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Identity and Volunteering Intertwined: Reflections on the Values of Young Adults

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Abstract Volunteering motivation has been studied from many perspectives during the last few decades. These studies have increased our understanding on the individual, dynamic, and reflexive nature of volunteering. Moreover, research that combines volunteering with the concept of identity or role identity has deepened this understanding. Nevertheless, the ways individual volunteers experience and associate volunteering with their personal identities has been little studied. Values can provide an empirical window into the core of personal identity. Identity, values, and volunteering are combined in the approach used in this study, which introduces the theoretical viewpoints of narrative identity and value identity. The analyses of 24 life course interviews demonstrated volunteering can be used in identity work for expressing the core values of individuals. The results also indicate the variety and range of values, which can be associated with volunteering.

Résumé Au cours des dernières décennies, les motivations qui mènent à la pratique du bénévolat ont été étudiées sous de nombreuses perspectives. Ces études ont permis de mieux comprendre les composantes individuelle, dynamique et réflexive du bénévolat, et les recherches reliant le bénévolat au concept d'identité ou d'identité de rôle ont permis d'approfondir encore cette connaissance. Cependant, la manière dont chaque bénévole vit et associe le bénévolat à son identité personnelle n'a été que peu étudiée. Les valeurs peuvent constituer une ouverture empirique sur le cœur de l'identité personnelle. Cette étude utilise une approche associant identité, valeurs et bénévolat, et introduit les points de vue théoriques d'identité narrative et d'identité liée aux valeurs. L'analyse de 24 entretiens de parcours de vie a démontré que les travaux sur l'identité peuvent utiliser le bénévolat pour exprimer les valeurs

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fondamentales des individus. Les résultats illustrent aussi la variété et l'étendue des valeurs qui peuvent être associées au bénévolat.

Zusammenfassung   Die Motivation zu ehrenamtlicher Arbeit wurde in den letzten Jahrzehnten von vielen Perspektiven aus untersucht. Diese Untersuchungen haben unser Verständnis von der individuellen, dynamischen und reflexiven Eigenschaft ehrenamtlicher Arbeit erhöht. Zudem haben Studien, die die ehrenamtliche Tätigkeit mit dem Konzept der Identität bzw. Rollenidentität verbinden, das Verständnis weiter vertieft. Dennoch ist bislang kaum untersucht worden, wie freiwillig Tätige die ehrenamtliche Arbeit mit ihrer persönlichen Identität erfahren und verbinden. Werte können ein empirisches Fenster zum Inneren der persönlichen Identität bereitstellen. Der vorliegende Studienansatz, der die theoretischen Sichtweisen der narrativen Identität und Wertidentität vorstellt, verbindet Identität, Werte und ehrenamtliche Arbeit miteinander. Die Analysen von 24 Lebensverlaufsbefragungen legen dar, dass die ehrenamtliche Tätigkeit Teil der Identitätsarbeit sein kann, um die wesentlichen Werte einer Person auszudrücken. Die Ergebnisse zeigen zudem die unterschiedlichen Werte, die mit ehrenamtlicher Arbeit in Verbindung gebracht werden können.

Resumen   La motivación de los voluntarios se ha estudiado desde muchas perspectivas en los últimos decenios. Estos estudios han ampliado nuestro conocimiento sobre la naturaleza individual, dinámica y reflexiva del voluntariado. Asimismo, los estudios que combinan el voluntariado con el concepto de identidad o de identidad de roles han profundizado nuestros conocimientos. No obstante, se ha estudiado muy poco la forma en la que los voluntarios experimentan y asocian el voluntariado con sus identidades personales. Los valores pueden proporcionar una ventana empírica a la esencia de la identidad personal. La identidad, los valores y el voluntariado se combinan en el enfoque utilizado en este estudio, que presenta los puntos de vista teóricos de la identidad narrativa y la identidad del valor. El análisis de 24 entrevistas sobre toda una vida demuestran que el voluntariado puede utilizarse en el trabajo identificativo para expresar los valores esenciales de las personas. Los resultados también indican la variedad y los diversos valores que pueden asociarse con el voluntariado.

Previous Research: Identity, Values, and Volunteering

Volunteering motivation has been studied from many angles during the last few decades. Most of this research has categorized different groups of motives or functions for volunteering (Clary et al. 1998; Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991; Snyder and Omoto 1992), for a review see Musick and Wilson (2008). Common ways to view volunteering motivation are the intrinsic versus extrinsic and the self-oriented versus altruistic continuums. Altruistic, learning, career, and social motives have been found in more or less all research on the motives for volunteering.

Research also shows that volunteers combine different motives in a unique mix that suits the individual volunteer. Moreover, a volunteer's individual motivation is dynamic as it changes over time and with different situations (Clary et al. 1998; Yeung 2004). Volunteering is thus personal and individual, even more so in the suggested change toward reflexive volunteering, the increasingly individual orientation to volunteering motives, preferences, and views in contemporary western societies (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003).

Research that associates volunteering with volunteers' personal identities has become more common during the last decade, possibly due to this shift. The widely used functional analysis (Clary et al. 1998; Omoto and Snyder 1995) already stated that volunteering has different functions for different volunteers, that it fulfills different needs and goals for different individuals. These needs can be very personal and relate to individual life situations and values. According to Wuthnow (1991), volunteering is one way of expressing one's individuality and it can provide volunteers with a sense of identity. Research related to volunteering role identity has deepened the understanding of how volunteering can be intertwined in personal processes (Finkelstein et al. 2005; Grube and Piliavin 2000). This approach states that individuals have multiple social role identities, which result from social interaction and the expectations of others. Social role identities can gradually become central for the individual, a part of one's concept of "self." Volunteering role identity has been used most in understanding commitment to volunteering. Several quantitative studies have verified the connection between volunteering role identity and commitment to volunteering activity and/or the volunteering organization (e.g., Finkelstein et al. 2005; Laverie and McDonald 2007).

