FINDING VOLUNESIA:

An Exploration of How Volunteer Identity and Volunteer Learning Through the Life Course Transforms Participants and Develops Enduring Leaders.

This Thesis is being submitted for the Degree of

Doctor in Philosophy,

at the School of Education,

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By Shelli Ann Garland

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for the degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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SUMMARY

Ireland has a rich history in volunteering, of neighbor helping neighbor, and giving one's time, energy and commitment to others outside of one's immediate family. The purpose of the research is to examine life course influences on volunteer identity and learning through volunteering in order to contribute to lifelong learning through volunteering. By choosing to adopt a life course perspective, this research seeks to understand the learning experiences of Active Volunteers (AVs) within the context of wider society and changing social structures. It closely examines the concept of volunteer identity and learning through the life course, and why it may be considered an issue of critical importance in the context of community engagement and volunteer longevity.

From my own life experience, I consider that volunteering provides invaluable learning and personal/professional growth opportunities that are transformative and enduring, but it is important to establish if similar experiences are shared by others. My research explores the lived-experiences of the AV in Ireland post-tertiary education, to gain insight and understanding of the volunteer identity and volunteer learning as informal learning over the life course. Through an inductive approach that adopts social identity theory and lifelong learning theory, this research is underpinned by a constructivist/interpretive paradigm. Such an approach is qualitative, holistic, and aims to understand and explain the personal ways individuals relate volunteering with their identity, learning as part of their volunteer experience, and understanding identity through learning.

The theoretical framework for this study, sets volunteer learning within the sociocultural and constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. Sociocultural theory looks at the important contributions that society makes on an individual's learning and development. Sociocultural theory suggests that learning is largely a social process and emphasizes the interconnection between people and the culture in which they live (Bonk & Kim, 1998). This research focused on an exploration of the lived-experience of volunteering over the life course and the interpretation of the relationship between informal learning (Aspin & Chapman, 2000) and identity formation influenced by socially defined influences and experiences of family, environment, customs and lifestyle (Bonk & Kim, 1998).

Through this study, I examined from a sociological and pedagogical perspective, the lives of the active community volunteer in Ireland who attended or completed post-secondary education, and who are currently volunteering for an organization, group, or individual within their community. Through the lived experience, I looked at volunteer identity from the view point of the AV and their understanding of what learning through volunteering means, "if" or "how" those understandings change over time, and to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of learning that remains.

The literature review has exemplified the depth of research in this area. This study explored the ways in which identity and education, both formal and informal, and volunteer influence and participation, played a part the AV life, how AVs define themselves in their role as volunteers and if they recognize their

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The literature review has exemplified the depth of research in this area. This study explored the ways in which identity and education, both formal and informal, and volunteer influence and participation, played a part the AV life, how AVs define themselves in their role as volunteers and if they recognize their

volunteer participation as a form of learning. The findings present an interpretation of AV learning experiences through in-depth narratives and reflections around learning and volunteering.

Through in-depth interviews and reflective journaling with 24 participants, my research specifically investigated volunteer identity, and participant perceptions of learning through volunteering. I examined how AVs were influenced by their earliest memories of volunteering; how the environment in which they were raised and their experiences of formal education impacted them; how they define themselves in their role as AVs; and if they recognize their volunteer participation as a form of learning. Through life story narratives of learning across the volunteer experience, I analyze common experiences and learning themes among volunteers from the volunteer lived experience, their understanding of learning through volunteering, and if their experiences are transformative and enduring. The research findings uncovered four distinct Active Volunteer Dispositions (AVDs) that, when properly cultivated, can transform and revolutionize how we understand volunteer identity and learning through volunteering. The four AVD types are *The Guide, The Idealist, The Champion,* and *The Executive* and each have unique disposition affiliations. *The Guide's* volunteer disposition is driven by the need for authentic relationships with strong affiliation toward building and maintaining genuine relationships with others. Inclusion of others and a desire to feel personally included is important to *The Guide*, and they put a very high value on education, teaching and learning. *The Idealist's* volunteer disposition is driven by the desire for meaning and purpose in their life with strong affiliation toward doing good for others, being a good person and interacting gently with others. *The Champion's* volunteer disposition is passionately defending people or causes that they believe in. They are very pragmatic and have a strong affiliation with seeking truth, justice, and rights for others. *The Executive's* volunteer disposition is driven by a sense of duty and responsibility. They have a strong affiliation with being highly organized, professional leaders for others.

Identifying and understanding the AVD types as leaders, are important through idiosyncratic tendencies and affiliations. AVDs provide an important model of volunteer leadership and learning that can be further developed through workshops, seminars, mentorship, apprenticeship, training manuals, and other methods familiar to the education enterprise, adult education. Personal and social identity is an important element for individual volunteer learning, and further study into the interconnected relationship between identity and informal learning over the life course, for volunteers, can be useful for creating, supporting and maintaining important volunteer leader learning models.

This thesis provides insight and understanding of the volunteer identity, how informal learning is understood, and to inform learning in adult and higher education by providing important models of volunteer identity and learning that are vital to community-minded longevity and preservation through volunteer, adult and higher education. Adult and higher education, as institutions of society, have a fundamental role to play in promoting the ideals of democracy, social justice, and human rights in addition to contributing to the economic and social development of society as a whole. The findings are discussed in terms of typing the volunteer dispositions and recommendations in terms of supports for AVs;

ideas for learning and community-based curriculum development in adult and higher education institutes; and suggestions for national and international educational policy development for the betterment of wider civic society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"I am still learning" – Michelangelo

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARCH	Advocacy Resource Center for the Handicapped
AV	Active Volunteer(s)
AVD	Active Volunteer Disposition(s)
CBL	Community-Based Learning
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFI	Call for Input
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GDPR	General Data Protection Rules
HEI	Higher Education Institution
I-VOL	Irish Volunteer Database
LPI	Leadership Practices Inventory
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
P2P	Points 2 Ponder
PHAB	Physically Handicapped Able Bodied
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
QoL	Quality of Life
SDL	Self-Directed Learning
TD	Teachta Dála – TDanna – Deputy to the Irish Dáil
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
"I am still learning" - Michelangelo

1.1 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

This chapter first introduces the background of the research, including the rationale for the study as well as the objectives of the research. Next, a brief overview of the context of the study as it relates to the research philosophy, research approach, and theoretical perspective will be offered. Then, the research questions will be introduced for the first time in this thesis. Finally, the structure of this thesis will be confirmed. As a note of understanding, I have attempted to use American English throughout this thesis when applicable. Further, throughout this thesis the term Active Volunteers (AVs) will be used to describe my research participants that I recognize as people who are presently, currently, and actively volunteering or involved in volunteering in some capacity.

The background of this research provides a review of the rationale for conducting this research on volunteer identity and learning through the life course. My position on the relevance and importance of conducting this study as well as current public view on the importance of volunteering and community engagement is recognized. Followed by an explanation of previous studies and relevant history on volunteer satisfaction, longevity and sustainability.

RATIONALE

Non-profit and charitable organizations rely heavily on the responsibility and stability of the volunteer. Many organizations are headed by volunteer boards as part of their governing system and volunteers are a vital part of that governance (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Responsible and experienced individuals help an organization with the key skills and knowledge that the learner carries with them. Evidence suggests that organizations that use volunteers place a particularly high value on higher educated learners for the specific skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm that they can offer (Weston, Guardini, Minnion, & Kwiatkowska, 2013).

My impression at the outset of this research, was that there is valuable learning that occurs through volunteering and community engagement to address immediate needs

and desires of the volunteer, as helper, to engage and address needs of another person or organization, but are there some deeper influences that encourage volunteer longevity? Is there a process of learning from and through past experiences that creates a personal transformation or an enduring impact on the volunteer and motivates sustained volunteerism? These questions and variations of inquiry related to identity, formative education, and informal learning through life experiences are part of what inspired this study.

While there has been diverse research on the impacts of volunteering (Healy, Rowan, & McIlrath, 2014), volunteer satisfaction (Binder, 2015), motivation (Yamashita, López, Soligo, & Keene, 2017), and quality of life (Cattan, Hogg, & Hardill, 2011), as identified within the literature review, there has been scant research on how identity combined with experiences of formal and informal learning impact an AV over the life course and if life experiences and learning through volunteering enhance the longevity and sustainability of the AV. A study of the lived experience of the AV in Ireland represents an under-researched aspect of Irish life, and could provide a deeper understanding of volunteering, the experience of being a volunteer, and what volunteering and engagement within the community provides the volunteer in terms of personal learning and lifelong volunteering impact.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived-experiences of the AV in Ireland post-tertiary education, to gain insight and understanding of the volunteer identity, learning through volunteering, and how informal learning is understood through volunteer experiences.

Fig.1.1 provides an 'at a glance' overview of the objectives of this research.

Objectives of Research

FIG. 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Through in-depth interviews with 24 participants, in an effort to answer my research questions, I explored how AVs were influenced by their earliest memories of volunteering; how the environment in which they were raised and their experiences of formal education impacted them; how they define themselves in their role as volunteers; and if they recognize their volunteer participation as a form of learning.

This research investigated volunteer identity, and participant perceptions of learning through volunteering. Through life stories of learning through the volunteer experience, I analyzed common experiences and learning themes among AVs lived experience, their understanding of learning through volunteering and if their experiences were transformative and enduring. Such an approach is qualitative, holistic, and aims to understand and explain the personal ways individuals relate volunteering with their identity, learning as part of their volunteer experience, and understanding identity through learning. This study demonstrates these ways of thinking in terms of the conflicting views on informal learning and attempt to thus contribute to the discourse of learning and leadership through volunteering in adult and higher education.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This research considered the lived-experience of active volunteers, that have been volunteering or influenced by volunteering over the life course, and the interpretation of the relationship between informal learning and identity formation influenced by socially

defined influences and experiences of family, environment, customs and lifestyle. It explored the ways in which identity and education, both formal and informal, and volunteer influence and participation played a part in people's lives. My aim was to look beyond volunteer motivation and the benefits that volunteering provides to establish a deeper understanding of the influence that historical life experience and learning mean to an AV over their life course, as a whole. My objective was to explore the volunteer influence, exposure, and experience of these adults to find out how they became involved in volunteering, what it meant to them, and whether their formal learning influenced their volunteer experience and to provide further insight and understanding of the relationship between identity and learning through volunteering.

Further, this study explored how AVs define themselves in their role as volunteers and if they recognize their volunteer participation as a form of learning. Can we [adult educators] bolster their identity and learning? In this study, I focused on volunteer identity and volunteer learning beyond post-secondary or third-level education. I examined from a sociological and pedagogical perspective, the lives of the active community volunteer in Ireland who attended or completed post-secondary education, and who are currently volunteering for an organization, group, or individual within their community. Through the lived experience, I looked at volunteer identity from the view point of volunteer participant and their understanding of what learning through volunteering means, "if" or "how" those understandings change over time; and to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of learning that remains.

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

I open this section with a brief explanation of my personal interest and investment in volunteerism, education, community and society relationships, particularly in Ireland. VOLUNESIA is a culturally-made noun created within Filipino vocabulary that means, *"That moment when you forget you're volunteering to help change lives, because it's changing yours."(FIMRC & Children, 2017)* When I came across this word while researching one-word terms in an effort to explain what volunteering is, without actually using the word 'volunteer' I thought, "this is an interesting way to describe a *feeling* that you get from volunteering and the reciprocal transformation that, for me, elicits the idea of a gradual change." It illustrates that idea of informal learning – that transforms you… transforms your way of thinking gradually. VOLUNESIA, to me, is the essense of this research.

Growing up in my rural hometown in New York, during the mid-late 20th century, I was raised in a vibrant and large, Irish-Protestant family. My great-grandmother, an immigrant from Cloggernagh, Dún Gar, County Roscommon, emigrated from Ireland at the age of 17 because she refused family insistence to enter a Catholic convent. She spoke very little English, raised five children, and served faithfully in her local church until her death in 1974. My earliest memory of her was sitting upon her knee with my twin brother, playing with her long silver hair while she hung plastic monkeys on our ears and sang softly to us in a language that I did not understand. She, along with my other family members, instilled within me a sense of civic pride, volunteerism, and commitment to charity, steeped further in patriotism and service first to others.

As an adult, I served in the United States Naval forces, married, started a family, attended church, and worked as paralegal for a criminal defense attorney, all while giving and serving within my church and community in various capacities. I was a non-traditional student, who began my higher education tenure in 2009 after my children were grown. While completing my undergraduate education in sociology and communication, followed by my Master's degree in Career and Technical Education, I participated as a student in community-based learning opportunities, as well as in the field of school and community relationships.

In my professional experience as a higher education administrator in enrollment and student affairs at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, USA, I worked closely with student and career services within the university, as well as volunteer organizations within the community surrounding the university. The engagement and pedagogical knowledge that I had gained as both a student and professional stimulated my awareness of the aspect of combining volunteerism as part of academic learning to facilitate student engagement with the community to instill and cultivate a deep sense of citizenship [personally and professionally] through volunteering.

My deeper interest in the tradition of volunteering in Ireland grew, in part, from my heritage as well as an opportunity that I was given to travel to Ireland as part of my Master's program, to experience Irish higher education and societal relationships. I heard that Ireland was known for Céad Míle Fáilte [a hundred thousand welcomes], and my personal experience did not disappoint. From the moment that I arrived in Ireland, my interaction with the Irish, filled me with a sense of family and belonging. I fell in love with Ireland and her people immediately, and I had never known a greater sense of home, than while I was in residence there. I remember clearly, as I flew back to the United States in July 2015, that I would return 'home' to Ireland so that I could

learn, grow, and give back, some of the abundance of values, tradition, service to others, that Éire had provided me through my great-grandmother. Learning and serving has always been an integral part of my life and helped to shape my ideals and who I am as a woman. I wonder if I am *who* and *how* I am today because of my past familial experiences of volunteering. Through my own experiences, I believe that volunteering provides invaluable learning and personal-professional growth opportunities that are transformative and enduring, but it is important to establish if similar experiences are shared by others.

As I read and research, I often think about what I represent. My educational discipline is that of sociology, communication and education. Who am I as part of this process? I am an engager, I am a practitioner, I am a participant in volunteering, education and adult learning. While completing my Master's degree, I was asked as part of my portfolio, to formulate a personal philosophy statement that encompasses who I am as a professional and as an educator. The authors of *The Handbook for Transformative Learning* made a statement that stuck with me, "Meaning is constructed through experience and our perceptions of those experiences, and our future experiences are seen through the lens of the perspectives developed from past experiences" (E. Taylor & Cranston, 2012, p. 15). This was a very important reflective lesson for me as it created an awareness of how interconnected my attainment of knowledge and learning experiences are with my contribution to society.

My life experiences foster diligence; perseverance; self-confidence; productivity; stability; passion for community; maintaining balance; reputation; positive attitude; personal satisfaction, and longevity. My education emphasizes diverse knowledge; organization; creativity; social responsibility; civic skills; self-awareness; global consciousness, and a desire for life-long learning. I look for the best in every opportunity but I am realistic and discerning which are important learned qualities. I strive to utilize past work experiences, gained knowledge, and a trained mind to enrich future possibilities with an innovative attitude of always learning, growing, and improving. Connecting the skills and knowledge from my life experience, work experience, and education (Dewey, 1986) serves to validate my sense of self-worth and appreciate the worth of others, while finding ways to inspire the desire to consistently pursue, develop, and realize the importance of self-worth through learning. These are fundamental characteristics of my personal and professional identity. Pursuing research on issues that really matter in today's society [where people come together in their role as citizens to impact their community and society] are important to me.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

What do I value and envisage for this research? Do I value the process, the outcome, or the impact? Perhaps I value all three in combination for a more holistic approach. I want to better understand volunteer identity and learning through stories of AVs. When did they begin volunteering? How long they have volunteered? What motivates them to volunteer? I want to know why they continue to include volunteering as part of their life activities. Embracing a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm for this research means that I recognize that the AV's social world is complex and that knowledge is constructed within a person when the information encounters existing knowledge that has been developed by experiences (Donileen, 2007). Exploring AV lives through the sociological lens of life course perspective and informal learning theory provides further insight and understanding of the relationship between identity and learning through volunteering. These concepts will be discussed in further detail in Chapters Three, and Four.

Taking an inductive approach toward exploration of volunteer identity and volunteering as informal learning through the life course specifically considers the AV's lived-experience of volunteering and the interpretation of the relationship of informal learning and identity formation through volunteering.

With the philosophical assumptions that guide the design of my research in mind, the study centered around the research approach of narrative inquiry. Through narrative stories, I examine the lives and learning of the AV's, structural contexts and social change from the historical and socio-cultural context of their life course (Elder Jr, 1998). The AV narrative stories [of personal learning, transformation, and understanding identity through learning and serving], have been the focus of this research, as it provided important models of learning that are vital to adult education, volunteer and community-minded longevity and preservation. These experiences and stories focus on how time, sequence, direction, and related concepts are used actively in everyday life and understanding those experiences through time, supports a constructivist view (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

The role of narrative inquiry in educational research is to help us to understand events and see them in a new or different way (Wellington, 2015). It is my belief that *exploring* how volunteering, as informal learning, may transform participants is key to *understanding* how volunteering, and informal learning over the life course, can

enhance formal education and generate learning that remains with an individual over time.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions evolved through exploration of the literature and focus on varying themes of identity and learning intertwined. Question One [RQ1] focuses on the theme of learning and awareness of volunteer identity. Question Two [RQ2] pertains to motivation and awareness of volunteer identity. Question Three [RQ3] comprises learning and volunteer longevity and Question Four [RQ4] represents learning and enduring understandings.

1. **Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**
2. **Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**
3. **Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?**
4. **Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

For recognition and clarity, the research questions will be numbered and **bold-typed** throughout each chapter in this thesis.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One
Has presented the background of the research, rationale for the study and objectives of the research. The context of the study as it relates to the research philosophy, research approach, and theoretical perspective was disclosed. The research questions were introduced and the structure of this thesis was established.

Chapter Two, Three, and Four
Presents the literature in brief three-chapter triplet. Throughout the three chapters, I review the literature as it pertains to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this study and the foundation for thinking about volunteer identity and learning is understood. Gaps in literature and research will be weaved throughout each literature chapter. Chapter Two briefly explains the history of volunteering in Ireland to establish the context, perspective and understanding of the culture of the AVs. In Chapter

Three, a working definition of volunteering is recognized and an understanding of personal and social identity as it pertains to volunteering is established. In Chapter Four, an exploration of formal and informal learning and lifelong learning is rationalized as underpinnings of volunteer learning, grounded by Life Course theory as a focal point for this research that draws the literature triplet to a close.

Chapter Five
Positions this research qualitatively and elucidates the approach and methods undertaken to complete this research project. Including the theoretical underpinnings of the research that were introduced in this chapter followed by in-depth descriptions of the methods used for data generation and analysis approach. A discussion on reflexivity and ethical adherence concludes the methodological positioning of this study.

Chapter Six
Presents the life journeys of four AVs from their earliest memories of volunteering, learning, and living, through their reflections of volunteering now, and their aspirations for future volunteering. The narratives in Chapter Six provide a background of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and values that have formed their volunteer identity and shaped their volunteer dispositions. Further, the Points 2 Ponder at the end of each of the four Vignettes are provided for reflection before the analysis in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven
Organizes the findings and threads of commonality generated from the in-depth interviews and reflective participant journals. There were two main levels of analysis in this study, as a blended approach of *Narrative Analysis* and *Thematic Analysis* and findings from the detailed thematic narrative analysis and the themes that emerged are presented related to the four research questions.

Chapter Eight
Presents the gift of the Active Volunteer Disposition (AVD) and major findings from the analysis in Chapter Seven and discusses those findings in relation to the published literature. The AVDs are described and features for each Disposition are outlined and grounded in the literature.

Chapter Nine
Draws the thesis to a conclusion, highlights key points in findings, identifies the gaps in literature and offer recommendations toward policy, institutions and for further research. I conclude with my reflection on the journey of this study and the new learning that has come from it.

1.5 EXPLANATION OF THE LITERATURE TRIPLET: CHAPTERS TWO, THREE AND FOUR

There has been a growing interest within the public and education sector to better understand the individual volunteer, volunteer motivation, participation and the ways in which volunteers learn. National and international research have studied various strands of volunteer identity, learning and volunteer organizational culture throughout the lifespan with common themes such as volunteer motivation (Einolf & Chambré, 2011; Grönlund, 2011, 2012; Hustinx, Handy, & Cnaan, 2010; Toraldo, Contu, & Mangia, 2016; J. Wilson, 2012), volunteer youth identity (Grönlund, 2011), volunteer personality types (MacNeela, 2008), volunteer and organization relationships (Gallo, 2013), volunteer leader behavior (Bowers & Hamby, 2013; Fuller & Friedel, 2017; Posner, 2015), lifelong learning (Duguid, Mündel, & Schugurensky, 2007; Epure, 2013; Gallo, 2013; Rogers, 2014), volunteer Quality of Life (QoL) and well-being (Cattan et al., 2011; E. Hogg, 2015; Shye, 2010; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001), volunteer nature (Toraldo et al., 2016), and social responsibility (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017) to envisage certain volunteer types and conditions in which volunteers engage (Toraldo et al., 2016). While motivation is key to volunteer contribution, the influences that cause a person to identify with volunteering and the learning that remains throughout the lifespan, has not been researched.

In the next three chapters, I review the literature as it pertains to the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study as a foundation for thinking about how volunteer identity and learning is understood through family, community, societal and educational influences, and volunteer beliefs, attitudes and values over the life course, with the following research questions as a guide:

1. **Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**

2. **Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**
3. **Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?**

4. **Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

The research questions will be numbered and **bold-print** throughout varying sections within the three-literature chapter triplet. I have set them individually in sections where I felt they would best invite the first level of clarity that is needed before reading Chapter Five, *The Methodology*.

Chapter Two begins with summarizing the history of volunteering in Ireland to establish the context, perspective and understanding of the culture within which this research is enmeshed. Chapter Three provides a brief overview, understanding, and analysis of meaning, and refine a definition of volunteering. I review and discuss volunteer identity in relation to 'self' [personal identity] and 'community' [social identity] and question if personal identity or social identity is a more appropriate perspective on volunteer identity, or if volunteer identity is more a combination of both. Chapter Four will explore volunteer learning through pedagogic, andragogic and heutagogic theories of formal and informal learning as foundational structures that underpin volunteering and its relationship to adult and lifelong learning, concluding with Life Course theory as an embodiment of this research.

Through the literature triplet, I present idiosyncratic differences between identity and learning as it pertains to AVs [as defined in section 1.1 in Chapter One], and uncover gaps revealed in the research to surmise how we [as adult educators] can better understand volunteer identity and strengthen learning through volunteering. Ultimately, this chapter triplet presents an evaluation of the current literature and provides the context for this research in that an exploration of this nature may present important models of volunteer identity and learning that are vital to adult education, and community-minded preservation and longevity.

The diagram in Fig. 1.2 provides a basic visual framework of the literature and how it was approached to ground the themes present within the research questions.
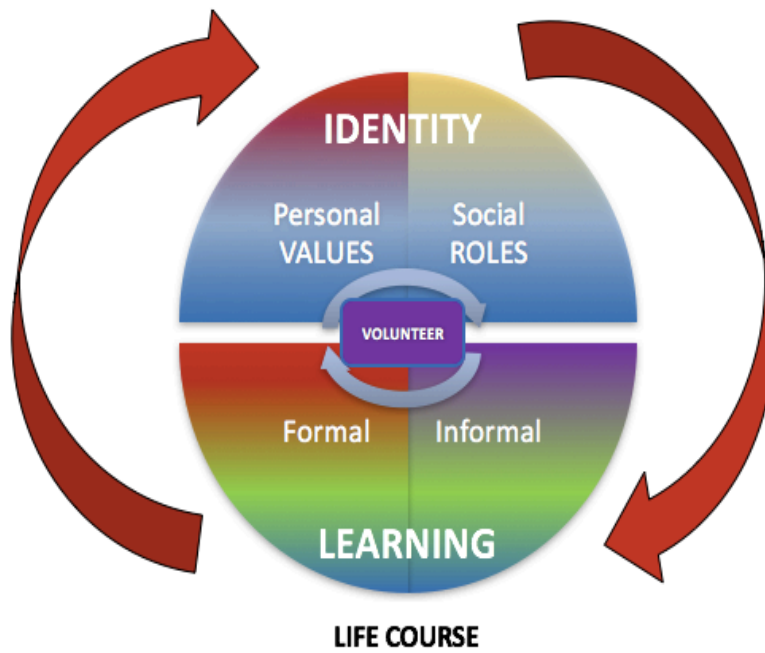
FIG. 1.2 VOLUNTEER HISTORY, IDENTITY & LEARNING DIAGRAM

CHAPTER TWO: VOLUNTEER HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

"It is almost tautological that the majority of what we know, we never set out to learn"
David Matheson

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves first to clarify and establish a definition of the volunteer within national and international contexts. A summary of the history of volunteering in Ireland will be discussed to establish the milieu of the volunteer and the culture within which this research is situated. This chapter will conclude with a discussion on the importance of volunteering and volunteer contribution through comprehensive international research and more limited research within the Irish community.

2.2 DEFINING THE VOLUNTEER

The essence of volunteering is simply something that you do of your own free will to benefit another person, group or organization. While historically, the idea of volunteering is centuries old in Ireland, the term volunteering has numerous and varied meanings, including volunteering, volunteerism, community engagement, community participation, and civic engagement, helping behavior (Stebbins, 1996), voluntary worker, free-will worker, 'good' Samaritan and gratuitous worker. The connotation of these terms all vary widely but espouse the common understanding of humanitarianism, philanthropy, and helping others (Gallo & Duffy, 2016; Routon & Walker, 2017). Through a desire to unify communities for collective good, individually, or as a group, these meanings illustrate varied forms of 'civic agency'. 'Civic agency' refers to the ability of citizens to work collaboratively across cultural, racial, and global differences such as political systems, religious organizations, income, geography and ethnicity to address challenges, and solve problems (Adler & Goggin, 2005).

Research on volunteering for leisure (Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008; Stebbins, 1996; Veal, 2017) asserts that the word 'volunteering' can be seen as a leisure or 'freely chosen' activity. Determining whether to situate volunteering as a personal leisure activity or as a societal/civic activity poses a conundrum. Each present strong, valid perspectives related to volunteer identity and learning through volunteering [i.e. motivation, quality of life, satisfaction, civic responsibility, skills and

qualifications] and yet neither perspective clearly suits the concept of volunteering. Therefore, examination of volunteering as explored through the lens of both leisure and civic is essential. Stebbins (1982) defines serious leisure as 'the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience'. He contends that volunteering is a serious leisure activity and that there are two principal motives for volunteering. The first is for helping others [altruism] and the other is helping oneself [self-interestedness] (Stebbins, 1996).

Volunteering is recognized as fundamental to society and it is primarily a social activity that one participates in as contribution to their community (Volunteers, 2015). The Citizen's Information Board in Ireland, defines volunteering as "a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, local communities, and other causes that are undertaken without payment" (2010). The International Labor Organization (2012) defines voluntary work as "unpaid, non-compulsory work" – that is, time that individuals give without pay to activities performed either through organizations or directly for others outside their household". The UN defines volunteering as activities that individuals or groups offer to society in ways that often require a degree of sacrifice, but also involve satisfaction as well as motivation (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). The varying nuances of volunteering will be discussed further in the following chapters as their terms, roles, theories, and impacts are teased out in relation to what it means to be a 'volunteer' historically, societally, individually, socially and through learning. As a general working definition, and including elements of the definitions offered above, I define volunteering as *something that you make a voluntary, conscious choice to do, as an individual and of your own free will, and not for monetary gain, for the service of another person, group or organization not related to you.* For simplicity, throughout this chapter, terms related to these varied forms of 'civic agency' will hereunto be referred to as *'volunteer'*, *'volunteering'* and *'volunteerism'*. This is not to be confused with the term 'Active Volunteer' (AVs) which was introduced in section 1.1 of Chapter One and will be used concerning my research participants and identification of literature that relates to these research participants.

2.3 VOLUNTEER HISTORY IN THE IRISH CONTEXT

There is little doubt that volunteering and volunteerism occurs in every society around the world. The United Nations (UN) has recognized the contribution of volunteering

and the influence that volunteering has on tackling challenges that communities and societies face all over the world. In their 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (2015) the UN recognized that volunteerism is beneficial from the macro-societal level of the large-scale social processes and effects that volunteering has on the stability of a community down to the micro-individual level of the small-scale interactions between volunteers and the individuals, groups and organizations that they serve.

Historically, the ethos of volunteering and community work is well-established within Irish society and the Irish people are consistently 'civic-spirited' (Neville, 2016). There is a strong interest by the Dáil Éireann [one of the houses of the Oireachtas - the national parliament in Ireland], in the concept of active citizenship and civic participation through volunteering in Irish society, and a willingness to participate in measures to achieve these (Weller, 2008). Per the World Giving Index in Fig. 2.1, Ireland is regularly listed as one of the top ten volunteering countries in the world (Foundation, 2018).

FIG. 2.1 CAF WORLD GIVING INDEX 10th Edition (October 2019)

The National Committee on Volunteering confirms that historically, volunteering by community members throughout Ireland have made an enormous contribution to Irish life and that Ireland has a rich history of volunteering with an informal approach of neighbor helping neighbor, and giving one's time, energy, and commitment to others

outside of one's immediate family (2002). Volunteering is deeply rooted in community activities "arising out of long-established traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchanges" (Volunteers, 2015). The influence of religion has played a central role in the early tradition of voluntary action and charitability in Ireland. As early as 500 AD when the monks, who were known for their provision of shelter and aid to the sick and homeless (European Commission, 2010), began building monasteries in Ireland, their presence influenced the Christian tradition of 'caritas' [the Latin term for charity or 'virtue'] and is simply understood as giving service to benefit others. As early as the mid 16th century through the mid 1960s, the Catholic Church provided essential welfare assistance and services to members of their local parish, as the belief was that the church and community were to care for those who were in need, and the government felt no immediate need to intervene (European Commission, 2010). Subsequently, Protestant philanthropy in the 18th century and the rise of Catholic religious philanthropy in the 19th century established and fostered the notion of charity through voluntary hospitals and organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul, which still exists today (European Commission, 2010).

Volunteering was fostered further through the Gaelic revival of the later 19th century, the ethos of self-help embodied in the cooperative movement, and through informal local customs of 'cooring' [a term based on mutual cooperation and reciprocal obligations between familial and community ties in rural Ireland (Byrne & O'Mahony, 2012)]; and the Meitheal [Meitheal is an old Irish term that describes how neighbors would come together to assist in the saving of crops or other tasks (Dolan, 2004; National Committee on Volunteering, 2002) and is a term still used in rural areas of Ireland]. Non-religious organizations such as the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), which are still active today, also contributed significantly to Irish society and the volunteer movement. Voluntary Action Ireland argues that volunteers are responsible for creating and maintaining most of the community-based sports clubs, facilities and national governing bodies of sport in Ireland (Ireland, Trainees:, Wade, Mathieu, & Perrin, 2004). In the 1970s, the Irish government began providing basic welfare and social services to the community. Nevertheless, the religious and community volunteer sector continued to supplement the state's assistance with additional provision to people in need. Toward the latter third of the 20th century, aid from religious organizations started to decline where community and independent, non-profit organizations began to fill the need. Volunteering Ireland, the national resource for volunteering, was originally established in 1997 under the parent

group – Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups. It gained independence in 2001 (Citizens Information Board, 2010).

To reinforce volunteering as a societal power structure, a green paper supporting voluntary activity entitled "Working Papers: Defining the non-profit sector" was published by the Policy Research Centre, National College of Ireland in 1998 (Donoghue, 1998). This initiated a series of meetings between the Irish government and voluntary community sectors to discuss policy and develop measures to support the voluntary sector in Ireland. Additionally, the early results within this green paper influenced another announcement by the UN that set the wheels of increased voluntary participation in Ireland into motion. During this period, noted global humanitarians such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Gandhi, and John O'Shea, founder of the Irish UN, challenged the issues confronting humanity in the 21st century. Matters of peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production (UN, 2017) are among the frequent challenges. Irish research has demonstrated how volunteering has the ability to strengthen social capital and social connectedness (van Hout, Tarrant, & Foley, 2011). In 2000, a governmental White Paper published by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, entitled the (Ahern, 2000) followed, outlining the importance of the Government in enabling the voluntary sector to work more effectively without taking control of it. Shortly thereafter, the UN proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers. This initiative by the UN was a means to increase volunteer reflection, recognition, and promotion of the act of voluntary service. Ireland was inspired to use this as an opportunity to raise awareness of volunteering nationally and to celebrate the immense contribution that volunteering has made in Irish life (Ireland et al., 2004).

This commitment by the government to support volunteering in Ireland as well as the encouragement of Taoiseach [Prime Minister of Ireland], Mr. Bertie Ahern, to provide an enabling framework to help voluntary activity, led to the creation of the National Committee on Volunteering (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Not only have volunteers provided much needed support for voluntary organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but play a key role in the economic health and development of society. The value, as reported by the Volunteer Development Agency, in 2001 estimated that the economic contribution of the volunteer [by calculating an average wage to reported volunteer hours] totals approximately 598m Euro to the non-profit community and to the Irish Community (National Committee on Volunteering,

2001). There is little doubt that these organizations have been instrumental to increasing awareness and supporting participation within the communities, nationwide.

In 2006 during the reign of the An Tíogar Ceilteach [the Irish term for 'Celtic Tiger' that represented rapid economic growth in Ireland from the 1990s through the late 2000s (van Hout et al., 2011)], concern began to grow regarding the extent to which Irish citizens are prepared to be involved in communities: time, work, commuting and patterns of changing values and lifestyles brought into focus questions about whether there was a "crisis" of volunteering and community (Ireland. Taskforce on Active, 2007). Teachta Dála (TD) Ahern expressed deep concerned about the direction that Irish society was heading regarding civic engagement and *social capital* (McIlrath, Farrell, Hughes, Lillis, & Lyons, 2009).

'Social capital' has been defined in a variety of ways and has been used to capture the complex effects that norms and social networks contribute both directly to social solidarity and indirectly to enhancing democracy and strengthening economic effectiveness (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Further, social capital expresses the sociological essence of community strength (Putnam, 2000; Siisiainen, 2003). A solution to the problem of common action and opportunism presupposes the development of voluntary collective action, and it is connected to the inherited social capital in the community. This collective action, from Putnam's (2000) view, are divided into three main components: first, trust and 'positive' values; second, social norms and obligations; and third, social networks of citizens' activity, especially voluntary associations (Siisiainen, 2003). TD Ahern held that the changing demographics, and rapid growth of the economy, in Ireland required a fresh perspective on how volunteering should be approached. In an effort to understand and engage with the sociocultural changes shaping Ireland and its people (Weller, 2008), TD Ahern initiated a taskforce to combat the inactivity of community and political engagement by community members, and the overall decline of social capital in Ireland.

This taskforce, dubbed the Taskforce on Active Citizenship was employed to advise the government on the steps that should be taken to ensure that the wealth of civic spirit and active participation already present in Ireland, continued to grow and develop (McIlrath et al., 2009, p. 20). In 2006, the National Census added a question on volunteering (European Commission, 2010). This was the first time a formal request for information on volunteering had ever been asked and it set a benchmark to monitor voluntary activities in Ireland. In 2007, the Taskforce conducted a survey of 1,045 people over the age of 16. They found that approximately 23.1% of the population

aged 16 and over participated regularly in voluntary activity. They highlighted their 2007 report entitled Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship with their vision for active citizenship. "In our view, being an Active Citizen means being aware of, and caring about, the welfare of fellow citizens, recognizing that we live as members of communities and therefore depend on others in our daily lives" (Ireland. Taskforce on Active, 2007, p. 23) Active citizens:

- support and become involved in different types of voluntary and community activities
- respect and listen to others with different views from their own
- play their part in making decisions on issues that affect themselves and others, by participating in the democratic process
- respect ethnic and cultural diversity and are open to change
- welcome new people who come to live in Ireland (Ireland. Taskforce on Active, 2007)

In 2016, Volunteer Ireland reported that 14,000 volunteers registered with the national volunteer database, I-VOL. These volunteers contributed over 490,000 hours and over €10 million to the economy (Volunteer Ireland). This is a major increase from the 2001 estimates of civic and volunteer value reported in 2013 through the Central Statistics Office (Central Statistics Office, 2015). The National Committee on Volunteering declared that volunteering remains tremendously important and faces numerous challenges and opportunities including demographic changes, new employment participation patterns, and new developments at regional and local level. "Ireland is a society of increasing heterogeneity and changing values linked to the growth of individualism and consumerism and the perceived decline of communities is the need to rethink what is required for genuine democratic and civic participation. However, the most immediate problem is the absence of a stated policy and strategy for developing and supporting volunteering" (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002, p. 44).

The Taskforce had been key in inspiring many nationwide, within the voluntary sector, to establish many fundamental departments, initiatives, and programs to support volunteering, including two of the biggest non-governmental organizations, *Volunteer Ireland* and *The Wheel. Volunteer Ireland* is the national volunteer development agency and a support body for all local volunteer centers and volunteering information services in Ireland. They partner with local centers and community organizations to provide opportunities for anyone living in Ireland to volunteer. *The Wheel* is Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organizations, charities and social enterprises. They are a registered charity in Ireland and assert themselves as a 'one-stop-shop' for anything related to the charity and nonprofit sector. These organizational bodies provide important services and civic connectors that are fundamental for

establishing, supporting, and strengthening the impact of volunteerism throughout Ireland.

In July 2017, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) was established following a decision announced by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, to Dáil Eireann on 14 June 2017. Oversight of the community and voluntary sector became the remit of the DRCD who are endeavoring to breathe new life into the voluntary sector. As an action under Strategic Goal 4 of the DRCD's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020, the DRCD pledged to encourage and support the community and voluntary sector by developing a national strategy on volunteering (Development, 2017). They consider the volunteer sector vital to building a more just and prosperous society, contributing to all key areas of national life, including social, community, and human capital in Irish society, and have pledged to increase funding levels to the support sector. As recommended in the Program for Partnership Government (2017), DRCD published a national Call for Input (CFI) in autumn 2018, to seek input from stakeholders to establish the current position of Irish volunteering, future aspirations for volunteering, and to develop a National Strategy on Volunteering in Ireland with the hope of forming a National Advisory Group (2017). Further, the Program also pledges increased supports to the sector, a more coherent policy framework and the development of a supportive strategy to help encourage a cooperative approach between the sector and public bodies (2017). Within their CFI, they state "the Department sees a national strategy on volunteering as one element of achieving our objective of recognizing, expanding and supporting the role of volunteers in civil society" (DRCD.gov.ie, 2018, p. 7). This recognition of the importance of volunteering in Irish culture and society toward establishing national standards of best practice for sustainability in the volunteer sector is encouraging, and the new National Strategy of Volunteering is slated for publication in 2019. While the government is supportive of volunteering and the role of volunteers in civil society, academic research on volunteer identity, roles, and learning in Ireland is very limited.

2.4 Volunteering and The Community Connection

The previous section on the history of volunteering in Ireland provided evidence that volunteering is integral to self-sufficiency qualities of community involvement and that volunteering has a strong sustaining function for Irish society (National Committee on Volunteering, 2001). To best connect the literature to my research, I present the next section with this research question in mind: **RQ2 Why does someone volunteer?**

Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been a part of their identity? There needs to be an understanding between the motivation [an action] of an AV and the connection [the being] that we make *for* or *with* our 'self'. The next section will discuss how connections that AVs make based on values, goals, and socio-cultural environments can provide a significant contribution for/with/to the communities that AVs live in. This connection to the community through engagement can be seen as significant to the individual volunteers through factors related to personal Quality of Life (QoL) as a personal standard of health and comfort [relating to well-being, life-satisfaction, and sense of purpose] (Binder, 2015; Cattan et al., 2011; Shye, 2010; van Hout et al., 2011). The connection can also be signified through personal and social factors that motivate engagement, such as belief in the cause, a desire to help others, learning, desire to be good person, and professional or career-type motives (Parker et al., 2009; Stebbins, 2004; Volunteer Ireland).

The broad notion of citizenship [the awareness of belonging to a country] and civic engagement [acting on the behalf of or for the benefit society], are deemed important elements for this research (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Clingerman & Locklin, 2016). Participating and contributing to the furtherance of a community in which one belongs is an imperative personal and social aspect of volunteer well-being, motivation, and learning (Fear, Bawden, Rosaen, & Foster-Fishman, 2002) and is therefore embraced within this review.

VOLUNTEER QUALITY OF LIFE

Volunteering has been shown to increase people's well-being across the lifespan (Cattan et al., 2011; Einolf & Chambré, 2011), and connects participants to their community through a variety of social and local activities (Brennan, 2005; MacNeela, 2008; MacNeela & Gannon, 2014; McGrattan, 2014; van Hout et al., 2011). In a recent study on social processes and connectivity in Irish volunteering, volunteers described their experiences as contributing to increased personal well-being and sense of purpose, development of friendships and meeting new people (K. M. Brown, Hoye, & Nicholson, 2012). A quantitative analysis on volunteering and life-satisfaction of the British populace from 1996 – 2008, carried out by Martin Binder (2015), shows positive effects of regular volunteering on life satisfaction and increases significantly based on the amount of time volunteers spend on volunteering. Binder's study also found that volunteering also positively impacts on one's satisfaction with leisure time and

evidence for the positive impact of volunteering on health and participant's social life (Binder, 2015). A longitudinal analysis in Ontario, Canada, examining community engagement on 72 participants from age 17 – 32 years reported that community involvement contributes to a more fully developed moral and civic identity and to a commitment to future involvement (Hasford, Abbott, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 2017). Further, a review and analysis of in-depth, international research on volunteering and QoL of adults, Cattan, et al (2011) concluded that voluntary activity can have broad and varied positive impacts on the QoL of older adults, but were unable to support a clear connection between volunteering and QoL outcomes.

VOLUNTEER MOTIVATION

The motivational foundations of volunteering are understood as relating to values, where volunteering provides for individuals to express important values of altruistic and humanitarian nature, and to feel it is important to help others (Weller, 2008). Volunteers' motivation and the concept of serious leisure are critical in explaining the subjective well-being of volunteers (Cattan et al., 2011; Pi, Lin, Chen, Chiu, & Chen, 2014; Stebbins, 2004). It is clear from research that motives play a significant part in how volunteers and volunteering is perceived. People volunteer for a variety of reasons, but the most significant motivations, according to the 2004 Voluntary Action in Ireland report, was belief in the cause (15.4%), asked to help (12.5%), wanted to help (11.5%), wanted to be neighborly (10.7%), knew or liked the people already involved (10.3%), had time to spare (7.9%), and for enjoyment (7.1%) (Ireland et al., 2004). Altruism, learning, career, and social motives have been found in more or less all research on the motives for volunteering (Grönlund, 2011). Van Hout's (2011) research on social processes and connectivity in volunteering found that volunteer participants identified volunteering activity as a specified community need, providing work related experiences, fulfillment in free time and opportunity for up- skilling. People tend to be motivated to volunteer due to the human need to relate to and engage with others (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Engagement within a community fosters healthy relationships and a greater sense of community (Pancer, 2015).

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter began with a brief journey through the history of volunteering in Ireland and discovered that historically, the ethos of volunteering and community work is well-

established within Irish society, and the Irish people are consistently civic-minded. Additionally, volunteering is deeply rooted in the community, Irish citizens have made an enormous contribution to Irish life, and Ireland has a rich history of neighbor helping neighbor. Literature recognized the notion that volunteering is integral to the self-sufficiency aspect of community involvement and has a strong sustaining function for Irish society. Research presented that volunteer participation in Ireland helps community groups and organizations to increase their capacity and to expand their impact that they might not otherwise reach without assistance of volunteer input. Further, people tend to be motivated to volunteer due to the human need to belong, relate to, and engage with others, which introduces the next chapter for consideration – Chapter Three volunteer as personal and social identity.

CHAPTER THREE:
VOLUNTEER AS PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a summary of the history of volunteering in Ireland was introduced and the influence of the volunteer on the community through individual connections relating to QoL and motivation for volunteering were evaluated. The foundation for this research question: **RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?** will be explored in this chapter. The first part of this chapter expands on the QoL and motivations of AVs as it considers the idea of volunteering and volunteer identity connected to 'self' [personal identity] and 'community' [social identity] through personal values and social roles that are linked with motivation, QoL, *and* social relationships. Volunteer identity is based on people's self-identity for personal and pro-social reasons (Meier & Stutzer, 2008; Prouteau & Wolff, 2008), that include a sense of belonging (M. A. Hogg, 2006), personal satisfaction (Chacón, Vecina, & Davila, 2007) and sense of well-being (Allen, Goldwasser, & Leary, 2012; Cattan et al., 2011). Collective and individual volunteer styles will also be examined in this chapter as further underpinnings of volunteer identity. The diagram in Fig. 3.1 provides a visual model of the literature connection in this chapter.
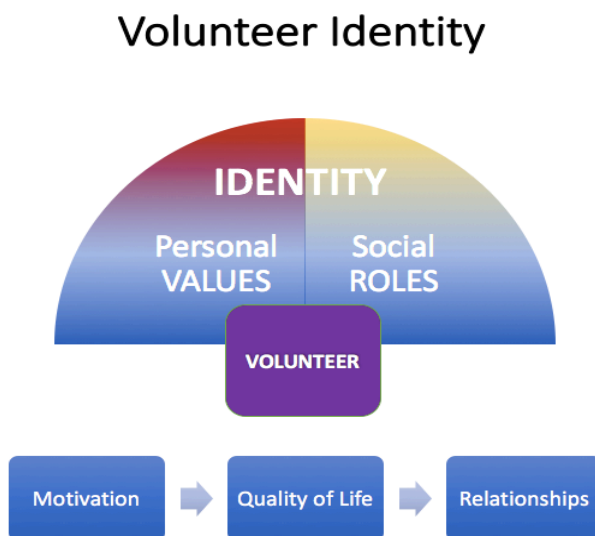
FIG. 3.1 VOLUNTEER IDENTITY DIAGRAM

3.2 APPRECIATING THE PERSONAL VOLUNTEER SELF

Volunteering, as the literature confirms, can be practiced for social and individual reasons that are often tightly connected and messy to separate. Volunteering is a distinctive, significant, and wide-spread social practice (Einolf & Chambré, 2011). It is often regarded as so central to their self-perception that it virtually defines volunteers (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Our self-perception and identity are constantly changing as our daily lives change, and how we see and interact with the world around us are constantly changing. Identity, in the most ambiguous sense is personal or individual existence. Oxford's definition of identity sheds more light on identity with this definition "who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others; a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others" (Oxford, 2011; "Oxford English dictionary," 1990). As the meaning of identity takes form, one can begin to view the concept of identity through numerous lenses. For the purposes of this study, identity is explored through the social, narrative and transformative lens, as it is most conducive to educational and learning experience.

Not all volunteers are alike when it comes to understanding and articulating who they are as a volunteer, or what volunteering means to them and why, which is why further research in this area is necessary. Volunteering is also a personal expression of the greater 'civic' self [your understanding of yourself within a community], as a citizen with the rights and responsibilities of that community and with a sense of citizenship and belonging in your community, as discussed in the previous chapter. The 'civic' identity differs somewhat from that of a volunteer in that it offers a relational element of being community-minded and a feeling of connection to the community by engaging and participating within that community (Brennan, 2005; Byrne & O'Mahony, 2012). This provides significance for understanding how we construct identity and make meaning through volunteering (Biesta, Field, Goodson, Hodkinson, & Macleod, 2008; Daloz, Keen, & Keen, 1996), as experiences in the community during emerging adulthood can have a strong impact on a personal commitment to future civic engagement, as well as shaping a "moral or civic self" (Hasford et al., 2017)

The traditional value system of charity, also discussed in the previous chapter, has historically informed voluntary action in Ireland, and conveys that an individual's and community's need for self-expression as part of one's identity, is a significant aspect of volunteering that does not change over time (Citizens Information Board, 2017;

Sundeen, 1990). I do not entirely agree with that stance as a research study completed by Hasford (2017) suggests that there are profound and complicated relationships between the self and various forms of community involvement [e.g., activism, volunteerism, or religious involvement] across the life course (Van Willigen, 2000). This 'complicated' state suggests that the volunteer identity is not fixed but is more fluid and can change somewhat, as one ages, societal and environmental influences, needs, and life circumstances change.

While needs, motivation and satisfaction may change over time, quite possibly it is the core beliefs and values that someone holds onto, that does *not* change over time. Previous research in this area remains unclear. Volunteering can be used in the processes of self-definition and identity in expressing the different core values of individuals (Grönlund, 2012) that further illuminates the interconnected relationship between the social self and the individual self. Volunteer Ireland reports that volunteering is divided into two main strands that include collective and individual motivations for volunteering:

> 1) **Identification with Communities of Interest** – this is a *collective* style of volunteering where volunteers have a strong sense of personal responsibility to their community and are primarily concerned with 'giving back' to the community.

> 2) **The Need for Individual Expression**– this style of volunteering is more *individual* where volunteers are seeking to learn something or make some gain for themselves through volunteering (Volunteer Ireland)

Nevertheless, the ways individual volunteers experience and associate volunteering with their personal identities has been little studied (Grönlund, 2011).

3.3 APPRECIATING THE SOCIAL VOLUNTEER SELF

Volunteers that are motivated in the collective sense might feel useful when helping others (Gil-Lacruz, Marcuello, & Saz-Gil, 2017; Stebbins, 2004). This can include volunteering to offer new ideas or skills and to set an example for others (Brennan, 2005) in a leadership capacity. Individuals may view volunteering as an investment and expect external payoff in human capital (E. Brown & Ferris, 2007). Contributing to a form of social networking (Prouteau & Wolff, 2008); or for professional or career advancement (Dorsch, Riemer, Sluth, Paskevich, & Chelladurai, 2002). Additionally, participation on school and professional boards is considered volunteer work that contributes to society and creates that network to link community together through volunteering (Brennan, 2005). Gil-Lacruz (2017) argues that individual expression

through volunteering is carried out to collect internal rewards as a direct result of their activity and as an outcome of the volunteer work they do. I disagree. Is this not a direct contradiction to van Ingen and Wilson's (2017) statement earlier in this section that it is 'so central to their self-perception that it virtually defines them'? Could it not be possible that volunteering is so much a part of someone's identity that the person doesn't even consider *why* they volunteer until or unless they are asked to reflect on that?

While *volunteering* can be best described as an action, *volunteer* is a descriptor based on an understanding of self and self-reflection that is so interconnected, it can be complicated to distinguish in literature between individual understandings and motivations, social identities, and social actions or processes. Identity can be termed as the various meanings given to oneself by the self and others through relationships implicit to the identity (Gecas & Burke, 1995). Oyserman (2012) further defines identities as a collection of personal and social traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who someone is. The idea that personal identity and social identity are knit together through a notion of the self which is made up of various social identities and personal identity that draw values deeply personal but socially patterned (Hitlin, 2003) is well researched but complex. According to Grönlund (2012), volunteer identity is built according to one's identity and values that ultimately result in a sense of self-acceptance. Her research has shown that volunteering is one arena that can fulfill an individual's process of self-definition and because of an individual feeling, his or her core values are satisfied through volunteering. Although, volunteer identity types are still emerging/evolving and are still grossly under-researched.

Volunteering has also been theorized and categorized into a wide-range of social role identities. Einolf (2011), toward constructing a hybrid theory of volunteering, conducted a comprehensive research that expands on Wilson and Musick's (J. Wilson & Musick, 1997) categories of human, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011) in that cultural capital and habitus [in particular] should be regarded as highly useful concepts for recruiters in trying to understand the behaviors of potential volunteers (Dean, 2016), and Hustinx's (2010) unified theory of volunteering. Einolf argues that volunteering and research on volunteering can be classified into three major theoretical categories: *social theories* [that study roles, context, and networks] (Bourdieu, 2011; Dean, 2016; Grattan, 2012; Nash, 2003; Siisiainen, 2003); *individual characteristic theories* [that study traits, values and motivations] (E. Brown & Ferris, 2007; Gil-Lacruz et al., 2017; Gonzalez-Perez, Labhrainn, & McIlrath, 2007; Grönlund, 2011; Marta, Manzi, Pozzi, &

Vignoles, 2014; Quillinan, McEvoy, MacPhail, & Dempsey, 2018); and *resource theories* [that study skills and free-time] (Aral, 1997; Binder, 2015; Gould et al., 2008; Pi et al., 2014; Stebbins, 1996, 2004) justifies the importance of continued research on volunteers and volunteer learning. Further, research conducted by Dorsch (2002) on organizational role identity and volunteer commitment recognized that someone who either gives time to several organizations, or a lot of time to one organization is likely to develop a volunteer role identity, in line with Einolf's (2011) social theory, but does not clearly articulate volunteer identity and learning through volunteering that is the basis of this research.

Literature on volunteering supports that people have one essential need, and that is to feel a sense of belonging (Biesta et al., 2008; Donileen, 2007; Gecas & Burke, 1995; Oyserman et al., 2012), as if part of a family, group, organization or community. This is important to this research as it may support significance in the durability and enduring feature of volunteering on the individual as these social influences provide a sense of belonging through a wider social network of community involvement. Social science research on topics such as interpersonal relationships, attitudes, social identity, social influence, and value for the well-being of others, help us to understand how individuals relate in their community and come to see themselves as citizens (Pancer, 2015). Volunteering has been researched and widely defined as a social role identity (Einolf & Chambré, 2011; Hitlin, 2003; Thoits, 2012; van Ingen & Wilson, 2017); and performance identity (Gil-Lacruz et al., 2017; Ho & O'Donohoe, 2014). Holdsworth's (2010) study on student motivation for volunteering during higher education found that many participants talked about making a connection and developing a sense of belonging. The advantages and benefits of volunteering are well documented, and include an increased personal well-being and sense of purpose, meeting new people and making new friends, and a sense of giving something back (van Hout et al., 2011).

The research thus far, commonly agrees that when people regularly engage with the purpose of helping others, it tends to promote positive relationships, increase awareness of social responsibility, improve self-esteem, devoted citizenship, and a feeling of investment in community (Finley, 2011). Weller (2008) explains that participant positioning of themselves as volunteers actually ignites the varying identities within family, friends, local community members relationships.

3.4 SUMMARY

The literature reviewed in this chapter offered that the social and personal features of volunteer identity and the roles that are recognized as part of volunteer identity are important for this research. Specifically, they express the distinct differences in the identity characteristics of the volunteer and inform, at a foundational level, *why* the individual may choose to volunteer and whether that comprises of collective or individual motivations and individual QoL. The closely connected relationship between personal and social identity and the interconnected relationship it may have with volunteer learning is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR:
VOLUNTEER THROUGH FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, learning originated from parental guidance and mentor relationships through the common maxim *"the school of life"* that evolved over time, into formal learning through apprenticeships and later more formal institutions of academic learning. As this research focuses on the life histories and the lived experiences of AVs over their life course, who attended institutes of higher and adult learning, this chapter will consider the literature pertaining to formal and informal adult learning and examines theories that are closely related to volunteer learning. Can volunteer learning that is life changing and enduring happen without formal intervention? The exploration of literature in this chapter will attempt to provide some foundational clarity for the following research question: **RQ3 Does a volunteer feel that there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?** A clear explanation is not easily found and this chapter explores the connections and dichotomies that may exist with volunteer learning and formal/informal learning theories. The diagram in Fig. 4.1 provides you with a similar visual framing to that of the Volunteer Identity, that informs this chapter on 'volunteer learning' using the same themes of motivation, QoL, and personal and social relationships presented in the previous chapter on volunteer identity. Volunteer Learning is connected and affected by motivation, QoL, and Relationships in much the same way as Volunteer Identity.

Volunteer Learning
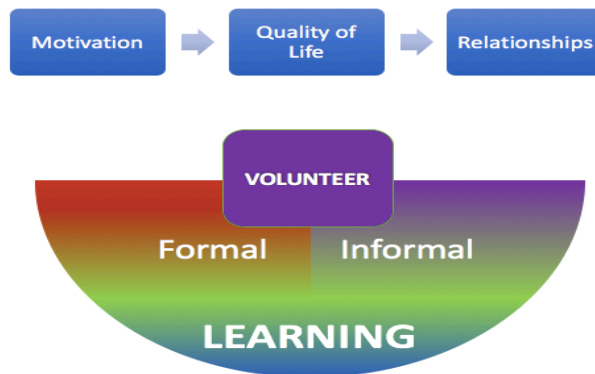
FIG. 4.1 VOLUNTEER LEARNING DIAGRAM

4.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMAL LEARNING AND VOLUNTEERING

INTRODUCTION

Education and learning across the life course, whether formal or informal, will greatly impact the entirety of someone's life. For example, you might call your adolescence your formative years because that time-period had such a strong influence on the rest of your life and formative is a word that describes something that made you who you are. Education throughout the life-stage, is a highly valued institution for sustainability and success of societies all over the world and continuous education is vital to the stability of high-functioning societies. For clarification, and as a way to build upon the foundational principles of learning, formal learning refers to the institutional ladder that goes from preschool to graduate studies. Formal learning is any type of learning program that is structured, in which the goals and objectives are defined by a training department, instructional designer, and/or instructor. Pedagogy [Teaching Children] is an encompassing term concerned with what a teacher does to influence learning in others and generally covers the lifespan from early adolescence through early adulthood and the learner is dependent upon the educator who decides what, where and when the student will learn – school learning (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). Andragogy [Teaching Adults] covers the adult lifespan beyond the normal considerations of compulsory schooling within the formal method and practice of teaching adult learners and adult education, and that adult learning is partially self-directed (Hase & Kenyon, 2013).

Adult learning can be subdivided into three contextual categories a) formal learning in a degree-granting institution, b) non-formal learning that is organized and typically for leisure or community oriented learning, and c) informal learning derived from the experience of daily life (Bennett, 2012). Many models and concepts of formal learning in adult and higher education, through engaged and hands-on experience, have developed over time and have been associated with volunteer activities where critical thinking and reflection of experience are key to experiential and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990; Moylan, Gallagher, & Heagney, 2016). Learners learn through experience and process what they experience in ways that they can understand (that make sense to them), which causes a change in the way they understand the meaning of, or their future perception of that learned experience (Moody, 2012; Parker et al., 2009). Experiential and transformative learning are formal educational learning theories that have been theorized, refined, researched and practiced within third level and adult education in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, for more than thirty years. Experiential learning and transformative learning theory are closely related and the processes of learning between the two, often converge. Experiential and Transformative learning, as formal learning theories, will be defined and discussed further in the following two sections because they have been linked with formal volunteer learning.

