-sample), they all had the relevant citizenship and volunteered in the respective territory. The sample was gender-balanced. The participants in both samples were from different walks of life (students, employees or retirees), from different age groups, and various professional and educational levels (see Appendix C). The youngest participant was 23 years of age and the eldest was over 80 years old. Interestingly, both had

seven years volunteering experience. This illustrates that age does not necessarily correlate with the duration of volunteering. Although I am aware that younger (students) groups are among the most avid volunteers, the requirement for five years of extensive volunteering, which I set as an inclusion criterion, mostly excluded their age group range from participation.

Although the sample was not representative in a way the samples from the national surveys are, it aimed to address the demographic diversity of volunteering (gender, age, religion, occupation, national citizenship and educational level). It included a variety of people who reflected the larger societal profile providing 'maximum variation' (that is 'purposefully seeking variation or diversity in sample selection') which presented yet another strategy for promoting validity and reliability of the qualitative research (Merriam & associates, 2002, Table 2.2, p. 31).

Sampling procedure

The participants in the sample were selected through my personal contacts in volunteering and through the outreach of friends and fellow volunteers. Some were recruited by snowballing method, whereby early informants proposed further participants. Recruitment was a two-step process. At first I preferred to meet the volunteers 'in action', in their own organisation or volunteering event, which allowed me familiarisation with the entire field. After 'breaking the ice' and introducing the research project I arranged for a second meeting to conduct an interview. This two-stage recruitment tactic was intended to facilitate a more revealing interview through having broken the ice with the initial meeting. The main drawback of this approach was that it was time consuming, that is, two meetings per participant rather than one. Moreover, on more than one occasion, despite the original arrangement, the person did not follow up with the second meeting (usually due to a busy schedule). Consequently, after two attempts to arrange an interview meeting, I no longer persisted to avoid being intrusive.

It was notable that although anonymity was provided, the participants commonly wanted their real names to be used and even offered to be photographed. They brought and showed personal photos, award certificates and sometimes even artefacts of their work (when such were available). These facts indicated that participants felt proud of their work and seized the opportunity for public expression presented by the interview. It seemed at least some of them considered the attention of the researcher rewarding.

Specific Methods for Gathering of Primary Data: Observation and Interviews

The way individuals perceive their prosocial activity influences their observable behaviour. Although observations of the volunteers, their organisations, environments, and media appearances had their place in this research, the one-to-one in-depth interviewing proved the most appropriate method. As a research method, it 'centers on meanings that life experiences hold for the individuals being interviewed' (Warren & Karner, 2015, p. 120) and, therefore, is identity revealing. The interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2018 in two capital cities: Melbourne, Australia (AU) and Sofia, Bulgaria (BG). Written informed consent was obtained from the participants in both countries prior to interviewing. For each interviewee, I collected demographic characteristics, including nationality, gender, age group, and professional status (studying, working or not working, retiree) (see Appendix A, Demographic Questionnaire). If a particular demographic detail (such as profession or religion) appeared to be a note-worthy characteristic of the interviewee's volunteering, I asked for more relevant information verbally and then added it to the sheet.

In the volunteer literature, often cross-country research projects are monolingual (e.g., English language only) in approach, recruiting only native volunteers who speak good English (See Ozbilir, Day, & Catano, 2015). I argue that although convenient, this procedure may distort the real picture (of volunteering) in the respective countries. Evidently, the fluent English speakers in a non-English speaking country have received advanced education one way or the other, which often correlates with a privileged upbringing and being part of a more powerful socio-economic strata of society, which would bias the findings. Therefore, the interviews in my study were conducted in two languages: English for the Australian sub-sample and Bulgarian for the Bulgarian sub-sample. Some of the Bulgarian participants were fluent in English and when presented with the opportunity to choose their interview language, they spoke in English. Soon, after I noticed that the richness and rhythm of their verbal expression began to suffer, I switched to conduct the interview in Bulgarian. Only one of the Bulgarian interviewees was equally fluent in English as in Bulgarian (that is I was unable to differentiate) and her interview remained in English language – according with her choice.

The interviews were conducted in neutral public spaces – mostly shopping centre's coffee shops and without time pressure. To avoid any sort of possible perceived hierarchical power distance of the type 'researcher–participant' or 'university educated–lack of high formal education', my approach was polite and welcoming. If tension inadvertently appeared, (sometimes after reading the Explanatory Statement and signing the Consent Form), I usually

attempted some self-disclosure such as mentioning my own volunteering experience, but without providing details.

I considered semi-structured interviews most appropriate for this research on personal identity, because they provide a certain degree of freedom for the interviewee. At the same time they preserve the structure ensuring that all participants answer the same questions, which enables the classification of data. The open questions encouraged reflection upon lived experience and elaboration on their significance.

As personal identity is an intimate topic, it is not realistic to expect straight sincere answers on direct questions in an interview context. Thus, I did not consider it appropriate to ask straightforward 'identity questions' of the type: 'How does this affect your identity?' I am aware, however, of the use of such questions in similar research (Haywood, 2015). Instead, in my study I focused on asking implicit questions that revealed essential identity parameters (see Appendix B, Interview Guide Questions). The inclusion of indirect questions of the type 'you may give an example of your friend' gives respondents the freedom for expressing their views in their own terms.

The interview questions followed the time-flow sequence of actual volunteering – its commencing, experience, consequences and impact on volunteers and their networks. The participants were provided with the opportunity for finding new ways of seeing and understanding past events, and this was mentioned in their feedback to me. On one occasion, when the respondent became upset in explaining the emotional hardships she encountered while volunteering, the interview was intermitted and the remaining two or three questions completed a month later. At the end of each interview, I asked the participant a feedback question about the interview process itself in order to improve the procedure and empower the participants. The feedback varied from neutral to positive.

The main procedural difficulties I encountered were based on the fact that volunteers tended to omit the reporting of some of their major achievements, which I knew of previously or from other informants. In these cases specific prompts and concrete recounting questions were needed. Although the participants experienced well-deserved pride for their deeds, oftentimes they tended modestly to underrate their own merits. Volunteers' circles usually do not approve of self-enhancement or self-promotion because they are in favour of more collectivistic values.

The interviews were first recorded digitally and then transferred to computer. The short variant of the first names were used in the interviews together with the recorded agreement of the interviewed person. Later, in the transcription phase they were codified with pseudonyms. Although the respondents had the opportunity to decline the recording, no one objected to having their interview recorded. The audio recordings were then transcribed for analysis. First, they were read for highlighting the general essence of the stories in a mixed, random way. On the second reading, the transcripts were grouped by country, to capture the specific foci nationality brought into the study, and then ordered into memos. In the next stage, I performed an open/thematic coding (manual) of each transcribed question for identifying significant key items of data (key words, catchy phrases, repetition, emotional emphasis, big pauses). Then I reflected on how the selected items organises into meaningful patterns and suggested what they represent theoretically. I found useful the suggestion to discriminate 'two dimensions to the thematic content of the sentence: the topic and the issue' (Bouma & Carland, 2016, p. 179); that is, where the topic is set by the question and the issue is raised by the participant. Each topic had various issues. In the next phase, I summarised the issues in concepts and outlined their boundaries. The concepts were identified and named, linked with each other on the principles of similarity or contrast and designated as themes. The major themes and their structures were further explored independently and within the context of previous research and theoretical perspectives. I undertook the process of interviewing, transcribing and coding the data. The notes of my supervisors were searched and taken into account.

Specific Methods for Gathering and Analysis of Secondary Data

As this research included a cross-country component, I explored national socio-cultural differences by using heterogeneous settings and sources. Two of these sources were official statistics and the volunteer historical context data collected by institutes for governmental and organisational purposes. For example, the large scale surveys on volunteering, conducted by the ABS (2015) for Australia, and Eurobarometer Survey (2011) for Bulgaria and other EU countries including EU averages, provided an overview of the volunteering levels and types in each specific country (see Appendix H). Although these sources in general did not provide enough data for rigorous comparative design, they did allow for comparative elements to be introduced into the study.

I remained attentive to the initial definitions and concepts incorporated in each research tradition and the volunteer practices from which these official surveys stem. The critical analysis from the point of view of my research parameters would require a different set of data,

which unfortunately is not available at this moment of time. The main problem was that Australian volunteering includes large number of volunteers recruited for reasons of welfare programs, study and employment training. How big was their share remained uncertain. Bulgarian volunteering was not related to any welfare or job-search directed training – they were managed by Ministry of Labor, Employment and Welfare, which provided similar programs. The EU average data includes both kinds of arrangements – for example, the UK (included into EU average data) presents similar to the Australian model of welfare volunteering, while other countries, like Bulgaria (also included into EU average data), do not. In order to equalise initial conditions, I did not recruit welfare and employment purposes volunteers. Overall, if the welfare-volunteering component was eliminated from the picture, the difference between the two countries in terms of volunteering levels would lessen. Exactly, to what extent, I cannot tell for the lack of available statistical information.

This study includes volunteers from two culturally diverse countries, a fact that is reflected in their volunteer organisations, initiatives and reflected experience. Therefore, I have sought to outline the impact of these diverse backgrounds on the volunteer accounts through taking into account the historical roots and the contemporary development of the volunteering movements in the both countries (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, Hofstede's cultural values model (Hoffstede, 2011) based on his multi-factorial research of cultural differences among nations has provided reliable guidelines for comparison and contrasting (see Appendix D), albeit with limitations.

Moreover, this research is informed by variety of organisational documents, available in the public domain such as volunteer organisation platforms, official web sites, mission statements, testimonies, recruitment advertisements, and various events reports. How a particular group or a vocation is portrayed on social media can shape the way an individual comes to appreciate their role identity. Similarly, although general media sources on volunteering themes were informative for this study, I have not sought to analyse them from a media research approach.

Chapter Review

The research methodology follows the logic of the research questions within the theoretical framework. This chapter has summarised the research design and methods of the current project, which focuses on one-to-one qualitative interviews, held in two languages and in two socio-historically different countries as the main source of data. This study involves

cross-cultural aspects in investigation of volunteer identity, which are an underexplored structural approach in the current volunteer research literature. The purpose has been to capture the contrast and the similarity in the participants' narratives and the ways they involve their national identity in volunteering contexts.

The study strengthens the significance volunteering holds in the lives of long-term volunteers and describes the multiple ways it enhances their identities. For background information, the study uses relevant broadcast media presentations among other sources. All the secondary data (from media, the research of others and governmental statistical surveys) are interpreted with caution due to the variations in utilised sources and definitions.

The chapter comments on the study's limitations, which are mainly due to its small-scale focus and feasibility restrictions. Overcoming these limitations is considered possible through future directions for research such as recruitment of participants from now deliberately excluded kinds of volunteering (such as informal volunteers, regional/country or indigenous volunteers) and contrast their identity insights. The exploration of this wider volunteer framework would capture further diversities within the structure of volunteer identity and will benefit the development and application of better theoretical concepts, research methods and policymaking initiatives.

Chapter Four

The Identity Drivers Behind Long-term Volunteering

Chapter Four explores the data related to the first research question about the drivers behind long-term volunteering. The participants, each in their own unique way, reported and interpreted how their volunteer behaviour was generated and sustained throughout the years. I sought to capture the core meanings the participants conveyed when they talked about their volunteering experience and how their environment shaped it. The guiding principle for understanding their experiences is that volunteer work is both an individual and collective social practice. Moreover, as the actual experience of the volunteering process within its social context has been neglected in research (Wilson, 2012) this chapter aims to provide insight into this least studied domain.

The participants' narratives suggest that oftentimes the drivers toward volunteering were shaped together with the unfolding of their own life courses and identities. In this thesis I use 'drivers' as an umbrella term that covers a range of concepts such as personal (subjective) needs, motives, cognitions and aspects of personal identity that facilitate behaviour and enhance volunteer identity formation. The term 'subjective' drives (and needs) emphasises the fact, that they were located in the subject (individual), although they may have objective social origins, context and impact. Volunteerism is a focal point of diverse social factors (Oppenheimer, 2008) intersecting with personal and social identities (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008). Therefore, while noting social identity features, research attention was focused on mapping the core personal identity components emerging in the narratives.

This chapter has three main sections that carry the discussion of drivers for volunteering: the fulfilment of the personal and the internalisation of social needs; motives and empowerment for goal-setting; and achievement of volunteer identity

The focus is narrowed in the third section for discussion on emerged themes concerning the formation and the manifestation of volunteer identity.

The Fulfilment of the Personal and the Internalising of Social Needs

This section shows that volunteering has the capacity to fulfil immediate and long-standing psychological needs and interests, as indicated by previous research investigating volunteerism more generally (Erez, Mikulincer, van Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg 2008; Haski-

Levental, 2009; Lyubomirsky, S. King, L., & Diener, E., 2005). The findings of past studies and the volunteer interest model of Maki and Snyder (2017) have enabled the current project to focus on a specific segment of volunteerism (that is long-term) in fulfilment of psychological and social needs. Therefore, in the current study, the needs are regarded not only as a trigger for initial volunteer involvement but also as a foundation for long-term commitment and sustainment of volunteer identity.

Many of the participants had difficulty describing their initial involvement in the volunteering process, as it took place many years ago (decades in some cases) and because it was inseparable from informal acts and life contexts. Analysis of the data reveals that the majority of the participants in my project started their volunteering for a mixture of internal and external reasons, without strongly differentiating between their personal and/or organisational engagements. For example, in response to my questions where, when and how she started to volunteer, Kate answered:

> Simply, there were things I did on my own initiative, because they are important and necessary to do, which were unpaid, hence there was nobody else to do them, but all related to some kind of a big desire. (Kate, BG, 50-60, higher education, 14 years volunteering)

For Jack the volunteering also started informally by helping his 'friends with stuff …', because:

> I am very helpful person … but I won't consider it volunteering, I consider it being a friend. (Jack, AU, 20-30, student, 4.5 years volunteering)

Further analysis of the interviews revealed that beneath the wide diversity of reported triggers lay a certain heightened sensitivity to the existing interpersonal and/or social needs (see Mackay, 2014, for example). Rebecca, a working student in her twenties with six years of organised volunteering work started by initiating a campaign for the prevention of road rage in her native town in New Zealand. She was aware that it was a problem for the town dwellers, including her brothers. To address the needs of her own small town, she also became involved with other social causes, including the cultural expropriation of the indigenous population and violence against women. Settling in Australia she continued her volunteering work to address the latter problem of prevention of violence against women, while at the same time being employed part-time in environment protection. Her volunteering complements her working career as it keeps her informed of social issues she feels compelled to address. She did not

describe herself as being a volunteer in one specific sector or another, but rather more generally as a passionate and responsive person.

Ashod also emphasised the inseparable character of his work/life dynamic and volunteering involvements. He was a founder of a NGO for hearing-impaired people and simultaneously volunteered, sharing his expertise for LGBT and other marginalised communities. Ashod remembered starting his volunteering in the quite different field of recycling:

> … First in University and then trying to involve in the project the entire city we lived in [the campus city of American University, Blagoevgrad]. We were the first, who had Internet in their Uni and we were connected [with similar initiatives] internationally and this helped a lot. Anyway, even now, for me there is not much difference: between the ways I live, my work in the NGO and my volunteering; it's all one… [identity]. (Ashod, BG, 30-40, 20 years of volunteering)

Marika had one of the longest volunteer experiences among the interviewees. She started her volunteering spontaneously (in an informal way) soon after her arrival in Australia almost half a century ago, because:

> I always wanted to do good … I was only 19 and pregnant with my only son when I saw a woman carrying heavy bags and parcels – the Australian women those days were wearing long coats and dresses, even when it was hot. I instinctively took some of her bags and helped her to her home. I didn't know any English yet, so I didn't speak. She might have thought that I am going to steal them, but she didn't … Soon after I started helping a neighbour in an invalid chair, pushing her two kilometres to the nearest shops, trying to evade the bumps on the road, which could damage her neck … and I didn't mind doing this either. (Marika, AU, 70-80, retired, 40 years of volunteering)

Beneath the diversity of contexts which may randomly trigger and facilitate volunteer deeds (as in the narratives of Rebecca, Ashod and Marika), lay already well-established psychological values: 'to do good' and the need to connect with others (Jack, Ashod and Marika); their own 'big desire' (Kate); and to be responsible, autonomous and initiate things by free choice (Kate and Ashod, Rebecca).

