

The Processual Nature of Volunteer Engagement: A Reconstruction of Career Patterns Based on the Narratives of Interviewees Involved in Non-Profit Activities

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Abstract: The article is intended to reconstruct the career stages of volunteers. As a result of the biographical data analysis, three stages of the volunteering career were outlined: preparation, institutionalization, and, potentially, professionalization. The conditions and contexts of their occurrence were also reconstructed.

Secondly, the patterns of volunteering careers were described, namely, the 'structured action scheme' with its 'axiological' and 'pragmatic' variants; a 'post-trajectory' pattern, and the pattern of 'mature participation' and 'biographical metamorphosis'.

In this qualitative sociological study, transcriptions of narrative biographical interviews were analyzed. The procedures of the classic version of the grounded theory methodology were applied. Some concepts developed by Fritz Schütze in the field of the biographical analysis were also used.

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Introduction

This article was inspired by a collection of narrative interviews conducted in 2018/2019 and 2020 by sociology students from the University of Lodz as part of exercises in qualitative research methodology. Time and organizational constraints resulting from the educational cycle influenced the choice of the research topic covered within one semester. It was agreed that volunteers would be interviewed by sociology students¹. This particular topic was selected due to the social significance of non-profit activities, especially against the backdrop of the dominant neoliberal philosophy and subsequent policies. In addition, there was a pragmatic reason behind this choice, namely the relatively large number of individuals involved in this type of activity. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), in 2016, '8.5% of the population, i.e. about 2.6 million people aged 15 and over, engaged in organized volunteer services' (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2017: 21–22). If we add unpaid activities related to participation (including in helping activities) in various forms of Scouting, which was not included in the GUS study, the number of people involved in non-profit – voluntary activities could be significantly higher².

Definitions, research problem, method of analysis, and data

The research studied the process of becoming a volunteer, including long-term commitment, continuing one's own activities as well as suspending volunteer work or withdrawing from it. Therefore, the study was aimed at **reconstructing career stages**. The essence of such a career is the provision of unpaid services for the benefit of other people, institutions, and organizations. We apply the definition of a career as provided by symbolic interactionism, namely: 'a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him' (Hughes, 1964: 63; see also Goffman, 1961; Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Prus, Sharper, 1977; Prus, Grills, 2003; Dymarczyk, 2008; 2018).

1 The participants of the seminar comprised: Inga Białek, Zuzanna Bocheńska, Agata Bociek, Ewa Burzyńska, Natalia Derewicz, Aleksandra Drączyk, Agnieszka Duda, Maria Dudka, Karolina Góralska, Aleksandra Górka, Milena Karlińska, Zuzanna Kaźmierczak, Izabela Kiszelewska, Patrycja Kluszczynska, Alicja Kochanowska, Karolina Konieczna, Nikola Kosińska, Maja Kowalczyk, Aleksandra Kwiatkowska, Aleksandra Lechowska, Magdalena Lisowska, Iza Liwińska, Joanna Lota, Michał Malina, Maciej Maślakiewicz, Maksymilian Michalczuk, Monika Okrasa, Tomasz Pańczyk, Patrycja Pązik, Martyna Pentela, Arkadiusz Piwnik, Piotr Przywojski, Kacper Ragan, Milena Salamon, Emilia Sawicka, Klaudia Siekiera, Paulina Skiera, Aleksandra Słupecka, Natalia Stasiak, Oliwia Stasiak, Karolina Szczepanik, Justyna Szewczyk, Agnieszka Szwaja, Paulina Tarnowska, Krystian Tomczyński, Natalia Walasik, Matylda Walendzik, Bartłomiej Wiśniewski, Julia Zając.

2 According to the largest Scouting organization in Poland, the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego, ZHP), the number of Scouts of various ranks exceeded 104,000 in 2019 (Harcerski Instytut Badawczy, 2019). The second-largest Scouting organization in the country, the Scouting Association of the Republic (Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej, ZHR), had over 16,000 members in 2015 (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zwi%C4%85zek_Harcerstwa_Rzeczypospolitej). Scouts active in minor organizations and associations should be added to this figure. For the purpose of this study, Scouts, especially those performing various organizational functions, are recognized as full-fledged volunteers.

Volunteering is understood here (it is a working definition verified during interviews) as any activity in which time (and labor) is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause. Volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance, but narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends. (Wilson, 2000: 215).

It is noteworthy that this study does not cover cases of occasional participation in helping activities such as the popular nationwide charity campaign The Grand Orchestra of Christmas Charity (pol. *Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy*) or World Cleanup Days, which are, in fact, compulsory in many schools. At least relatively systematic and voluntary involvement in unpaid work for the benefit of others is an important inclusion criteria.

Given such a definition of the research problem, namely the reconstruction of career stages of volunteers, the autobiographical narrative interview was selected as the most suitable tool among the available data collection methods. The main objective was to obtain detailed multilayer narratives about an individual's experiences and feelings interwoven in a personal biography (Schatzman, Strauss, 1966; Schütze, 1983; 1990; Wengraf, 2001; Rosenthal, 2004; 2006; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020). The interview scenario followed the recommendations of Harry Hermanns (1987) and consisted of five consecutive phases: a) the introduction to the interview situation and building mutual trust (*starting-phase*); b) the phase of stimulating a narration, which consists in explaining the type of narration that the interviewer is interested in, i.e. a narration that recounts **personal** experiences and describes situations related to embarking on and continuing volunteering; the narrative should also refer to the role of other people and contexts that have had an impact on the type of activity that our interlocutor is involved in; c) the phase of an extempore and uninterrupted narrative (*the phase of main-story*); d) the phase of asking questions of a complementary, clarifying, and in-depth nature (*additional inquiry*); and e) the 'normalization' and 'back-to-normal' phase (*ending-phase*).

In total, 43 interviews were conducted. The interviewees differed in terms of their demographic characteristics, family situation, occupation, social position, and, obviously, the number of years in volunteering. Thus, the youngest interviewees were students entering adulthood, while the oldest narrators were retirees whose adult children, if they had any, had already left their family of origin. Some had been active in community service for only a dozen months, while others had been active for many years. In many cases, as will be discussed below, it is difficult to identify a clear point in time when voluntary work started. It also happened that these activities were carried out with varying degrees of intensity, and sometimes they were even discontinued for longer periods. The majority of interviewees were women (30) who constituted 2/3 of all the narrators. As regards age composition, young people under 25 (19 interviewees) represented the most numerous group, followed by individuals over 40 (12 narrators), including 4 interviewees over 50. Eleven interviewees were in the age range of 25–40. The majority of interviewees (over 60%) lived in large cities with a population of over 500,000, while some of them resided in towns and villages. The absolute majority of the narrators came from the Lodz macro-region (in Central Poland), which is a certain limitation in terms of extrapolating conclusions about careers of Polish volunteers (see Chapter Discussion and Limitations as well as the Appendix with detailed characteristics of the research participants).