Volunteering is a powerful source of learning (Kerka, 1998, 2003) and formal education and training for volunteers is well researched and well-established. This type of formal education is essential, because volunteers need initial and ongoing orientation to learn about the organization and training to perform particular tasks or assume additional responsibilities. Workshops, seminars, mentorship, apprenticeship, training manuals, and other methods familiar to the education enterprise are integral to the mission of volunteer agencies (Bourdieu, 2011; Dean, 2016; Kerka, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Weller's research on young Irish adults in civil society discussed that an individual level of education is suggested in the following studies as the most consistent predictor of volunteering (Weller, 2008). He further suggests that formal education increases the potential to volunteer as it heightens awareness of problems, increases empathy and builds self- confidence. His research also suggests that educated people are also more likely to be asked to volunteer, with the result that they belong to more organizations and develop civic skills (Weller, 2008). This has specific association within the content of the next section.

There is wide consensus that volunteering is positively linked with education

(Taniguchi, 2006; D. G. Wilson & Hartung, 2015; J. Wilson, 2012). In Wilson's volunteerism research (2012), he challenges that education beyond tertiary level is perhaps the most important 'asset' as far as volunteering is concerned, at least in advanced industrial societies. This concept of social and cultural capital has been research and discussed in great detail by a wide range of scholars as being important to volunteering (E. Brown & Ferris, 2007; Dean, 2016; McNamara & Gonzales, 2011; van Hout et al., 2011; Weller, 2008). Although, one question that stands out here is an 'asset' to whom, exactly? There is a continual tension that exists between the state and its moral obligations to the community and that of volunteer organizations to provide a specific quality of 'volunteer' [i.e. level of skill and education] that groups specific kinds of people for engagement in specific kinds of volunteering. From the individual perspective [as well as Bourdieuan], the concept of social capital emphasizes that conflict and power of social relations increases the ability of an individual to advance their own interests generally through social and civic activity as an individual and as a societal 'asset' (Bourdieu, 2011). Individual and social positions [that include educational advancement] and the division of economic, cultural, and social resources are legitimized with the help of Bourdieu's symbolic capital. Social capital then becomes a resource, albeit an 'asset', in the social struggles that are carried out in different social arenas or fields (Siisiainen, 2003). This presents a problematic relationship between state and governing bodies, and civil society that represent volunteer organizations and people of all backgrounds and level of education, and begs the question, 'whose interests are being served'?

Wilson further argues that educated people belong to more organizations and have broader horizons, as measured by attention to current affairs, higher levels of cognitive competence, and higher status jobs (J. Wilson, 2012). These forms of learning challenge the learner to assess their value system and worldview and to be potentially changed by the experience (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). But, do they fully explain the kind of learning that a volunteer experiences independently, without the guidance or assistance of a teacher, instructor or guide?

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY AND THE VOLUNTEER

Research suggests, and educational theorists tend to agree that experience in learning matters (Enfield, Schmitt-McQuitty, & Smith, 2007), and without an experience, there can be no true learning or real understanding of a concept or situation (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). The concept of experiential learning is not a

modern-day phenomenon and is an established theoretical approach to adult learning in Europe, North America, and Australia (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1996). Dewey (1938) is most often credited with laying the foundation of experiential learning with his belief that all meaningful education comes through experience.   Adult learning theorists (Bonk & Kim, 1998; Boud et al., 1996; Chickering, 1977; Kerka, 1998; Mezirow, 2000; Rogers, 2014) among numerous others, have extensively theorized adult learning processes as experiential.

Experiential learning can be formal or informal but must always have a component of reflection of the learning experience and application of new knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Dewey contradictorily argues that not all experiences are equally educative, and just experience does not necessarily lead to learning or mean that learning will take place. Without the opportunity to reflect on an experience and apply new knowledge, experiences may be improper (Dewey, 1938). Therefore, experiential learning is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values (Kolb et al., 2001; Miettinen, 2000). Unlike traditional classroom situations where learners may compete with one another or remain uninvolved or unmotivated, and where the instruction is highly structured, learners in experiential learning situations cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach (Munck, Tandon, McIlrath, & Hall, 2014). Moylan (2016) explains that experiential learning is an educational approach that has been subject to significant discussion and research within the confines of Higher Education. The key argument that I present is that experiential learning is an andragogical method that assumes a formal teacher/student role that insinuates an adult cannot learn experientially without the assistance of a teacher to instruct his reflection.

To understand more about this type of learning, it is necessary to briefly examine how the concept of experiential learning has developed, what factors are involved in its implementation, and what typical learning activities could be employed to promote this type of learning. This kind of direct experience methodology can foster refined values, deeper knowledge, and more purposeful skills development (Moylan et al., 2016). As learners learn by doing, not just through experiments and classroom exercises, but through real world experiences outside of the classroom, they not only begin to take a personal interest in their learning experience, but they begin to invest themselves in that experience and form connections and attachments to the value of their experience for themselves and others (Boland, 2014). These informal learning experiences along with formal reflection and guidance work very well as part of educational curriculum

and in settings within primary, and post-primary through third-level and adult education spaces where schooling meets the fulfillment of community needs (Gonzalez-Perez et al., 2007; Hardwick, 2013). This model of community-based learning will be explored in more detail in a later section.

Research indicates that learning by serving others through volunteering within a community can be a vital [and albeit, natural] component to one's formal education. By providing carefully chosen experiences, to connect the learner with the concepts and course outcomes, educators can make a more powerful and sustaining impact of the learned content (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002; Moyer & Sinclair, 2016; Moylan et al., 2016). The process of learning by doing is as important as the content, itself. "Experiences are generalizations of the interactions between humans and the entities of environment, in practical activity" (Miettinen, 2000, p. 59). This type of experiential learning is best facilitated because of the learner's participation in practical events, which supports the creation of experiences and their subsequent reflection on these experiences (Moylan et al., 2016). Again, the question remains if experiential learning can happen autonomously as informal learning without guidance of an educator in situations such as volunteering.

For several decades, educational psychologists have studied the learning process and have concluded that learning is equated to a change in behavior (Hansen, 2000; Kolb et al., 2001). From there, consensus begins to diverge. Hansen (2000) asked post-graduate learners to identify, based on personal experience, what they considered characteristics of learning through experience to be when they themselves felt such learning took place. Through a series of individual and group responses, a definition of experiential learning was formulated as learning which combined mental, emotional and physiological stimuli (Hansen, 2000). Enfield (2007) asserts that to accomplish true learning and real understanding that is experiential learning, a sequence of three discrete components is needed: 1) A "concrete experience" (Kolb et al., 2001) where the learner is involved in an exploration, actually doing or performing an activity of some kind; 2) a reflection stage (Boud et al., 1996; Mezirow, 1990) whereby the learner shares reactions and observations publically and processes the experience through discussion and analysis; and 3) an "application" or "conceptualization" phase that helps the learner deepen and broaden their understanding of a concept or situation by cementing their experience through generalizations and applications (Enfield et al., 2007; Kolb et al., 2001; Miettinen, 2000). Miettinen (2000) believes that the element of experience and reflection make experiential learning particularly

attractive for adult education theorists in furthering the concept of life-long learning.

Dewey underpins the concept of experiential learning in *Experience and Education* (1986) by explaining that previous experiences affect current experiences, which naturally influence future experiences and the learning that takes place on one day will evolve into additional learning as time progresses. This statement about past experiences affecting future experiences, I agree with, but is contradictory to the understandings of experts in the previous paragraphs. According to Dewey (1986), mustn't this evolution of learning only happen formally with the facilitation of an instructor to learner? According to Kolb (2001), experiential learning is a "recurring cycle" and as a result of the reflection and application phase from one experience, new concepts, hypotheses, and/or impressions arise that lead the learner to further exploration which restarts the experiential learning cycle (2001). Kolb developed this idea whereby he described experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (2001, p. 235). He proposed that there were four components within a cycle of learning - the concrete experience (feeling), reflection observation (reflection), abstract conceptualization (thinking) and active experimentation (doing). In other words, a learner will move through this cycle by "experiencing, reflecting, abstracting and acting as they construct meaning from their experiences" (Baker et al., 2002, p. 52). These four components of Kolb's learning cycle have been shown to transform and internalize the learning process and can help promote an experiential learning experience (Moylan et al., 2016).

Hudson (Hudson, 1999), posits that learning happens in "life-cycles of transformation" that are consistent with life events [positive and negative], that include births, deaths, job transitions, gain or loss, and experiences that push us to grow; and we turn to learning naturally to help us through those experiences (Biesta et al., 2008; Blossfeld, Kilpi-Jakonen, de Vilhena, & Buchholz, 2014; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Nesbit, 2012). Could this combination of formal and informal learning theories help to explain how influence, environment, and experience impacts volunteer learning through the life course? This leads to investigation of the concept of transformative learning theory in the next section.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY AND THE VOLUNTEER

For many (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Bouchard, 2013; Dirkx, 1998; Illeris, 2014; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011), the ideal of transformative learning is a persistent element of the lived

'learning' experience. The formal concept of transformative learning, on the other-hand, is another formal learning theory that comprises all learning which implies changes in the identity of the learner (Illeris, 2014), "The identity has more than ever before become the core of life— and it makes sense to see transformative learning as the processes by which we deal with the constant possibility, urge and necessity to change and transform elements of our identities" (Illeris, 2014, p. 573). Transformative learning is a process of change in one's perspective, or way of thinking and drives real behavioral change. It is important for people to identify their own problems, become critically aware of their political, socio-economic and cultural situations, and ultimately try to transform the reality collectively (Quillinan et al., 2018).

Mezirow explains that adults have acquired a coherent body of experience – associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses – frames of reference that define their world (Mezirow, 1997). This frame of reference Mezirow refers to, are habits of mind which are habitual ways of thinking and feeling that are influenced by our assumptions, or set of codes, that define our point of view and serves as the constellation of our belief, value judgement and attitude toward a particular understanding (Mezirow, 1997). As with the three components of experiential learning mentioned in the previous section, Mezirow further (2000) considers that transformative learning changes ones perspective through a psychological [through a change in understanding of self]; convictional [through a change in their beliefs]; and behavioral [where people change their actions or lifestyle because of the learning that has occurred] process. This is important because as our world around us and the things that we experience in our daily lives changes, so do our individual interpretations and perceptions about that world around us.

To be conscious and functioning in our everyday lives is to be always learning, changing and growing, which is the framework for transformative learning. Transformative learning is rooted in the way a person communicates and is a common learning experience that deals with a variety of personal, individual and unique transformations (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). It provides a vibrant learning community that focuses on helping learners evolve from the traditional inactive learner to the progressive, effective, transformed learner. A study that was done with AVs in Taiwan found that continual learning achievements were acknowledged by participants and they desired to share what they learned with others (Lee, 2016).

Transformative learning is predominately a formal education theory through adult learning processes that develops autonomous thinking (Mezirow, 2000). Dirkx presents

four strands of conception by four adult education theorists that encompass the framework for transformative learning theory. The first strand, originated by Paulo Friere, asserts that transformative learning is beneficial on both a personal and social level, fosters critical consciousness also known as *conscientization*, in which learning helps the learner develop a deeper understanding of self and the way they think about themselves and the world (Dirkx, 1998).

The second strand is Jack Mezirow's understanding of *critical reflection*, which is the most well-known theory in the field of third level and adult education, and represents the understanding of how a learner makes meaning from their experiences and the process of making meaning of experiences through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection (Dirkx, 1998). This self-reflection process produces autonomous thinking that is essential for citizenship and responsible decision making and can lead to significant personal transformations (Mezirow, 1997). The third strand, developed by Larry Daloz, is *developmental transformation* which centers around the concept of learning as growth, and the need to find and construct meaning within our lives (Daloz, 2012). According to Daloz, this is a key factor that motivates learners to construct new meaning structures that help them make meaning from their changing world (Dirkx, 1998). For example, the way in which one made sense of their life through experience, education, and societal environment, growing up in the USA, would be very different from the perspective one would gain as a middle-aged woman living in Ireland. Your environment, culture, learning and experiences have changed, you have matured, you have two decades of education and life experience between your 'self' today and that adolescent past.

The fourth and final strand is the theory of personal transformation, *individuation*, a less common theory by Robert Boyd, which deals with the expressive or emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and integrating in daily experiences of life (Boyd, 2003). The daily learning process of self-knowledge and the knowledge of our 'self' *in* the world and *of* the world, makes our unconscious conscious by becoming aware of parts of our 'self' that we did not previously recognize. Dirkx explains that this design of holistic and conscious learning is interpreted as part of our everyday experience of life (Dirkx, 1998). While Boyd's theory emphasizes the importance of consciousness in learning, his theoretical point of view is one of the least structured and under-developed concepts in this pedagogical framework and could use further reinforcement. Each of these experiential and transformative learning theories collectively form the overall learning experience that is an ongoing, dynamic, and ever-changing journey full of potential and learning that endures. Learners are transformed

into thoughtful, thorough, and reflective professionals that undergo a transformation in their understanding of 'self', belief system, and lifestyle, holistically and completely (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008).

While experiential and transformative learning are exceptional ways of experiencing and considering the connection and challenges between the 'self' and the social identity, they are a very particular component of formal learning in education that does not explain the transformative learning that happens through experiences that are not related to conscious learning environments, such as volunteering.

COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING AS FORMAL ADULT LEARNING AND THE VOLUNTEER

Volunteer learning is understood to be broadly informal (Duguid et al., 2007). Establishing the relevance of volunteering in higher and adult education is key to this research because the findings from this research can have significant impact on institutes of higher learning and provide future models of volunteer learning that can inform formal academic pedagogy. Therefore, while the development of this research will not include an evaluation of Community-Based Learning (CBL) curriculum or programs, it does consider the impressions of AV experiences in higher education and whether their learning influenced, impacted or enhanced their volunteering experiences. Volunteerism, and the desire to engage oneself within a community can be an individual initiative, and institutions of higher learning can be a catalyst for inspiring, fostering and motivating those individual desires to create a community of civically engaged, invested adult learners (Gonzalez-Perez et al., 2007). The learning concept of CBL in higher education, is often explored as an evolving formal learning structure in higher education that connects university, learner, and community together (Adshead & Quillinan, 2017). Although, while CBL is regularly researched, it is not widely embraced by universities in Ireland as a pedagogical model or best practice, with very few Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) implementing CBL.

CBL is very much in its infancy stage in Ireland, and what exactly CBL is can be very confusing (Hardwick, 2013). Explaining what CBL is *not*, before explaining what it *is* may help clarify the differences. First, a look generally at engagement and volunteering while attending an institute of higher education – so as not to confuse it with the formal CBL models is necessary. Volunteering and 'civically engaged' students, while in higher education, is purported to be highly beneficial across several levels. Boland (2014) suggests that volunteer participation in higher education is widely associated

with such concepts and ideals as democratic citizenship, corporate social responsibility, and education as a public good (Boland, 2014). Findings in Mc Grattan's (2014) study on volunteering in Irish higher education affirms the positive experiences of volunteering. She reports that all volunteers in the study commented on how much they enjoyed their voluntary experience. They also discussed a sense of achievement and accomplishment and feeling part of something, gaining practical experience, learning new skills and making new friends and connections (McGrattan, 2014).

As discussed in the previous chapter on identity, a sense of belonging within a community is a significant aspect of volunteering. Gronlund's Finnish study on identity and volunteering in young adults offers insights into the holistic and varied ways that volunteering is associated with identity including processes of self-definition and expressing individual core values (Grönlund, 2012). Let me be very clear here that what is being described in this context is 'free-will' volunteering by students and that this is not CBL in Irish higher education. This is important to note once again, that while volunteering and 'civic engagement' is being reported as highly beneficial for participating students, university and community, within the university context, there is a significant disconnect between the research findings and university investment. There tends to be some disagreement among research that the institutes of higher learning are only required to transfer the knowledge of what volunteering means, and are in no way obligated to support that experience beyond the classroom. Finley (2011) purports that the civic mission of higher education is only to provide learners with an 'understanding of civic life', as opposed to also providing learners with the skills and values needed to actively participate in and influence that civic life. There has been widespread research done on learners who participate in volunteering within higher education. Extensive literature (Conlon, 2004; Dib, 1988; Eraut, 2000; Lee, 2016) supports that learners develop fundamental skills and personal attributes (which are not easily obtained within the textbook and classroom setting), that empowers learners to interact effectively with other people. Literature further suggests (Adler & Goggin, 2005; M. Barrett & Zani, 2014; Finley, 2011) that volunteer participation in civically oriented activities, has a significant impact on intrapersonal and social development.

CBL is an intentional pedagogical strategy to integrate student learning in academic courses along with engagement within a community. The work that is carried out is built on partnerships between instructors, students, and community groups that are holistically reciprocal and beneficial (Hardwick, 2013). CBL requires learners to take initiative, collaborate with diverse people groups, and make decisions where they are

accountable for the results, which form the basis for future experience and learning (Bruce & Bloch, 2013).

The growth which has occurred in volunteering activities in Irish adult and higher education in recent years, as well as the investment of those institutions, (Boland, 2014) demonstrates that there is growing enthusiasm for developing the civic dimension of adult and higher education in Ireland from an informal pedagogy of volunteering to the more formal pedagogy of CBL.

SUMMARY

This section considered the literature pertaining to the formal learning theories of Experiential Learning, Transformative Learning, and CBL. An examination of these formal learning theories and their connection with volunteer motivation, QoL, and relationships discussed in section 4.3 reveal that volunteer learning does not easily fit into a 'one size fits all' formal pedagogical framework rather, the informal nature of learning through volunteering may be more appropriately aligned with informal learning frameworks, and that further exploration is necessary. Therefore, the next section discusses the relationship of informal learning and volunteering.

4.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMAL LEARNING AND VOLUNTEERING

INTRODUCTION

While Experiential, Transformative, and Community-Based Learning have vital components of learning that can happen informally through experiences outside the classroom environment. It is represented most exclusively with formal learning as part of adult learning curriculum and/or classroom learning. Volunteering is a form of learning that happens more informally, through understanding that occurs by the act of experiencing and reflecting organically rather than through textbook reading and formalized pedagogy (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Epure, 2013). With Adler, et al's observation that 'volunteering is a form of informal learning', in mind, a focus on the following research question: **RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning that and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?** can be considered in this section. Merriam (2004) provides a most simple explanation of informal learning: "Informal learning refers to experiences of everyday living from which

we learn something". It is a late 20th century term referring to widespread practices of knowledge (Heath 2016) that occurs outside of the externally imposed curricula of formal education systems, and is learning that often occurs without the mediation of a teacher and evaluation mechanisms (Duguid et al., 2007).

Informal learning differs greatly from formal learning in that formal learning expects goals and outcomes from an experience, whereas informal learning relies on learning from an experience. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (Rogers, 2014). Some have described informal learning as the most natural forms of learning and characterized it as learner-driven (Carliner, 2013). Informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure and is commonly driven by an internal motivation to learn something simply because it motivates us through celebrating those "aha" moments when we connect to things in our environment (Mezirow, 2000). It is not structured like formal learning [in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support] and typically does not lead to any form of official certification (Carliner, 2013). Volunteering is a very good opportunity to learn informally and helps learners register a real progress in personal development and skills, and building competencies (Epure, 2013). Whilst there are many kinds of informal learning that can be explored, I specifically examine self-directed learning, incidental learning, socialization, and lifelong learning underpinned by a life course perspective, as they most closely influence identity creation and learning that occur through volunteer experience over time.

In this section, I assess selected informal learning theories that have been connected to research on volunteer learning that bear significant consideration toward my research on volunteer learning. In the first three sub-sections, I consider Schugurensky's (2000) tri-part model of informal learning that correspond with adult learning theory, [a) self-directed learning, b) incidental learning, and c) socialization] as solid volunteer learning theories, that have been individually researched in volunteer literature. Next, I explore lifelong learning because all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective (Froehlich, 2015) tends to fall under the remit of lifelong learning. Finally, I explore life course perspective as an underpinning of lifelong learning.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AND THE VOLUNTEER

Andragogy [Adult Learning] is the method and practice of teaching adult learners [also known as adult education]. Adult learning that is partially self-directed (Hase & Kenyon, 2013) means that it falls between the formal and informal learning categories. Another term to be aware of is Heutagogy [self-directed learning] as the study of self-determined learning, and is an extension of, rather than a replacement for pedagogy and andragogy. Heutagogy displays certain principles about learning which are absent from pedagogy, and often from andragogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). An Autodidactic is a person who chooses to freely practice self-learning [self-education, self-learning or self-teaching] which is education without the guidance of masters [such as teachers and professors] or institutions [such as schools] so differs from Andragogy and Heutagogy somewhat in that the Autodidactic learner embarks on the learning journey on their own. Andragogy and Heutagogy rationalize that learners can be both independent and interdependent; they can strive for autonomy and self-direction in learning and can identify the potential to learn from novel experiences as a matter of course and are able to manage their own learning (Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Jarvis, 1987; Knowles, 1975) . What this means is that as a person matures and leaves formal schooling, they have more freedom to pursue self-directed learning and will shift to find solutions for real-life challenges. Self-Directed Learning (SDL), is likely the most recognizable type of informal adult learning and is well- informed in adult education literature. It was first developed by Malcolm Knowles (1975) and is thought to be the primary way that adults learn. Knowles maintains that SDL is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Hartree, 1984; Knowles, 1975). Per Schugurensky (2000), SDL is conscious and intentional, exemplified by an adult who wishes to learn more about an historical event, and so reads resources to intentionally and purposefully meet the desired learning need (Bennett, 2012).

Roberson's (2004) research on older, rural adults found that SDL is highly engaging, variably structured, collaborative, goal-directed and is the main way that adults beyond formal education learn. It is a powerful concept that impacts the learner in a variety of ways which includes self-awareness, empowerment, life satisfaction, and specific information for necessary change (Roberson, 2004). It fits in quite nicely with the motivation, QoL, and relationship themes set out in section 2.1. Although, I rationalize that SDL doesn't quite fit the criteria for volunteer learning because I hypothesize that

AVs don't generally set about volunteering with the initiative to "learn something" rather they just do it [volunteering] and it [learning] just happens (Stebbins, 2004) organically.

INCIDENTAL LEARNING AND THE VOLUNTEER

The next type informal learning for consideration is Incidental Learning. Incidental Learning [or accidental learning] is a method of learning by simply being 'there' where they are impacted by some element within their environment (Kerka, 1998). The learner learns from seeing, asking questions, and maybe doing. Often people don't plan on participating in incidental learning, it just happens. Matheson (2004) states that we are learners of things which in the main we do not set out to learn. We acquire information without purpose as to its acquisition, which is not to say that we might not later devise a purpose for it (Matheson, 2004), but a great deal of our learning is incidental and unplanned. Schugurensky (2000) considered incidental learning unintentional but conscious; meaning that an adult is aware learning occurred by happenstance. Kerka (2000) describes incidental learning as unintentional or unplanned learning that results from other activities. It is situated, contextual, and social. It can happen in many ways: through observation, repetition, social interaction, and problem solving (Rogers, 2014; van Hout et al., 2011), from mistakes, assumptions, beliefs, and attributions (V. J. Marsick, Volpe, & Watkins, 1999); or from being forced to accept or adapt to situations (Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999). Incidental learning refers to learning resulting from natural opportunities for learning that occur in everyday life when the person controls his or her own learning (Conlon, 2004; V. J. Marsick et al., 1999). This "natural" way of learning (Rogers, 2001) has characteristics of what is considered most effective in formal learning situations.

Incidental learning that occurs in the process of an activity is a significant part of the volunteer experience (Kerka, 1998) and begins with some kind of a trigger (E. Hogg, 2016), that is, an internal or external stimulus that signals dissatisfaction with current ways of thinking or being (V. Marsick, Watkins, & O'Connor, 2011). There is an impressive amount of incidental learning that takes place in volunteer work (Duguid et al., 2007). Yamashita (2017) notes in her research on motivations for participating in formal volunteer activities in urban communities, that incidental learning happens among volunteers in environments and situations such as working with other volunteers, service recipients, hospice patients, and immigrants.

SOCIALIZATION AND THE VOLUNTEER

Socialization, which Schugurensky (2000) described as unconscious and unintentional learning occurs, for example, when a person practices family norms or adapts to an organization's culture. Socialization includes all the unconscious influences on us through our family and groups within our wider society, through religion and sport, through our chosen music and our peer pressures in such things as dress and eating habits (Rogers, 2001). Socialization is also known as *tacit knowledge* or *tacit learning* and these terms are used interchangeably but is predominately used in educational research (Eraut, 2000). Most learning is informal, tacit learning and are influenced by experiences and major life changing events that elicit learning. For many learning is merely a factor of life, a continual striving to deal with problems rather than as learning, per se (Biesta et al., 2008).

Volunteering is an activity or social practice that encompasses cultures, generations, and societies in which informal learning is known to occur and learning through volunteer experience is significant. Even in most formal learning situations, there are elements of informality; of situated learning; of the application of the generalized learning to the specific life situation of the learners; of the reconciliation of the new learning with the individual experience of the learners; undertaken by the learners themselves, even if these are mostly unconscious or unintentional (Rogers, 2014; Simons, 2003). Per their preliminary research findings, Schugurensky and Mundel (2005) suggest that the primary mode for learning in volunteer activities is incidental and informal, and results in tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000; Moody, 2012). Rogers (2014) argues that because tacit learning is largely unconscious, it is more difficult for the learner to recognize it for what it is and to perceive its relevance to any new learning. It is very effective practical learning, can be applied to real-life immediately, and the learning comes from the application rather than the application coming after the learning (Eraut, 2000). I would tend to disagree with this statement and suggest that with volunteering learning application may not be relevant to varying circumstances that the AV does not identify with at that time.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE VOLUNTEER

Trying to establish a definition of lifelong learning that is easily understood and universally accepted by learners, educators, and governmental policy makers seems

near impossible. The Irish Department of Education and Science (2000) defines lifelong learning as the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Most definitions include some interpretation of 'any learning activity that is meaningful and focused, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis, with the aim of improving self, and gaining knowledge, skills and competence throughout the lifespan from cradle to casket'. Lifelong learning not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competiveness and employability (Friesen & Anderson, 2004; McKenzie & Wurzburg, 1997).

Lifelong learning covers much of what has been discussed in the previous sections: formal [e.g., organized education programs, systematic job training] and informal learning [e.g., self-learning, use of the Internet for new information], and incidental learning such as information acquired through conversation with friends; (Boulton-Lewis, 2010; Yamashita, López, Soligo, et al., 2017) and generally includes any activities related to learning over the life span (Bee, Boyd, & Johnson, 1998; Gallo, 2013). Bagnall (1990) surmises that that there are four main functions of lifelong learning: 1) the preparation of individuals for the management of their adult lives; 2) the distribution of education throughout an individual's lifespan; 3) the educative function of the whole of one's life experience; 4) the identification of education with the whole of life. While the benefits of lifelong learning are yet to be confirmed with more empirical data, existing research has established that lifelong learning has benefits for numerous aspects of one's life and participation in lifelong learning programs improves one's knowledge and competency (Blaschke, 2012). As you continue learning you become more confident, more adaptable to change, and are less risk averse (Field, 2012a). It helps you to achieve a more satisfying personal life, health and well-being (Aspin & Chapman, 2000; Biesta et al., 2008; Epure, 2013). It provides cognitive and intellectual stimulation (Lamb & Brady, 2005) and investment in social capital [e.g., resources such as interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity, and shared information gained from relationships with others] (Boulton-Lewis, 2010). The more you learn the more you can understand the world around you while developing skills that have a positive impact.

Lifelong learning is often affiliated with employment and labor force participation and career advancement and, therefore, research on lifelong learning typically focuses on the working age population (Biesta et al., 2008; Field, 2012a, 2012b) rather than on volunteering. However, broader government and education initiatives calling for deeper citizen involvement in community, civic and social fabric of society, lifelong learning and volunteering research is now trending. There is an increasing amount of

research into the relationship between volunteering and lifelong learning (Yamashita, López, Soligo, et al., 2017). This includes both the formal learning required for the professionalization of formal volunteering and the informal learning outcomes of the individual experience in the adult volunteer (Dib, 1988; Eraut, 2000; Rogers, 2014; Yamashita, López, Soligo, et al., 2017) .

Lifelong learning is a holistic process that combines a balance of formal and informal learning throughout one's life, from cradle to casket. Coombs and Ahmed (1974) summarize lifelong learning most eloquently, "the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play: from the example and attitude of families and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning (Carliner, 2013) – including that of a highly 'schooled' person.

LIFE COURSE THEORY AND THE VOLUNTEER

Life course [which may also include the terms life span, life history and life cycle in varying contexts] is a sociological theoretical perspective that considers life history, life stories, and social pathways as the lived experience of human lives over the course of life. The life course paradigm is best viewed as a theoretical orientation that guides research on human lives within context (Elder et al., 2003). Elder (2003) further, views the life course as a *theoretical orientation*, one with particular relevance to scholarship on human development and aging, and uses the term "theory" with this particular meaning.

Life course can also be considered a methodology used to support studies on how people live their lives from childhood to old age and how their life paths (that include historical and geographical context) influence the course of personal and social development. Elder (1998) contends that life course theory supports researchers in the construction of empirical questions, conceptual development, and research design. The life course provides a framework for studying phenomena at the nexus of social pathways, developmental trajectories, and social change (Elder et al., 2003; Elder Jr, 1998) .

For the purposes of this inductive research, the life course perspective is used more as a theoretical lens in which to examine volunteer identity and learning, rather than a method for measuring personal and social development. The life course approach for this research, is a useful way of understanding volunteer identity and learning.

Life Course and Volunteering

There have been several studies [largely quantitative] on volunteering over the life course in varying capacities that support life course approach in volunteering research findings. Research conducted in America by Oesterle et al (2004), examined whether educational, work, and family roles promoted volunteerism during late adolescence and early adulthood, as in later in adulthood. Examining a data panel from the Youth Development Study, they found substantial continuity in volunteerism from adolescence through the transition to adulthood [as well as attending school during this life stage] promoted volunteerism in the years following. Their research also found, in contrast, that full-time work investments in the early life course were found to hinder volunteer participation, as well as during the time of raising young children in the family and earlier parental ages. The results of their study support a life course perspective for understanding civic participation (Oesterle et al., 2004).

While this research is complementary to this study, it focuses on volunteering and civic participation rather than looking at how experiences over one's life deeply impacts their identity and learning. The European project Education as a lifelong process [funded by the European Research Council] (Blossfeld et al., 2014) provided from a life course perspective, an empirical analysis of adult learning in eleven European countries as well as Australia and the USA. It studied the socio-economic relevance of work-related adult learning and the inequality of participation in the various learning opportunities provided in these countries. One of the many findings from Blossfeld et al (2014) analysis, was that initial educational inequalities tend to be reproduced throughout peoples' life course. This body of research links life course and lifelong learning, with some societal and socio-economic impacts, but does not relate to volunteer identity and learning.

Hogg (2016) conducted a significant piece of research in that it examined volunteering over the course of individuals' and their families' lives drawing from panel survey data. The original body of research was quantitative; however, this report takes a qualitative approach. It explored how engagement changes over the life course, and how this impacts volunteer engagement in older age. The report used data from interviews

conducted in England to *'develop a heuristic put forward by Davis Smith and Gay (2005), which proposes three categories of older volunteer: constant, serial and trigger volunteers'* (E. Hogg, 2016). This research, while important to the understanding of volunteering over the life course, lacks the depth of volunteer identity and learning that is significant for my research.

A quantitative study done by Lancee and Radl (2014) examined how volunteering varies over the life course. They based their research on three theoretical explanations (resources, interests, and role substitution), and analyzed how changing family characteristics, employment status, and educational attainment affects individual volunteering behavior. Their research found that volunteering behavior is relatively stable over the life course and further illuminated that 'although life course events have an impact on the frequency of volunteering, their influence is limited and largely constrained to events occurring in the family domain (Lancee & Radl, 2014). Another American study on volunteer behavior conducted by Sundeen (1990) examined the relationship between family life course status (based on marital status, parenthood, and age of youngest child) and volunteer behavior. It also looked closely at the impact of being a single parent on volunteering. This research was quantitative and used a Gallup survey to analyze and disseminate findings which is not equivalent to this study.

Still, another research conducted by Van Willigen (2000) used data from a representative panel to study the long term impact of volunteering on life satisfaction and perceived health of persons aged 60 and over. She found that older volunteers experienced greater increases in life satisfaction over time as a result of their volunteer hours than did younger adult volunteers and experienced greater positive changes in their perceived health than did younger adult volunteers (Van Willigen, 2000). This research is similar in design and implementation to Tabassum et al (2016) UK research on volunteering and well-being over the life course. Further, quantitative research was conducted on formal volunteering over the life course in Australia (E. Gray, Khoo, & Reimondos, 2011), which focused on how a life course perspective can benefit the study of people's involvement in volunteering.

These research pieces, while covering the theoretical underpinnings of life course, varied greatly in the content of their research questions and illuminates for me that considering a quantitative study of life course would not be suited to answer the questions in this research. It seems likely from the largely quantitative research using life course, that examining volunteer identity and learning narratively and qualitatively from a life-course perspective is quite novel in design and execution.

Life Course and Life Long Learning

Life course theory plays a prominent role in the conceptualization of education and lifelong learning [as is further discussed in the methodology Chapter Five], and research examining lifelong learning from a life course perspective has been conducted. In the UK, Biesta et al (2008) explored differing dimensions of lifelong learning, different lifelong learning trajectories and identities, and the wider benefits of adult learning over the life course. The Learning Lives project took a biographical approach by focusing on individual adults and their learning biographies and trajectories and the relationships between learning, identity and agency in their lives using a combination of life-history research, longitudinal interpretative life-course research and analysis of longitudinal panel survey data. The project produced significant and extensive findings related to learning and life course. Closely relevant to this study is that much learning is tacit and routinized; major life changing events often trigger learning, just as learning can lead to significant changes in people's lives; adults have widely differing dispositions towards learning, and for many learning is merely a factor of life, a continual striving to deal with problems than as learning (Biesta et al., 2008). Still another UK body of research from Jamieson et al (1998) reports on a qualitative study of a group of older people involved in adult education. The aim of the study was to illuminate the meaning of education from a life course perspective. The findings of the study illuminate the diversity of life experiences, which influence the significance of educational activity to individuals over the life course (Jamieson et al., 1998).

The area of life course theory has been shown to connect people with historical and cultural environments and experiences that create changes within societal institutions with individuals and families in wide ranging contexts that include volunteering and learning concepts. Thus, a review of literature has failed to provide evidence that life course theory has been used in relation to research of this nature [i.e. wholly qualitative research on volunteer identity and learning].

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I addressed informal learning theories and related them to motivations, QoL, and relationships that AVs may encounter as part of the holistic learning process. I positioned the informal learning theories of incidental learning, self-directed, socialization, and life-long learning within the research and consider inconsistencies

and gaps between the literature and the focus of this research. I concluded this chapter with a look to life course theory underpinning lifelong learning. Volunteers often experience growth in personal knowledge and confidence through volunteer and life perspectives and experiences (Posner, 2015). Their ability to create constructive relationships (Bowers & Hamby, 2013), and their capacity for new levels of accountability (Fuller & Friedel, 2017) that inform significant learning qualities. These learning theories will be encountered again in Chapter Six, Seven and Eight. This chapter has revealed that research on volunteer learning is substantial overall, but very limited in scope with respect to volunteer identity and learning over the life course.

4.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

Review of the literature has identified that historically, personal and social Identity is an important element for volunteer learning, and that further study into the interconnected relationship between identity and informal learning over the life course, for volunteers, can be useful for creating, supporting and maintaining important volunteer learning models. Additionally, an exploration of volunteering in Ireland and formal learning has shown that further research, support, and investment in community engagement and CBL, by the higher education institutions is critical, and that individual learning can be powerful, whether taught, self-experienced, or self-learned.

There is little doubt that formal education increases one's awareness and aptitude for engaging in wider society through volunteering and that volunteering as an informal element of learning for an adult can have a critically positive and sustaining effect, as well. Research has shown that college students who participate in civic engagement during their college years, may offer positive and long lasting effects as graduates (Binder, 2015; Bruce & Bloch, 2013). A study on volunteering in the European Union [in a report specifically for Ireland], (European Commission, 2010) espouses the influence of volunteering in HEIs and the impact it may have on the graduate. It reports that those who have reached the Third Level Qualification are more than twice as likely to volunteer after graduation, as those with Primary Certificates (48.6% compared with 23.2%) and higher and lower professionals had the highest participation rates in voluntary activities (24.7% and 25.6%, respectively), while semi-skilled and unskilled workers (12.9% and 9.4%, respectively) participated least (European Commission, 2010). Further literature findings [though limited] uncovered a few key points that are essential to this study. Astin et al. (2000) reports that results

from a study of 209 institutions with a sample of over 12,000 learners found that student engagement in volunteering during college may be linked with positive cognitive and affective outcomes such as frequency of socializing with diverse people, promotion of racial understanding, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and participating in community action programs, after graduation (Astin et al., 2000). Perhaps it can be argued that these participants were already more likely to engage in those types of activities due to influences [such as life experiences and learning] not related to HE, anyway. Additionally, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) found that HE graduates are more likely to vote in elections and more likely to be members of charitable organizations than non-graduates. They further reported that that potential contribution of HE to the development of society enriched by active citizens was due to the level of educational attainment as well as by association and socio-economic status – were very strongly related to engagement measured by volunteering or active community organization membership (McIlrath et al., 2009).

More awareness of the depth and breadth of volunteer learning—including but not limited to sustainability—can help to increase the recognition of the value of volunteers' activities for themselves and for society (Patterson, 2012), and can help organizations develop strategies to nurture and maximize that learning. Adult educators can play significant roles in assisting organizations and social movements to encourage, support, and bring together the vast informal learning acquired by individual members through collective initiatives to aid those organizations in the construction of more sustainable communities (Duguid et al., 2007). Additionally, volunteer administration professionals have noted the lack of empirical evidence supporting development of theoretically based volunteer curricula and training programs (Fuller & Friedel, 2017). A reliable methodology for ascertaining volunteer attitudes and intentions is needed to enhance support for those who volunteer to improve their communities (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Research on *if* or *how* volunteering impacts individuals through learning that remains with the participant over time has not been well-researched.

CONCLUSION

This chapter triplet presented that volunteering has both a rich history and a positive role within Irish society and for adult learning. Chapter Two began with a brief overview, understanding, analysis of meaning, and working definition of volunteering followed by a journey through literature on volunteer history in Ireland. I summarized the history of volunteering in Ireland to establish a perspective and understanding of

the culture within which this research is enmeshed. Chapter Three I reviewed and discussed volunteer identity in relation to self and community through the life course lens and further explored research relevant to personal and social identity. Chapter Four surveyed formal and in-formal learning within the wide-range contexts of volunteering Volunteer learning through pedagogical and andragogical theories of formal and informal learning as foundational structures that underpin volunteering were surveyed and the relationship to lifelong learning, followed by a more in-depth consideration of life course perspective.

Through the literature, I presented several gaps revealed in the research. The literature has shown that identity and learning through volunteering and understanding the influences, experiences and environments that cause a person to identify with volunteering and reflects learning that remains through volunteering, has not been thoroughly researched in the context of volunteer identity and learning over the life course.

The literature reviewed herein, ultimately presented an overview and evaluation of current and most relevant research on volunteer history, identity and learning; and foundational context for this research. The illustration in Fig. 4.2 [previously presented in section 2.1] provided the visual framework for the literature review based on the research questions and the context of the study.
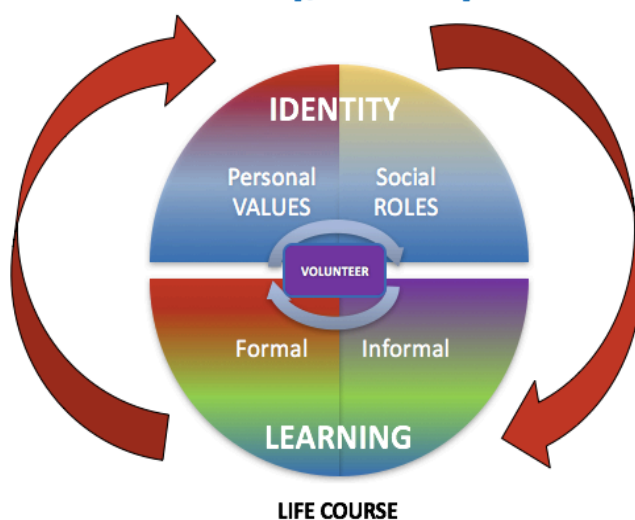
FIG. 4.2 VOLUNTEER HISTORY, IDENTITY & LEARNING DIAGRAM

The history of volunteering in Ireland and the community connection was introduced to establish the context, perspective and understanding of the culture of the Active Volunteers and a working definition of volunteering was established. It was within Chapter Two that the first research question, **RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?** was introduced as an overview of the connection between community and volunteer. In Chapter Three the next research question: **RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?** framed the exploration of volunteer personal and social identity.   In the Chapter Four formal and informal learning theories, and lifelong learning were rationalized as foundations of volunteer learning from the life course perspective with the last two research questions in mind: **RQ3 Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?** and **RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

Research of this nature can inform how volunteer participation may help groups and organizations to increase their capacity and to expand their impact within communities that they might not otherwise reach without volunteer input. Additionally, it will provide important models of learning that are vital to adult education and community-minded longevity and preservation. In the conclusion of his doctoral thesis, Weller (2008, p. 112) states "As volunteers are defining their own identities through their engagement and reflection, academics and researchers should work to understand the nature of the volunteer, what it means to be a volunteer, and how and why individuals volunteer". This statement and his call for further study, in my view, could not be a more perfect way to summarize the content and significance of the literature chapters and justification for pursuing this research.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Education is an admirable thing but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught." - Oscar Wilde

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the approach and methods undertaken to complete this research project from inception to completion. Firstly, an explanation on the theoretical underpinnings of the research is presented, beginning with the research philosophy, theoretical perspectives and assumptions, researcher identity, rationale, and objectivity that drove the decision-making process. Secondly, in-depth descriptions of the tools used for data generation and analysis approach are provided, and finally a discussion on reflexivity and ethical adherence.

This research was conducted in three phases over three years, commencing September 2016 and concluding in August 2019. An overview of tasks completed in each phase are provided below, in Fig. 5.01.

PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE
EXPLORE Literature [September 2016 – December 2017]	**EXPERIENCE** Narratives [January 2018-September 2018]	**EXPLAIN** Lived-Experiences [September 2018-August 2019]
• Explore the literature and develop depth of understanding • Refine Exploratory Research Question • Write Literature Review • Explore options for Field Research • Begin mapping Methodology for Field Research	• Seek Ethical Approval • Write Methodology Chapter • Reach out to area Volunteer Organizations to publish 'call for participation' for interviews • Design Volunteer Workshop/Focus Group activities and expected outcomes • Design 10 day Volunteer Reflection Journal tool • Conduct Field Research • Transcribe Interview Narratives	• Analyze Data • Write Vignettes Chapter • Manage Data and create visual illustrations of Findings • Write up Analysis of Findings and Discussion Chapter • Presentation of Findings to Research Participants, Active Volunteers and Volunteer Organizations • Complete Conclusion and Recommendations • Write up Discussion and interpretation of analysis

FIG. 5.01 PHASES OF RESEARCH

The initial research questions that emerged from Phase One of the research journey evolved into the final four research questions in Fig. 5.02.

Research Questions

1. Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?

2. Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?

3. Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?

4. Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?

FIG. 5.02 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The diagram in Fig. 5.03 visualizes the framework for this study as well as the organization of this chapter.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	RESEARCH APPROACH	RESEARCH STRATEGIES	RESEARCH METHODS
Constructivism	Interpretivist Symbolic Interactionism	Inductive	Case Study	In-Depth Interviews
Interpretivism		Deductive	Narrative Inquiry	Focus Groups
Social & Personal Identity		Life Course Lifelong learning	Life History	Participant Journals

FIG. 5.03 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

5.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

RESEARCHER IDENTITY: PAYING IT FORWARD - A PROCESS NARRATIVE

Whether written or oral, accounts of everyday experiences are lived in narratives. We all have stories that have been told to us or that we have told others that provide a robust way of incorporating past experiences into meaningful learning (McAlpine, 2016). In Section 1.2 of Chapter One, I discussed the importance of pursuing research on issues that really matter in today's society, where people come together in their role as citizens to impact their community and society, and why an exploration of volunteering, through narrative stories are important. To explain the structure that supports the theory of this research study, I further expand on this with a story that created an awareness for me of what '*making a difference*' means to others, and what it has come to mean to me. The following is a process narrative that attempts to add depth and understanding to my overall motivation for conducting this research.

'*Paying it Forward*' is a common American idiom that means "to respond to a person's kindness to oneself by being kind to someone else" (Oxford, 2011). It is an expression for describing the beneficiary of a good deed repaying it to others instead of to the original benefactor. The concept is old, but the phrase is said to have been coined by Lily Hardy Hammond in her 1916 book *In the Garden of Delight* (Hammond, 1916, p. 206).

In 1999, a novel entitled *Pay it Forward* by American novelist, Catherine Ryan Hyde (2014), was released and quickly became a national bestseller. It was then released as a cinematic movie. The story, set in Las Vegas, chronicles 12-year-old Trevor McKinney's launch of a goodwill movement known as '*pay it forward*'. As part of a class assignment, Trevor does a favor for three people, asking each of them to "pay the favor forward" by doing favors for three other people, and so on, producing a ripple effect of 'doing good' that is wide-spreading.

Trevor's 7th grade social studies teacher, Eugene Simonet addresses the students on the first day of class with a challenge that ultimately becomes an important life lesson. The interaction goes something like this *"This class is social studies. That is… you and the world. Yes, there is a world out there and even if you decide you don't want to meet it, it's still going to hit you right in the face. So, its best you start thinking about the world right now and what it means to you… What does the world mean to you?"*

Mr. Simonet continues *"How often do you think about things outside of this town?".* Mr. Simonet pauses a moment to reflect *"Why should we think about the world? After all, what does the world expect of us, of you? What does the world expect of you?"* Mr. Simonet follows with assigning a year-long extra-credit assignment that he has written on the board in simple block letters that says "THINK OF AN IDEA TO CHANGE OUR WORLD – AND PUT IT INTO ACTION". Trevor then asks Mr. Simonet, *"What did you ever do to change the world?"* and Mr. Simonet responds, *"Well, Trevor, I get a good night's sleep. I eat a hearty breakfast, I show up for work on time and then… I pass the buck to you".* (Hyde, 2014, pp. 72-78).

I watched this movie for the first time at home, on a warm afternoon in August 2001, while my youngest son was napping in his bedroom just down the hall. I was a stay at home mother on the cusp of thirty with a heart full of compassion and love for others but no real direction other than what my current world held for me. Mr. Simonet wasn't asking the students to do something that could mean passing or failing their social studies course. It was only extra credit, after all. What he hoped to do was encourage them to think outside of themselves and about the people and the world around them. Without giving away the outcome of this story, I will share this… there was transformation in hearts all around Las Vegas and wherever the story of Trevor reached. Lives collided, hearts were touched, and lessons were learned. Perspectives changed.

The storyline had significant impact on me, and I remember asking myself "what have I done to change the world? Have I made a *difference in the world*, whether in big ways or small ways?" This story, and the idea of '*Paying it Forward*' was the conscious initiation of my understanding that while formal educational lessons are important for several aspects of learning, it is the transformative element of learning through life experiences and relationships with others that has influenced me and remained with me over time. Less than a month later, with the attacks on 9/11, my country was faced with a tragedy that changed our culture, our world, and for many, our perspectives. It was indeed the impetus for how I viewed life, learning, and relationships. It made me more aware of my community, my environment, and the influences that were impressed upon me by my family, my education, and my life experiences up until that point in my adult life.

This study has been driven and guided inductively by the desire to explore and gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of individual identity and how learning is understood through volunteering. Further, this study aimed to explore if learning

through volunteering is transformative and enduring for the participant. This research falls within a Social Constructionist perspective as part of a Constructivist-Interpretivist paradigm, because volunteer identity and learning through volunteering is being studied and analyzed through participant experiences over the life course. By asking research questions that require AVs to think about volunteer experiences, learning impact and how it affects their world, I recognize and consider that their view of identity and learning experiences are socially and culturally constructed. By embracing a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm for this research I recognize that the AV's social world is complex and that knowledge is constructed within a person when the information encounters existing knowledge that has been developed by experiences. These experiences and stories focus on how time, sequence, direction, and related concepts are used actively in everyday life and understanding those experiences through time, supports a constructivist view (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). As an interpretive researcher, my aim is to explore perspectives and shared meanings, and to develop insights into situations (Caduri, 2013; Wellington, 2015) that allows an understanding of how AVs relate their volunteering to their identity (Ezzy, 1998) and learning (Aspin & Chapman, 2000).

5.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Research methods and methodologies are as complex and diverse as researchers themselves. Whether it be quantitative research, qualitative research, mixed methods approach, or a combination thereof, these methods of research comprise a system of getting answers (Wellington, 2015, p. 35). First, this study was conducted through an inductive approach of discovery through exploration of the research questions through a wide range of literature. Then, in-depth interviews, reflective participant journals, and an interactive focus-group workshop hybrid was conducted. As further clarification of the inductive/deductive approach that I undertook in this study, Dewey (Dewey, 1938) outlines a strategic paradigm of enquiry that reflects this research paradigm in that deduction begins with the universal view of a situation and works back to the particulars wherein induction moves from fragmented details toward a connected view of a situation (D. E. Gray, 2013).   This research, follows a qualitative interpretive approach, through methods that are personal, interactive, and in-depth, through interviews and narrative interpretation. The AV's perceptions of their past learning experiences and meaning of experiences on their identity as volunteers, cannot be evaluated through quantitative methodology which relies on statistics and the reduction of meaning to numbers. When meanings are intricate and complex, quantitative

reduction can be incredibly difficult (O'Leary, 2017) and does not enable the in-depth personal accounts on volunteer identity and learning to be heard. Additionally, quantitative research methodology does not allow for the research questions to be answered satisfactorily and a qualitative methodology best enables the research to successfully answer the four research questions as qualitative research is best suited to provide understanding of the lived-experience (Creswell, 2007).

Further, this study is based on the epistemological notion of interpretivism and is approached from the life course perspective to better understand volunteer identity and learning as a lifelong learning process. This approach is important for this study because the insights that each individual AV provides on identity and learning is distinctive and offers a wide-view of volunteer learning that is valuable for informing adult and lifelong learning. From an interpretivist's perspective, people are intricate and complex, and different people can experience and understand the same 'objective reality' in very different ways. An interpretive researcher accepts that the observer makes a difference to the observed and that reality is a human construct (Wellington, 2015, p. 26). It is my desire to see our world through the eyes of the volunteer, to better understand how they perceive learning through experiences and the reasons why they act as they do, based on those experiences, which falls within the constructionist/interpretivist paradigm. Taking an interpretative approach for this research allowed an understanding of how volunteers, as individual and social beings, relate volunteering to their identity and learning. An interpretivist position enabled an understanding of how participants' experiences are influenced by their past and present experiences, personal stories, motivations and beliefs (Blake, 2014), which is compatible with the life course perspective wherein the approach is to look at experiences across an individual's life, rather than looking at a snapshot in time (Hogg, 2013).

My research is further underpinned by the constructivist view that learning is active, and that knowledge is constructed by personal experiences grounded by everyday learning within the environment rather than just acquired (Bennett, 2012) through a combination of formal and informal learning that make up 'lifelong learning'.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

LIFELONG LEARNING FROM THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

Expanding on the literature in Chapter Four, life course theory, developed in the 1960s (Elder Jr, 1998), is also known as life course approach or life course perspective. It refers to an approach for analyzing individual's lives within structural, social and cultural contexts. Life course theory examines an individual's life history and the connection between the individual and the historical and socio-economic context in which the they have lived (Biesta et al., 2008; Blossfeld et al., 2014; Chan, 2017; Elder et al., 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Sociologist, Glen H. Elder, Jr. is well-known for his ongoing work studying people and how changing environments have influenced them. Through life course theory, he established several key principles that characterize the life-course approach.   These five key principles comprise: life-span development, human agency, historical time and geographic place, timing of decisions, and linked lives.   He maintains that the life course is comprised of a sequence of socially defined events and roles that do not necessarily continue in a given sequence, but are more effectively a sequence of transitions over time (Elder Jr, 1998). This research examined the lived-experiences of AVs from their earliest memories of volunteer influence, formal and informal learning, life course transitions, and different social and economic positions across their life course (Lancee & Radl, 2014) to better understand volunteer longevity (Jamieson et al., 1998; Lee, 2016; Nesbit, 2012; Sundeen, 1990; Ulrich Mayer, 2004; Van Willigen, 2000; Yamashita, López, Stevens, et al., 2017). Life course theory is the best stance to take for this study because this research investigates volunteer identity, and participant perceptions of learning through volunteering throughout the life course. Through life stories of learning through the volunteer experience, I analyzed common experiences and accounts of experience through time (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) along with learning themes among volunteers' lived experience, their understanding of learning through volunteering, and if their experiences are transformative and enduring.

Further considering the survey of literature in Chapter Four, lifelong learning involves any activities related to learning that occurs over the lifespan and covers formal and informal learning (Yamashita, López, Stevens, et al., 2017). As this research examined volunteer identity and learning over the lifespan, the suitability of grounding this study in life course theory and lifelong learning, appears to be a positive balance. Lifelong learning is often characterized by a wide variety of types of learning opportunities, and these opportunities are shaped significantly by learner-defined requirements and contexts (Friesen & Anderson, 2004). Lifelong learning is based on the view that everyone should be able, motivated and actively encouraged to learn throughout life and embraces individual and social development of all kinds and in all

settings: formally, in school, vocational, higher education institutions and informally: at home, work and in the community (McKenzie & Wurzburg, 1997) including volunteer activities as work within the community. Ultimately, lifelong learning is any kind of learning activity that occurs throughout a person's life, formally or informally, for personal, civic, social or employment-related purposes with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and abilities.

THE LIVED-EXPERIENCE THROUGH NARRATIVE STORIES

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative and dynamic method(ology) and study of experience within a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm that is understood narratively. Narrative inquiry is suited for this study as it provides a way of understanding experience and gives sense to personal assumptions, perceptions, and world view experiences by telling stories about the 'self' and the others, and studying experiences that are distinct to the field of education (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). Creswell (2007) suggests that narrative can be both a method for the study [the interviews, focus groups and reflection] as well as the phenomenon of study [through the insights gleaned from analyzing AV narratives]. Narrative begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals followed by the researcher interpreting the larger meaning of the story when analyzing the data (Creswell & Inquiry, 2007). McAdams has described how cultural narratives about national history, ethnicity, religion, and politics shape the personal stories people live by, and how personal stories can sustain or transform culture (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Narrative inquiry is about living and telling stories about living, how we create meaning in our lives and building our lives and community. As Ezzy explains (1998) a narrative identity provides a subjective sense of self-continuity as it symbolically integrates the events of lived experience in the plot of the story a person tells about his or her life. The methods used in this study generated data that capture the meaning that AVs make from their lived experience and reflections of those experiences as learning over the life course.

The relationships that have been formed between myself and my AVs encouraged me to invest myself in them through their storied lives (Barnacle, 2004). The stories that are presented in Chapter Six, of Christy, Rosie, Caitríona and Pádraig represent the common voices of identity and learning through the AV lived experience. As a narrative researcher, my principle interest in experience is the growth and transformation in the life stories that I researched (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As an educational researcher, experience is what is studied and it is studied narratively

because narrative thinking is a key form of experience, and a key way of writing and thinking about that experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Taking this narrative approach allowed data in the form of narrative to be gathered that is rich and robust (Blake, 2014). Research using this method represents a collaboration between myself as the researcher and my AVs over a period of time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with my AV's social environment (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative inquiry is important to this research because it makes a real contribution to the study of volunteer identity, learning and longevity through studying the lived experiences of AVs that are personal, reflective, and can make sociological connections between identity and learning. I have thought carefully about the purpose, the research impact, and my role as researcher through narrative inquiry while embracing life course theory and how the parallel can be justified. First, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) contend that their theory criteria of narrative inquiry is past, present, future; personal & social; and place. Ezzy (1998) explains that narrative identity integrates the events of lived experience in the plot of the story a person tells about their life. Second, life course theory examines an individual's life history and the connection between the individual and the historical and socio-economic context in which the they have lived (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Finally, as was stated in the previous section on lifelong learning, any kind of learning activity that occurs throughout a person's life, formally or informally, for personal, civic, social or employment-related purposes with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and abilities comprises lifelong learning. Therefore, as this research is situated in examining and analyzing AV's lives within structural, social and cultural contexts, this methodology is most appropriate.

For this study, I focused on the identity and learning of the AV through individual stories that generate personal identities and self-understandings as part of social experiences. Time [life course] and narrative [narrative inquiry] also play a significant role on identity which is realized through the lived experience that connects back to the constructivist/interpretivist ideal of the 'self' through experience and communication known as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics emphasizes the reality of lived experience, of acting in the world, as foundational to any attempt to understand the interpretive process (Ezzy, 1998) as [lifelong] learning.

Through meaning making, people go beyond the plots and event details of their personal stories to articulate what they believe their stories say about who they are (McAdams & McLean, 2013). People are natural storytellers and make meaning of

their experiences by thinking of them as stories that have a point. They construct and share stories about themselves, detailing particular episodes and periods in their lives and what those experiences mean to them (McAdams & McLean, 2013). 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; Grönlund, 2011). Social researchers have previously rejected the study of narrative in qualitative studies. Although, the formerly criticized subjective and contextualized nature of the narrative form have evolved as its precise strengths in examining multiple questions about how humans create and sustain meaning (Donileen, 2007), including the meaning of identity.

5.5 RESEARCH METHODS EXPLAINED

INTRODUCTION

A broad and holistic approach to generating data related to volunteer identity and learning through volunteering was adopted. There were three methods used for generating the primary data in this qualitative study, a hybrid workshop-focus group, in-depth interviews and reflective journals. Following the in-depth interviews and hybrid workshop-focus group, a selected number of participants from both the workshops and the interviews agreed to complete a 10 day 'reflective journal' with 10 prompts to consider over 10 days. These journals were introduced to elicit greater depth of reflection (Barnacle, 2004) for the AV on volunteer identity and learning through volunteering. The data was organized then analyzed first narratively (Andrews et al., 2013) and then thematically (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Each of the generation methods used in this research will be explained in depth within the following sections.