Matsuba and colleagues (Matsuba and Walker 2005; Matsuba et al. 2007) have shown an association between volunteering behavior and what they call a "helping identity". This approach differs slightly from volunteering role identity. It does not link volunteering specifically with the role of a volunteer but with helping in general. This comes close to the genre of research on moral identity. Moral identity can be described as the inherent need of the personality to act morally. Monroe (2003), inter alia, has underscored the importance of identity for moral motivation. She suggests that the ways individuals see the world and themselves in relation to others strongly influence their treatment of others. Research on moral identity has found connections between moral identity and pro-social action, including volunteering (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Hart et al. 1999; Younis and Yates 1999). Some of these studies view any voluntary action as an outcome of moral identity, which is slightly problematic as motives for volunteering vary to a great extent. Thus, volunteering is not always a moral action if morality is defined by the actor's motives. According to Blasi (2004), moral functioning must be rooted in moral understanding and motivation. Moral in the context of moral identity should be tied to subjectivity as it is a part of an individual's identity. A call for research into the *how's* and *why's* of moral identity has also been articulated (e.g., Hardy and Carlo 2005).

Hitlin (2007) has pointed out that an identity connected to a role such as a volunteer identity is tied to social identity theory. For a discussion on social and personal identity, see Badea et al. (2010) According to Hitlin (2007), identity theory has often neglected the sense of a coherent self that exists abstracted from and

across situations. He states there is a need for expanding identity theory beyond this. Hitlin suggests the concept of "value identity" which occurs as an individual identifies oneself with a particular value. Hitlin (2007, p. 250) states: "values provide an empirical window into this core level of personal identity as it exists apart from and prior to the enactment of specific identities." Values are a common field of study in relation to volunteering. Altruistic, humanitarian, and religious values have especially and often been linked with volunteering as parts of motivational structures (Bekkers 2005; Cnaan et al. 2010; Musick and Wilson 2008). Altruistic and humanitarian values are also usually seen as moral values (Aquino and Reed II 2002). Nevertheless, the ways individuals experience these values or link them to their identity and volunteering have not been studied much. In general, research on the role of values in any action has been called for by investigators (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004). In order to provide information for these gaps, this study looks at identity in volunteering from the view point of individual volunteers and their values. Such an approach is qualitative, holistic, and aims at understanding the personal ways individuals relate volunteering with their own identities and values as an integrated part of one's identity. This study analyzes 24 life course interviews of volunteering young adults. Moreover, it introduces narrative identity and value identity as theoretical viewpoints with which to grasp the interacting triangle of identity, values, and volunteering (Hitlin 2007; McAdams 2006a).

Theoretical Framework: Narrative Identity and Basic Values

Identity can be defined as the sense an individual has of oneself. It comprises the abilities, roles, values, background, and reference groups important to one. Identity formation and its maintenance are seen as central needs for an individual. One must have a sense of his or her abilities, background, and reference groups. These definitions in addition to the approach of this article build on the psychological understanding of identity (Blasi 1993; Erikson 1968). For a review on identity theories, see Leary and Tangney (2002). In late-modernity, identity has increasingly been presented as a reflexive project (Giddens 1991; Taylor 1989). Individuals are responsible for what they make of themselves and identity is reflected, changes, and develops throughout the life-span. Collective understandings of normative or moral behavior have given way to increasingly individual moralities and also the ability to construe a logical, continuing life story has been described as a part of a healthy identity (Giddens 1991).

This reflexive process of constructing identity is often described as negotiating or forming a life story to make sense of one's life, to bring coherence to one's identity. McAdams uses the concept of narrative identity and defines the life story as an "internalized and evolving cognitive structure or script that provides an individual's life with some degree of meaning and purpose" (McAdams, 2006a). Even though this process can be seen as innate, the narrations can also be shared with other people. Narrative methodologies are a way to use these individual narrations in understanding different aspects of personality and to reach a deep level of

personality at the level of identity (Bauer et al. 2008; McAdams 2001). A life story is always subjective and is thus best used as a tool for understanding the ways individuals interpret and understand their lives and reflect the identities (Polking-horne 2004; Roberts 2002). As an individual construes a life story, he or she integrates a reconstructed past and an imagined future. For instance, the ways in which an individual interprets one's past is thus a statement about identity at that particular time.

The construction of narrative identity is influenced by the values and beliefs of an individual. According to Taylor (1989), creation of identity through narrative typically involves moral stances, referencing an implicit perspective on the good. The narrator judges oneself and others from this stance. In this way, life stories can provide information on an individual's beliefs and values. Values can be defined as relatively stable, desirable goals that guide the actions of individuals (Rokeach 1973). For a review on various approaches to values, social structures, and individual behavior, see Hitlin and Piliavin (2004). According to Schwartz (2007, p. 712), values are "trans-situational goals that vary in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or a group." Schwartz (1992, 2007) has identified 10 basic human values, which are recognized across societies. These basic values are structured along two polar dimensions: self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and conservation versus openness to change. The values are motivationally distinct, thus each value and value-direction promote action in different ways. The 10 basic values which are each followed by two examples that expresses them (Schwartz 2007) are: power (authority, wealth), achievement (success, ambition), hedonism (pleasure, enjoying life), stimulation (exciting life, varied life), self-direction (creativity, independence), universalism (social justice, equality), benevolence (helpfulness, loyalty), tradition (devoutness, humility), conformity (obedience, honoring parents), and security (national security, social order).

Values are seen as normative and justified but are often also emotional and to some extent unrecognized (Schwartz 2007). The narrative methodologies intro-duced above and also the individual's life stories are thus beneficial because they provide the means to determine areas and subjects that are not easily explicable for the individual, such as those of values, for example. According to Hitlin (2007) enacting according to one's identity and values result in a sense of self-acceptance. Volunteering is one arena that can fulfill an individual's process of self-definition. This can be a result of an individual feeling that his or her core values are satisfied through volunteering. Identity and moral conduct can also be seen as complemen-tary, their associations as being interplay between moral judgments and the construction of self (Nucci 2004). Thus, deeper understanding on volunteering and processes related to it can be reached through this approach of identity and values. McAdams (2001) stated that the construing of narrative identities starts in late adolescence and young adulthood. Moreover, the classic theories of human development and moral development (Erikson 1968; Kohlberg 1975) describe young adulthood as a time of maturing identity and questions of what is right and what is wrong. Young adults thus make an interesting group in which the associations between narrated identity, values, and volunteering can be scrutinized.