Bill – the oldest of the Australian volunteers – clearly displays a combination of psychological needs fulfilled by his altruistic behaviour. These are connectedness and competence (investigated previously by Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003; Kahana et al.,

2013, Olafsen, Halvari, Forest, & Deci, 2015; Steimel, 2018; Weinstein, Deci, & Ryan, 2011). Bill works twice a week in local charity shop repairing donated items and the shop's shelves. The other volunteers and employees in the shop affectionately call him 'Uncle Bill'. He started volunteering seven years ago, following the death of his wife 'and now the others [the other volunteers in the opportunity shop] are my family' (Bill, AU, 80+). Being an ex-technical manager (in his working career), Bill is planning to volunteer for the remainder of his life:

> Because I can see the troubles [technical hazards] coming far before anybody else here and I am afraid of what is going to happen with this shop after I am gone … (Bill, AU, 80+ retired, 7 years of volunteering)

At this stage and social context of his life, volunteerism is the social practice which provides preservation and a continuity base for Bill's identity despite the suffered loss of family and profession. The role of skill-based volunteering in recovering the lost professional identity applied also to other participants in the current study, such as Tim, Pradeep and Jeff who elaborate further on the supportive and unsupportive work interactions in their volunteering and adjustment. This topic shall be discussed separately in the next chapter in considering the two-directional impact of volunteering.

Motivation to Volunteer

Crane (2013, p. 2) contends that 'motivations to volunteer can be complicated and messy'. The current study supports the notion that it is complicated, but not necessarily messy. Rather, it aims to present a necessary distinction between the antecedents (and triggers) of volunteerism and proper motives, which can be regarded closer to the self. Motives are conscious, goal-oriented and readily reflected upon. While in my project the antecedents were detected in the answers to the set of questions focused on 'when, how and where' volunteering commenced, the motives were examined with the 'why' types of questions – why (you or other people you know) volunteer.

The narrative of Australian volunteer Prim gives further expression to this distinction. Restricted to a wheelchair after an injury that occurred 16 years ago, he spontaneously started volunteering for other people in similar circumstances – first in his hospital settings (meet and greet, showing around, explaining) and then out of hospital by teaching them how to be autonomous (for example how to cook at home or drive a manual car). Prim demonstrated exceptional self-efficacy in the process, because as he put it, 'there are a lot of difficulties for the people with spinal injuries and I know them'. Later he trained and become a mentor for

injured people. Simultaneously, using his professional accounting skills, he was elected treasurer of a spinal cord injury organisation and also as a representative on one of the local councils. In response to my question about why he is engaging with activities, Prim replied that for him the volunteering is:

> Good for the harmony in this country … The main thing is I give my experience in each of places – mentoring, advisory board, policy making – because we need to change this world … I want to do it for the future people. (Prim, AU, male, 8 years of organised volunteering)

Prim's volunteering was complex, which aligned with his large-scale goals and mission. It included helping a specific group with circumstances to which he could relate, but his motives seemed deeper, embedded in his personal identity:

> … and there is another reason, I want people to see me working, moving around in my invalid chair and to know that people with injuries and the emigrants [Prim came to Australia as an emigrant himself] with my colour of skin [lifts and shows his hands] may contribute to this country … We need to do more for this country.

Through his volunteering work Prim appeared to be fighting social stereotypes and prejudices. Examining volunteer self-efficacy (personal and collective) in a field study, Cady, Brodke, Kim and Shoup (2018) discovered that it impacts all three motivational outcomes: effort, performance and satisfaction. As the personal self-efficacy correlated positively with all three of them, it explained the multiple dimensions of Prim's volunteering. It seems that motivation impacts on the identity by influencing its clarity (Schwartz et al., 2011) and integration (Weinstein et al., 2011).

In another example, Pam (AU) reflected on her motives for volunteering, which corresponded to the main phases in her life cycle and linked with her identity formation. She started her organised volunteering in a probation officer support role, and later continued informally when some of the recipients needed to stay in touch with her. Pam later engaged in foster care respite, mainly for the moral education of her own children, despite the fact that their father 'had quite different views on their education'. Parallel to her paid work, she commenced volunteer counselling because it gave her new perspectives on her own counselling related job. She eventually became an awarded team leader in a major volunteer organisation. Pam indicated that it was 'because of these wonderful young people … the team, there is some special feeling that comes from the people that get together'. Finally, she plans to complete her

volunteering, when the time comes, in some small city 'like Port Fairy, for example, where all the city volunteers [for music festivals and other events]'. She explained 'because with my husband we like the idea of all-city volunteering'.

Pam's narrative manifests the feelings of meaningfulness, connectedness and enjoyment that increase when people are joining efforts in pro-social actions (see the experimental studies of Mogilner, Chance, & Norton, 2012). Cabrera, Marrero and Carballeira (2014) associated the self-actualisation motives of volunteering to the subjective well-being and to the permanence in the voluntary service.

Volunteering for Pam, Ashod, Marika and Wayne was a way of life. Their motivation showed both altruistic and personal orientation, because in the volunteering process the 'boundaries of human individual extend beyond his/her isolated self, to include aspects of society and culture of which one is a part' (Shye, 2010, p. 199). Volunteering motivations tend to connect personal past and future, identity and society, community and its environment, and, by their practical outcomes, realise the potential to improve social circumstance. It appears to be the common denominator behind the diversity of volunteer involvements and forms. Bessant (2010), however, suggests that the context of volunteering may not enable this potential to fully unfold or even may allow its misuse. Some of the still active volunteers (Tim, Richard, Ari) reported gradually or suddenly loosing motivation along the way. They limited the scope and the intensity of their involvements due to inhibiting networks (Cowlishaw et al., 2010) and felt unfriendly attitudes toward themselves, other mates and volunteering in general (McAllum, 2013; 2014). The impact of the barriers and challenges volunteers face will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Volunteer Identity

Social and personal volunteer identity interface

Crane (2013, p. 9) asserts that by studying volunteer identities researchers would 'better contribute sources of motivations for volunteers as well as understand how the lives of these millions of people are affected by volunteering'. Previous research has examined predominantly socio-demographic aspects of volunteer identity. In this thesis, I narrow the focus on those personal identity determinants able to sustain long-term (and oftentimes multiple volunteering) engagements. My choice is informed also by prior research on social identity and volunteering as far as the social and the personal identity are inseparable.

For example, I have observed that participants in both sub-samples – Wayne, Pam and Pradeep (AU) and Antonia, Lily and Violeta (from BG) – were taking on the socialising role of informal educators. They influenced the younger recipients and team members by expanding their coping skills and world horizons. Or, as Wayne stated, he was persuading the young to volunteer, because 'more volunteering – less suicides' (AU, 60-70, ex-builder, 45 years of volunteerin). Jeff, as the oldest of the Bulgarian interviewees, viewed his volunteer role in the team also from a life cycle perspective. He was feeling like the 'wise old man' among his otherwise young animal protection activists, because 'sometimes common sense and logic are needed, emotions only are not enough' (Jeff, BG, retired engineer, 80+). These tendencies of merging social and personal identity aspects in volunteering correspond to previous findings which have established that volunteering provides mechanisms of socialisation of youth (Holdsworth, 2010; Frimer et al., 2011; Engelberg et al., 2014; Zimbardo, 2011) and inclusion of the elderly (Fraser et al., 2009; Kahana et al., 2013).

Volunteering is also defined by gender; that is, women are more likely to volunteer (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Oppenheimer, 2002), and in a different way (Crane, 2013), particularly in the informal sector (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2006). More sophisticated volunteering studies control, not only for relevant demographic-related (social) characteristics, but also the linkages among them (see for example age with gender Warburton and McLaughlin, 2006).

My findings correlate with the existence of gender differences explored by previous research with a feminist orientation such as Oppenheimer (2002) in Australia and Crane (2013) in the United States. Although in both countries women volunteer more, men 'volunteer more in political and professional capacities' (Crane, 2013 p. 6). It seems that women tend to assume more the role of caring-for-others – as was the case for Marika and Lyn (AU) and Ari and Antonia (BG) – while men tend to position themselves at the professional spectrum of volunteering – Tim, Bill and Wayne (AU), and Paul (BG). Nevertheless, these distinctions were at times varied as there were female interviewees on the professional end of the spectrum – Pam (AU) and Kate, Lily and Violeta (BG) – and some (although not many) males in the caring sector. Apart from the caring and professional distinction, the evidence in the current study confirms that gender identity is reflected in volunteers' engagements in various subtle ways. For example, Wayne (AU) showed pride in talking about the huge amount of money he and his team managed to raise during various sport events. For Wayne, being a male helped his volunteering, because 'going around in crowded places carrying plastic bags of money is not a

joke'. Apart from being trustworthy, he prided himself that not anyone had his courage and his (typical male) physical appearance to do it safely.

Volunteer identity tends to reflect the national status; that is, being native to the country, a new or settled immigrant (more than 10 years) (Wang & Handy 2014, pp. 1559-1582; Lai, Y. & Hynie, 2010). The social identity of being a volunteer positively related with national identity, at least in China (Lai, M., Ren, Wu, & Hung, 2013; Wang, J. et al., 2011). It is noteworthy, that current evidence also suggests a relationship between national and volunteer identity. I found it to be particularly prominent for the settled ex-immigrants in Australia including Marika and Prim, among others. Through their deep involvement with volunteering they asserted their achieved Australian identity.

Similar results on immigrant volunteering have been reported by Wang, L. and Handy (2014) for Canada. They found out that while in general the host-culture people prefer to volunteer for well-established trustworthy organisations, immigrants choose to volunteer in organisations that facilitate their acculturation in the new country. In the Bulgarian sub-sample there were no directly observable links between the national identity and volunteerism. The explanation might that all the participants were Bulgarians by birth; therefore, they regarded their national identity as given and were not challenged to reflect upon it.

Socio-demographic features also exert influence on volunteering and identity. For instance, country dwellers volunteer more than the metropolitan citizens in Australia (ABS 2015) and do so differently (Oppenheimer, 2008). Furthermore, the social identity of volunteers is influenced by their ethnicity and race (Foster-Bey, 2008); religiosity or secularism (Hustinx, 2015; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006) where the relationships are found not to be deterministic (Prouteau & Sardinha, 2015) but to have wider cultural character. It is also influenced by the education level (Crane, 2013; Wang & Handy, 2014) and family status, among other factors.

The personal and the complex collective (Fraser et al., 2009) determinants involved in volunteerism forge a specific 'volunteer identity'. Those determinants provide the volunteers not only with the sense of who they are but also with the idea of how they are (individually and collectively) different to others. The current study was informed by the ongoing discussions in the sociological literature around the term 'volunteer identity' (Wilson, 2012, p. 176; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006). It supports the view that there is one volunteer identity instead of several different groups of volunteer identities. For example, the later was

proposed by Gronlund (2011, pp. 858-9), who investigated clusters of volunteer values in a small-scale study based on telephone interviews in Finland.

Without entering in the details of these terminological disputes, I should say that the concept of volunteer identity did have significance and meaning for its bearers, which was reflected in their life-event narratives. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two the volunteering environments are often unpredictable and the volunteering roles are multiple and diffuse. The function of volunteer identity was to bring the self and volunteerism together and to regulate their interface. Thus, the volunteering process requires sufficiently complex and fluid identity that is able to absorb the complexity of the context and adjust to its changes.

What constitutes volunteer identity?

The concept of 'volunteer identity' in this study is probed by a set of questions focusing on the issue that if anybody can be a volunteer, why do they do so? The questions aim to reveal whether or not respondents construct their own (inner) 'personal theories' of volunteer identity. All of my interviewees answered the questions on this particular issue, conveying a sense that over the time they had volunteered they had developed strong personal opinions, ready to be communicated. None indicated that they did not know or were unsure.

The data (see Table 1) manifest that those who give 'Yes, anybody can be volunteer' types of answers (that is thinking anybody can be volunteer) were a minority (n=3). Two suggested that if certain critical situation occurred (such as natural disasters – flood, fire, or terrorist attack) anybody would volunteer, but not otherwise. This opinion is supported - the volunteer literature for example, regarding war-time womanpower mobilisation-volunteering, (see Oppenheimer, 2002, p. 131). However, the emphasis of current study emphasis is on free-of-pressure forms of volunteering.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of answers to the interview question: Do you think anybody can be a volunteer? (See Appendix C for details).

Country	YES	NO	Total
Australia	0	10	10
Bulgaria	3	7	10
Total	3	17	20

It is noteworthy, that from the entire sample (n=20), I received only three affirmative responses to the 'Can, anybody volunteer?'. All three were from the Bulgarian group. Paul's response was the most clear and well-substantiated:

> Yes, I am sure that anybody can be volunteer. Volunteering might be so diverse and flexible that given the opportunity and the right match between organisations and people anyone can find his interest and place in volunteering … Even the most materialistic person can understand and accept that his interest, even if it is a very egoistic interest, can coincide with the interest of the others and with some larger community. (Paul, BG, 30-40, e-marketing, team leader, 6 years of volunteering)

Paul's case seemed to be strongly influenced by his education, professional and volunteering experience. His background reveals that he had a university degree in Business Administration (Management and Marketing). He worked previously in this field, both professionally and as a volunteer, creating (together with his team) the biggest e-platform for volunteering in Bulgaria. Paul is firmly convinced that anybody can volunteer if personally matched to the suitable job and organisation. He has been involved in facilitating these matches for several years.

The overwhelming majority of the interviewees, from both countries, did not support the idea that volunteering is for just anybody (see 'No' answer in Table 1); rather they support the idea of individuals having personal characteristics conducive to volunteering. It is evident from responses that that this conviction does not appear automatically at the start of the volunteering process, but rather it gradually develops, along with associated challenges that form a volunteer identity:

> Initially, when I started volunteering, originally I thought that everybody can do this [the volunteering – makes a large gesture with both hands] but with my job I kind of learned that, I found that: one, you really need to be passionate about what are you doing and two, you need to be very resilient. It is not an easy work and you need to practice things here … (Rebecca, AU, 20-30, working student, 6 years of organised volunteering)

Rebecca's practice provided her with higher (agency) standards to measure against. Focusing on the insight from Rebecca's narration, I presume that if my respondents were from the alternative cohort – inexperienced volunteers (e.g., as Rebecca was several years before) – their answers would be quite different. A previous survey and qualitative research on student volunteers undertaken by Holdsworth (2010) suggests a similar outcome. To verify this

statement, it is necessary to compare the opinions of beginner versus long-term volunteers on same topic in further research.

The 'No', response that-not-everybody is suitable for volunteering, dominated the issue (Table 1). Nevertheless, the opinions varied on the intensity from one long-term volunteer to another. Bill shares the ambiguous suggestion that, 'No … but anybody should try' (Bill, AU, 80+, retired, 7 years of volunteering). By contrast, Jack's responded by stating:

> … no way! I don't think everybody would want to [volunteer]. If anybody wants to they would be – it is not hard to become a volunteer … I do not think anyone is able to and I do not think everyone should. We don't need that many volunteers, we don't need everybody to be volunteer and some people are better than the others. (Jack, AU, 20-30, student, 4.5 years of volunteering)

Richard added to the categorical 'no way!' response:

> No, definitely not! Not everyone is suitable, not everyone is capable, not everybody wants to [volunteer] … and you cannot say they 'should' because … it is like we are on the top of the world judging people while we don't have the capability or understanding of how people think … (Richard, AU, 50-59, technician, 15 years of volunteering)

These statements recognised the fact that, although volunteering options are indeed open to anybody (in Australia and Bulgaria), it is not enough for volunteering to occur. Without the availability of favourable inner conditions (volunteer material), in the addition to the external ones, volunteering remains only a remote possibility. In practice, as the interviewees suggest, many individuals simply lack those inner attitudes (and values, as indicated by Gronlund, 2011). The 'No, not just anybody is volunteering material' type of answers reveal the way volunteer identity is perceived by the volunteers. They expressed in different voices an inherent conviction; that is, there is a distinctive volunteer identity (volunteer material), which appears to oppose the traits of non-volunteering type of people.