ESTABLISHING THE SAMPLE

The sample group participants were achieved primarily through purposeful 'typical case' sampling (Wellington, 2015). It is difficult to determine if the sample is representative of whole population, but sampling with purpose draws a compromise (Wellington, 2015). I initially focused on criteria-based sampling techniques to reach my target sample group (Creswell & Inquiry, 2007; Wellington, 2015) to recruit participants that would best answer the research questions. The criteria for taking part in this research was:

1. Participant must be currently actively [regularly] volunteering. While no minimum occurrences were required, it was understood that 'active volunteering' meant recently, and more than once.
2. Participant must be currently attending or have previously attended an institute of higher learning, although obtainment of a degree was not required.
3. Participant must be living in the country of Ireland, but Irish citizenship was not required.

Setting the criteria with these three requirements best represented a compromise between sample practicality and participant thoroughness (Wellington, 2015). Recruiting for the interviews as well as the hybrid workshop-focus group and in-depth interviews were initially conducted in similar fashion. All the participants in the hybrid workshop-focus group and the in-depth interviews throughout Ireland, self-identified and elected to participate via a nationwide 'call for participation' linked to a Google form. Fig. 5.04 shows the call for participation with active links in blue.

Dear Volunteer;

You are invited to participate in a National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland. This research project is being carried out by PhD candidate, Shelli Ann Garland, for research in the Cultures, Academic Values and Education (CAVE) research center at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin.

The aim of this project is to examine, from a sociological and educational perspective, the lived experience of the active community volunteer in Ireland who participated in volunteering, community engagement, or community-based learning during their 3rd level education.

If you would consider participating in this important research project, please click on this link Volunteer Interest Form to complete a very brief interest questionnaire. Your answers are strictly confidential and will only be used to determine your interest in the research. Your information will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher.

If you would like further information about this research, please contact me at this email address: garlands@tcd.ie

I hope to begin interviews within the next 30 days.

Kind Regards,

FIG. 5.04 ELECTRONIC CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

National volunteer organizations were contacted requesting permission to post a participant inquiry form which was created in Google forms. These organizations were

either contacted via social media message [i.e.: Facebook messenger] or through email addresses that were retrieved from online websites. After creating a comprehensive list of volunteer agencies and support organization contacts, an email of introduction and participant information form Appendix A was sent to key gatekeepers identified within each organization for research validation. I requested permission from gatekeepers within local and national volunteer organizations, including Comlamh, Volunteer Ireland, The Wheel, Community Knowledge Network Galway, and Dublin City Volunteers, to invite participants via their social media groups, member groups, and email list-serves.

Six organizations were happy to review and publish the inquiry form on their social media platforms, in online newsletters or on their website. Two of the organizations requested a photo of the researcher, stating that personalizing the request on social media with an image would increase participant interest. One organization requested a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that asked for the research to be shared with them, when completed. This MOU was signed by myself and a representative from the volunteer organization. Four other organizations asked that the research also be shared with them when completed but did not require an MOU. After reading the dimensions of the study, these organizations distributed the request for participation through their affiliated social media platforms on my behalf. Invitations through Twitter, Facebook, online newsletters, and organization websites. An example of a website post and a Twitter post from two volunteer organizations are provided in Appendix B.

Participants for the hybrid workshop-focus group and for the in-depth interviews were former students from post-secondary colleges, institutes of higher learning, and 3rd level institutions. All participants were over the age of 18 years with the youngest aged 23 years and the oldest aged 90 years. All participants were of good physical and mental health and not considered nor identified as vulnerable persons. A very small number of participants [especially for the hybrid workshop-focus group element of the research] were recruited through other participants. This was accomplished by asking self-selected participants to share my research and their experience, if they were so inclined, with their volunteer colleagues, family or friends, and invite them to contact me if they wished. Two in-depth interview participants and three hybrid workshop-focus group participants were recruited in this manner.

After initial interviews were completed, a request for focus group/workshop participants were invited to participate through a similar online Google form via the same gatekeepers that agreed to publish my previous request for participants. The caveat

this time was that this focus group/workshop was designed and advertised as a volunteer identity workshop. The Google form was built as a registration submission form for attendance at one of the three focus group/workshop times offered. Full details regarding how the focus group was conceived, the sample gathered, and workshop implemented, are provided in the section entitled *Focus Group/Workshops*.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The Purpose of In-Depth Interviews for Narrative Research

Using a qualitative case study research approach allowed numerous possibilities for generating data in this study. In-depth interviews are better for narrative research because the AVs had more opportunity to offer views, insights, and perspectives that could not be easily garnered in other mediums [such as semi-structured interviews or observations]. In-depth interviews provided a space for the AVs to share their memories and lived-experiences of volunteering and learning that included important life course transitions and the impacts of social and economic situations across their life (Lancee & Radl, 2014). These interviews also gave me an opportunity for clarification and further elucidation, when necessary. Additionally, as the researcher, this method for generating data afforded me the ability to think narratively about the experiences of the AV through inquiry that was rich with information relevant to the research questions. Interviews are designed to elicit views and perspectives that are not necessarily or easily observed (Wellington, 2015). In-depth interviews allowed me to take the time to go deeper with the AVs and ask for further insight and clarification of stories, illustrations and memories. In-depth interviews allowed me to establish a rapport with my AVs and make them feel more comfortable, and generated more insightful responses, rather than relying on strict or stringent formal questions that can sometimes make people feel a bit interrogated (Andrews et al., 2013). As a researcher, I had greater opportunity to ask follow-up questions, probe for additional information, and circle back to key questions during the interview that generated rich understanding of attitudes, perceptions, and motivations (Casey, 1995). Because in-depth interviews are more intimate and there was no need to rush with the AVs, I was able to monitor changes in tone and word choice in those face to face interviews to gain a deeper understanding, and going deeper means that I needed fewer participants to glean useful and relevant insights (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The in-depth interviews conducted with the AVs were so insightful, that I identified highly valuable themes

quickly which made the process of coding and analyzing smoother.

The Process of using In-depth Interviews for Narrative Research

The participant inquiry form was published beginning on 18 June 2018 through 16 July 2018. Postings that were shared on Facebook and Twitter were shared and retweeted numerous times. The researcher is unsure of the numbers reached, but according to the organizations that agreed to post the request, there were membership totals and possible viewing by approximately 6,000 or more.

The participant inquiry form returned a total of 40 self-selected volunteer inquiries who identified as community members throughout the nation of Ireland, that actively volunteer in their community through a not-for-profit organization, private charity, school or non-governmental organization. Two of those inquiries were completed but indicated that they were not interested in participating in the research, which is an 'out-option' that was provided within the form, for those who might be curious about the research but not interested in participating. Those who provided email contact information were sent a personalized email in Appendix C, inviting them schedule an interview time slot with me.

After completing the voluntary Google form, recruitment for this study was accessed through voluntary participation initiated by an introduction letter and invitation to participate in the research through an interview process. The initial online Google questionnaire form was approved for use by the ethics committee, and was designed to gather basic criteria for inclusion in the study. The Google form identified those who attended post-secondary education. AVs were refined on the basis that they participated in, [but not necessarily graduated from], some level of post-secondary [or 3rd level] education, and checked a box stating that they were interested in being contacted for further participation.

The form was designed to collect that information and notify the researcher that this person was tentatively interested in participating. It is interesting to note that there is no way of knowing what network or social media platform that the participants would have received the link to the form from. This created what I feel, is a blind and unbiased collection of AV participants, as the form was public to the reach of the whole of Ireland. Participant demographics could not be manipulated by using this online inquiry method because it was based on national, voluntary completion of the inquiry form.

The illustration in Fig. 5.05 indicates that questionnaire forms were completed from people who lived in six of the 32 counties in Ireland. The form was not without fault, because the question was a 'fill in the blank' question, it allowed for misinterpretation of the question. There are 5 varying 'Dublin' [which still would mean Co. Dublin] and two indicated 'Ireland' as their county of residence, possibly assuming that it stated 'country' and 1 entry that listed 'no' as their county of residence. The Google Analytics also based percentages on n = 100 which was not accurate for a sample size this small. Therefore, graphs were created manually rather than using Google standard graphs. Overall, using this kind of Google form questionnaire generated sufficient general demographical information as to where the inquiries were coming from.
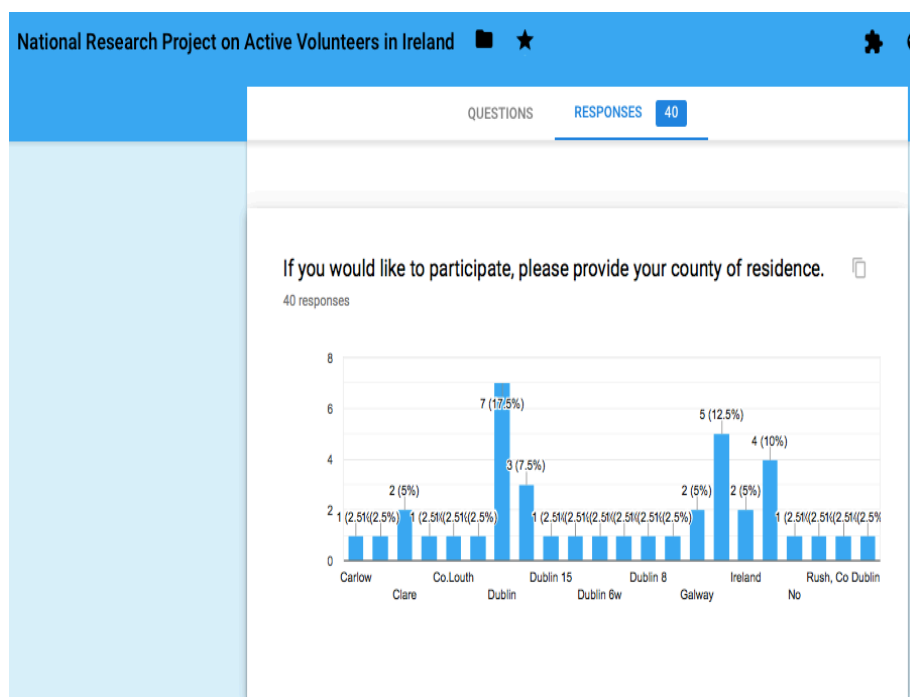
FIG. 5.05 GOOGLE ANALYTICS DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

The 38 respondents were sent an email response, thanking them for their interest, providing them with a participant information sheet, and a request to respond if they were still interested in an interview with me. Of the 38 participant inquiries that were interested, two additional responded with "maybe", which was another option provided as an out option if someone was interested in the research to receive further information via personal email from the researcher along with an attached participant information form that described the research in further detail. A further note that two additional participants were referred to me by fellow research colleagues and were contacted outside of the online participant inquiry form, though one of them did complete the online form after I sent an introduction email with the link. One of the

participants was known to me as an expatriate acquaintance whom I met at my community gym and we have attended various events together socially. I did not know that this participant would complete the online form and agree to an interview.

Once AVs responded back, we further connected to schedule interviews. I provided an informed consent form in Appendix K, for their signature via email or in person before the interview commenced. In addition to the consent form, details of the research process, and nature of the study was provided to each participant. Each interviewee had the freedom to choose where, when and how they were to be interviewed. Again, this establishes an element of comfort for AVs on their terms. Many were happy to meet with me on campus and several asked me to meet at their place of work or at their home, allowing me to take in a variety of locations around Ireland and gave me an insight into what the communities were like that the AVs committed their volunteering time to. A few AVs asked me to meet them at local pubs and eateries. For several, I traveled to other towns and counties for, and three of my interviews were accomplished via Skype video conferencing. All participants were asked to complete a participant consent form which was emailed to them for their record and review along with a reminder of our meeting, the night before.

Adhering to the ethical guidelines for informed consent, I provided each participant with my business card, and the participant consent form in Appendix K, to complete and sign, before the interview started. We discussed the guidelines and the outcomes of the interview process related to recording, their right to revoke permissions, their right to not answer any question that makes them uncomfortable, the assurance that the interview would take approximately an hour to complete, and their understanding of what *volunteering* is. Participants were also informed that both their identity and the identity of the organizations that they volunteer for would be anonymized to ensure anonymity. Once these initial guidelines were discussed, and the consent form was signed, we began our dialogue.

The interview questions started with basic demographic questions followed by questions relating to the AV's educational history. Then their volunteering history, their current volunteering experience and finally, some philosophical questions about their views and understanding of volunteering. The detailed interview questions are provided in Appendix D. Table 5.1 shows the main interview questions related to the four research questions. As these were in-depth interviews, each question was just a general question to open dialog and the questions were expanded upon with the participants to delve deeper when appropriate.

1. Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?
2. Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?
3. Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?
4. Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?
5. Positioning questions...

Historical Volunteer Experience	Current Volunteer Experience	Philosophical Questions
What was your volunteer experience, if any, in post-primary/secondary school?	Type of volunteering that you currently do?	Why do you volunteer?
What led to your decision to volunteer while in higher education?	How often or how much time do you spend volunteering per week/month/year?	What impact do you feel you have had on the organization(s) that you volunteered with?
What kind of volunteering did you do in Higher education?	Do your family or friends participate in volunteering along with you?	Who or what do you believe was your inspiration for volunteering?
How long or often did you participate?	What kind of volunteering do you like to do? Is there a type of volunteering that you would rather not do?	What is it like to be volunteer?
Was it part of your module requirement? Did you earn academic credit for volunteering? What was your experience like?	Why do you volunteer now?	Do you think that your volunteer experience changed you? How has it changed you?
What is your earliest recollection of volunteering?		Have you ever been recognized for your volunteer experience? How does that make you feel?
What is your fondest memory or experience volunteering?		What role do you think that your education has played in your life as a volunteer? Not your volunteer experience, rather your education. How do you think you would feel if you could not volunteer anymore?

Table 5.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

During and after the interview, I recorded a few notes about the interviewee on characteristics such as personal demeanor, if they seemed nervous or comfortable with me, my perception of their personality, where our interview took place, if there were any odd interruptions. These notes were only used for assisting me with AV participant recall while transcribing narratives and may be used by me in the future to recall or describe an AV participant for future publications.

All interviews were audio recorded on my personal laptop via the audio recorder application and on my mobile phone through the voice recorder application. This was done as a failsafe measure to make sure that any valuable data were not lost due to technical difficulties. The audio recording on the mobile phone was used as a

transcribing device while the interviews were transcribed on my laptop. Once the interview was transcribed and I verified that the audio on my laptop recorded properly, I deleted the audio file off my phone and kept only the one copy of the audio recording on an external hard drive that is password encrypted.

Each interview was followed up with an email to the participant thanking them for their time and valuable input and asked them if they would be interested in further research as I would be presenting a hybrid focus-group workshop. Nearly every participant agreed, stating that the research was very interesting and they would like to help in any way that they were able.

The Demographics of In-Depth Interviews for Narrative Research

The interview attendance rate for those who responded and agreed to be interviewed was 100% and 24 participants were successfully interviewed. Nine identified as male and the remaining 15 identified as female. Statistics from 2016, provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland, through the Volunteer Ireland website (Volunteer Ireland) reports that more females [68%] volunteer than males [32%] in Ireland. Volunteer Ireland also reported that the largest age group for volunteering in Ireland is 23 – 35 year olds [44%] followed next by 36 – 49 year olds [20%]. While the female to male ratio in Volunteer Ireland's study aligns with the demographic ratio in this study, the age range for this study differs from that of Volunteer Ireland's. This general demographical information was collected because I wished to see if there was any variance of responses among certain groups, e.g. males and females, ages, level of post-secondary education attained. It could be that the time-period within which the call for participation and interviews took place in this study [June 2018 – August 2018] took place during summer-term break for students enrolled in institutions of higher AVs Volunteers in this study. It is interesting to see in Fig. 5.06 that within the age ranges listed, none of the AV ages were below that of the 28-30 years aged range (with the youngest AV being 30) and the oldest AV in the 71-90 age range was aged 90 years.
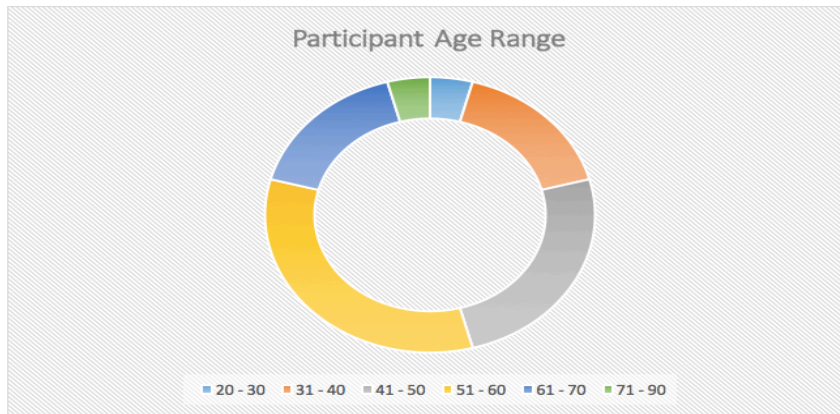
FIG. 5.06 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT AGE RANGE DEMOGRAPHICS

As the request for participants was made public through several counties and regions of Ireland, there was no control over who volunteered to participate in the research and the sample was beholden to the respondents who completed the inquiry form and responded to the email invitation to schedule an interview. Of the AV interviews, 15 female participants and 9 male participants. Again, this aligns with the female/male ratio provided by Volunteer Ireland (Volunteer Ireland).

The reported ethnicity or country of birth provided interesting results. While Ireland is the largest group of AVs interviewed, there were four other countries represented in Fig. 5.07 that are living in Ireland and volunteering regularly within the community.
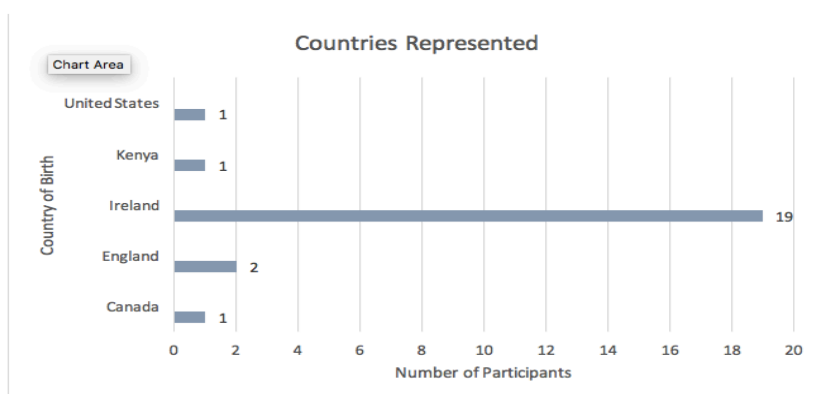
FIG. 5.07 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT COUNTRY OF BIRTH DEMOGRAPHICS

After the first two interviews were completed, it was determined that some of the interview questions had to be changed as they were either not appropriate, or difficult for the participant to understand. "What is your income level?" was removed before the interviewing began. While this question, is common in the United States [where I am originally from], I was advised by several research colleagues that the Irish are very

uncomfortable talking about how much money that have and/or make. This question was just to classify the demographical income variable of participants, and to gain an understanding if a theme were to present within a specific income bracket. Although it may have provided an interesting facet to the research demographic, it was not vital to the outcome. And, as it was not the intention of the researcher to make any participant (most of whom were Irish), uncomfortable it was not included in the questions asked. Instead, a question regarding employment status was asked. The demographics determined that 15 of the participants' work, while 6 were not working and 3 were retired.

All participants completed higher certificates or degrees at varying levels as seen in Fig. 5.09. The largest group of participants held a Bachelor's degree, with Master's as the next group, and so on.
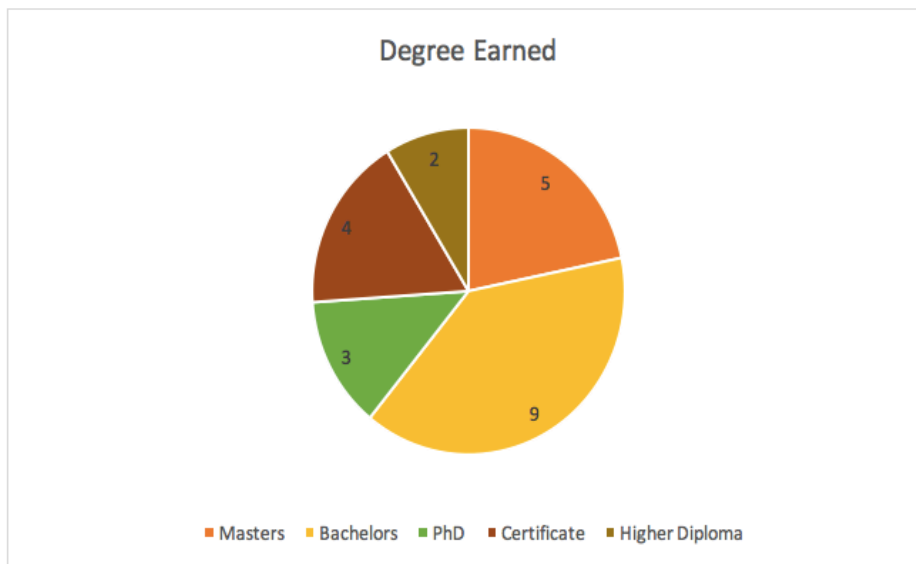
FIG. 5.09 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEGREE EARNED DEMOGRAPHICS

Two questions were added after the second interview. They were both within the philosophical section, the question "in your own understanding, please explain what is it like to be a volunteer?" and the question "Please provide three adjectives that you would use to describe who you are as a volunteer" These were included to assist in answering research question one and two centered around volunteer identity. Some questions were omitted if they did not apply to the volunteer's experience. I.e.: Was it part of your module requirement? Did you earn academic credit for volunteering? What was your experience like? These questions apply specifically to CBL

experiences only and almost all AVs did not know what Community-Based Learning was.

Once the initial interviews were transcribed and completed, an excel document was created to assign alias' to the participants for future record and reference. A participant profile table is provided in alphabetical order in the table below. This table is intended to provide a brief overview of participant demographics relevant to this research. In adherence of ethical practice in relation to anonymity, the AV names in Table 5.2 are pseudonyms chosen by this researcher after the interviews were conducted and transcribed.

ACTIVE VOLUNTEER	GENDER	AGE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	CURRENT VOLUNTEER SECTOR
CARRIE	F	66	Higher Diploma	Adult Mental Health
CAITRIÓNA	F	45	Bachelor's Degree	Family & Community Services
CHRISTY	M	66	PhD	Adult Education
COLM	M	68	MBA	Family & Community Services
DENNIS	M	30	Bachelor's Degree	Adult Education
ELLORI	F	40	MSc	Children's Health Services
EOIN	M	90	Nat'l Teacher Certificate	Family & Community Services
FRANCINE	F	55	Bachelor's Degree	Human Rights
GILLIAN	F	60	Certificate	Family & Community Services
JENNIFER	F	53	Postgrad Certificate	Family & Community Services
KATHLEEN	F	68	Higher Diploma	Community Services
MALLORY	F	40	PhD	Family Health Services
MARTHA	F	68	Higher Diploma	Family & Community Services
MAUREEN	F	49	Higher Diploma	Community Services
MICEÁL	M	47	Higher Diploma	Event Volunteer
MICHELLE	F	60	MSc	Event Volunteer
MIRIAM	F	33	MSc	Education Administration
NATALIE	F	57	Postgrad Certificate	Community & Youth Services
PÁDRAIG	M	57	Bachelor's Degree	Family & Community Services
RAILEEN	F	43	Higher Diploma	Higher Diploma
RAND	M	51	MSc	Adult Mental Health
ROSIE	F	31	Bachelor's Degree	Adult Mental Health
STEPHEN	M	53	Bachelor's Degree	Youth Community Services
VALERIE	F	37	Postgrad Certificate	Business Administrative
XAVIER	M	49	PhD	Adult Education Administration

Table 5.2 Active Volunteer Pseudonyms

The full document of interview questions are provided in Appendix D.

The Purpose of using a Hybrid Focus Group Workshop for Narrative Research

Focus groups are seen as providing insight of an exploratory or preliminary nature or provide richness as a secondary method of generating data (Wellington, 2015). Focus groups are group interviews that comprise a small group of approximately 8 – 10 people with common characteristics, brought together to discuss a specific topic or issue (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative data generating techniques through narrative inquiry, such as focus groups, are relevant to gain a perspective into growth, transformation, and identity as the lives of the AV are constructed and meaning is interpreted from the stories that they share (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Lee's (2016) research on the transformative experiences in learning and service of older adult learning groups [research on lifelong learning] used focus group discussions as part of the qualitative research design to facilitate in-depth exploration. For similar reasons as Lee's study presented, I also chose to use focus-groups in this research primarily as a scoping method to determine if AVs were interested in learning more about their identity as volunteers and how they might maximize their volunteer impact. For this study, I designed more of a hybrid focus-group workshop also known as an interactive focus group that incorporates more creative methods (Casey, 1995). The hybrid focus-group workshop format was designed for two distinct purposes. The workshop format was designed as a dynamic learning environment for AVs that included interactive, creative and reflective exercises on identity and learning that encouraged participants to reflect on their volunteer learning and experiences over the life course. The focus-group format was designed and placed at the end of the workshop so that I could ask questions about the participant's experiences and understandings of formal and informal learning and volunteer identity that invited a lively discussion and data for supporting the use of learning workshops that is presented in Chapter Nine.

The Process of using a Hybrid Focus-Group Workshop for Narrative Research

As mentioned previously, the invitations to participate were sent out to interview participants and the gatekeepers from local and national volunteer organizations that were previously contacted for the interviews were contacted again with the request for permission to post the invitation to participate in the hybrid focus-group workshop on

their social media and networking platforms. The invitation is copied from the Google Registration Form and is available for viewing in Appendix E.

The goal of the invitation via social media platform was to enlist volunteer participation from all over Ireland. The three sessions were scheduled one after the other on the same date on 22 August 2018 beginning at 9:30 am and concluding at 8:00 pm. This was planned to provide maximum opportunity for participants and maximum efficiency in recruiting volunteers, organizing assistants, note-takers and completing the data generation in one day. It was also scheduled in this manner to promote the event as a dynamic learning workshop with steady traffic into the School of Education and inquiry from the school.

The specific criteria for these groups were:

1. Participants were currently living in Ireland
2. Participants were interested in volunteering, volunteering identity, and volunteer learning.

Participants were invited to register for one of the sessions using a Google form link. The form asked for minimal information that included surname and forename, email address, session time choice, and an open question for comments or concerns such as food allergies or special accommodation for disabled persons. There were 44 participants total registered for the sessions. The morning session had the lowest registration number of twelve. The afternoon and evening session each had eighteen participants. There was a limit set for the registration at 20 participants for each session as 20 is the maximum for managing time and input as well as getting thorough results. Each participant received a personal email confirming their registration time and providing an attached focus group consent form for their record and review (see Appendix K). Participants also received an email the day before the workshop reminding them of their session time and directions to the venue.

The expectation was that 75% registered would attend, leaving a group of 8-12 participants in each session. There were 28 participants in total. The morning workshop included 6 participants (11 were originally registered for this session). The afternoon workshop included 8 participants (18 were originally registered). The evening session consisted of 14 participants (16 were originally registered). This made for very positive seating arrangements, a collaborative atmosphere, and efficient sharing of knowledge. The School of Education assisted with participant registration on the day, catering, note and photo taking. Each workshop was audio recorded for

clarity of notations, poster and pen sessions for sharing together, and note taking as well as the use of themed, colored post-it notes that were written on by the participants and shared on a poster at the end of the workshop to share one 'aha' and two 'urges' from the workshop. These were all later photographed and transcribed for analysis and are discussed in more detail in section 9.5 of Chapter Nine.

The workshop incorporated interactive activities with specific learning outcomes centered around the theme of *Engage, Inspire, Transform*, to encourage participant action and reflection on themes of volunteer identity and learning. The participants had a variety of ways to express themselves while learning and reflecting on their identity as volunteers and how identifying traits and predispositions within themselves can impact their volunteer activities, satisfaction, and sustainability as volunteers.

The agenda in Fig. 5.10, below outlines the learning outcomes for the hybrid focus-group workshop.

Engage, Inspire, Transform Workshop
Are we born helpers or learned engagers?

Discover your volunteer identity | Revolutionize your volunteer impact

Wednesday, 22 August 2018

Times: Session A 9:30-12:30 | Session B 1:00 – 4:00 | Session C 5:00 – 8:00

Where: Trinity College Dublin Arts Block Rm 3105

Facilitator   Shelli Garland

Agenda

Registration & Tea/Coffee and Biscuits (15 minutes)
Welcome/Introduction (10 minutes)
Ice Breaker (10 minutes)
Identity Circle & MBTI Test w/ questions (1 hour)
Break (10 minutes)
Ice Breaker (10 minutes)
Education Exploration Questions (1 hour)
Closing (10 minutes)

Outcomes of this workshop/focus group for attendants:

Engage	Inspire	Transform
Participants will value the importance of identity in volunteering and learning through volunteering	Participants will assess strengths of learning through volunteering and build positive dispositions and approaches toward learning	Participants will demonstrate an awareness of the role that volunteering has within society and the learning opportunities available through voluntary work
Participants will work collaboratively with other volunteer participants to establish and build confident self-identity as volunteers	Participants will evidence impact of volunteering on self and others through exploring and engaging with volunteering in meaningful ways	Participants will have a stronger sense of identity and ability to transfer their understandings and learning for use in their own volunteer contexts
Participants will effectively communicate with others regarding volunteering identity and learning through volunteering	Participants will develop understanding and apply knowledge, values and skills from learned experiences to inspire continued learning in self and others	Participants will demonstrate a stronger connection and contribution as volunteers within their community

FIG. 5.10 FOCUS GROUP AGENDA WITH OUTCOMES

The Demographics of the Hybrid Focus-Group Workshop in Narrative Research

The most significant surprise for me, in the focus groups was the diversity of the participants and the variety of countries that were represented at two of three sessions, as seen in Fig. 5.11. All participants self-selected their session times through registration. Countries represented include China, Germany [2], Ukraine, Russia, France, America, Ireland, South Africa and Spain.
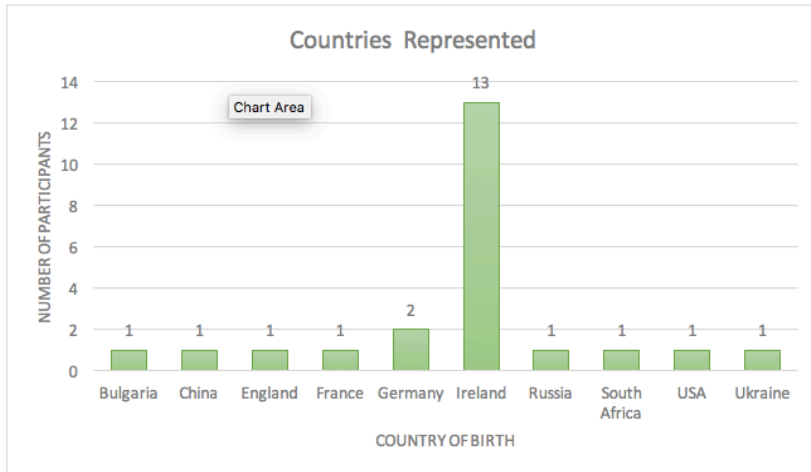
FIG. 5.11 FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS COUNTRY OF BIRTH DEMOGRAPHICS

This shows, and conversation confirmed, that many enjoy volunteering in Ireland because it helps them to feel and be connected to the community/country that they are living in and because Ireland is an embracing culture for volunteering. I also received several lovely email letters of appreciation and congratulations on the success of the workshops in Appendix F.
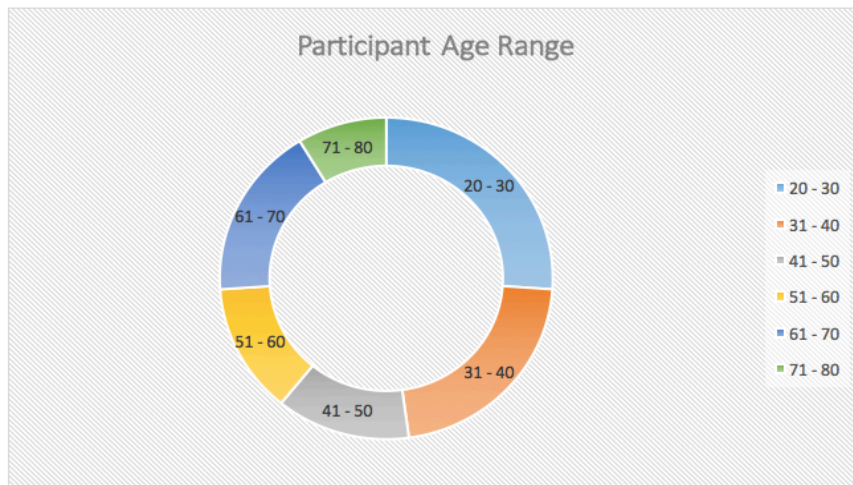
FIG. 5.12 FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS AGE RANGE DEMOGRAPHICS

The age range in Fig. 5.12 above, show the breadth of ages interested in volunteer identity and learning. The average age was 44 years – which is the same age average as that of the AVs interviewed. Additionally, the female – male ratio for the workshop was also like that of the interviewees. Finally, in Fig. 5.13 below, the education level of

the workshop participants showed an equal number of Master's and Bachelor's degree level. Whereas for the AV interviewees, the Bachelor's degree was higher than the Master's.

Degree Earned

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Higher Diploma
- PhD
- Certificate
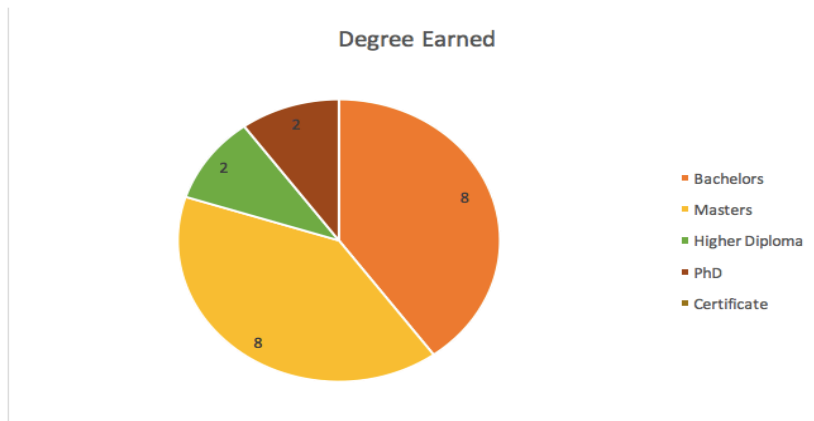
FIG. 5.13 FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS EDUCATION LEVEL DEMOGRAPHICS

The data generated from the hybrid focus-group workshop questions were analyzed for content and themes [independent of the primary data]. Because the hybrid focus-group workshop was presented to supplement the main body of study, the feedback is discussed in Chapter Nine as a recommendation and design for developing volunteer impact programs for adult learners through volunteering.

REFLECTIVE PARTICIPANT JOURNALS

The Purpose of Reflective Participant Journals in Narrative Research

As this is an explorative research, I, as researcher, was trying to understand the lives, experiences and motivations of the AV and methods like in-depth interviews and focus groups, were useful for gaining an insight into AV's own descriptions of themselves, but it was limited by what they could recall and share during the interview or group time-frame. The use of reflective journals as a methodological approach in narrative research and is more often used for critical, practice, or action-based research (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Researcher reflective journaling [not to be confused with participant reflective journaling] has been used very infrequently in educational research but is gaining momentum, as it provides an opportunity for the participant's voices to be heard authentically. Most often, [as in Chan's (2017) study of immigrant Chinese parenting approaches – using a life story approach], reflective journals are

used as a tool to critically examine and evaluate participant voices from the researcher's standpoint. I chose to introduce reflective journals as part of this research, [similar to Jacelon's (2005) qualitative health research on older adults using participant diaries], to elicit deeper reflection on identity and learning by the AV. Using reflective journals offered AVs an opportunity to reflect on their own time, and in their own space, so they had time to deeply consider the questions and contemplate their memories and experiences of volunteering and learning throughout their lives. Jacelon (2005) explains that the benefits of using participant journals in qualitative research provides a rich source of data. Participants have time to think, breathe and contemplate on research questions provided. Additionally, reflective participant journals promotes critical reflection by the writer, that can trigger transformative learning by the participant (Mezirow, 1990).

Researcher journals have long been accepted as a source of qualitative data in research (B. A. Smith, 1999). However, the use of participant reflection journals as sources of research data has not been given sufficient attention in educational research. Research in some social sciences and humanities areas have shown that participant reflective journals can add depth to qualitative research data as they can provide a unique perspective (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005) from participants that could not be easily heard in an interview. Meth (2003) used solicited participant diaries in her social geography study, concluding that participant journals, as a research method, allowed the voices and descriptions of the lived experience to be heard. Further, she recommended using journals as a multiple method in social research because participants can have more autonomy to share what they want, as well as where and when (Meth, 2003).

In addition to generating data through the in-depth interviews and the hybrid focus-group workshops, the reasoning for conducting and generating field texts in this precise manner and succession was to build relationships with the AVs and to assess AVs who were most interested in this research process. The initial interviews as well as interaction with AVs in the hybrid focus-group workshops helped me to determine who I would invite to collaborate with me further through reflective journaling for in-depth narrative.

The Process of Reflective Participant Journals in Narrative Research

Approximately 10 days after the focus-group workshop hybrid had concluded, a list was made of eight people who either participated in an interview with me, attended

one of the focus groups, or both. From the eight AVs who were invited to participate in the reflective journaling, five AVs, two men and three women agreed to complete the journals. These AVs were selected initially, due to their level of participation in the research until that point, and with as much attention to diversity, breadth, and depth as possible.

One male participant had participated in an interview with me as well as in one of the focus groups. The second male participated in only the focus group with me but during conversation at the group, had agreed to assist further in my research. One male [Pádraig] was a widowed father of four adult children, aged 57 years. The other male [Christy] identifies as a gay male who is retired from the profession of education.

Three females agreed to participate in the reflective journals. Two of the women had participated in the interviews. One could not attend the focus group, and the third woman had not been interviewed but agreed to assist further in my research during conversation at one of the focus groups. One woman [Rosie] is a single mother, aged 31, who was raised seven miles from the Norther Ireland boarder during the period of "The Troubles" from 1987 – 1998. The second woman [Caitríona] is a 45-year-old, married mother of three daughters. The third is a woman [Shelby] who identifies as a lesbian female.

The AVs were given a series of ten questions either complemented an initial interview question but requested deeper reflection, or the same question was re-worded. An example of both are provided in Table 5.3, below.

Interview Questions	Reflective Journal Questions
What is your earliest recollection of volunteering?	Think about all the different activities that define volunteering. Describe your earliest experience or memory of volunteering. This could have been as informal as watching or helping a friend or family member while they volunteered. Try to describe this experience in as much detail as you can remember. What made this memory meaningful to you?
Why do you volunteer now?	Why do you volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated you to volunteer/continue volunteering?
Do you think that your volunteer experience changed you? How has it changed you?	What are some of the most powerful learning moments that you have had through volunteering, and what made them so? What is the most important thing that you have learned personally from these moments?

Table 5.3 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS vs. REFLECTIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS - COMPARISON

The AVs were asked to keep a reflective journal of these questions over a ten-day period. All participants were sent an email with attached reflective questions and a one-page instruction sheet in Fig 5.14, for answering the questions.
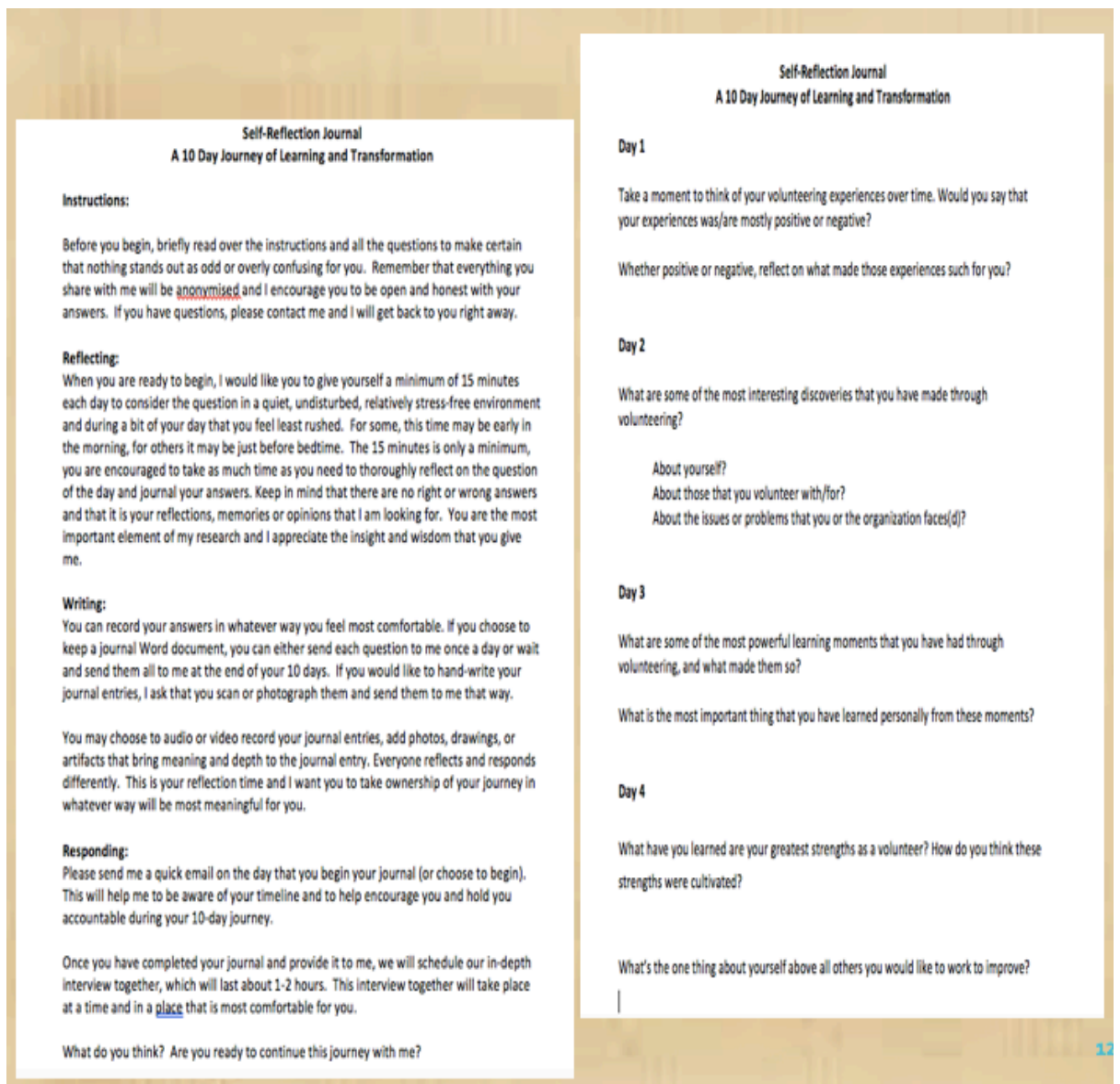
FIG. 5.14 REFLECTIVE JOURNAL INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Some AVs chose to email each question back each day, others, as in the example below, in Fig. 5.15 chose to make an "e-diary" and sent it all back all at once at the end of the 10 days.

> Volunteer Diary.
>
> **Was there a moment of understanding that motivated you to volunteer/continue volunteering?**
>
> There were moments when I was aware that this was a good thing to be doing, but there was never a defining moment when of understanding … again, I suppose that that goes back to my childhood and that understanding that this was what 'we' did. We became involved, we volunteered.
>
> **Day 7**
> **Think about all the different activities that define volunteering. Describe your earliest experience or memory of volunteering. This could have been as informal as watching or helping a friend or family member while they volunteered. Try to describe this experience in as much detail as you can remember.**
>
> My mother taught in a very deprived part of the city in which I grew up. Her day began with the buttering of a large pan of bread. She would then repack the loaf of bread back into the wrapping paper and along with two quarts of fresh milk which was delivered, she got ready for her day's work. When we were old enough we took over the buttering of the bread while waiting for the porridge to be made and gradually learnt that the bread was for the children in her class who came to school without breakfast. This was in the 1950s before 'breakfast clubs' or any such responses to disadvantage were formally put in place. This was extended into other areas of my mother's working life – the sharing of toys we no longer used with families who had little, the First Communion Breakfast that my mother and her colleagues in school put on for the children after they had received the

FIG. 5.15 REFLECTIVE JOURNAL e-DIARY EXAMPLE

Note that the '10 day' requirement was loosely defined and some of the AVs took up to three weeks to return the reflective journals. (Meth, 2003) argues "it gives a great amount of richness, depth and illumination into the influence and impact of volunteer memories" and, from the reflections returned to for this study, I agree. Data from Pádraig, Caitríona, Rosie, and Christy were integrated into the narratives in Chapter Six. Shelby's reflective journal content was not used in the vignettes, as only four out of the five were selected to represent the Active Volunteer Dispositions for this study.

5.6 ANALYZING THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

In the next section of this chapter, I outline the frame used for the analysis of the data and findings. This structure takes on a more blended approach in that, as this research

was undertaken inductively without any formal hypotheses, and as an exploration of volunteer identity and learning through volunteering over the life course, the content relative to each research question would be narratively and then thematically analyzed. This study includes three qualitative data sets 1. In-depth Interviews 2. Hybrid Focus-group Workshops and 3. Reflective Participant Journals, as outlined in the previous sections. Compared to one another, none more important than the other in generating the data, rather, these data sets served three distinct functions for this research in answering the research questions. The In-depth Interviews established the context and relationship between the research for the AV, their role as AVs, and the connection that their identity and learning experiences have had on their volunteering activity through articulation of their beliefs, attitudes and values.

In-depth Interviews began the process of answering the research questions through thoughtful narrative that provided the insight into AV experiences and behaviors. The Reflective Participant Journals served to deepen the answers to the research questions by encouraging AVs to thoroughly reflect on and consider the relationship between past experiences of learning throughout their life, their understanding of identity, and their volunteer activity. Finally, the Hybrid Focus-group Workshop served as an active learning opportunity for AVs to provide guided instruction on activities designed to promote reflection on volunteer identity and awareness of volunteer activity as informal learning.

The analysis of the data generated is of a narrative and thematic narrative nature. Through the structuring of this study, as well as the data generating and analysis processes, I found that I could draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry work as detailed in section 5.4 above. I believe that the methods used to generate the data and the way in which the data was analyzed comprise a cohesive union of the qualitative interpretivist paradigm set out in the beginning of this chapter. The interconnection between my research philosophy, approach, theoretical perspective, strategies and methods forms a strong, rigorous study and is precisely the reason why I carried out my research in this manner. The next sections explain the process of analysis.

THEMATIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In keeping with the structure and techniques of narrative inquiry from a life course perspective, my analysis of the data takes on a blended approach of *Narrative Analysis*

[as a research approach] and *Thematic Analysis* [as a broad strategy for 'data handling']. In reviewing a wide range of methodological literature for this research, I read that stories generated from in-depth qualitative and narrative data are particularly relevant when exploring volunteer identity and learning (Clark & Rossiter, 2008; Duguid et al., 2007; Lee, 2016; Selmo, 2015). Based on AVs beliefs, attitudes, and values from the life course perspective (Biesta et al., 2008), I conducted this analysis in 2 levels. First*, narratively, as narrative analysis asks *HOW AND WHY* as you analyze data (Andrews et al., 2013). I analyzed the stories AVs shared with me. *Narrative Analysis,* primarily used in educational research, helped me to understand how AVs are representing themselves, or their experiences - to themselves and to others. After an in-depth, thorough Narrative Analysis, I then conducted a *Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis*, primarily used in psychology research, asks WHAT rather than HOW and WHY (Aronson, 1995; J. A. Smith, 2015) and provides a device for exploring similarities, disparities, etc. across the data generated. Some of the themes from the 1st level of analysis, were held stronger by the AVs, these fell into distinct groups and make up my AVDs. These AVDs represent a new way of understanding AVs and will be presented in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Once transcribed by the researcher, the AVs interview narrative transcripts were read and hand-coded in the image Fig. 5.16 below. I chose to transcribe all my interviews myself and I chose not to use coding software. First, transcribing all my own narrative transcripts provided me an opportunity to further develop my relationship with my AV's lived experience by re-hearing their voices and our interviews a second time. It provided comprehension of the attitudes and expectations of the AVs in relation to their environments and experiences, and I could sense basic themes emerging before I even started the coding process. I chose not to use coding software because I felt that hand-coding my AVs would provide me with a richer, more complete set of codes.

Historical Experience

What was your volunteer experience, if any, in post-primary/secondary school?
I suppose that my mom… we would have no deaf family member or no association with the deaf community, but my mother, they would have a garden theater or summer fair to raise funds and she would bring cakes and things down. I remember someone asked her at one stage. And from then it kind of grew and we helped out then. Like for fundraisers where you would have stalls and I remember going with her and door to door to factories and businesses trying to get spot prizes or things that they could sell or raffle or raise money on for the stalls. That would be the first things. And then they would have flag days where you would have to stand in town (now there are a lot of charities doing it) but you would actually have the boxes and the deaf boys would go out as well and so they had set flag days throughout the year and I would do that as well. So I suppose we have done an awful lot volunteer work around the deaf school along the Navan Road – St. Joseph's. We spent a lot of time there as kids. Even after my mom went back to work when I was around 9 yrs. Growing up helping out there or here with the baking, cakes and stuff. It was from my mother's link to it. Because she did it, we were naturally drawn into it. That is all I really remember. That would have gone through secondary school and then at one stage the head of St. Joseph's decided that they didn't need a fundraising committee any more and it kind of filtered out. I think that linked in around that was when residential sexual abuse and commission of inquiry and all of those kind of things kind of kicking off, you know the start.

Then I think my mother myself and another woman came together to see if we could do something around the child sexual abuse. I would have been probably been about 19 or 20 just finishing school. None of my family would have gone to college back then. I would have been the first from my family to go to university.

Then the voluntary work petered out after that because I was going to school, my grandmother took ill.

How long or often did you participate?
I would have done some things when my children were in primary school. There would have been cake sales and that kind of thing for school. Baking things or my son. Then there was the beginning of my own personal experience behind the violations around the human and civil rights in the mental health system. My own experiences I suppose, shaped that. From that really, trying to get more rights generally accepted for other people. I suppose that has been the core of the voluntary work since. That's been since about 2012.

I have no idea, way way back. Twitter and going to human rights events. Government consultations around disability and mental health all of those things. So I go to a lot of those, and it is always nearly raising issues from the floor because they are not exactly issues that people want discussed or attention drawn to. Things like forced electric shock, restraints. All those things that just aren't discussed. So, that has been a lot of what I have done since 2012, any way.

Shelli Garland
influence of mother to disparities in community

Shelli Garland
local community disparity

Shelli Garland
awareness of disparities

Shelli Garland
belief in a cause

Shelli Garland
influence of personal experience of human rights violations

Shelli Garland
seeks truth and justice

Shelli Garland
belief in the cause, action oriented.

Shelli Garland
Outspoken, unafraid

FIG. 5.16 HAND-CODING NARRATIVE EXAMPLE

I used a simple Excel spreadsheet to keep track of coding and as common themes began to emerge, the transcripts were then sorted into categories based on frequency of themes. To comprise a theme, commonalities in responses for at least three participants were necessary. Commonality was established based upon the entire texts, as captured in an Excel spreadsheet entitled Comparative Codes, a detailed sample of which can be found in Appendix G. By continually re-reading the transcripts, I became intimately acquainted with each AV and noted that there were four distinct categories that each participant fit into – based on their beliefs, attitudes, and the kind of volunteering that they liked and disliked. The codes [which are extensive and comprise 20 printed pages of data] were compared as 'codes', 'commonalities', and 'idiosyncrasies', and listed as separate sheets within the spreadsheet. A snapshot of the 'codes' sheet is presented in Fig. 5.17.

	A	B	C	D
54	awareness of Environment	connection with community	dislikes inefficency	because you can
55	awareness of Environment	connection with community	dislikes inefficency	belief in the cause
56	awareness of Environment	connection with community	duty filler	belief in the cause
57	awareness of Environment		duty filler	belief in the cause
58	awareness of Environment	do for others	duty filler	belief in the cause
59	awareness of environment	do good	duty filler	belief in the cause
60	affectdd by environment	do good	duty filler	belief in the cause
61		do good	duty filler	belief in the cause
62	awareness of others	do good	energetic	belief in the cause
63	awareness of others	do good	enthusiastic	belief in the cause
64	awareness of others	do good	environment	belief in the cause
65	awareness of others	doing good for others	focused	belief in the cause
66	awareness of others	doing good for others	giving back	belief in the cause
67	awareness of others disparity	belief in doing good	goal oriented	belief in the cause
68			goal oriented	belief in the cause
69	Committed	easygoing	goal oriented	belief in the cause
70	committed	easygoing	goal oriented	belief in the cause
71	committed	easygoing	goal oriented	belief in the cause
72	committed	easygoing	goal oriented	belief in the cause
73		easygoing	goal oriented	belief in the cause
74	community		goal oriented	belief in the cause
75	community	empathy	goal oriented	belief in the cause
76	community	empathy	goal oriented	belief in the cause
77	community	empathy	good natured	belief in the cause
78	community	empathy	good natured	belief in the cause

Codes | Commonalities | Idiosyncracies | +

FIG. 5.17 CODING SHEET FOR ANALYSIS

I noted the subtle differences for the volunteer decisions or actions based on impressions from experiences discussed during the in-depth interview. In Fig. 5.18, the number in each column heading represents the number of AVs that identify with the name classification and the colors represent a color for each AV in that category only. While the colors may be the same from one column to the next, they only match in color because it would be too difficult to keep track of 24 different color types and because they had been sorted into distinct categories – 'like' colors did not pose a problem with the coding from this point.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	GUIDE - 9	IDEALIST - 6	EXECUTIVE - 4	CHAMPION - 5	
2	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented	
3	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented	
4	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented	
5	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented	
6	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented	
7	Authentic Relationships	appreciates variety	action oriented	action oriented	
8	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented	
9	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented	
10	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented	
11	authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented	
12	authentic Relationships		adaptable	action oriented	
13	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	administrative	action oriented	
14	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	affirmation	action oriented	
15	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	affirmation	action oriented	
16	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	ambitious	active	
17	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	ambitious	active citizenship	
18	authentic Relationships		ambitious	activist	
19	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	ambitious	activist	
20	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	appreciation	anxious	
21	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	appreciation	awareness of activism	
22	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	awareness of differences	awareness of cultural disparity	
23	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	awareness of differences	awareness of cultural disparity	
24	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity	
25	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity	

◄ ►   Codes   Commonalities   Idiosyncracies   +

FIG. 5.18 DISPOSITION CODING SHEET

Once coded and categorized, the occurrences of themes were stunningly clear on the page. The names in column A, B, C, and D, that you see above in Fig. 5.18 [*The Guide, The Idealist, The Executive,* and *The Champion*] evolved considerably from my initial categorization of the AVs in the analysis of findings - Chapter Seven, and will be presented in-depth, as major findings in Chapter Eight. Each disposition, is very distinct in the frequency and nature of the identity and learning values they were prone to.

These emerging 'dispositions' were further analyzed through Thematic Analysis and will be presented in-depth in Chapter Eight as a new understanding of the Active Volunteer Disposition (AVD). In Fig. 5.19 below, you will see that the dominate codes were charted up individually by AVDs, along with the occurrences of synonyms in language and 'dislikes' when AVs expressed any. This image displays the early emerging AVDs.

FIG. 5.19 POSTERS OF DISPOSITIONS

After analyzing and evaluating the codes, themes, and qualities of the AVDs, I created the AVD model in Fig. 5.20 below to quickly recognize them.   AVDs that are influenced by the foundational elements of identity, motivation, and learning construct individual dispositions that affect the kind of volunteering one appreciates and values. Although, how the dispositions stack up and/or play out with a different set of participants or in a different cultural context is not the remit of this study and therefore, should be considered in further research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Trochim, 2006).

FIG. 5.20 ACTIVE VOLUNTEER DISPOSITIONS

The narrative and thematic analysis in combination, allowed the common themes to emerge clearly among the AVs followed by more complex, yet concise themes of individuality as AVDs that provide rich and robust findings that are presented in-depth in Chapter Seven and Eight.

VIGNETTES FOR REFLECTION
The Purpose of using Vignettes for Reflection in Narrative Research

Chapter Six of this thesis represents the detailed narrative life stories of four of my 24 AVs in the form of *vignettes*. Vignettes, are a 'slice of life' are often used in theater, fiction and non-fiction literature to provide more information on a theme, mood, character or ideas (Barter & Renold, 1999). These stories about individuals, situations, and structures can make reference to important points in a study of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes and can be used effectively in qualitative, narrative research (Andrews et al., 2013; Barter & Renold, 1999). In qualitative research, vignettes enable participants to define a certain memory or life experience in their own terms (Biesta et al., 2008; Elder Jr, 1998). Not only do the four vignettes in Chapter Six speak to the common threads between the other 20 AVs in this study, they also represent each of the four AVDs presented in detail as my major findings in Chapter Eight.

It is evident that narratives of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona and Rosie strongly depict the AV identity through learning relationships that formed their beliefs, attitudes, and values about volunteering throughout their life course. Vignettes have been used to elicit cultural norms derived from respondents' attitudes and beliefs about a specific

situation (Barter & Renold, 1999). Each of the AVs reflect on their memories and experiences of volunteering and learning, in their own words, and in greater detail, than I could present in snippets of narrative through analysis, alone.

The stories of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie are not unlike the other 20 AVs interviewed, and any one of their stories could deliver meaning to the dispositions in the form of a vignette, but it was these four narratives that impacted me most personally, and was therefore the reason that they were chosen to represent my AVDs in these vignettes. While the life journeys, cultural and societal environment, and lived experiences differ widely from one AV to another, their learning and disposition toward certain types of volunteering activity bear striking resemblance to other AVs that places them into four dispositions.

Essentially, these narratives were deeply significant in answering the research questions. As I transcribed 24 interviews that averaged approximately 12,000 words each, the life journeys of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie, and the substance in their narratives kept coming back to me. They were unforgettable, and I found myself reflecting on them repeatedly… making comparisons to the other 20 AVs and making conscious connections that resulted in the major findings in Chapter Eight.