The transcribed interviews were analyzed in line with the methodology of grounded theory (GT) (Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, Corbin, 1994; 1998; Konecki, 2000). However, there was a significant limitation related to systematic data collection, as the project was implemented under time constraints, and all the data was collected during the same time frame. Moreover, some of the analytical schemes and concepts proposed by Fritz Schütze (1983; 1990; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020) were applied. As already mentioned, the main emphasis was on the reconstruction of the **process** of becoming a volunteer, including practicing, taking on certain roles and tasks, and, finally, mature participation in volunteering. In line with the GT rules, this process was depicted as rooted in observed contextual conditions, with particular emphasis on the actions and interactions undertaken by social actors in the subsequent stages of their volunteering career. Such an approach is, by the way, fully in line with the methodological assumptions of symbolic interactionism, from which grounded theory originates. Thus, if we were to cite Herbert Blumer, 'Action is traced back to such matters as motives, attitudes, need-dispositions, unconscious complexes, stimuli configurations, status demands, role requirements, and situational demands' (Blumer, 1969: 15).

It is noteworthy that the majority of available research/analyses focuses on identifying the motives for involvement in volunteering. The functional approach prevails, i.e. focusing on the needs of volunteers that are satisfied by involving in helping others. Perhaps the most frequent inspiration and starting point for many subsequent studies is the VFI (Volunteer Functions Inventory) typology by Gil E. Clary, Mark Snyder (1991; Clary et al., 1998)³. The same is true for Poland. So far, Polish researchers have focused on pinpointing the motives and situations leading actors to engage in volunteering. At the same time, the processual nature of this activity is missing. This study aims to fill the gap by identifying, describing, and explaining the stages of becoming a volunteer.

Career stages

The first stage of a career

The identification of the first stage of a volunteering career poses several problems. It was not uncommon for the interviewees to have difficulties identifying the 'turning point' as well as clearly identifying the moment in time when unpaid helping activities 'really' started. This is usually a long biographically-entrenched and highly contextualized process involving actors themselves as well as 'significant others'.

3 Gil E. Clary et al. (1998) identify 6 types of volunteers' motivations, namely (a) values function, i.e. the person is volunteering in order to express or act on important values, such as humanitarianism and helping the less fortunate; (b) understanding function, i.e. the volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world and/or exercise skills that are often unused; (c) enhancement function, i.e. the individual is seeking to grow and develop psychologically through involvement in volunteering; (d) career function, i.e. the volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering; (e) social function, i.e. volunteering allows the person to strengthen one's social relationships; (f) protective function, i.e. the individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.

Thus, the so-called **preparatory stage** was rarely equivalent to the onset of **systematic** voluntary activities. It was usually closely linked to **upbringing** and **socialization** in the family of origin. The narrators mention a family tradition of helping others and a prevailing the 'spirit' of helpfulness:

I 14 (26, F): I don't want to give up on it [volunteering] because this is in my heart, this is how I was brought up from an early age, me and my siblings. That you have to be with people, you have to help, you have to show an interest in others.

I 15 (23, F): Why did I become a volunteer? I learnt this at home; in my family helping others is as natural as breathing [...]. My mum, by the way, established a foundation that helps women with cancer and their families. And I believe that helping others has always been part of me.

I 23 (? , F) I've been involved with the Me and My Home foundation for as long as I can remember because my mother is the vice-president of it; she also runs a family-type children's home [...] it's part of my life.

I 30 (> 45, M) It's in my blood; I have it in my blood. My dad and my brother have always been involved in activities for the benefit of our town. They've always been inventing things, organising things; that was the spirit at home and that's how we lived. Celebrations, anniversaries, parcels for the elderly, for the poor, for veterans.

Parents, siblings, and closest relatives are the so-called significant others (Mead, 1934), who play a huge role in shaping an individual's attitudes, hierarchy of values, and behavior patterns during primary socialization. It is therefore not surprising that the passions and activities of mentors are shared by their followers early in life. By the way, volunteering is not the only 'hereditary activity' that is transmitted from one generation to another. The interviewees often indicate the moment when they encountered altruistic attitudes and behaviors using the word '**always**', which, of course, refers directly to the impact of one's closest relatives. It is noteworthy that statements such as 'this is in my heart', 'I've always been like that', 'it's in my blood', 'I have it in my blood' indicate a profound internalization of values. Not only were these values expressed at a declarative level but – as we can see – they were implemented by the caregivers whose dependants were raised in the spirit of helping others and for the benefit of others. It is also noteworthy that the child in the process of primary socialization 'does not internalize the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalizes it as the world, the only existent and only conceivable world, the world *tout court*. It is for this reason that the world internalized in primary socialization is so much more firmly entrenched in consciousness than worlds internalized in secondary socializations' (Berger, Luckmann, 1967: 154).

The interviewees also point to the role of their school environment: teachers, tutors, catechists, members of Scouting organizations, representatives of volunteer associations cooperating with their school, as well as peers:

I 4 (20, F): I guess my adventure with voluntary work started back in primary school. I joined the Scouts. It was in the fifth or sixth grade [...] We used to have more or less regular events every half a year, events that were popular at the time [for the benefit of charity organizations – author’s note].

I 16 (21, M): I’ve been active in various religious networks [...] certainly since I was a child [...] [I]n such religious groups you have to do something and generally you want to do something.

I 20 (> 20, F): My adventure started back in primary school. I took part in a recitation competition. The librarian helped me during rehearsals. She came up with the idea that we would regularly go to different kindergartens and libraries to recite poems to younger children.

I 29 (> 30, F): So, I had my first volunteer experience in middle school, when my friend and I went [...] I mean, she used to go to a stable where a woman rescued horses from a slaughterhouse. [...] So my friend took me there. We were about thirteen years old.

I 32 (> 25, F): I guess it all happened when people from PCK [Polish Red Cross] visited our school. I then decided I wanted to do it too, that it was worth it. And then I translated this into action. My teacher stood by my side, my tutor, who was actively involved in volunteering at school, and it was with her that I was involved in helping others.

Jane Piliavin (Piliavin, Callero, 1991; Piliavin, Grube, Callero, 2002), inspired by Albert Bandura’s (1977) theory of social learning, states that altruistic attitudes and behaviors and the resulting actions are formed in particular under the influence of modeling of parents who **practice** volunteer work, which is further **fostered** by school volunteering. This combination, in the case of young individuals subjected to this influence, usually results in the formation of an altruistic self. The self does not evolve as a separate physiological or psychological entity, but as a social construct, a derivative of social interaction (see Mead, 1934).

The analysis of the narratives shows that the clearly articulated (familial and social) origins of acting for the benefit of others are in some instances juxtaposed with the notion of a ‘personal character’ (also referred to as ‘disposition’, ‘nature’, or ‘temperament’) as a motive and precondition for an interest in volunteering:

I 1 (21, F): I think that in my case [volunteering – author’s note] mainly has to do with my character, my disposition and my sensitivity. The kind of person I am. Ever since I can remember, I’ve been responsive to the suffering of others, to inequality and injustice in the world, and I’ve always wanted to help children who were lagging behind in kindergarten.