Who are the 'non-volunteers'?

The data reveal that the long-term volunteers carry comprehensive image of their non-volunteering counterparts. In fact, I did not ask any specific questions about who are those 'non-volunteering material' kind of people. Any comparison between the social perceptions of who is versus who is not volunteer material (in the mind of veteran volunteers) was not part of my research questions. Previous research has compared various characteristics of

demographically similar volunteering versus non-volunteering people, for example, motivation (in Shye, 2010); well-being (Kahana et al., 2013; Lai & Hynie, 2010, pp. 93-97), post-traumatic growth (Cohen & Numa, 2011, pp. 69-76) and even longevity among other parameters (Okun, August, Rook, & Newsom, 2010, pp. 1662-8).

For the current project non-volunteers seemed too large a cohort; therefore, the issue of comparison is limited to one of cognition – how subjects perceive volunteer and non-volunteer identity types. I found the necessary theoretical grounds for this analysis in Ricoeur's definition of identity (1992, pp. 2-3), discussed in Chapter Two, and empirical evidence in Gronlund's (2011) small-scale qualitative research from Finland.

According to the majority of the respondents in the current study, the non-volunteer was not simply a person who is not volunteering at this particular moment of time, nor someone who had never volunteered. The non-volunteer was, rather, described as person who was not willing to be involved in any activity without material reward, regardless of the opportunities and context. In other words, this is someone who actively opposes and avoids any idea of volunteering. Some of the interviewees suggest that this type of behaviour (or more correctly – lack of altruistic behaviour) is due to a deficiency of essential inner dispositions. Nevertheless, what are these? According to Jack, there was a gradation in the 'dimension of non-volunteering'. He defined three types of non-volunteers:

> Some people may already have volunteered in the past, but then they moved – went into paid employment. They needed money; they needed to pay their bills. Other people are very career focused – they are just focused on their study and finding a good job, while other people are just lazy and they might be not studying, not working either and they might be on the dole and still not working and not studying, they don't want to contribute to society, just do not contribute. (Jack, AU, student, 20-30, 4.5 years volunteering experience)

For Jack the non-volunteers have tunnel vision focused only on their careers, or in the worst-case scenario they were lazy, neither working, nor studying and living on welfare.

Robi, a Bulgarian student with five years of organised volunteering, explained that the non-volunteers otherwise 'are good people, but they don't have it in the blood', because 'if the job is not paid they immediately lose any interest'. Marika, who had volunteered for more than 40 years in Australia, commented that although 'anybody that could walk and could think can be volunteer', there are 'too many people [who] do not like to do things for other people'. Jeff,

the oldest volunteer from the Bulgarian sub-sample, viewed the non-volunteering individual type through the perspective of the generational dynamics:

> No, I do not think that everybody is going to take to volunteering. The young people today are very busy with their work and families and it takes so much time ferrying children between places, but the oldies like me are closing in on themselves – some of my friends even do not want to step out of their homes anymore … (Jeff, BG, retired engineer, 80+, English translation mine)

It is significant that for the interviewees, the profile of the non-volunteer is closely associated with other comprehensive characteristics. For instance, Jack associated non-volunteer type with being on unemployment benefits, Jeff with burnt out young adults and/or the overly cautious elderly, being isolated or self-isolating. Other narratives add to the complex image extrapolations and associated features. According to Simona's (BG) perception non-volunteering type displays indifference to the possible opportunity to benefit others, lack of discipline, and avoidance of any effort in all spheres of life (as systemic disposition).

For Richard, who started his volunteering in a mission in India, non-volunteers were individuals who were 'thinking only for themselves', who 'do not look outward, only inward'. But Richard deliberately refrained from calling these non-volunteers selfish or egoistic because, as he commented further, this would be judgemental and bring the bigger question: 'and who makes them egoistic?' Undoubtedly, Richard's question searched for objective determinants behind the observed surface behaviour. Moreover, he showed empathy to them, because:

> And I think MYSELF as an egoistic person, because I turned my face the other side [away from the human suffering] so many times … (Richard, AU, 50-59, technician, 15 years of volunteering)

Wayne summarised the social context in which not-volunteering passivity occurs and thrives. He pointed out that:

> a lot of people have been retrenched, people of 60 years old, like me … now sitting, drinking ale for four hours, wasting time … cos it's coming time, when you sit on your bum, watching telly and doing nothing, watching the days go by … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

The dataset revealed that non-volunteering traits were attributed not only to individuals, but also to larger groups and social strata and are the result of an unfortunate mix of personal

and social mishaps. Further, one of the participants attributed non-volunteering characteristics also to people who choose to volunteer (and donate) only within their own ethnic and religious groups. Marika, who came to Australia many years ago after a revolution in her own country, prioritised the 'all-Australian' type of volunteering over other ethnic and religious community approaches:

> Maybe it is in their culture or they think they do not have enough, maybe they think that the state should provide it … We are all made different, one day they might change … (Marika, AU, 70-80, retired, 40 years of volunteering)

Marika's views were based on her own observations and, therefore, could not be applied broadly. It seemed she was empowering her own, acquired national (all-Australian) identity by asserting a type of volunteering, which benefited all Australians.

Ashod provided an important contribution to the topic of non-volunteers. Although he has a hearing impairment, it has not stopped him obtaining university degrees in Bulgaria and abroad, or to work and volunteer. He wants to foster an environment for the members of hearing impairment groups to volunteer, because:

> Very few of the people in our community [hearing impaired] understand volunteerism. They think that it should be given to them, because they are disabled, as the mainstream society prefers to label them in order to isolate them … And this is a stigma. They, [the people with disabilities] are conditioned by the system to live life in a capsule. Therefore, they think that by volunteering they will lose energy. But what are you going to win [if volunteering]? ... They think that they should be cared about because they are second-class citizens and, therefore, they cannot but someone else should take care of them. But if you tell them: now, you should take care, you should give, very few will respond. If you invite 100 people, 5 will come. Like percentage, it is very little. And very few are the people, which will say 'I CAN, that's why I want to help!' Only particular individuals, among the people with disabilities, one here and one there think this way. And this is a problem for our society, our Bulgarian society. (Ashod, BG, 30-40, 20 years of volunteering)

Ashod considers non-volunteering among marginalised people as a litmus test for the existence of inequality and discrimination society-wide. He considers this statement valid for all those who have internalised social stigma. Therefore, they do not perceive themselves as able to claim same agency and initiative as other members of society. They are isolated, capsulate within their group and do not feel the power to volunteer. Their disempowerment,

which frustrates their self-efficacy beliefs, fulfils wider cultural expectations and reinforces the cycle. Although the legitimate recipients of the volunteer efforts of others, the fact that the they see themselves only on the passive, receiving side of the transaction, is evidence of their constricted agency and lack of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2008).

The non-volunteer type is not merely seen as the moral opposite or described as 'selfish'. Neither are they regarded as the 'common enemy', as in Gronlund' study interviewees (2011, p. 869). For instance, Robi considered they might be otherwise 'good people', while Richard, Marika, Wayne and Jeff were empathetic of the reasons that discourage people from volunteering. They described people who are disempowered, burnt out, constrained by endless commuting, struggling to pay their bills, retrenched, retired, and socially isolated. In other words, constrained by social disadvantages. As long-term volunteers, my study participants (compared to Gronlund's research cohort) were able to not only articulately explain what volunteer behaviour is and is not, but also readily elaborate on the possible socio-cultural causes. Their perspective on non-volunteers and non-volunteering shows a deep understanding of social complexity. In respects of Bandura's insight that 'theory building is a long haul in which essential components are added incrementally' (2018, p. 132), I hope that the complex picture of the non-volunteer, which my interviewees spontaneously described in contrast to themselves, is one of these essential components.

Some of the interviewees directly elaborated on what constitutes an essential volunteer identity. For example, Kate exclaimed:

> Wow, I definitely think that the volunteers are different from the rest of the population.
> I definitely think they are different, only let me try to express it … I am afraid that I am
> going to define it as some kind of over-situational activity, but it is not only that … it
> is not to let the expectations and the decisions of others to define you, not to remain in
> their box. (Kate, BG, 50-60, in higher education, 14 years volunteering)

The complex character of volunteering draws attention to the demands of applying broader categories with extensive explanatory background.

What constitutes 'volunteer material'?

Being 'volunteering material' is reportedly crucial for volunteerism, according to the veterans of volunteering, interviewed in my project. While searching for prior projects on this topic, I found studies focusing on some more general approaches useful for insight, such as personal compared with social motives and agency (Frimer et al., 2011); values and personal

identity (Hitlin, 2003; 2007); and dual identity and creativity (Goclowska & Crisp, 2014). On the specific interface of volunteerism with particular aspects of identity, I was informed by the studies on gender identity and volunteering (Crane, 2013); national identity and volunteering (Lai et al, 2013); volunteer role identity and motive fulfilment (Finkelstein, 2008, 2010); and volunteer roles (general versus organisational) and identity (Guntert & Wehner, 2015). Despite the advance in the exploration of the volunteer roles and collective identities, 'personal identities has been little studied' (Gronlund, 2011, p. 852). Gronlund asserts that 'volunteering is associated with identities of individuals, not merely [their] role identities', and reflects an 'entire identity' (p. 871). As a result, she characterises and classifies five general types of volunteer identity by summarising the narrated motives and values.

In this research, I am regarding the salient motives, values and meanings as the essential core of personal identity. Although necessary, they may not be sufficient for sustaining the volunteer identity in the long run, such as in my cohort. The observations of the veteran volunteers and their narratives point out their readiness for going beyond the status quo (Pam, AU) and acting 'out of the box' (Kate, BG). They not only have the same values as many other people, but they assert their values in a proactive way. As Simona explained:

> I am sick and tired to hear about these problems [with asylum seekers and refugees]. I
> want to do something about it … (Simona, BG, 20-30, 6 years of volunteering)

Therefore, in addition to the values approach, I have also utilised an agentic perspective on volunteering, which I consider applicable for all kinds of volunteering behaviour. Therefore, this study regards volunteer identity as an active agent with deeply seated self-efficacy beliefs (Eden & Kinnar, 1991; Fraser et al., 2009), and has social self-efficacy beliefs (Bathini & Vhora, 2014). Previous studies indicate that volunteer identity is further empowered by the volunteering process (Crane, 2013; Frimer et al., 2011). The empowerment results in an enhanced sense of purpose (Fraser et al., 2009); and acting on and deliberately influencing its proxy (immediate) and distant environment (Bandura, 2018; Ohmer, 2007; Lindemeier, 2008; Wang et al., 2011).

In this study, the respondents' opinions on the constituents of volunteer identity differ in themes and comprehensiveness; some appear similar to each other and complementary, forming patterns, while others stand alone and provide interesting contrast. The interviewees supported the existence of essential, intimate individual features determining the volunteer identity, using the metaphoric expressions 'in the blood' (Robi, BG) and 'like DNA' (Pam,

AU). The answers clustered around several major themes: the open heart (encompassing love, passion and empathy values); responsibility and duty standards (to care for others and what is going on in one's own street, nation, world); personal qualities like resilience; autonomy (freedom) and belonging. Some of the respondents focused their narrative on one of the themes, while most presented a mix of two or more necessary identity components simultaneously. Likewise, Gronlund (2011, pp. 858-9) remarks that her values/motivation based identity categories are 'not a clear cut' either. They are in fluid interface, which may change daily, as findings of prior research suggest (Schwartz et al., 2011).

It is noteworthy, that several answers display ongoing resonance between volunteering and the heart (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2006; Warburton & Smith, 2003). For instance, as already cited, Pam spoke of the 'values from the heart', while Marika uses the metaphor of an 'open heart' to explain the motivation/force behind volunteering. For her the open heart is an all-encompassing and transcending entity. Without an open heart:

> We cannot say we are civilized. Everything returns – the bad, and the good, and the happy. It is all energy, in people, animals. Do not grab and harm them, because you can. You have to be harmless, that is how we will have an open heart and we will improve … People, animals, everything has life in it – it is one life … and it has nothing to do with religion or how many books you read ... And if the people are not awaken, we should awake them! (Marika, AU, 70-80, retired, 40 years of volunteering)

Her statement, among others, combines compassion with responsibility, duty with an active stance towards changing people's attitudes and behaviours in a desired direction; which is agency by proxy (Bandura, 2018). For Richard, one of the Australian participants, the volunteer is not only aiming to help the direct recipients of volunteering service, but rather part is an expression of something much bigger – taking 'care of our common source'. Similarly, the ultimate meaning for another exceptional volunteer was about 'making harmony in society' (Prim, male, AU, 40-50, 8 years of volunteering).

Ashod used the heart metaphor in a different, more socially conscious way. For him true volunteering 'intends people to feel personally and socially responsible'. It stems

> from the heart and grows from bottom up – the things should happen from bottom up and not the opposite way. Everyone should look first into themselves and decide how to feel happy [in volunteering] and with who has similar views on society to join with. (Ashod, BG, 30-40, 20 years of volunteering)

In his interview, Ashod contrasted volunteering 'from the heart' with the pseudo-volunteering that existed in Bulgaria under the totalitarian political order, which I discussed earlier (in Chapter Two) and to the corporate (company) volunteerism spreading now. According to his perspective, both are characterised by a mass, campaigning character 'coming from the top down'. In other words, initiatives and decisions are made at the top level of the hierarchy and made semi-compulsory (in the best case scenario) for the individuals at the lower power levels:

> I spoke with other people about it – the feeling is not good. They say that before it was the Prof Committee [obligatory professional union] that decided if and how we should volunteer, and now the HR [Human Resource] management decides for us all the same … At least in Western Europe these mass initiatives of company volunteering are part of rich portfolio of other types of volunteering. In our country, they are not related to anything … (Ashod, BG, 30-40, 20 years of volunteering)

In his parallel assessment, Ashod points to the fact that true volunteering requires more than personal intent; it also requires a conducive social climate to thrive that allows free choice of initiatives and associations. This points to the fact that the intrapsychic changes happen not only due to the immediate context fluctuations, but also as a result of larger historical shifts in society (Vygotsky, 1978). The same type of volunteering (e.g., corporate) can have different impacts on personal identity in different countries, due to the specific cultural context and historical background.

Antonia (BG) stated that volunteering requires a dual set of personal characteristics; that is, a combination of passionate personality and empathy. Similarly, Rebecca (AU) talked of combining passion and resilience. She was sure that having them both, plus confidence and self-efficacy (e.g., communicative and creative) skills help her on the challenging route:

> I found that: one, you really need to be passionate about what are you doing, and two, you need to be very resilient. It is not easy work and you need to practice stuff here … And I am very lucky, because I have the right qualities for that. I am very confident, I am social and I love social people. And I am really passionate and that is what works for me, be able to yeah, communicate and socialise and kind of create with people with which you are on the same page, or not only in [same] boundary and level … (Rebecca, AU, 20-30, working student, 6 years volunteering)

Bathini and Vhora (2014), in their work on volunteering in India, refer to similar concepts and argue that social self-efficacy beliefs, universalistic values and extraversion

correlated personal traits benefited volunteerism. On the topic of social skills, Jack indirectly agreed with Rebecca, mentioning that 'obviously [volunteering] is easier for some people than it is for others' and 'some are better [at it] than others'. He suggests that volunteers in general like helping people – an observation supported by research on volunteerism. He emphasises that this feature is in accordance with the Australian national identity: 'we, Australians, like helping people'.