The Process of using Vignettes for Reflection in Narrative Research

I chose these four [Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie], based on the content of the narrative transcripts as well as if they returned a reflective journal in addition to their interview. While the interview narratives and the participants themselves were articulate and very well spoken, the raw transcripts were scrubbed, removing much of the conversational language [such as *'um, ah,* and *you know'*] and excluding my own voice, as the interviewer, to make the extensive narratives less cumbersome and easier to read. The interview questions were removed, and any narrative conversation from me in the narrative. The interview narratives were then combined with the submitted reflective journals that were all submitted electronically, and manipulated into a chronological monologue from the lone voice of the AV to represent memories, experiences and learning over their life course. Narrative research can be used for educational and social research by placing the participant's voices 'at the center of the inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie were provided with the revised transcript narrative and asked to make any modifications or corrections in the vignette, making

sure to check the accuracy of the chronology. I did not rephrase nor add anything to their spoken word in the interviews as I wanted to maintain the integrity of their memories and impressions, and be true to their story. When provided their completed vignette for review, Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie all responded positively to their written word and gave me their approval to submit their vignette. This was an important step in that this feedback established credibility of the narrative as the AV's true voice. These vignettes, as written in this style, invoked a powerful image for me [the curator of these life histories], of the AV, sitting on a stool in a dimly lit room, a spotlight on them, and with no obvious distractions, relaying their 'slice of life' to their captive audience.

The selection and structuring of the vignettes has been determined by me. The 'what' or 'who' these distinct dispositions are is being deliberately withheld from you in the Vignettes chapter to let the stories speak to you, individually, as they will. It is my hope that presenting them in this style will be used as a pre-reflective device to prepare you for the analysis in Chapter Seven and the findings in Chapter Eight and to draw your own conclusions about the impacts that volunteering and learning.

Chapter Six also includes reflection boxes called 'points 2 ponder' [P2Ps] that were suggested to me in a professional conversation with a fellow sociologist and academic role model that I highly respect and value. As the vignettes are intended to leave an impression on the reader's mind, these P2P reflection boxes are placed at the end of each vignette for the reader to reflect, interpret, and extrapolate on before the analysis in Chapter Seven. These reflection boxes also include thematic considerations from my own very brief interpretation of the narrative summary. The idea is that, as the reader embarks on this journey with Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie, there is an opportunity to ponder the influences and experiences of each AV and comment on any themes or impressions that come to mind from the reading before settling into the detailed analysis of findings and discussion.

Ultimately, my own identity and desire for continued and lifelong learning is embedded within this research, which can be complex, messy and subjective (Chan, 2017) but it was important that I remained critical and objective in positioning myself as a researcher who is deeply immersed and passionate about volunteering. Therefore, I was as careful as I could be to not to be drawn in affectively and hyper-conscious of what I was interpreting. While being completely objective and unbiased in this qualitative study is impossible [refer to section 1.2 in Chapter One and section 5. in this chapter as a refresh of the acknowledgement of my bias], I have taken deliberate

measures to create a 'reasonable detachment' (Barnacle, 2004; Chan, 2017) from the AV's narratives and ask myself a series of questions from the emerging findings that I could critically reflect relative to current literature rather than what I may be 'feeling' throughout this research process see Fig. 5.21.
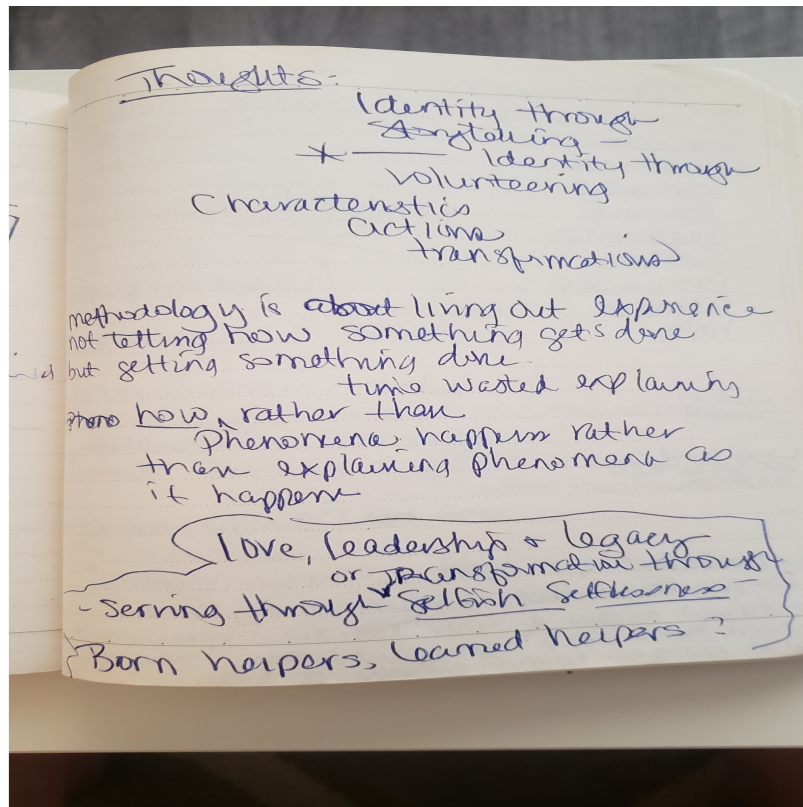
FIG. 5.21 RESEARCHER REFLECTION OF FINDINGS

While I have made it very clear throughout this thesis that I am fully immersed and, as an educational practitioner who is passionate about adult education, volunteering and acts of service, I have been keenly aware that how I interpret findings must be thoroughly and rigorously checked against established research. The stories collected during qualitative research processes are not only the participants' stories, they are also reflective of the researcher's social and cultural positioning (Chan, 2017). It is my hope that providing the P2Ps reflection boxes in Chapter Six will allow you an opportunity to connect to the volunteer journeys of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie, in a way that provides meaningful understanding for the thematic connections evident in Chapter Seven. I tested the vignette chapter with the P2Ps on several academic colleagues who were kind enough to read, reflect, and provide feedback on their thoughts regarding this alternative form of presenting narrative in a thesis. The

feedback was very positive and provided me with options for presenting maximum impact through the reflective chapter. Some elements were changed through the 'pilot' process. Instead of P2Ps at the end of each section of each vignette, only one was deemed sufficient at the end of each vignette. Additionally, the reflective 'prompts' were changed to provide the reader with the researcher's overview and how each vignette also answered one of the four research questions from the researcher's perspective. Fig. 5.22 is an example of a P2P reflection that was returned to me by a professor who teaches in the School of Education.
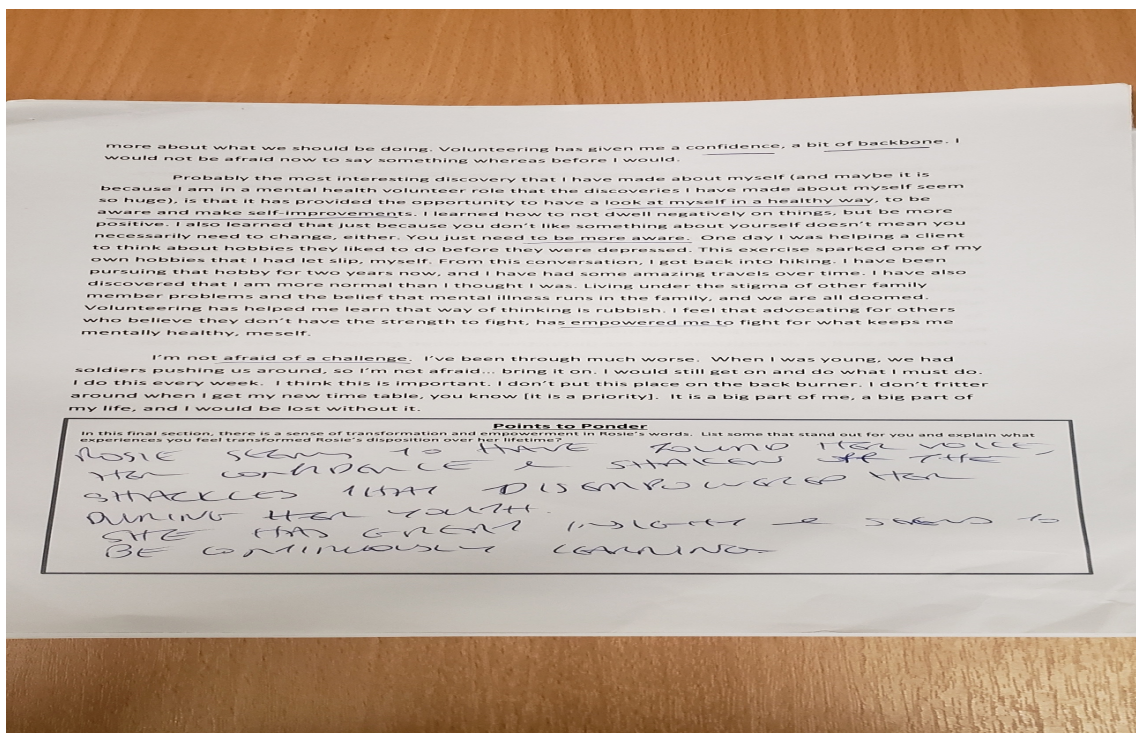
FIG. 5.22 POINTS TO PONDER (P2P) REFLECTION EXAMPLE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS TO ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS IN THIS STUDY

As a researcher, I felt that presenting the research findings to those involved in my research was an opportunity to give something back to those who took the time to sit with me, answer questions, attend focus groups, and write in journals.   The AVs and volunteer organizations expressed interest through their involvement in the study and were concerned with the findings of this study, as well. Presenting research findings is an important method in reporting and validating research findings. It is an effective method in exhibiting and communicating the research findings, and my research participants can also confirm the credibility of the findings, and thereby dependability and confirmability are achieved. This idea of "member checking" was developed by

Lincoln & Guba (Lincoln, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1986) as a way to enhance the credibility of qualitative research and delivers validity, reliability, reflexivity and trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

It is my conviction that my AVs were the 'first in' to my study and therefore should be the 'first out' and who better to report to first, then those who invested in my research in the first place? My AVs shared details of their lives that they had never thought about before. I place a high value on the input of the AVs, who shared with me their memories of growing up, the environments in which they lived, and the education that they received. intimate moments of adolescent uncertainty, memories of familial influence, lessons learned through tragic experiences. Without my participants, there would have been no study. Further, it is my ethical obligation as a researcher to share the findings with my participants because I offered to do so when I sought their informed consent.

5.7 REFLEXIVITY AND ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

In this section, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, I consider the ethical questions and issues that formed part of this work. For this research I was the sole researcher or 'human instrument' (Crotty, 1998) who interacted with all AV participants. I was thus more able to realize and holistically study all of the AVs socially constructed realities. As a priority, relationship and trust between myself and my AVs were vital for the study to be successful. Establishing my position as a good listener and researcher who wishes to tell the volunteer's story in a way that is honoring to the AV's lived-experiences and consciousness of their privacy is necessary. While there was in-depth probing, it was done in mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Interviews were conducted in a place that AVs felt most comfortable. Additionally, I encouraged ongoing dialog with my participants, letting them know that we were generating the data in this research together, as a team. It was important to me that Participants know how valued their input was to this study. I used conversational dialog rather than interrogative interviewing techniques and designed the questions to allow in-depth, free-flowing conversation to occur. AVs were allowed all the time they needed to contemplate and reflect before answering. This section provides insight and explanation regarding my awareness and desire for reflexivity in the study and adherence to ethical practice.

The interpretive position of this research posits learning and knowledge as a social and cultural construction and hence I, as the researcher must consider how my own assumptions and views have impacted on the research process and interpretation of the narratives in order to understand the complexities of the various realities involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

There are some limitations of this narrative inquiry that are explained within this section. With any qualitative research, there will always be the argument that the research lacks quantitative data to support the story (Andrews et al., 2013). The research predominately represents the dominant culture or population and the degree of transferability must be considered (Trochim, 2006). The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. In this case, the research sample was limited to participants who are actively volunteering, or interested in volunteering, as set forth in section 5.5. Ultimately, a qualitative perspective of transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Additionally, the notion that interpretations are influenced by the researcher's own belief system [bias] is valid as the researcher's history and affinity for volunteer participation has been well established throughout this thesis. The interpretive position of this research posits learning and knowledge as a social and cultural construction and hence I, as the researcher must consider how my own assumptions and views have impacted on the research process and interpretation of the narratives in order to understand the complexities of the various realities involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I acknowledge that complete objectivity in a qualitative study is impossible and that I must be always mindful about my subjective views and opinions. I believe in the value of volunteer participation and the sustainability of volunteer engagement for society and community. Additionally, I acknowledge that the value of time and reflection from my participants was vital to this research and that the participants deserve to be notified of the findings from this research, if they so wish. I have made conscious attempts throughout this research to balance my subjective biases about volunteering with objective awareness of cultural and societal beliefs, attitudes and values present in this study that are different that my own.

The risk of bias in qualitative research is inevitable, and when participants are involved the risk can be even greater. This research included significant, on-going, in-depth contact with the research participants in the form of interviews, focus groups and email correspondence where invested relationships and mutual respect, admiration, and affinity have been established. Particularly that of the participant's acknowledgment of invested interest in this research and the outcome of this research, and the researcher's affinity and invested interest in the continued lives of many of the participants, and acknowledgement of the value of said participants and their desire to be informed of the outcome of this research. With that in mind, much care has been taken to ensure that the questions asked of the participants were delivered thoughtfully and with an open mind so that participants felt comfortable with sharing their feelings and understandings without misrepresentation, and in a way that put the participants at ease with telling their story authentically.

This researcher was acutely aware of the varying researcher and participant biases that could have possibly skewed the data or interpretation of the data and I carefully considered this throughout the data generation and analysis process. The bias of utmost concern for me was confirmation bias. Therefore, my exploration was conducted with a keen awareness of my own personal history, passion, and cultural biases for volunteering and learning. As a citizen of the United States, where integrating serving with learning in education has been common for more than four decades, I was careful to consider that the cultural variations and understandings in Ireland could be very different than my own. I was mindful that I was conducting research in a country whose education system is primarily classroom based and teaches for exams. The idea of incorporating citizenship and community involvement has been historically left to family influence and I needed to be vigilant in assessing those variations objectively.

Additionally, I needed to consider that the type of participant bias that could creep into this kind of research [based on the identifying factors of a volunteer as 'the helper' (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017)] are acquiescence and social desirability biases. Therefore, care was taken to phrase questions so that the participant was comfortable to answer questions that may not be socially acceptable or anticipating what they perceived the researcher wanted to hear.

There were several variances may have affect the outcome of the study. Such limitations were that the varied language and understanding of what volunteering means could have inadvertently excluded participation from certain groups that don't

define or identify themselves as volunteers [specifically, GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) or sport organizations, animal rescue organizations, or church affiliations]. It should be noted that the National Committee on Volunteering states that "The act of volunteering is not always recognized as being such and the language of volunteering is not always used to describe activities that may be considered as acts of volunteering. At times, individuals do not see themselves as being engaged in a volunteering role. In other cases, 'volunteering' as a concept is seen to have negative connotations or associations. Alternatively, organizations may not treat de facto volunteers as volunteers" (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Another limitation, as is with many qualitative research studies, is the interpretation of the number of participants. For in-depth interviews, this research included 24 AV interviews. The focus groups had 28 participants, for a total of 52 in which 5 of the participants were also interviewees which makes the total participants in the entire study 47. This limitation was addressed by opening the focus group criterion up to anyone 'interested' in volunteering and not specifically 'active volunteers'. The criteria for the focus group was also changed so that participants did not have to have attended any institute of higher learning to boost diversity and robustness of the study. Still another issue of significance that I anticipated, was pushback from gatekeepers with the new European Union General Data Protection Rules [GDPR] that were initiated in January 2018. This did not become a significant concern as volunteer lists were not provided to me, rather participants were recruited public domain and forums via a voluntary, self-identifying, online google form.

Gender ratio was also a concern for this research. In 2015, CSO reported that slightly more women volunteer than men at a ratio of females (28.7%) and males (28.1%). In 2016 Volunteer Ireland reported that over 14,000 volunteers who registered with I-VOL was 68% female and 32% male (Volunteer Ireland). This meant that it was likely that more women would respond to the public call for research participants than men. Effort was made to encourage male participation, but without overtly forcing or otherwise manipulating the validity of the research. I did extend additional email communication with the males that submitted interest forms, hoping that they would respond, but did not follow through with email communication thereafter. I didn't want to target and recruit male participants for the study, rather I preferred to allow the scales to balance naturally. However, statistically, the participation in this research ultimately did support the trends reported by CSO and Volunteer Ireland (refer to the demographics in section 5.5).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Access and ethics are critical aspects for the conduct of research (Creswell, 2007). The fact that qualitative methods may be used to investigate personal or private opinions means that there were inherent ethical considerations that must be considered before proceeding with the research. The School of Education's Ethics Committee received and reviewed my application for approval of my research project preliminarily entitled "Volunesia: Transformations through volunteering. Exploring the lived experience of the active community volunteer in Ireland, who participated in community engagement and/or community based learning during their 3rd level education". The Committee granted approval on 9th April 2018, and provide permission to proceed with my research on the condition that it is carried out as indicated on my application in Appendix J.

The research, as depicted on my application and further detailed within the previous sections, adhered to Trinity's Policy on Good Research Practice. It was based on a) respect for the participants, b) beneficence & the absence of maleficence, and c) justice. No incentives were offered and there are no further ethical aspects that must be considered in the recruitment of the proposed participants. All AVs and focus-group workshop attendees participated on an informed and voluntary basis and they understood that they were free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without prejudice. Participation was arranged at a time that suited the AVs for minimum disruption to their daily lives.

- Interviews were conducted at various locations across the country of Ireland, that were most convenient and comfortable for the participant, and included public meeting spaces, coffee shops, or campus offices, in their home, if they chose, and three interviews were conducted via Skype video conferencing.
- Focus groups were conducted in the form of focus-group workshop hybrids and took place on campus at Trinity College Dublin. The focus groups lasted three hours each and there were three groups in total.
- There were no known security concerns beyond those encountered by participants and the researcher in everyday life and Volunteering is not considered a sensitive topic.
- There were no known conflicts of interested associated with this research project. It was understood that research participants could be critical of current practice in this area. The research findings could have highlighted how current

practices in the data generation location diverged from recognized best practice. If this were to have occurred, the researcher understands that this data would be reported in a professional, constructive manner.

- The potential for the disclosure of illegal activity was very low in this research area and no criminal activity, that this researcher is aware of, was reported. If it had occurred, the data would have been excluded from the dataset and the relevant authorities would have been notified. Participation in community engagement and volunteering and the lived experience of an AV does not create any conflict of interest or disclosure of sensitive or illegal information.

- Anonymity has been assured for all AV participants. The participants are not being named in the study. All participants were provided pseudonyms so that their real name and information was anonymized. Specific details, locations, and names of participants were anonymized for individual protection.

- A Presentation of Findings and discussion session was held on 14 June 2019 in the Trinity Long Room Hub on Trinity campus. All the AV participants, and volunteer organizations that published my call for research were personally invited to attend the presentation.

- Data is stored securely and will be destroyed in line with the relevant Irish Data-Protection legislation (Data Protection Act 1988, 2003). The data collected is stored in a secure manner with encryption and password protection and any printed documentation is stored in a locked cabinet in secure location that only the researcher has access to. The designated destruction date will be approximately two years after my graduation and conference of degree. All means of data collection is securely stored, maintained and will be destroyed at the appropriate date/time.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter detailed the methods and methodology for this qualitative study and the holistic lens toward volunteer identity and learning. I have argued that the most appropriate way to address the research questions was to adopt a narrative inquiry approach underpinned by the life course perspective through the process of lifelong learning. This chapter detailed the methods most useful for generating data in this research as in-depth interviews, hybrid workshop-focus groups, and reflective journals because each of these qualitative methods are compatible with narrative research and have been used in established life course research. Additionally, this chapter offered creative methods for presenting AV narratives through use of vignettes and for

analyzing the data for this research narratively and thematically. Chapter Six introduces you to the stories of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona and Rosie.

CHAPTER SIX: VOLUNTEER VIGNETTES

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them"
William Shakespeare

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The connections to learning that we make through memories of our experiences growing up often plays a significant role in how we approach learning as adults and can vary greatly from one AV to another. Often, without any conscious comprehension of it. Memories can have an impact on outlook and identity. From informal learning influences, such as dealing with parental alcoholism, or a death in the family, to formal learning influences that are structured through socially defined activities in school such as cross-border peace engagement, or participation in religious ceremonies as part of school curriculum. Each of my 24 AVs have life experiences that are as unique and diverse as they are. Age, socio-economic history or position, familial influence, school or home demographics, and the like, all have an impact on the ways or reasons for which they give of themselves through volunteering. Those past influences and experiences provide different impacts toward a propensity to actively volunteer, and many similar sentiments are echoed as to why they volunteer, or what they personally gain by being a volunteer.

This chapter is representation of a journey through the lives of four AVs. From their earliest memories of volunteering, learning, and living, through their reflections of volunteering now, and their aspirations for future volunteering, these are enduring life stories which provide a background of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that have both formed their volunteer identity and shaped their volunteer dispositions. Each of the vignettes poignantly begin the process of answering my research questions and each represents a significant precursor to the AVDs that are presented in Chapter Eight.

1. **Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**
2. **Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**
3. **Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?**

4. Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?

As you begin this chapter, I ask you to think of the forthcoming narratives as a gift that has been placed in front of you. A gift wrapped richly and beautifully, in such a way that it evokes immediate interest and anxious anticipation. Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie's stories, as Vignettes, are the wrappings of a gift… chosen because they articulate their life narratives with brutal honesty and poignant reflection that leaves an impression, provokes curiosity, and anticipates contemplation of the themes that will be unwrapped for you in Chapter Seven and Eight. This chapter is rather lengthy, but it is deliberately long because Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie's connection together in this chapter suggests a continuity of impact across the dispositions as these Vignettes represent the four AVDs that will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Splitting the Vignettes in this chapter would, in my estimation, dilute the significance of the four life narratives on the findings in Chapter Eight.

Therefore, reflection boxes have been placed for you, the reader, at the end of each Vignette, along with thematic considerations from my own interpretation of the narrative. The idea is that, as you take in this journey with Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie, you have an opportunity to ponder the influences and experiences of each Vignette narrative and comment on any themes that you might begin to see or impressions that come to mind from the reading before moving on to the next. The journey and reflection in each of the following stories are narrated in their own words. The researcher's voice has been completely removed from narrative and the section headings are a direct reflection taken from the narrative in that specific section.

6.2 CHRISTY

INTRODUCTION

Christy is a 66-year-old man who identifies as gay and is married with no children. He was born and raised in the mid-west region of Ireland. He is the youngest of two sons, raised by parents who were both educators. Christy has attained a PhD and is currently employed as an educator. Christy grew up in rural Ireland and attended primary and post-primary at an all-boys Catholic school from approximately 1960 and received his first 3rd level degree in 1976. The 1960s saw the end of censorship in

Ireland, and the provision of free post-primary education, but virtually all of the state-funded schools were under the church control and had been since Ireland gained its independence in 1922. During the mid-20th century, Ireland was influenced by many of the same socio-economic and social-societal issues that other modernized countries were dealing with such as consumer affluence; a rise in recreational drug use and abuse, debates on religion; equality and the status of Irish women; and homosexuality was considered criminal and abnormal (it would not be decriminalized until 1993 in Ireland). These societal and cultural issues, among others, had a direct impact on Christy's perception of life and learning experiences.

CHRISTY'S VOLUNTEER JOURNEY AND REFLECTION
"I want them to find a [feather] boa in my wardrobe and wonder how it got there"

From a young age, I was brought into the world of volunteering by my parents and it is part of who I am in the world. It is part of my identity. It is a value that I consider important in my idea of who I am. Both of my parents were primary school teachers and as such, had very complex lives. My mother was involved in a resident's association locally and with a women's group that up-skilled women to go back into the work force once their families were reared. My father was a choral conductor and arranger, and was involved in various choirs or choral groups.

My mother taught in a very deprived part of the city in which I grew up. Her day began with the buttering of a large pan of bread. She would then repack the loaf of bread into the wrapping paper along with two quarts of fresh milk which was delivered each day. It was a regular part of how she got ready for her day's work. When we were old enough, we took over the buttering of the bread while waiting for the porridge to be made and gradually learnt that the bread was for the children in her class who came to school without breakfast. This was in the 1950s before 'breakfast clubs' or any such responses to disadvantage were formally put in place. This was extended into other areas of my mother's working life – the sharing of toys we no longer used with families who had little, the First Communion breakfast that my mother and her colleagues in school put on for the children after they had received the sacrament. Putting Christmas hampers together in our sitting room for families that my parents were aware of who had little, and delivering them with my father on Christmas Eve.

My earliest memories of volunteering would have fallen under a heading of 'being volunteered' as my parents, both involved in different kinds of volunteering, simply brought my brother and I along to events that they were involved with. As soon as we

could, we would simply help. We would be handed a tray of sandwiches and were told to go around and serve. You were relegated to clean-up duty and given the black sack to work with. It would have been that kind of thing. I suppose, I never viewed these kinds of tasks as menial because you were getting to be with adults doing 'adult things'. I think I saw it as a privilege. It was allowing you to be part of the grown-ups rather than sent off to play with the other children. In our home, there wasn't a huge emphasis on children and parents socializing together. Looking back on those experiences, I think of them in very positive terms, as in many cases, we did them as a family. They are memories I have not revisited in many years. Our childhoods were very much a mixture of good memories and not so great memories, the latter taking precedence by the time we were adolescents and colouring our experiences of our childhood in darker hues. It is good to focus on those earlier experiences of a family doing things together!

It took me until my mid-teens to realize that my father was an alcoholic. That darkened our childhood considerably because we were sucked in to it. We realized that he was drinking and drinking very heavily, and often did not go to work because he was hung over. My parent's marriage was consequently very unhappy. The house was very unhappy. The only levity we got was when he went to the pub. It was euphoric in the beginning… and then it was nice… and then there would come the awareness that he is going to come home in the next hour or so. Those were the windows that we had from the time that I was 10 or 11 years old. That continued until he died of alcohol related illnesses. Prior to that (before the drink became an issue) was a very different family experience. As we got older, our family happiness was very much dictated by the idea that we were all happy when we were doing what my father wanted done. If there was any kind of disagreement, he made everybody's life miserable. He was very much the patriarch.

I had a friend once say to me "when I die I want them to find a boa in my wardrobe and wonder how it got there" and my mother did just that. While, my father's volunteering was somewhat more obvious, it was a performance, it was more about him, and it was about winning and being the best at it, my mother was more quiet and understated. There were lots of people who benefited from her kindnesses, but also voluntary things that she did. She was forever writing references for people for jobs and going to bat for people who were in trouble at work. That would have been where my inspiration to volunteer would have come from.

When my mother died, she left a huge number of people that we didn't know in her wake that she had a massive influence on. She was teaching literacy to adults well into her 80s. She was fearless. She was selfless. I found out things about my mother at her funeral that I didn't know. People came up to me and said "did you know your mother did this?" and they were huge things. There was a man who turned up at her funeral, whom my brother described as the 'chief mourner'. He told us that my mother had dressed him for his first holy communion, and for his confirmation. Later, she had gotten him a suit for his first job and another suit for him to wear the day he got married, and we never knew… we never knew.

"The Catholic church held sway in education"

The early construction of my identity as a young man in the 1960s, included the ideal of volunteerism but it was wrapped in swaths of Catholic doctrine. It was a time in Ireland when the Catholic church held sway in education, and the subjugation of the 'self' was of primary importance. The bending of wills around the principals of the church was a huge part of my early experience of education. Mass indoctrination and the exposure to the control of the church on how and what I thought. Being different was not an option, unless it was to excel and something that brought glory to the school or to the church. The notion of 'pride' was something to be stamped out of 'a good' person. Guilt and self-doubt were the core methods to make sure that no one got too far above their stations.

Being "selfless and humble" were attributes which were held daily in front of us in school, as qualities we should aspire to if we were to be "good boys" and later "worthy young men." In the all-male school that I attended, the pinnacle of success was seen as excelling at sport or excelling at science. Students who had such successes were paraded in front of us as what we should aspire to. The school was hierarchically organized with classes streamed on ability basis. The lower the class, the lower the status in the school, and some students who showed prowess at sports were promoted to the top classes where they suffered badly. It was quite a mess – not the happiest of places to have spent my schooling but where my parents (especially my mother) felt that we would encounter the real world and learn how to survive there.

I am going back to the 1960s to an all-boys Christian-Catholic school, you know, where idealization was hugely formative. We were not encouraged to be idealistic, it was

demanded of us. It wasn't a 'take it or leave it' thing. You had to aspire… and we were given all these stories of Saints and gory details, and were to aspire to purity and honesty and totally idealistic things. I think they were very damaging standards to give teenagers who were unsure who they were anyway. Many schoolmates that I connected with years later, would talk about that they had drink problems, or they had marital problems like within a year of getting married. I often wonder how much of that is down to the unrealistic standards that were put in front us and the ideal that you would strive to be.

There was a tension between belonging and feeling like I didn't belong. If you weren't good at sports and you weren't particularly good at sciences, sort of the third by a long mark was to be involved with voluntary stuff at school. To be seen as a good citizen. But it was a long way away from the other two (sports/sciences). Volunteering was seen as a secondary kind of attribute but one which was admired. It did not quite measure up to playing on the school's sport's team or bringing credit on the school by getting full marks in science based exams. However, it allowed for a sense of aspiring to the tenets of Christian doctrine which underpinned the ethos of the school and thus allowed for a sense of belonging to be experienced. Being like others was far more important than being yourself. You got to wear the uniform.

As I began to make my own decisions about what I would volunteer for in secondary school, I recall not always making the best decision at the time. I suppose these were my first attempts at separating from my family, to become independent. I volunteered to be part of the St. Vincent De Paul (VdP). I recall that there was a very strict male hierarchy within the VdP chapter in school and the older boys were running the chapter with clear favourites and a certain amount of bullying going on. If someone's younger brother went in, they got to go visit the nice people. The likes of me and some of the other boys [because our parents were teachers] were sent to where you wouldn't want to go. We were the lower pecking order, as children of the parents of the 'establishment' – teachers were seen as the enemy. Shopkeepers or doctor's sons would have the better pick.

My sense of belonging during this time was more to do with having friends there and doing something that I thought was worthwhile. There was a very strict code. I think it was less about cooperation and more about competition. You naturally ally yourself with the strongest person, but you were up "you know where" without a paddle if the other person didn't want you attached to them. So, it wasn't a complex 'social thing', it was a very clearly defined 'social thing'. Nobody was taken behind a building and

beaten up, that wouldn't have been tolerated within the school. But the amount of emotional abuse that was meted out to people by teachers and other pupils was quite phenomenal. My favourite volunteering activity however, was quiet and unnoticed. I ran the meteorological station in the school for four years, collecting data every week and mailing it to the Met Office in Dublin. I recall that there was both a sense of accomplishment and responsibility about getting the readings charted up daily and sent off every Friday.

The things that I was really good at in school weren't really valued. I did not excel at sport and was very much an average student. I was drawn to the arts rather than to the sciences, and unless you were a fledging literary genius, being average was not really valued. Arts and languages, were lower status things. I was teased mercilessly in school for being in the pipe band and wearing a "skirt" but it was kind of rite of passage. You got noticed, and you didn't necessarily differentiate between 'good notice' and maybe 'not so good' notice. It was more like "somebody knows that I am alive", that type of thing.

Thinking back on that experience of secondary school, and reflecting on the volunteering I was involved with, it becomes difficult to separate the reflection from the context in which all of that happened. It goes back to the notion of the values that where held up to us as to what we should aspire to. They were totally unrealistic. You were told "you never lie, you never steal anything, you always did what was right, you never did anything wrong" but you had to go to confession and confess it anyway. The first class that we would have had every day was Christian doctrine and that kind of set the tone for the day, and there was an almighty amount of fear driven into kids. We were made afraid of our humanity. We were made afraid of what is essentially what made us human. If you couldn't aspire to this 'Maria Goretti' kind of purity, you were less… you were constantly less. You were never enough. It was very intense and left me at the end of the process quite damaged yet, I did very well in school. I qualified as a teacher and went on to do lots of different things. But I don't attribute that to school, I attribute that to what I did with the damage they did to me in school.

I recall when I was finishing school of being aware of the conflict between doing 'selfless voluntary work' while maybe at the same time enjoying a certain notoriety. To be seen as seeking the praise/admiration of others… was I really altruistic if I was getting praise for involving myself in such activities as volunteering? Could anyone be truly selfless?… those kinds of questions were fairly constant in my questioning of morality when I was up against the real world with its shades of grey and the only tools

I had been given were the absoluteness of the Catholic teachings which underpinned my whole school experience. So, within my formal education, volunteering gave me a place to belong in school and also gave me an identity within a school community where belonging was not always that easy for someone who was different.

My college years were not especially laced with a whole lot of volunteering as it was a really busy time where there was little time to do much more than keep up. Days were long, and it was my first real experience of having to be in charge of my own learning as opposed to having it directed. Although, I did volunteer with summer clubs for children in disadvantaged areas. I went up there for the month of June and July and played games, read stories, went on outings, made snacks for the children, not unlike my mother's buttered bread. All I had to do was entertain the kids, and that's what we did. I really enjoyed it. It was my first year in college, and I was studying primary education, so this was a real hands-on awareness of responsibility.

During my third-level education, [without so much of the Catholic influence]. I had the opportunity to read about what other people thought and how they were conceiving of the world. Some of it was around philosophy. I remember one student asked me if I ever read Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged? and I said I had never heard of it. I read it, and I still have that book to this day. It had a huge influence on me and caused me to think very differently. So, what I encountered in university changed who I was and that would have to change who I was a volunteer. You become aware of the wider world around you. It becomes this notion of personal agency and awareness of 'self' and how that impacts on your identity. Is your identity how you feel about you, or is your identity how you feel about how other people see you reflected in what they tell you so that you can see yourself as something other than in a mirror?

"Don't look back, you're not going there"

I would have been well into my 20s and heading toward my 30s before I acknowledged that I was gay. In secondary school, that wasn't something I was dealing with. Like I wasn't in a place where I could face that. For a long time, who I am as a gay man remained hidden and remained something that was perceived as shameful and part of being a volunteer was all the time… skirting around the possibility that you would be found out and then what would you do? Because the finding out was never the problem, but what would follow it. You ask any gay person, and they will tell you that you 'come out' every day and you keep coming out every day. I wasn't out myself. I remember plea bargaining with the god that I thought was there at that time, "let me be

bi-sexual, I can do bi-sexual, but don't let me be gay. Let me be a bit normal", until sort of 20 years later I realized that there is no normal. Normal isn't there. I was working at a place where if my sexuality was known, I would have been fired and I would have never gotten another job in Ireland.

I think that any church that says "I don't like you and I don't like what you represent" that is not religion to me. I know that there is the capacity in me to revel in bitterness and resentment and hatred and all of those kinds of things because of my experiences growing up. I choose not to, because I think I become very much a less acceptable version of me – to myself that way. It doesn't change the past. You can't undo the past. The reason the bitterness isn't in there is because I have worked very hard at it. Like the Buddhist saying "don't look back, you're not going there" you know, look forward and see what you want to lighten your load ahead.

I am very comfortable volunteering in the educational setting. It is where I think I am skilful. I am currently working with people from a UN program for victims of torture, and I would be very confident with helping the few people that I have worked with, around their literacy.   But were the other side of why they are here, to come to light, I wouldn't feel confident – even though I trained as a therapist and psychology was my main undergraduate subject, I still wouldn't feel confident – I don't know how I would be in practice. I would be very happy volunteering with things that I know I can do, and I would be wary of doing something where I might damage somebody.

I would be very aware of the people who want to be in charge of everything. Their position for themselves there is to tell people what to do. And the nearer you get to what they want to do, the happier they are with you. There are people who gravitate towards power, you know that they want to be in powerful positions or very close to those who are, and they volunteer in capacities that allow that to happen. For me, it provides me with an opportunity to be a better version of me. It is important to know why I am there in the capacity of a volunteer. I suppose it is consciousness or mindfulness – or whatever you want to call it. I couldn't be there without thinking about why I am there or what I am doing there, what impact my being there is having on me and on other people. It is that kind of reflection of "how do I do this to the best of my ability for the best reasons?". You know, some people can damage other people without intent. I think it is the notion that you don't just turn up and volunteer. You have to think in terms of why are you doing this, and what are you getting out of it? Is there something that you are getting out of it? I think that people volunteer for different purposes and different reasons. Everyone is there for a different reason. Being made

feel valued is important. For others, there is a sense of belonging – and a capacity to form friendships.

Looking back on 'the adult' phase of my life, I see how very enriching my volunteering experiences were for me and how much they gave me direction and purpose. Much of my time was spent working with educational organizations and I owe so many opportunities that came my way to those organizations. They gifted me with great relationships and friendships and a few 'hard knocks' too – but overall they were very positive and nurturing set of experiences for me, especially those which moved me out of my comfort zone on more than one occasion.

"This feels like a 'right fit' for who I am"

Throughout my work life, I have been involved in volunteering. From working on crisis telephone lines, to working on adult literacy programmes, to being part of and working for educational associations. These have been very positive experiences, overall. At every age and stage of my career, I have been involved in voluntary work of some sort. I have always felt it was part of who I am. The notion of 'privilege' was something that I was aware of from early on. My parents made sure that we understood that we had more than most and that to give back was how we lived 'a better life.' It was kind of ingrained in me as a core value of who I am. I think I volunteer now, because it is a core value. It is part of who I am. It always has been and if I didn't, I think there would be something missing.

I think volunteering gives me a sense of purpose. I taught theory for many years when I was teaching in college, which I now have to put in practice. When I have a 57-year-old man in front of me who says "I can't write my name" and I have to think "okay, I know all of the theoretical things of what I have to do here and how do I become human here and how do I allow him to be human here and not be threatened by it". So, it is that privileged opportunity to go back and do what I told students to do for 20 years. It has the sense of purpose and the sense of being a member of a community. It has the sense of being of use to somebody else – even if it is for an hour. That you have something that they can use that you can explain and give them. I also get a sense of worth out of it. I get relationships. I get to see what life is like from someone else's perspective and in a way that I can have an effect on that. It's one of those things. It's not a single thing.

I think relationships in everything is important. Even when I am working with people that I don't know, I will try and make a connection with each of them because I think that is how I teach best. Like when I go to speak in front of 200 people, I have a hard time with that. You know, I can't have an intimate relationship with that number of people in three hours. Everything about learning is around relationship. I remember my mother saying "there is one thing you have to do as a teacher and that is to try and do yourself out of a job, all the time". You are trying to put them into a position that they don't need you. If you are not doing that, you are not being an effective teacher.

Since retirement I have given over two days a week to voluntary work. Initially I stopped myself from getting over involved in various causes, for fear of not having enough to do and have been trying to strike a balance between fulfilling my own learning needs with being available to work in a voluntary capacity. I work as a 'Fáilte Isteach" volunteer one day a week where I work with non-English speakers on improving their spoken and in some cases, written English. I also work with a couple of older men on a substance abuse programme in Dublin 8, who have significant literacy difficulties. The underlying philosophy of the programme is very much client driven and is very challenging but I have built up a good rapport with these men and we work for three hour stretches on developing literacy skills they identify as being relevant to them.

These men are all in their late 40s early 50s all three of them and one of them came from Ghana and he never attended school. There was no school in his village – so he was never in a school as such. He is in Ireland for 12 years. He is an Irish citizen. He lives in a small one room council flat. He has a daughter who is in foster care because his accommodation doesn't suit her living with him. Her mother is a drug addict. The other lovely man is a product of the special school system and where he was told that he was stupid, he was thick, he had disabilities and that is all he got from it was the labels that were attached to his education. Yet, the two of them, the one thing they have in common is that they both want to be able to sign their names. That was their first goal. One has met that goal and has since discussed with me the possibility of doing English for the Jr. Cert. in two years-time. The other one, from Ghana, I have to slow him down. He wants to do everything. He cannot wait to turn the page. So, I tell him "wait, we think first, we talk, we look, we examine and we do". I want what is best for them, I care about them. If they were in trouble, I would offer any help that I could… but I think as a teacher, as an educator, I realize that we are a facility that they are using for a finite amount of time and it is not that they are using you, they are using your expertise which is why you required it – and you are passing on the torch as it

were. As these are activities that I undertake voluntarily, I tend to be very positive experiences and allow me to still have an active teaching life which is something that I value highly. I would be well able to fill in a day reading and writing or visiting friends and being social but I choose to give over some of my time to help where I can. This feels like 'a right fit' for who I am.

"God loves a trier"

Looking back, I suppose the most powerful learning moments centred around my learning about myself and others. I learnt many good interpersonal skills, how to be an active listener, how to set aside my own agenda, how to recognize my reactions to situations and how to build relationships with different groups and individuals. The most powerful learning moments for me were around valuing the people who volunteer for organisations. Keeping volunteers informed and upskilled is essential with clear lines of communication and responsibility evident in an atmosphere where people feel that they can contribute. I have learned that I don't need to be 'the leader' … I am a happy 'foot soldier'. I have no managerial ambitions of any sort. I never had. I toyed with the idea of being a school principal, I would have hated it. I would have been useless at it. I don't necessarily need to be in charge of things or manage them. I like to contribute and I like to work in a democracy rather than a hierarchy. I am happy to be a mentor. I would have opportunities where someone would come in and shadow me, watch me work. I would involve them in that work – very quickly. That makes me a mentor.

I found that it is important to have a good sense of myself when volunteering … to know where the volunteerism starts and finishes … in that way I can make an honest contribution. My tendency not to say 'no' often enough and my discomfort with any kind of aggressive conflict! My partner comments frequently that I 'like nice.' We are as opposite as you could make two people. He is a manager/leader in a multinational company and has a team of 40 working under him. He regularly accuses me of being too nice and liking everything to be nice. I like nice movies and happy endings. I don't do horror and I don't do conflict. I liked my house filled with nice people, talking about nice things. It makes him sick. He would prefer others to be shouting and relieving themselves of burdens. It is just one of many differences that we share. I tend to see the nice in the world and I tend to go with the nice rather than the nasty. Even if someone is being awkward, I will find something nice in it. It gets me into trouble. Knowing when to step back and maybe take a break or to step out of a voluntary role is

really important. While I can have passion and commitment in causes that I value, I also have a life outside of that which demands attention and commitment so that I can balance these competing forces rather than be ruled by them.

I am good with people especially those who are marginalized in any way and I have the capacity to set up rapport with most people I meet. I'm also comfortable with not knowing everything and with learning new things – being out of my comfort zone is not alien to my sense of who I am as a learner. I don't have a problem saying "I don't know or I can't do that" on anything. I go to art class on a Friday – I am not good at it, but as my teacher says "God loves a trier" and he says "now this is how you do it, these are the techniques that you use, give yourself a chance to do it". I don't feel that I have to know everything, that I have to be capable to do everything. I think it is really alright to say "no, I don't want to do that". Whereas, say from my schooling, it would have been the opposite. You were to not just to be schooled, but to be an expert at everything. And that was a measure of a good student? It took me 60 years to figure out that they were wrong.

"It is an 'old' feeling"

There were moments when I was aware that volunteering was a good thing to be doing, but there was never a defining moment of understanding … again, I suppose that it goes back to my childhood and that understanding that this was what 'we' did. We became involved, we volunteered. Even though I am now classified as 'older' I am still governed by the idealism that fed my adolescence, youth, and early adulthood. I still hope that things will get better. I think they were learned and remained with me. I think that it is an 'old' feeling. It's there a long time. It's going back to my childhood. It is not a moment but has been nurtured. Because it started so young, I suppose I never really questioned it. It was who we were as a family when I was young, and who I grew into and who I became as I got older. It gave me a sense of belonging and an identity. It also gave me something to do as well as someone to be.

Going back to my father's situation, I need not necessarily be the son of an alcoholic, I could be somebody who did good deeds and followed on the line of that. A lot of that was school related and it allowed me to be a certain kind of person because I wasn't a footballer or a hurler, so I could be a person who volunteered for things. Even though it was a very low status, it was still a status. I wonder if having something 'useful' to do was also part of my upbringing … 'the devil finds work for idle hands' was a frequent maxim in my childhood and 'hanging around' was not seen as a particularly attractive

quality. Being a 'good Christian' was, and this included the 'doing of good deeds' as a core principal. As a young man, I bought into the whole catholic thing lock stock and barrel for a long time. It took a long time to disentangle myself from that indoctrination and to find my own way in the world. But in doing so, I brought some of the values that I was taught, with me. While I saw many of the 'messengers' as quite flawed and at times quite evil, their corruption did not essentially change the original meaning of the message.

I think that in moulding all of these young men to particular kinds of men, I think the Christian Brothers were doing something quite dangerous and quite evil in some respects. Although, I think they thought they were doing the right thing. I think the intent behind the message was a good one, although the 'institution' of the message might not have been necessarily good. Now, I think it is different because I have a better understanding of who I am and who I am as a volunteer. Who I am as somebody in that situation where I am facilitating something. I have a good sense of who I am in that regard and an ability to really commit to a cause I will volunteer for. My commitment is in direct relationship with my sense of who I am – I don't commit to causes I am not inspired or impassioned by.

Now, 50 years later I have a keen awareness that if you are self-aware and you are aware of who you are and you're reflecting on who you are, can you do what my mother did and just do all of these things and nobody knows about them? I think that is "selflessness". Does the fact that you know what you are doing may be seen by someone else as good take away the goodness?

Volunteering continues to be part of who I am. It is part of a set of values that lie at the core of who I am. So, I cannot talk about being transformed by my experience of volunteerism as I was really formed around it. I have been transformed by the people I have met while volunteering – in some cases fellow volunteers and in other cases, people I met as part of my voluntary work. Some of these were powerful role models for me early on, in terms of how I should curtail judgement and not make assumptions. I learnt to look beyond what is visible and to allow people to be as real to me as they wished to be. That also held up a mirror to me and made me take long hard looks at who I was and what I doing. It showed me the importance of finding others who could help and support me when I needed it and to learn from other volunteers how to be a better volunteer.

I suppose that the biggest transformation that volunteering has made for me was to allow me to become a reflective practitioner. Many of the voluntary activities I was

involved with included 'debriefing' as an integral part of their practice. I found the reflecting prior to the debriefing was a very powerful space for me to be in and I worked for many years on developing my own reflective practices. This kind of practice allows me to be the best version of myself that I can be, today.

Points to Ponder

RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Christy shares memories and moments from his life that clearly impact *why* he volunteers and what it means to be a volunteer. His life journey of learning and his identity as a volunteer have been deeply influenced by his formative years in an all-boys Catholic school and through his relationships and ideals of his mother and father. **RQ2 Was there a moment of understanding that motivated Christy to continue volunteering over time, or is it because volunteering has always been part of his identity?** Christy's final thoughts in this narrative, took me by surprise… As a researcher, you hypothesize and form expectations of what you believe the answer to your research questions will be. Christy's was not the answer that I had anticipated. In his narrative, he states "*Volunteering continues to be part of who I am. It is part of a set of values that lie at the core of who I am. So, I cannot talk about being transformed by my experience of volunteerism as I was really formed around it.*" He goes on to say "*I think that it is an 'old' feeling. It's there a long time. It's going back to my childhood. It is not a moment, but has been nurtured. Because it started so young, I suppose I never really questioned it. It was who we were as a family when I was young, and who I grew into and who I became as I got older. It gave me a sense of belonging and an identity.*" Christy's narrative is filled with themes that value identity and learning through personal interaction. Themes of deep, genuine, authentic relationships with others; the value of inclusivity and belonging; hands on teaching and sharing knowledge with others; and a desire to guide and mentor others were repeated throughout this narrative. On the notion that identity and learning have a complex and intimate relationship, what patterns do you see between Christy's formal and informal life learning and the kind of volunteering that he participates in?

6.3 Pádraig

Introduction

Pádraig, is a conscientious, exuberant, and genuinely kind man. He is a 57-year-old father of four grown children who lost his beloved wife to cancer five years previous. He was born and raised in the outskirts of the capital city in Ireland by parents who were committed to raising moral, generous, and 'good' thoughtful children. Pádraig's primary and post-primary education took place during the mid-1960s through the late 1970s. He attended university and completed his Bachelor's degree in 1982. The 1980s was a decade of recession, unemployment and emigration in Ireland, with the continued 'troubles' in the North of Ireland which rippled unease down through the capital city. Pádraig talks fondly about his years married and reminisces about what life was like working very hard while raising his children (during the years of economic roller coaster that started with the reign of the "Celtic Tiger" from the 1990s through into the new millennium, followed by a severe economic downturn in the late 2000s, but always with a feeling of not being quite fulfilled… of feeling like something was 'missing' in his work/life balance. When his wife died, Pádraig's life changed dramatically and he found himself wanting to reach out to the organizations that cared for his family during those tragic days, as a way of giving back, and as a way of getting back a sense of happiness and balance.

Pádraig's Journey and Reflection

"Do something good"

When I was young, my parents were very involved in volunteering with several different causes. My parents were good people and they were involved in a lot of charities and religious charities, when I was growing up. I was always in awe of my parents and incredibly proud of them. I observed and appreciated the positive benefits they personally got out of their volunteer work. The desire to give back to my community was always there and it comes from growing up in a family that had a genuine interest in helping other people out. My parents were my main inspiration for most good things that I have done in my life. I would say the desire to want to do something good with the hours in the day, to use my time wisely and just that genuine interest in other people – that would have come right through childhood. I would have done a small bit

of volunteer work as a youngster. I would have been doing fundraisers for the local St. Vincent DePaul Society, and a bit of stuff throughout my school years. We were altar boys in the church and that would have got us involved in doing a bit of helping out. I would have been encouraged to do that by my family.

For the most part of my life, working and raising a family caused me to focus my efforts elsewhere. I thought that my dad had the perfect job. He loved his job and I suppose that I was not making the same life and opportunities that I saw him making, so I always felt that something was lacking in my working life. If I could turn back the clock, I wish that I had volunteered more, absolutely 100%. I think that I missed a huge opportunity growing up, for myself to be a lot more fulfilled in my life. Throughout my life I have worked very hard and people would say that yeah, your family is your reward because you worked so hard, and I have always tried to balance it. But during my working career I always felt like there was something huge missing... that I should have done something different. I was good in my job, I enjoyed my work but I always felt there was a huge hole. The memory of observing the joy, happiness, and sense of achievement that resulted from my parents doing good for others and for their community has remained in the back of my mind throughout the years.

"The broader pillars of development"

My personality traits that have helped me to be a strong volunteer were cultivated from a very grounded upbringing and wonderful parents who had an incredibly strong moral compass that they passed on to me and my siblings. I had a very well rounded education; my secondary school focus was not just on academia, but on the broader pillars of development – intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual and aesthetic, in equal proportions. It was only in later life that I really learned to appreciate this.

I went to university from 1978 to 1982 and studied science which helped develop many of my strong characteristics – objectivity, logic, analytic, curiosity, and creativity. I wasn't an active chap in college. My four years in university played no significant role in my desire to volunteer or help others that I can think of. There were plenty of societies and groups within the college which were focused on volunteering with the needy, but for whatever reasons, I was shy going to university, knew nobody and was mostly trying to survive, I never joined any of them. I have seen my own kids not engage during university and this concerned me. They go to college and they come home. I would love for them to be involved with some volunteer work through their college and I think it would hugely enhance that whole experience for them. You know,

and set them on the path of good, for life. I hope that I can encourage my own kids to volunteer by just letting them see how good an experience this has been for me. They are caring and gentle children, and can do so much good.

"There is something for everybody"

I liked my job, I worked all my life and I was good at my job. I earned good money doing my job, but I wasn't fulfilled. My wife and myself had a plan that we were both going to retire around now, when I got to 58 years, our plan was to volunteer and travel. But plans change and her illness came along... I stopped working when my wife got sick and then after she died, I went back to work part-time for a few years but I stopped a short while after to take care of my children. My kids are all grown up now, and don't need the minding anymore. I am kind of in what's like an early retirement. I don't quite define myself as being retired, yet. Whether I go back to work or not, I don't know, but I would be more interested in going back to a full-time volunteering job than to a full-time paying job because its more fulfilling for me.

I started going to funerals and I started seeing and listening to people's stories at funerals and you put yourself in that position and you think about what your funeral story is going to be like and they don't... they don't thank you at your funeral that you stayed working 20 hours a day, you know? I was working very hard, and I loved my work but I was totally unfulfilled. I just find the stuff that I am doing now, the experience that I have of volunteering has been a highlight for me over the last 5-6 years. If I was working full-time, I would find it hard to be able to balance and get the time to volunteer. When I was working, I didn't leave space for other meaningful things... you know so, it is one or the other for me. I am more fulfilled volunteering my time than working.

I tinkered about with a bit of volunteering during my 30s/40s, which was mostly focused on my children lives – school, spiritual and religious development and football coaching. In the back of our minds, my wife and I were aware of how lucky we had been. We always planned that when we retired, we would get involved in volunteering as a means to pay back for having been privileged with great opportunities in our lives. My wife's illness and death resulted in many adjustments for me. Consequently, my motivation to volunteer was based on two strands. First, to pay back for the incredible support that we received from our local hospice and second, as a means of finding a sense of purpose and direction for my future.

I started volunteering with the local hospice and... I do a few different jobs at a couple different local hospices. I work one day a week volunteering in hospitality. I sit with patients and their families, bringing in food and stuff like that, just generally being there for three or four hours a day on the inpatient unit. I also work with them on two major fundraisers annually. I coordinate the volunteering for them. This involves the basic fundraising process of organizing all of the fundraisers and planning, and execution of the fundraising events. These fundraisers take place two weekends in the year. I also volunteer as hospitality quarterly, at bereavement information evenings for people who have lost members of their family the previous three months They just come along to a talk on the different ways people experience bereavement, and we are there to basically provide tea and chat with them. The reason why I do this volunteering is because the hospice had looked after members of my family, my mother-in-law, my mother, and then my wife when they were at the end of life. They had come to our homes when they were suffering with cancer, and it was just my way of giving back to those organizations.

My role as a befriender of people, and families/friends of people, who are terminally ill and near end of life requires special communication, listening and social skills. This learning has been very much developed experientially, but has been greatly assisted by wonderful classroom training workshops provided by wonderful qualified hospice staff. Volunteering in the hospice environment has helped me develop my communications skills. Some thirty years working in IT and supply chain helped develop my project management, people management, communication, technical and business skills. Being a husband and father helped to develop my softer skills and my sense of responsibility, of which I am the proudest. My fundraising work for hospice has given me the opportunity to develop my skills in the fundraising area and this in turn, helps in the development of many of these soft skills. I have been introduced and received training into the practice of mindfulness. I find that practicing mindfulness is very beneficial to my well-being, bringing me both physical and mental health benefits.

I recently volunteered with an international event for people with physical and intellectual disability that took place in Ireland. I was on the games organizing committee for them. It was my first-time experience volunteering for this organization. I picked them as a general interest in terms of trying to help in that space. I had a cousin who had Downs Syndrome and he died a couple of years ago and it was kind of a driver for me to push myself to get involved in a bit of volunteering in that space. We organized all of the team entertainment for all of the participants when they weren't

completing. That was a busy project that took a lot of time over the last five months and it was a very rewarding and amazing experience for me.

Volunteering on this organizing committee provided me the opportunity to work on planning and execution for a major event. I worked alongside some volunteers and staff who are very experienced and skilled in event management and I learned so much from working with them. I also received some excellent "train the trainer" training and delivered training to all our games volunteers. As part of that role to "train the trainers", I had to deliver training to about 100 – 150 volunteers for the event. That was a new experience for me, and I loved it! I got to deliver training in my old college, which was kind of cool, in one of the lectures theaters that I studied in 30- years ago. What an experience! Here I was 30 years later in something of a teaching role.

It was just such an exhilarating experience for me. A lot of stress went into the work that we did but the rewards for me were so great. I really enjoy working with people, and the interaction with people is just what gets me going. Whereas, in my hospice work, I feel honored to be helping in the hospice with the patients, but it is quite hard. It is hard thing to say that you enjoy doing that because you are working with people at end of life. For me, it is very fulfilling work, but the happiness that comes from the work I did with the event organizing is just hard to match. I also learnt what it is like to work with, and how to communicate effectively with people with intellectual disability, and learnt so much from working alongside the people who work with these people daily. It was so good, such a wonderful experience and I am very interested in doing that kind of volunteering again, for certain.

I also volunteer one day a week in my local volunteer center, which manages all volunteering activity in my community. It is a small team that is funded by government and I volunteer for them in the role of database support person. This organization works with all the volunteers that sign up to volunteer in our community and the organizations and charities that may be looking for volunteers. The reason I went into the center to volunteer is because I want to immerse myself in volunteering as I wanted to try and find something where I could volunteer and give maximum benefits of my time and skills and this felt like a good way of finding it. In return, I have gotten maximum exposure to what is going on in volunteering sector and attending the national volunteer conferences and stuff like that. Being a part of all that, you really get exposed to the volunteer awards, ceremonies and stuff like that, you know. I've been

fully immersed. I know the business; I know what's going on in volunteering in Ireland and I am ultra-impressed by it.

As part of that partnership, I volunteer for an organization that runs volunteering activities and "one-off" kind of events. They provide the volunteers for one-off events in the local area. They are supported by the local councils and stuff; they would help fund it and so it is for organizations that aren't profit making but need a hand out. Basically, that involves going for a day or a couple of days and there would be maybe 20 volunteers and at some of the events they have me managing the groups of volunteers, as a team leader. That is a great, fun way for encouraging volunteers to come along. They get a taste of volunteering and learn how good volunteering is from that experience, and how well you can feel after doing it. Then, maybe they decide to stay on and join us on a more permanent volunteering opportunity through the center. These kinds of events promote continued volunteer placement.

I am happy, and I am careful about what kind of volunteering I get involved with. When I started, I wanted to make sure that I was in spaces that were going to provide an air of happiness. I think it is important to have a bit of joy for yourself in it, as well you know. You have to enjoy what you do. So, event volunteering efforts like at a concert or something like that, the people are just happy out. You have to match with what brings you satisfaction and happiness. When I look at current volunteering roles on iVol [the online national volunteering database], and I look to see where I want to get involved next I am a little bit cautious about what I can bring to that role and what that role could mean for me. I'm a bit of a 'scaredy' cat. I wouldn't want to get into volunteering in things like working with ex-prisoners, or drug rehabilitation, or anything like that. It is just that I am not comfortable in that space I would say that I'm not a brave person. My sister volunteers for the local homeless community and she goes out at night on a Saturday night and does the soup runs and stuff with them... and you know, I wouldn't be comfortable doing that either. I like my volunteering to be a bit secure. There is something for everybody, I believe and you know, and you should go with what fulfills you.

Volunteering has created innumerable learning opportunities for me. Some of the hard skills I have developed include learning new technology computer applications. I have also been trained in fire safety and manual handling. Although, I really think it is the soft skills that I feel I have learnt and developed most from my volunteering experiences. The Volunteering experience is bringing all of the lifelong learnings to the

fore and challenges me to develop each and every one of them, which is one of the major benefits of volunteering for me.