Data and Method of Analysis

Life course-themed interviews were carried out during the winter 2004 to 2005 of 24 volunteers aged 21–36 living in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, Finland.[1] The chosen interviewees volunteered for different fields (sports, education, social work, and religious volunteering). 12 of the interviewees were women, 12 were men, and their world views ranged from committed Christianity to atheism. The themes of the interviews were volunteering (i.e., starting to volunteer, different stages in activity, organizations, motivation, rewards, and role models) and different stages of the interviewees' lives, ranging from childhood to hopes and aspirations for the future. The interviews covered the lives of the interviewees in a broad fashion and did not focus merely on their paths to volunteering. Volunteering and understanding it were, nevertheless, the context and the first theme of each interview. The history of their past, present activities, and future intentions that the interviewees decided to share in the interview were of their own choices. In spite of that, themes related to reference groups (family, friends, spouse, and/or children), societal context (Finnish society, politics, channels of influencing), and religiosity were discussed on the initiative and prompting by the researcher, if these were not spontaneously mentioned by the interviewee.

Each interview text was analyzed individually. Each text was read through several times to build a holistic understanding of the different aspects of the interview. In 17 of the interviews volunteering was intertwined with the narrated identity and moral evaluations. On the other hand, in 7 of the 24 interviews it was not. In these seven interviews, the constructed narrated identities were associated with different activities, different arenas, and different roles, not volunteering. Volunteering was not seen as a part of who they were. The roles and behaviors they had in volunteering were not relevant to the image they presented of themselves. They viewed volunteering as a hobby or something they had drifted into. They combined different motives, usually social motives and learning motives, but motives were not used or presented in relation to values or identity. Volunteering was not considered to have served as a tool of carrying out or realizing ones values when it was started. Stopping volunteering was no threat to their identities. These seven interviews were excluded from the analysis, and the analysis of this study focused on the interviews in which volunteering was found to be integrated in the narrated identity, and values were seen as a part of it. Including the seven interviewees in the analysis could have resulted in different value identity types. Nevertheless, as the focus of this study is to understand the connections between value identities and volunteering, this was not viewed as necessary. This decision is further discussed in the discussion of this study.
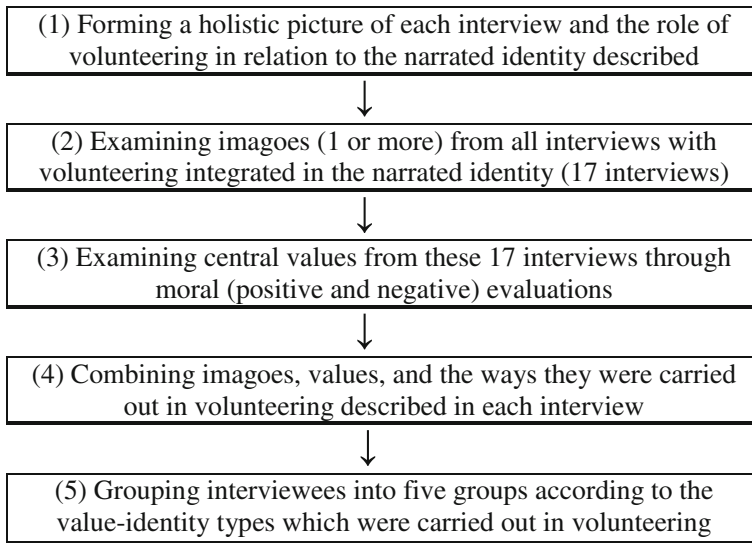
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[1] The interviewees were recruited through a telephone survey research conducted in 2004 ($n = 1000$). The respondents of the telephone survey were chosen randomly and formed a representative sample of both sexes, those age groups within the age category (20–39), and respondents from all three cities (Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa) which form the metropolitan area of Finland. Respondents were questioned about volunteering (among themes such as beliefs and religious views and importance of different activities and themes in their lives), and 37% of them reported volunteering in one ore more volunteering activities.

Self-representations which are characters in the life story of the interviewee were sought for in each of the 17 interviews. They are called imagoes (McAdams 2006b). Imagoes are negative or positive, archetypal images of the self which arose in the narrations, and there can be several imagoes in one narration. They represent different aspects in the narrator's character and often reflect the social setting (culture, society, people close to them) of the narrator. The positive imagoes presented by the interviewee were interpreted as statements about their narrated identity. On the other hand, negative imagoes were interpreted as rejected identities, which highlighted what they did not identify with at all or anymore.

Values were examined through moral negative or positive evaluations. The ways in which the interviewees presented the different imagoes as negative or positive, the ways they judged or evaluated their own or other people's choices and lifestyles, the society, or their goals in life, were interpreted as statements about the interviewees' values. As discussed above, core values can be seen as a relatively stable part of an individual's identity, and life stories can provide information on them. Nevertheless, these core values can be interpreted and discussed differently at different times and contexts. The values in these interviews are thus used in understanding the ways the interviewees interpret, understand, and make sense of their lives and reflect the identities at the time of the interview and in relation to volunteering. They are seen as reflections of core values of each individual but not as a final or the whole truth of them. The results of the study can in general be described as subjective self-constructions of the interviewees at a given time in a given context.

A holistic understanding of these self-constructions was formed for each individual with the help of imagoes, values, and the meaning of volunteering in the narrated identity. After this, the interviewees were grouped according to their central values into five value identity types related to volunteering. These five types were intertwined to some extent, and the groups should not be viewed as clear cut. The ways that the interviewees used volunteering in identity work were very similar, and interviewees in different groups also had some similar values. Nevertheless, the most central core values of identity which were intertwined with volunteering were different in each identity type group. The similarities and differences are described as the types are introduced. Also, the narrated identities of interviewees were more nuanced, multidimensional, and contradictory than can be taken into account in demonstrating the results. The introduction of identity types will focus on the shared core values and the ways they are carried out in the case of each identity type. These descriptions should not be read as thorough representations of the identities, narrated identities, or all values of the interviewees but rather as descriptions of the core that was shared in the self-representations of interviewees in the same identity type group and which differentiated them from other identity type groups. The analysis is summarized in Fig. 1.