I 3 (30, F): It seems to me that this need to act with an idea in your mind, to act for the sake of something, for the benefit of others, to contribute to the world, has always been typical of me [...]

because I'm such an energetic person, full of positive energy, which I was wasting while sitting at work, as it seemed to me.

I 22 (19, F): I've always wanted to experience new things, to do something new. Why? This is simply the way I am. This is in my nature, in my temperament.

Some researchers and theorists argue that there exists a pro-social personality or an altruistic personality (Allen, Rushton, 1983; Oliner, Oliner, 1988). For example, with reference to the so-called Big Five model by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1999)⁴, altruism can be associated with extraversion, emotional stability, and agreeableness (Batson, 1991; Bekkers, 2004; Tait, Whiteman, 2009)⁵. In turn, Louis A. Penner (2004) believes that volunteering can be associated with empathic ability, self-efficacy, inner locus of control, strong morality, and a positive self-image.

It is not my intention to decide whether innate predispositions to take altruistic actions are inborn or not. Some interviewees claim that their involvement in volunteering is rooted in their 'temperament' or 'nature'. Others, in turn, having initially hinted that they have traits conducive to such activities, thematize and problematize this issue in further parts of the interview, which is often the case in autobiographical narrative interviews⁶. This happens because the interviewee has enough time to reflect on the events, situations, conditions, emotions, and actions that comprise their biography. For example, one of the interviewees (I 28) stated that 'volunteering has always been part of who I am', only to remark a few minutes later that 'if a person becomes a volunteer, they are usually drawn into it'. Finally, he built a synthetic conclusion, saying: 'Empathy, openness, sensitivity [...] that's one thing, that's the basis [...] and courage, which you acquire with time, later on'. We can see **work** (initiated by 'others') performed by the narrator, on the one hand, in order to meet the expectations of presenting all the motives and situations that made him a volunteer, while, on the other hand, he probably felt the need to share a story that would not be contradictory or incomprehensible. This is actually a good example of one of the three narrative compulsions, namely the compulsion to construct a coherent gestalt *Gestaltschließungszwang* (Kallmeyer, Schütze, 1977: 188). In short, if an interviewee introduces a given plot or plots (life events, persons, inner experiences, etc.), they try to present them in a coherent and logical way. In our case, it is about combining the **sense** of having specific personal traits with the **experience** of being influenced by others when it comes to being engaged in a particular activity. By the way, interviewees often point to a combination of several motives for volunteering, as will be discussed below.

4 In the Big Five model, the structure of personality consists of the following dimensions: (a) extraversion (vs introversion); (b) emotional stability (vs neuroticism); (c) openness to experience; (d) agreeableness (vs antagonism); and (e) conscientiousness (vs misdirection).

5 Personality traits such as a strong self-image, self-efficacy, an inner locus of control, and low need of appraisal as well as high value attached to moral norms such as a sense of responsibility and low desire for free riding have also been shown to be conducive to voluntary help (Piliavin, Charng, 1990; see Haski-Leventhal, 2009: 278).

6 In the case of a narrative, interviewees 'recount their experiences, indicating time and place, citing interactions or sequences of interactions that contain problematic issues (otherwise there would be nothing to talk about), ways of dealing with or resolving them and an evaluation of what happened' (Waniek, 2019: 139, after Helling, 1990).

Another motive that can turn into the first stage of a career in volunteering is the experience of trajectory⁷. Two types (subcategories) of such experiences can be distinguished. The first type of trajectory may result from the experience of one's own illness or dysfunction. The second type of trajectory is characterized by high intensity and dynamics, and can be related to the loss of someone close to the interviewee. Such an experience can bear the signs of trauma.

Let us look at the accounts illustrative of the first (I 10, I 12) and second (I 2, I 37) types of trajectory:

I 10 (20, F): I was undergoing chemotherapy in a hospital. During one of my early visits, a volunteer from Gajusz [a foundation – translator's note] appeared, and she organised jewellery-making workshops. And I liked them, because it allowed me to break away from the in-patient reality [...] I was both a participant and a mentee [...] I helped to organise workshops [...], and then I left the hospital and became a volunteer for good. [...] I want to use my story to help others. I've experienced a lot and I know what others may be going through.

I 12 (35, F): Why did I become a volunteer? I mean, first of all probably because I suffer from three diseases [diabetes, chronic stress, multiple sclerosis – researcher's note]. I am slowly turning into a cripple. But I decided not to give up. [...] I started to like it more and more. I like what I do. I'm happy I can be of use to someone else. I'm not only a cripple who sits at home and is good for nothing.

I 2 (31, M): We lived in a small town near Warsaw. In a small house, with my parents and my twin [brother]. Yes, a twin. I don't know whether it's possible to describe it, this state or feeling of attachment. As monozygotic twins we were almost identical. [...] It was as if we were one person. [...] That day is still fresh in my memory: it was the 14th of July. I hate that date to this day. It was then that Marcel started to have problems: he started to pass out; he became pale. In the evening he fainted and wouldn't wake up. An ambulance, a hospital and the verdict. Acute lymphocytic leukaemia. [...] I was fourteen years old, and my whole world fell apart. Marcel was dying, and I was wandering around the world alone. When Marcel passed away, I lost half of myself. [...] At university I met my friend Artur. An incredible go-getter who introduced me to a slightly crazy world. During my final year Artur was in a car accident. It was a shock to me, because he was a very close person to me, and I couldn't swallow another loss. Fortunately, the accident turned out to be 'bearable'. After lengthy rehabilitation Artur would come back to life. I was helping him for a long time. I was simply helping him. It was a turning point for me, as I could help someone for the first time in thirteen years in a way that would save them. [...] I felt so needed and important. [...] During that time, I met a lot of people at the rehabilitation center

7 In a broad sense, trajectory means a temporally extended experience of a given state, event, or phenomenon by a social actor. This experience is characterized by the occurrence of successive stages, i.e. it is of a processual nature (e.g. the trajectory of an illness). The narrator reflects on the reasons for a given state or phenomenon, its changes and consequences, as well as actions and interactions related to it (Glaser, Strauss, 1968; 1970). In a more narrow sense, we are dealing with biographical trajectory (Riemann, Schütze, 1991; Schütze, Riemann, 1992; Schütze, 1997). In this case, it means a process of disorder and loss of control of one's own life, which affects the identity and biography of the social actor (see also Kacperczyk, 2012).

[...] [O]ther volunteers saw potential in me, and so I joined them. [...] I just feel that I am doing something good, that I am needed, that someone is waiting for me and needs me. [...] I think that by helping others, somewhere inside me, I feel like I am helping my brother. Of course, I came to terms with the loss long ago, but as you can see, some part of me still thinks about him.

I 37 (20, F): The reason I decided to get involved and stayed involved was my late friend Sara. [...] When I was in a bit of a crisis, because I was about to graduate, I wanted to dedicate 100% of my time to my school, and I wanted to leave volunteering, but something happened that prevented me from doing it. On 25 April, Sara had an accident with her uncle on a motorbike. They were delivering invitations for her eighteenth birthday party, which was to be on Saturday [...] Unfortunately, Sara didn't survive.