"This is why I do it"

I love helping others. I like to be busy and I enjoy learning new things and having new experiences. Volunteering has given me the opportunity to step outside, or even jump outside of my comfort zone, and attempt many new things. I have consequently discovered a number of things that I am good at that I might otherwise never have realized without it. Volunteering has given me a real sense of purpose, improved my self-esteem and I really believe it has helped my physical and mental health. But above all, the main reason I volunteer is because of the opportunity it gives me to meet new wonderful people, who are committed by their work or their own desire to volunteer, in an environment where I also want to help.

The people I have met while volunteering, fellow volunteers, members of staff in the organizations where I have volunteered, are the most wonderful group of people. It means so much to be with people who share my beliefs of what are the important things in life. I also love meeting new people from different cultures and different walks of life and learning so much from our interactions. I've thrown myself into volunteering, and I am very effective in what I do, so whatever it is, if someone gives me a role or project then I am on it. I am happy to do it, I'm not pushy and I respect where it is at. Once I step into a role or project, whatever hole needs to be filled, I will try to fill it. I look for roles which will challenge me. My volunteering hours are only going to increase rather than decrease as time goes on and I find what I really love in volunteering to fill that time. I have such a sense of personal fulfillment from helping others.

I love volunteering, it is completely fulfilling for me. I absolutely thrive on it now. I love the challenges. You are doing different stuff all the time and I absolutely love that, you know? My experience volunteering with the disabled athletes, I don't think I will get another experience that felt quite like that again. There were a few moments watching the athletes participate which was a major moment for myself and an acknowledgement that "this is why I do it". During a couple of moments where I was seeing it all, taking it all in, I watched the participants performing that were so joyous in competing and I was just in a space that was such a wonderful, exuberant, happy feeling to experience and be a part of. To know that these participants were having the time of their life, and I was part of making that happen. There were several of those

moments like that over the entire weekend. It was great. I really encourage others to volunteer, because I just know the benefits of volunteering are just so massive.

"I realize that everything I do is worthwhile"

I believe that volunteering is 100% a "win, win" situation. The personal joy, sense of achievement, and positive mental health attained from helping others is as big a win for me. An even bigger, "win" is the awareness of what my efforts bring to the people and the organizations that I am supporting through my volunteering. No amount of money could create any environment for me that could match the joy that I experienced at the national event this summer. The games were the culmination of six months of hard work and effort from a wonderful team of staff and volunteers, with plenty of fun, meeting new people and making new friends. We are all the same, regardless of where we come from – facing similar challenges, with same common goals. There was the challenge of new work experiences and lots and lots of effort and stress; but the outpourings of joy and happiness experienced during the weekend of the games, plus the warm sense of personal achievement, generated one of my life highlights and created a sense that everything I had done to-date was worthwhile.

I have developed an acute awareness of diversity within society through my volunteering. I feel so much more comfortable with, and enjoy being in the company of people from different cultures and walks of life and people facing serious challenges. I now realize that, prior to volunteering, I had a very limited exposure to diverse situations. While volunteering within hospice environment, environment supporting people with intellectual disabilities and a multitude of charities and volunteers, I have discovered that I have a real empathy for people facing real challenges. I love being with them and doing whatever I can, however small, to help. Through this process, I have learned to be flexible and adaptable. I am always willing to take on absolutely any task, from sweeping the floor, to cold calling, fundraising, dealing with celebrities and people in crisis situations, and preparing and delivering presentations to hundreds of strangers. Volunteering inspires me to push myself even further, in order to develop the self confidence that I am lacking and hinders my ability to make the major positive impact on my society that I believe is deep down within my capabilities. Slowly, but surely, I believe volunteering will get me there.

When my kids were growing up, we were volunteering in the school with the kids - our kids, others kids. We would impart programs to help get them through their communion and confirmation. So, I had a part in their spiritual education and the community

support, and the kids in school. We did that kind of stuff. I got involved with the football club, I had a personal interest, my son was in it but I decided I wanted to help the club because there was 400 – 600 kids, so I was doing my part supporting the club and doing some fundraising.

"Onwards and upwards"

I feel that the real volunteering, where I was making an impact and feeling an impact, started at the point in my life when my wife passed away. It was after that; I was a bit sad. I was lost, I was in a very sad state and worried about the future. A hopeless person who needed to find something to do and, although we had a plan to do this thing in a different life, it just lead into doing that on my own. The thing that drove me into the volunteering really, was the sad person I was. I was grieving and I needed something major to happen to me in my life. I was worried about my own mental state, my future and what was going to happen... If we take from that point to where I am now, its hugely helped me through the grieving process. I just feel like there are so many opportunities there. I just love that I won't be lonely. It has given me complete reason to go on. This is a journey that people go through. Had I not done the volunteering... would I be as happy about life as I am now, and handling my situation? Possibly without volunteering... but I don't think so. I think the volunteering is a huge, a huge support to me to get through the grieving process. So, it has been 100% reciprocal.

I feel much, much happier in myself. I am doing something that I thoroughly enjoy doing from a personal perspective. It feels so good when you do something, however small it may be, to enhance somebody else's current state. It is hugely personal, but I just feel so good when I get up in the morning and I know I have some volunteer work to do in that day, now. I just feel good about what's about to happen. I am making somebody else's life better doing it. That is what is giving me back the pleasure of it, you know? I want to give back to society. I was a lucky person and we had a good life and I have had a lot of luck along the way and I've always wanted to give back, but I never expected that I was going to get so much back myself from volunteering. It's like a drug, you know, you want more. If I couldn't volunteer anymore, I would be disappointed and it would be a huge loss to me. I just love the people and I love doing it. It would be a huge hole in my life. It took until my 50s to really discover it and see how much it means to me.

From my volunteering, I have generated a real sense of purpose and a new level of self-confidence. Volunteering has been a huge help to me in overcoming the grief from the loss of the most important person in my life. Volunteering has given me a real sense of direction when I was mentally all over the place, filled a massive gap, and given me a real sense of hope for the future. When my number is finally up, I'm now believing that I will have lived a complete life, confident that I have used my talents adequately for the good of others. Onwards and Upwards!

Points to Ponder

In the early years of Pádraig's life, he talks about the influence of his parents and repeats the sentiment of 'being good' and doing 'good' for others. Later, he talks about being committed to family and that "your family is your reward". Pádraig links acts of service and 'good works' to the importance of education, which directly relates to my research question about desire for continued, genuine learning experiences. **RQ3 Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?** His narrative is filled with themes of 'being a good person', 'being kind to others', compassion, benevolence, and 'purposefully partaking in learning' activities that provide 'meaning and happiness' to yourself and for others. He is very aware of the learning and skills that he has gained through his volunteer experience, and the awareness that the impact goes much deeper than that. He says *"I realize that everything that I do is worthwhile"* and *"Volunteering brings all of the lifelong learnings to the fore and challenges me to develop each and every one of them, which is one of the major benefits of volunteering for me."* What are your thoughts on Pádraig's narrative?

6.4 CAITRIÓNA

INTRODUCTION

Caitríona was born and raised in south Dublin, Ireland. Her parents were middle to upper-middle class professionals and she is the oldest of four (all sisters). She is a 45-year-old wife and mother of two primary school aged daughters who admits that she has been volunteering as far back as she can remember. After completion of her Leaving Certificate, Caitríona entered university. She earned her Bachelor's degree in 1996, followed by a postgraduate certificate in Supervisory Management and a postgraduate certificate in Public Relations Management. Caitríona presented a three-page Curriculum Vitae of volunteer experience when she arrived for our scheduled in-depth interview, and I remember thinking "this lady means business!"

Ireland, during the 1980s, was in a recession and most families struggled to make ends meet. Although, Caitríona's family remained quite stable economically during her schooling years. She did quite well on the Leaving Certification, receiving 6 honors, and graduated with honors from university four years later.

CAITRIÓNA'S JOURNEY AND REFLECTION

"Instilling empathy and understanding"

My whole life, as far back as I can remember, has involved volunteering in one way or another. The early volunteering moments included helping my nana in her home with small tasks, helping the tiny tots on a Saturday morning in the swimming pool, to full participation in a local youth group for young adults with disabilities and then community programs up to my college years.

My earliest memory of helping others was on a holiday with my family and grandparents when I was about 12. My nana had several bad strokes, so required assistance for all her personal care. We wheeled my nana from their hotel around the town and decided to go for a lunch. We headed to this lovely restaurant. I remember we all took turns, with my dad's steady hand to push my nana in the wheelchair. Looking back now I think we thought it was fun. I know we assumed she was unsteady on her feet so as kids, we gave absolutely no consideration to her capabilities or how she might have been feeling that day.

At the restaurant, it became obvious that my nana couldn't eat without her dinner cut into small pieces, she couldn't use her arm, hold her cutlery, or feed herself and so both my granddad and dad took in turns to patiently assist with feeding her spoonful by spoonful. On the opposite side of the table sat my baby sister, in her highchair feeding herself with her spoon. There was something so poignant about that lunch. My dad was a very strict man and very serious. My granddad used to terrify us sometimes with his gruff mannerisms and lack of patience. He was a country man, used to the land and animals and understood their needs over the needs of people. But there, on that day, these two men made my nana feel like the heart of their day. They fed her, chatted together, encouraged the conversation despite the garbled words from her mouth, laughed and engaged with her. My dad wiped the drool off her lips and chin. My granddad, with his large, rough, gardening hands, fixed my nanas scarf, smiling at her and brushed the hair from her face. In their actions, I saw love, empathy and gentleness. I think that day still stays in my mind because all those tiny moments, interactions and interchange between these two men and woman have subconsciously at least, made me understand that kindness is always free and takes very little.

As I think about my primary school years, both my parents were very engaged in the community, my sisters and I were always brought along with them. My mom was part of the parent's association and they would have meetings in our house and charity events, we would have always been dragged to things, like it or not! That would have been my first introduction, and my mom has also been involved in volunteering, and still is. Volunteering is just a family ethos. My sisters and I, we have always been part of it. I was involved in gymnastics and swimming so; from about eight years of age we would have always done maybe a couple of hours a week helping out with the tiny tot swimmers on Saturday mornings. You would go over and do your gymnastics and then give an hour or two with the little ones. There has always been an element of giving a bit more of your free time. From that beginning, I got involved in coaching kids all the way through secondary school.

From secondary school through the first years of university, I was part of the PHAB club. It was a community youth club that we called the PHAB group (Physically Handicapped Able Bodied) and you can't necessarily use that terminology now, but it fit our group. We met every week for discos, trips to the cinema, coffees, fundraising and events. The foundations of this association can be seen in many of the ARCH [Advocacy Resource Center for the Handicapped] Clubs which provide a secure social

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environment for people with special needs, their siblings and friends to form friendships and have fun. We had family and friends with special needs, and it was just an extra way of you know, doing your part.

We would have discos once a month and a big group of us would walk down together and pick up pals. You can imagine a whole group of us going along with a few wheelchairs, it was fun. I would say that certainly the PHAB [Physical Handicapped and Able Bodied] club was a big part of my social life. In my teens, with normal teenage anxieties, everything was falling apart at the edges in our family, those moments took me away from family chaos to fun, laughter, friendships and a seismic shift in how I perceived the madness in my world to one that instilled empathy and understanding. In hindsight, what I believed was a difficult day for myself was not really a bad day, just the skewed perceptions of a teenager. I could easily shut the door, storm off and leave chaos behind. I now realize that my involvement in those groups allowed me to grow as a person and not become angry, selfish and self-destructive.

What I now realize is that what I experienced from my own peers with all types of disabilities in wheelchairs was the daily fight they had to deal with and it made me view life in a different way. This was also two decades ago when disability was not part of daily discussion and was misunderstood. Our most vulnerable in society did not have the support of the law or organizations and societal understandings of what disabilities there are, and how we as a community, could make life easier. I don't think as a teenager I quite understood any of it. At the time as I was just part of a group that happen to have some friends in wheelchairs and others without. I thought it made no difference at the time, but on reflection I know it did.

As part of our annual trip to Cork with a group of 50 teenagers, many with physical disabilities and a handful of leaders, we were placed into small groups to ensure there was a mix of abilities and no one was left out. Your team had to stay together for activities and events, to look out for each other, assist those that wanted the help and sit together at meals. On one of the day trips we visited an outdoor activity center. Each of our friends in wheelchairs were lifted onto horses, assisted by someone standing beside them and led around the stables. For one boy, it was his first time to be beside and touch a horse, let alone ride on it. He was the proudest man that day, head and shoulders above us all.   My friend Audrey, is visually impaired and that week in Cork brought us on a "blind walk". We were blindfolded and Audrey led us around paths in the forest using her senses and skills to navigate the twists and turns. It was

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incredible. The feeling of fear, anxiety and needing to place absolute trust in someone else remained with me for years.

On another occasion, a group of us went one day to the local swimming pool. It was the early 90s and I don't think anyone expected a rowdy, noisy group of mad teenagers arriving in that day. There was no lift into the pool, something that is standard in every community pool, today. Not to be deterred, three of the guys lifted Stephen from his wheelchair and into the shallow end placing arm bands on his arms and legs and all three of them gave Stephen his first experience of floating in a pool. You could hear his shrieks from Cork to Dublin! When some of my friends talk about those crazy trips we did those years ago, the fundraising we needed to do to ensure we had enough to cover all the expenses for some families. Those friends gave the rest of us experiences that have remained with me today. I've learnt compassion and empathy. I've learnt that those who live daily with a disability are more than the title of their disability; they have taught me that to see beyond that and see ability and empowerment.

"Someone is counting on me"

I didn't do much formal volunteering during university. I don't think during that period of my life I was very active, and I may have even moved away from volunteering a bit, because of all the other social aspects and stresses of study. There was a group of us who would meet up for coffee regularly, so even if we weren't a part of any bigger society group during that time, the friendships were normal and nobody was defined by an inability… it was just here you are. It was just all part of our life. I think it was always part of my life, mixing in social groups regardless of ability or disability.

There were also some family things happening that… if I were to look back, I'd say that I needed to be volunteering. More volunteering would have kept me away from a lot of things. I think that if I had volunteered more during that time it would have been brilliant for me, it would have carried me in a different way. Although, I still would have volunteered on Saturday morning swimming. I would still have coached kids. It got me out of bed. It made me realize on a Friday that I can't go on the complete tear in college. I think it gave me more responsibility. I also would have contended with a lot of things going on at home and I think I would have taken on responsibility for taking my sisters to different things.

I do think that those experiences instilled a responsibility in me. You know that you can't walk away from those situations, and you can't walk away because you are going to be letting somebody down. Be it your sister, or be it the coach who is relying on you to be at the poolside between 9 am and 11 am on a Saturday morning. Equally, I would have also had a part-time job at McDonalds and so, there was still aspects of responsibility, that I can't let people down. I think that is always the same way, even on a rainy October day, and you are curled up in front of the fire and the last place you want to be going is to a meeting in the cold, rain and dark. You ultimately know that you are letting other people down. I recognize that I signed up for this and it is my responsibility… someone is counting on me.

"I am responsible for making a difference"

I have spent most of my career in volunteering, as a volunteer, as part of volunteer community groups, or my job has been dealing with volunteers. There have been so many volunteer experiences through the years. In my community, we set up with several neighbors (I live in quite a suburban area), and throughout the recession, there was a road that was cut off. We were slightly cut off from the main road which had its upsides in terms of creating a bit more suburban area, but, a lot of the businesses had huge problems. It was the recession and the area just got a bad hit. Even though there is a real mix of society around where we are, there was a few of the neighbors who decided to get a meeting together and from there we set up a community group. have been part of that for three years. We have done clean up days, we've done pub quizzes, we've had a festival at Christmas. We organize getting the lights up. We do leaflet drops as part of the tidy town district, for people who don't have access to internet. We have a Facebook page, and everything. I have been secretary of this community group for the last year and a half. I have met neighbors two or three doors down who were there 13 – 14 years, who I never would have spoken to, otherwise. I am part of the PTA [Parent Teacher Association] with my daughters' school.

I stopped working full-time, with the purpose of being at home for my family. The decision took many months but it was one of the best decisions I made. However, I know my weaknesses and strengths and I realized very quickly that I also needed to keep busy, use my skills and be amongst people. It can be a little lonely sometimes despite having a lot to do, organizing the kids and family. I met a couple of volunteers from my previous job in the hospice one afternoon for coffee and I realized how much I missed the people, the interaction, the fun and the sense of belonging. The interaction

between volunteers from all walks of life coming together in one space and time, to make a change or give back because of a personal motivation has always intrigued me.

I needed to do something just for me, without any altruistic motives, but I needed to know that I was needed to. Isn't that a fundamental impetus for most volunteers? I emailed a couple of friends I worked with many years ago who are part of organizations and charities and within a couple of weeks was applying for a role within a local organization for adults with dementia. My role has saved the organization considerable money, I have made a difference, and I have a fundamental sense of being needed. It feels like I am in a great place now. I feel privileged because I can take the time out, I am there for the kids but I am still giving back and using my skills that I have for others.

I am now involved with a new center. We work on making the place homier while getting rid of all the clinical aspects to the environment. The center didn't have a volunteer coordinator so the director said "right, I've no money, but we need to do things and we need to apply for money to get a volunteer coordinator in here" so I did a few weeks of interviewing volunteers and staff and I had a great view of it and I put a strategic plan together. It is a document of about 5,000 words to give recommendations. I subsequently go every week and look at the various aspects. I re-did all their role descriptions and all that. I do this all for free. They are now advertising for the role and it is a full-time role and I'm not ready for that, yet. But I have said to them "look, let's keep ticking away at this and when the new person comes in, you are now at a stage where you can run with the program and I am happy to stay and provide admin support and all that kind of thing". I just feel that I know I am making an impact, I am very comfortable in that environment and it's a good help. They don't have the money yet so why not?

They needed someone to apply for grants. The girl who was looking after volunteers as part of a tiny remit, as she was looking after clinical aspect and wasn't able to give the time. I know that my coming in and doing that research for those few weeks having that document, and making those recommendations has allowed them to have a vision and strategic plan for the next two or three years. It has also allowed them to get a bulk of administrative work done before a new person comes in. They are not on the back foot; they are actually six months ahead of where they should be. I did a bit of work looking at the next couple of years for them and what were the key milestones that we need to do to recruit somebody to get the role descriptions, to get the volunteer

handbook, to look at the website, all those fundamental operating details. I have given them that avenue to say "right, we are on the right track and this is where we are going". Without any cost implications, time implication for staff having to do this… Just to see the value of what I am able to do. I come away saying that I am able to use my brain, it hasn't gone into mush and I am also not just a mom, today. I am still engaging and I am also giving something back.

To take this a step further, I am now volunteering in a dementia specific care center for those from early to late dementia development. There are no nurses' stations, no uniforms and no badges. This is a home, with people getting involved in daily activities that suit them and their personalities. The chef comes to the houses (not wards) and those that are able can peel the potatoes and help with cooking some food. It is interactive, vibrant and it puts feelings first before anything else. This is setting the gold standard of care for the future and an example of how our nursing homes should be supporting our vulnerable.

I have also volunteered in a hospice in my community. It's palliative care and there is a long-term unit. We would have patients in residence with neurological problems. There are patients with varying and certain levels of palliative support needs. I involve my daughter's and expose them to these kinds of experiences. Every second month we were taking turns going in on a Saturday and a Sunday. We still go in for different events, and they have gotten to know different residents. I think it is good for them to see and to know that we are privileged with our life. But the privilege is also about being able to get out of bed and do what you want to do and for others because they can't.

Working in the hospice as a volunteer coordinator we organized a number of training days and talks given by the professionals in all departments that were tailored for the volunteers. We learnt about dementia, dysphasia [Feeding Techniques], communication, wheelchair training and all the mandatory clinical requirements that filtered into working and volunteering in a clinical setting for palliative care patients and long-term care residents. Although I was a volunteer coordinator, many times over the years we stepped into the roles of volunteers who were missing on their allocated days. We experienced firsthand the daily tasks on the wards, assisting residents with drinks, feeding and activities [baking, music]; getting to know our long-term residents in a different capacity to the one we normally follow. In turn, we understood the obstacles our new volunteers faced and how to deal with the concerns of all our volunteers.

I am very comfortable working with our older generations. They are this hidden group of people who have so much to tell us and so much knowledge to impart, and we still have so much to learn from our older generation and I don't think they are given, maybe as much time and respect that they deserve. They have paved the way for you and I to be able to do what we do. This is what I love, and I think it goes back to memories with my nana years ago. Even now when you start having a conversation or a chat – even when somebody has aspects of dementia, it doesn't matter. They may not be engaging, and you go out for a walk or you have a chat, or making a cup of tea and you start asking them questions. A little while later, the conversation just flows along and there is a brightness in their face in their eyes. You know, and even that tactile touch, where someone may want to reach out and hold your hand because they haven't had someone hold their hand in a while. I just think there is this positive energy that comes between somebody. There comes a point when you walk away and you realize that somebody has just relived a moment.

All it takes is just some small conversation and a little bit of time. It's not about fancy computers or organizing big events or any of that. It is just sitting side by side with somebody. Sometimes it might even be on a bus, and I see someone struggling to get on the bus, or in the supermarket and they can't reach up to the shelf and I have seen where they do that and its having a chat "do you need a hand, can I help you with that? How is your day" it doesn't take very much effort. I am responsible for making a difference.

My personal experience with my nana, the training for our volunteers and the hands-on experience assisting with feeding residents and communicating with our older generation has ensured that I feel extremely comfortable walking into this familiar environment. The way we communicate with each other and show respect and empathy with one and other hasn't changed, we just need to ensure we are the best at what we do.

"It is looking at the world in a different way"

Being a volunteer is just an innate part of me, but the motivations come from making a change in someone's life and a sense of giving back to my community. It is a real eye opener. It is almost like you stop for a moment and let the world pass by, like a car or a bus, that kind of image. And then actually the cars and the busses are passing by and you notice that the person at the bus is probably an older person who hasn't spoken to someone for about two or three days and you are the first person that talks to them. It

is stopping and looking at the world and noticing, and then it just gives you a bit of pride that maybe you have done something good today. You know you aren't looking for that pat on the back, you're not asking someone to say "that was brilliant" I just think it is pride and … It's not even pride. I think it is just looking at the world in different way. It puts value on why you are here.

My mom has been hugely influential on my continued desire to volunteer. I have three other sisters, and we all are involved in PTAs or local communities and sometimes we have these conversations of "why do we do this"? I think there is a family ethos that is there. You know, we are not rich, we've all had different milestones in our lives, whether it was someone very young who passed away, or has been very sick… My nana and my great aunt were fantastic. They would have been involved with Girl Guides and different local charities. My nana always, even in her late 80s, would have gone down to the local community center to help out the older people and I remember thinking, "that's fabulous". Certainly, the very strong women in my life have influenced me.

One of the things I would have found working in the corporate sector, is that you're getting up, you're getting dressed, getting the kids to school, breakfast, you go in to work, you come home. There is a hamster wheel thing going on and the volunteering takes all of that and gives you that inspiration to just live and to just be. I think there is a whole network of friends and neighbors that I wouldn't know in my life. Like with the kids, whenever we go to the shops, it is meeting people, it is that engagement it is that chat. You are part of a community, and I don't know how I would feel if I didn't… if I wasn't meeting someone. I think if you don't have that connection or that engagement with somebody, you miss out.

As the volunteer coordinator in the hospice for years, we always used the motto "You are the eyes and ears of our patients and residents". Telling our volunteers on their first day, and all the training days, that they are the advocates for those that can't speak. You must shout for those that can't. Volunteers who say they don't think they made any difference in a day are told that every small interaction in a glance, a smile and a touch of a hand makes us feel connected. I would have had young people with Down Syndrome who were my volunteers. I would have had people who were CEOs [Chief Executive Officers] who were retired and came back to volunteer. I would have had students from 15 – 16 years of age and in every strand of those volunteers they always would have something to give. But you also had to be very patient to find what ticked, what made them. Was it someone's mom telling them "you need to volunteer

and not sit on the couch" or was it "I need to show that I have been volunteering for my credits for college" or "I have enough responsibility in my life and I just want to go in and do my bit from 9 to 5 but don't' ask me about any more responsibility. Every single person has something to give.

Some people have more qualities than they can see in themselves. I think that if you can recognize that and you can see that, it can take a bit of time and I can say "you know, actually I know you don't want any more responsibility and I know you have been a CEO your whole life, but actually I think that you are coming every Tuesday and doing the tea trolley on the boards and that is brilliant, but I think you might be good on the buddy up system for somebody else". For example, men at the hospice are happy just doing their bit I am happy to do that, but you look and you say well there are some men in palliative care who only want to talk and engage with men. You're not family, you're not friends, you're not somebody who is going to be talking about my sickness, I just want to have a pal. When you link that person up, they actually get more out of it. Because people would have given me a chance and a challenge. I think it should just be part of everyone getting involved in their local community. The fundamentals of experiencing volunteering in an organization is important and can be a turning point for some depending on if they have a good experience or not.

"My education doesn't make me better than someone"

I've spent a lot of time over the last couple of weeks finding a few moments in my day to reflect on personal situations and feelings related to my volunteering experiences and I can happily say that some of those memories I have revisited for the first time in many years. Learning from volunteering has been a fundamental part of me growing up.

Education has certainly introduced me to organizations and individuals with the same ideals as mine. My volunteering and volunteer management experience have developed through learning on the job; taking previous event management experience and campaigns and tailoring them to current practices; attending national and management conferences; meeting other volunteer coordinators; visits to other organizations and seeing first-hand their volunteer programs and new ideas that they have implemented successfully. The work involved in supporting volunteers, policies and legal requirements have changed so much in recent years. Each of the organizations I have worked for, I believed in their mission to change and influence

society and effect change at some level. This belief empowered me to volunteer so my team and I could make a change or ensure our campaign was a success.

As there is only one third level course for leadership in the not-for-profit sector, a lot of the education comes from short, one day courses offered through a volunteer organization here in Ireland. It is a shame that this country has no third-level recognition of Volunteer management or voluntary placements that could make a fundamental difference to an individual and organisation and mmore importantly, can be recognized nationally. There is a distinct lack of real recognition from companies and organisations to promote management or volunteering roles as it should be.

Although, I realize that just because I have an education doesn't mean that I am any better than a volunteer who doesn't. Life experience is just as important, and those volunteers can sometimes give better insight into what it is like in that space. I do think that education is really important because it allowed me to understand, to learn, and to experience with knowledge. For example, my formal education allowed me I to go overseas and experience different cultures as part of my learning. Now, I had to take on the responsibility to earn money to pay for that experience, because we didn't have the money at home and I had to get jobs when I was over there. I realize that this was all part of the learning.

There has been a multitude of learning cultivated over the years. Some of them include patience, listening skills, empathy and compassion. The greatest of these for me, would be patience. If I am not able to take time to listen to the person in front of me and hear their story, to have empathy for their situation, then I can't be a volunteer. These strengths have been fostered by time, experience, and listening to both side of a story, from training, from meeting others, adapting to situations, and by a desire to change something or make a difference. And I think those strengths are there because I fundamentally believe in the cause and ethos of the organization.   I think that if you have a positive experience volunteering for an organization that no classroom or formal education can match that feeling of making a difference. Everyone has something to give, we just need to harness it at a young age, light that spark, and we have a volunteer for life.

"It is about doing the small things really well"

One of the things I always tell my kids is "you know what, bad news always sells and gets on the news and they never talk about all the incredible amazing good things that

happen". Going into the hospice where you have this conflict, where life ends for people and it is so sad, but the other side of is when you see the positive impact. I have seen how a seemingly small request from a family member to bring their loved one, who was in her final days, to get a bag of chips and to see the seafront (where a couple had met and had their first date), could make an enormous impact. The patient wanted to go back and do that one more time, to relive that moment in their life. We were able to organize it, and we made sure that we had the staff and the medical supplies, and I made sure that the volunteer driver was available. You are on the outside of it, and you can see that this husband is going to lose his wife in a few days. The wife could relive her memory, and her husband will carry that memory for the rest of his life when she is gone, and you know that you helped to make that moment happen. These experiences just make me aware that I can change the path for someone. You can give them a different experience. You just see how lucky you are and that you can make an impact when you believe it can happen. Even when I have made that cup of tea for someone, or had that chat – it is a knock-on effect. I think life would be very shallow if you didn't help others. It isn't about doing the big things, but about doing the small things well.

Volunteering is me, it is part of me, and an integral part of my personality. If I didn't volunteer, life would be very shallow. I am acutely aware that I am a busy mom, and that just yesterday my girls were babies, they had that dependency on me. I realize that they are now starting to move away a little bit, and you know, where will I be in 10 years' time when they leave? Who will I be? I want purpose. I want to feel needed. I have a duty and responsibility to give back to others. I think that volunteering is a huge part of my identity and I think that even looking down the line in a couple years' time, I want to be known for doing what I can do for others and not all the other aspects of my life.

Points to Ponder

RQ! Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?
Caitrióna discusses many of the skills that she has honed as a volunteer over the years, and expresses her motive for doing so, she states *"I needed to do something just for me, without any altruistic motives, but I needed to know that I was needed to"*. The delicate balancing act between remaining faithful to who you are and your innate sense of responsibility to service can be quite complex. Caitrióna's life and learning experiences seem to center around feeling duty-bound and responsible for the care and well-being of others, performing duties with the utmost organization and professionalism and making sure that she completes tasks with care and precision. She says *"You know that you can't walk away from those situations, and you can't walk away because you are going to be letting somebody down… someone is counting on me"*.

Her words impacted me deeply and prompted me to look more carefully at the familial and societal impacts that cultivated this sense of responsibility in Caitrióna. Is it the extrinsic impacts or is it more intrinsic? What do you think Caitrióna values more – formal institutional learning experiences or informal volunteer experiences?

6.5 ROSIE

INTRODUCTION

Rosie is 31-year-old woman who experienced many difficulties and obstacles throughout her life. She is one of six siblings raised during a period in Ireland that saw high poverty and unemployment rates. Rosie's family was not involved with the Catholic Church and in fact, resented the Catholic Church early in her life due to the suicide of her father's brother and the stigma and shame that the Catholic Church placed upon Rosie's family because of that. She grew up in the northern region of Ireland within just a few miles of the Northern Ireland border during the 'troubles'. The 'troubles began in the North of Ireland during the 1960s, and continued to the end of the century ("The troubles," 2001). It was a thirty-year stretch filled with political violence, low intensity armed conflict and political deadlock within the six north-eastern counties of Ireland that formed part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Byrne & O'Mahony, 2012). Her childhood and school years were emotionally damaging in many aspects that includes experiences with sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and various forms of drug addiction. Rosie became pregnant at the age of 17 and had to leave school to care for her child. She eventually returned to school and later went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Community Youth Work. She is currently unemployed and volunteers full-time in the community that she grew up in.

ROSIE'S JOURNEY AND REFLECTION

"It was Ireland made"

Volunteering has always been a part of me, I just didn't realize it until I look back through the years. As kids, we always got involved in our street. I remember once or twice a year the street would be cleaned and me and my friends always got involved. We would help by collecting stuff for the bonfire. One time, my sister, a friend and I had a garage sale. We sold off our old toys to raise money for one of the African charities at that time. In primary school, we got involved in the litter program, which was an environmental thing they held once a year. We had to do things around the school, you

know to make the grade, but I suppose that was about the only things kids could do to help the community in the '90s.

One of my earliest memories of being involved in volunteer activity was attending peace rallies when I was about 10 years old. We would have peace rallies on Saturday afternoons in the square. I think it was around 1996. These peace rallies were about the conflict up the north and to end violence on both sides. It was one of the biggest rallies that our town ever had, I think. 5000 people marched down Clanbrasill Street and gathered at the square. Myself and my friend used to make signs and go by ourselves. My family never got involved in this stuff. As kids, we knew what was going on in the north. We knew the atrocities that happened on both sides. You know, like me and my friend we had to walk ourselves, make our own time. If we wanted to go, we took ourselves. Nobody took us. It wasn't organized by any political party just ordinary people who wanted peace. We knew it was only 30 minutes away from where we lived, but life for other children was completely different to ours. I remember going that day and sitting at the square with our signs. The buzz was great and we knew we were part of something important. It's a very important memory for me.

I always got involved in cross-border activities in the school. These were great! We got to go to schools up north and do fun things. The cross-border projects were part of the peace process trying to get the younger generations on side with each other. People would say that there was a peace process, but there was no real peace process here, you know. My school was a protestant school and there were only eight kids in my class. It was a very small school, and we didn't link in to any charity and volunteer activities the way the Catholic schools did. This all ended though, when I went to secondary school. In secondary school, we weren't encouraged to volunteer, you know. I do remember being involved in a school protest we had at the square. I don't remember what it was about, but the schools kept going on strike during that time. The strikes were so often that we were missing a lot of time in schools and students in exam years where panicking. So, all the students from the schools left school and marched through the town to the square. It was a great day, marching and chanting outside schools while students were running out the doors to join the protests.

I was inspired by people for all the wrong things that they did and not wanting to be like them. You know, I come from a family well… I suppose it was the '90s in Ireland. My mam was from Manchester and my father was from Roscommon. You know, so they left the Catholic church in 1989 because my brother's father killed himself and my father sat with him in the hospital for a week waiting for him to die. They left the church,

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but we were shunned really, because of the suicide. We were not Catholic anymore you know, it didn't matter that both parents were Irish, we were now the outsiders on the street. Because of this, we didn't really get involved in community. We were often kept away for safety reasons. I hated growing up like that. I didn't see why if I got involved in something, what's going to happen? What's so wrong, why was dad so afraid of everybody? My father was a fireman and he was always getting involved in stuff. But I think it washed over everybody else. Of six children, I am the youngest. I am the only one that would have had interest in this sort of thing, you know.

When I look back at that time growing up, everyone said we were still under British control and that it was an important issue. But I don't agree. The Republic was not under British control but Catholic church control.   I saw that it destroyed so many lives. People in the Republic lived in fear of them and this fear spread. My dad feared them growing up because the church controlled every aspect of their daily life. The time and energy the Irish Republican Army (IRA) spent at fighting a superpower like the British, and what did it really change? More time and energy should have gone into separating the church and state. I have seen a lot of families go through things and when you see families grown up in the area (and I'm only 30), they are going to see things. If you grow up in a certain area, you're just going to see things, and you either fight against it or you become it. I have always tried not to become it.

One of the reasons why I got involved with volunteering was the violence in the schools. Teenagers of violence have addiction problems and because of state controlled institutions here in this country, our lives were ruined and that goes into our educational lives as well. My educational career was ruined by middle-aged teachers who had no attitude to be there. I had friends that were on heroin, I was pregnant at 17 when my friends began smoking heroin. It was all around, but I had something to take me away from that, having a baby. They had nothing to take them away from that… So, I suppose it was watching the trials of other people, including me own. So, I think my inspiration for volunteering and fighting for cause just comes from that, from that way of growing up. I was thinking it was just all bullshit, ya know? That was it… so it… it was Ireland made.

"I don't care who you are… get it right, so"

When my son was four months old, I chose to go back to school and bought my own uniform and books. I was living on my own as well. I went back to school full-time. When I finished school, I couldn't get accepted into college because obviously with

everything going on, I managed to get a Leaving Cert but, you know there was no resources at the time. I only got a bit of money to pay for crèche. There was nothing to help you pay for studying or anything like that. So, I had a Leaving Cert, but it was not good enough to get into college. So, I became a full stay at home mother for two or three years and then I went to college. From my education, I got interested in community youth work. When you do community work, you are going to volunteer your whole life anyway. But half the interesting jobs you don't get paid for. If you want to do them, you have to do them for free, you know?

I graduated in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in Community Youth Work at [local institute of technology]. The whole time in college we were encouraged to volunteer but at the time, it really annoyed me. I went to college to get a degree to earn an income. As a young, single mother I think I was too focused on being in a poverty trap and college was my way out of it. My attitude was that I wasn't going to work for free for anyone, and I was looking at it from my perspective of a single mother. [The institution] wanted us to volunteer the whole time we were in college, and I really didn't understand why they were saying it, and I just thought to myself "it's alright for you to be sitting there on your bleeding wages, when I am just struggling to be here in college". I eventually did a few months volunteering at a youth center in one of our most well-known council estates. But, being a single mother and in college I really didn't have time for it. After a few months, the stress and not being at home wasn't worth it so I stopped.

After my second year in [the institute of technology], I started volunteering, as a sort of work placement, with an after-school program for at-risk students who needed assistance with their homework and behavior. I was seeing the youth services work like a child as well. It took me back as a service user when I was around these people, because I was used to their language. I was used to behaving in a certain way when I was in these places. Not as a worker but as a service user. By volunteering then, when I did volunteer in college, that was something that I realized (and I said it to the leader at one point), I said "I feel like I am here again as a service user". In fact, one of the women that was volunteering there, was pregnant and wanted to use the service, and we would go up there. We went for the cups of tea and a wee slice of bread or something. What it did was put me back into feeling of being looked after. She [the woman running the course] said "that's what happens when you go through the services, you need to be on this side of it now". It was interesting for me to be on this side of it [the service], being in this role change as well, and getting used to it.

Looking back, my learning through college was to look at community work from the eyes of education into what it was and why you sort of do it as well, and why that expectation is there as well. Because we were kind of expected to be that person naturally, before we had any kind of education. I realized that I'm just that passionate person that wants to get involved anyway and this gives me the avenue to do it. I suppose I didn't realize it as that, I was just doing it. It was my introduction through college that actually got me involved in policy making as a volunteer and the structural organization of things, you know. That's what I'm getting as a volunteer. I thought, I'm not just here as a do-gooder, washing cups. You know, its actual work that they give me to do. So, I don't mind doing it then. If it wasn't for college pumping it into us all the time, I don't think I would have took it on. It was constant, and I got an eye into it for one year. I understand it now, both sides of it.

I think that if you don't have education behind ya, if you are not able to take in information, I don't think you are ready to be a professional volunteer. Having life experience is not enough. You need to have the theory behind it. To understand the journey that you came through. Education gives you that chance to do that. To understand as to what work you're going into. Why are you going into this? Your education just provides all the basic guiding principles for you. It is very, very important for volunteering and I think it should be done as a natural path. Understanding confidentiality, data protection, communities. I think you should have some sort of education before you begin professionally volunteering. It is more than handing out tea and bread. You could do a hell of a lot of damage. I don't care who you are – get it right, so.

"Why am I here?"

It was a lot of work at the after-school program, and I knew it wasn't something that I could do long term. I say that it was one of the best places to train. If you can train there, you can train anywhere. I suppose there is a deep meaning in it for me, as well. I did need the job knowledge and I did need the experience and that was the best place to get it. But, I do identify with many of the things there. You know as a child, the things that happened to me. I take child protection very serious. I got into youth work because of things that happened to me. I have always been very open and honest about that. We are children of violence, and unfortunately it is an awful lot of people's history. And when people take child abuse and cover it up, people need to wake up to that, so that is why I don't keep quiet about it. I always promised myself when I was

grown up, that I would never shut my mouth and I would never go away. I learned so much from that placement and it was great experience. I just knew it wasn't something I could keep up as a mother with a young son. It would run me into the ground. So, after a year there, I got what I needed out of it and left. After a while I started feeling down because I hate being unproductive. At first I enjoyed having time at home and took pride in my house and baked a lot. After three months, I couldn't even bring myself to do the smallest of house work jobs. I started to fall apart in every area of my life just because I didn't have a job. One failure had lead into a ton of other failures. Volunteering made me feel like a success again.

I started volunteering my local depression and suicide prevention center because I had a genuine interest in helping people with mental health problems. I knew what it was like myself, and how hard it is to get support. I knew what it was like when a family member is ill and you need to support them. I could empathize with people and make them feel comfortable. I chose this organization because it was a local group here in town helping people. They are a grass roots charity established for the community by the community. No HSE [Health, Safety and Environment] services or other services were in place here when they were established. This organization was set up by a father whose son committed suicide. This made me trust the organization's motivation. It wasn't about money or business but about removing barriers for people who cannot access mental health services. This organization has made counselling available, free of charge, to people in the community. Which removes another strong barrier for people who need help.

The nature of the work that is involved requires certain responsibilities straight away, you learn the real hands-on experience of dealing with front line issues in the mental health crisis. For me, it completely challenged my own view of mental health in many ways. It expelled many myths I had about suicide. I thought that suicidal people behaved in a certain way. Notions that if someone was going to commit suicide, they get their affairs in order first. From training and talking to people who are suicidal, I realized that they don't tell people. I realized how stupid that this way of thinking is. I always thought I treated people individually but I had categorized people far more than I thought. This encouraged me to do a module online with the open college in mental health awareness. This course was an eye opener for me. Learning the difference between thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It was my first introduction into studying mental health. I felt as though I had purpose.

There is also a huge responsibility with keeping things confidential. When you work in the office you over-hear and over-see everything. You hear information about counselors, clients, and other volunteers. It is very important that everyone understands what confidentiality is. You cannot be a timid, shy person who is afraid to ask questions. You need to be comfortable with people while they express raw emotions. I am comfortable with people while they cried or breakdown with emotion, because I have seen it many times in my life, anyway. I liked the comforting side of the job because I personally know what it is like to deal with mental health services and to ask for help. I know what that person feels like, what they are going through. It is important to me that I make the space feel safe for someone in distress. People put their trust into you and when you do a good job they are very appreciative. This has motivated me when I feel fed up. It is easy to get fed up when your volunteering at my age. Sometimes I have lost sight of why I am here. Then someone comes in who needs to talk and you are reminded of why you do it. If this service wasn't there none of these people would have gotten that help they needed in that moment. It reminds you that its real work even though you're not paid, it doesn't deflect from your work. I was given a real responsibility with impact - talking to people, administering the questionnaire, assessing safety and making stay safe plans. I was dealing with family members also if the clients were minors. I got to use all my theory from college and other courses that I had previously completed. This experience reinforced knowledge I had from my courses.

Working with the service made me confront own issues from my past and triggered a lot of personal issues for me. I liked being able to listen to people and empathizing with them but I recently stopped doing assessments because of the memories and trauma that it was resurfacing for me. It was a hard decision to make not to do assessments. It wasn't helping me to constantly remain in a such a stressful and emotional environment, but the more I see healing take place, and hear attitudes change around suicide and mental health, the more motivated I am to keep doing it because that shows it is working. This helped me to realize that what we are doing here is important and to find a different way to support the cause.

Overall, my experience volunteering has been very positive I have learned a lot about myself on a personal level too. I have learned a lot of healthier ways to think, and incorporating new coping skills for different issues that I wouldn't have known about if I didn't volunteer. I started doing mindfulness class last year because I knew a lot of clients were doing it so I tried it for myself. In ways like that, I have learned how to help myself. Volunteering has given me a chance to help people because I had been

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helped myself in the past through youth services. I know how influential each one of them have been to me. I chose a mental health charity because of my own family issues what they were going through. I also thought it was important because they work hard to try and remove the stigma of suicide. I have seen first-hand how families live after someone commits suicide and how the stigma of this prevents loved ones from seeking help. Shame and guilt (mainly from neighbors and the church) makes suicide seem like a secret shame. Because of this, families don't get to grieve properly. It has been great to be part of something that is ready to speak out and give the right information to people without fear of being challenged.

Since working with this organization, I became more interested in politics as well. I could start to see properly how all these failed policies were directly impacting on the lives of people. It made me see that the job we do as community workers is political. Because of this, I have now joined a political movement for woman along the border counties. Not all volunteering in my opinion, is going to give you that kind of chance.

"That's why I am here"

I don't like to get involved in anything that takes me away from the town. Any organization or charity event that is going on here, if it is going to take away from our sources here at home, I don't generally get involved. I will give you an example of what I am talking about. A national suicide prevention charity does a walk every year, it is world-wide. There is a 1.5 million euro invested from our town. Not a penny of that money goes to any services here. They do not provide services for people here. You have to travel on your own time to get to one of their offices to see them and for very limited service only. They only offer 6-8 counseling sessions for someone who is self-harming. That is an absolute waste of time. I don't know why the government is funding that. It is a waste of time. Take it from a single mother, I've been in that situation, and that's why I am here. You know, I've come through it. I've come through a family of mental odd-balls anyway. You know, if this is happening in my community, this has to be happening in other communities nearby. How could it not be? If those around the coast and around the country are struggling, why are we only talking about the major city? Anything that takes away from this town and its people, I won't get involved in it.

We give counselling to people for as long as they need it. We don't get any money. There are a lot of people who are ringing us saying "hey we registered for the walk, we're doing it for you". I say "no, that money goes to that other organization, it is a great organization, but just to let you know that the money doesn't stay here in town. You're not doing it for us, you're doing it for them". People aren't aware of that, so. I'm not talking bad about them; I am just making people aware. Our county has one of the highest rates of suicide in Ireland.

You know, I told you about the peace rally that I attended when I was young? I used this example in a school when I talked about active citizenship to second year students last May just before the referendum. As kids, we got involved and didn't realized it was active citizenship. Trying to get the message across to them that maybe you have already done something for your street and you might not have realized that it had value. It is easy to be an active citizen. I used the repeal movement as an example of active citizenship. I didn't go into whether I was "yes or no" I just got to talk openly about what it was and why it fit in to our talk that day. I spoke on Mary Robinson and I could talk to the students about the 8th amendment because that was her work. As a volunteer, coming into the school, I could talk about all the controversial issues that the teachers can't talk about. I could talk about Palestine and the occupation of land and what we read and what oppresses us. I was talking to the teacher afterwards and said it was the only school that I could do it so far, as it's the only non-religious one I go to. He wasn't surprised as education in Ireland is very censored and still very much under Catholic control.

This is why I became a community worker. This is why I volunteer in the rough areas. At first, I was a little reluctant to get into education and stuff like that in the mainstream schools, but I realized that I am missing disadvantaged people by doing that. So, I would be very passionate. All the volunteering I do would have deep roots. I would never volunteer somewhere that I wasn't passionate about just for the sake of it. I don't agree with that. You won't go in there with the right attitude. Pick something that your passionate about. It just links into active volunteerism and looking to other people fighting for them and not for yourself. I got involved because I wanted to help raise the profile of the culture. It was missing. You are always looking for something that is missing.

"Learning to value yourself in new ways"

The most powerful thing I have learned is that life is short. I used to hate this saying. I usually rolled my eyes when someone would say it. As a young person, you just think its patronizing. But, I never really knew what it meant. Volunteering has put that saying into context for me. The youngest person who I dealt with was nine years old, and suicidal… Why does someone that young want to suicide? I think for me, life never felt short because I was always stressed out by trying to achieve. Being a young single mother and a school drop-out I felt terrible about myself which is why after my son was born, I went back to school to prove I could do things the right way. I put a high value on education. After finishing school and doing well, I still was only focused on the next step. After finishing college, I didn't celebrate an achievement, I only focused on getting a job. I now feel pressure to be off social benefits and earning an income while still caring for my son. I don't want to spend the rest of my life stressed out, trying to achieve the next step because that way of thinking keeps you on a loop of self-doubt, and nothing you do will be good enough. Through volunteering, I have learned to value myself in new ways. I have learned to value myself on my skills and personality more than my achievements on paper. If life is short, I would like to believe that I have made a difference.

"Discovering self-empowerment"

I have learned that volunteering is work, especially the kind of volunteering that I do. I have realized that what I am doing is incredibly valuable and I should be proud. Many clients have thanked me and plenty have said that they can open up to me, when they normally cannot open up to others, so I take that and it reinforces my sense of self-worth.

Volunteering has opened my eyes to things. I see the bullshit in the way things are being done in society and what is going on, and I want to be part of the change. You know, I just think that volunteering has made me a more outspoken person. It has made me read more about different issues in my community. It has changed where I research and look for information for these issues. I find that I am talking more with people and working in other community sectors as well. I have changed my opinion on addiction, so I think before reacting. You know, volunteering has made me more of a thinker, more balanced, I think. Rather than jumping into what we already know I think more about what we should be doing. Volunteering has given me a confidence, a bit of backbone. I would not be afraid now to say something whereas before I would.

Probably the most interesting discovery that I have made about myself (and maybe it is because I am in a mental health volunteer role that the discoveries I have made about myself seem so huge), is that it has provided the opportunity to have a look at myself in a healthy way, to be aware and make self-improvements. I learned how to not dwell negatively on things, but be more positive. I also learned that just because you don't like something about yourself doesn't mean you necessarily need to change, either. You just need to be more aware. One day I was helping a client to think about hobbies they liked to do before they were depressed. This exercise sparked one of my own hobbies that I had let slip, myself. From this conversation, I got back into hiking. I have been pursuing that hobby for two years now, and I have had some amazing travels over time. I have also discovered that I am more normal than I thought I was. Living under the stigma of other family member problems and the belief that mental illness runs in the family, and we are all doomed. Volunteering has helped me learn that way of thinking is rubbish. I feel that advocating for others who believe they don't have the strength to fight, has empowered me to fight for what keeps me mentally healthy, me self.

I'm not afraid of a challenge. I've been through much worse. When I was young, we had soldiers pushing us around, so I'm not afraid… bring it on. I would still get on and do what I must do. I do this every week. I think this is important. I don't put this place on the back burner. I don't fritter around when I get my new time table, you know [it is a priority]. It is a big part of me, a big part of my life, and I would be lost without it.

Points to Ponder

There are several experiences in Rosie's early life that both inspired and frustrated her. These experiences inspired her desire for volunteering but not in the ways that we often think inspire volunteerism. The culture, time period and society that she grew up in, known as 'the troubles' signified just that – troubling times filled with civil violence, political and religious-based unrest, and a sense of paranoia and distrust of the intentions of people, in general. Although, through this, Rosie exudes an unwavering passion for the causes of others and fighting for the rights of under-represented people groups and community. **RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of 'self' that is transformative and enduring?** At one point Rosie says *"All the volunteering I do would have deep roots"*. There is a significant tension between anxiety, despair and self-worth and value. Amid this tension, there is a sense of inspiration and a desire to make a difference. There is a sense of transformation and empowerment in Rosie's narrative. For me, the themes that stand out in this story are 'passion', 'fierce defender', 'champion for others', 'pragmatic', 'outspoken', 'fighter of social justice'. What are some of the learning moments in Rosie's volunteer experience that stand out for you?

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter represented a brief glimpse into the lives of four of my 24 AVs. The life journey's that brought them to where they are now as AVs. The impressions that have remained from familial and societal influencers, self-reflections, new awareness's, and lessons learned from formal education as well as the informal lessons from the 'school of life'. The poignant moments shared through personal tragedy and triumph, loss and jubilation, and steady tension between understanding who they are and why they feel so strongly about giving their time to others. What did you see in this chapter? Did you begin to see a relationship between the stories or experiences? Did you see any glaring differences? Similar stories are echoed through the voices of the other 20 AVs in Chapter Seven, and the threads of commonality that bind them together will be closely analysed like a wrapped gift waiting to be carefully opened, layer by layer. As we read the lived experiences of these AVs in comparison to the others, we begin to see themes and patterns emerge among them that are common from one story to the next as well as dispositions that are distinctive between groups of AVs.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community" – Anthony J. DeAngelo

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present a detailed thematic narrative analysis in which I discuss the themes that emerged and present the findings related to my four research questions:

1. **Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**
2. **Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**
3. **Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?**
4. **Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

There were two main levels of analysis in this study, as a blended approach of *Narrative Analysis* and *Thematic Analysis*. The analysis was conducted in two levels. Both levels looked at the beliefs, attitudes and values that AVs expressed when questioned about identity and learning through volunteering in line with the four research questions that are presented for you in the following sections. The first level of analysis in section 7.3, entitled *The Threads of Commonality*, involved conducting a thematic narrative analysis of all 24 AV participants. This inductive, *Narrative Analysis* incorporated my HOW and WHY questions as I analyzed the data through the stories AVs shared with me and helped me to understand how AVs represent themselves and their experiences, to themselves and to others. This thematic narrative analysis was based on the overall themes that, informed by the explorative nature of the research questions, emerged from the initial analysis of the data through narrative inquiry. The overarching themes were provided based on each of the research questions. Then I provided the sub-themes that emerged, and highlight idiosyncrasies within themes. I include a brief description, where appropriate, of the meaning I made of each theme as identified in the coding profile Fig. 5.16, presented in section 5.6 of Chapter Five. Additionally, I provide brief narratives from the AVs, to endorse the themes. Upon review of the first level themes, it became very apparent that there were idiosyncrasies, unique features, and distinct dispositions that were common between groups of AVs and represent what I consider to be the major findings. This second level of analysis,

the *Thematic Analysis* asks WHAT rather than HOW and WHY covered in the first level analysis.   Some of the themes from this 1st level of analysis, were held stronger by the AVs, that fell into distinct groups and make up my AVDs and will be detailed in Chapter Eight. The themes that emerged from the narrative analysis in this chapter will be combined with the themes in the next chapter and is grounded within the educational and sociological literature presented in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

7.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILE

A descriptive participant profile, first introduced in section 5.5 of Chapter Five, is provided for you again, in Table 5.2, below. There were 24 AV participants ranging in age from 30 years to 90 years old. There were 15 female participants and 9 male participants. All participants completed higher certificates or degrees at varying levels. In adherence of ethical practice in relation to anonymity, the AV names are pseudonyms chosen by this researcher after the interviews were conducted and transcribed.

ACTIVE VOLUNTEER	GENDER	AGE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	CURRENT VOLUNTEER SECTOR
CARRIE	F	66	Higher Diploma	Adult Mental Health
CAITRIÓNA	F	45	Bachelor's Degree	Family & Community Services
CHRISTY	M	66	PhD	Adult Education
COLM	M	68	MBA	Family & Community Services
DENNIS	M	30	Bachelor's Degree	Adult Education
ELLORI	F	40	MSc	Children's Health Services
EOIN	M	90	Nat'l Teacher Certificate	Family & Community Services
FRANCINE	F	55	Bachelor's Degree	Human Rights
GILLIAN	F	60	Certificate	Family & Community Services
JENNIFER	F	53	Postgrad Certificate	Family & Community Services
KATHLEEN	F	68	Higher Diploma	Community Services
MALLORY	F	40	PhD	Family Health Services
MARTHA	F	68	Higher Diploma	Family & Community Services
MAUREEN	F	49	Higher Diploma	Community Services
MICEÁL	M	47	Higher Diploma	Event Volunteer
MICHELLE	F	60	MSc	Event Volunteer
MIRIAM	F	33	MSc	Education Administration
NATALIE	F	57	Postgrad Certificate	Community & Youth Services
PÁDRAIG	M	57	Bachelor's Degree	Family & Community Services
RAILEEN	F	43	Higher Diploma	Higher Diploma
RAND	M	51	MSc	Adult Mental Health
ROSIE	F	31	Bachelor's Degree	Adult Mental Health
STEPHEN	M	53	Bachelor's Degree	Youth Community Services
VALERIE	F	37	Postgrad Certificate	Business Administrative
XAVIER	M	49	PhD	Adult Education Administration

Table 5.2 Active Volunteer Pseudonyms

7.3 THE THREADS OF COMMONALITY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the emerging themes and sub-themes are ALL-CAPPED, **Bold-typed**, and presented as section headings. To ensure that the information is offered in a way that can lead to smooth reading of the analysis, the first level themes and sub-themes are set out in Table 7.1 below and are placed as headings before each **bold-typed** research question.

1. **Learning** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity**	2. **Motivation** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity**

• Acceptance and Belonging • Meaning and Purpose • Worth and Worthiness • Duty and Responsibility	• Influence and Impact • Satisfaction and Well-Being • Making Connections • Affirmation and Appreciation
3. **Learning** and Volunteer **Longevity** • Formal Learning • Informal Learning • Leadership • Skills and Qualifications	4. **Learning** and Enduring **Understandings** • Awareness • Values • Transformations

Table 7.1 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Additionally, throughout this chapter, I italicized and provide quotation marks around the AV narratives in blocks of text and include the AV's pseudonym and age in parentheses.

7.4 LEARNING AND AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEER IDENTITY

The first research question considers the extent to which AVs are aware of their dispositions as volunteers and how learning experiences in their early life, both formal and informal, have impacted their volunteer activities throughout their life. This provides a foundation by which to provide a link between identity and learning.

> **RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**

Asking AVs questions about personal experiences relating to their volunteering and education produced common responses relating to acceptance and belonging, meaning and purpose, worth and worthiness, and duty and responsibility. The questions asked and interviews with the participants drew out reflections of 'self' and learning about 'self' and provides us with impressions rather than a list of skills and qualifications, wherein these impressions form the skills and qualifications that will be detailed in question 3.

ACCEPTANCE AND BELONGING

Nearly all the AVs interviewed discussed memories and experiences involving volunteer activity that elicit feelings of affinity and sense of belonging in a group that leads to a desire to be accepted by others. Being accepted as part of a group and the meanings that these memories and experiences have on someone's identity, contributes significantly to whether someone chooses to participate in activities or causes that are considered greater than ones 'self' individually.

> *"I don't know, I guess I can say what I get out of it is what it is like. You know, it feels like I am contributing to something. That I am defining myself as a person who is part of something, when I am volunteering, I feel like I am part of a cause, let's say."* – (Dennis, age 30)

> *"I remember going that day and sitting at the square with our signs. The buzz was great and we knew we were part of something important… a very important memory for me."* – (Rosie, age 31)

> *"Recently, at a conference that I really love volunteering at, they really made you feel as part of the team… And it is because, even the attendees at this conference were, you know, were treating the volunteers with respect… I think when you feel like you are part of an organization and you're, contribution is recognized and seen as being significant."* - (Mallory, age 43)

Sometimes, volunteer influences and experiences whether formally or informally experienced, introduces lessons in personal growth and cultivates perspectives on what belonging means to an individual or why it is important for them to be part of the social fabric that volunteer activities offer.

> *"The things that I was really good at in school weren't really valued. I now wonder, thinking back on it, if I volunteered in school to belong – I did not excel at sport and was very much an average student. I was drawn to the arts rather than to the sciences, and unless you were a fledging literary genius, being average was not really valued… So, within my formal education, volunteering gave me a place to belong in school and also gave me an identity within a school community where belonging was not always that easy for someone who was different."* – (Christy, age 66)

> *"I don't have children and family, so for me in a different way, you know I suppose there is a bit of selfishness too. You feel a part of the community as well on the other side, and they might see you somewhere and they are like "oh hi" because they expect to see you in a uniform or something because of the volunteering, but whereas they see you in plain clothing and they will have a chat with you and tell you that they really enjoyed their weekend away and such."* – (Raileen, age 43)

> *"It was an after-school kind of thing… it was two-tiered in the sense that when we went to it through school and such, it was very much the group we went with and it was short term and, it was a bit of a social side to it as well. I went away,*

and it was much more intense. And as well as helping I learned an awful lot about me and what I could do and what I definitely couldn't do. I learned my boundaries. It was a really good growth experience. Do you know what I mean?" – (Maureen, age 49)

Belongingness and acceptance in social groups helps to define who we are and serves as a conduit for seeking meaning and purpose for our lives. Volunteering, for many, can be seen as a motivation for finding meaning and purpose that fulfills our desire to belong and validate our worth.