Responsibility and duty was the other big theme, evident in the answers of the veteran volunteers. It was intricately linked with other topics, as in Marika's mention of animal rights, or independently, as elaborated by Tim. Commenting on the same controversial social issue on exporting livestock from Australia, he noted, that before:

> … in Australia, we have had it well organised. If you want to export, make it properly, to do it properly. Officers get there, check around and if it is not OK, then BANG, it is closed! Now everything is in computers and it goes like click, click and then in the documents – tick, tick, tick [makes gestures to suggest using a computer], and then goes from one computer to another … (Tim, AU, 60-70, semi-retired, law, 8 years volunteering)

Tim warned that 'volunteering can be [mis]used as an excuse from government not to carry out social services, or to get cheap social services'. Based on his legal competence, he insisted in the age of corporations and artificial intelligence, a volunteer's main responsibility is to be a vigilant corrective to potentially wrong and harmful social practices.

For Kate, volunteerism is an avenue to autonomy and freedom. She creates her own initiatives, usually based on models she has seen abroad and which have proven successful and generative. The diffusion of innovations across broad social networks is considered one of the manifestations of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012, p. 12; Eden & Kinnar, 1991). Kate observed that in the volunteering process, 'you are in fact experimenting with yourself … and your networks' which further amplifies identity and enhances creativity (see, Goclowska & Crisp, 2014). Kate found out that through volunteering, a person inevitably expands their networks:

> In the successful team we are all very different – I have one sensitivity and resources, the others have their own … and if you are not in the right team, you should search further and find one.

Reflecting on her own personal experience, she realised that:

If something is important, I cannot [resist] not doing it. If you do not follow this importance/significance, you are not identical with yourself. And if you are not authentic with yourself, what are you? Volunteering is this need to be authentic – when something is important you speak about it, you are supporting it and are getting engaged. Volunteering is a major part of your freedom. To invest efforts, without anybody paying you – this is the big part of your freedom – you are not limited by if someone decided to pay you or decided not, if someone is going to accept it or not. You are being autonomous participant in the process … instead of working for the causes of others, alien to yours, and doing it in a mere more or less way, because somebody else is defining you.

Lyuba: You mean, not working for the bureaucracy? Isn't this inevitable?

Kate: It is inevitable, yes! Nevertheless, it should not be ONLY that.

(Kate, BG, 50-60, 14 years volunteering experience)

Chapter Review

Volunteering simultaneously embodies universal, group and uniquely individual properties. It requires forging of personal volunteer identity to back up the social roles of volunteering. This chapter has reviewed the personal identity drivers behind volunteering. Following agentic theory (Bandura, 2018) and my results, I have argued that the volunteers in this project exercised all three agentic elements: forethought (goal setting and aspirations), self-regulation (through personal standards and focus on the moral dimension on life), and self-reflection (judgement on own perceived efficacy, self-beliefs, motives and accomplishments).

This study highlights that the core of volunteer identity contains pro-social values, as previous qualitative studies of Gronlund (2011) and Crane (2013) assert. Moreover, the data reveals collective and personal self-efficacy beliefs (supported by Fraser et al., 2009). The findings highlight the personal identity volunteers develop during the years of practical experience build expertise and control over their own lives (as supported by Lyubomirsky et al., 2005b). Therefore, I have investigated the constituents and dynamics through the ways volunteers frame their volunteer identity.

The data I have gathered allowed me to conclude that for some of those who volunteer long term, volunteering is a way of life. The activity is driven by psychological and internalised social needs, complex motivations and identity components. Participants perceived it as

coming from an open heart and regulated by the values of the heart. Volunteering requires an active personality, and a willingness to reciprocate for the good things that happen in life. It is hard work that requires responsibility and resilience, but also brings pleasure and fulfilment. It is helping people immediately or indirectly, persistently working for more distant goals. It offers authenticity and freedom by transcending the 'box' of an oftentimes bureaucratic paid job, which although inevitable, was considered not the only type of activity with which to engage. Volunteer identity was described as passionate, resilient and empathic. It values the autonomy and connections with other visible and invisible social players.

Within the volunteering process, participants perceived that some are better placed than others due to special skills and the social self-efficacy beliefs. It was thought that everyone could improve their performance in exercising their abilities. In the process, volunteers realised, sometimes painfully, that not everybody shares their values and enthusiasm. For instance, there are people who will never volunteer, regardless of social needs, opportunities and even persuasion. It is not always easy to determine why, as there is no intrinsic uniformity among non-volunteers; some are simply not interested as money or status are not involved; others avoid effort; while others are restricted by unconducive personal and social circumstances. Furthermore, some veteran volunteers considered that social disadvantage plays a disempowering role in determining non-volunteering attitudes. Such insights can be used by governmental and non-governmental organisations to more effectively sustain the volunteering process by devising customised identity oriented approaches among disadvantaged groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Impact of Long-term Volunteering on Self and Significant Others

Chapter Five investigates the second research question concerning the impact of volunteering. The question is two-fold:

1. *What is the impact of long-term volunteering on the personal identity of those who volunteer?*

2. *How do volunteers perceive the way their own identity influences others?*

This chapter regards the impact of long-term volunteering as a bi-directional transaction; that is, volunteering exerts influence on those involved, and the volunteers themselves exert influence on a close circle of significant others and the larger environment. As shown in Chapter Four, the interviewees often identified with more than one volunteer role, team, cause and organisation, each with different consequences. These varied and sustained identifications were distinctive for long-term volunteering.

The influences of volunteering can be both deliberate and unintended (Dekker & Halman, 2003). Their impact on personal layers of volunteer identity remain much less studied than the impact on social aspects (Gronlund, 2011, p. 870; Badea, Jetten, Czukor, & Askevis-Leherpeux, 2010; Hitlin 2007). This research oversight is most evident in the personal identity/outcomes domain. This chapter considers the consequences of volunteering that relate to personal identity, and draws on volunteers' reports of objective (material and quantifiable) achievements as important sources of information.

The following sections narrow the focus to perceptions of non-material outcomes (subjective processes and qualities) that directly relate to identity. Participants discuss the acquired personal gains and encountered challenges. The eventual development of coping strategies is addressed as an outcome of the difficulties that have been overcome. The second part of the research question – how volunteers exert deliberate influence on their significant others and larger social environment – is exemplified in various sub-sections. The chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the findings and the limitations of this research.

The Impact of Long-term Volunteering on Personal Identity

The consequences of volunteering: holistic approaches

Self-identity has a holistic, integrative nature, and the impact of volunteer work is multidimensional. Therefore, its analysis requires considering all mediating personal and social structures, institutions and norms operating both inside and outside the volunteering process (Hortt, 2015). To avoid the field fragmentation in volunteering research (Hustinx, et al., 2010a), this study implemented an integrative approach, interpreting the findings through the prism of the holistic, *civil society* concept 'seen as the exclusive societal sphere of voluntary involvement' (Dekker & Halman, 2003, p. 8). Similar derivative concepts include *citizenship identities* and *civic engagement* concepts (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, pp. 159-179) that relate to the terms *civic duty* (Hortt, 2015, p. 95) and *civil education* (Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008, pp. 49-60) among others.

Initiatives of free citizens

A sense of autonomy and meaning was evident in the volunteers' accounts of performing mundane tasks, which they indicated held personal significance. Interviewees often articulated the 'ultimate goal' of their volunteering. Haski-Leventhal (2009, pp. 271-2) asserts that 'for a goal to be ultimate it must be an end in itself and not a means to another goal'. For example, Prim reached to a deep level of reflection, explaining the consistency behind his multiple volunteering roles. From his wheelchair he was volunteering in various organisations (from hospitals and associations of people with injuries to council committees). The ultimate goal of his many activities was to make visible the contribution people with disabilities and other immigrants make in Australian society, specifically those with his 'colour of skin'. Tending to view volunteering as his mission, he commented that he wished: 'to build harmony in this country … and I want to do it for the future people, because we need to change this world' (Prim, AU, male, 40-50, accountant, 8 years of volunteering). Prim, among other participants, demonstrated a future-oriented perspective of his volunteer actions. Forethought (self-guidance towards a future state) is one of the main properties of agency, which 'provides direction, coherence, and meaning to one's life' (Bandura, 2018, p. 131).

Wayne (AU) promoted volunteering as an avenue to improving people's life-resilience in general. He said: 'more volunteering – less suicides'. Kate (BG) described the ultimate outcomes of her volunteer initiatives using similar far-reaching terms:

… All my projects are forms of presence and doings – initiatives of free citizens, which

aim to engage a variety of people and to create something that would be a part of the

social life here in Bulgaria – a form of civil society. (Kate, BG, 50-60, higher education,

14 years volunteering)

Through volunteering, the participants found ways to make a difference in society. They asserted a legitimate place in the civil society (Kate, BG), own/host country (Prim and Marika, AU) or the world in general (Pam and Prim, AU). Inevitably, they faced individual limitations. Pam stated that her volunteering was a worthwhile personal journey, 'even if it is a tiny little bit in the tiny little part, corner of the world …'. Although each of these interviewees volunteered in different fields, their reflections highlight similar intentions to position themselves in the world through their unpaid work. Volunteers perceived themselves as having *citizenship identities* (Warburton & Smith, 2003) that were an integral part of society and its future.

Achieving material results

Volunteering outcomes appeared to be diverse. Many participants emphasised the material outcomes of their labour. For example, Lyn (AU, awarded volunteer) told of the hundreds of 'hugging quilts' (see Appendix E) she produced alone during the past three decades of her volunteering, or more recently with the help of fellow volunteers, due to advanced arthritis. Lyn was donating her symbolically rich quilts to protection centres for victims of abuse. She was not able to see the victims in person; nevertheless, through her craft she related to them and communicated her dedication to provide encouragement to those she sought to help. The oldest of the Bulgarian volunteers, Jeff (80+), reviewed all costs of the animal shelter where he volunteered to emphasise how crucial is the role of these unpaid workers. Bill (AU, 80+ years old, former technical manager with seven years of volunteering experience) calculated the amounts of money his charity shop made each day of the week. He was unhappy by the decrease in revenue, since a new building site next door almost blocked the access to his charity shop.

Richard (AU) talked about the quantity and the quality of the telephone calls he and his team made each day for a shift of between two and four hours for engaging people with the specific public policies they promote. Richard was deeply disappointed about the low percentage of return calls and the failed expectations to reach the campaign's objectives. Inspiring or disappointing, the practical outcomes were testimony to invested agency and self.

Wayne (AU) proposed to municipalities to spend less money on carers by engaging volunteer resources:

> … Then council's paying a lot of money to retrain 40-year-old women to be carers, when they could train young [volunteer] social skills: because the carers are trained and it costs a lot of money … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

It is interesting that the sustained experience in volunteering brought Jeff (BG) and Wayne (AU) to a practical-expert level of knowledge and confidence to express opinions about the cost-management of complex volunteer/community issues. On the same topic, previous research on the interchangeability between paid and volunteer labour has concluded that the use of additional volunteer labour has an overall positive contribution to the final product or service (Handy, Mook, & Quarter, 2008). Nonetheless, this leads to 'the sensitive, and almost taboo, issue of the relationship between volunteer labor and paid labor' (Handy, Mook, & Quarter, 2008, p. 16).

The findings appeared both supportive and contrary to previous works on the outcomes of volunteering. Viewed as an underestimated economic resource, volunteering does not receive the deserved organisational and managerial attention (Lewis, 2014). Volunteerism was commonly viewed as 'free labour' and 'do-good volunteer contributing' (Handy & Mook, 2011, p. 412), which was 'loosely coupled with outcomes' (Hager & Brudney, 2015, p. 235). The findings of the current study contrast with the claim that '[m]ore often than not, neither organizations nor volunteers articulate the net benefits (or costs) of volunteering' (Handy & Mook, 2011, p. 412).

The findings indicate that many participants were aware of the inherent economic side to volunteer labour. They carefully calculated their work in terms of costs and matching results (in social service, product or money). In his experimental research, Hortt (2015, p. 81) outlined volunteering as a social exchange. He contrasted it to donating to charity that is a market exchange where 'each exchange is governed by a different set of norms and expectations' (Hortt, 2015, p. iii). Regardless, the long-term volunteers in the current study seemed to be well aware of the market dimension of their labour.

In this study, the material results of volunteering were considered important in themselves. However, their significance went beyond the obvious – they were carriers of connectedness (Lyn, AU, Lily BG) and solidarity (Wane, Pam, Prim, AU, Jeff, BG). In the

participant's narratives, the concrete, practical outcomes of volunteering testified to the *materialised* human initiative, resilience and efforts that made them possible. In this way, the material results related to the identity's main question: 'Who am I?', and answered it in an affirmative way.

Wayne, who is one of the longest serving Australian volunteers in the study, offered a 'monetary precise' narrative. I first contacted Wayne at a charity event, organised by a branch of a major political party. His father was one of the founders of this particular branch and Wayne continued the family legacy (identity). Later, I interviewed him in the shopping centre, where he was selling red poppies, raising money for a Vietnam veterans' organisation. A retired builder in his mid-sixties, Wayne started volunteering as a child helping his father to raise money for the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne:

> My father used to do a lot of volunteer work … And I used to help him a lot, when I was very young, and I took it up from there. For the last ten years I am doing it for the Vietnam Vets, 15 years for the RSL, aaah … 8 years for the Heart Foundation, 5 years for Salvation Army, 9 years for the kids with cancer and now I am doing for the Labor Party, which I've been doing also in the Council and on and off for the last ten years. I do a lot of volunteering work … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

Wayne proudly stated the amount of money he alone (or together with his team) raised for different projects:

> And on Grand Final days I sell posters – in the Uncle's Bob Club I work with, we collected 48,000 dollars – 48,000 dollars in one afternoon!

> When I was helping the Vietnam Veterans, I was going in town in the morning … we generate about $15,000–$16,000 a day. When I come here [Shopping Centre] I make generally $500 a day and I'll be here for about 10 days … then I will go in town and generate $5000 in that day.

Wayne explained that he was doing:

> Mainly fund raising, because there are so many people out there that need so much help … these days it seems costs of the living are going up a hell of a lot and of course, it's nothing better than helping rise healthy children – that's what I think … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

Further, Wayne emphasised the fact that he received a pension and, therefore, was not very financial: 'When I was construction manager there was about $3000 a week. When going on pension – $220 a week – big difference!' Wayne could earn additional income for himself in the same supermarket where the interview took place. He pointed to the greengrocer stands nearby where he had recently been offered a part-time job selling vegetables instead of red poppies for the veterans. Wayne indicated that he declined the offer due to pride, and concluded the interview with the comment: 'I could write a book for things done in my life!' (Wayne, AU).

Wayne appeared to be open and charismatic. The major part of his volunteering was oriented towards one volunteer operation – raising funds (individually and/or collectively in a team). He indicated that he did this successfully for multiple organisations and projects across different sectors of volunteer employment, across the entire charity sphere including veterans, hospitals, political and medical foundations. His approach seemed unique. There appears to be no previous literature relating to this specific form of volunteer practice – performing one single operation across many sectors.

These examples raise the question of why some respondents viewed the results of their volunteering in concrete measurable forms while others did not. First, it was possibly due to long-term exposure to resource deficits where the material accountability and transparency became increasingly important. In these circumstances, volunteers were pressured to describe the outcomes of their volunteering in material or economic terms (Hustinx, et al., 2010b) such as added value through goods, funds and services. It is possible that this perspective may not apply to new volunteers. Unfortunately, the limits of my study do not allow me to verify this suggestion. Second, the interviews revealed intrinsic or subjective inclinations toward these concrete forms of expression. They might have been mediated by other factors, outside volunteering such as the professional background of the volunteer, for instance. Although no one from the three professional accountants in my study (Prim and Marika AU, Ari BG) responded in this way, it was noticeable that Jeff (BG), Bill, Wayne and Richard (AU) all had some form of technical education and career. It is likely that their 'technical' background influenced the chosen field of their volunteering practice and the 'matter of fact' reporting.