Illness trajectories or traumas resulting from the loss of a loved one are borderline situations. The individual loses a sense of control over their own life, or even faith in the sense of a future existence. In such circumstances, volunteering may prove to be salutary. For example, Doug Oman and co-authors notes that 'the altruistic features of volunteerism might reduce destructive levels of self-absorption' (Oman, Thoresen, McMahon, 1999: 303), one's focus on one's own frailty and suffering. Previous social isolation, 'the sense of not having anyone who is someone to you and not being someone to anyone' (Mirowsky, Ross, 1989: 141), is lifted by, among other things, 'the quantity of social ties and relationships' (House, Landis, Umberson, 1988: 302). Let us add that not only the quantity but also the quality of these relationships is of paramount importance here. Thus, volunteering restores a sense of control over one's own life and the surrounding reality, and significantly lowers depression (Mirowsky, Ross, 1990). Acting for the benefit of others is also sometimes seen as the fulfillment of the will of a person who passed away. Such an understanding of one's mission obviously fulfills a protective function by setting a goal and providing meaning to the individual's further existence. Volunteering is in this case a form of (self-)therapeutic activity.

Most of the above motives (and resulting actions) fall into the broad category of '**because**' motives. Alferd Schutz, the founder of this concept, argued that the reasons for certain actions cannot be identified in the immediate past. For example, certain motives are rooted in the period of early socialization or refer to past events (e.g. loss of a loved one) that left their imprint on a person. The second type of a motive distinguished by Schutz is the '**in-order-to**' motive. It transpires at the stage of planning an action and refers to the objective, the state that an individual wants to achieve through this action (Schütz, 1962: 21–22, 69–72; 1967; 1970: 48–50). The 'in-order-to' motive has to do with a **career plan**, understood here as a deliberate and pre-planned sequence of decisions and actions undertaken in order to achieve a desired social, professional, economic position and/or desired (envisaged) state of well-being:

I 21 (22, F): At my Institute of Psychology [...] there are a lot of such initiatives [...] there was a poster, and my friend and I contacted them. [...] I went there because [...] everyone says volunteer work, uhm [...] because they want to help and so on. And I joined it mainly to get some experience and to see what it's like in a mental hospital [...] and it wasn't really about helping,

generally. [...] I don't know how to put it so that it doesn't sound stupid [...] I went there not because I had a strong need to help others. I just had this goal to gain some experience, practical experience [...] These were mostly psychology students.

I 18 (circa 40–45, F): It was mainly about enrolling in an internship for prospective certified teachers, which involved not only academic achievements but also extracurricular activities. Voluntary work fit in perfectly with my internship. [...] All these activities allow me to broaden my experience during my internship, and, above all, I'm fighting my laziness. [...] I also had an opportunity [during my voluntary work – author's note] to meet Jas, who suffers from a medical condition. After that, I came to the conclusion that some people are really suffering, and it might be worthwhile helping some people.

I 22 (19, F): Actually, volunteering combined most of the things I was interested in at the time, i.e. meeting people not only from Poland but also from abroad, contact with English. That's what I was looking for in volunteering, the opportunity to speak a foreign language. [...] To get to know each other, internationally, cross-culturally, to get to know our different needs, but also our cultures and our differences, to prevent wars. [...] I simply fell in love with this voluntary service. It simply turned out that this was what I was looking for.

It is noteworthy that such a motive can be translated into a 'because' motive, as it could be expressed, for example, in the following sentence: 'the interviewee became a volunteer because she wanted to expand her CV'. However, the opposite situation, i.e. translating an 'in-order-to' motive into a 'because' motive, is rather unthinkable. The above distinction between a 'because' motive and an 'in-order-to' motive is a certain approximation/simplification, since, as mentioned above, becoming a volunteer is a **process** in which certain motives and accompanying actions are rooted in socialization and unique biographical experiences, and at the same time imply career plans – plans that are born in the course of action and interaction with other social actors.

The distinction based on a noticeable criterion, although as vague as the previous one, is that of the actor (narrator). Namely, one should distinguish between two categories: the '**egocentric' project of the self** (focus on oneself, personal feelings, emotions, and desires) and the '**community' project with a focus on 'us'** (focus on the community – community motivations, goals, and actions). For example, one of the interviewees (I 3), who, as she says, is 'single, so it's like there's nothing important holding me back like a family', decided to look for 'something for herself'. Having undertaken voluntary work teaching children in Cambodia and Laos, she states: 'this is the kind of place that is like healing for your soul [...] [I]t is a health resort for the soul, that's how I see it'. The following are quotes from similar 'egocentric' projects of the self:

I 15 (23, F): I think that being a volunteer teaches you a lot about life. [...] Suddenly, you become a superhero and, uhm, you're shocked by the way you can manage your time, because I study, I work and I'm also a volunteer and I manage to combine all this. [...] We change ourselves. It

seems to me that Magda [the narrator's name] from three years ago is a completely different Magda than now. And it's thanks to volunteering.

I 41 (34, M): You can appreciate how much volunteering has given and continues to give you only in retrospect. It's worth experiencing, watching how you change, how it affects your senses, feelings and the way you see things. It's trivial, but the greatest benefit for you is the broadening of your horizons, constant development and training, self-improvement in various fields.

On the other hand, the 'community' project with a focus on 'us' can be exemplified by the statements below:

I 16 (21, M): I believe you have to share the skills you have [...] [T]his is also an activity, a finishing line, creating a social network [underlined by the author] that does something useful, right? We said, okay, we're starting an association and we set up a Youth Action Group. [...] My volunteering – it's not, it's not only about my activity [...] [I]t's not based only on the fact that I'm doing something but that I also get involved, right?

I 25 (25, M): We have it written down, it has been agreed, and if there is any response we'll try to gather some volunteers later as an organised group. [...] We are part of a community as people from 'Czarnów'. And this activity for the benefit of the community is, in fact, the basis for the survival of our society as a group. And I always wanted to follow such, uhm, values shared by different tribes or some indigenous communities. I believe that if there were none of us, we would all disappear.

The above quotes indicate, among other things, the use of the first-person pronouns 'I' and 'we', i.e. the individualistic versus group perspectives. It is especially noteworthy that these perspectives can be traced throughout the **whole narrative**, i.e. in the narrative units, suprasegmental parts (Kaźmierska, 1996; Schütze, 2012: 141–278; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020) – that is, in the **entire** narrative structure. It should also be clarified that the use of the terms 'egocentrism' and 'community' in inverted commas suggests that these are narrative **emphases**. Paradoxically, it constitutes a dialogical self in contrast to the earlier 'fixed' distinction between 'I' and 'we' (Hermans, Gieser, 2012; Hermans, 2016). In other words, the narrator conducts an internal discussion with 'significant others' – 'the voices of others'. However, the interviewee remains a reflective subject that expresses their own expectations and has plans, personal positive, and negative emotions and experiences.