MEANING AND PURPOSE

Finding meaning and purpose for our lives is fundamental for growth and personal development. Purpose can be a driver for major life decisions and meaning gives value to our sense of worth and worthiness. Building confidence, and a desire to make a difference for others, builds on the longing for connectedness and human interaction, as reported by the AV Participants.

> *"It just makes me feel connected. I have purpose. It gives my life purpose. It made me a better person and aware of so much. Because you just go through your day to day and it can become monotonous and really, is work giving your life meaning? Not so much. Like, you know when they say if you look back on your life and what you did… I wouldn't say it is so much what I did but the people that I have met. Volunteering has been like a magnet between the meaning and relationships."* - (Valerie, 37)

> *"I suppose that, yeah, someone volunteers because they are trying to generally be helpful and you want to see that you are making an impact on someone's life, you know? That would be my driving force. When I am at work I am not making an impact on someone's life. I may be working on a project and it may be very satisfying but all I am doing is making an impact on the bottom line or some efficiency somewhere. So, it's not the same as making an impact on someone's life…"* – (Rand, age 51)

> *"It was who we were as a family when I was young, and who I grew into and who I became as I got older. It gave me a sense of belonging and an identity. It also gave me something to do as well as someone to be."* – (Christy, age 66)

As is evident in the next set of narratives, AVs express how volunteering has guided them, helped them to overcome grief and build their confidence when previous experiences may have impacted them negatively in other areas or times in their lives.

> *"From my volunteering, I have generated a real sense of purpose and a new level of self-confidence. Volunteering has been a huge help to me in overcoming the grief from the loss of the most important person in my life.*

Volunteering has given me a real sense of direction when I was mentally all over the place, filled a massive gap, and given me a real sense of hope for the future." – (Pádraig, age 57)

"It has built me back up in many ways. Built my confidence. It has built up my confidence a great deal.   Which is great. When you get older you think that people don't want you anymore and your confidence goes down." – (Carrie, age 66)

"I used to attend a monthly support group to have whinged and stuff instead of burdening people around me with the experiences I was having with my son and, now I can go and I can give back to people who are where I was two or three years ago, and know that I genuinely made a difference." - (Ellori, age 40)

As mentioned earlier in this section and confirmed by AV statements above, when we pursue meaning and purpose in our lives, the motivations for those pursuits are closely tied to our identity through our sense of worth and worthiness as connected beings.

WORTH AND WORTHINESS

Worth and worthiness are qualities that social beings seek to attain as part of that sense of belongingness. Whether volunteering service validates that sense of worth or builds it, AVs agree that it is a perpetuation of the fluid self and can sometimes be a constant tension between validation of worth and building worthiness.

"I suppose it's worthwhile personally, because you feel like there is something that you have that can be a benefit somewhere else. I hate the phrase "it must be very rewarding" because I don't feel that I am rewarding myself with the fact that other people aren't doing as well in life. It's not that it is rewarding, it is that it fulfills that need to try and better where we're at, whether that is my local community or the bigger picture." – (Miriam, age 33)

"It has the sense of purpose and the sense of being a member of a community. It has the sense of being of use to somebody else – even if it is for an hour. That you have something that they can use that you can explain and give them. I also get a sense of worth out of it. I get relationships. I get to see what life is like from someone else's perspective and in a way that I can influence that. It's one of those things. It's not a single thing." – (Christy, age 66)

"Like when I, if I am just a student here and I'm studying an issue and just working in private schools, I can say "well, I am just an educator, I'm a student" but when I am volunteering, I can say "well I work with refugees and immigrants" this is like a worthy cause that I have identified and I am part of it." – (Dennis, age 30)

AVs have expressed that volunteer experiences build their self-confidence and self-worth as another way of saying they have been empowered. This empowerment validates confidence in their abilities and justifies their position to "make a difference".

DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Voltaire's well-known charge *"with great power comes great responsibility"*, exemplifies the ideal that AVs identify with volunteering. Essentially, the AVs believe that volunteering is part of their identity. They equally feel a great burden to duty and responsibility for their actions, because if you have the ability to do something, you have the obligation to do it for the good of others.

> *"Volunteering is me, it is part of me, and an integral part of my personality. If I didn't volunteer, life would be very shallow… Where will I be in 10 years' time when they leave [children]? Who will I be? I want purpose. I want to feel needed. I have a duty and responsibility to give back to others."* – (Caitrióna, age 45)

> *"So in that sense it takes all of you to do things, and volunteering, if you have decided you are volunteering, then you have committed and this entity has become part of you."* - (Colm, age 68)

> *"I just feel that we all have a responsibility to give back. My parents were very good to me and I grew up well, and I went to a nice school. We didn't have pots of money but my parents provided for us. You know we went to school and I eventually went to college. I was privileged and I am still privileged. I am very aware that there are people who, because of multiple circumstances aren't as privileged. It's not always their fault but sometimes it is, so I feel I have a responsibility to give back to society."* – (Michelle, age 60)

As AVs reflect on the impact that informal experiences in formal school settings have on how their identity is shaped, the ethos and culture of the schools they attended can leave subtle impressions on young minds that are carried into adulthood. Voltaire's declaration has deeper meaning as a metaphorical mirror, when reflected toward the institutions that are responsible for formal education. The following narratives from AVs confirm this assertion.

> *"Well, I mean, if you go back… go back to my school volunteering, I think it shaped my life in many ways. It gave me responsibility at an early stage in my life and the affirmation and the validation to say "look, you can do things" you can lead in situations and you can take on situations and you have a series of skills and capacities, that while they're not necessarily recognized in a school curriculum or in a formal academic curriculum, they are important life skills and you are good at things."* – (Xavier, age 49)

"There was an ethos there that cultivated that motto for the school, was something about 'being a man for others'. It was a boy's school and it was your duty to make a contribution to society. Especially if you are fortunate to be in a position where you aren't struggling every day, it is kind of your duty, I suppose." – (Rand, age 51)

"It is addictive, you could say. It is hard to say "no". That is a good point for me, because I walked myself into it, toward the end of my time in University, to helping organize a conference with the Society. I was actually holding down two volunteer positions that had a lot of responsibility at the time. I burned out because of it… But, I am back volunteering now, so that says something." – (Valerie, age 37)

Feeling obligated and possessing a sense of obligation can be a strong motivating factor for AVs and is built into the foundations of Duty and Responsibility. A common term for obligation is 'duty-bound' and I found myself writing this repeatedly into the margins of my AV narratives. Whether someone feels obligated or duty-bound because of familial influence, religious influence, or societal influence, it is all very personal to the AV and does not necessarily represent a spirit of unhappiness in fulfilling the duty, rather an attitude to just 'get on with it'.

"Dislike and enjoyment doesn't come into it, t'was a job to be done and we decided that we would do it, so that she would have heat for the winter, you just do it, you know?" – (Eoin, age 90)

"I do have a family member with special needs and I think it linked in a little bit to do what I do. Her rights abused, her family rights abused. I don't think I really have the privilege to walk away… Because of my personal links, I don't have the privilege to walk away." – (Francine, age 55)

"We knit gowns and blankets for the premature babies that die. I was asked to do that, originally and I thought, "what? I can't do that" but then I thought well I am lucky I have two children; I have a duty." – (Michelle, age 60)

SUMMARY

If a pattern is likened to a model or design used as a guide for sewing and needlework, an inspiration if you will, the pattern of identity and learning through volunteering has begun to emerge for AVs. Asking AVs if they **are aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities** generated beliefs, attitudes and values related to acceptance and belonging; meaning and purpose, worth and worthiness; and duty and responsibility that form the creation or inspiration of the pattern for volunteering that is sustainable and enduring. What

then, are the motivations that drive active and sustained volunteering? This is the basis of my second research question.

7.5 MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEER IDENTITY

When embarking on a quilting project, after the inspiration has occurred, the creator must gather the proverbial tools and supplies necessary to complete the project. It seems likely then that motivation, in alignment with identity, will be to gather the supplies needed to help ground and focus an AV. The second research question gathers those supplies together as it explores the personal and social motivations for volunteering.

> **RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**

In answering the first research question, I looked closely at the internal reasons volunteers do what they do in response to experiences living through numerous cultural traditions and expectations placed upon them by family, school culture, religion. Here, I took a closer look at many of the common external factors [such as practice and lifestyle] that contribute to reasons why AVs behave the way that they do. Asking AVs about what motivates them to volunteer and influence(d) their ideal of volunteering elicited thought-provoking responses and common motives on 'self' and others, comprised of influence and impact, satisfaction and well-being, making connections with others, and affirmation and appreciation.

INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

AVs share premises of when and how they are influenced by sociocultural norms and expectations throughout their lives, and the substantial effect these can have on their character, development and behavior. When asked if there was anyone or anything in their life that inspired them to be a volunteer, AVs responded thoughtfully, and sometimes with great somber reflection. Family influence and bond seems to play a significant role in volunteer motivation.

> *"I was always in awe of my parents and incredibly proud of them. I observed and appreciated the positive benefits they personally got out of their volunteer work. The desire to give back to my community was always there and it comes from growing up in a family that had a genuine interest in helping other people*

out. My parents were my main inspiration for most good things that I have done in my life." – (Pádraig, age 57)

"Volunteering is just a family ethos. My sisters and I, we have always been part of it... My nana and my great aunt were fantastic. They would have been involved with Girl Guides and different local charities. My nana always, even in her late 80s, would have gone down to the local community center to help out the older people and I remember thinking, "that's fabulous". Certainly, the very strong women in my life have influenced me." – (Caitríona, age 45)

"I had a grand uncle he had been out in the war for civil independence. You know, civil war – blue shirts, and then farm organizations and that kind of thing. He married into our family. He was a unique thinker and also made absolutely beautiful cider. I used to go to his place to learn how to keep sheep, or whatever, and he would talk about things and teach me about changing the way you think. Thinking about what you think. He was terrific thinker." – (Colm, age 68)

And sometimes, as is the case with Rosie, it is the *lack* of family influence that impacts and inspires volunteer motivation.

"One of my earliest memories of being involved in volunteer activity was attending peace rallies when I was little about 10 years old. These peace rallies were about the conflict up the north to end violence on both sides. My family never got involved in this stuff… I hated growing up like that. I didn't see why if I got involved in something, what's going to happen? Of six children, I am the youngest. I am the only one that would have had interest in this sort of thing." – (Rosie, age 33)

The next set of narratives by AVs illustrates the ways that they were fundamentally impacted by their own personal lived experience. The familiar idiom 'the school of life' serves as a reminder that the informal ways we learn through our own life experiences, whether good or bad, impacts our actions and desire to contribute to activities that are deeply meaningful to us.

"So I suppose that normally what gets you involved at the start is the reason… so like the mental health group, I would have got involved because of personal experience with myself or with family members that have mental health problems. You get involved because there is the personal thing at the start and then that kind of goes away and you are there, no matter how you got there, you get into the role due to personal connection." – (Rand, age 51)

"The reason why I do this volunteering is because the hospice had looked after members of my family, my mother-in-law, my mother, and then my wife when they were at the end of life." – (Pádraig, age 57).

"At one stage I was in an impatient unit and there was a woman there who had lost her children. She had papers served on her when she was an inpatient in

[psychiatric] hospital and she ended up losing all access to them. That is when I realized that women are losing access to their children permanently, women who are quite capable of being parents to their children and I think that affected me." – (Francine, age 55)

SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING

A person's lifestyle is the way in which they choose to live their life or the satisfaction that they seek to make the best of the life they lead. It is a way of life most commonly associated culturally with a desire to pursue what is deemed 'healthy' and promotes optimum personal satisfaction. AVs repeatedly assert that volunteer participation is associated with overall positive feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of well-being.

> *"I got married in '58 and we were happy, and somebody has to be the first to go. You can be very sad, and you are and I am, and I miss her all the time. And, life is there to be lived, and you might as well get on with it and do what you can every day when there is a need. It's part of my lifestyle. It makes me feel good."* – (Eoin, age 90)

> *"It meets all my needs. It gives me a great buzz. I don't feel like I have to fix people. So, when people come in, I am wide open and we can sit and talk. I know where they are going. I have been there myself."* – (Gillian, age 60)

> *"I suppose it's like anything that you do. If you enjoy it, it is easier to do and it sits better. And I get a lot more satisfaction out of the bit that I like. You can see the difference. It is tangible…"* – (Raileen, age 43)

But, care must be made with maintaining balance between volunteering and other life pursuits, as it may cause strain and tension that can do more harm than good to what may be perceived as an AV's healthy lifestyle. What triggers that sense of imbalance as well as how they are mindful of those imbalances is something that AVs share in the following narratives.

> *"Doing assessments was a huge positive for me to start with, Unfortunately, administering these assessments did become a negative for me. It made me confront own issues from my past and triggered a lot of personal issues for me. Particularly sexual assaults, childhood traumas, and abuse…I liked being able to listen to people and empathizing with them but I recently stopped doing assessments because of the memories and trauma that it was resurfacing for me. It was a hard decision to make not to do assessments. It wasn't helping me to constantly remain in a such a stressful and emotional environment…"* (Rosie, age 31)

The next narrative statement provides a glimpse into how Rosie copes with the negative elements of her volunteering in a positive and healthy way.

> *"Overall, my experience volunteering has been very positive I have learned a lot about myself on a personal level too. I have learned a lot of healthier ways to think, and incorporating new coping skills for different issues that I wouldn't have known about if I didn't volunteer. I started doing mindfulness class last year because I knew a lot of clients where doing it so I tried it for myself. In ways like that, I have learned how to help myself."* – (Rosie, age 31)

Francine, a human rights volunteer and activist, struggles with discrimination and bullying at her workplace because she works in a government organization affiliated with socio-economically disadvantaged people in her community, and her volunteer activity is often seen by her work colleagues as contradictory to the services that her employer provides. The tension between what she believes is right for the person and what the organization provides as a service, negatively impacts her satisfaction and well-being.

> *"I suppose the negative impact has been with work [not volunteering]. The kind of discrimination that I have got [for activism]. There are people at work (men and women) over the years saying I am crazy, things like that. Nut case, head case. Really nasty horrible stuff. That has been the negative aspects of it."* – (Francine, age 55)

Like Rosie, Francine has coping mechanisms and ways of reasoning to overcome her fears and encourage her resilience to continue the volunteer work that she believes in.

> *"The positive aspects have been, I suppose in terms of developing myself as a human being and to go beyond fear. You know that you don't end up with a fear of anything because you know, you have to go to uncomfortable places and you lose inhibitions or fear when you have to approach someone to discuss an issue or cause. I suppose it is more the people that I encounter especially in the disability community."* – (Francine, age 55)

Other AVs echo Rosie and Francine's statements and arm themselves with dispositional 'supplies' for maintaining balance and healthy perspectives.

> *"I found that it is important to have a good sense of myself when volunteering … to know where the volunteerism starts and finishes … in that way I can make an honest contribution."* – (Christy, age 66)

> *"I really enjoyed the volunteering experience, but there were billions of other things that I was doing that I enjoyed. So, for me now, especially being a mom and working full time, my free time is so limited that I must get a lot from what I am doing. It has to mean a lot for me to continue to do it. I can't see myself ever not being involved in this group."* – (Ellori, age 40)

*"Even if someone says let's do a meeting – I always say I can't do Monday's…
it helps with that work life balance…"* – (Raileen, age 43)

MAKING CONNECTIONS

As social beings, it is our desire to connect with other people, and as we discovered
earlier, links to social groups help us to establish and cultivate our desire to belong.
AVs agree that meaningful relationships through personal, social, professional and
wider-community connections further promotes feelings of satisfaction and connection
to our broader community and promotes feelings of belonging and affinity through
relationships with others. The narratives below show that personal, social, professional
and wider-community connections are important features in volunteer identity and
learning through volunteering.

Personal Connection

The AV narratives indicate that a personal, one on one, connection with someone has
enormous health and well-being benefits. Whether it is fulfilled by a desire to help
others because you have been helped along in your own life, connecting with diverse
people and awareness of new and diverse ways of life, traditions, and cultures or to
reap enjoyment from bonding with others, personal connection and relationships can
influence a continued desire to volunteer.

> *"I kind of think it is that I made some really great friends and connections first
> and foremost… and then I have some really interesting experiences… Helping
> people or allowing for the connection that I have been able to have; I want other
> people to experience that connection too."* – (Valerie, age 37)

> *"You get involved because there is the personal thing at the start and then that
> kind of goes away and you… you, are there, no matter how you got there, you
> get into the role due to personal connection. I didn't go out looking for specific
> volunteer opportunities. They just came along and evolved."* – (Rand, age 51)

> *"When you have made that connection, just that one person or that, like child or
> that one person where you've shown an interest, they've shown an interest in
> you. Actually, you get to understand each other in a way that you don't have
> with everyone. It's just really nice."* – (Miriam, age 33)

Social Connection

AV narratives illustrate that social connections can significantly improve mental health and ward off loneliness that is an inevitable part of the life journey. It can improve your outlook as well as your quality of life. It can provide healing from hurt and encourage trust in others. When we have common connections and bonds with others that we socialize with, it can be inspiring and feel like you are investing in relationships with others that make you feel good about yourself and your volunteer activity.

> *"I think the social aspect was huge for me when I was volunteering, because even then we would have gone camping and done all of those things and that was such fun. You got to meet people from Galway and Donegal and we just had so much fun. Even now, I still talk about it and you giggle over how silly you were because you were up until four in the morning, ya know? It was just fun."* – (Raileen, age 43)

> *"I think it is down to something that matches my values that I want to be able to do something about, solving a problem or contributing to the solution of a problem. Something that matches my own personal values. Because I get so much back from it, as well as you know, just social aspects…"* – (Mallory, age 43)

> *"I certainly got a lot from the social links and such. It was positive. You know, some of the people that you meet would be very inspirational. Because I am self-employed and I don't get out much it can be an opportunity to socialize and you feel like you are part of a team. Part of something bigger, where my own work is very much on my own. To make society a little bit better for other people and that social interaction."* – (Natalie, 57)

Professional Connection

Some of the AVs felt that professional connections can be absolutely vital elements of their engagement experience. These connections can build confidence, create new perspectives, broaden networks, generate ideas, knowledge, and solutions for community and societal issues evident in the volunteer experience, and create opportunities for collaboration for higher impact.

> *"I have spoken to senators and people that I have connections to during my time as a town counselor. I was also the last mayor of our town so I have connections to our government. I use opportunities like that to say "hold on" you need to know who your strategic population is right now…"* – (Martha, age 68)

> *"You build up a relationship with your colleagues that you volunteer with. You build up a relationship with lots of people over the years. With the families that you meet and the regular faces."* – (Eoin, age 90)

> *"I suppose that when you become a volunteer, there are so many opportunities to take on work and take on responsibilities you do, I suppose, gain a lot of skills that help you in your life and in your work life, you know so in terms of managing time and dealing with people and making relationships with people like that."* – (Rand, age 51)

Wider-Community Connection

Often, connections that AVs make with smaller volunteer groups and organizations, especially when volunteering and acts of service, link into acts of service for wider-community. As perspectives connect smaller groups to bigger societal needs and challenges, communities are brought together in a more strategic and meaningful way.

> *"After I was done with school, I wasn't particularly interested because I didn't consider Ireland to be my home at that point, so I didn't really have the connection then. Now that I have been here for a long time, I have the connection now."* – (Rand, age 51)

> *"I'm proud of my community and I really enjoy making really good friends who I would have just waved over the wall at prior to that. It was that volunteer experience of fundraising like maniacs and coming up with things for him to do which brought our community together. There are 36 houses in our general area, and we are tight. We have been on holiday together, and volunteering did that for me."* – (Ellori, age 40)

> *"I am part of a community, and I don't know how I would feel if I didn't… if I wasn't meeting someone. I think if you don't have that connection or that engagement with somebody, you miss out."* – (Caitrióna, age 45)

AFFIRMATION AND APPRECIATION

Whether affirmation and appreciation are conscious motivations for volunteering or unconscious, the AVs in this study have varying opinions on the themes. Affirmation and appreciation can come formally through intentional organization acknowledgement, informally and personally by recipients of volunteer action or internally within AV, themselves. Some, like Xavier acknowledge their need to feel affirmed and appreciated. Others, like Christy, struggle with affirmation and appreciation, because they desire their acts of service to go quiet and un-noticed. Most of the AVs agreed with Raileen, that affirmation and appreciation should come from within yourself first and only for your own personal gratification and satisfaction.

Need for Affirmation from Others

These AVs discuss the need to be recognized and affirmed for their acts of volunteer service. Whether it is for professional, personal, or social reasons, being recognized and affirmed for volunteer service is valued as beneficial and links further to a sense of belonging. There are five sub-categories under Need for Affirmation from Others, that draw on Affirmation and Appreciation for AV satisfaction and longevity.

For satisfying the 'self' – Volunteer activity can be a strong motivating factor for personal satisfaction, and when that satisfaction comes in the form of positive affirmation from others, it can be gratifying for some AVs, like Xavier, who appreciate the acknowledgement from others.

> *"I think there is a sense that there is a type of opportunity afforded by engaging in the level of volunteering that I do now, that is very affirming for me and very career affirming for me… Without sounding too big headed, I think I recognized earlier in my life (and maybe it goes back to that school experience) that there is an affirmation from volunteering that I enjoy. There is an affirmation through taking on leadership roles and situations on a voluntary basis that is good. That feeds my particular ego, you know. I quite like that… I think it is affirming. You can receive affirmation from colleagues and friends and community and people who you respect and people who you want to be part of a peer group with."* – (Xavier, age 49)

For encouraging continued motivation – Affirmation and appreciation in varying forms can be a strong motivational factor for some AVs, like Rand and Pádraig, who are personally satisfied from simple acknowledgements for volunteering.

> *"One of the schools sent me a card, a thank you, and that was great it makes a big difference. Keeps you going. It is nice to be recognized. You know?"* – (Rand, age 51)

> *"The places that I volunteer at are so good about acknowledging the time that the volunteers give. I like being appreciated for doing good and it is lovely when someone says "Thanks"."* – (Pádraig, age 57)

For building confidence – Affirmation and appreciation can be a strong motivation for continued volunteer activity and personal satisfaction. When someone acknowledges your volunteer effort and impact on those you are helping, it can be important for desiring to continue volunteering.

> *"It makes me feel like, you know I have had students that say "oh you are such a great teacher, we are so lucky to have you" and it makes me feel more confident in my own abilities like "oh, maybe I am a great teacher if they keep saying this". Yeah, I don't know how to say it other than it feels great. It feels nice to be recognized for your work and to have someone recognize and appreciate that work and express it to you formally or informally."* – (Dennis, age 30)

For improving self-esteem – Gillian, along with other AVs, that acknowledgement of volunteer participation is important for building self-esteem and personal confidence.

> *"I believe that recognition is beneficial. Because for the time that they give up and the work that they have done, and most have full time jobs and give up their time on Saturdays or Sundays and give training. For all the stuff that they do that recognizing them for what they do builds your self-esteem. It gives you confidence and it gets you known out there."* – (Gillian, age 60)

For validating worth – Valerie and Martha, among other AVs, find deep value and worth for themselves through Affirmation and Appreciation for volunteer activity.

> *"He formally thanked me in front of some of the original team and gave a lovely complimentary speech of my involvement and regretted that it had taken so long to publicly appreciate my role in the early set up of the Centre, (probably over 20 years)! I was happy because it brought a closure to a time in my life, while rearing my children alone, that I did feel at last, I had been valued for the amount of volunteering and work within the organization…"* – (Martha, age 68)

> *"I received the volunteer of the year award one of the years before I left my country. I had moved here and my mom received it on my behalf. It was really cool… I was touched. I really appreciated the honor."* – (Valerie, age 37)

Struggle with Affirmation from Others

Some AVs struggle with acts of appreciation. They would rather their acts of volunteering go un-noticed. Whether it is fear that their motives are seen as selfish, attention-seeking, or self-motivating, or that being seen 'doing' somehow diminishes the quality of the 'goodness' in the act. The struggle for these AVs is contentious, even if only in their own mind. The next five sub-categories under 'Struggle with Affirmation from Others' provide an explanation for some unusual [and sometimes negative] inferences related to Affirmation and Appreciation.

Stolen 'goodness' – Some AVs, like Christy, fear that others perceive their volunteering as a selfish act for attention and takes away the genuinity of feeling good about volunteering.

> "I have a keen awareness, along with a comment someone made that 'you're doing that because it makes you look good'. I never got away from that as a question. If you are self-aware and you are aware of who you are and you're reflecting on who you are, can you do what my mother did and just do these things and nobody knows about them? Or if you say "I'm off to my volunteer meeting" are you saying that so people know where you are, or are you saying that to make them aware that "he is going off to do a good deed, isn't he great?" I have gone one way and the other over the years, looking at it as philosophical questions and I have never come up with a satisfactory answer. Does the fact that you know what you are doing may be seen by someone else as good take away the goodness? And I have no answer to it." – (Christy, age 66)

Altruistic or 'self'-gratification – Some AVs simply see volunteer activity as nothing more than providing themselves with a positive outlet.

> "I knew that afternoon I needed to do something just for me, without any altruistic motives, but I needed to know that I was needed to. Isn't that a fundamental impetus for most volunteers?" – (Caitrióna, age 45)

Personal beliefs vs. Professional beliefs – AVs, like Miriam, sometimes what is required of us in a professional or formal volunteer role does not always connect positively with what we believe is right or proper personally in a volunteer role.

> "If you are volunteering you can't expect to get anything out of it. That's the thing I don't like about volunteering, you know when you know "I've done all of this work, and I'm owed something" and you're like 'well, no', because you are getting something from it, which is that feeling of being able to give something outside of yourself. I believe, personally… In my professional role managing volunteers, I have always made sure to give some kind of token. Em, just because, at the end of the day these people are still giving their time. They are getting something from it but, it is just a way of 1. Acknowledging people's time, but 2. You hope they're going to come back. So, we have offered to take people out, and even when times were good, we gave vouchers at one stage and then that totally went when the cuts came." – (Miriam, age 33)

Some, or none... that is the question – Again, this notion of whether positive reinforcement, accolades or acknowledgement can be a very fuzzy conflicting stance for an AV, like Francine.

> *"Sometimes I have had comments from friends and fellow activists that say something nice or some solidarity. Beyond that there is absolutely nothing. Not that you want anything, but a little would be nice. And the courage to acknowledge advocating for people. For the cause, you would like to see it acknowledged, not for yourself but to get the message out, you know? Sometimes I think those rewards are useful for that."* – (Francine, age 55)

Genuine affirmation vs. contrived affirmation – Some AVs, like Mallory, struggle with that balance between wanting or needing genuine affirmation for their good works, and just being satisfied with a simple acknowledgement [which is somewhat contrary to Christy's lament about wishing volunteer activity to go quiet and un-noticed by others].

> *"For the school volunteering that I did, they had a formal ceremony thing. I got a plaque. I feel like that was a bit contrived.... There had been a change in personnel and I had said that the previous volunteer manager couldn't thank you enough and you always felt like you were part of the organization because they would invite you to things like launch events and things like that. So, you did feel like you were part of something. I preferred that kind of informal stuff... I think what irritated me about the formal ceremony thing is that they did this hoo-ha with refreshments and wooden plaques and then at the end of the night, they were like "oh please fill out the forms to volunteer again next year" and I was like, "that is not what you do... Oh, thank you and can we have something else?" Just say thank you!"* - (Mallory, age 43)

Expectation for Affirmation Should Only be for Yourself

The following AVs firmly believe that motivation for acts of volunteer service should only be for your own personal gratification and not for any other reason. To these volunteers, their acts of service are done with no expectation of affirmation except only what they choose to give to their 'self'.

> *"I don't do volunteering to get recognition. Rather I do it for myself. I think it is funny, because in a work scenario you are expecting to hear "job well done" whereas when you are volunteering, you do it for the reason that you've chosen, you know?"* – (Raileen, age 43)

> *"That would have been one of the reasons that I have now donated some time with the homeless community. I suppose the appreciation of what I have as well. Health, a good education, comfortable life. I am very lucky in that way and it would just be a way of acknowledging that"* – (Natalie, age 57)

"I have had a lot of very appreciative people from the heart thank me. When I stepped down as chair I got a bunch of flowers and a gift, in terms of an award. The one that genuinely meant the most to me was a particular person who was very low and after about 2 hours with them, I helped them to see the light at the end of the tunnel. So, recognition in that way, yea." – (Ellori, age 40)

SUMMARY

RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity? The motivations presented in this section addressed research question two. The gathering of the necessary motivational 'supplies' comprised of influence and impact, satisfaction and well-being, making connections, and affirmation and appreciation, [which encompass volunteer motivation and awareness of identity] have been identified and assembled. The next step in constructing the Volunteer Quilt is to make sure that we have the skills, qualifications and understanding to undertake the quilting project in a meaningful and sustainable way without frustrations due to lack of expertise or knowledge, wherein the project of volunteering could ultimately be abandoned altogether. The third research question, set out in the next section, tackles the notion of genuineity and longevity for learning.

7.6 LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER LONGEVITY

The third research question asks about the impact and influence of formal and informal learning through volunteering and sustainability of the AV role.

RQ3 Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?

According to AVs, the ways in which we respond to learning experiences, in a way that brings personal worth and satisfaction in response to the impressions from those experiences can leave a lasting impact on us and establish roots in our belief, attitudes, and values. Formal learning, informal learning, leadership, and 'other' Skills & Qualifications gleaned through our lived experiences are deeply rooted in our learning and once established, can be virtually impervious to change.

FORMAL LEARNING

Memories and experiences of formal or structured learning can impact the quality of one's volunteer experience through theoretical understandings of the 'why' meanings behind the 'what' activities, i.e.: 'why' volunteers do 'what' they do as AVs. There is also the expectation that formal, structured, institutional learning provides useful attainment of skills and life-enhancing qualifications necessary to perform roles and duties that are beneficial to ourselves, our professions, and our communities as highly functioning, knowledgeable, engaged contributors to society. AVs, when asked if they believe their formal learning experiences informed their volunteering or their roles as volunteers, almost everyone valued their formal education and felt that their formal education enhanced their desire to volunteer within their communities.

> *"I think that people often think that volunteering is that simple thing where you 'go and do', but actually there is a lot of structure in volunteering. Some of the skills that I learned in college I've used within the volunteer role that I do. So, I think they kind of go hand in hand and side by side… I can take my education and knowledge and apply it towards my volunteering. I suppose when you volunteer, you sometimes hear "well, we just do it this way" or "we have done it this way for the last 30 years" instead of saying "let's look out there and see what research has come"* – (Raileen, age 43)

> *"Because I got the privilege of [formal] education, that itself influenced my desire to give back to society. I think that my undergraduate and post graduate work about inclusion and diversity… and I think being educated has opened my*

eyes to possibilities that there are different ways of thinking." – (Michelle, age 60)

"Well, I definitely know that my education has made me a better communicator and professional. There was a lot of negotiation stuff that I did and understanding other people's perspectives. In volunteering, it is another job you just aren't getting paid for it. I don't think I would have recognized right away the impact that my education had. One thing for sure is that my education has given me a perspective as how people value things in different ways and support and appreciation." – (Valerie, age 37)

There are a few exceptions to the notion of 'all-positive' feelings about the influence and impact of formal education on volunteer experiences. Some AVs ardently believe that experiential forms of life-learning have more influence to volunteer impact and longevity and serves as an introduction to the value of informal learning through volunteering discussed in the following section.

"I find that our education system teaches how to manage volunteer groups, but not how to volunteer. My experience is that the graduates who volunteer have almost always been volunteers before college, or come from families who have volunteers within them. Might only be personal experience, or country culture." – (Colm, age 68)

"I don't think [formal education] has played much of a role in any sense. I can't remember having any formal education where it encouraged me to actively seek out volunteering. In reality, it would be the other way around. I could say a lot more about the effect that my volunteering has had on my education." – (Dennis, age 30)

"I think it has played absolutely no role. I do. I think some of the training that I have done… I actually learned more some of those days than I learned in my whole of education – life skills. You know how people act, peoples' experiences and how to support that. I kind of feel what I have learned has been outside of the education system in way, and yet I really value education. I don't know that it has played any direct role." – (Francine, age 55)

INFORMAL LEARNING

Through observation of the tenets of experiential or informal learning, the understanding is that informal learning is everything that happens outside the 'formal' classroom (Bennett, 2012; Dib, 1988; Fear et al., 2002). It is less structured and more spontaneous than formal training and come from learning by doing, observing and intimately 'experiencing' situations, scenarios and conditions that we might not normally be exposed to. The AVs in this study confirm that informal learning has a

significant impact on their continued need to volunteer and they value the new knowledge and awareness generated by their experiences.

> *"I suppose it was education for me. I had no idea how the other half lived. I came from a farm in the country where everyone worked. You had to in those days and we were never short for anything. We had plenty to eat, plenty of fuel, we had lots of relations who helped us uh, it was a very different world entirely."* – (Eoin, age 90)

> *"For me, I would say the education of life, really would have played more of a role. My life experiences have created a more of social awareness for me, rather than my education ever did."* – (Miceál, age 47)

> *"The thing about rural community is that there is a very great mix of ages and everything that you did, there is an older person, a younger person almost everywhere. Everything you did you had a mix of knowledge through conversation. So, you had that kind of [informal] learning going on, and passing on of knowledge within the rural community. Which we got the benefit of."* – (Colm, age 68)

LEADERSHIP

The theme of Leadership emerged as a commonality among AVs and frankly came as a surprise to me. At the onset of this inductive study, I had not considered Leadership to be a typical identity or learning aspect of volunteering. These unexpected yet distinct leader themes began to emerge and it became apparent to me that the aspect of volunteer leadership as a personal and social identity and leadership learning theories were important to consider for volunteer learning as the themes emerged and fanned out among the 24 AVs. Therefore, research literature involving volunteer identity, leadership and learning had to be examined and included in this analysis chapter.

Leadership can be many different things to many different people, and there are a multitude of leadership styles, models and derivatives. Leader models or 'influencers' in volunteering are generally leaders that are proactive, problem solving, visionaries who desire better outcomes for themselves, others they are charged with leading, and causes that they believe in (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). Leaders can possess a host of skills, qualifications and abilities that promote the overall vision of a group or organization (Herman & Chiu, 2014). While speaking with the AVs, it was clear that they do not actively recognize leadership qualities within themselves. Leadership qualities, therefore, were categorized into four distinct leadership styles, based loosely on the common leadership models: Servant Leaders (Chen, Zhu, & Zhou, 2015;

Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Greenleaf, 2008), Laissez-faire Leaders (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010; Flynn, 2019; Sharma & Singh, 2013), Transformational Leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Herman & Chiu, 2014; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012), and Charismatic Leaders (Conger, 2015; Sacavém, Martinez, da Cunha, Abreu, & Johnson, 2017; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

While there are numerous studies on both educational leadership (Bush, 2007), and volunteer leadership practice (Fuller & Friedel, 2017), scant research on volunteer leader learning has been carried out. Reference in this section is made to educational leadership (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014; Bush, 2007) as 'leadership learning' because it seems to be most representative of volunteer leadership. Although, a search of 'leadership learning' and 'volunteer leadership learning' for related literature produced minimal results, there are a few comparatives that are discussed within this section. Simon Sinek (2014), author of *Leaders Eat Last…,* shares many insights on leadership, leader development and learning. Sinek (2014)explains that leadership is a skill, a learnable, practicable skill, and that the best leaders don't consider themselves experts but students of leadership education. Great leaders consider themselves the caregiver of the people, not because they are in charge but because they are willing to work alongside the people and are not afraid to explore the unknown (Sinek, 2014). This was an interesting point, in striking similarity to that of Fuller (2017), who conveyed that volunteers who donate their time and energy in the interest of helping others gain knowledge, skills and insights that contribute to their personal growth and development, while expanding the possibilities for caring and collaboration throughout whole communities.

Bowers (2013) considered transformational leadership as a lens for leadership models on philanthropic donors. She was interested in the relational aspect of volunteer leadership focusing on acknowledging differences between leaders and followers - understanding the differences, adapting others to the leader's unique perspectives, and adapting the leader's perspectives to those of followers. Bowers used Posner's (2015) framework for practice of exemplary leadership learning and practice for volunteers that includes: 1. Model the Way 2. Inspire a Shared Vision 3. Challenge the Process 4. Enable Others to Act and 5. Encourage the Heart. She determined that this leadership model was effective in a volunteer setting since it meets the needs and motivations of followers, whether they are other volunteers, or in the case of her research, philanthropic donors (Bowers & Hamby, 2013).

Fuller's (2017) research on developing volunteer leaders echoed Bower's analysis of volunteer leadership behavior and Posner's work on leadership practices of volunteer leaders as well. Fuller found that volunteers learn in at least four domains; instrumental skills pertinent to the volunteer setting, skills in working with other people, awareness of volunteers' role in society (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008) and knowledge of the self-gained from personal reflection on the volunteer experience (Fisher & Cole, 1993). Learning positively affects a sense of oneself as a leader (Bowers & Hamby, 2013; Chen et al., 2015). Reflection, as discussed previously in this chapter, is powerful for linking learning to self-development and leadership enhancement in a volunteer setting (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). In the course of service, volunteers learn and develop, they create new relationships, and they influence others as their activities augment the potential for social change (Brennan, 2005; Duguid et al., 2007). As relates to transformative and experiential learning discussed previously in this chapter, service opportunities often expose volunteers to unfamiliar populations and conditions of life that may significantly change their self-perception and outlook on the world (Fuller & Friedel, 2017). The willingness to try new things, the commitment to service, and the self-awareness that comes from reflecting on one's service can be both precursors and outcomes of striving to make one's neighborhood or community a better place to live (Fuller & Friedel, 2017). These underlying explorations into volunteer leadership and learning may prove a useful lens in exploring the key questions about volunteer identity and learning within this research.

While Posner, Fuller, and Bower's models of volunteer leadership have merit, slotting volunteer leadership into to a 'transformational' leadership model alone, seems narrow. A brief review of literature on leadership styles that correspond with volunteer leader behavior in Bower's and Posner's research presents several additional leader styles that AV behavior represents and suggests a gap in diversity of leadership thought for volunteering. In addition to the transformational leader, exploring leader styles such as that of the laissez-fair leader (Flynn, 2019), charismatic leader (Shamir et al., 1993), and servant leader (Chen et al., 2015) styles, provides a more in-depth, well-rounded, foundation for volunteer leadership concerning individual identity in volunteer learning. While this list is not exhaustive, it does represent the most well-known, established leader styles representative of characteristics and behaviors like those indicative of AVs. While these tenets of leadership style have been well researched on their own, there is no known research wherein these principles have been applied to volunteer leadership [other than that of transformative leadership, which has been cited

previously]. Reviewing these formal business models of leadership, in addition to transformational leadership researched by Posner, Fuller and Bowers, may broaden options for volunteer leadership models based on personal and social identity and volunteer learning that is connected, and does not rely on one or the other.

If we think of AVs loosely in terms of these common educational and business leader models, we begin to see where idiosyncratic patterns between volunteer dispositions begin to occur. These distinguishing differences will be expanded upon in Chapter Eight, but as we continue to thread together pieces of the volunteer quilt, it is important to establish the novel leadership beliefs and attitudes that AVs hold.

Servant Leaders

Servant leaders covet genuine, authentic relationships that they can execute with a high level of trust in others and deeply invest in, and include a commitment to serving the needs of others and the surrounding community (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). While there has been substantial research completed with regard to mainstream styles of accepted leadership [mentioned above], there is very little research on that of servant leadership (Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017).

According to Greenleaf (1973), originator of the *Servant Leader* style, the idea that servant leadership is "a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader-first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature." (Greenleaf, 1973, p. 7). Stone, et al. (2004) argues that servant leaders are just as proactive, ambitious, and driven as any other leader type, they just have motivations that guide their leadership and decision making that are different than the others. In fact, servant leadership differs from other styles of leadership because their primary focus on 'others' first (Gregory Stone et al., 2004). Gandolfi (2018, p. 267) sums it up succinctly "most styles of leadership direct their focus first on a mission and second on empowering followers to achieve that mission. Servant leaders direct their focus first on the ability of 'others' to succeed and then on the success of the mission".

The largest group of AVs interviewed (9) carry leader qualities related to that of a Servant Leader (Chen et al., 2015; Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Gandolfi et al., 2017;

Greenleaf, 2008). Some AVs covet genuine, authentic relationships that they can execute with a high level of trust in others and deeply invest in. They value the opinions and contributions from others and focus relationships on the principles of reciprocal trust, teaching and developing self-sufficiency and leader qualities in others with a sense of humility and broad inclusivity.

> *"I always encourage my students to volunteer. I talk to them about the benefits that volunteering will bring them as people. I encourage them participate in anything that they are passionate about. Now whether they do or not, who knows… but I try to convey to them the benefit to themselves and the community."* – (Michelle, age 60)

> *"I hope that I have made an impact because I have worked directly with a lot of students and in my volunteering work I hope that students learn from me and they go on to pass tests and become citizens and enroll and get jobs, and makes a very direct impact in their lives."* – (Dennis, age 30)

> *"I am becoming more aware that many educated people do not know how to volunteer. It's actually… they think I'm good at it. It's not rocket science, it's just that they never learned it... You learn more about your own nature, like I said about being intuitive. You think what you're doing yourself is normal. After a while, you find out actually, that it's not normal. You have to learn how to get your ideas into their language. Because most people don't have the capacity to see what's not there. It just doesn't come naturally."* – (Colm, age 68)

Laissez-faire Leaders

Laissez-faire Leaders [also known as Passive Leaders] enjoy leading with a 'do no harm' approach (Aasland et al., 2010). Laissez-faire leaders provide very little direction to others and gives those they lead as much freedom as possible to determine goals, make decisions, and resolve problems on their own (Sharma & Singh, 2013). According to Aasland, et al (2010) laissez-fair style expresses more of an undesirable style of leadership that fosters abdicating responsibility and avoiding making decisions by the leader. But, in the space of volunteer leadership, could passive leadership be more beneficial for the leader and organization? Could it not be argued that in a volunteer role, the non-authoritarian, relaxed leader approach could work positively in situations or with diverse people groups wherein supporting them in ways that brings meaning and purpose for themselves and the organization would be most beneficial? Flynn (2019) reasons Laissez-faire leaders, in more positive terms by suggesting that they, by choice, exercise very little authority within their group organization. Rather, they rely on trusting their members or followers to make appropriate decisions and

seek to 'on-board' highly trained and reliable members into the group or organization (Flynn, 2019).

Six AVs interviewed strongly identified as a Laissez-faire Leader [Passive Leaders] (Aasland et al., 2010; Flynn, 2019; Sharma & Singh, 2013). Several AVs enjoy leading with a 'hands off', 'do no harm' approach. They are non-authoritarian, relaxed leaders who believe that people do not always need leaders directing them, rather supporting them in ways that bring them meaning and purpose for themselves and the organization. They do not particularly like being placed in positions of leadership and would rather assume a support role, but will take on leadership positions when asked to do so. They appreciate allowing others to fulfill duties and obligations in their own way, and success is non-confrontational and creates a sense of peace and happiness for everyone.

> *"So, I volunteer for a charity that supports families with kids living on the autistic spectrum. I, in terms of time… I chaired the charity for a year and that was purely voluntary. I can honestly tell you that being the chair when I didn't want to be chair was difficult, when the committee collapsed and everyone bar three walked away. But the group would no longer exist if I didn't volunteer as chair. It would have fallen apart… Now, I have pulled back from a lot of that, and now I volunteer with them an hour week. Someone else comes in and runs it but I support all of that."*- (Ellori, age 40)

> *"I don't think…now, I am no Mother Theresa but I think it is just about helping someone… I would say that there is nothing on the top of my head that I could say I hate doing because I would never think in terms of that language, you see. There might be aspects that I don't like but that just goes without saying. Like going through a bag of used clothes and there are creepy crawlies in it. I'd rather not do it. If I had to do it, I do it."* – (Martha, age 68)

> *"I helped them in various ways to become more efficient or to refine processes or give insights where they may not have known things (basically educated them) based on my own experiences, so I have given back my own learning. I just realized that I have a talent for seeing things for the different parts and how they all function together and how they might work better. But, what has helped is having a lot of people who gave me leeway and encouragement, but also let me go and if I wanted to do stuff "let her do stuff" and if I wasn't harming the organization."* – (Valerie, age 37)

Transformational Leaders

A closer look at transformational leadership is warranted, as previous research findings on volunteer leadership are underpinned by transformational leadership, as set forth by

Bowers, Posner, and Fuller's studies (Bowers & Hamby, 2013; Fuller & Friedel, 2017; Posner, 2015) on volunteer leader behavior and leadership practices.

Transformational leadership, in general, is a leadership style that inspires positive changes in followers. "Transformational leaders...are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization." (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 69). Transformational leaders are passionate and enthusiastic people who are interested in helping others (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and deeply involve themselves with others in processes that they are concerned with, and the goal of generating successful outcomes.

Numerous research studies have been conducted relating to transformational leadership in both paid and unpaid leadership capacities. Herman, et al's (2014) research looked at social identity of transformative leaders and job performance. They discerned that transformational leaders display certain kinds of behaviors that inspire followers to reach for higher levels of achievement in their own work which enables them to convert their personal interests in success for the collective success. They believe these behaviors in transformational leaders imply that this style of leadership is a process of helping others change the way they imagine themselves as leaders (Herman & Chiu, 2014).

Bowers (2013) research focused on the relational leader/follower aspect of transformational leadership and the differences between paid an unpaid volunteer leaders, based on Posner's (2015) model [which only looked at paid volunteer leadership behavior]. Bower's research determined that transformational leaders display certain kinds of behaviors that include raising followers to a higher level of achievement, enabling them to transcend their personal interests for collective welfare, focusing on their abilities to facilitate personal growth, and developing their intellectual ability to approach problems in new ways (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Furthermore, Bowers (2013) cited two additional studies, Catano, Pond and Kelloway (2001) and Banducci (2005), that provide support for the study of the construct of volunteer leadership. Catano, et al's (2001) research compared organized volunteer leaders with that of trade union leaders and suggested that the organized volunteer leaders modeled that of transformational leadership, whereas the trade union

employees modeled that of transactional leaders. They further proposed that transformational leadership provides a useful lens for studying volunteer leadership because it "influences commitment and participation without the use of rewards or punishments" (Catano et al., 2001, p. 258). This research indicated that specific leader behavior could result in more effective volunteer leadership (Bowers & Hamby, 2013).

Leadership experiences and influences that AVs are exposed to throughout their lives leave impressions on them that often inspire their own style of leadership as adults. Transformational Leaders are visionaries who confidently identify themselves as leaders that want to be an integral part of the success of an organization, their team, and for their own gratification (Herman & Chiu, 2014; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012). This group of AVs share inspiration and aspiration for their style of leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gregory Stone et al., 2004), through volunteer activity.

> *"There was a teacher who I would have been very close to in the school, I suppose two or three teachers. But this particular teacher was interested in the whole development of leadership capacity in adolescence. Now I say this in retrospect because at the time I didn't know that this was going on. See he always had a group of people and people would volunteer to help with traditional school stuff like school liturgies or school play or something like that and out of that a group of people were brought together and he would say "well why don't you try something like this and why don't you try that." – (Xavier, age 49)*

> *"I was volunteering setting up a youth club in my own local area. It ran concurrently with my college time. A lot of my work would have been setting up the youth club. I was 19 or 20 years and some youngsters in the area came to me and said that there wasn't one in the area. So, we canvased the area and talked to people and a group of us got together and started it. It worked very well for a good long time. I put a lot of time into that." – (Natalie, age 57)*

> *"These organizations can't afford to pay people to steward, so in a lot of cases, the small groups – the money that they take in, probably wipe out their funds if they had to pay people to do that... They can put these events on and take in all the money that they get to put toward the activity, services they are providing. My being there, allows them to put the event on in the first place." – (Miceál, age 47)*

Charismatic Leaders

Charismatic leadership is a style of leadership that encourages a particular behavior in others through strong, articulate, communication and dynamic persuasion (Shamir et al., 1993). Charismatic leaders are resilient motivators who desire to improve policy

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and procedure. Conger (2015) defines a Charismatic Leader as an authoritative and visionary leader that rallies people with enthusiasm and a clear vision for a particular mission or cause. This leader gives people leeway to innovate and take calculated risks, provided that they move in the direction of an understood vision (J. D. Barrett, Vessey, & Mumford, 2011). Would this not coincide with number three of Posner's LPI Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership – *Challenge the Process* (Posner, 2015)? Charismatic leaders have been seen as friendly and warm but also strong, dynamic, and powerful (Sacavém et al., 2017). Charismatic leaders are often seen as heroic or inspiring and desire to encourage leadership in others (Conger, 2015). They are tenacious, courageous, outspoken and steadfastly support causes that they believe in, and traits of leadership in volunteer activity show ownership and pride in traits of character or qualities of identity (Grönlund, 2011).

Charismatic Leaders are often seen as heroic or inspiring and desire to encourage leadership in others (Conger, 2015; Sacavém et al., 2017; Shamir et al., 1993). Five AVs strongly identify with qualities indicative of a Charismatic Leader. They are tenacious, courageous, outspoken and steadfastly support causes that they believe in. AVs share life experiences and activities that dispose them to positions of leadership with a natural demand of personal accountability in themselves and others. They seek truth and justice and will often sacrifice their own well-being to fight for marginalized and socially stigmatized.

> *"I do think that if someone is asking for someone to volunteer, they have a responsibility to them as well as to the people that they are working with. So, I suppose what I have learned is that when it is done well, so making sure that the induction of volunteers, that they got their child protection training, that they feel supported, that they can be supporting them, you know all that kind of stuff is really important. It needs to be done well for the person that working with as well as the volunteers."* – (Miriam, age 33)

> *"I would have joined and gone through various positions and various levels. During my time in school, I would have initially joined and find my feet and then I would have quickly moved into various kind of leadership roles and training others and moving on. I would have learned and benefited from other people in those organizations. I would have learned very particular skills and leadership. I would have learned from those. I would have mentors that I would have drawn from… The guy that I go to musical gigs with now was a cadet 10 years younger than me. I would have developed him into leadership roles and now here are going to music gigs together 4-5 times per year."* – (Stephen, age 53)

> *"You don't know what has happened to someone's life that morning so you don't know what happened in that person's life 10 years ago, you know*

sometimes. But if you can just respect people and make that little connection that makes their day that little bit easier, to me – that has held all through my work. If they get that understanding and that perspective that you would want back." – (Miriam, age 33)

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Tangible and intangible skills that are part of our everyday learning (formally and informally) can have enormous impact on the way that we conduct ourselves in our personal, social, educative, and professional lives (Lee, 2016; Moylan et al., 2016). AVs express their understandings of tangible and intangible skills that have been learned and how their professional experiences, volunteer engagement and formal education have tightly woven their skill-sets together.

> *"It has been central in terms of the professional capacity that it has given me. Again, thinking about volunteering in an educational context, I have the skills of a high level educational researcher, so I have the language, the experience, I hope I've got the capability to deal with relatively high level educational research and that is important in educational research associations. It has given me that in that level. Because I trained to be a teacher, which I think is an incredibly interpersonal training, I think it honed my natural skills in those areas."* – (Xavier, age 49)

> *"I think it certainly has given me particular skills. Public speaking skills and I say this certainly in the work place and dealing with peers of similar age. I have been doing this for 15 years getting up in front of others and speaking and it is a very particular skill. It has given particular training skills not only for myself but also how to train and how it can be applied to any kind of domain. And I got formal education and that, there are just elements of learning by seeing. I think that certainly changed me and were useful."* – (Stephen, age 53)

> *"My role as a befriender of people, and families/friends of people, who are terminally ill and near end of life requires special communication, listening and social skills. This learning has been very much developed experientially, but has been greatly assisted by wonderful classroom training workshops provided by wonderful qualified hospice staff. Volunteering in the hospice environment has helped me develop my communications skills."*- (Pádraig, age 57)

SUMMARY

The skills, qualifications, and understandings that these AVs have acquired through their lived experiences have established that **RQ3 volunteers feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to**

continue learning through those experiences. This learning provides the knowledge needed to provide meaningful and sustained volunteer engagement, as part of the 'Volunteer Quilt', that is tightly woven and knitted together. The fourth research question, set out in the next section, addresses the next step in the Volunteer Quilt, that of quilting the fabric of the AV through enduring understandings that provide meaningful impressions that remain through our lives.

7.7 LEARNING AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

The fourth and final research question seeks to determine if experiences through volunteering impact AVs with indelible awareness, values, and deep transformations that remain with us.

> **RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

Does the learning that occurs informally and experientially in our lives inform our understandings of our 'selves' and the society and environment in which we live and remain with us as part of the fabric of our volunteer selves? Each theme, Awareness, Values and Transformation expresses deep-rooted meaning and understandings that AVs have gained from volunteer experience and learning.

AWARENESS

AVs express feelings that learning is naturally designed to create new awareness or better inform ideas of awareness's that they may already have. AVs in this study share experiences of volunteering that identify with the notion of the importance of lifelong learning, and more specifically new awareness of the environment in which they live, culture and diversity of others within society and the disparity and suffering of others. These awareness's deeply affect AVs in ways that they had not expected and provide insights that dramatically influence their learning, understanding and implications on their identity.

Awareness of Lifelong Learning

> *"The Volunteering experience is bringing all of the lifelong learnings to the fore and challenges me to develop each and every one of them, which is one of the major benefits of volunteering for me."* – (Pádraig, age 57)

"You become aware of the wider world around you. It becomes this notion of personal agency and awareness of 'self' and how that impacts on your identity. These experiences created questions that I sought to answer as I pursued further study. Is your identity how you feel about you, or is your identity how you feel about how other people see you reflected in what they tell you so that you can see yourself as something other than in a mirror?" – (Christy, age 66)

"You're always learning, aren't you?" – (Carrie, age 66)

Awareness of Environment, Culture, Disparity and Others

Environment

AVs explained that volunteering creates awareness not only of the social, societal and sociocultural environment in which we live, but provides context and creates awareness of how others, who are different from us live. Volunteering sets our learning sights *outside* the environmental 'bubble' that we place ourselves into when we consistently surround ourselves *inside* with things that represent 'sameness'.

> *"I suppose it gives me an opportunity to meet different kinds of people in different situations that I mightn't meet through my family circumstances or my work circumstances"* – (Michelle, age 60)

> *"I realized that I was afraid of people with disabilities. I realized when I started that I was so nervous that I had actually never been around people with serious disability, and I was quite nervous of them and I had a preconceived notion about what it would be like. And, I think my fondest memory was realizing at the end of the week that everybody has potential. Everybody can achieve something that I have no right to feel sorry for people who aren't feeling sorry for themselves. And that people just pick themselves up and get on with things. And I think that was a real gift"* – (Ellori, age 40)

> *"It is a real eye opener. It is almost like you stop for a moment and let the world pass by, like a car or a bus, that kind of image. And then actually the cars and the busses are passing by and you notice that the person at the bus is probably an older person who hasn't spoken to someone for about two or three days and you are the first person that talks to them. It is stopping and looking at the world and noticing, and then it just gives you a bit of pride that maybe you have done something good today. You know you aren't looking for that pat on the back, you're not asking someone to say "that was brilliant"* – (Caitríona, age 45)

Culture

AVs believe that an integral part of learning through life experience is becoming culturally aware. It is a significant aspect of communication in social relationships and meaningful interaction with society. When we step back from our 'self' and contemplate our own cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions along with that of others around us, we gain a deeper understanding of those values, beliefs and perceptions that are enduring and transformative. These AVs have engaged in a greater awareness of 'others' because of their volunteer experiences.

> *"I think it has given me a broader outlook on people who are different from me. You know, especially around when I do my volunteering. Kind of makes me appreciate what I've got. I have a home. I am lucky. You see people coming in that are really having trouble. So, I appreciate what I have. I am happy to give something back. That's the way I see it."* – (Carrie, age 66)

> *"The World Pride Day. I was helping with the giant rainbow flag, as long as the street. Afterward, it must be rolled up and there was this guy who, an older gentleman in maybe his 50s at the time. He walked by a group of us and said "I want to thank you for this, it means a lot to me" so for him to, you know I don't know what he had gone through in his life but he must of… well, I don't know the law, but here in Ireland it has been decriminalized for 25 years. I don't know when that happened in the UK, but. So, I don't know what he experienced in his life, but it obviously meant a huge thing to him for this to be on and to have attended."* – (Miceál, age 47)

> *"It has made me see more awareness of how others live. I hope to be a little more sympathetic and open-minded you know. More empathetic. It has been positive impact, yea."* – (Natalie, age 57)

Disparity of Others

A disparity is understood as a 'great difference' and what represents a disparity can mean many different things to different people (Breen, Hannan, Rottman, & Whelan, 2016). Disparities most often refer to those related to racial or ethnic, economic, cultural, educational, health, or geographical issues (Dorling, 2015). While AVs have vastly different experiences with global and societal disparities, the impact and awareness of the disparity of others on their identity and learning is quite similar. It creates a lasting impression and change in belief, attitude, and values.

> *"They would have had a hard upbringing. They were on our estate, so they were our kids. So, we would encourage and support them. And one girl, the other kids would get after her to talk and sing and she would just freeze. You know, so I would stop them and make them get tolerance and just wait and you*

know even about feelings and body language and the learning you know. The young girl came out on the night and she had to sing the song "just a spoonful of sugar" and she just excelled herself. I didn't care about the rest of the show or anything else, only that she could do this. And she did a class job and it was great." – (Gillian, age 60)

"When I look at volunteering from where I do it, there is a huge social class, so you get a mix of children. Some are from a very low socio-economic group and you can see the impact that that something like volunteering has on them. Do you know what I mean? And then there is other children that will just float through." – (Raileen, age 43)

"Being able to be part of a structure that tries to help and to leave the judgement at the door is something that I have tried to do. That even when people can't help themselves, you still have an empathy and understanding as to why people's lives are just pretty crap and to just empathize and not judge." – (Miriam, age 33)

VALUES

AVs have determined through their own awareness's and learning processes that education and learning is important for them and for others. Further, they regard acts of service, giving to others, teaching, listening, and valuing others as worthy volunteer actions. Values inform and guide AV learning and participation.