Participants' narratives of achieved tangible results were indicative for the volunteer identity because they symbolise invested personal (and collective) pragmatic efforts. Being an efficient agent in productive way appeared to be valuable part of volunteer identity. Material practice enriched the self-concept by differentiating and integrating 'a sense of self along

different social and personal dimensions' (Bamberg, 2010, p. 4). It was an act of self-identification despite being underestimated as such in the volunteer literature. The next section concentrates on the narrated intangible outcomes of the psychosocial character.

Direct identity outcomes

The literature on volunteering that explores the ultimate (personal consequence) stage of the process lags behind the needs of practice (Haski-Leventhal, Hustinx & Handy, 2011) for guidance. It focuses principally on 'the antecedents of volunteering' while 'the issue of consequences of volunteering for volunteers' is much less developed (Wilson, 2012, p. 177). The notion of volunteering effects remains largely reduced to 'wellbeing outcomes and longevity-health benefits for those involved' (Wilson, 2012, p. 177).

Indeed, some of the respondents were informed of the health (particularly mental health) and longevity benefits of volunteering (Ashod and Paul, BG; Pam, Wayne and Jack, AU). Nevertheless, these interviewees considered such benefits as more or less a side effect, rather than a significant result. For instance, Pam commented that a director (in her paid employment) had read some research on volunteering as a factor for longevity and then jokingly said: 'If this research is true, you are going to have a very long, long life, Pam!' (Pam, AU, 60-70, awarded volunteer).

The benefits: 'I feel fulfilled'

Freedom of connectedness and belonging

Jack, an Australian student, was one of the few interviewees who mentioned the occurrence of mental health benefits for himself and his peers. He emphasised that peer connectedness in volunteering sustained mental health. It helped combat social isolation, which he indicated can exist on crowded student campuses: 'In addition, volunteering brings more social life – the Uni gets very quiet on holidays – nothing is working …' (Jack, AU, 20-30, student). He values the communality with his fellow volunteers because it is an expression of psychosocial sameness: '… I think this is the key. You just find the joy in helping people … It's one thing that connects us.' Jack's awareness of the mental health aspect of volunteering may be augmented by the recent programs for improvement of mental health literacy among young Australians (for example, interventions initiated by Wright, McGorry, Harris, Jorm & Pennell, 2006).

Pam (AU, team leader) appreciated the special feeling coming from people 'who are gathering together' and mentioned that otherwise 'you don't get that sense of liveliness in

atmosphere, that connectedness and fun'. Lyn (AU) echoed: 'I like both – the company in patchwork and the good deed' (Lyn, AU, awarded volunteer). In addition, Kate elaborated on the free relatedness which volunteering brought into her life. She compared the openness and authentic quality the volunteer's alliances have in comparison to professional ones:

> … You never know what kind of people you will meet there … The true reward for me is in the contacts: the opportunity to show, to reveal who you truly are, what you are doing and how are you doing it … to create relationships. I think that the people I worked with [on volunteer projects] know me much better than my usual colleagues in my professional work do. (Kate, BG, 50-60, higher education, 14 years volunteering experience)

The volunteer form of connectedness, as Kate (BG) explains, is free, at times unpredictable and open to change because is not fixed in rigid role functions (Netting, O'Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, 2005, pp. 179–205). It seems that volunteer teamwork brings 'additional social encounters' (Moller et al., 2010, p. 754) with peers, beneficiaries and other supporters. It has authentic depth and affective value based on genuine interest and relatedness. The feelings of acceptance and associated self-worth in turn encourage the identification with the team defining the self-image of volunteer.

The sense of self and well-being

The theme of connectedness and belonging closely relates to volunteers' sense of self and well-being. Psychological well-being is of crucial importance for the volunteers, because they 'may be compensated only in the form of positive meanings and feelings, while employees also receive a salary' (Vecina, Chacón, Marzana, & Marta, 2013, p. 294). The well-being theoretical paradigm has proven useful in the exploration of volunteering, because it definitely has such an aspect. Moreover, volunteering improves quality of life (Shye, 2010) and subjective well-being (Borgonovi, 2008; Brown, Hoye, & Nicholson, 2012). The findings of the current study correspond to the well-being categories defined by Longo, Coyne and Joseph (2017): happiness, vitality, calmness, self-acceptance, competence, self-awareness, self-worth, involvement, purpose, optimism, congruence, connection, development and significance of own actions. They reveal the way the volunteering process structures the notion of self. Nevertheless, the impact of volunteering on a person needs more than conceptualisation from the well-being point of view.

The activity stemming from self-agency

The interviewees' narratives reveal that the long-term volunteers described and positioned themselves with regard to their agency. For instance, Lyn (AU, awarded volunteer) wanted to apply her abilities to something meaningful, declaring 'I am a very active person … If I don't do this what shall I do? … I am very active'. Pam (AU, awarded volunteer) looked at her volunteering for asylum seekers not only as an expression of her values but also as an active 'form of anger management'. She revealed feelings of anger to the way 'my government threatens these people [the asylum seekers]'. Rebecca (AU, student) echoed that her contribution provided relief from 'feeling angry' and, therefore, was always 'encouraging people to be active'.

Similarly, in Bulgaria, Simona showed agency-based identity differentiation. She explained how her active stance resulted in volunteer behaviour:

> I am sick and tired of hearing about these problems [with asylum seekers and refugees].
> I want to do something about it … there is always an attitude that someone else should
> and could do something. The volunteers don't think that way; therefore, they take things
> in their own hands … it's time to get to the dirt and engage. (Simona, BG, 20-30, office
> worker, 6 years of volunteering)

To capture the reflected volunteer agency, I employed a wider socio-psychological perspective on the analysis of data. Bamberg (2010, p. 9; original emphasis) points out that: '*Self* and *identity* are traditionally tied up with the essentials of what is taken to be human'. Bandura (2018) argues that agency is the most human property. Volunteering builds upon the deep structures of self, its agency potential and self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, for investigating how volunteering affects self-image and identity, there is a need for further exploration of the interview narratives with sound (agentic) theory in mind.

Crane (2013, pp. 8-9) draws attention to the fact that 'the very act of commencing volunteer activities is itself an act of agency' and suggests that the existent agency is further empowered by volunteerism. From the same (agentic) theoretical grounds, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005b) reviewed previous research and interventions to conclude that through exercising personal resources the volunteers are building expertise and control over their own lives. It seems that these outcomes were more pronounced when individuals were exposed to varied and intense, sustained volunteering (as with the interviewees in this research). For instance, Simona (BG) contributes in more than one way, by being a blood donor and volunteering for

refugee children (teaching them Bulgarian through play) at the same time. Both activities fostered her self-worth and happiness:

> The blood is also a thing that you can donate and it restores every day, I don't receive anything [for it] which is the most noble thing – to help, when you are not going to receive anything in return … I like the fact that I am helping others, particularly when I work with [refugee] children – the fact that they enjoy me, that I am making a difference to their day … Thus, I establish new connections with people and can see their different worlds. The reward for me is that I expand my vision of the world and my own world … (Simona, BG, 20-30, office worker, 6 years of volunteering)

Simona indicated that her action in donating blood is noble and this seems to foster her sense of self-worth. It is interesting that Simona indicated that she did not receive anything in return for her volunteering efforts, yet she mentions the gratification associated with being 'enjoyed' by the refugee children and self-satisfaction of making a difference to their day. Simona also commented that she was provided with opportunities for new connections and is rewarded through an expanded vision of the world. These observations suggest that Simona receives multiple non-tangible returns for her volunteer efforts.

Expansion of the personal worldview

The expansion of personal worldviews (self-expansion as a human being) is the process one undergoes while volunteering. It is not domain specific, but occurs across the different sectors of service. For instance, Antonia communicates essentially the same expansion and deepening of perspectives following volunteer commitments. She was a young teacher, who volunteered for a LGBT community group as a receptionist, then for an orphanage in Bulgaria:

> Of course, it changes you – what you hear from the other people, and how I see the other people – either orphans, or little children, even when they misbehave. The big thing I have learnt is not to feel sympathy for people, but empathy for people, to understand … so why do I choose to volunteer? I choose to do it to feel that way. I can understand what people are feeling …

When asked if it is making her happy to have better understanding of other people, Antonia replied:

> Yes. I got a lot of that [volunteering], because I can understand a lot more about my GL [gay and lesbian] and transgender students and I have empathy for them, and I probably

will want to do more about it in the future … (Antonia, BG, 20-30, teacher, 6 years of volunteering)

Pam, a team leader in an organisation helping asylum seekers, noticed a similar 'expansion' in her views and perspectives. She perceived that consulting them reflected positively on her as human being and professional competence:

I have had 25 years of experience in counselling. Still yet, I was feeling that I am starting it all over again. It was humbling, but a great learning and fantastic reminder of human-to-human connection. I used to think that I do not know what I've got to give if someone has been tortured, or been through war. I can't begin to relate, who might be, pretending to help them? And yet, it is possible to bear witness to each other's stories and connect in a human way. Big reminder! (Pam, AU, age 60-70, 20 years of volunteering)

This enlargement of the interviewees' own horizons and personal frames of reference, through volunteering, asserts that the sense of self is open to change, when the other's context (or sub-culture) changes (Erikson, 1968). It comes as an effect that many of my interviewees witnessed and is in principle an empowering experience. It is achieved through social action, which is a mediator for cognitive development and vehicle for internalisation (Vygotsky 1962; 1978), psychosocial growth (Erikson, 1964 [1959]; 1968) and realisation of one's own agency potential (Bandura 2018). It might result in heightened self-awareness (Beasley, et al., 2015), various positive outcomes and making new choices in different spheres of life, depending on an individual's attitudes and circumstances (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). This might be, for instance, in one's profession (as already noted), or the education of one's own children as moral citizens (as Pam mentioned) and in others spheres of life.

The rewards are important, but not the only type of outcomes. Together with the positive outcomes, the volunteers also raised negative experiences that sometimes limited or destabilised their volunteer intentions and identity. It was noted that the negatives, at times, had the potential to be a 'deal-breaker', leading to a cessation of the volunteering process altogether. As mentioned, there is little known about active versus non-active samples of ex-volunteers (Vecina, Chacón, & Sueiro, 2010, pp. 335-344). My sample included only active volunteers (at the time of interview). The challenges they encountered were reflected upon and dealt with, adding depth to the volunteering experience. For instance, Lyn (AU) emphasised how the good feelings can overcome the pains of her aging body: 'Sometimes, at the end of the

day, my whole body is aching, but then I make myself a cup of tea and I feel happy, fulfilled [because of volunteering]!'

The challenges: 'It all comes with a cost'

Previous scholars have explored the possible avenues to reduce the obstacles in/to volunteering. Earlier research has considered how the motivation to volunteer fits (or does not fit) the role identity (Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005, pp. 403-418). Other approaches investigated the monetary and non-monetary balance of costs and benefits in volunteering (Handy & Mook, 2011, pp. 412-20). Some scholars see the volunteer challenges as a negative result in the cost versus benefits comparison (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Chinman, Wandersman, & Goodman, 2005; Lee & Brudney, 2009, pp. 512-530). I consider the cost-benefit trade-off perspective, the social role fitting approach, and the expectation/motivation versus reality models as important, but insufficient to reveal the agency and identity challenging foci of volunteerism.

Exhaustion and distress

The difficulties encountered by participants evoked self-reflection and knowledge of their own limits. Due to volunteering, the interviewees arrived at a better understanding not only of who-they-are, but also to who-they-are *not*. In the current research, physical, mental and emotional exhaustion appear to be one of the main issues volunteers faced. It was identity-challenging because it contradicted the volunteers' self-image of being an otherwise strong and resourceful human being. Wayne confided that he suffered several bowel operations, which is why:

> I sometimes feel very tired at the end of the day – cos I can't get anybody to help me – if I need to go to the toilet – I need to rely on somebody, to look after my [poppy] stand. I know, it is getting intense and I bring my lunch with me, because I can't afford to leave … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

Kate reported mental burnout as a different kind of exhaustion:

> … all these activities lead to a huge overload and I take it as a personal challenge to overcome. Everything requires a lot of communication and leads to tremendous workload and great persuasion. Although I am a person that communicates well, I don't like to make an extra effort to attract the attention of others. The necessity to enter in the kind of social interactions I don't like is a huge challenge even though it is in the

name of the people, communities and groups I sympathise with … (Kate, BG, 50-60,

higher education, 14 years volunteering experience)

Kate believes that her effort really 'matters to other people, which in turn enhances purpose and meaning' (Thoits, 2012, p. 360). Therefore, she was able to have an honest look at her own limits and to sustain the salience of her volunteer identity, despite the inconvenience. Antonia similarly experienced acute emotional burnout even though she was engaged in seemingly simple volunteer roles. First, she became a part-time meet-and-greet receptionist in an LGBT community centre, when she was only 22 years old. Then she taught English in an orphanage in her spare time. In both places, she did not expect the emotional toll she had to pay when:

> … many people, LGBTQ people, came just chatting, while I was working, telling me how awful, horrible their life was and how they were mistreated. … It is very emotional sometimes. It is very heavy. Sometimes I go home saying – OMG this guy just told me the worst story ever and it happened to him! It is pretty harsh – you know, somebody living all their life not liking who they are and I always just stood there … Not knowing how to handle it ... But it wasn't something I hated. Just that I found it difficult to deal with over my experience. Same with the little kids. You see the little kids in the orphanage – you know they have no parents, or something horrible happened like their mother was burnt in front of them, and they will tell you all about that – they have no problem telling you about …

Antonia brought her innate capacity of being empathic with the suffering of vulnerable people into her volunteering. The encounter with their trauma and loss forced her to face her own constraints – lack of sufficient life experience (incomplete identity) and special knowledge:

> And I am like a counsellor … And the second thing I don't like is like I don't know what to do about it … So nobody trained me and told me – 'Hey, they will tell you all of these things and this is how to respond'… I am not a counsellor, but it's good to have a little bit of knowledge … If somebody tried to tell you that he just tried to kill himself yesterday, what would you say?! … You need some kind of preparation mentally. … Or you can burnout … (Antonia, BG, 20-30, teacher, 6 years of volunteering)

These physical (Wayne, AU), mental (Kate, BG) and emotional (Antonia, BG) strains point to the inherent volunteering issues of keeping personal boundaries and integrity under stress. Some of the role-identities seem more central and salient to self-concept than others

(Merolla, Serpe, Stryker, & Schultz, 2012, pp. 149-172; Ryan & Deci, 2000, pp. 68-78). The volunteer roles were both central and salient for the long-term volunteers in this study because 'the more time spent in volunteer activities, the more important volunteer identity' becomes for the person, providing meaning and guidance in life (Thoits, 2012, pp. 360, 381). Marcussen, Ritter and Safron (2004) suggest that 'the meaning individuals attach to social roles is key to understanding the extent to which stress influences self-concept, well-being and behaviour' (p. 289). Hence, it was likely that participants were strongly affected by the stress coming from their volunteer roles, because they were central for their identity. Distress, produced within the important (defining the self-concept), salient roles, has much more 'deleterious impact' (Marcussen et al., p. 289), than the stressors coming from less important (for identity) roles. For interviewees in the current study, the negative impact of the distress coming from the salient (volunteer) role was significant. Nevertheless, it seemed counterbalanced by the positive effects gained through meaning and purpose, which this role provided, and the fostered self-efficacy beliefs.

Fluidity and disorganisation

Perhaps most concerning for the participants in my study, after the exhaustion theme, was the perceived disorganisation of the volunteering process. It was attributed to the fluidity (including inconsistency/impermanence) of peer participation. The insufficient organisation was perceived as a serious, persistent problem, significant for the volunteers in both sub-samples (from Bulgaria and Australia). The issue appeared inherent to the volunteer process as it stemmed from the flexibility of volunteer membership. It hindered the connectivity with others, which is a well-being constituent (Longo, Coyne, & Joseph, 2017). Fluidity was related to the theme of exhaustion because many volunteers attributed their excessive workload as due to the poor attitude of co-volunteers, who often did not turn up to provide support at critical times.