The second stage of a career

The next stage of a volunteer's career essentially comprises different forms of **established habits** and the **institutionalization** of activities. From the perspective of a social actor, this usually constitutes the assumption of formal (and informal but meaningful) roles and functions within voluntary organizations:

I 14 (25, F): I met a girl called Marlena at Szlachetna Paczka [Noble Gift, a charity organization for the poor]. [...] Marlena asked me over to their [company] for a coffee. I showed up and became friends with them. [...] And in May I started working there on a permanent basis. [...] First, they organised a bicycle rally, and since it was the first time they did this, everyone had different duties. They knew I had done a bit of volunteering, so they involved me. I wasn't even yet immersed in my work when the boss said, 'We're appointing you the head of volunteer work'. [...] **I had to** [author's emphasis] find volunteers; **I had to** [author's emphasis] allocate tasks so that everything was done properly. Only then did I understand how important it is to be responsible for other people.

I 16 (21, M): Okay, we're setting up an association. And we established a Youth Action Group. It had its own structure, based on a legal, hmm, legal framework, so we based it on the Associations Act, so we had possibilities to apply for grants, to obtain funds. [...] Well, all those procedures of setting up an association – it was something cool, because it also **disenchanted** [author's emphasis] all that, well, the early stage of the process of the establishment of an association. [...] I could see that, on the one hand, it's stupid, because it's very bureaucratic, something completely different from what an association is, that it is a living organism, living people, and you have to **register** [author's emphasis] it, just like some law. [...] It is so artificial, right? Very unnatural. [...] And it's inevitable, well, but it's also a cool experience, right?

I 31 (20, F): A few weeks ago I was elected to the board [of a voluntary organization] as an HR person, i.e. a person responsible for integration, for the board's contact with the section members, that sort of thing. [...] On top of that I'm also planning – I'm in charge of planning – an integration trip [...] **I have to** [author's emphasis] take care of all that logistical stuff too. All in all, this is what I do now, and **I have to** [author's emphasis] convene meetings.

I 42 (> 35, M): We organised these activities spontaneously. We would come up with jogging routes – for example, triathlon routes; then we would invite friends, acquaintances, their children and generally everyone. [...] And then we ran into a wall. Whenever a bigger event was to be organised, or something cyclical, it had to be formalised. Companies, sponsors – they wanted a partner. So it became a **necessity** [author's emphasis]. It was easier, because you could sign a sponsorship agreement, and it was easier to apply to various institutions and companies for funding. And that's how it kept spinning.

The sense of compulsion or necessity expressed by interviewees is a noticeable and common narrative thread. This compulsion might result from the fact that the actor's helping activities are entangled in the context of their professional work (I 14). It may also stem from the legal requirements related to the operation of non-profit organizations (I 16). All interviewees mention compulsion resulting from the **pragmatics** of organizing social campaigns, e.g. attracting sponsors, the logistics of undertaken activities, and the already-mentioned legal and institutional conditions. The interviewees are ambivalent about this. On the one hand, they accept this logic/pragmatics, while on the other, they

sometimes *implicitly* or *explicitly* regret having to subordinate the volunteer's romantic vision to the requirements of the system. It is noteworthy that one of the interviewees (I 16) sees positive sides of the institutionalization and formalization of activities. He states that his perception of volunteering has become '**disenchanted**' (here: due to the discovery of the rules governing the functioning of the world of volunteering). The concept of 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung der Welt*), coined by Max Weber, can be briefly described as a process in which the traditional world order with its traditional justifications and logic is subordinated to rationalization and formalization, which directly leads to the reification of social relations (Weber, 1988: 582–613). We are dealing with a similar process in the case of volunteering, where the spontaneous actions of 'living' actors are transformed into an integrated set of assigned social roles. As mentioned, saying goodbye to the romantic vision is often painful. According to the interviewees, however, it is necessary. Still, this sometimes contradicts the basic motives for engaging in helping activities. As one of the interviewees (I 43) put it, 'It wasn't that I so much wanted to, but I had to, adapt. [...] Am I not missing something? Is it not going against my better judgment? I don't know, I don't know. [...] I didn't want to manage; I wanted to help. Or should I come up with something new?' Let us note that this is free will (Cnaan, Handy, Wadsworth, 1996; Monroe, 1996; Hustinx, Cnaan, Handy, 2010), which is at the core of volunteering. If an actor perceives that there are more and more coercive situations in their current activities, they can, nevertheless, accept it. They can also withdraw or temporarily suspend their volunteer work (three interviewees did so). They can also change their organization.

An important **context** that influences the sense of institutional entanglement and coerciveness, or lack thereof, is the degree of the institutionalization of the organization itself, the scope/intensity of participation in helping activities, and the importance of volunteering compared with the actor's other activities:

I 3 (30, F): [For several years, the interviewee has been going from one project to another, in a semi-formal organizational mode, having no additional family or professional obligations.] I'm a person who's very curious about the world. I like travelling, and I did my best to combine both things, to be able to help in a distant place [Cambodia, Laos], to share my experience and knowledge.

I 8 (22, M): [The interviewee has been involved in organising assistance for sick children for several years.] It seems that [volunteering] is complementary to everyday life, that we study, work, develop ourselves, do something for ourselves. And volunteering makes us complete; we can give something to someone. [...] You also need to be able to separate your private life from your voluntary work, not to blur the boundaries. Although it is fantastic to help others, you also need to help yourself.

I 43 (34, M): [The interviewee acts as a legal aid coordinator for people mistreated by their employers.] Well, as a lawyer I have various responsibilities. There are many responsibilities related to my job, and there are plenty of them. [...] This, as you might say, *pro bono* activity of mine is an additional, well, and important activity. [...] I do not spare time and effort, because I think it

is important, but it does not define me completely. [...] I get involved in various issues, including side issues, which are also important, such as tourism. [...] However, you must also be reasonable and be at peace with yourself. The dog is wagging the tail, not the other way round. I don't feel any tension. That's it.

Age is also an important context (which should be analyzed together with the above-mentioned contexts). This context is characterized above all by the relevant roles and obligations resulting from participation in family and social life, consecutive stages of education, and professional activity. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the identity of a social actor is not a structure, but a process. It is constructed and negotiated with interaction partners and is constantly subject to changes (Strauss, 1959). The same applies to a career which is an inherent part of life in a society. At different stages of life an individual goes through the so-called turning points (Strauss, 1959; see also Shanahan, Macmillan, 2008). They are most often associated with successive status transitions – e.g. entering or graduating from university; changing one's place, nature, and position at work; getting married; having children; retiring or taking on new roles and tasks during a volunteering career. All these changes cause a revision of one's existing self-perception and trigger specific decisions, including decisions about the form, scope, and the very fact of participation in voluntary activities. Some examples are following:

I 7 (> 40, F) I'm wondering why [volunteering] didn't occur earlier, didn't start earlier, because I was limited by my everyday duties: family life, two children, maybe not the smallest ones, but still small [...] All the time there were these, let's call them, limitations – that is, this everyday life. When my girls – my daughters – grew up and left home, I could reorganize my life so that I had more spare time. [...] I surfed the Internet and found a place [for volunteer work].