"Some people play rugby, some people play golf, I do this. It doesn't make me any better or worse that any of them. It is whatever interested you." – (Colm, age 68)

"Whether it be 10 minutes or an hour and then whatever else comes with it. With volunteering to teach the kids, you don't just go on a Monday night and teach them, there could be competitions coming up and you have to put in extra hours. They might have tests, you have to go on duties with them to give them the skills that they need, so it isn't as simple… And giving something back to a community is what is important." - (Raileen, age 43)

"It helped to create an awareness of people less well off or simply how a helping hand or a listening ear can make a difference. Growing up as an only girl, (even though I had observed such practices within family life, but because they were not called charity or volunteering or given any specific name or explained) I did not get to share often and I was not aware either that I had special status in my small town so volunteering has taught me deeper values of love and kindness and basically 'how to share.'" – (Martha, age 68)

TRANSFORMATION

The values that we place on education and learning can be transformative (Bouchard, 2013; Mezirow, 2000; E. W. Taylor, 2009). The act of volunteering can be equally transformative (Adler & Goggin, 2005). It can be hard to tell if AVs have transformed others through volunteering or if they have been transformed by their acts of volunteering, yet change has occurred. AVs illustrated that lived experiences and learning through experiences that stimulate changed mindsets or alter set beliefs or viewpoints, mark transformation.

> *"In Drumcondra, we started visiting a very deprived area of the city on Talbot St. It was a revelation to me, the quality of the housing and the number of people in small little flats, oh very, very poor. I came [from the rural countryside] of people that would be relatively well-off, and there were no issues with hunger or whatever at that time, and seeing the tenement's in Dublin in 1940s-1950s would have been a transformative experience." –* (Eoin, age 90)

> *"I suppose enjoy making a difference. In my political activity, it was centered around a particular ethos that I felt I was aligned to. And people often join a political party with the idea to change the world and find themselves a member of a local branch where you're not changing the world. And most of my time on the political side was around that. There were one or two occasions where you actually look back and say "I did kind of change the world" –* (Stephen, age 53)

> *"Volunteering has changed me substantially. Maybe I was always going to be this sort of person anyway, it is very hard to know what makes you who you are. Um, but I think they did definitely give me a taste for leadership. They gave me a taste for service. But it did make me take on the role of leadership and I am very comfortable. It is has given me a sense of my own limitations and my own capacities. So, I know what I am good at in a volunteer context." –* (Xavier, age 49)

Sometimes, as with Francine, change does not always come in a pretty package of positivity. There can be negative transformations through volunteering and activism that negatively affect AV lives, but belief in the cause and feeling like volunteer activity makes an impact continues to be a driving force for volunteer awareness and learning.

> *"These experiences have changed me and in some respect, not always for the best. I think I am a harder person and even with my children I am harder. If they aren't feeling well, I tell them get up and keep going. So, that isn't always necessarily for the better. I don't know. I think it just becomes intrinsic in what you do in terms of who you are. What you do. But I think in terms of understanding other people's perspectives maybe, I have a better idea. I would*

hope that anyone in the community that presents for support would have their rights respected but right now there just isn't that assurance." – (Francine, age 55)

SUMMARY

Each research question in this chapter, *The Threads of Commonality* have been analyzed and developed through the thematic narrative content analysis representative of constructing a Volunteer Quilt. Step one and two dealt specifically with volunteer identity, motivation, and awareness. Step one: imagining and creating the pattern through question one on learning and awareness through volunteer identity. Step two: gathering the supplies needed to construct the quilt through question two relating to volunteer motivation and awareness of volunteer identity. Then, step three and four dealt specifically with volunteer learning, longevity, and enduring understandings. Step three: starting the quilt through formal and informal learning, skills and qualifications through question three. Finally, step four: quilting the fabric through learning and enduring understandings of awareness, values and transformation through research question four. Each square of fabric of the Volunteer Quilt, now woven together, can be hard to determine where each stitch began and ends. Chapter Eight will explain the final step in the Volunteer Quilt – pulling it all together into the Active Volunteer Dispositions.

7.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter, has presented *the threads of commonality* that weave identity and learning through volunteering tightly together and generated a proposed new typology for understanding Active Volunteers. I presented a detailed analysis of the shared beliefs, attitudes, values and about what it means to be an Active Volunteer and learning through volunteering, collected across narrative stories of learning amongst AVs. In Chapter Six, I introduce four distinct AVDs as a new proposed understanding of the AV and represent motives for volunteer participation associated with social identity through influences, impacts, and learned behaviors of the lived experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
"Awareness is the greatest agent for change" – Eckhart Tolle

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Six, I suggested a reflection on each of the four Vignettes, the stories of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona, and Rosie. In Chapter Seven, each of the four research questions were discussed, finding the common threads from all 24 AVs, stemming from a detailed, comprehensive thematic narrative analysis. This chapter now presents the four AVDs as the squares of the Volunteer Quilt meticulously pulled and stitched together. Each square patch an AV, knitted together through threads of commonality along with the others into a larger piece that boasts an intricate pattern of volunteer identity and learning through volunteering. The themes that emerged from the narrative analysis in Chapter Seven are now combined with the themes in this chapter and grounded within the educational and sociological literature presented in Chapter Two, Three and Four, further substantiating the four research questions as seen in Table 5.31.

1. **Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**
2. **Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**
3. **Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?**
4. **Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of**

self that is transformative and enduring?

1. **Learning** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity** • Acceptance and Belonging • Meaning and Purpose • Worth and Worthiness • Duty and Responsibility	2. **Motivation** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity** • Influence and Impact • Satisfaction and Well-Being • Making Connections • Affirmation and Appreciation
3. **Learning** and Volunteer **Longevity** • Formal Learning • Informal Learning • Leadership • Skills and Qualifications	4. **Learning** and Enduring **Understandings** • Awareness • Values • Transformations

Table 7.1 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS

8.2 PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

This study set volunteer learning within the sociocultural and constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. Sociocultural theory looks at the important contributions that society makes on an individual's learning and development. Sociocultural theory suggests that learning is largely a social process and emphasizes the interconnection between people and the culture in which they live (Bonk & Kim, 1998). This research focused on an exploration of the lived-experience of volunteering over the life course and the interpretation of the relationship between informal learning (Aspin & Chapman, 2000) and identity formation influenced by socially defined influences and experiences of family, environment, customs and lifestyle (Bonk & Kim, 1998). I examined from a sociological and pedagogical perspective, the lives of the active community volunteer in Ireland who attended or completed post-secondary education, and who are currently volunteering for an organization, group, or individual within their community. Through the lived experience, I looked at volunteer identity from the view point of the AV and their understanding of what learning through volunteering means, "if" or "how" those understandings change over time; and to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of learning that remains.

The literature review exemplified the depth of research in this area. This study explored the ways in which identity and education, both formal and informal, and volunteer influence and participation, played a part the AV's life, how AVs define themselves in their role as volunteers and if they recognize their volunteer participation as a form of

learning. In Chapter Five section 5.6, I introduced the method for analysis and framing of the AVDs and explained how the four AVDs were recognized. Chapter Six acknowledged the four AVDs through the narrative stories of Christy, Pádraig, Caitríona and Rosie, as vignettes. Chapter Seven presented an interpretation of AV learning experiences through in-depth narratives and reflections around learning and volunteering. This chapter now discusses the AVDs and how they were constructed through the commonalities of all the AVs presented in Chapter Seven, further establishing the commonalities between all the AVs and sorting them among the idiosyncratic dispositions.

There are four distinct AVDs that emerged from the second level analysis. This second level of analysis, the *Thematic Analysis,* took the HOW and WHY in the research questions as well as the themes from the first level analysis, then asked WHAT? Some of the themes from this first level of analysis, were held stronger by AVs, and fall into distinct dispositions that make up the AVDs. *The Guide, The Idealist, The Champion, and the Executive*. Within the culture [commonality] of AVs, I propose that there is a sub-culture of AVDs. Additionally, as was discussed in the latter part of Chapter Seven, one of the commonalities gleaned from the volunteer interviews with the 24 AVs, was a non-typical socially generated theme of Leadership that I had not previously considered. These novel leader tendencies for the AVs are clearly delineated among the four dispositions and are discussed further in the next section.

8.3 IDENTIFYING THE ACTIVE VOLUNTEER DISPOSITION

In the next four sections, I discuss the themes that emerged, and place the discussion within the educational and sociological literature set out in Chapter Two, Three and Four. The proposed AVD shows where the analysis fits in with the established literature, and places this study within the existing knowledge as well as evidence where the findings may not fit so nicely into the established theories in literature. The illustration in Fig. 8.01 [previously presented in section 5.6 of Chapter Five] represents the proposed AVDs. The process of analyzing the commonalities of AVs in Chapter Five and the differences of each AVD [*The Guide, The Idealist, The Champion* and *The Executive*] through the second level analysis are detailed individually in the next four sections of this chapter. AVDs share life experiences and activities that dispose them to positions of leadership with a natural demand of personal accountability in themselves and others.
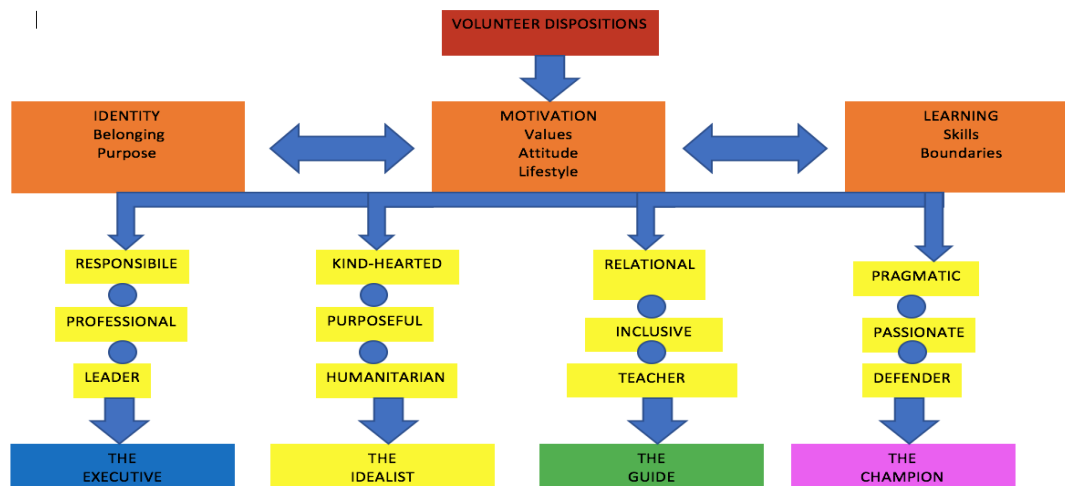
FIG. 8.01 ACTIVE VOLUNTEER DISPOSITIONS

It is here that I would like to explain the importance of referring to each AVD, as a 'disposition' rather than a 'type, category, personality, identity', or other such quantifying term. Those terms often have a tendency toward psychological terms, characteristics, and categorizations that suggest immobility. Wherein, the term 'disposition' is more socially influenced and sociologically based as an 'inclination or tendency' (Oxford, 2011). There is a feeling of appreciation for the grace and fluidity in the term 'disposition' that suggests the ability to evolve and transform (if so inclined), rather than the harsh, restrictive terms mentioned above that may suggest rigidity and a sense that one cannot 'change one's stripes' if one chooses. The AVDs should be understood as learning dispositions or natural tendencies. There is no strict determinism through one's disposition (Nash, 2003) and a space of choice and possibilities can always be perceived. This allows the dispositions to evolve naturally as identities occasionally evolve throughout the life span.

The AVDs, therefore, are aptly named that because it demonstrates the idea of fluidity and capacity to evolve (Biesta et al., 2008). The AVD meets the AV right where they are, at that moment in time, throughout their life. I refer to the term 'disposition' as such because typing, categorizing, or identifying [common in psychology], can often make a person feel locked into a description they may not fully identify with (Donileen, 2007). Dispositions are fluid and flexible to accommodate the various personal and social transformations that we encounter throughout our lives (Nash, 1999) – impacted by influences in our environment and lived experiences (Ulrich Mayer, 2004). As life journeys change, sometimes our focus changes. You don't 'just' get a divorce, become an 'empty-nester', lose spouse or a job. Emotional upheavals touch every part of our

lives and sometimes change how we act and react, who we are and how we interact with others (Nesbit, 2012).

The argument for the introduction of the four AVDs will be made in the next sections based on the reflection of the vignettes in Chapter Six and the data analysis in Chapter Seven. Each disposition is useful for understanding the motivations, decisions, and actions of AVs. Each AV most strongly identifies with one of the four themes under each research question. While they identify with a sub-theme in all four themes in Fig. 8.01, above, the coding process introduced in Fig. 5.16, 5.17 in section 5.6 of Chapter Five as well as the individual coding in Appendix H rate each AVD in descending order from the strongest disposition. Perhaps as you read the following summary of each disposition, you might reflect on the notes you took while reading Chapter Six - *The Vignettes*, to ascertain if you also made any of the realizations discussed here.

FIRST PROPOSED AVD - THE GUIDE

The first proposed AVD*, The Guide,* represents the biggest group of AV participants. There were 9 AVs who identify as *The Guide*. The first vignette in Chapter Six, Christy's Story, is the story of *The Guide*. Christy's disposition as *The Guide* is echoed in the narratives of Michelle, Dennis, Mallory, Gillian, Colm, Jennifer, Raileen, and Eoin. Details in the coding spreadsheet for *The Guide* are available in Appendix H. Themes relevant to 'Authentic Relationships' came up 60 times during in-depth interviews with *The Guides* and can therefore be considered the leading disposition of this AVD. Themes relating to 'Teaching and Sharing Knowledge' came up 48 times. Awareness of 'others' 29 times, 'hands on' 25 times, and the frequency decreases from there.

The Guide most strongly relates with the theme MAKING CONNECTIONS from Motivation and Volunteer Awareness of Volunteer Identity, as seen in Research Question Two. **RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?**

1. *The Guide's* first and *strongest* disposition is "authentic relationships" which is a sub-theme under MAKING CONNECTIONS – Question 2 in Fig. 8.02.
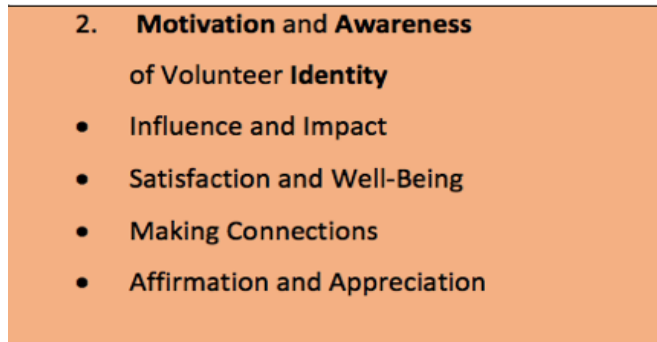
Fig. 8.02 MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS – MAKING CONNECTIONS

"I think relationships in everything is important. Even when I am working with people that I don't know, I will try and make a connection with each of them because I think that is how I teach best. Like when I go to speak in front of 200 people, I have a hard time with that. You know, I can't have an intimate relationship with that number of people in three hours. Everything about learning is around relationship." – (Christy, age 66)

2. *The Guide's* second strongest disposition is that of "learning and education" which is a sub-theme of VALUES under Question 4 in Fig. 8.03.
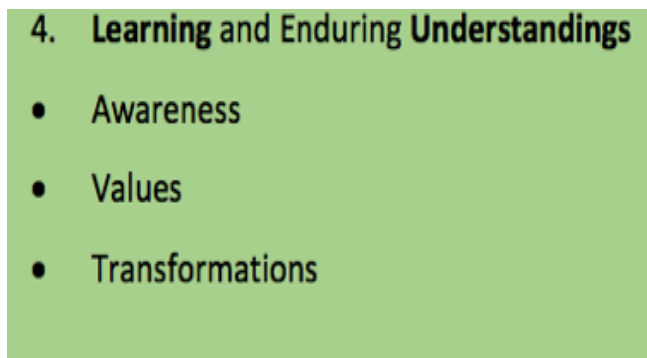
Fig. 8.03 LEARNING AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDING - VALUES

"I always encourage my students to volunteer. I talk to them about the benefits that volunteering will bring them as people. I encourage them participate in anything that they are passionate about. Now whether they do or not, who knows… but I try to convey to them the benefit to themselves and the community." – (Michelle, age 60)

3. *The Guide's* third disposition is that of "acceptance and belonging" as a sub-theme under Question 1 in Fig. 8.04.

1. **Learning** and **Awareness**
   of Volunteer **Identity**
- Acceptance and Belonging
- Meaning and Purpose
- Worth and Worthiness
- Duty and Responsibility

FIG. 8.04 LEARNING AND AWARENESS – ACCEPTANCE AND BELONGING

> *"We were doing a variety show and a family came down and they wanted to be part of it, but the family would have seemed to been in trouble. They would have had a hard upbringing. They were on our estate, so they were our kids. So, we would encourage and support them. One girl, the other kids would get after her to talk and sing and she would just freeze. So, I would stop them and make them get tolerance and just wait and you know even about feelings and body language and the learning. The young girl came out on the night and she had to sing the song "just a spoonful of sugar" and she just excelled herself. I didn't care about the rest of the show or anything else, only that she could do this. And she did a class job and it was great…" – (Gillian, age 60)*

4. *The Guide's* final disposition is that of "Formal and Informal learning" as main themes under Question 3 in Fig. 8.05.

3. **Learning** and Volunteer **Longevity**
- Formal Learning
- Informal Learning
- Leadership
- Skills and Qualifications

Fig. 8.05 LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER LONGEVITY – FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

> *"I suppose, it is interesting that one of the youth that I worked with since she was 11, she has now just finished her leaving cert and she came up to me and said "you know you inspired me, I want to go on to become a nurse" and you know you don't hear that very often and it is quite humbling that you can influence people in those ways. You don't realize actually influence people by what you do or don't do, you know what I mean?" – (Raileen, age 43)*

Summary of the First AVD – *THE GUIDE*

As evidenced in the first and second level of analysis in this study and along with established literature, the first proposed active volunteer disposition is *The Guide*. The construct of *The Guide* disposition suggests that *The Guide* is a hands-on, volunteer who values deep and authentic relationships and likes to work directly with those they believe need them most. *The Guide* disposition will likely relate to people on their own level and realize deep, personal satisfaction from helping others (Binder, 2015; Cattan et al., 2011; Yamashita, López, Stevens, et al., 2017). *The Guide* is someone who invests their time in others because they are genuinely and warmly interested in their well-being (Bauer et al., 2008; K. M. Brown et al., 2012; Cattan et al., 2011). They may be generally trusting, sensitive, loyal and honest. They are service-oriented with an innate drive to help and are likely to put the needs of others above their own. Connection with others is highly valued (K. M. Brown et al., 2012). T*he Guide* disposition will likely seek relationships, insight and inclusiveness with and for others. They highly value the feelings of others, are intuitive, and trust their instincts. They are likely to be very creative, imaginative and unconventional thinkers. They value structure and have strong organizational skills (McKenzie & Wurzburg, 1997; Millican, 2014). *The Guide* highly values education and access to education for all (Chittenden, 2015; Friesen & Anderson, 2004; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). They are representative of the characteristics of a 'Servant Leader'. Although, they do not see themselves as leaders (because they do not like to control people), but rather mentors or "guides" who believe that knowledge sharing, teaching, and learning should be done together as a team (Chen et al., 2015; Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Greenleaf, 2002). *The Guide* disposition generally dislikes conflict and will not follow those that they cannot morally or ethically support. *The Guide* AVD is likely to be found volunteering and serving in roles as educators, mentors, counselors, mediators, youth leaders, or any activity in which knowledge and experiences are exchanged warmly between individuals or community.

SECOND PROPOSED AVD - THE IDEALIST

There were six AVs who identify with the values associated with the second AVD that I termed *The Idealist*, as represented by the Story of Pádraig, in Chapter Six. The narratives of Carrie, Ellori, Martha, Valerie, Rand share many of the same predispositions as Pádraig. The themes coded for *The Idealist* can be found in Appendix H and lists themes relating to 'satisfaction' 73 times, themes along 'a desire to help others and 'do good for others' 47 times, and so on.

The proposed AVD, *The Idealist* most strongly relates with the theme MEANING AND PURPOSE from Learning and Awareness in Research Question One. **RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**

1. *The Idealist's* first and *strongest* disposition is "meaning and purpose" which is a sub-theme under Question 1 in Fig. 8.06.

1. **Learning** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity**
- Acceptance and Belonging
- Meaning and Purpose
- Worth and Worthiness
- Duty and Responsibility
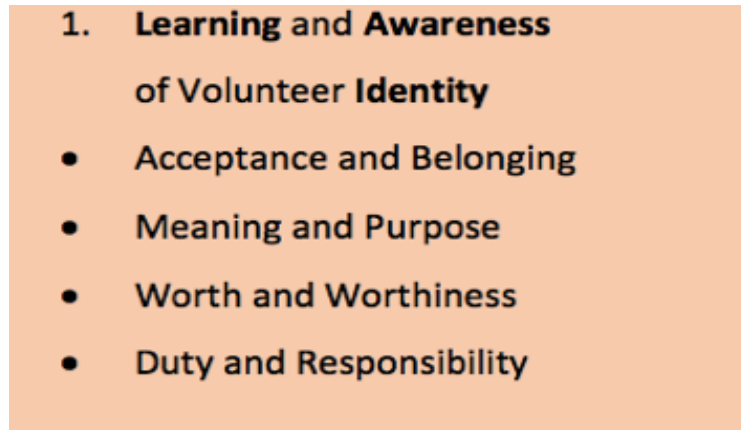
Fig. 8.06 LEARNING AND AWARENESS – MEANING AND PURPOSE

> *"I was a lucky person and we had a good life and I have had a lot of luck along the way and I've always wanted to give back, but I never expected that I was going to get so much back myself from volunteering. It's like a drug, you know, you want more… We are all the same, regardless of where we come from – facing similar challenges, with same common goals. There was the challenge of new work experiences and lots and lots of effort and stress; but the outpourings of joy and happiness experienced during the weekend of the games, plus the warm sense of personal achievement, generated one of my life highlights and created a sense that everything I had done to-date was worthwhile."* – (Pádraig, age 57)

2. *The Idealist's* second strongest disposition is "satisfaction and well-being" is a main theme under Question 2 in Fig. 8.07.

2. **Motivation** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity**
- Influence and Impact
- Satisfaction and Well-Being
- Making Connections
- Affirmation and Appreciation
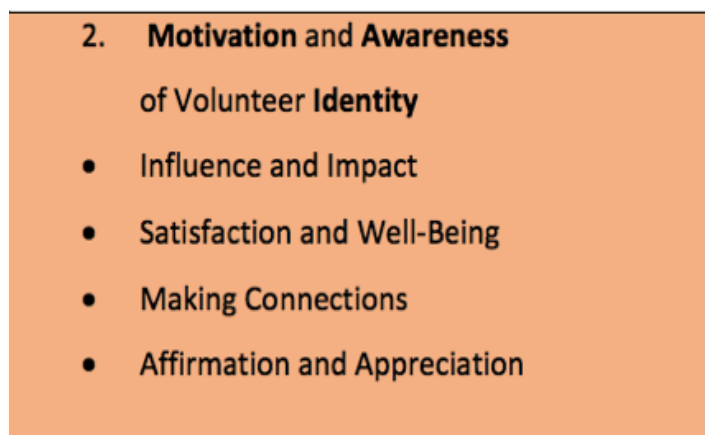
Fig. 8.07 MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS – SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING

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"I saw a call for a volunteering when the special Olympics world games to Ireland… That sort of lead on to other things being open to the idea of volunteering because I got so much out of it. I had a very positive experience. And it was more really the experience that did it more than anything else… it just really resonated with me" – (Ellori, age 40)

3. *The Idealist's* next disposition is "humanitarian" and is a sub-theme of VALUES under Question 4 in Fig. 8.08.

4. Learning and Enduring Understandings

- Awareness
- Values
- Transformations
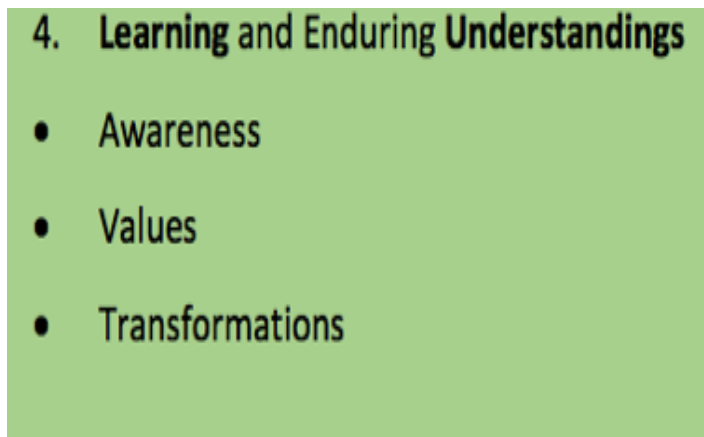
Fig. 8.08 LEARNING AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS – VALUES

"I suppose that my education is in engineering, and that engineering is about improving society and volunteering is about improving society – supply your housing and transport it is about things for society. You're not really about making money but providing things that make society better [like volunteering]." – (Rand, age 51)

4. *The Idealist's* final disposition is "learning" which covers two of the main themes under Question 3 in Fig. 8.09.

3. Learning and Volunteer Longevity

- Formal Learning
- Informal Learning
- Leadership
- Skills and Qualifications
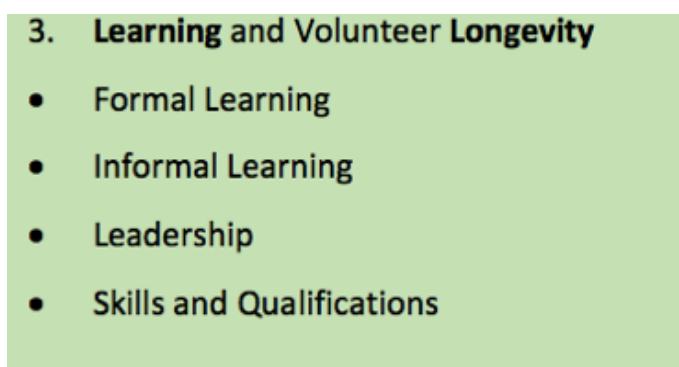
Fig. 8.09 LEARNING AND LONGEVITY – FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

"I'm a great believer in you help one person and that ripples along somewhere else… Education is empowering in whatever way it is gained. It plays an important tool in shaping destinies and understanding the meaning of reaching out to others." – (Martha, age 68)

Summary of the Second AVD – *THE IDEALIST*

As evidenced in the first and second level of analysis in this study and along with established literature, the second proposed active volunteer disposition is *The Idealist.* The construct of *The Idealist* is someone who likely volunteers because it provides them much happiness to give to others or make others happy (Binder, 2015; Cattan et al., 2011; Yamashita, López, Stevens, et al., 2017). The AVD, *The Idealist,* seems to be down to earth, practical, kindhearted and gentle. They generally possess (or desire) positive moral qualities, seek truth, harmony, and transformation for themselves and others (Bouchard, 2013; Lee, 2016). *The Idealist* lives by the universal "Golden Rule" of treating others as they wish to be treated. They likely believe that giving unselfishly is restorative and receive personal satisfaction from giving to others (Binder, 2015). *The Idealist* tends to be an excellent communicator who enjoys generating ideas and finding ingenious ways to solve problems. The research suggests that they are deep, complex thinkers, and are always seeking meaning and purpose in everything. *The Idealist* is generally loyal and devoted to people and causes and adopts the features of the Laissez-faire Leader style (Flynn, 2019; Sharma & Singh, 2013). They may be very good at giving practical advice and care, are dependable, and enjoy variety but work well with routine tasks and will work diligently to see something through completion. They are likely project-oriented, organized, cooperative, and make excellent team members. *The Idealist* desires to be seen and appreciated for who they are, rather than what they can accomplish.

While an 'Idealist' might seem almost unrealistic or 'too happy' with their positive attitude of 'meaning and purpose', consider the influences in the life that have impacted this attitude. The research indicates that an Idealist, similar to Pádraig, believes in the power of social interaction through volunteering for overall well-being, purpose, meaning and personal satisfaction (K. M. Brown et al., 2012; Reicher et al., 2005; van Hout et al., 2011). Pádraig was lost, alone and grieving the loss of the person he loved most in the world. He believes that volunteering to help others, as he was helped before, and the social interaction he has with others as part of volunteering saved him, improved his quality of life, and made him a better person. You will likely find *The Idealist* disposition volunteering and serving in roles as personal carers, community or social advocates, fundraising, and event planning.

THIRD PROPOSED AVD - THE CHAMPION

Five AVs had strong connections to what I have termed as the AVD, *The Champion.*
The construct of *The Champion* disposition identifies as a fighter of social justice. *The Champion* likely embodies the kind of person that fights for the rights of the underrepresented and marginalized. The Story of Rosie introduced you to this disposition in Chapter Six and Miriam, Maureen, Francine, and Stephen closely exemplify similar features. The codes for *The Champions* are listed in Appendix H, with 'honest and straightforward' mentioned 35 times, 'awareness of others' 33 times, and so on.

The Champion disposition most strongly relates with the theme VALUES from Learning and Enduring Understandings Research Question Four **RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?**

1. *The Champion's* first and *strongest* disposition is that they VALUE "belief in the cause" as a sub-theme under Question 4 in Fig. 8.10.
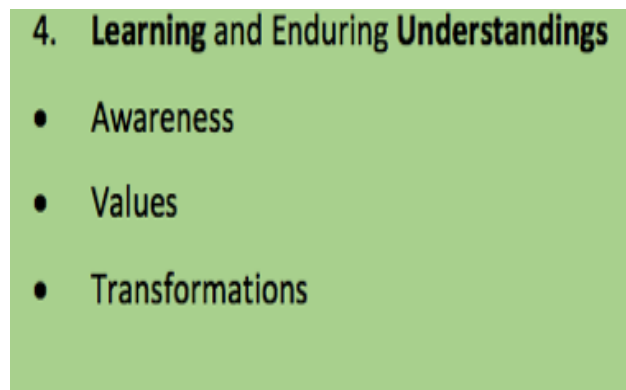
Fig. 8.10 LEARNING AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS – VALUES

> *"I think and it made me aware of causes of political systems around the world, of injustice and it really came at a time when I was developing as an adult and made me see things from other perspectives and what other people were going through... That, more than any other made me aware of my social responsibility."* – (Maureen, age 49)

2. *The Champion's* second strongest disposition is "influence and impact" as a main theme of Question 2 in Fig. 8.11.
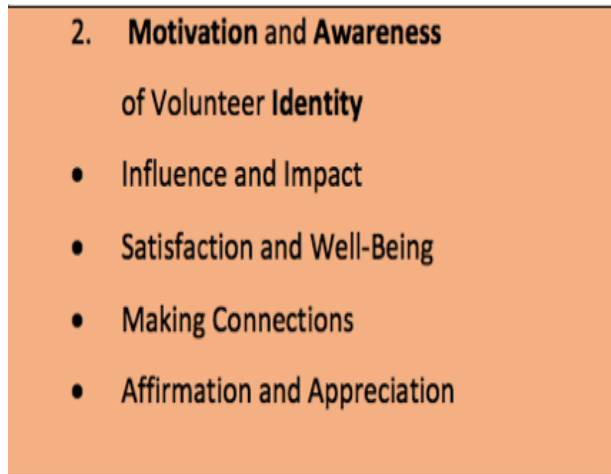
Fig. 8.11 MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS – INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

> *"So, yea there was quite a mixture of being able to get involved where I could. And what they say makes a lot of sense to me. And I would have been like very argumentative and it used to really upset me when people would judge, but that came from seeing, experiencing and being really interested in knowing "well why don't people do so well, why don't people live so well. No one really wants to live like that…" the need to explore that more and then arm myself with arguments toward people that wanted to blame the individual."* – (Miriam, age 33)

3. *The Champion's* third disposition is that they consider themselves quite pragmatic as learners as a sub-theme of formal/informal learning in Question 3 in Fig. 8.12.
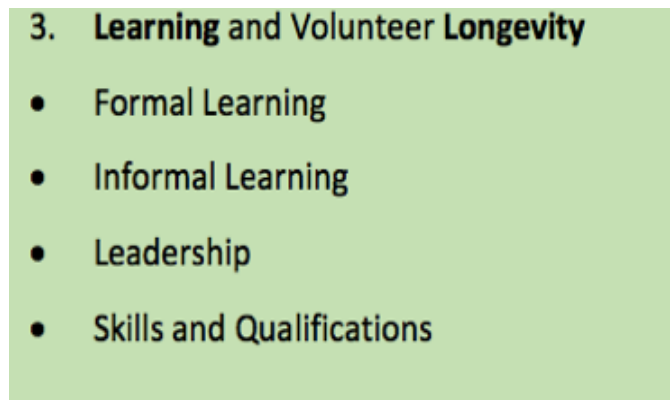
Fig. 8.12 LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER LONGEVITY – FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

> *"When I look back at that time growing up, everyone said we were still under British control and that it was an important issue. But I don't agree. The Republic was not under British control but Catholic church control. I saw that it destroyed so many lives. People in the Republic lived in fear of them and this fear spread. The time and energy the IRA spent at fighting a superpower like the British, and what did it really change? I have seen a lot of families go through things and when you see families grown up in the area, they are going*

to see things. If you grow up in a certain area, you're just going to see things, and you either fight against it or you become it. I have always tried not to become it." – (Rosie, age 31)

4. *The Champion's* final disposition is that of "worth and worthiness" as a main theme under Question 1 in Fig. 8.13.

1. **Learning** and **Awareness** of Volunteer **Identity**
- Acceptance and Belonging
- Meaning and Purpose
- Worth and Worthiness
- Duty and Responsibility

Fig. 8.13 LEARNING AND AWARENESS – WORTH AND WORTHINESS

"I think If you were weighing up the balance I think the balance has gone the other way. I think that what I have learned in volunteering has brought more to my life than what my life has brought volunteering."– (Stephen, age 53)

Summary of the Third AVD – *THE CHAMPION*

As evidenced in the first and second level of analysis in this study and along with established literature, the third proposed AVD is *The Champion*. The construct of *The Champion* disposition seeks truth and justice and will often sacrifice their own well-being to fight for marginalized and socially stigmatized (Binder, 2015; K. M. Brown et al., 2012; Dorling, 2015). This research intimates that they are charismatic leaders, who like to take charge of a situation and are results-oriented, with a goal of positive change in mind (Conger, 2015; Sacavém et al., 2017; Shamir et al., 1993). *The Champions* seem to have a clear set of standards and beliefs that they live by and are as equally action-oriented. This research strongly suggests that *The Champion*, while generally introverted, are usually quite self-confident and outspoken when supporting something they believe in. They are highly practical, realistic and tend to live in the present rather than the future. *The Champion* disposition values autonomy and has an excellent ability to apply logic and reason to problem solving. They seek truth and justice, and have a keen awareness of cultural and societal disparity and intuitively understand people and situations (Chittenden, 2015; Holdsworth, 2010; van Hout et al., 2011). *The Champion* indicates that they can be intense and tightly-wound personalities, especially when they believe that someone or something is being

misrepresented or mistreated. They are straightforward, honest and not afraid to address situations that may be uncomfortable for others. *The Champion* tends to be more influenced by personal experience, environment, or issues than the other Dispositions (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). For example: Francine, who was institutionalized for mental health disorder, now fights for the rights of mother's who have been victims of injustice because she went through, she witnessed it by other women in hospital and did not want others to go through the same. Rosie, was a single mom growing up on the northern border of Ireland during the struggles. She says that she believes she did not become a heroin addict like her friends, because she was a teenage mom and had responsibilities to her child that took her away from all of that.

The Champions are dependable and feel duty-bound to do what must be done for the good of others even if that means putting themselves at risk. Generally, *The Champion* can be found volunteering for causes they feel strongly about. Most likely one that fights for social change within a society such as political and social activists, people or animal welfare, social awareness and advocacy.

FOURTH PROPOSED AVD - THE EXECUTIVE

The construct of the fourth AVD *The Executive*, is represented by the smallest group of AVs interviewed. This is likely because *The Executive* disposition seems to keep quite active, and the time frame for this study as well as the ways in which the call for participation was presented may have limited interviews with this disposition. The Story of Caitríona reflects *The Executive* disposition and three additional AVs, Miceál, Natalie and Xavier, agree. The coding for *The Executive* can be found in Appendix H. Themes relating to 'responsibility' were mentioned 34 times. Leader and leadership 22 times, Value – knowledge and learning 21 times.

The Executive most strongly relates with the theme VALUE from Learning and Enduring Understandings Research Question One **RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?**

1. *The Executive's* first and *strongest* disposition is DUTY and RESPONSIBILITY as a main theme of Learning and Volunteer Longevity under Question 1 in Fig. 8.14.

1. **Learning** and **Awareness**
   of Volunteer **Identity**
- Acceptance and Belonging
- Meaning and Purpose
- Worth and Worthiness
- Duty and Responsibility

Fig. 8.14 LEARNING AND AWARENESS – DUTY AND REPONSIBILITY

> *"I do think that those experiences instilled a responsibility in me. You know that you can't walk away from those situations, and you can't walk away because you are going to be letting somebody down… I think that is always the same way, even on a rainy October day, and you are curled up in front of the fire and the last place you want to be going is to a meeting in the cold, rain and dark. You ultimately know that you are letting other people down. I recognize that I signed up for this and it is my responsibility… someone is counting on me."* – (Caitrióna, age 43)

2. *The Executive's* second strongest disposition is Leadership as a main theme under Question 3 in Fig. 8.15.

3. **Learning** and Volunteer **Longevity**
- Formal Learning
- Informal Learning
- Leadership
- Skills and Qualifications

Fig. 8.15 LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER LONGEVITY – LEADERSHIP

> *"Administrative roles my strengths would be in. I like working on boards. I feel like I am currently working on the two boards with them on the governance code. I wouldn't be on a board if all I thought I was going to do was go to a meeting I don't really think that is much of a contribution, so when I agreed to go on the boards it was on the understanding that this would be my particular contribution."* – (Natalie, age 57)

3. The Executive's next strongest disposition is Affirmation and Appreciation as a main theme under Question 2 in Fig. 8.16.
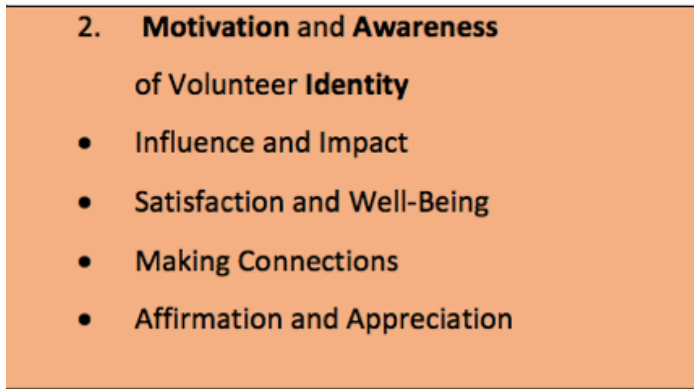
Fig. 8.16 MOTIVATION AND AWARENESS – AFFIRMATION AND APPRECIATION

"I like to volunteer for things that are professionally relevant. I like to do things where I can see in short term, medium term, and long term impacts. I like differential impacts. It doesn't mean I don't like the immediate buzz you get from helping out in the schools, you say, "okay I've done something" because that has happened. But I also like the longer-term thing where you can see a strategy developing and you can see the impact over a period of time. So, I like that… "I'm doing that because I think it advances my career". Um, and I think to be honest about that, I think there is an element of career advancement through the type of professional volunteering. I use professional loosely. It's not paid volunteering, it is professionally focused volunteering. And I think it benefits your career. I think it gives you opportunities to engage with people who could benefit your career." – (Xavier, age 49)

4. *The Executive's* final disposition is the VALUE of Knowledge and Learning as a sub-theme under Question 4 in Fig. 8.17.
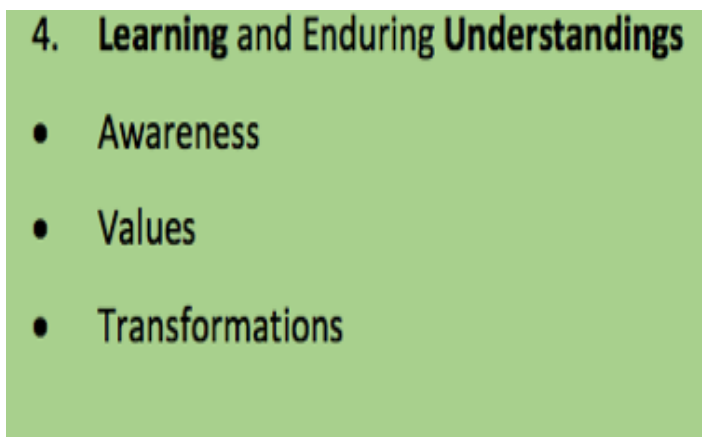
Fig. 8.17 LEARNING AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS – VALUES

"I feel that I benefit from it, if for no other reason than… well, I have seen and done more in these last three years volunteering than I have done in the previous decade. I have seen far more of the place. It gets me out of the house. I am not working at the moment, so I can also be cynical about it. It looks good on my CV. I don't like putting it there, and when I get a job, it will be coming off, but it is useful and there is the potential for an employer to ring an

organization that I volunteered with and ask "how is this person? Are they reliable?" So, there are many different things. But for me, it gets me out of the house, gets me talking to people and seeing and doing stuff that I would have never done before." – (Miceál, age 47)

Summary of the Fourth AVD – *THE EXECUTIVE*

As evidenced in the first and second level of analysis in this study and along with established literature, the fourth new AVD is *The Executive*. Research suggests that *The Executive* disposition feels a sense of duty, responsibility and obligation to volunteer their time (Herman & Chiu, 2014). They generally have a natural ability to see an immediate problem and quickly devise a solution. *The Executive* has excellent communication, organizational and people skills (Herman & Chiu, 2014; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012). They are genuinely stable, good-natured, self-confident, and decisive but have very little patience for inefficiency and incompetence. When something needs to be done, they will jump into action to get the job done and will work hard to fulfill duties. *The Executive* seems to identify with the transformational leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Herman & Chiu, 2014; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012) who highly values knowledge and resourcefulness in others and can envisage how to best use that for the benefit of the organization or cause. This research found that *The Executive* disposition embraces an imaginative perspective and confidently identify themselves as leaders that want to be an integral part of the success of an organization, their team, and for their own satisfaction (Binder, 2015; E. Hogg, 2013; Yamashita, López, Soligo, et al., 2017). They tend to value tradition, security and have a profound respect for service. *The Executive* is loyal, faithful, civic and family-minded. They aspire greatness for themselves and the organization or cause that they represent. The Executive can be generally found volunteering on boards and committees, working with formal organizations, in administrative volunteer roles, organizing and managing other volunteers at events, and volunteer activities of that nature.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIVE VOLUNTEER DISPOSITIONS

The evidence and the analysis demonstrated in this thesis suggests that AVDs do not change much over time as their predispositions and dispositions are firmly grounded by their beliefs, attitudes, and values from early influences (Elder Jr, 1998; Nash, 2003). While the types or kinds of volunteering can change throughout the life course (E. Hogg, 2016) as mentioned in section 8.3, the elements that trigger the personal

and social satisfaction of the AVD does not change much. For example, The Champion may take on a role as The Guide – counseling one on one, and then maybe move later into a more administrative role like that of The Executive, [and this is because threads of commonality between the AVDs mean that they are woven together]. The key here is that the underlying strength in The Champion [belief in the cause] does not change, therefore the Champion will still involve themselves in volunteering that champions a cause they believe in. Another example is that of The Executive – their strongest disposition is organizational responsibility and professional leadership. They take an administrative role on the school board or on the PTA in their children's school while they are growing up, but then later – after their children have moved on, they may take on a role of a volunteer coordinator or a trustee on national education board affiliated in line with their profession. While the 'who' they volunteer their time with has changed, the 'what' or the 'why' has not shifted. This is not to say that someone does not have transformational moments that can change their beliefs, attitudes or values (Bouchard, 2013; Illeris, 2014; Lee, 2016). More often, it is a moment in life that deepens awareness of beliefs, attitudes or values, rather than turning from them entirely (Mezirow, 1990).

8.4 CONCLUSION

Irrespective of the AVD, the research presented here indicates that the motives and inclination to volunteer are powerful. The capacity of people to give their time, energy and expertise to causes and to others, is intriguing. Many volunteers regard volunteering as an integral part of their lives as far back as they can remember, and report that volunteering has impacted them deeply, and is an important part of who they are (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Sharing a mutual cause brings people together in a unique way – common causes are the first meeting points for people who share similar views of the world. Those first meeting points have the potential for the formation of social connections and relationships that are impactful and enduring.

The evidence also suggests that volunteers experience life differently but how we are transformed by our learning experiences and what we do with those experiences defines who we are as AVs. The complexity of experiences the AVs face and the ways that they individually interpret or play out their narrative stories and reflect on their life history affect their disposition as volunteers. These personal and social roles that they enact can be powerful and affect each AV in deeply positive or negative ways. As was discussed in Chapter Seven, and from narratives shared by Rosie, Francine, Christy

and others, life experiences can sometimes have negative impacts on volunteer motivation and satisfaction. It is important to consider that some experiences can negatively affect attitude and learning. Informal learning results from daily life activities and personal experiences that are related to work, family or leisure [such as volunteering] (Department of Education and Science, 2000; Dib, 1988; Friesen & Anderson, 2004) and is commonly driven by an internal motivation to learn something simply because it motivates us through celebrating those "aha" moments when we connect to things in our environment (Bouchard, 2013; Illeris, 2014). The Volunteer Quilt has been pulled together into a beautiful patchwork of distinctive AVDs and common understanding's that encompass the AV. The unique contribution of this thesis to the field is the identification of four key AVDs presented as a new understanding of AV Leaders.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way" – Doris Lessing

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a conclusion to this study. First, from my in-depth analysis, is the introduction of a new and innovative AVD. Followed by a presentation on the usefulness and applicability of the findings of this study and the need for further formal conversation on using personal reflection and disposition affiliation as learning methods for individual volunteer satisfaction and sustainability. Then, limitations, implications and further recommendations are presented and a reflection on the importance of lifelong learning, brings this thesis to a close.

9.2 SUBSTANTIATING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question One **[RQ1 Are volunteers aware of their volunteer identity and how formal and informal learning have impacted their volunteer activities?]** considered the idea of volunteering and volunteer identity connected to self and community through informal learning via social roles and relationships, and the ways in which formal institutional learning impact personal beliefs, values, and attitudes toward volunteer activity. Grönlund (2012) argued that volunteer identity is built according to one's identity and values that ultimately result in a sense of self-acceptance. Epure (2013) states that volunteering is a very good opportunity to learn informally and helps learners register a real progress in personal development and skills, and building competencies. While this research agrees with Grönlund's assessment that self-awareness and identity through volunteering is vital, and Epure's evaluation that that volunteering helps learners to develop skills and competencies, volunteer learning and identity goes much deeper and should be considered in combination. This research determined that learning and awareness of volunteer identity are intimately linked together by a desire for acceptance and belonging; finding meaning and purpose in their lives; the pursuit of worth and worthiness; and fulfilling duties and responsibility. Additionally, the findings in this research suggests that reflecting on volunteer experiences by AVs generates understandings that one's personal core values are deeply satisfied through volunteering and that an amalgamation of formal learning and informal learning and personal reflection through volunteer experience can enrich the process of self-definition in an AV.

Question Two **[RQ2 Why does someone volunteer? Was there a moment of understanding that motivated them to continue volunteering over time or is it because volunteering has always been part of their identity?]** This question was asked because there needs to be an understanding between the motivation [an action] of an AV and the connections [the being] that we make for or with our self. People tend to be motivated to volunteer due to the human need to relate to and engage with others (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Additionally, the literature on volunteering supports that people have one essential need, and that is to feel a sense of belonging (Oyserman et al., 2012), as if part of a family, group, organization or community. This project has shown that AVs are motivated to volunteer due sociocultural environments, traditions, and expectations through volunteer experiences and learning that directly impact their overall satisfaction. These external factors of influence and impact of others, satisfaction and well-being; the personal and social connections with others; and affirmation and appreciation of themselves and from others. But, motivation and satisfaction to continue volunteering are also signified internally by personal and social identity factors that motivate engagement, such as belief in the cause, a desire to help others, learning, the desire to be good person, and professional or career-type motives. It is a balance between the appreciation of AV identity and the recognition of learning impacts that encourages volunteer sustainability.

Question Three **[RQ3 Does a volunteer feel there are genuine learning opportunities in their experiences of volunteering and a desire to continue learning through those experiences?]** Volunteering is a powerful source of learning (Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005). This research has discovered that volunteer learning is connected and affected by motivation, QoL, and relationships in the same way as volunteer identity. Learners learn through experience and process what they experience in ways that they can understand, which causes a change in the way they understand the meaning of, or their future perception of that learned experience. Recognizing a relationship between the structure of formal learning and awareness of the importance of informal learning, along with building skills and qualifications and inspiring leadership in AVs stimulates volunteer longevity.

Question Four **[RQ4 Does an activity or experience that one participates in for the benefit of their community influence them with a deeper learning and knowledge of self that is transformative and enduring?]** Merriam (2004) provides a most simple explanation of informal learning: "Informal learning refers to experiences of everyday living from which we learn something". This research has discovered that

volunteering is an activity or social practice that encompasses cultures, generations, and societies in which informal learning is known to occur and learning through volunteer experience is significant. Volunteering is a form of learning that happens more informally, through understanding that occurs by the act of experiencing and reflecting organically rather than through textbook reading and formalized pedagogy, but formal learning can work to embed soft-skill attributes that are community and 'other' focused, tightening the connection between learning and identity.

The findings of this study relate to volunteer identity through learning. The four research questions sought to explore and better understand volunteer identity in combination with the overall formal and informal learning experiences of AVs. The research literature provided a broad framework for this study in thinking about how volunteer identity and learning is understood through family, community, societal and educational influences, and volunteer beliefs, attitudes, and values over the life course.

Understanding, developing, and supporting the interconnected relationship between identity and adult learning in volunteer spaces is vitally important for volunteer longevity. Encouraging ongoing reflective practice in adult learning and cultivating volunteer leader dispositions based on identity, disposition, and learning will certainly impact volunteer sustainability.

9.3 THE ACTIVE VOLUNTEER DISPOSITION

The unique contribution of this thesis to the field, from the data and analysis, is the identification of four key AVDs presented as a new understanding of AV Leader dispositions. AVDs share life experiences and activities that dispose them to positions of leadership with a natural demand of personal accountability in themselves and others. The AVD, through experience and learning, represent the AV right where they are, at that moment in time, throughout their life. The AVDs are fluid and flexible to accommodate the various personal and social transformations that we encounter throughout our lives that are impacted by influences in our environment and lived experiences. Emotional upheavals touch every part of our lives and sometimes change how we act and react, who we are and how we interact with others. As life journeys change, sometimes our focus changes and the AVDs maintain the capacity to evolve along their life path.

As an overview, the four AVDs are *The Guide, The Idealist, The Champion,* and *The Executive* and each have unique disposition affiliations, as described in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

> ➢ *The Guide's* volunteer disposition is driven by the need for authentic relationships with strong affiliation toward building and maintaining genuine relationships with others. Inclusion of others and a desire to feel personally included is important to *The Guide*, and they put a very high value on education, teaching and learning.
>
> ➢ *The Idealist's* volunteer disposition is driven by the desire for meaning and purpose in their life with strong affiliation toward doing good for others, being a good person and interacting gently with others.
>
> ➢ *The Champion's* volunteer disposition is passionately defending people or causes that they believe in. They are very pragmatic and have a strong affiliation with seeking truth, justice, and rights for others.
>
> ➢ *The Executive's* volunteer disposition is driven by a sense of duty and responsibility. They have a strong affiliation with being highly organized, professional leaders for others.

Identifying and understanding the AVDs as leaders, is important through idiosyncratic tendencies and affiliations. AVDs provide an important model of volunteer leadership and learning that can be further developed through workshops, seminars, mentorship, apprenticeship, training manuals, and other methods familiar to the education enterprise and are integral to the mission of volunteer agencies (Kerka, 1998), adult education, and community-minded preservation and longevity. Personal and social Identity is an important element for individual volunteer learning, and further study into the interconnected relationship between identity and informal learning over the life course, for volunteers, can be useful for creating, supporting and maintaining important volunteer leader learning models.

USEFULNESS-APPLICABILITY OF FINDINGS IN THIS STUDY

The findings from this study were presented at an event held on Friday, 14 June 2019 on Trinity College Campus. The overview, analysis, findings, implications and recommendations were presented through engaged polling, and participatory discussion to 21 AVs and volunteer/community stakeholders, as well as academics in the School of Education and Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin. I briefly discuss

this event as informal [albeit primarily anecdotal] evidence of the impact of this research and the value of its findings.

Several questions were asked of the audience throughout the presentation via Poll Everywhere, which is an online platform for facilitating live and interactive participation and audience engagement. I initiated this to ensure that my participants would stay engaged throughout what I knew was going to be a lengthy presentation. I did not realize until after the presentation was over, that recording this type of engagement would provide such meaningful feedback on my research.

A series of three questions were asked to invite the audience to briefly reflect on volunteering and engage with me, as the facilitator, before I started the dissemination of research.

1. List ONE word to describe what volunteering means to you?
2. What motivates you to volunteer?
3. What discourages you from volunteering?

Fig. 9.1 and Fig. 9.2 show the responses generated for Poll Everywhere, Question 1 and 2. All of the poll results can be found in Appendix I.

Fig. 9.1 Poll Everywhere Question 1 Responses

What motivates you to volunteer?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"Obligations"

"Being asked"

"Opportunity to learn"

"The need to take action"

"Satisfaction"

"Having something to contribute."

"Humanity"

"Civic responsibility"

"How much I learn from the experience"

Fig. 9.2 Poll Everywhere Question 1 Responses

After presenting an overview of the study, methodology, and analysis of the common themes among AVs, I discussed the leader styles affiliated with the four AVDs and asked the audience to answer one question about their perceived leadership style. The responses proved to validate the AVDs presented in this study. The question was "In terms of volunteering, which leadership style do you think you most identify with?" is represented in Fig. 9.3 as Poll Everywhere Question 4.

In terms of volunteering, which Leadership Style do you think you most identify with?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

Servant Leader - I covet genuine, authentic relationships. I like to develop self-sufficiency and leader qualities in others. — 31%

Laissez-faire Leader - I like to lead with a 'hands off', 'do no harm' approach. I like to lead in a way that provides meaning and purpose. — 23%

Charismatic Leader - I desire to encourage leadership in others. I will steadfastly support causes that I believe in. — 38%

Transformational Leader - I see the bigger picture and I am confident in my leadership abilities. I appreciate being part of a team. — 8%

Fig. 9.3 Poll Everywhere Question 4 Responses

Remember that *The Guide* reflects the Servant Leader, *The Idealist* reflects the Laissez-faire Leader, *The Champion* – the Charismatic Leader and *The Executive* the Transformational Leader. In the study sample, *The Guide* was the largest group, followed by *The Idealist*, then *The Champion* and *The Executive*. While in this feedback session, more attendees reflected that of *The Champion*, followed by *The Guide*, *The Idealist* and *The Executive* was still the smallest group represented.

Finally, after the presentation was over, I asked four final questions before allowing questions from the audience.

6. Who do you think will be most impacted by the findings of this research?
7. Based on tonight's presentation, what one thing did you learn about yourself as a volunteer or volunteer advocate?
8. Is there anything you wish I had shared with you tonight, but did not?
9. Did you find this presentation interesting? Why or why not?

Fig. 9.4 and Fig. 9.5 illustrate the results from Poll Everywhere Questions 6 and 7.
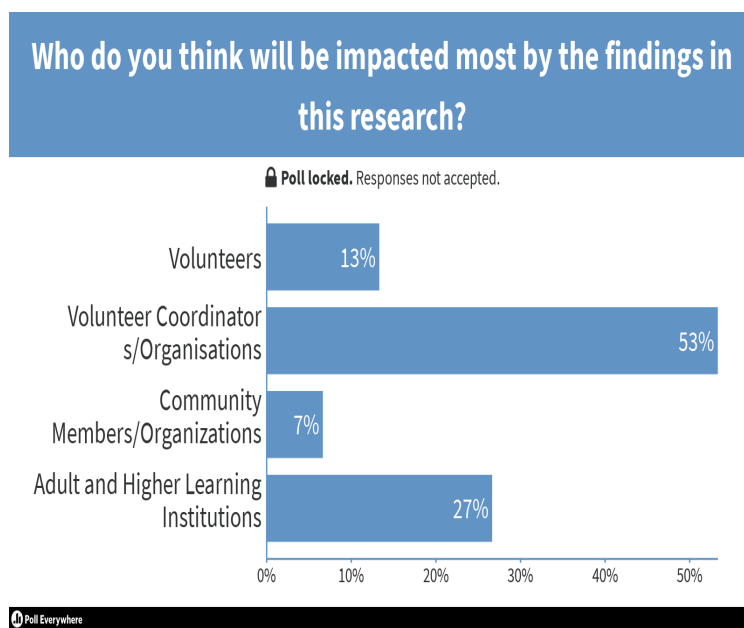
Fig. 9.4 Poll Everywhere Question 6 Responses

The results from Question 6 surprised me, as my investment on the 'individuals' in this study and preconceived notion about the AVD findings in my study, inclined me to feel that individual volunteers would be most impacted by the findings. I did not expect to see that the audience to whom the research was disseminated, would feel that volunteer organizations and adult education would be most impacted by the research.

Fig. 9.5 Poll Everywhere Question 7 Responses

Conducting a presentation of findings for this research, allowed translation of data to a diverse audience, robust feedback from stakeholders and overall interest in the findings of this study.

REFLECTION, RECOGNITION, AND AFFILIATION FOR VOLUNTEER LEARNING

This research has exposed the need for further formal conversation on using reflection, recognition and disposition affiliation as learning methods for individual volunteer satisfaction and sustainability and for volunteer organizational recruiting, planning and inspiring volunteer longevity.

Reflection

Volunteer learning is being suggested here as a learning experience, and literature establishes that volunteer learning is informal and individual. Formal learning theory [such as transformational and experiential learning] is designed and presented as a course of action through adult education and volunteering and volunteer learning is currently recognized as informal learning or not commonly thought to be educational (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). Although, once formal and higher education has been completed, many volunteers do not take the time to recognize the deep learning that comes from volunteer activity until they are asked to reflect on their experiences. Many see volunteering as an activity and a contribution to society that also fulfills personal desires and needs. But, conscious acknowledgement of actions or

experiences as a form of learning, is often not even considered. Therefore, reflection is a powerful tool for adult learning.