The five value identity groups were denoted as (1) influencer identity, (2) helper identity, (3) faith based identity, (4) community identity, and (5) success identity. The identity groups will be presented in sequence. Central imagoes and values in the identities of each group will be presented first, followed by the way the interviewees

(1) Forming a holistic picture of each interview and the role of volunteering in relation to the narrated identity described

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(2) Examining imagoes (1 or more) from all interviews with volunteering integrated in the narrated identity (17 interviews)

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(3) Examining central values from these 17 interviews through moral (positive and negative) evaluations

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(4) Combining imagoes, values, and the ways they were carried out in volunteering described in each interview

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(5) Grouping interviewees into five groups according to the value-identity types which were carried out in volunteering

Fig. 1 Analysis of interviews

carried out these values in volunteering. Fractions of construing narrated identities are also demonstrated for each group.

Results: Identity Types Carried Out in Volunteering

Influencer Identity

Four volunteers (M1, F4, M11, F11)[2] construed identities with focus on influencing. They all presented a central imago of a person who fights against injustices and wants to make the world a better place. They were very critical and analytical and wanted to question things usually taken for granted. Criticism toward globalization, the centrality of money and consumerism, and the average middle class life style in general were present to some extent in all of their interviews, as in the following quote:

> We have so much of everything. I think what's more for me means something less for someone else, and in my opinion, we already have quite enough. It's time to start giving something to those others. (M1: A 25-year-old man volunteering for developmental cooperation and politics.)

Values of universalism, concern for the welfare of all humankind, self-direction, and stimulation [as described by Schwartz (2007)] were central in their identities

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[2] In all codes of interviews, F stands for female and M for male. The number in the code is the number of the interview in the order the interviews were made.

and for steering their choices in life. One interviewee describes the value of being different in the following:

> It's the power of being different. In a crowd where everyone always agrees with each other, with all those yes-men nothing ever happens. You have to make a crack to make something happen. You have to poke them with a stick a little. (M11: A 28-year-old man volunteering for the disabled and nature conservation.)

Thus self-direction, being independent and creative instead of conforming, was seen as a virtue. Their core values were mostly directed toward others and for change [as described by Schwartz (2007)]. These values also gave meaning and motivation to their volunteering. They volunteered for human rights, global justice, nature conservation, and in helping the disabled. They were very aware of injustices in society and three of them also cited injustices at a global level. Volunteering was distinctively one way to influence these injustices, as illustrated by the following quotes.

> I could never imagine volunteering just for the fun of it. For me it always involves this viewpoint of the disabled in a really strong way. (N11: A 36-year-old woman volunteering for the disabled.)

In the quote, there is also a rejection of one volunteering motive, volunteering for fun. This was rejected by the interviewee especially as the only reason for volunteering (just for fun), which emphasized her volunteering as a way to influence the position of the disabled in society. Despite the critical and independent nature of their values, and the criticism toward people who don't act independently, three of them presented their own values to some extent as inherited or grown into instead of being independently chosen. They raised strong links between volunteering and their childhoods by grouping their influencer imagoes with similar imagoes in their family and thus construed continuums of influencing in their unfolding lives. The parents and/or grandparents of some of the interviewees had critical worldviews that their descendents admired, and these world views had also influenced the interviewees' perceptions of injustices in their own ways.

> We've always talked politics in my home, even when I was little. I'm from a kind of a communist family, or that's how it felt then at least. We went marching on May 1st, and there was this kind of ideological atmosphere. I think it has a certain influence. (N4: A 26-year-old woman volunteering for organic food and nature conservation.)

The interviewees thus construed continuums with their own and their parents' values and ways of life. The will to influence was presented as an inherent quality, a trait of character, something that has always been, thus ensuring the stability of certain values in their identity. They also presented volunteering as an obvious consequence of their values and who they were. Influencing, trying to make the world a better place was described as a need within, something one does not think about very much. One of the interviewees stated that influencing injustices were a way of trying to make ones surroundings more pleasant similar to taking care of his

own well being, like "buying a softer pillow, if my old one is hard." (M11: A 28-year-old man volunteering for the disabled and nature conservation.) Despite this obviousness of volunteering, some interviewees construed phases in which these core values and the imago of an influencer had been threatened, as in the following:

> For them [high school friends] it's career, family, car, DVD-player… money… That's safe! Finding a good job, a woman, buying a house—. I didn't want to follow the path where you study fast and take a job and buy the house. It already stressed me at that point—. I realized I don't like technology, and I don't care about making money. I should do something that is useful for others than just me. Of course, if you're greedy and rude, you get far in this world. But then, I don't want to be greedy and rude. You have to do something useful, something else than money or build some machines. (M1: A 25-year-old man volunteering for developmental cooperation and politics.)

The interviewee described how he had ended up choosing his own path, which was different from those of all his friends. An alternative imago of a materialistic, greedy person, following a safe path was thus presented, but the main imago of an independent person, aiming to be useful for others had won. The interviewees were thus proud of their values and the identity of an influencer they had chosen, which highlights the positive feelings and proud ownership of this identity.

Helper Identity

Four volunteers (F2, F5, M6, M7) construed identities with a focus on helping. In all of their interviews, the central imago of a person was one whose values and life style aim in helping others. Their values are demonstrated well in the following quote:

> I don't know what it is about volunteering, but sometimes it draws people who don't really do it… I mean they do it for some other reason [than the wish to help others]… They want to put it into the list in their CV: that I've been involved in this and that. I don't like that because it's not honest. (N2: A 32-year-old woman volunteering for youth and prisoners.)