I 15 (circa 25, F): I'd been nurturing the idea about volunteering for a very long time, since secondary school. I decided it was high time when I entered university because I manage my own time and I'm my own boss, so it's a perfect moment. [...] And now I'm equal to the task and can take on new roles and responsibilities.

The subsequent, third, stage, is directly related to the status transitions mentioned above, as well as the age, social roles, and motivations characteristic of an individual at a given stage of development.

The third stage of a career

The third stage of a career in volunteering **can** mean **professionalization** – the complete or partial conversion of a non-profit passion into a professional and paid activity:

I 5 (21, F): I've been an SYI, i.e. a social youth instructor, for about three years now, which is – it's a higher rank in volunteering. I like it and I want to get more involved in it, which is why I'm studying therapeutic pedagogy, so I think I want to continue helping, even if it's work. [...] Because it's already a job.

I 12 (35, F): My whole adventure with volunteering started in 2015. [...] I'm very happy I made this decision at the time. [...] Well, and now I even signed an agreement on volunteer work with the headmaster. [...] I've been studying oligophrenic pedagogy [extramurally], and I think that, when I graduate, I'll manage to get a permanent job here. Not only as a volunteer, but also for a living. [...] To get seniority before retirement. [...] I'd like to work as a teacher. I think that the years of experience have done their job and I'll succeed at it.

It is important to emphasise that professionalization is not the rule but only a **possible** career option. The same goes for institutionalization, as the essence of a voluntary action is 'a helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain or mandated or coerced by others' (Van Til, 1988: 6). Moreover, for many groups of volunteers, professionalization is not a desired or even acceptable option. For example, it is important for the elderly that, through their involvement in helping others, they can continue to feel needed, maintain relationships with others, and find their life meaningful. They can find comfort in new (non-occupational) roles and at the same time share their experience. Moreover, they can grow spiritually and fulfill moral obligations resulting from their faith and worldview (Witucki et al., 2011; Lubrańska, Zawira, 2017). On the other hand, in the case of young people, volunteering offers a possibility to acquire and test skills and competencies that have 'market value', are an asset in their search for employment, and are useful for their future careers (Williamson et al., 2015; Lubrańska, Zawira, 2017; Jardim, Marques da Silva, 2018).

An alternative or complement to professionalization is '**the broadening of the scope of activities**'. Long-term commitment, dedication of one's own energy and capital, and the institutionalization of activities may result in plans and actions to cover a wide (wider than earlier) range of beneficiaries with aid activities. The 'broadening of the scope' may simply mean taking an interest in new groups of stakeholders, but also establishing cooperation with other people and aid organizations:

I 9: (43, F) [a volunteer who has been president of the motorcyclists' association for four years] We – there are a dozen of us who are engaged, but we're also able to connect with local communities. [...] So, our twenty-year-olds – people in their twenties – participate in [other] activities.

I 32 (> 25, F): [a volunteer with several years of experience; she helps children] There are new initiatives and new [children's] camps ahead of me. I'm still active; it keeps spinning. I'm trying to expand these activities, to spread them and involve more and more people.

Career patterns

Professionalization, the 'broadening of the scope of activity', and even institutionalization are **possible** career options. Transition to a subsequent stage depends on the interplay between different circumstances and contexts. The career stages outlined above can be seen in a linear, orderly, and progressive way. It resembles the social development of almost every individual. Thus, at the beginning there is

a stage akin to the 'primary socialization of a volunteer' (which often accompanies primary socialization *sensu stricto*). Values and attitudes such as empathy, sensitivity, a sense of justice, altruistic attitude, etc. are acquired at this stage. It is also accompanied by the acquisition of competencies that are key for the effective performance of the role, e.g. the ability to cooperate, express emotions, define priorities, or manage one's time. The next stage is 'secondary socialization', which consists in locating oneself in a broader social context, assuming roles and performing tasks that require cooperation, negotiations, coordination, and sometimes group leadership. Finally, the third potential stage is that of 'professionalization', i.e. the competent and effective integration of volunteering into an 'overall plan for life and/or occupational career'. The career pattern described here can be defined as a '**structured action scheme**'. This pattern refers to two of the four biographical process structures described by Fritz Schütze (1981; 2012), namely institutional schedules for organizing biographies and biographical action schemes. The former refers to the orientation of an actor towards meeting normative social and institutional expectations, and largely reflects the temporal continuum: family (of origin) – school – work. The latter process structure refers to an individual, relatively autonomous action plan, i.e. the implementation of predefined life and professional goals by an individual with a focus on adequate means of their implementation.

A specific variant of the 'structured action scheme' is the '**pragmatic**' pattern, which is debatable from an axiological and normative point of view. It is usually pursued by young people: schoolchildren, university students, individuals at an early stage of their professional path (not necessarily related to volunteering). In this case, volunteering is treated as a springboard to a further career or simply exploring intriguing otherness. Paradoxically, such an approach can have a positive side of gaining experience in social worlds that may be absent or marginal at a later stage of life. It can enable the development of competencies that are useful in actors' further activities in many respects. As reported by one of the already-quoted interviewees:

I 21 (?; F): 'I don't know how to put it so that it doesn't sound stupid [...] I didn't go there because I really felt the need to help. I just had the goal of gaining some experience, some practical experience [...] These were mostly psychology students there. [...] This brought me down to earth, made me realize that such things really did exist, that such things happen. It was an abstraction [before].'

The second variant of the 'structured action scheme' is the '**axiological**' pattern, which is based on strong axiological foundations, resulting from the processes of upbringing and socialization in the spirit of helpfulness. Humanitarianism and empathy in their broad sense govern an actor's actions. These motives were discussed in the earlier part of this article. Still, it is noteworthy that 'value orientation' is perhaps the most frequently indicated motivation in most studies of Western societies (cf. Allison, Okun Morris, Dutridge, 2002; Kim, Zhang, Connaughton, 2010; Brayley et al., 2014; Güntert, Neufeind, Wehner, 2015; Stelzer, Lang, 2016), including Poland (Buttler, 2018). The axiological variant fits into the 'structured action scheme' in the sense that the surrounding in which volunteers are raised and socialized exerts an overwhelming influence on their motives for action, their current decisions, and career plans.

Another reconstructed pattern can be labeled the **'post-trajectory'**. This is built in the aftermath of trauma, usually as a result of the loss of a loved one or the experience of one's own illness or dysfunction. In this case, the stage of primary volunteer socialization is not a necessary precondition for an actor to engage in activities for the benefit of others. Altruism (and sublimation) as a defence mechanism has in this case a therapeutic effect, as it makes it possible to alleviate negative emotions and feelings (Freud, 1948; see also Mirowsky, Ross, 1989; 1990; Schütze, 1997; Oman, Thoresen, McMahon, 1999). In this case, the actor may decide to 'broaden the field of activity' or embark on professionalization, but they may also feel satisfied with acting on a limited scale, as close contact with a small number of people can also bring relief from suffering and significantly reduce the feeling of isolation. Therefore, the 'post-trajectory' pattern mainly refers to a situation where, following an initial crisis, the individual takes action that allows them to return to their social life and to find meaning in their life, which in this case consists of helping disadvantaged others. In this sense, this pattern is a certain extension (but not an invalidation) of the biographical trajectory concept by Fritz Schütze in which not only past, but also present, biographical events are usually characterized by a loss of control over the course of one's life.