Being a volunteer team leader for many years, Pam (AU) acknowledged that such changeable peer behaviour was a source of disappointment and resentment in the team and for her personally. She was a practicing psychologist in her paid work but confided that the inconsistent attendance was ever-challenging even for her 'professionally trained patience'. Richard (AU) confessed that it was 'disheartening' and 'soul killing' for him to know that 'we have many members, but very few showed up' when needed. Wayne expressed deep disappointment for the breach of trust:

Sometimes, if you are working with a group of people it could be very disorganised. I wish that I can go there, just do my job and not to worry about it. … But when the work [fund raising] is on [AFL] Grand Final Day and there are only 20 [fundraising volunteers] to show up and it's supposed to be 30 – 10 are not showing up, while the other 20 are working under a lot of pressure. It is very disappointing for the other members … Because it is not a paid job, it is like OK saying 'we are going to help' and then not showing up … And somebody may need to sit down now and again for 4-5 minutes, or to grab a piece of pizza – we have a lot of elderly people working with us. And because it is volunteer job, you can't get mad 'you didn't do this and that'. … I was raising money – handshaking – in Burwood on Good Friday for the Royal Ghildren's Hospital – I made $3500 in a day and again I was asking 4-5 people to come and to help me and they were not turning up. I think that is rude, when you rely on other people. (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

Ashod, (BG, team leader) echoed the same disappointments:

There is an escape from responsibility I observe over and over ... As if this is not paid, therefore, it is not going to be my big priority … Or I don't feel comfortable today with this and tomorrow with that part of the work – especially in Bulgaria, people like to bend the conditions and to make variations in the arrangements instead. To this, I am answering – let us sign a contract that we shall complete the things qualitatively and professionally, to the end! (Ashod, BG, 30-40, 20 years of volunteering)

As evidenced by the interviews, the issue of volatile participation added uncertainty and tension among volunteers. The perceived breach of trust, lack of commitment and peer support affected the fibre of connectedness and identification within the team and with the organisation, hence volunteer identity. There is evidence that concrete organisational measures may alleviate the problem to a certain degree. For instance, making a form of a psychological contract (similar to what Ashod suggested) could help consistency in participation. These contracts though must be in tune with the personal intentions and individual traits of the volunteer in order to influence the time donated to volunteering (Vantilborgh et al., 2013). Furthermore, the issue is systemic and cannot be resolved by individual volunteers or organisations.

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) argue that contemporary volunteering is undergoing radical change, mirroring powerful social tendencies. It seems to be shifting from the traditional, steady forms of involvement 'as a lifelong and demanding commitment' towards more dynamic, project-like 'changing patterns of involvement' (p. 168) in line with the

dynamics of modern employment and individualistic lifestyles. Although this global shift in volunteering and in concept of volunteer identity remains under-theorised, it offers an explanation for the tensions which participants of the current study experienced.

It seems that the mobility and intensification of everyday life undermines the stability of volunteering involvement patterns, which effects organisations and interpersonal relationships among the volunteers in more than one way. It seems that the reported frustration and resentment (caused by instability and trust issues) was much stronger among the long-serving volunteers. Usually they were perceived as those steady, reliable, and nurturing people to whom the beginners turn for help and advice. Oftentimes they embraced the position of team-leaders, responsible for the overall success of any given initiative. The narratives suggested that when the attendance was insufficient they were trying to overcompensate for the absence of peers (e.g., Wayne, Pam, AU and Kate, BG). Therefore, the subsequent drain on their own resources was adversely affecting their volunteer identity. The findings indicate the need to create a more flexible set of conditions in order to more evenly balance responsibilities.

Frustrated potential for positive impact

Some of the volunteers, from both Australia and Bulgaria, thought volunteerism was sometimes limited in terms of its role in society, which hindered the purpose (mission) and narrowed the diversity of actions. On a personal level, this systemic narrowing results in restrained agency and frustrated potential for positive impact, ultimately hindering participants' sense of meaning and volunteer identification.

As a semi-retired legal officer in gambling industry, Tim's (AU, 60-70) volunteer identity emerged from his personal values and from his professional identification. Concerned with the negative effects of excessive gambling he created an educational program for preventing gambling addiction. Recently, Tim discontinued this form of his volunteering, although he continued to derive meaning and satisfaction from it. He indicated that he was encountering insurmountable obstacles and a lack of social support made him vulnerable.

> But I do not do it anymore. It is too difficult because the gambling machine [industry] has threatening devices [methods], it is too strong. The Industry is a cheating one. I take an advocacy role there and was trying to round up the educational side of the things, so I do not do anti-gambling stuff anymore or I may get involved in court cases – which I have – just coming up in September … (Tim, AU, 60-70, semi-retired legal officer, 8 years of volunteering)

After the closure of his voluntary educational unit, Tim started to help two other associations by offering technical assistance. Although he finds this technical work necessary for the sustainment of these organisations, he regretted that it did not involve his professional skills as a legal officer, which reflected his identity:

> I think there is one problem with volunteering – I found those difficulties everywhere … What I encountered in almost all volunteer organisations is that they want people – only either – for doing the bookwork, or for paper work, or for computer work, or to do some accounting and collecting money, but they don't want professionals. I am happy to volunteer, but for an organisation, where I could do something, which I am, something I am finding challenging and where I can use my talents. (Tim, AU, 60-70, semi-retired legal officer, 8 years of volunteering)

Tim indicated that volunteering ideally needs to be sufficiently mentally challenging to be able to sustain volunteers' interest and identity investment. Moreover, by attracting skilled membership and putting vulnerable people at the centre of its activities, volunteering should help them adequately by being able to provide the complex help they really need. According to Haski-Leventhal (2009), these characteristics are the constituents of the alter-centric (other-oriented) approach to volunteering and altruism, when people act out of duty 'on behalf of the others simply because they care about humanity and that altruism is their core value' (p. 289). She opposes this alter-centred, duty driven (deontological) approach to the widely applied egocentric understanding of the volunteering process (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Many of the participants in the current study manifested an alter-centred rather than ego-centred orientation. Moreover, Tim describes his desired involvement as one that professionally challenges the social status quo rather than just doing good deeds in general:

> Well, I have my qualifications and I want to use them. I am not standing at the corner rattling a tin or adding columns with numbers ... There are plenty of people able to do this. I see so much waste within the organisations – I can provide work [in control systems of legislation] that others could not. And it is volunteering! But the way these things work now is very suppressed. I have a friend of mine who is a very experienced doctor. He was on a board of some charity and gave his medical opinion on certain health issue and they jumped: 'You are not here to give us medical advice, we have people to do that' and he was very hurt … So I think people are becoming increasingly cynical about volunteering. While recipients – some desperately need help – and they do not get it … (Tim, AU, 60-70, semi-retired, law, 8 years volunteering)

Tim shared in the interview that he would like to continue volunteering but also wants to feel sufficiently fulfilled. His professional qualities and rare practical experience are part of his self-perception and he wants to be acknowledged by others accordingly. He thinks that volunteer organisations underestimate volunteers' skills. Given this study obtained data from only volunteers, it would be an interesting further study to inquire if his perceptions held true.

Paul (30-40, e-marketing specialist, team leader, 6 years volunteering) found a similar problem existed in Bulgaria. He was the creator of the biggest and most popular e-platform for volunteering in the country. Paul observed that advertising organisations do not address all available potential volunteers and the fullness of their skills. In his opinion, they failed to use more 'fun language' in their advertising and to ensure training and support in an efficient way. Paul has a degree in economics with work experience in marketing. Equipped with professional knowledge he sees potential for major improvements in almost all volunteer organisations his e-platform hosts. He wants to offer his help but without intrusion: 'I would like to help with my professional skills, in a pro-bono kind of way, not in a hands-on way …' If his expertise remains un-utilized, he stated: 'I am not prepared to give them any unsolicited advice'.

According to some of the high-skilled participants (like Tim, AU and Paul, BG, for example), organised volunteering offers a limited range of options for professionals. This perception restricts the ways they want to serve the public (with high-quality service), and the unfolding of their agency and identity. The problem seems part of the broader issue of organisational support. An organisation, which encourages the self-expression (of interests and talents), 'would be perceived as more supportive' and vice versa (McBey, Karakowsky, & Ng, 2017, p. 996). Furthermore, the perceived organisational and leadership support also benefits commitment (McBey, Karakowsky & Ng, 2017, pp. 991-1007; Oostlander, Güntert & Wehner, 2014). These findings (in the current and previous studies) suggest the availability of untapped volunteer potential of autonomous professionals with talents and experience.

Organisations need to be mindful not to devalue volunteers' expertise and civic duty (which was illustrated in the example of Tim's doctor-friend). The cynical attitude towards volunteers can take different forms; for example, lack of respect and refusal to cooperate (Bennett, Barkensjo, 2005, p. 264). It may stem from various sources; for example, sponsors, managers, beneficiaries or institutions (van Schie, Güntert, & Wehner, 2014, pp. 851-868). Such an approach has detrimental effects on the positive self-perception of the volunteer role. Acknowledging the issue of identity-role incoherence, Steimel (2018) concluded that unfortunately there is not much research on this issue to inform the practice. She interviewed

skill-based volunteers to reveal identity versus role discrepancies and concluded that this particular issue of volunteering is 'characterized by spectrum of tensions' (p. 142). Yet, rare and potentially valuable skills of well-intending volunteers wait to be utilised in more inclusively designed volunteering initiatives.

Coping strategies: 'Making it work'

Volunteers operate in the context of fluid role boundaries, resource and training deficits. These persistent difficulties reveal personal vulnerabilities, which may lead volunteers to build strategies to cope with obstacles and stress, or alternatively trigger disengagement. Both affect self-identity. Many participants reported turning for support in critical times toward other fellow volunteers. Robi (BG) commented that many tended 'to cry on each other's vests'. Others (Simona, Ari, Kate, Lily – BG; Pam, Lyn, Wayne – AU) were fortunate to have considerate families and friends. As Wayne mentioned, they can restore

> … your own peace of mind. It is relaxing. I have 50 people I know passing today [through his stand with red poppies in the shopping centre] – neighbours, friends, people who know me from the cricket club, football club … and from other things … (Wayne, AU, 60-70, ex-construction manager, 45 years of volunteering)

It seems that participants actively search for social support to strengthen their volunteer identities. Previous research has investigated the role of supportive social structures in increasing the commitment and the salience of particular identities (Merolla et al., 2012). There is research on the link between the perceived organisational support and long-term sustained volunteering (McBey, Karakowsky & Ng, 2017). Other support aspects are discussed and reviewed by Smith and Cordery (2010). Regardless, it was evident that some of the interviewees in the current study were not getting the support they needed, yet they remained strongly committed to volunteering. Their commitment drew on personal resources and coping skills as indicated by Rebecca (AU) who shared:

> ... for me, I need to be sure I have my time to write. Otherwise, I find it very overwhelming, I won't lie, that there are times I come home and just cry, because there are so many problems …

Second, the volunteers deliberately sought to change the attitudes in their inner circle (for example, tried to convince family and friends of their cause). Third, they were actively associating with like-minded individuals through volunteering.

Rebecca's family was neither understanding nor supportive of her volunteering. She was upset about the views of her parents and brothers, that 'there is no such things as cultural appropriation, climate change and violence against women. If you ask them, they'll tell you that such things simply do not exist!' Therefore, through her volunteering she was challenging her family's views. Meanwhile, she searched for support elsewhere:

> My friends are supportive and like-minded. My best friend and I, we did volunteering together. But my family have very different political views. I am working with them very slowly to be where they are now – which is like 'well, yeah, may be [these problems really do exist]. (Rebecca, AU, 20-30, working student, 6 years of organised volunteering)

The 'letting go' attitude – or the transcendence of the mundane problems for the sake of lofty goals and core values – was another effective coping strategy. Marika, (AU, retiree) one of the longest serving volunteers in the sample, manifested her assertive and resourceful personality in multiple ways. She came to Australia as an immigrant and did not have family and friends supporting her volunteering. Nevertheless, Marika demonstrated a high level of persuasion of others for assistance. This is socially mediated (proxy) agency, according to agency theory (Bandura, 2018; Damen, Müller, van Baaren, & Dijksterhuis, 2015). Prior to giving her interview she insisted I promised to search the Internet with a view to supporting two of the causes she was fighting for: one was against the 'cruel export' of livestock and the other against the sale of a church (in Tasmania) to cover court expenses and claims in recent child abuse scandals.

In addition to this activism, Marika volunteered to help lonely older people and those in palliative care. She confided that it was challenging. Marika revealed that at times, she felt saddened by witnessing the speaking behind a person's back, intrigues, quarrels and manipulative behaviour by some care beneficiaries. Nevertheless, it seems that through a broad-minded approach and *'open heart',* Marika (AU) has managed to sustain her volunteering. In line with the work of Caprara, Alessandri and Eisenberg (2012), it seems that her prosocial behaviour in the form of volunteering is based on psychological traits, self-transcendent personal values, and self-efficacy beliefs. In response to my question about how she managed to regain her empathy, Marika shared her belief: 'You know, even in the worst of the people there is something good. At the end of the day, it is all love! Love is above all.' (Marika, AU, 70-80, retired, 40 years of volunteering).

Influencing the Distant Environments

Influencing organisations

The participants acknowledged the transformational effects of volunteering on their personality and character. They communicated their own agentic efforts to influence their family and peers for good causes. Some interviewees (Prim, Pam and Richard – AU; Ashod and Paul – BG) took personal and collective pride in influencing broader programs and decision-making policies. This larger scope of volunteer involvement further enhanced their individual and collective self-efficacy beliefs (Ohmer, 2007).

Volunteers were more hesitant, however, when speaking about their own '*mothership*' (Pam, AU) organisations. This may have been to avoid acknowledging tensions between their personal identification with the organisation and its performance measured against high standards. Although on the whole they embraced the organisation's mission and derived satisfaction from their membership, they voiced dissatisfaction about certain shortcomings. The participants evaluated these organisations in a positive and sometimes in partially negative way according to how well its actions measured up to their adopted standards.

This evaluation (according to high standards) is an agentic property and part of the agentic self-regulation (Bandura, 2018, p. 131). Alternatively, as Pam (AU) puts it, 'it is not a critique – it is simply as it is'. Some expressed their concerns that the organisation they committed to was changing character. According to Pam, as her volunteer organisation got larger, it was becoming 'very bureaucratic and it is saddening, because could be otherwise. Hope it could go and change'. It may have become 'disorganised – not paying enough attention on the raised issues' (Wayne, AU and Kate, BG, with very similar views). Oftentimes, the team leaders had difficulties understanding the ongoing changes in personnel, directives and regulations. Pam communicated: 'I think the volunteering organisation is full of good will but it's really challenging sometimes to coordinate'. Strongly committed to the organisation from its founding, more than 16 years ago, Pam applied extra effort to improve the visibility of her own team:

> Policies are changing all the time; names are changing all the time ... I cannot give up and say, 'This is an unforeseen challenge'! But there are ways around it. It felt like you really got to be – pull your boots – then reboot again and start – again and again … to catch up and meet with the new people to catch up and meet with the organisation … Sometimes it is going two ways: I miss changes [in organisation], and the program loses

face in the main organisation … (Pam, AU, age 60-70, awarded, 20 years of organised volunteering)

To prevent the above from happening, Pam did her best to influence management decisions while providing the guidance and self-assurance that members require. Garner and Garner (2010) claim that adequate 'responses to dissatisfaction, to greater degree, influenced volunteer retention' (2010, p. 14); therefore, 'organizations can benefit from creating an environment where volunteers can voice feedback in constructive ways' (p. 2). The tensions were more pronounced in the narrative of the team-leaders, who perceived themselves as the face of the organisation and, therefore, responsible for its good image and for providing adequate assistance for the other volunteers.