Benevolence was thus a central value for them, to the extent that volunteering for other reasons than helping others was seen as "dishonest". The interviewees all volunteered to help and care for other people, children and youth, elderly, prisoners, and/or recovering alcoholics for churches, organizations, or with activities organized by themselves. The helpers had concerns connected to universalism values (directed to self-transcendence similarly as benevolence) as did the influencers. However, the helpers' volunteering was distinctively and consciously connected to benevolence. Moreover, their values were more directed toward conservation than openness to change [as described by Schwartz (2007)]. Religion had an important role for two of the interviewees in this group. It affected their values of helping, adding to their motivation to help others, but also gave them strength to help those in need as in the following:

The feeling of being powerless, not being able to do anything else than comfort the children [in a Russian children's home] for a little while. But you can tell them they can pray, and the heavenly father hears them. That's something you can give the children. You have to leave, but you can leave them in bigger hands. (N5: A 24-year-old woman volunteering for a religious community and children.)

Three of the helpers wanted especially to help people linked to their own experiences. Interviewees with experiences of abuse or alcoholism in their childhood wanted to help children and youth in similar situations as they themselves had experienced. The motivation for volunteering stemmed from understanding the seriousness of the children's situation and their needs. Both experiences of being helped and experiences of being helpless motivated the interviewees to help now that they had the ability and the opportunity. In addition to linking helping motivation to one's own experiences of neglect or abuse, another way of linking helper identity with one's childhood stemmed from what one had grown into doing. One of the interviewees had taken care of his grandmother from an early age. As an adult, he had first taken care of other aging relatives and after that continued visiting and helping the elderly he had met in a nursing home after his relatives had died. The way he construed the continuity is apparent in the following quote:

I took care of her [grandmother] since I was a child. I guess it comes from there—. I have seen what the end of a human being is and how lonely one can be. Or what kind of help an old person or a sick person needs. (M7: A 32-year-old man volunteering for the elderly.)

Thus, the interviewee continues to help old people with their needs through volunteering after growing into the importance of helping as a child. A third way of construing continuity in volunteers identities was describing role models for their values and helping identity learned in their childhood, usually from parents or a grandparent. Even in those cases where the volunteer had experienced abuse in her home, a role model was found outside the home as described in the following:

From very early on I've thought 'I want to be like nana'—. She was very active, and a strong woman—. She had lots of friends and we used to visit pensioners who were not as healthy as her, and go grocery shopping for them. She used to do this kind of work with people a lot. (N5: A 24-year-old woman volunteering for a religious community and children.)

The strength to turn one's own negative childhood experiences into a motivation to help others was thus described as stemming at least partially, from the example of the "strong" grandmother. The volunteer with negative role models in her childhood had also found a positive exemplar and had chosen to follow it. It could be said that being strong and helping others had become a survival strategy for some of the volunteers with a helper identity. This also highlights the crucial importance of continuing helping to their respective identities. Volunteering provides an arena to keep up and strengthen the identity of a helper who has not merely survived but turned their traumas into benefits for others. The role models were for other helpers'

parents and a happy childhood, so volunteering was a way of carrying out the values learnt in one's childhood home.

Helping was thus very personal for these volunteers, which explains the moral judgment toward people volunteering for other reasons or thinking only about themselves (above). Helping was intertwined in their identity to the extent that it guided their whole life. For instance, they wished they could help professionally as well. The central value of helping also defined career choices. Those who volunteered for children or youth because of their own experiences in the past wanted to do social work with children, youth work, or work for human rights for children. They dreamt of making a living carrying out the inherent need to help other people, as described in the following quote:

> So that I could help and make a living out of it. But also that it would be so financially profitable, that I could make the surroundings [of a seniors' home] for the people as good and great as possible. (M7: A 32-year-old man volunteering for the elderly.)

These quotes highlight how volunteering was only one arena in which to carry out their values and identities. The identities were so strong they wanted to express them constantly. This suggests that the identity is not merely a role identity of a volunteer, but rather a personal value identity which is expressed in volunteering.

Faith-Based Identity

Four interviewees (F1, M2, M3, F6) represented a strong narrated identity related to religion. Compared to influencers and helpers, this group was more heterogenic, especially in relation to values. What was shared was that religion was the key meaning making strategy for all of them. Moreover, they all volunteered in their religious communities, which were all Christian denominations, and faith was the way they articulated their motivation for volunteering. They all construed life stories in which the guidance of God, finding ones way to a religious community, making the decision to believe, or serving God were the core narration.

All of these four volunteers mentioned Christian values as their guiding light, but this was understood in somewhat different ways. Moral judgments against selfishness highlighted the values of benevolence and love for one's neighbor. In addition, values of accomplishment, work, and communality could be intertwined in the identity of a Christian. Both views are presented in the following quotes:

> In life people are a lot more important compared to the things which can be trendy, career or something. So it [volunteering] is a lot more meaningful compared to the things most people spend their time with. (M3: A 32-year-old man volunteering for children and youth in Russia.)
> I think my faith influences other values as well, it's so central. I'm very patriotic. I love Finland and being Finnish. That's one. And also getting ahead in life, being successful, influencing society, influencing for the good. (M2: A 26-year-old man volunteering for youth and a Christian student organization.)

The first interviewee thus sees people and helping them as his value, but the latter states faith influences him valuing patriotism and being successful. This highlights the variety of values linked with faith. What was interesting compared to the two previous groups of influencer and helper identities is that values as understood in value theories (Schwartz 1992, 2007) seemed to be less central for the volunteers with faith-based identities. Religion was presented as their value. This is also what distinguishes them from some other religious volunteers. There were religious volunteers among volunteers with helping identity and success identity. Nevertheless, the identities they construed and attached with volunteering were not construed around religion but around values. Religion could reinforce their values, benevolence, and conformity in the case of helping identity. Religion could also be seen as the source of the values, but religion in itself was not a value, nor being a believer the central imago in the same way as for the volunteers in this group.