The pattern of **'mature participation'** can also be identified based on the gathered data. This term is reserved for activities undertaken by adults aged 40 or more (and/or who often have a long history of helping activities), who have a family and who enjoy financial stability (which does not necessarily mean that they are wealthy). These volunteers, above all, devote their spare time to such activities. In volunteering, they establish lasting social relations, participation, and reference groups, where they meet similar people, get support and the feeling of belonging; they feel that they are needed. There is a wealth of literature on this subject that describes both motives for such activities and the benefits of 'mature participation' in volunteering (e.g. Angus, Reeve, 2006; Brown et al., 2011; Lubranska, Zawira, 2017; Aranda, Zappalà, Topa, 2019). At the same time, the author of this article feels that there is a lack of sufficient data collected in the study from mature volunteers, which will be commented on in more detail in the section devoted to limitations and discussion.

The last of the reconstructed patterns is the one based on **'biographical metamorphoses'** concept (Schütze, 1981; 2012). It has not been explicitly described to date. This metamorphosis is most often triggered by a positive experience that changes the actor's previous self-perception: the position they hold, the roles they play and are capable of, and the opportunities and challenges they face. It is also an example of secondary socialization and the way social interaction, or, in fact, a sequence of interactions, can imply positive change. A good exemplification of the 'biographical metamorphosis' is provided by one of the interviewees (aged 45), who recalled two situations that changed her perception of herself and influenced the further course of her life and professional career when she was young and just embarking on her career. At the same time, these statements emphasize the role of significant others who are important interaction partners:

I 19 (45, F): I was born into a family of modest means, so my parents couldn't afford to buy me a [Scout] uniform. And I went to the Scout assembly, and a Scout troop from Lodz was supposed to come. We are from the countryside. As you know, when the 'Tigers' from Lodz arrive, they are

dressed up from head to toe. They have beautiful uniforms and everything. And I had an ordinary apron. [...] We were still missing one more Girl Scout. We were waiting for her; we were waiting, and she was riding a bike, just like you do in the countryside. She was from a very poor family. She didn't have a uniform. And I remember something that stuck in my mind, that she got off the bike – everybody was laughing at her – and she got off the bike and said, 'What are you looking at? A dress is a dress.' And I saw how proud our patrol leader was. He was so proud. He was extremely proud that she was such a proud Girl Scout. It was my patrol leader who saw the potential in his Scouts. In everyone. [...] Everyone made something of themselves. [...] He made us sensitive to other people – the lonely, the elderly. [...] And I took this lesson on board. [...] The Scout leader was my tutor and saw potential in me. He always encouraged me to do more.

Among other things, the interviewee became involved in the Scouting movement under the influence of a positive experience that boosted her self-esteem. Consequently, she moved out and pursued her professional career as a teacher and a Scout. With time, her activities became the norm and routine, before another stimulus emerged:

I 19 (cont.): The headmistress of the school [in the place where the interviewee lives] came across an article in the newspaper that [said that] I took care of children. She says the following: 'How come? Marzenka, you're working with children in Lodz, but what about children in our school?' This had an impact on me. It was a positive stimulus for me, an unremarkable person, who's always on the sidelines. The headmistress herself came to see me personally, because she saw that I was working with other children. [...] And she suggested that she would very much like our Scout group to be re-formed at our school like a phoenix rising from the ashes. [...] I put myself to the task, although I was very hesitant. [...] The [Scout] team is operational. [...] The whole pack. I am the mum of this pack. The foster mum. [...] It gives me hope and meaning.

Similar to other career patterns, metamorphosis is a process. This is evident, for example, in the two narrative sequences referring to different stages of the biography presented above (including turning points and/or dilemmas, omitted here explicitly, as they are less profound and require a wider context for discussion). The issue of processuality will also be discussed in more detail in the final section below.

Discussion and limitations

To begin with, let me stress that career patterns introduced above serve as Weberian ideal types meant to classify and explain social phenomena. In reality, different combinations of patterns reconstructed through research can occur and do occur. For example, a positive transformation may follow the experience of trauma, but may also be a consequence of effective early socialization, which may turn into *pro bono* activities. It is also possible to review a pragmatic career option developed under extraordinary circumstances. Besides, people who pursue the 'mature participation' pattern draw on

previous experiences, namely the socialization they have undergone and the unique experiences and interactions they have had during their lifetime and participation in different social worlds. Thus, these patterns should be considered as theoretical typifications. On the other hand, narratives are not free-flowing impressions. The way in which the social actor constructs a narrative is the result of their perception of **their own life** career. It is a narrative that has been worked through, or at least filtered through, a unique combination of breakthrough and less decisive life events. It is a reflexive journey through one's own biography, against the backdrop of contexts, conditions and circumstances, and the consequences of taken (or abandoned) actions. Described and **pursued** careers are also, as noted earlier, a **process**. The reconstruction of these processes is not easy. Sometimes, reconstruction is visible due to the process dynamics, as in the case of the 'post-trajectory' pattern. At other times, it requires looking at the 'overall biographical process', as in the case of 'structured action schemes'. It is important to bear in mind that interviewees are subject to narrative compulsions such as the requirement to condense (*Zugzwang zur Kondensierung*), which means that the narrator has to limit themselves to narrating the most important events that allow the listener to know and understand the most significant stages of their career/life. Secondly, there is the requirement to provide detail (*Zugzwang zur Detaillierung*), since only then is the narrative credible and comprehensible, both for the listener and the narrator themselves. Thirdly, there is the requirement to close (*Zugzwang zur Gestaltschließung*), which, in turn, means that if the narrator has introduced a certain thread to their story, e.g. certain events, people involved in them, and the states and emotions accompanying the event, they will strive to present this thread in a coherent and logical manner (Schütze, 1983; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020: 77). Thus, different narratives in terms of their content can be formally similar and comparable. Also, owing to the grounded theory procedures, it is possible to abstract large categories and their properties and conditions that are applicable to the understanding and analysis of the presented stories.

The stories and derived patterns of volunteer careers presented in this article have their own important limitations in terms of their representation and saturation with (possible) content. Firstly, it should be remembered that, although representativeness is not a requirement in a qualitative study, young people, often peers of the students who carried out this project in the field phase, were over-represented. Although they are the majority of people involved in helping activities in Poland, the scarcity of stories told by experienced people of mature age was clearly noticeable. It most certainly influenced the content of this report.