Based on social identity analysis, Boezeman and Ellemers (2008) argue that volunteer organisations need to constantly convey the social significance of volunteering work, which is a form of support for the members. The perceived importance of volunteering contribution is the 'antecedent of pride' and the perceived organisational support is 'the antecedent of respect' (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008 p. 159). Both the personal pride and received respect (which is essential for self-respect) are found to enhance the commitment to an organisation.

However, these intense organisational efforts are not necessarily suitable for each volunteer personality. Kate (BG), being a self-proclaimed introvert, avoided large-scale organisational commitments. Instead, she worked for sizable initiatives and projects created by her or by her other fellow volunteers, which proved to be suited to her individuality:

> Yes, I can put hard work into my own initiatives or give a hand helping Lilian's
> initiatives, or somebody else's, but you won't see me volunteering for the Red Cross,
> for example. I would rather clean my village's river or all the rivers instead, if I could
> … (Kate, BG, 50-60, higher education, 14 years volunteering experience)

Volunteers revealed diverse volunteering styles and organisational preferences. Research provides some explanation for this by exploring approaches to work through the concepts of extroversion versus introversion (for example, George, Helson & John, 2011) and organisational commitment versus engagement (Vecina et al., 2013), among other personality dimensions. Furthermore, Finkelstein (2010, pp. 445-8) investigated how the collectivism versus individualism construct determines the volunteer experience. Both personality types expressed similar willingness to volunteer, although in different ways. Collectivists were more interested in establishing and strengthening of social ties, while individualists pursued more

career-related objectives in their volunteering. This distinction seemed somewhat relevant when comparing the more collectivistic volunteer style of Pam (AU) with the individualistic counterpart of Kate (BG), whose volunteering was closely tied to science-related projects thus being consistent with her professional (scientific) identity. Despite the differences, both were dedicated volunteers, influencing organisations.

Integrative tendencies – influencing society groups

The deliberate influence that volunteers attempted to make was not limited within the framework of their immediate projects and organisation. Individually (and in collective associations) they often exercised influence on larger social groups and institutional bodies pursuing distant goals. The engagement in these broader activities presented as 'agency as constituted by self', where the volunteers were 'implementing and choosing from particular repertoires that identify and contextualize' (Bamberg, 2010, p. 4). The volunteers' direct encounters with larger social institutions for socio-cultural change fostered an identity formation process throughout the course of events.

The attempts to influence larger institutional entities were equally valid for the volunteers from both countries. Nevertheless, there was one evident difference. While the Australian volunteers concentrated on the all-Australian issues (including advocating for asylum seekers, victims of abuse and ecological projects) the Bulgarian volunteers were deliberately implementing ideas for various projects they observed in other countries, predominantly the EU and the USA. For example, Violeta (BG, 60-70, English teacher, 7 years volunteering) successfully applied an idea for a program in Bulgaria based on what she had seen during a trip to the Hemingway Museum in Chicago – the inclusion of students as museum volunteers. Violeta started the program alone: 'I was filing, editing, offering materials while slowly involving students to help in preparing presentations in English and German, organising special evenings'. In the beginning, they were faced with suspicion and resistance from the regular museum staff who asked:

> 'Why do these volunteers want to engage? What is their interest? Is there any NGO involved and how?' Usually, people work for money and anything else looks suspicious … then when they see that it brings us pleasure and that we are useful, they relax and become very satisfied. Unfortunately, the museums in Bulgaria have scarce financing. They need restorative works and some are closing ... But there we leave our spiritual heritage for someone to take it and to carry it on … I saw the same in England – in Essex and Suffolk, near Cambridge – there were houses from the 16th and 17th centuries

– the volunteers were supporting them, working in shifts … Violeta (BG, 60-70, English teacher, 7 years volunteering)

Kate implemented different volunteer projects in Bulgaria following existing examples in other EU countries: 'Many good things already exist out there and we can, if not to apply them directly, at least to re-create them, or act in the same direction, for to live in a better way'. While implementing foreign initiatives in the Bulgarian social context, Kate clearly acknowledged her Bulgarian and European identity as important and salient but reported her scientific identity being central:

I don't know if my belonging to Bulgaria or Europe is more important here, but I am sure that the belonging to the scientific community is leading me. I think the scientist should have stronger presence in the society – and I saw it in an exceptionally sharp form in the CNRS [Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique] in France. … They were making huge expositions in the public exhibition halls, dedicated to their projects, results and achievements, where the staff were present to explain to the public what they were actually doing – this is a part of their self-organisation. For me it is important that these good and valuable things are transferred here in Bulgaria. The big attention they pay to the public presence of science and scientists I do think is important to implement. I am absolutely convinced that before we have had objective obstacles in front of us, but now only the subjective ones remain. This belief motivates me most! (Kate, BG, 50-60, higher education, 14 years volunteering experience)

Lily (BG) dedicated her volunteering to cultural performances in Bulgaria and internationally. For her it was important to show the Bulgarian culture abroad:

I have long confirmed that the cultural community is supra national. The voluntary creation of culture should be transnational. I am very fond of these transnational aspects. Oases of spirituality that I want to dwell ... and I want to find out what makes the Bulgarian culture understandable for other artists as well. (Lily, BG, 50-60, English teacher, 8 years volunteering)

The Bulgarian volunteers committed to bridge Bulgarian and foreign practises were addressing essential needs within the Bulgarian society, which is undergoing EU integration (Zlatkov, 2014). None of interviewees reported participation in the existing official international programs for volunteer exchange, which was widely promoted (by organisations like Cooperation for Voluntary Service – Bulgaria, among others). Nevertheless, they (Ashod, Kate, Violeta, Ari, Paul) implemented best practice approaches from abroad through their own

initiative or worked to show Bulgarian culture to international audience (Lily and Violeta). Although the assertion of Bulgarian identity was not directly stated in their interviews, through deliberate implementation of these best foreign practices they were expanding the limits of their national identity.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework indicates that each conscious psychological functioning originates as sociocultural interaction in meaning-making activity in the 'inter-psychological', 'intersubjective' (between subjects) domain (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Therefore, 'each higher form of behaviour enters the scene twice in its development – first as a collective form of behaviour, as an inter-psychological function, then as an intra-psychological function, as a certain way of behaving' (Vygotsky, 1997 [1930], p. 94). It seemed that deliberate establishment of external paths of relations (such as between social groups, institutes and cultures) fostered internal links integrating personal identity aspects (including national-European, cultural, scientific). An important result of establishing external interactions/dialogues was the fostering of inner identity integration.

Chapter Review

This chapter has analysed the evidence gathered from interviews to address the second research question about the impact of long-term volunteering on volunteers and their social environment. It was noted that previous work had considered mainly the consequences to the health and well-being of volunteers (Wilson, 2012, p. 177). None of the reviewed research provided information about how long-term volunteering influences the personal identity of the volunteer. Past theory and research argued that the commitment to volunteering per se is a testament for agency and self-efficacy beliefs (Crane, 2013; Güntert & Wehner, 2015, pp. 14-18; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener 2005). The evidence provided in this chapter demonstrates that for some volunteers, the most important outcomes of their efforts are having concrete, material form. These material outcomes are means to the ultimate goal of their volunteering and as such represent materialised efforts and tenacity.

The majority of the volunteers, however, explained the less tangible results of their efforts in a cluster of terms related to well-being – feeling joyful and happy, fulfilled, optimistic, connected with others, while involved in good deeds. The more reflective of the interviewees elaborated on congruence, autonomy and freedom, depth and self-discovery, which the volunteering process seemed to satisfy. By exploring the participants' narratives with consistent agentic theory (Bandura, 2018) in mind, I found out that many of them reported

broadening and deepening of their personal worldviews as main consequence. The observed self-expansion (as human beings) was not domain specific, but occurred across the different sectors of volunteering, in both countries. The expansion of self stemmed from internalisation of the new social functions (Vygotsky, 1997 [1930]) provided by volunteering. It resulted in the outgrowing of previous frames of reference (such as some narrow views of own family and friends), more empathy, self-reflection and social competence, reportedly spreading to other spheres of life.

Encountered difficulties fostered a deeper self-understanding and identity development through crises (Erikson, 1964 [1959]). The interviewees stressed the physical, mental and emotional work overload as main issues of discontent. The discontent was perceived to be also connected to another inherent problem – excessive volunteer turnover. Some highly professional volunteers in both countries experienced frustrated potential for positive impact due to a lack of available-high-skills volunteer roles. The availability of diverse volunteering roles would be attractive for more diverse membership, which would present an inclusive and attainable volunteer policy.

The volunteers in my study actively built a wide range of coping mechanisms to overcome the obstacles they faced. They found support in personal resources and networks, and persuaded others to practice their own prosocial attitudes and values. The most noticeable differences between the two national sub-samples were in the way volunteers tried to facilitate improvements in the larger social institutions. The Australian participants engaged in all-Australian campaigns and best practices. Many of the Bulgarian participants adopted foreign initiatives and models. These findings were interpreted within the framework of the existing socio-historical differences from which the volunteer movements were part.

Chapter Six

Thesis Overview and Major Findings

Thesis Overview

This thesis has examined the two major themes of personal identity and volunteering. The prosocial behaviours of volunteerism exposed the committed individuals to complex social influences and challenges. In the current study, volunteer work was regarded as instrumental for social and personal change, and it implied deliberate efforts in pursuing aims. It embodied various aspects of agency and particularly self-reflection. According to Bandura (2018), self-reflection is the major form of agency compared to self-directedness and self-reactiveness. They include properties like fore thinking, self-regulation and self-examining (Bandura, 2018, p. 131), all of which are widely implemented in the practice of volunteering.

The present study regards the construction of volunteer identity as influenced by the social interventions inherent in volunteerism. The social conditions (social tools) of volunteerism shaped in action specific volunteer identities, which participants in this study narrated. I have utilised Vygotsky's general socio-cultural theory (together with Bandura's agency theory) as useful landmark theories in identifying how volunteering shapes identity. According to Vygotsky (1978; 1962), any practical activity is mediated by the agency of other people and contextualised by larger communities, culture and moment in history. The collaborative interactions transmit specific competencies (*social tools*) that become necessary inherent (internalised) identity features. Vygotsky held the position that this conversion from social activity and collaboration to higher order of psychological self-organisation happens where the social conditions are optimal (for example, in the *zone of proximal development)*, which is a central concept in his theory.

This qualitative study was designed to emphasise the role of personal agency in identity construction within the volunteering process. To that end its theoretical framework combined the reviewed overarching theoretical approaches with recent research's findings in the area of volunteerism, which previous chapters have sought to examine. Volunteer identity, which participants developed and communicated, showed commonalities with the main components of all other identities, as previously defined in Chapter Two. These components were identified

as unity, continuity in time and distinction from others; in this case, from those who do not tend to volunteer in any circumstances.

Volunteer identity has social, as well as individual aspects. Studying the personal volunteer identity, Gronlund (2011, pp. 854-55), following Badea et al. (2010) and Hitlin (2007), states that although social by definition, the volunteer identity contains personal layers and structure necessary to sustain the social functions. However, these personal constituents of volunteer identity have remained much less studied than the social aspects (Gronlund, 2011, p. 870). It became clear that these aspects needed better recognition and representation in research. The personal domain of volunteer identity that I investigated is comprised of intense needs, motivations, values and self-efficacy beliefs. With time, the volunteers set up specific personal structures such as empathy, fulfilment, resilience and persuasion, self-empowerment, expansion of the personal worldviews and a spectrum of coping strategies for dealing with the difficulties. These helped them to sustain years of significant volunteer commitments.

Throughout the years, the veteran volunteers often took opportunities to identify with more than one volunteer role, team, cause and organisation. Each provided them with particular motivation, experience and consequences. For example, a participant mentioned in Chapter Four started to volunteer in an ecological project for separate recycling, then continued in an organisation for people with hearing impairment, and recently extended his acquired expertise to other marginalised groups. His varied activities brought him to a deeper understanding role of agency and volunteering in the democratic structure of society and his own place in it. I regard the network of these diverse, intense and sustained identifications and their influence on construction of identity as distinctive for long-term volunteering. It is an act of self-identification, which enriches the self-concept by differentiating and integrating 'a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions' (Bamberg, 2010, p. 4). The average service volunteer might not be exposed to the same length, variety and intensity of identifications as participants in this study. Therefore, if this thesis examined a different group of volunteers (such as student volunteering), the drivers and impact of volunteering may look less pronounced.

The study had an international dimension, as it was conducted in Australia and Bulgaria. The reason for doing so was to capture how identity formation in volunteering is differently contextualised by local interactional contexts. Hence, I support the statement that 'internationalization is [a] moral, professional and intellectual imperative', which 'makes better practice' (van de Vijver, 2013, p. 762). Moreover, the research contributes to an identified gap

in the volunteer literature in respect of cross-national research (Hustinx, et al., 2010a). None of the reviewed social research investigated simultaneously samples from these two countries (Australia and Bulgaria), which actually manifested one of the original features of this study. The project was bilingual. It examined whether the volunteers who originated from countries whose culture is sufficiently different from one another (according to Hofstede, 2016) experienced the volunteering process and its function in identity formation in similar way.

This research was designed to investigate both volunteering practice and personal identity as co-constructed within a societal context and larger cultural background. It voiced volunteers' memories, perceptions and intentions concerning their own or their co-volunteers' identity formation within a wide spectrum of volunteering related practises. The current study evidence was in accordance with the concept that 'all the higher psychological functions [including identity] originate as actual relationships between individuals' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 52). The current data reveals the significance of volunteer work interactions with multiple people and organisations in the construction and transformation of personal identity. The results were supported by the overarching conceptual framework theories in this project (of Vygotsky and Bandura). As both have pointed out the socially mediated practices (such as volunteering) determine individual (and group) behaviour and personality. Participants in this study reported actively reinstated their agency by approaching various societal issues and exercising 'their influence through different forms of agency rooted in corresponding types of efficacy beliefs' (Bandura, 2012, p. 12).

The current research dialogued with previous empirical studies on volunteering with similar theoretical foundations, which regarded the volunteering process as a self-directed prosocial activity that tends to increase the control over one's own life and environment (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005), to enhance empowerment and self-efficacy beliefs (Crane, 2013; Ohmer, 2007) together with a spectrum of well-being parameters and overall happiness (Borgonovi, 2008). My research broadens this line of investigation by including into the analysis the specifics of long-term volunteering practices and personal identity aspects, which provide valuable perspective into why people engage in prosocial activities and what objectives sustain them over time. This study investigated how the veteran volunteers reflect on the interplay of all three modes of their own agency – individual, proxy and collective (Bandura, 2018, p. 131) – in volunteering service and the transformation it brings to the self. The findings from the current research have implications for applied social science through broadening the perspectives on prosocial behaviour and identity.

The research objectives intended to reveal what stimulates the steady commitment to volunteering in order to contribute to better organisational strategies reducing excessive turnover of people. The project addressed those essential characteristics the participants identify with, through the prism of their understanding of functioning or obstructed agency potential. It seems that with time, the volunteers set up specific personal identity structures, which help them to sustain years of significant volunteer commitments and to influence their social environment in a desired way.

Major Findings

The thesis set out to answer two research questions about sustained volunteer experiences. In response to the first research question: *What are the key identity related drivers of volunteering?,* Chapter Four provides useful insight. Based upon previous research, it was expected that prosocial values and meanings would produce a sustained commitment to volunteering (Hitlin, 2007, p. 250). The study shows that both values and agency are necessary for sustained volunteering engagements. This thesis examines further if there are any/such defined personal identity which the participants strongly associated with sustained volunteerism and what are its essential features. The overwhelming majority of participants considered the existence of genuine and authentic volunteer identity as a pre-condition and driver for further volunteering. Indeed, the current research reveals that the concept of owning a distinct volunteer identity has important meaning for the long-term volunteers (its bearers) and is a part of their self-esteem as people. It taps into their inner values, reflects existing self-efficacy beliefs and empowers behaviours by focusing their agency potential (Bandura, 2018; Crane, 2013; Ohmer, 2007).