One of the volunteers with a faith-based identity described a very straightforward view on volunteering: "the meaning [of volunteering] is to spread the Gospel" (M3: A 32-year-old man, volunteering with children and youth in religious communities in Finland and in Russia.) The meaning of volunteering and also the meaning of most things he described in the interview were religious. Different life stages and instances were given religious meanings and interpretations. Three of the believers constructed a life story with different religious phases and described how they had ended up with the current religious identity. The central points in their construed life stories were linked with religion, describing how the imago of a believer was threatened or questioned, ending up with a happy ending where the imago of a believer wins. The threats described were the influences of different life phases and especially their own doubts and questioning the faith, as in the following:

> I've done it [volunteered] since I was little. My mother worked in the Church so I've kind of grown into it—. In high school these matters of faith were kind of on hold, I partied pretty much. But then in my twenties when I started to study for a degree, old anxieties came to the surface, and that's when I found religion again. (N1: A 33-year-old woman volunteering for children and in music in a religious community.)

Thus, in this narration, religion is put on hold for a while, but re-emerges as a result of experiencing difficulties. Faith was presented as a saving turn and a provider of help, which steered the individual back onto the right track after encountering difficulties. Usually these times of questioning the faith were nevertheless described as a phase they had needed to make their faith as strong as it was at the time of the interview. As mentioned above, volunteering was also intertwined with the faith-based identity. Several motivating structures of religion were found including being cared for in the religious community when volunteering, and the wish to be an active part of the religious community. Some of these motives can also be seen as parts of the volunteers' identities. Such is as an innate feeling of having a calling presented in the following:

> When you have a calling from God, you can't get rid of it. If I didn't do it [volunteer] I'd feel much worse. In a way even though it's often hard and you

kind of pay a price, kind of make a sacrifice, you still can't, not do it. (M2: A 26-year-old man volunteering for youth and a Christian student organization.)

Volunteering as a calling was thus presented as being so natural he felt it was not an option to not volunteer. The way volunteering is just one way of carrying out one's faith and values, and acting according to one's identity is also described in the following:

[Interviewer: In what other ways do you carry out your love for your neighbour in addition to volunteering?] That's a difficult question. It assumes that volunteering is like a separated segment of my life. It can be in my schedule, but in my mind it's one way of serving God. (M3: A 32-year-old man volunteering for children and youth in Russia.)

Thus volunteering had no central value in itself but it was a tool for expressing religious identity and doing religious work. This view on volunteering also influenced the way the interviewees anticipated their future in volunteering. Volunteering would continue, if it was the best arena to serve God, carry out one's calling, or get strength to one's own faith in the future. Some volunteers with faith-based identities stated that their future in volunteering depended on their own religious needs and life phases. Volunteering was presented as a way to fulfill their needs for a religious community at the time of the interview. If they found some other way to fulfill that need, they might quit volunteering.

For some volunteers with a helper identity or success identity, religion was a source of motivation and strength with which to back up other motives and values for volunteering. On the other hand, the situation was opposite for the volunteers with a faith-based identity. For them, different motives and values for volunteering were an additional dimension of or reward to the religious identity they carried out by volunteering. Thus, volunteering in a religious community was a way of spreading the gospel or fulfilling one's own religious needs or calling. But carrying out these religious practices by volunteering also gave them extra rewards of feeling useful and benefitting others. In this way, volunteering seemed to be a relatively pleasant way of construing, expressing, and strengthening ones religious identity.

Community Identity

Three interviewees (M3, F7, M12) narrated an identity related to communities. Their core narrations all had the central imago of a person who lives and volunteers for ones community. This community could be their family or a student community, and their stories differed to some extend according to the community in question. Most of them had a strong moral stance concerning the centrality of communality, family values, and the virtue of promoting these values.

I have thought about why everybody is getting a divorce. I claim it's because women demand their husbands to do half of the household work and such. I think my husband works more, so I'll take care of the home. When I was working all the time myself… everything is easier now. (N7: A 29-year-old woman volunteering in children's sports with her husband.)

In the case of this volunteer, the value of communality was linked to family and family values. The value directions of community members were preserving and directed to self-transcendence [as described by Schwartz (1992)]. Benevolence and family values were central. However, universalism was not central as they valued and volunteered especially for their close in-groups and communities. These volunteers come close to the helpers in their values, but the centrality of helping and empathy was directed primarily at their own communities and the motivation stemmed from helping in-group members. Their benevolence thus leaned more toward loyalty instead of helpfulness per se. Whereas the helpers argued their helping with empathy and justice, the community volunteers leaned more toward conformity and obedience. Two of the community members constructed a continuum of these values and of appreciating community in their narrated identity, as in the following quote:

> I think it [volunteering with children and youth in sports and music] is nice. It's nice to see what I can give and learn, that it has results, and to see that they like it. With kids, especially with my own…. I was raised so that my parents had time for me. So, I've tried to give time to my boys (M5: A 32-year-old man volunteering for children and youth in sports and music.)

This volunteer described volunteering with children and youth as a similar action to that of spending time with his own children. He expressed the values he was raised by in both of these arenas. One of the community members constructed a less coherent narration about growing into the imago she presented as right. She described a crisis or an awakening or growing to a new identity and the right values:

> The commercialism [in her previous field of work]…. It's a terrible world on the other hand. Nothing was sacred in a way. Relationships are just a game, all relationships. And the game gets really ugly, the cards are totally twisted. I guess I went along with it a bit, but at that point I felt like… what have I done, I hope I never see a mirror anywhere!—. I changed my job from a leading business to a small family business—. I got lost in the big world for many years. And my salary got smaller, but the job at the moment is more…. I work with young people. Someone would call this a 30's crises but I'd rather use the word growing (N7: A 29-year-old woman volunteering in children's sports with her husband.)

The imago of a person who appreciates communality instead of a career is thus presented as a result of her growing up, re-evaluating values and priorities, and finding the good imago after years of a negative counter-imago. She describes her conscience reacted to how she had lived. This highlights her belief that even during the years she "went along" with the commercialism, now she has seen as being wrong and harmful, her true identity was that of the communal, people-oriented person. The way volunteering is intertwined with living in one's community and working for it can also be seen in the following quote:

> I got into it [volunteering] through my own kids. They got interested at home, and I thought I could carry this on in school, where I work. And we started

talking about this at work. They asked me, and I agreed of course. I'm doing it [directing a music club in the school] for the third year now. (M5: A 32-year-old man volunteering for children and youth in sports and music.)