Secondly, another caveat directly related to the previous one is the fact that the interviewees tended to be people with considerable cultural capital (they were eloquent and willing to talk, etc.) It is also noteworthy that the interviewees were acquaintances or distant relatives of the students participating in the research project. Thus, they are (mostly) representatives of privileged milieus/groups. Meanwhile, in Poland, many voluntary activities are organized e.g. in parishes or neighborhoods, which is not always perceived as volunteering, although it is, in fact, volunteer work. In addition, many students from the University of Lodz come from nearby smaller towns, which are a natural source of human resources for the Lodz agglomeration. Therefore, these students have natural ties with the local and traditional communities they come from. Many volunteers are active within these communities.

Thirdly, the requirement of systematic data acquisition in line with the methodology of grounded theory was respected to a limited extent. In most cases, the interviews were collected during the one semester in which the classes were conducted. Truth be told, the first interviews were analyzed immediately, and suggestions regarding the subsequent interviews were followed by other students. Still, we as seminar participants were aware of the limitations of control over data acquisition, especially theoretical sampling. This control was non-existent in the case of late data acquisition.

There were also geographical limitations. As mentioned above, the students carrying out the project represented their local environments (the Lodz region, central Poland). Therefore, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole country. Although Poland is a relatively homogeneous country in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, the term 'Polish volunteers' should be used with caution.

Conclusions

This study succeeded in reconstructing the characteristic stages of a volunteering career, especially those that are part of the 'structured action scheme'. At the same time, it is not unusual for the institutionalization and professionalization of activities to be observed among volunteers who became active under the influence of trauma or in adulthood. In these cases, too, the early socialization phase, which is not always explicit, consisted of growing up in an environment where empathy, helpfulness, and altruism were valued. The processual approach to volunteering made it possible to present this activity in a broad biographical context. Such an approach enabled the analysis of conditions, contexts, and consequences of decisions and actions taken by social actors.

Based on a detailed analysis of the narratives, i.e. 'ideal types', concepts of volunteering activity were outlined. These models include the 'structured action scheme' with its 'axiological' and 'pragmatic' variants; a 'post-trajectory' pattern; the pattern of 'mature participation'; and 'biographical metamorphosis'. None of the types is autonomous and devoid of contexts and conditions. Each is the result of a process of 'becoming a volunteer', a biographical sequence of experiences, choices, and decisions, and, above all, of interactions with others. Others include close ones who act as 'significant others', but also those who are more distant but who create the 'social world' of a social actor-volunteer.

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Appendix

Characteristics of the participants of the research

No.	Age, Sex	Engagement time	Type of the activity of the organization	Status
I 1	21, F	2 years	Animal care and assistance foundation	Regular member
I 2	31, M	few years	Hospice	Regular member
I 3	30, F	Over 2 years	Student exchange organization	Regular member
I 4	20, F	Over 7 years	Scouting, Addiction support organization	Regular member
I 5	21, F	7 years	Polish Red Cross	Middle position
I 6	20, F	Over 1 year	School for children with autism	Regular member
I 7	> 40, F	8 years	Disabled children's foundation	Regular member
I 8	22, M	Over 5 years	Disabled children's foundation	Middle position
I 9	43, F	Over 5 years	Hobbyist association (including volunteer work)	Chairman
I 10	19, F	Few years	Sick children's foundation	Regular member
I 11	20, F	Over 7 years	Animal shelter	Regular member
I 12	35, F	Over 6 years	School common room	Regular member
I 13	27, F	Few years	Catholic charity	Local coordinator
I 14	??, F	6 years	Material aid for the needy and the poor foundation	Middle position
I 15	23, F	Few years	Disabled children's foundation	Middle position
I 16	21, M	Over 4 years	Youth action group, Stem cell donors organization	Founder and leader Member-coordinator
I 17	53, F	Over 3 years	Animal shelter	Regular member
I 18	45?, F	Over 3 years	School common room	Regular Member
I 19	45, F	over 30 years	Scouting (including volunteer work)	Middle position
I 20	> 20, F	Few years	Association for sick and vulnerable children	Middle position
I 21	21, F	2 years	Children in crisis foundation	Regular member
I 22	19, F	Over 2 years	Organization for world peace	Leader position
I 23	> 20, F	Few years	Foster families foundation	Regular member
I 24	20, F	6 years	Municipal centre for disabled children	Regular member
I 25	25, M	Over 10 years	Independent local activist, Survival activist, Pro-ecological activist	Leader position / regular member
I 26	20, F	Unknow time	Animal shelter	Regular member
I 27	20, F	Few years	Children with adaptation problems foundation	Regular member
I 28	> 25, M	Few years	Scouting, Other organizations participant	Middle position
I 29	> 30, F	Over 15 years	Animal welfare foundation	Regular position
I 30	> 45, M	Over 25 years	Scouting (including volunteer work)	Middle/leader position

I 31	20, F	2 years	Student Network	Middle position
I 32	> 25, F	Several years	Polish Red Cross, Bone marrow donor organization	Middle position
I 33	30, M	4 years	Informal organization to help abused animals	Regular position
I 34	> 50, F	40 years	Scouting (including volunteer work)	Middle position/group leader
I 35	23, M	7 years	Organization regularly supports the health service	Regular position
I 36	48, M	Few years	Hobbyist association (including volunteer work)	Regular position
I 37	20, F	Few years	Animal shelter	Regular position
I 38	41, M	Over 15 years	Hobbyist association (including volunteer work)	Middle position
I 39	46, F	Unknow	Catholic charity	Regular position
I 40	57, F	7 years	Supporting children education	Regular member
I 41	51, M	Over 5 years	Ecological educator	Independent
I 42	> 35 M	Over 10 years	Amateur sport club	Leader position
I 43	34, M	Few years	Association of legal aid	Middle position

Cytowanie

Waldemar Dymarczyk (2023), *The Processual Nature of Volunteer Engagement: A Reconstruction of Career Patterns Based on the Narratives of Interviewees Involved in Non-Profit Activities*, „Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej”, t. XIX, nr 4, s. 202–227, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.19.4.09>

Procesualność zaangażowania w wolontariat. Rekonstrukcja wzorów karier na podstawie narracji osób zaangażowanych w działania non-profit

Abstrakt: W niniejszym artykule dokonano rekonstrukcji etapów kariery wolontariuszy. W wyniku analizy danych wyróżniono trzy etapy kariery wolontariackiej: przygotowawczy, instytucjonalizacji oraz – potencjalną – profesjonalizację. Zrekonstruowano także warunki i konteksty ich występowania. Opisano typowe wzory karier wolontariuszy: uwzorowany schemat działania wraz z jego wariantami – „etosowym” i „instytucjonalno-pragmatycznym”, posttrajektoryjny, dojrzałego uczestnictwa oraz oparty na przemianie.

W jakościowym badaniu socjologicznym wykorzystano transkrypcje narracyjnych wywiadów biograficznych. Dane były analizowane zgodnie z procedurami klasycznej wersji metodologii teorii ugruntowanej. Wykorzystano również niektóre schematy i pojęcia znane z analiz biograficznych autorstwa Firtza Schützego.

Słowa kluczowe: wolontariat, kariera, metodologia teorii ugruntowanej, autobiograficzny wywiad narracyjny, symboliczny interakcjonizm