Participants often illustrated the distinctive characteristics of volunteers by distinguishing themselves from individuals and groups who were very unlikely to volunteer. This comparative tendency was also noted by Gronlund (2011, pp. 869-870). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the participants in the current project not simply labelled those who opposed volunteering in general, as was the case described in Gronlund (2011), but also searched for the deeper reasons for their non-volunteer attitudes. An original finding of my research is the extent to which interviewees offered their understanding on the socio-psychological forces that influenced how they view volunteering and the reasons that motivate or discourage participation. For example, they consider that being marginalised, feeling overwhelmed (for example, burnout) or socially disempowered are some of the reasons why people held negative views towards the prospects of volunteering. Moreover, the participants in the current study

pointed out that the development or under-development of volunteerism was a measure ('litmus paper' test) for democracy in each society. This shows that at least some of them emphasise the importance of volunteering (and themselves as volunteers) as part of the democratic process of society. Hence, their volunteer identity is their link to larger socio-historical processes.

The second research question was: *What are the implications of the volunteering behaviour for the self and significant others?* This thesis reveals that in the previous volunteer literature the impact of volunteering has been scarcely studied (Haski-Levental, Hustinx & Handy, 2011) and been predominantly viewed from a health and well-being perspective (Jenkinson et al., 2013; Wilson, 2012). Chapter Five presented the impact as a bi-directional transaction: from one side, the volunteering process and its created environment exerts influence on those involved; from the other side, the volunteers themselves exerted deliberate influence on their close (proxy) circle and larger environment.

Reflecting on the influence volunteer service has had on them, participants stated that volunteering expanded their personal horizons. The experience, however challenging, enhanced their sense of self-worth, autonomy, empathy and connectedness to larger community, which includes marginalised individuals and groups. In the process of constructing their personal volunteer identity through agency and action, the volunteers enjoyed rewards and endured various difficulties, which added depth to their experience by challenging their dedication. The excessive turnover of volunteers was perceived as a major problem with significant consequences. This thesis supports previous research that states the challenges coming from central and salient (actualised) identity aspects have more harmful overall identity effects than the challenges coming from aspects with lesser significance. The participants in this study were significantly affected by any inherent difficulties and conflicts they encountered in their volunteer role, precisely because their volunteer identity was both salient and central to their sense of self. The participants continued their involvement by implementing (non-deliberately and deliberately) several coping strategies for overcoming the challenges, which they developed throughout the years. Such strategies were writing, sharing with peers and co-volunteers, voicing the problems within the organisation, eliciting help for the cause from family, friends and other supporters, and transcending the conflicts through higher values. The experienced rewards, difficulties and internalised coping mechanisms all took part in development of more complex personal identity.

Chapter Five explored further findings related to the perceived influence volunteers have on their close and distant environment (i.e., the second aspect of volunteers' impact). It

discussed the participants' perceptions of material and immaterial outcomes of their actions. Both proved personally meaningful and a source of pride sustaining the volunteer commitments.

Despite the cultural differences between the volunteers in Australia and Bulgaria, both groups presented similar sensitivity to civic issues, good intentions and desired outcomes. They displayed similar patterns of pro-social value priorities, motivation, adaptive strategies and self-efficacy beliefs. Both groups believed in the existence of particular volunteer identity and explained it in comparable terms. The Australian participants, however, more often openly spoke about the relationship between their national and volunteer identity. The Bulgarian participants did not refer to national identity directly and perhaps perceived it as given by default and unquestioned. However, the evidence captured some nationality-based differences in the way volunteers tried to influence larger societal organisations and their policies. The Australian participants engaged predominantly with all-Australian issues. In contrast, the Bulgarian participants deliberately studied and implemented foreign practices that appealed to them personally and seemed relevant to the country's socio-historical transition and EU integration.

Limitations

As with any research project, there were some limitations to the present study. Firstly, although as qualitative research the study is not generalisable, it does provide important insight into the role of identity experience in volunteering. Based on data from committed volunteers, the findings may be academically insightful for further understandings about personal identity and volunteer practice.

Another limitation was the small sample size. The sample size consisted of ten volunteers for each country, amounting to 20 participants altogether. Nevertheless, their rich volunteering experience, which spanned over many years (and oftentimes decades) of volunteering provided sufficient data for analysis, thereby partially compensated for the small sample size. One further limitation is that some demographic features of social identity, such as religion, social class, education, marital situation and income level were not explored in this research. Further research would benefit from a closer examination of the influence that these social identity characteristics have on personal identity construction in volunteering.

Directions for Future Research

Further research is needed to expand upon the findings of this investigation. One option is for a project that replicates this research on a larger scale to determine if the results would be consistent across larger populations. Additional avenues for expanding the scope of the present work could be comparisons of data gathered from alternative volunteer pools, such as comparing the views of veteran volunteers with newly recruited, beginner volunteers. Another option is that the inclusion of rural and regional volunteers or Indigenous volunteers may reveal different issues and perspectives on the same research questions and produce different outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Country of Citizenship…………

Gender   F/M

What is your **age?**

18 -30 years old

30- 50 years old

50-70 years old

70-80 years old

Over 80

Are you **currently**:

Studying

Working

Homemaker

Retired

Other……………..

Initials……………

City, Date…………

Appendix B: Interview Guide Questions

Have you volunteered previously? If so, what impression were you left with?

How and why did you begin to volunteer? How often have you volunteered before and now?

For whom do you volunteer now and why?

What type of volunteer work does it involve?

What significance and meaning does volunteering have for you? (You can give an example involving yourself or someone else).

Describe volunteering in your own words: which five characteristics, things, events, interactions etc. do you relate to it? (You can give an example involving yourself or someone else).

What do you like most about volunteering?

What do you dislike about it?

After becoming a volunteer, has there been any change in the way you interact with others, or the way others behave towards you? If yes, describe it.

Do you think volunteering has changed you in any way?

How long have you been volunteering?

Are you planning to continue volunteering? If so, would you continue volunteering in the same field or explore new opportunities?

Can anybody can be a volunteer? Please, explain.

In your opinion, are there any particular qualities the people who volunteer possess?

Are there any other questions or issues about volunteering, which I did not ask but you feel important? Did you like this interview?

Appendix C: List of Participants

Name	Country	Gender	Age	Occupation	Other
BILL	Australia	Male	Over 80	Retired, tech. manager	7 years vol.
JACK	Australia	Male	20-30	Student	4.5 years
LYN	Australia	Female	60-70	Retired	32 years
MARIKA	Australia	Female	60-70	Retired, accountant, Religion	40 years,
PAM	Australia	Female	60-70	Counselling	20 years
PRIM	Australia	Male	40-50	Accountant, impairment	8 years
REBECCA	Australia	Female	20-30	Working student	5 years
RICHARD	Australia	Male	50-60	Technician, religion	15 years
TIM	Australia	Male	60-70	Semi-retired, law	7-8 years
WAYNE	Australia	Male	60-70	Building, managerial	45 years
ANTONIA	Bulgaria	Female	20-30	Teacher, sport trainer	5 years
ASHOD	Bulgaria	Male	30-40	NGO, impairment	20 years
ARI	Bulgaria	Female	50-60	Office-reception	6 years
JEFF	Bulgaria	Male	Over 80	Retired, Eng.	5 years
KATE	Bulgaria	Female	50-60	Academic	14 years
LILY	Bulgaria	Female	50-60	English teacher	8 years
PAUL	Bulgaria	Male	30-40	NGO	6 years
ROBI	Bulgaria	Female	20-30	Student	5 years
SIMONA	Bulgaria	Female	20 -30	Office-legal	6 years
VIOLETA	Bulgaria	Female	60-70	Retired, teacher	6-7 years

Appendix D: Cultural Comparison Australia/Bulgaria (Hofstede, 2016)

AUSTRALIA

BULGARIA
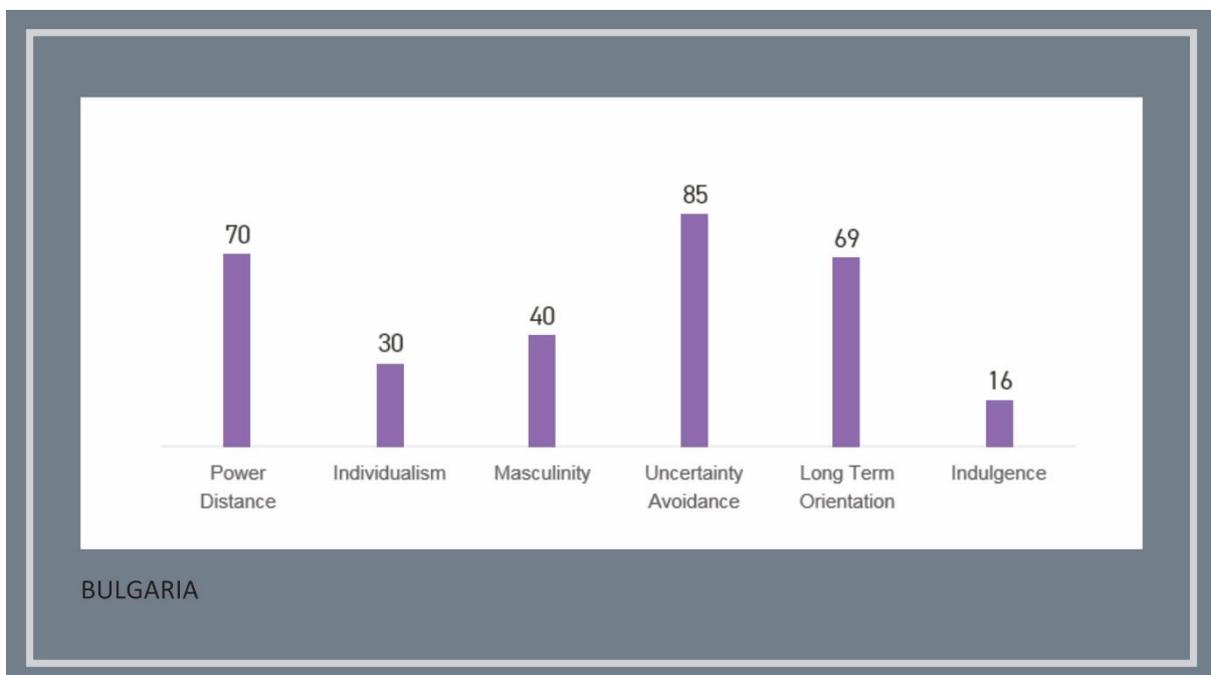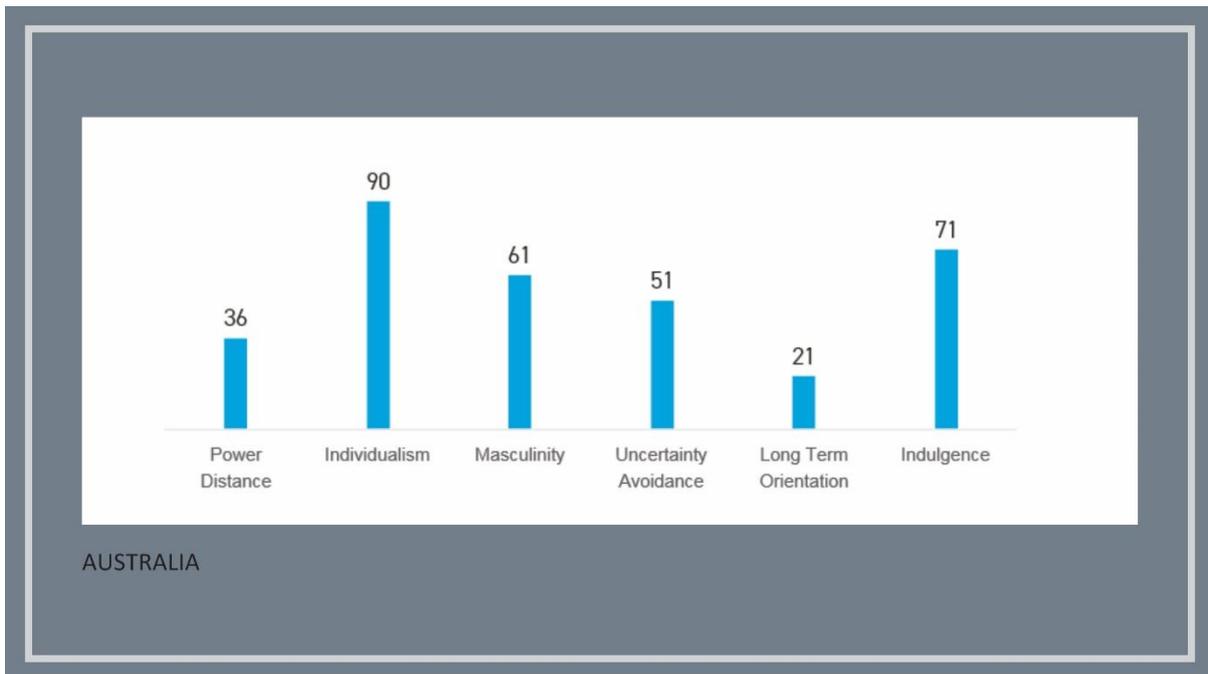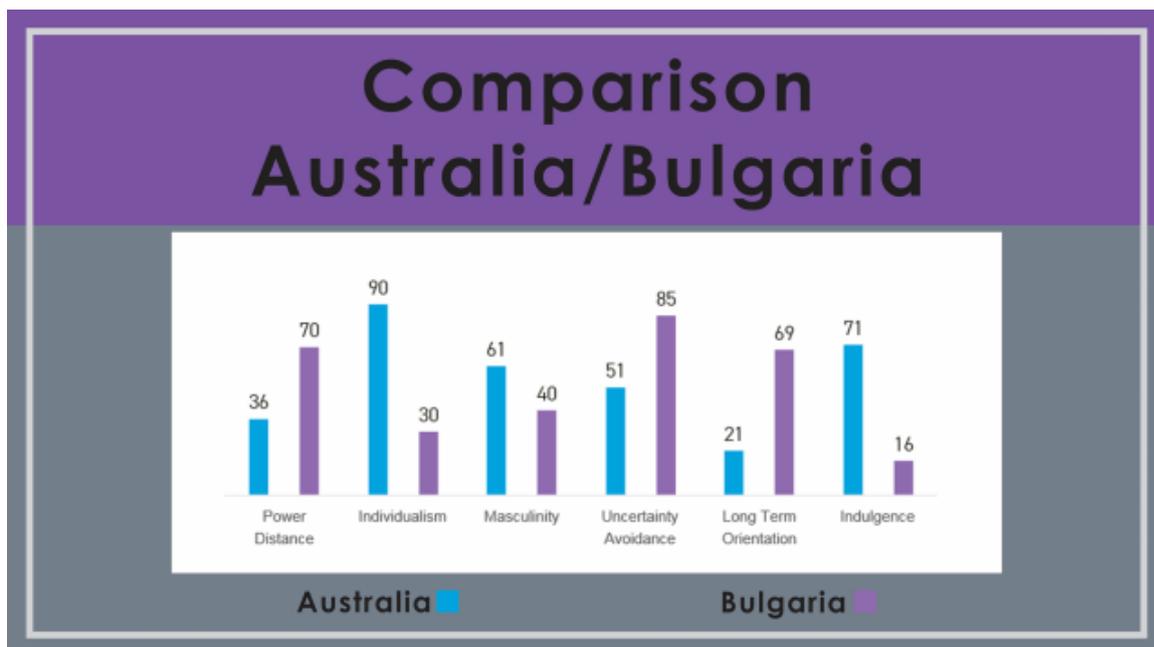
Appendix E*: Hugging Quilts and Volunteer's Medal

Appendix F: Level of Volunteer Participation

(ABS 2015; Eurobarometer Survey 2011; Ragonnaud, 2009)