For this interviewee volunteering was thus intertwined with family, his own children, the value of spending time with them, but also with his work, the community of the school he works and volunteers in. For a third community volunteer, there were several communities, which were important. He had, for instance, volunteered in student activities and been a member of the board in the apartment organization of the house he lived in. He linked his motivation with being needed in and giving something to the communities which were natural to him: "It's always something that is related to my own circle of life", when he described the choice fields of volunteering. (M12: A 27-year-old man volunteering for his student organization and his apartment organization.) Volunteering was thus also seen as a way to connect to the communities. Children's and spouses' hobbies, work place, or student organization defined their fields of action for these volunteers. What was central was to benefit the community and the people there and strengthen the values of belonging and communality. Communities and communality gave meaning to volunteering but also identity in different life phases.

Success Identity

Two interviewees (M8, F12) represented a narrated identity which was related to accomplishment and getting ahead in life. Their core narrations had the central imago of a person who makes something out of oneself, being successful and active. Their volunteering included positions of trust in the volunteering communities, and succeeding in the field of volunteering was rewarding for them. The volunteering communities were a political party for one individual and religious organization for the other. Activity and succeeding by one's own standards were important for the success seeking volunteers in general, as can be seen in the following quote:

It was a pretty tough thing for me when I had to ask my parents to help me when I just couldn't make ends meet during my studies. I wanted to promise myself that this would not go on for very long. Those few times I needed help were really embarrassing for me. But now I stand on my own two feet. (N12: A 26-year-old woman volunteering for a political party.)

Achievement, ambition, being a good citizen, and social order were valued in their narrations. Instead, inefficiency and daydreaming were criticized. Their value directions were preserving and directed more toward the self instead of others. Benevolence was included in their values but was not as central as achievement and security. Both interviewees construed a continuum in their life stories and linked the imagoes of their narrations to their childhoods and personalities. They described themselves as active children who already at a young age showed signs of leadership and achievement:

I was always the group leader, who made up the games we played. There was already that enthusiasm. I've always been active. I very rarely just sit around

and contemplate. (N12: A 26-year-old woman volunteering for a political party.)

These traits of leadership and activity were presented in a positive manner that showed ownership and pride in these traits of character or qualities of identity. These interviewees had succeeded in their studies and graduated fast. Volunteering was a part of this ethos of diligence and performing. It verified their identities as successful individuals and gave them experiences of accomplishing things.

> I'm better than most at it [volunteering in fund raising and organizing events]. I have to say [laughs]. Honestly, I can say that let's work on it and see what the result is.—I'm straightforward and open and courageous, and I have the guts to say what I think, but I rather act than talk. This is one thing I got tired of [in working life]. It's easier as a volunteer, you don't have to explain. In professional life the work is explaining and explaining. Tons of explaining before you can do anything. Now in volunteering I get to do things. (M8: A 36-year-old man volunteering for children and youth and sports in a religious organization.)

The interviewee described how good he is at what he did, and how rewarding it is to get things done. He also presents a negative moral evaluation of how frustrating it is to "just talk." Volunteering represents an arena where he can put his talents and energy into action. The instrumental nature of volunteering, and the way it was intertwined with other interests were highlighted in the ways the interviewees pondered their future plans for volunteering. The future of volunteering was linked with how it would benefit their individual goals for life and what they would get from it in the future. The function of volunteering for them was thus connected to their careers and personal life narratives. However, it could be replaced by something else they could succeed in. Furthermore, responsibility to the organizers of volunteering activities was central to them. Keeping promises, taking responsibility for common good, and doing what one had promised were valued and influenced on whether individuals would stop volunteering at a time when it became less rewarding or beneficial for them.

Value Identities in Volunteering

Monroe (2003) has stated that there are complex motives and/or reasons behind moral actions, but what is central is, that one's "identity sets limits on the choice options perceived as available." This seems to be the case in many of the narrated identities above. Volunteering was used as a way to be the person they felt they were or wanted to be morally. Nevertheless, the range of values the interviewees represented as moral was surprising. The central value of all identity types are summarized in Table 1 and analyzed in relation to the value theory of Schwartz (1992, 2007). The values of an individual are always nuanced, dynamic, and often contradictory. In this context, simplification is required, and the locations of the five

Table 1 Central motives, values, and value directions of identity types

Identity type	Central motives in their own words	Central values in identity in their own words	Central values (and value directions) analyzed with the value theory by Schwartz (1992, 2007)
Influencer	Making the world a better place, doing what is right, influencing, fighting injustices having fun	Being critical, solidarity, justice	Universalism, self-direction (self-transcendence, openness to change)
Helper	Helping others	Helping others, caring, empathy	Benevolence (self-transcendence, conservation)
Community	Being with one's family, giving something (back) to one's community, being a part of a community	Communality, responsibility, loyalty, family values	Tradition, conformity, benevolence (conservation)
Religious	Spreading the gospel, doing God's work, love for one's neighbor, being with other Christians, following their calling	Christian values, helping others	Benevolence, tradition, conformity (self-transcendence, conservation)
Success	Getting the feeling of accomplishing, fulfilling ones responsibility of helping others, making contacts, succeeding	Responsibility, independence, getting ahead	Power, achievement, security (self-enhancement, conservation)

identity types are defined by the most central core values represented in the context of the volunteers' identities in volunteering.

The table demonstrates how almost all of the 10 basic values as defined by Schwartz (1992, 2007) were carried out by some volunteers even though the number of interviewees in the research was limited. The variety of value identities which were associated with volunteering and were seen as moral highlights the range of individual moralities in contemporary western societies. Most people state benevolence and universalism as moral values (Schwartz 2007). These self-transcending values are also the values most often linked with helping and also volunteering (Clary et al. 1998). In a study by Schwartz (2007, p. 713), it is stated that more than 80% of respondents described benevolence values to be moral, and at least 70% described universalism, conformity, tradition, and security values as being moral. These were also the core values in most value identities carried out in volunteering in this study. Nevertheless, in the study by Schwartz (2007) fewer than 30% of respondents also labelled power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction values as being moral. This seems to be the case with interviewees representing the success value identity with self-enhancing core values of power and achievement. The results of this study reinforce the understanding that different individuals see different values as moral and express them by volunteering.

Despite the differences in presented core values, all five types had a "common enemy" they described as the moral opposite and differentiated form, namely: the selfish person who only cares for his or herself. Many interviewees saw this as a common feature, and criticism was harsh toward it. Even so, the moral

differentiation was argued slightly differently in different groups. Helpers thought too many people do not think about other people or care about their helplessness or the predicaments they are in. Influencers saw them as being too numbed by the system to question the middle class goal of being "a good tax payer" (free quote from interviewee M1, influencer). Believers saw this as a result of not having a religious faith, community volunteers also disapproved of the death of communality resulting in people only thinking about their own needs, and successful volunteers viewed many people as lazy, inefficient, and neglectful of their societal duties. The common enemy could also result in a similar activity, volunteering, although the motives, values, and identities in between ranged from conservative communality to critical influencing.

The detachment and individualism present in the current societal contexts can, at the same time, result both in radical moral identities and in seeking for sanctuary in the traditional values of communality, helping, and religion. The variety of values and identities, which can be connected with volunteering, makes it an ideal arena for reflexive identity work. Each volunteer can apply the activity to his or her own needs. Volunteering is concrete and effective, includes social contacts and often a community. These are central factors for our perception of ourselves. Volunteering also offers other rewards in addition to value and identity-related reflection. The traditionally ideological fields of volunteering such as volunteering in a religious community or in a labor union are not interesting for young urban Finnish adults in general (Grönlund 2006). This is possibly because they are seen as ideologically binding and pre-defined. Yet in many cases, volunteering does allow the volunteer to define the motives, values, and identities realized in the action individually.

Another thing in common for all the five types was expressing the values important to them in other arenas as well. This highlights the way volunteerism was connected to their personal identities, not merely volunteering role identities as reported by Grube and Piliavin (2000). For many, it was difficult to differentiate volunteering from their general way of and orientation to life. They wanted to act and work for their cause, whether it was helping those in need, global justice, or being a productive citizen, professionally, and in their families. "In all encounters with other people I have, even on the street" (quote from interviewee N2, helper).

Discussion

During the last few decades, scholars used the concept of identity to understand volunteering, especially that of volunteering role identity (Grube and Piliavin 2000). Despite this progress, studies on the associations between self-identity and volunteering have been scarce. This study has introduced the theoretical viewpoints of narrative identity (McAdams 2001, 2006a) and value identity (Hitlin 2007) in understanding these associations. Separately and in combination they offer new insights into the holistic and varied ways volunteering is associated with identity. The viewpoint on identity as a narrative process and methodologies based on this understanding also offers an interesting way to investigate the difficult areas of identity and values and also the ways individuals express them and reflect on them

in volunteering. Research on volunteering could benefit from more studies using these approaches.

The results presented in this study showed the extremely flexible nature of volunteering, as it can be combined with a range of values and value identities. Volunteering can be used in the processes of self-definition and identity in expressing the different core values of individuals. Volunteering is thus associated with the identities of individuals, not merely role identities, and can thus be essential for the entire identity. In addition, seven interviewees in this study did not connect volunteering with their core values or identity. This should also be viewed as a result of this study. In its flexibility, volunteering can be intertwined with deeply personal processes of personal identity and values, but it can also be viewed as an activity which does not touch these personal dimensions.

In all qualitative, and especially in holistic methods of analysis, the insights of the researcher are central. This is also a challenge, as another researcher might have used different ways of analysis and arrived at different conclusions. The results of this study are also based on a limited number of interviews and can thus not be generalized as such. Even though volunteerism was strongly associated with identity and used in identity work in 17 of 24 interviews, this association may not be the case for the majority of young volunteers. It is possible that individuals with a need or motivation to reflect on their identity, more willingly agree to be interviewed than those who do not have this need. The cultural context and the social setting of an individual influence his or her identity and the narrative construction of it in addition to values and the opportunities of volunteering. This research is based on interviews conducted in one area in Finland, and it can only raise questions for wider contexts.

Nevertheless, the results encourage further research on volunteering, values, and identities alone and in combination. Young age groups seem to offer an especially complex and intriguing field of study in their ways of using volunteering in relation to their values and identities. Value studies have found that young age groups are more directed toward hedonism than older age groups. Despite this, they are highly interested in volunteering. The fragmented societal context may reflect on the use of values in young age groups (Cnaan et al. 2010; Helve 1999). A hedonistically driven individual can operate in the field of volunteering with other value priorities alongside his or her main value orientation. Values of an individual are never one-dimensional, and these dynamic uses of different value orientations in different situations should be taken into account, at least when studying these younger age groups. It is possible traditional research methods have to some extent failed to understand the nuanced interactions between values and helping in late-modern western societies. Further in-depth research using holistic qualitative methods on the nexus of identity, values, and volunteering is required. These approaches are also needed from different cultural settings.

If the changing and complex relationship of identity, values, society, and morals with action can be further understood, the understanding can be applied in practice. If suitable ways of volunteering are offered to young people, volunteering can actually serve as an arena in which identity and values can be acknowledged. Moreover, suitable roles and arenas of responsibility for the future can be sought.

This will benefit young adults personally but can also build interest and responsibility in social issues and pro-social action, with volunteerism being an integral part of it. The results also have implications for organizers of volunteering. They emphasize the importance of listening to the individual needs of volunteers and encourage using interviews and discussions to recognize their needs at different stages of the individual's volunteering careers. Narrative approaches can be used in these interviews to search for motives, meanings and to make volunteering more rewarding for the individual, as personal values become more recognized and integrated in both volunteering and identity. The results also highlight the opportunities of volunteering in education as they show the way it is intertwined with values and moral questions. Previous research has detected positive connections between service learning and future volunteering (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2010). Service learning in particular and community service programs which aim at moral citizenship and pro-social values and behavior, inter alia, can benefit from acknowledging the individual processes of young adults involved in volunteering.

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