The literature has revealed that experiential learning, to be experiential must always involve components of reflection (Dewey, 1938) but it does not quite fit volunteer learning because if volunteers formally reflect on volunteer experiences, the acknowledgement of learning from that experience is missing. However, lifelong learning is a holistic process that combines a balance of formal and informal learning throughout one's life via a process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). The findings from this research reflects Coombs' assertion in that lifelong learning is a better fit for understanding volunteer learning, but tends to be more explicit knowledge awareness, that is still not quite suitable.

The definition of *enduring* is that something is durable, long-lasting, or remains in existence over time (Oxford, 2011). Lifelong learning is an on-going *process* over the span of a persons' lifetime, whereas this study has found that the idea of enduring learning implies that the knowledge and expertise *remains* steadfast with the learner which can then *transfer* to others as part of their personal and professional growth. As a volunteer, you never stop learning and that learning is lifelong. This research shows that through volunteering you are developing new skills, discovering new passions, gaining new insights about yourself, as a volunteer, and the world around you. This study has shown that reflection is key in learning as an adult.

Recognition

Through reflection, one makes meaning and through meaning recognition occurs. More awareness of the depth and breadth of volunteers' informal learning—including but not limited to sustainability—has been shown here to help to increase the recognition of the value of volunteers' activities for themselves, for volunteer organizations, and for society, and can help organizations develop strategies to nurture and maximize that learning.

Affiliation

Volunteering has been shown by this research to be an activity or social practice that encompasses cultures, generations, and societies in which informal learning is known to occur and learning through volunteer experience is significant. Even in most formal

learning situations, there are elements of informality, of situated learning, of the application of the generalized learning to the specific life situation of the learners, of the reconciliation of the new learning with the individual experience of the learners, undertaken by the learners themselves. The AVDs are the distinctive sub-groups of AVs who are connected to their AVD sub-groups through disposition affiliation. Disposition affiliations, [as a consequence of socialization] are those strong affiliations that were briefly discussed in section 8.3 of Chapter Eight. E.g.: *The Champion's* strongest affiliation is 'belief in the cause'.   These AVD affiliations and how they may be refined and developed further through a reflective learning model would be recommended.

9.4 LIMITATIONS

This study focused on volunteers that were currently actively volunteering in Ireland, and have participated in or completed some form of third-level education. This means that not all volunteers in Ireland are represented. People who are still enrolled in compulsory educational institutions, volunteers who are visiting Ireland from other countries but do not reside here, and those who may be interested in volunteering but do not currently volunteer may not be represented. Additionally, some AVs who met the criteria set out in Chapter Five, may not be included if they did not have access to the public call for participation or were otherwise unaware of participation in the study. Further, my interpretation of the term 'Active Volunteers' and 'participation in some form of third-level education' may have impacted the results of this study as potential participants may not have interpreted the terms in the same way and disregarded participation in the study. Finally, as with all research that relies on the responses supplied by the AVs, there is the possibility of disposition bias in that AVs answered questions during the in-depth interviews that would be presented most positive rather than attaching negative connotations to an activity that they feel should be seen viewed positively.

9.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals of this study were to gain insight and understanding of the volunteer identity, learning through volunteering, and how informal learning is understood. To inform lifelong learning in adult and higher education. Provide important models of learning that are vital to adult education and community-minded longevity and preservation.

Throughout the duration of this research, I have been focusing on developing adult learning programs and implementing workshops for AVs on understanding volunteer identity and learning through identifying personal attributes and reflection of the 'self' and disposition affiliation. These workshop programs incorporated both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning approaches, and promote active, dynamic, collaborative, immersive and reflective learning practices as part of the whole learner experience.

APPRECIATING THE NEED FOR LEARNING WORKSHOPS AND PROGRAMS

The details of the Hybrid Focus-Group Workshop *Engage – Inspire – Transform*, were explained in section 5.5 of Chapter Five. It is here I draw on the concluding activity conducted at the end of the workshop as it justifies the need and desire for implementing adult training sessions for community engagement and further research opportunities. I distributed two different color note-sheets and asked participants to reflect on the activities during the workshop and their learning for a few moments and then to write two 'Ahas' on the pink note paper and one 'Urge' on the lilac note paper. I explained that the 'Aha' (pink note paper) was to be something that they learned and felt they could take away from this experience that was just for them. The 'Urges' (lilac note paper) were to be something that they felt needed to be done, was missing, or some kind of advice for me. Below are two examples of what was posted in Fig. 9.6 and Fig. 9.7.
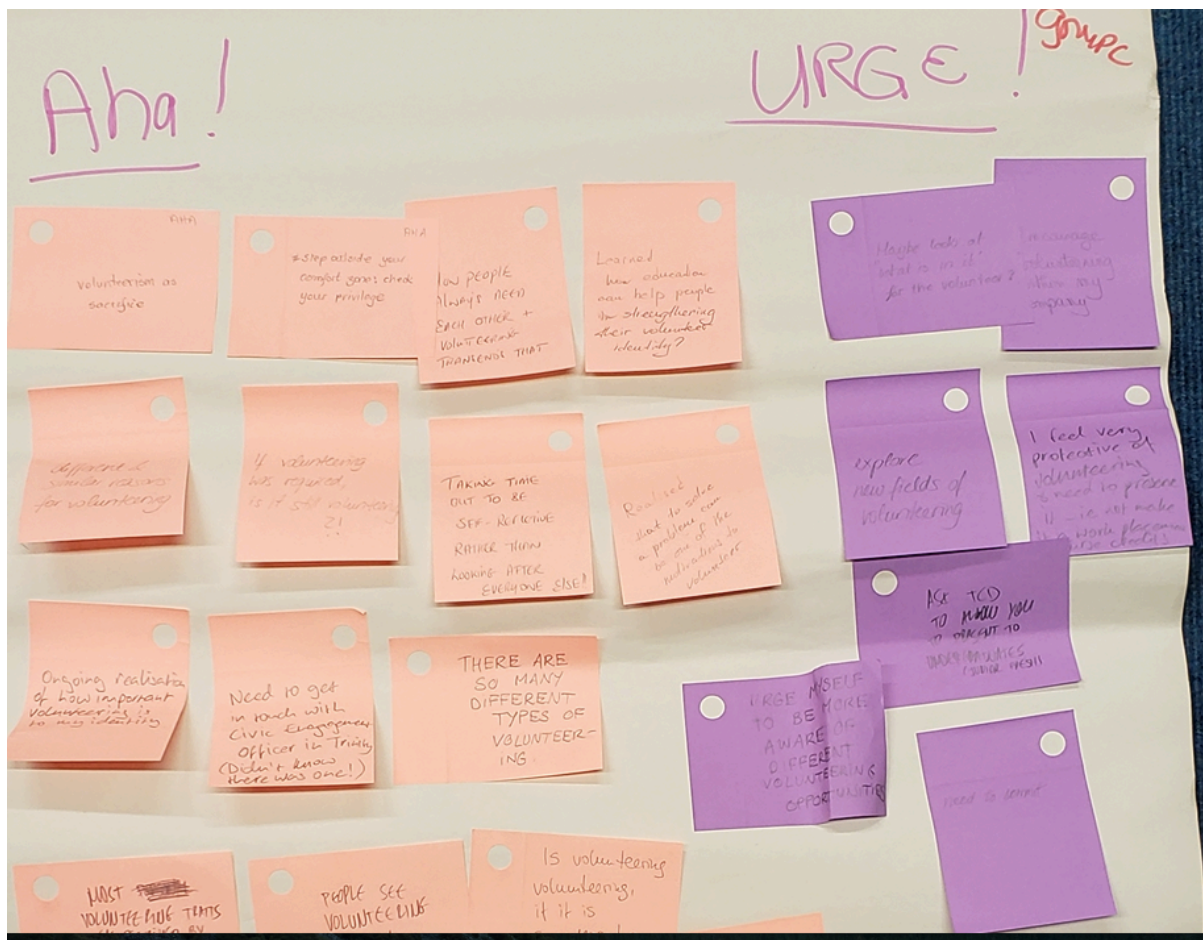
Fig. 9.6 *AHA'S* and *URGE'S* EXAMPLES FROM HYBRID GROUP C

Below are some of the 'Ahas' that were listed by participants:

Aha Moments

- Step outside your comfort zone: check your privilege
- Learned how education can help people in strengthening their identity
- Different and similar reasons for volunteering
- If volunteering was required (in education) is it still volunteering?
- Taking time out to be self-reflective rather than looking after everyone else
- Realized that to solve a problem can be one of the motivations to volunteer
- Ongoing realization of how important volunteering is to my identity
- People see volunteering differently
- Several aspects of volunteering (individual, collective)
- Amazing how open people can be
- Broaden perspective on possibilities of volunteering
- Personality test was interesting
- Different concepts on what volunteering is
- A volunteer coordinator's insight into what student volunteering is
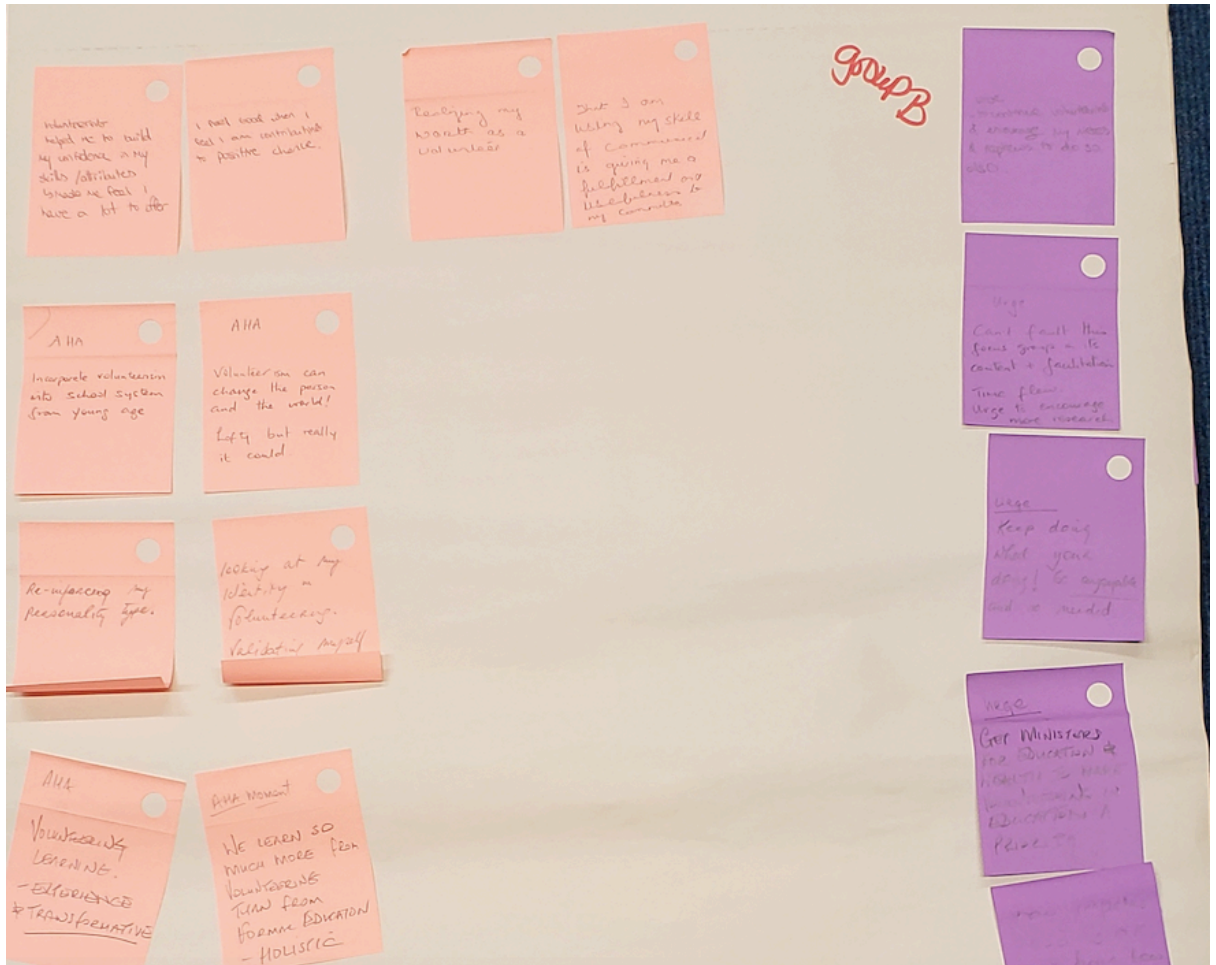
Fig. 9.7 *AHA'S* and *URGE'S* EXAMPLES FROM HYBRID GROUP B

Below are some of the 'Urges' that were provided by participants:

Urges

- To continue volunteering and to encourage my nieces and nephews to do so also
- Can't fault this this focus groups in its content and facilitation. Time flew. Urge to encourage more research
- Keep doing what you're doing! So enjoyable and so needed
- Get Ministers for Education and Health to make volunteering in education a priority
- More time
- Today was a good opportunity to evaluate my role as a volunteer. Thank you, Shelli! Perhaps a country-wide roll out of education – one's own investment/respect

Implementing these kinds of programs will help people who are interested in maximizing their potential and sustainability as volunteers within their community and tapping the potential of the volunteer spirit for wider-community participation and longevity in volunteering.

As government, education, and community entities here in Ireland, and internationally, call for wider community engagement, social justice, support, and active citizenship, designing and implementing adult learning programs of this nature are vital. Not only informally through self-directed learning, but formally through university and adult education. Creating training workshops and disposition affiliation questionnaires for adult and higher learning institutions and volunteer organizations that encourages AVs [and those interested in volunteering] suggest a cohesive alignment to recognize, reinforce, and support for volunteer learning.

APPRECIATING THE IMPORTANCE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

There has been very little research on the influence and impact of social and personal identity and learning on the volunteer over the life course and the notion of Active Volunteer Dispositions is just chipping a small chunk off a giant iceberg. The comprehensive nature of this research means that there are a multitude of further research opportunities existing starting firstly with further development of the novel AVDs themselves even going so far as implementing and testing AVD leaders in multiple volunteering situations and organizational settings. Secondly, as was stated in the Limitations section, this research was conducted nationally in Ireland. While, there were some AVs who were of other nationalities, the predominate nationality sampled were Irish. Further study into the AVD from an international perspective would broaden the scope and understanding of volunteer identity and learning in a more global context. Thirdly, the participants in this research were all educated in some form of third-level educational setting (whether they attended or completed). If this study was repeated with participants at different education levels, would these findings be replicated for groups who don't have HE qualifications/experience? Fourthly, volunteer leader models are quite limited and the scope of business leadership styles that could be further researched, identified, and modeled through the lens of informal learning is vast.

There is an increasing amount of research into the relationship between volunteering and lifelong learning. This includes both the formal learning required for the professionalization of formal volunteering and the informal learning outcomes of the individual experience of the adult volunteer (Duguid et al., 2007; Lee, 2016; Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005). Further research could be conducted in the differences between volunteer organization contexts, i.e. (big organizations vs small charity organizations, volunteer sector variants, how professionalized organizations are, etc.), do these varying contexts invite different types of AVD leaders?

Existing research has established that lifelong learning has benefits for numerous aspects of one's life and participation in lifelong learning programs improves one's knowledge and competency (Eraut, 2000; V. J. Marsick et al., 1999). As you continue learning you become more confident, more adaptable to change, and are less risk averse. Another area where further research would be warranted is the idea of shifting, adapting, transforming, identities over the life course and questions around whether experiences or changes over one's life changes their AV leader disposition, or do AVDs remain stable over time?

Additionally, volunteer administration professionals have noted the lack of empirical evidence supporting development of theoretically based volunteer curricula and training programs (Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005). A reliable methodology for ascertaining volunteers' leadership attitudes and intentions is needed to enhance support for those who volunteer to improve their communities (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). While there is plenty of research on the pedagogy of lifelong learning, and the variety of contexts within which it comprises, there is nothing that may be described as the pedagogy of enduring learning. It is my hope that through the findings of this research on the effect of volunteering on the learner over the life course, a new understanding of enduring learning through the AVD leaders can be further developed.

APPRECIATING THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLEGIALITY

Given the paucity of research, is there potential for greater collaboration with stakeholders such as The Wheel, Volunteer Ireland, CKI, Dublin City Volunteer, and others [who helped with this study], in developing a research base for supporting AVD leaders to further inform the work of their organizations? The findings from this study may encourage and support forming research partnerships and adult learning programs, with volunteer, community, and corporate entities that are interested in the following:

- o   volunteer learning and community engagement,
- o   leadership and learning,
- o   volunteer health and well-being,
- o   adult and lifelong learning,
- o   school and community partnerships.

Specifically, designing and facilitating curriculum and program development that incorporates both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning approaches, and

promotes active, dynamic, collaborative, immersive and reflective learning practices as part of the whole adult learning experience. Development of workshops and questionnaires for education institutions and volunteers to recognize, reinforce and support volunteer learning and identity would facilitate cohesive cross-disciplinary alignment for volunteer learning.

Overall, this research has established that individual learning, social influences, and independent reflection encourages deeper understanding of the AVD and that through a wider social network of community involvement, AVDs can significantly support the durability and enduring feature of volunteering on the wider community and society, as a whole.

9.6 REFLECTION

Recently there has been a trending 'tweet-re-tweet' occurrence on education and postgraduate Twitter social media feeds that invite conversation about *"What I wanted to be when I grew up" – in Primary School – High School – Undergrad – Postgrad.* I participated… how could I resist? Initially, I did not contemplate this tweet very much as I dashed off my reply and clicked "+tweet" in Fig. 9.8.

Fig. 9.8 TWITTER *"WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP"* TWEET

What did I want to be when I grew up?

In primary school, I wanted to be a teacher. I remember frequently playing 'school' with my siblings and cousins, as a child, and I *always* wanted to be the teacher.

"I want to be a teacher – so I can teach the world"

In high school [secondary school], I wanted to be a flight attendant because I was a dreamer, I had a restless spirit and I was fascinated by the world around me.

"I want to be a flight attendant – so I can see the world"

Many years went by between my formative schooling and my entry into the world of third-level education. I did not become a flight attendant, rather I joined the U.S. Navy, instead. I did not see too much of the world, at that point because I promptly married and started a family. It was not until after my boys were fairly independent young men, that I embarked on my educational journey, because my passion for continued learning

was just as strong in my 40s as it was when I was just a young girl. Throughout my undergraduate degree and even into my master's degree, I was passionate about sociology and understanding people and the way that people function in societies all around the world. My favorite courses were classes that centered around cultural and social awareness and global consciousness.

"I want to be a Sociologist – to study people in our world"

As a middle-aged adult, with many experiences and life events behind me, I desired to understand more about the world in which I lived. To study people, places and events that I had knowledge of and many more people, places and events that I did not. I did become a Sociologist, and yet I was so hungry for more learning. As a postgraduate – finishing my masters and working in a job [as a higher education administrator] that was less than satisfying for me, I set my sights once again on my passion to become an educator.

"I want to be someone who makes a difference in our world"

After posting that missive, I sat back to think about my educational journey and all that I have learned through my life, and indeed through this PhD study, I realized that my personal and educational aspirations, my own beliefs, attitudes, and values, have been deeply influenced by what I have learned from others, formally and informally. My social interactions, connections, and relationships with others have shaped my identity and my personal aspirations, as well. As the AVDs were coming together, I remember trying to identify where I fit into the dispositions that emerged and contemplating my sense of belonging in one Disposition or the other. I came to appreciate that I have my own profound connection with one of these AVDs, in a way that surprised me. I now realize that recent tweet, glibly tweeted in haste on an early Sunday morning in June, represents the conscious recognition of my identity, my learning, and my life journey. This educational journey is all part of my innate desire to make a difference in the world.

This study has shown me that who we are as social beings, are strongly impacted by the social interactions and relationships that are enacted throughout our lifetime. I equally believe that active and continued [personal, academic, and professional] reflection as an adult learner, is key to transformation and develops learning that endures. Learning is lifelong… Never stop.

"I am still learning" - Michelangelo

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTION TO STUDY EMAILS & PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM FOR INTERVIEWS AND HYBRID FOCUS GROUPS

Email to Organizations – Request for Research Invitations to Volunteers - Interviews

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>

Request for Research Invitation to Volunteers
5 messages

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>   18 June 2018 at 14:14
To: amy@volunteer.ie

Dear Amy;

I am a PhD candidate in my 2nd year at Trinity College Dublin. I am currently recruiting active volunteers to participate in interviews for my research project on the lived experience of the active volunteer in Ireland.

The aim of my research is to examine, from a sociological and pedagogical perspective, the lives of the active community volunteer in Ireland. I will be using the data that I acquire through interviews to analyze the lived experience of the active community volunteer post-tertiary education, to gain a better understanding of whether volunteer experiences while in higher education, promote and enhance a commitment to learning that supports transformative learning to inform future community-based educational curriculum and policy.

I would like to circulate an invitation to participate via your social media pages, volunteer email lists, website, etc. I am not asking you for member contact information, rather I am requesting permission to distribute my invitation and link to questionnaire on my behalf, which I would provide for you. My hope is to begin requesting participation as soon as possible, so that I may organise personal interviews from respondents in August.

Would this be something that your organisation would support by inviting participation?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Shelli A Garland
Postgraduate Research Candidate
Doctor in Philosophy
CAVE Research Center - School of Education
Trinity College Dublin

Amy Woods <amy@volunteer.ie>   18 June 2018 at 14:19
To: Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>

Hi Shelli,

Thanks for getting in touch – it sounds like a really interesting project.

We only send out our newsletters every 3 months or so and the last one just went out a few weeks ago so there won't be another one until after the summer. I am happy to share the link through social media though.

Email to Organizations – Request to Distribute to Volunteer Network – Hybrid Focus
Groups

((MYZONE))

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>

Request to distribute to volunteer network
2 messages

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>   1 August 2018 at 09:57
To: FEMI ATOYEBI <info@wheel.ie>

Dear Femi;

I hope that this email finds you well. You recently circulated an interest form via your social media
and website platforms regarding my research on volunteering in Ireland. I have had an incredible
response, and I wanted to thank you for helping me to find a widely diverse and enthusiastic sample
group for interviews. The main phase of my interview process is now complete. However,

As a volunteer organization, your assistance in circulating my request for participants are a vital
element of my research process. Which is why I am asking once again, if you would be willing to
circulate an invitation to a free workshop and focus group that I am facilitating entitled ***Engage,
Inspire, Transform*** on the **22nd of August 2018**at **Trinity College, Dublin**.

This workshop is designed to help volunteers discover their volunteer identity and revolutionise their
volunteer impact. It will also help me explore how volunteering and informal learning experiences
can impact formal education.

This workshop is open to any active volunteer who would like to attend. I am offering the workshop
at three different times on the same date (9:30 am - 12:30 pm *or* 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm *or* 5:00 pm -
8:00 pm). Space is limited to 20 participants per session.

Please see the information and hyperlinks to the reservation form below.

I would appreciate it if you could possibly circulate this invitation via facebook, website, newsletters
and twitter, etc.

Please let me know if you would be willing to distribute the following to your volunteer members.
 (The links all lead to the registration form).

Engage, Inspire, Transform Workshop

Wednesday, 22 August 2018 - Trinity College Dublin, College Green, Dublin 2, Arts Building, Room
3105, 3rd Floor.
(9:30 am - 12:30 pm ***or*** 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm ***or*** 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm)

Chief Facilitator: Shelli Ann Garland, MsCTE garlands@tcd.ie

This free workshop is designed to help you discover your volunteer identity and revolutionise your
volunteer impact.

Participant Information Form

National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland

This research project is being carried out by PhD candidate, Shelli Ann Garland, for dissertation in the Cultures, Academic Values and Education (CAVE) research center at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin www.tcd.ie/Education/research/centres/cave.

The aim of this project is to examine, from a sociological and pedagogical perspective, the lives of the active community volunteer in Ireland who participated in community engagement or community-based learning during their 3rd level education.

Within higher education, volunteering aka community engagement, is an activity that one participates in through a personal desire to serve the community. Community-based learning is a relatively new teaching method in Ireland which is a community-focused cooperation or partnership between the student, community partners, and those involved in teaching and research. Students gain credit through coursework for helping the organization fulfill that need. Community engagement is generally practiced through personal desire, while community-based learning is practiced through course participation (McIlrath, Lyons and Munck 2012). The differences and the result that these experiences have on the participant during tertiary education and the lasting impact and personal growth that these experiences may have after completion of a higher degree, have not been deeply researched.

Through case study analysis of the lived experience of the active community volunteer in Ireland who participated in community engagement and/or community based learning during their 3rd level education, interviews and in-depth interviews will be conducted. I will analyze the lived experience of the active community volunteer post-tertiary education to provide a better understanding of whether volunteer experience while in higher education, promote and enhance a commitment to learning that is supports the enduring phenomenon of transformative learning and inform educational curriculum and policy.

The instruments to be employed in the data generation are a volunteer participant questionnaire; individual in-depth interviews and a few small focus groups. The data generated by these instruments will be anonymised, stored securely in a secured location by the researcher only, and used solely for the purposes of academic analysis and publication in anonymised, processed form. It is intended that the study will be published in monograph form and produce several journal articles.

Note to participants:
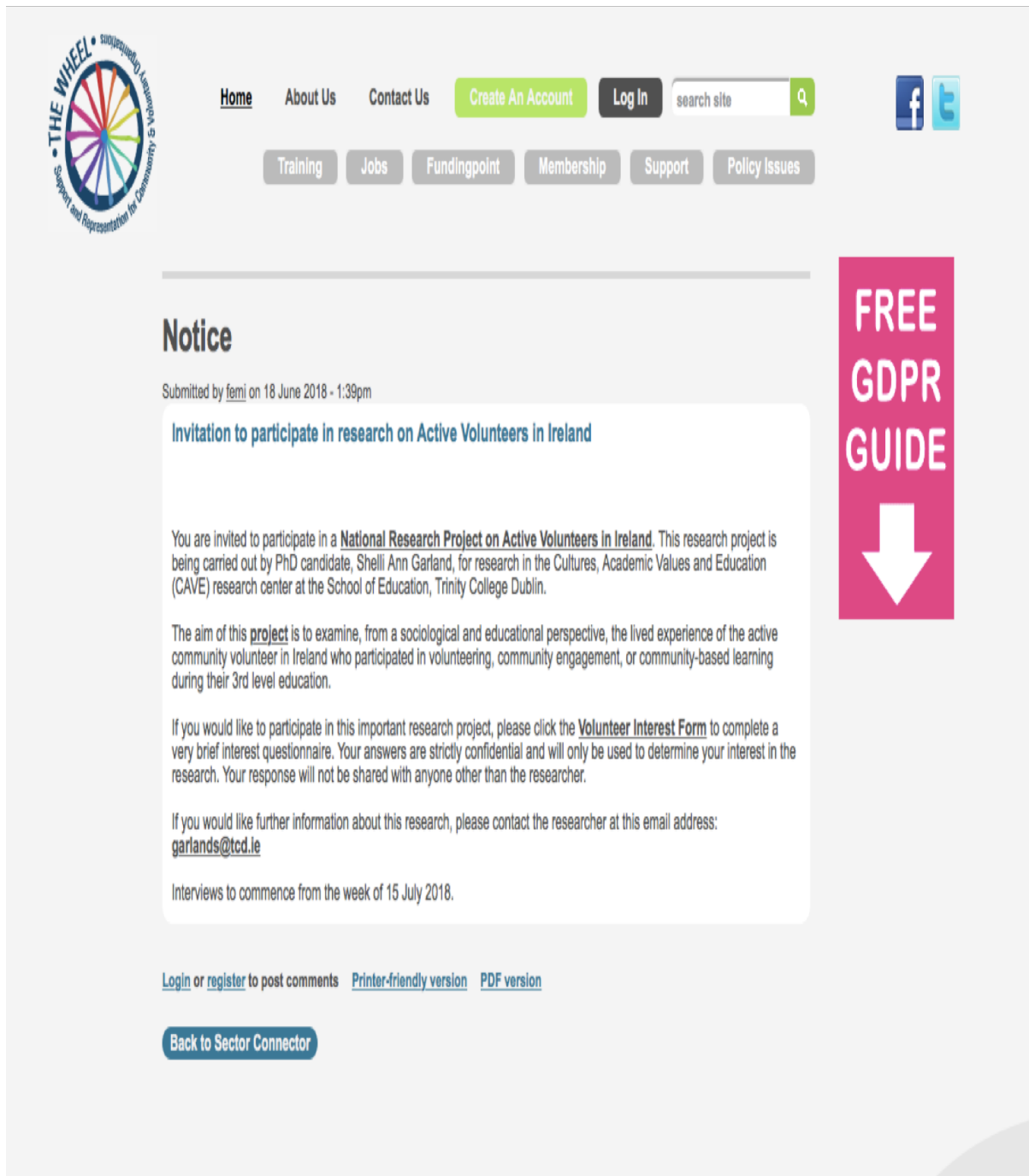
You are invited to participate in this first study of its kind by taking part in an audio or visual recorded interview, which will take place in person, at a location and time convenient to you. Should you be willing to participate, you will be provided with this information sheet before interview and asked to complete a consent form at the time of the interview. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes. Further questions can be directed to the researcher below:

Shelli Ann Garland   garlands@tcd.ie   +353 083 4584986

Volunteer Organization – Invitation to Participate in Research - Website Posting

📧 ⊚ @ ▓ ▚   ✳ ⏰ 📶 ◢ 14% 🔋 3:31 PM

Home

Volunteer Ireland @voluntir... · 1h ⌄
PHD Candidate **@shelli_garland** is
researching the lived experience of
active community volunteers in
Ireland, specifically those that
volunteered during 3rd level
education. You can help by filling out
this questionnaire

National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland

**National Research
Project on Active ...**
docs.google.com

💬   🔁   ❤️ 1   🔗

permanent tsb @permanenttsb   ⌄
Loans online up to €25,000 into your
account instantly. #ad bit.ly/
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CAR | HOME IMPROVEMENT | PERSONAL

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INTO YOUR ACCOUNT
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Personalized Email – Interview Participation

((MYzone))   Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>

Research on Active Volunteers in Ireland - Questionnaire Response

9 messages

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>   28 June 2018 at 20:36
To ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇@gmail.com

Dea▇▇▇▇

Thank you very much for completing the interest form regarding my research project on the Lives of the Active Volunteer in Ireland. You are being contacted because you completed the online inquiry form on the lives of active volunteers in Ireland and specified that you were interested in being interviewed.

In this ongoing body of research, I am now conducting interviews and would like to ascertain if you would be willing to give an interview to get a more in-depth perspective. I aim to use the outcomes of the project for my dissertation. I may also use the data gathered for peer-reviewed journals and at educational and research conferences. It is also intended that the findings will inform research, policy and practice in higher education.

Please find attached information sheet with the details of this vital research project.

If you can participate, a personal interview lasting approximately 60 minutes will be conducted. You will be supplied with a participant information form and asked to complete a consent form in advance of the interview. Interviews will be conducted in a location that is most comfortable and convenient for you.

I would greatly appreciate your collaboration with this important research.

Please let me know at this email address if you would be happy to undertake an interview and when would be most convenient for you. I will contact you to schedule a meeting together. Additionally, which method of contact suits you best? I am happy to phone, email, whatsapp, or text.

The second and third week in July are open for dates and times, so if you have a date in mind, do let me know.

Many thanks for your help, and I look forward to hearing your story of volunteering!

Kind regards,

Shelli A Garland
Postgraduate Research Candidate
Doctor in Philosophy
CAVE Research Center - School of Education

Narrative Interview Questions

Name:

Date:

Place of Interview:

NOTES:

INTERVIEW

Demographic Questions

I: Name

I: Age

I: Gender

I: What is your Ethnicity or country of birth (if wish to identify)?

I: Sexual Orientation (if wish to identify)

I: Marital Status

I: Do you have children?

I: Residential location (County)

Education & Employment Questions

I: Did you attend a 3rd level institution?

I: When did you graduate, or stop attending?

I: Did you earn a degree?

I: What degree did you earn?

I: What was your area of Study or specialization?

I: Are you currently working?

I: What is your current career, trade or job description?

I: Are you or were you a member of any Society while in HE?

I: Are you currently linked to your Alma Matter in anyway, now (Alumni Assoc)?

Historical Volunteer Experience Questions

I: What was your volunteer experience, if any, in post-primary/secondary school?

I: What led to your decision to volunteer while in higher education?

I: What kind of volunteering did you do in Higher education?

I: How long or often did you participate?

I: Was it part of your module requirement?

I: Did you earn academic credit for volunteering?

I: What was your experience like?

Current Volunteer Experience Questions

I: Are you currently actively volunteering?

I: Type of volunteering that you currently do?

I: How often or how much time do you spend volunteering per week/month/year?

I: Do your family or friends participate in volunteering along with you?

I: What kind of volunteering do you like to do?

I: Is there a type of volunteering that you would rather not do?

I: Do/did you keep any journals, photos or documents about your volunteer experiences?

I: Would you be willing to share them, or portions of them with me if requested in future interviews?

Philosophical Volunteer Experience Questions

(Ask for examples)

I: Do you think that your experience (or non-experience) volunteering in HE shaped your opinion of volunteering in anyway?

I: What impact do you feel you had on the organization that you volunteered with, then?

I: Now?

I: Who or what do you believe was your inspiration for volunteering?

I: Do you feel that your HE volunteer experience plays a significant role in your volunteer experiences today?

Why/Why not?

I: What is it like to be volunteer?

I: Can you provide me with three adjectives to describe who you are as a volunteer?

I: What is your fondest memory or experience volunteering?

I: Do you think that your volunteer experience changed you? How has it changed you?

I: Why do you volunteer?

I: What is your earliest recollection of volunteering?

I: Have you ever been recognized for your volunteer experience?

I: How does that make you feel?

I: Why do you volunteer now?

I: What role do you think that your education has played in your life as a volunteer? Not your volunteer experience, rather your education.

I: How do you think you would feel if you could not volunteer anymore?

Google Form Part One

Google Form Part Two

Name (first and surname) *

Short-answer text

Email Address *

Short-answer text

Will you be able to attend? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

Time Options (Choose only ONE)

☐ 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

☐ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

☐ 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Dietary or Specified Needs (if required)

Short-answer text

Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this workshop that you would like to share with us?

Long-answer text

Appendix F: Hybrid Focus Group Workshop – Compliment Emails

Workshop Email – Compliments

24 Aug

Thanks for interesting workshop - really enjoyed it. -F

29 Aug

M and I did enjoy the interaction and in fact, we both discussed it on the way home on the train and felt we received a 'new' awareness of ourselves.

MEG

2 Sep

Hi Shelli,

Just wanted to drop you a note (somewhat tardy, sorry !) to say a big thank you for a really enjoyable workshop on 22nd Aug. You facilitated the session so well; I thoroughly enjoyed meeting, conversing with, and listening to the thoughts and stories of the wonderful group of dedicated volunteers who attended. You raised so much thought provoking dialogue and you reinforced my own commitment to carry on volunteering, its undoubtedly the right thing to do.

I wish you the very best as you work towards your PhD – I have no doubt that you will be wonderfully successful, and I hope your work will inspire an even greater level of engagement in Volunteering going forward. I look forward to hearing the results of your research, and if I can be of any further assistance during your studies, please do not hesitate to give me a shout.

Many Thanks and best regards
-J

APPENDIX G: CODING

Comparative Codes (the graphic below represents only the first 50 lines of coding)
The Guide had 412 total coding lines
The Idealist had 433 total coding lines
The Executive had 273 total coding lines
The Champion had 462 total coding lines

	A	B	C	D
1	GUIDE - 9	IDEALIST - 6	EXECUTIVE - 4	CHAMPION - 5
2	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented
3	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented
4	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented
5	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented
6	Authentic Relationships	appreciated	action oriented	action oriented
7	Authentic Relationships	appreciates variety	action oriented	action oriented
8	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented
9	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented
10	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented
11	authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented
12	authentic Relationships		adaptable	action oriented
13	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	administrative	action oriented
14	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	affirmation	action oriented
15	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	affirmation	action oriented
16	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	ambitious	active
17	authentic Relationships	awareness for others in need	ambitious	active citizenship
18	authentic Relationships		ambitious	activist
19	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	ambitious	activist
20	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	appreciation	anxious
21	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	appreciation	awareness of activism
22	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	awareness of differences	awareness of cultural disparity
23	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	awareness of differences	awareness of cultural disparity
24	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity
25	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity
26	authentic Relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity
27	Meaningful relationships	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity
28	Meaningful relationships		believes in achievement	awareness of cultural disparity
29	relationships	care about helping others	committed	awareness of cultural disparity
30	relationships	care about helping others	communicator	awareness of cultural disparity
31	relationships	care about helping others	communicator	Awareness of disparities
32	relationships	care about helping others	communicator	Awareness of disparities
33	Values Relationships	care about helping others	communicator	Awareness of disparities
34	importance of relationship	care about helping others	communicator	Awareness of disparities
35	relationships	care about helping others	communicator	Awareness of disparities
36	relationships	caring about others	confident	Awareness of disparities
37	relationships	caring about others	confident	Awareness of disparities
38	relationships	caring about others	confident	Awareness of disparities
39	genuine relationship		confident	Awareness of disparities
40		complex thinkers	confident	awareness of global issues
41	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	confident	awareness of learning
42	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	conscientious	awareness of sacrifice
43	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	decisive	awareness of social differences
44	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	decisive	awareness of social differences
45	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	decisive	awareness of social issues
46	Awareness of Environment	complex thinkers	dependable	awareness of societal disparity
47	awareness of Environment	deep thinkers	dependable	awareness of societal disparity
48	awareness of Environment	deep thinkers	dislikes disorganization	awareness of societal disparity
49	awareness of Environment	deep thinkers	dislikes incompetence	awareness of societal disparity
50	awareness of Environment	deep thinkers	dislikes incompetence	awareness of societal disparity

Commonality Codes

	GUIDE - 9	IDEALIST - 6	EXECUTIVE - 4	CHAMPION - 5
1	GUIDE - 9	IDEALIST - 6	EXECUTIVE - 4	CHAMPION - 5
2	Authentic Relationships	appreciation	action oriented	action oriented
3	Awareness of Environment	awareness for others in need	ambitious	awareness of activism
4	awareness of others	awareness of differences	being in charge	awareness of cultural disparity
5	Committed	care about helping others	duty filler	belief in the cause
6	community-minded	complex thinkers	goal oriented	community-minded
7	confidence	connection with community	good natured	confident
8	deeply invested	cooperative	independent	deep thinkers/feelers
9	Dislikes idleness	devoted	inspired	deeply invested
10	Duty Bound	do for others	leader	dependable
11				
12	engaging	easygoing	logical	duty-bound
13	Feeling needed Loved	empathy	loyal	fights for others
14	Hands on - Direct Contact	cheerleader	organization	highly practical
15	impact	enjoyment	pragmatic	honest
16	inclusion	family influence	problem solver	identity
17	influence	feeling connection	respect for service	intuitive
18	Innate Natural	fulfillment	responsibility	natural leader
19	Interested helping in others	giving back	sense of duty	organized
20	leadership	golden rule	team oriented	others before self
21	Meaningful contribution	good communicator	values experience	outspoken
22	Organized	happiness	values knowledge	passionate
23	Privilege	helping others	values learning	perfection in others
24	risk-taker	immersed	values resourcefulness	perfection success in self and others
25	satisfaction rewarding	invested		personal investment

	A	B	C	D
26	Sense of Belonging	kindhearted		positive change
27	Sensitive	learned skills		pragmatic
28	Servant Leader	likes variety		realistic
29	social connection	meaning and purpose		results oriented
30	solution oriented	personal connection		risk-taker
31	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	personal investment		seek truth and justice
32	Values Learning/Education	positive		sense of belonging
33	well-being	purpose		set standards and beliefs
34		religious influence		social justice
35		satisfaction for self and others		straightforward
36		social connection		time investment
37		sympathy		un-afraid
38		value continued learning		values education
39		well-being		well-being
40		worthwhile		

Idiosyncratic Codes
(the graphic below represents only the first 38 lines of coding)
The Guide had 144 total coding lines
The Idealist had 126 total coding lines
The Executive had 84 total coding lines
The Champion had 98 total coding lines

	A	B	C	D
1	GUIDE	IDEALIST	EXECUTIVE	CHAMPION - 5
2	a good person	a gift	administrative	anxious
3	ability	adaptability	affirmation	because you can
4	Acceptance	altruistic	affirmation	benefit to others
5	active	ambitious	appreciation	caring
6		balance	appreciation	challenge others
7		balance	awareness of differences	challenging
8	agitator	belief	awareness of differences	commitment
9	attentive		believes in achievement	commonality
10	balance	better person	committed	commonality
11	balance	blessed	communicator	commonality
12	caring	challenge skills	communicator	connection
13	challenge		communicator	connection with others
14	challenge	church ethos	communicator	consistent
15	change	code of conduct	communicator	courageous
16	comfortable in education	communication with others	communicator	deeply impacted by disparities
17	communication	community	confident	detail oriented
18	communication	confidence building	confident	detail oriented
19		confidence building	confident	detail oriented

	A	B	C	D
20		contemplative	confident	empowerment
21	creative	contentment	confident	from bad to good
22	creative	create awareness	confident	fulfilling
23	deep thinker	deeds not words - action based	conscientious	human rights
24	deeply complex	deep meaning	decisive	impact
25	deeply complex	deep thinkers	decisive	impact
26	Complex	deep thinkers	decisive	impact
27	deeply ingrained	deep thinkers	dependable	influence
28	deeply ingrained	deep thinkers	dependable	influence
29	deeply intuitive	dependable	energetic	innate
30	Diversity	diversity	enthusiastic	intense
31	diversity	down to earth	environment	intense
32	driven	duty to give back	focused	invested
33	driven	ethical	giving back	invested
34	driven	ethical	good with people	invested
35		feel good	good with people	leadership
36	ehtos of church	feel good	good with people	leadership
37	empathy	feel good helping others	good with people	leadership
38	empathy	filling in the gaps	good with people	leadership

The Guide:

Frequency – Highest to lowest

Relationships	Learning/Education	Awareness	Hands on	Leadership	Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	Intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	Servant Leader	Sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested helping in others	Intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	Servant Leader	Sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested helping in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	Servant Leader	Sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested helping in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	Servant Leader	Sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested helping in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant leader	Sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested helping in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	Awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Teaching Sharing Knowledge	awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	teaching Sharing Knowledge	awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	intuitive
Authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	interested in others	intuitive
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	Hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	intuitive
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	sense of Belonging	Inclusivity	Interested in others	
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	Feeling needed Loved	inclusion		
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	Feeling needed Loved	inclusion		
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	Feeling needed Loved	inclusion		
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	servant Leader	Feeling needed Loved	inclusion not fitting in		
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of Environment	hands on - Direct Contact	leadership	Feeling needed Loved	Acceptance		
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of environment	hands on - Direct Contact	leadership	Feeling needed Loved			
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of others	hands on - Direct Contact	leadership	feeling needed Loved			
authentic Relationships	Values Learning/Education	awareness of others	hands on - Direct Contact	leadership				
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of others	hands on - Direct Contact	humble leader				
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of others	hands on - Direct Contact	natural leaders				
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of others	hands on - Direct Contact					
authentic Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of others disparity						
Values Relationships	values Learning/Education	awareness of differences						
relate to others	values Learning/Education	awareness of differences						
relationships	values Learning/Education	affectdd by environment						
relationships	values Learning/Education	social awareness						
relationships	values Learning/Education							
relationships	mentoring							
personal connection	mentoring							
personal connection	mentoring							
personal connection	mentoring							
personal connection	learning							
personal connection	learning							
personal connection	lifelong value for learning							
personal connection	learned values							
personal connection	knowledge							
personal connection	knowledge							
Meaningful relationships	leadership							
Meaningful relationships	impart knowledge							
importance of relationship	importance of learning							
genuine relationship	educating							
social relationships	comfortable in education							
social relationships	active learning							
connections	ethos education							
connections	self-development							
Social								
Social								
social								
social								
social								
social								
social								
social connection								
social connection								
social connection								
together								

The Idealist:

Frequency – Highest to lowest

satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learned skills	giving back	awareness for others in ne	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learned skills	giving back	awareness for others in ne	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning	giving back	awareness for others in ne	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning	giving back	awareness for others in ne	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning is important	giving back	awareness for others in ne	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning is important	giving back	awareness of blessings	appreciated	well-being	kindhearted
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning is important	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciated	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	learning leadership	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciates variety	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	lifelong learning	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciation	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	lifelong learning	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciation	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	value continued learning	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciation	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values education learning	giving back	awareness of differences	appreciation	well-being	
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values education learning	giving back	awareness of differences			
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values education learning	giving back	awareness of differences			
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values education learning	giving back	awareness of differences			
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values holistic learning					
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values knowledge					
satisfaction	helping others	meaning and purpose	values knowledge					
satisfaction	happy to help	meaning and purpose	values learning					
satisfaction	happy to help	meaning and purpose	values learning					
satisfaction for self and others	happy to help	meaning and purpose						
satisfaction for self and others	care about helping others							
satisfaction for self and others	care about helping others							
satisfaction for self and others	care about helping others							
satisfaction for self and others	care about helping others							
satisfaction for self and others	care about helping others							
fulfillment	care about helping others							
fulfillment	care about helping others							
fulfillment	care about helping others							
fulfillment	caring about others							
fulfillment	caring about others							
fulfillment	caring about others							
fulfillment	do							
fulfillment	do for others							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	do good							
fulfillment	doing good for others							
fulfillment	doing good for others							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment	empathy							
fulfillment								
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happiness								
happy								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
enjoyment								
feel good								
feel good								
feel good helping others								

The Champion:

Frequency – Highest to lowest

straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fight for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fight for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fight for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fighter of social justice
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fighter of social justice
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fights for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fights for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	fights for others
straightforward	awareness of cultural disparity	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	seek truth and justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	social justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	social justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid	sense of belonging	
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	social justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers	un-afraid		
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	social justice	action oriented	deep thinkers/feelers			
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	social justice	active				
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fight for others	active citizenship				
straightforward	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fight for others	activist				
honest	Awareness of disparities	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fight for others	activist				
honest	awareness of global issues	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fighter of social justice	awareness of activism				
honest	awareness of learning	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fighter of social justice					
honest	awareness of sacrifice	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fights for others					
honest	awareness of social differences	pragmatic	belief in the cause	fights for others					
honest	awareness of social differences	highly practical	belief in the cause	fights for others					
honest	awareness of social issues	highly practical	belief in the cause						
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical	belief in the cause						
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical	belief in the cause						
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical	belief in the cause						
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical							
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical							
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical							
honest	awareness of societal disparity	highly practical							
honest	awareness of suffering	highly practical							
honest	deeply impacted by disparities								
honest									
honest									

The Executive:

Frequency – Highest to lowest

respect for service	leader	values experience	problem solver	organization	good natured	goal oriented	action oriented	affirmation	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler	independent logical	being in charge
respect for service	leader	values experience	problem solver	organization	good natured	goal oriented	action oriented	affirmation	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler	independent logical	being in charge
respect for service	leader	values experience	problem solver	organized	good natured	goal oriented	action oriented	ambitious	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler	independent logical	being in charge
respect for service	leader	values experience	problem solver	organized	good natured	goal oriented	action oriented	ambitious	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler	independent logical	being in charge
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good natured	goal oriented	action oriented	ambitious	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler	independent logical	
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people	goal oriented	action oriented	ambitious	pragmatic	loyal	duty filler		
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people	goal oriented	action oriented	appreciation	pragmatic	loyalty			
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people	goal oriented	action oriented	appreciation	pragmatic	loyalty			
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people	goal oriented	action oriented	needs to feel appreciated	pragmatic				
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people	goal oriented	action oriented	self-affirming					
respect for service	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people								
responsibility	leader	values knowledge	problem solver	organized	good with people								
responsibility	leader	values knowledge											
responsibility	leader	values knowledge											
responsibility	leader	values knowledge											
responsibility	leader	values knowledge											
responsibility	leader	values learning											
responsibility	leader	values learning											
responsibility	leader	values learning											
responsibility	leader	values learning											
responsible	leader	values learning											
responsible	leader authoratative												
responsible													
responsible													
responsible													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													
sense of duty													

Appendix I: Poll Everywhere Live Polling Results

Question One

One word to describe what volunteering means to you.

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

giving
society contributing
community responsibility
back
connecting
helping
engagement

Poll Everywhere

Question Two

What motivates you to volunteer?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"Obligations"

"Being asked"

"Opportunity to learn"

"The need to take action"

"Satisfaction"

"Having something to contribute."

"Humanity"

"Civic responsibility"

"How much I learn from the experience"

Poll Everywhere

Question Three

What discourages you from volunteering?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"No time!"

"Time"

"Inertia"

"Time constraints"

"Bad management"
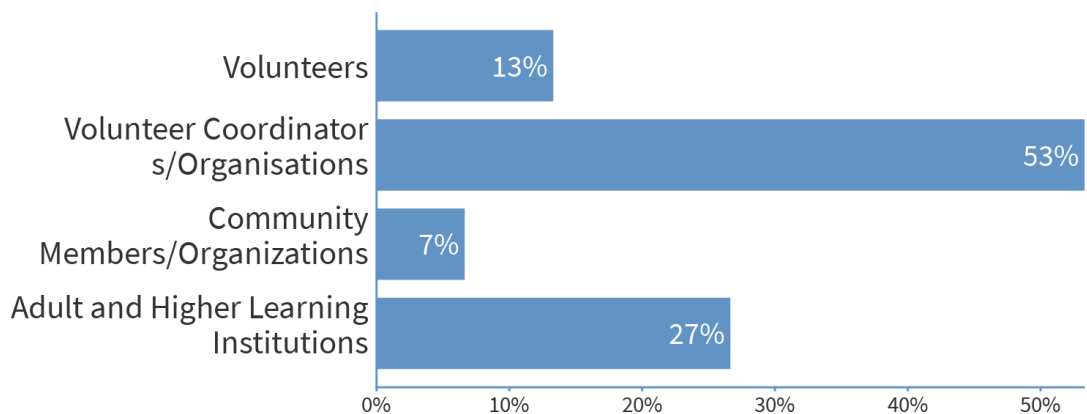
"Unnecessary paperwork"

"Other obligations"

"Nothing YET"

"Thinking I cannot make any difference"

Question Four

Who do you think will be impacted most by the findings in this research?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

Question Five

What one thing did you learn about yourself as a volunteer or volunteer advocate?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"I like to be the organiser!"

"Some theory"

"I care about issues more than I realized"

"I always have more to learn in this area"

"I've broadened my definition of what 'counts' as volunteering."

"My approach to volunteering"

"Volunteers can come in all ages"

"Leadership type"

Poll Everywhere

Question Six

Is there anything that you wish I had shared with you, but didn't? Did I miss anything?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"What are the actual skills that people learned?"

"No, that was great!"

"No you did great!"

"thankyou and good luck"

"What is their before and after view of volunteering. You made them reflect, so did that change their views?"

"What did the participants get the most out of their reflections"

"Good job!"

"Go on, tell us about your volunteer leader findings…we won't tell anyone.😉"

Poll Everywhere

Question Seven

Did you find this presentation interesting and informative? Why or why not?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"Yes, thanks"

"Yes it was great!"

"Please can we have a link to this presentation or a handout?"

Question Eight

Do you consider yourself a volunteer leader? Why or why not?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

"No, because not currently active in volunteering."

"No, It's hard to be something if you don't do the thing"

"Yes"

"Yes mentoring and sharing info with other volunteers"

"I am not an active volunteer at the moment, so no."
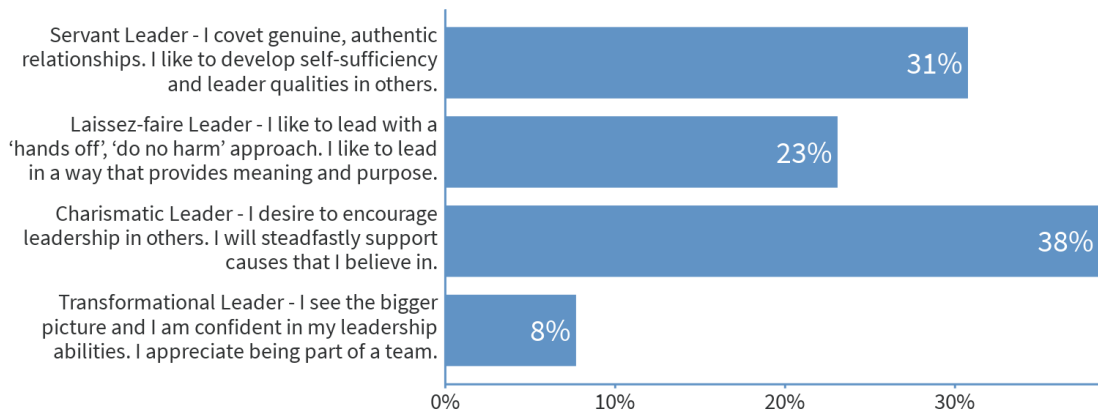
"Not really."

"Yes."

"Yes. I lead groups of young people to be more confident & to find their place in society"

Question Nine

In terms of volunteering, which Leadership Style do you think you most identify with?

🔒 **Poll locked.** Responses not accepted.

Leadership Style	Percentage
Servant Leader - I covet genuine, authentic relationships. I like to develop self-sufficiency and leader qualities in others.	31%
Laissez-faire Leader - I like to lead with a 'hands off', 'do no harm' approach. I like to lead in a way that provides meaning and purpose.	23%
Charismatic Leader - I desire to encourage leadership in others. I will steadfastly support causes that I believe in.	38%
Transformational Leader - I see the bigger picture and I am confident in my leadership abilities. I appreciate being part of a team.	8%

Poll Everywhere

Shelli Garland <garlands@tcd.ie>

Approval Shelli Ann Garland 9th April 2018

Phdrsrch <PHDRSRCH@tcd.ie>   9 April 2018 at 15:37
To: Shelli Garland <GARLANDS@tcd.ie>
Cc: Senior Tutor <senior.tutor@tcd.ie>, Aidan Seery <SEERYA@tcd.ie>

Approval Shelli Ann Garland   **9th April 2018**

Dear Shelli,

The School of Education's Ethics Committee received and reviewed the amendments to your application for approval of your research project entitled "Volunesia: Transformations through volunteering. Exploring the lived experience of the active community volunteer in Ireland, who participated in community engagement and/or community based learning during their 3rd level education".

It is the decision of the Committee that you may now proceed with your research on the condition that it is carried out as indicated on your application. Should there be a change in the design of your research project, you will need to re-apply again for approval from the School of Education's Ethics Committee.

 If you have any queries regarding this decision, please contact the Chair of the School of Education's Ethics Committee and Director of Research, Dr Ann Devitt (devittan@tcd.ie).

We wish you all the very best with your research project.

 Kind regards,

Fiona McKibben

Research Officer at the School of Education

on behalf of Professor Ann Devitt

Director of Research

3088 School of Education Arts Building

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

Dublin 2, Ireland.

Tel | + 353 1 8963583

_____

3088 Scoil an Oideachais

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath, Ollscoil Átha Cliath

APPENDIX K: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS

Interviews

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – Individual Interview

Title of Project: National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland

The Study: I am a Ph.D. student in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. I am carrying out research on the transformative and lifelong value that volunteering and community-based learning has on the participant post-tertiary education. This thesis is specifically investigating the lived experience of the active community volunteer post-tertiary education to provide a better understanding of whether education and/or volunteer experience while in higher education, promote and enhance a commitment to learning that supports the enduring phenomenon of transformative learning.

Participant Information: If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in an audio-recorded interview. Portions of this recording may be used in future educational and research related presentations, but will not be used publically, unless your specific written permission has been obtained. If at any time, you do not wish to provide audio, you are still an important aspect of this research and your anonymity will be respected and adhered to. The interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

I can foresee no risks for your participation in the study, beyond those experienced in everyday life. The information gathered will be treated with privacy and anonymity. No information regarding you will be revealed in the research. Information will be stored safely with access only available to the research team and examiners and it will all be destroyed after 10 years. The anonymized results from the study will be included in a thesis and may be discussed at conferences or published in a book or a journal.

You don't have to take part in this study if you don't want to and you can withdraw from the study at any time, without saying why. If you have any questions or if you don't understand something just ask the researcher to explain it for you.

Finally, thank you for taking time to read this.

Researcher Contact: Shelli Ann Garland   garlands@tcd.ie   +353 083 4584986

Supervisor Contact: Dr. Aidan Seery   seerya@tcd.ie   +353 1-8962433

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland

You are under **no** obligation to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, but at a later stage feel the need to withdraw, you are free to do so.

Please answer all of the following (tick the appropriate box):

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet.	☐	☐
I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.	☐	☐
I am fully aware of the procedures involving and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.	☐	☐
I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.	☐	☐
I know that my approval to use audio portions of my interview for future presentations are voluntary and that I can withdraw consent of the use of same at any stage without giving any reason.	☐	☐
I am aware that my results will be kept anonymous.	☐	☐

I agree to participate in the above study:

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – Workshop/Focus Group

Title of Project: National Research Project on Active Volunteers in Ireland

The Study: I am a Ph.D. student in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. I am carrying out research on the volunteer identity, transformative and lifelong impact of volunteering, and community-based learning in higher education. This thesis is specifically investigating the lived experience of the active community volunteer post-tertiary education to provide a better understanding of whether volunteer experiences and higher education promote and enhance a commitment to learning that supports the enduring phenomenon of transformative learning.

Participant Information: If you agree to take part in this study, you may be asked to take part in an audio/visual-recorded workshop/focus group where portions of the group participation may be video and/or audio recorded for future presentations. These images and/or recordings will not be used publically, unless your specific written permission has been obtained. If, at any time, you do not wish to provide video or photographic approval, you are still an important aspect of this research and your anonymity will be respected and adhered to. The workshop/focus group will take approximately 3 hours to complete.

I can foresee no risks for your participation in the study, beyond those experienced in everyday life. The information gathered will be treated with privacy and anonymity. No information regarding your identity will be revealed in the research. Information will be stored safely with access only available to the research team and examiners and it will be destroyed after 10 years. The anonymised results from the study will be included in a thesis and may be discussed at conferences or published in a book or a journal.

You don't have to take part in this study if you don't want to and you can withdraw from the study at any time, without saying why. If you have any questions or if you don't understand something just ask the researcher to explain it for you.

Finally, thank you for taking time to read this.

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Participant Consent Form

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You are under **no** obligation to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, but at a later stage feel the need to withdraw, you are free to do so.

Please answer all of the following (tick the appropriate box):

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet.	☐	☐
I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.	☐	☐
I am fully aware of the procedures involving and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.	☐	☐
I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.	☐	☐
I know that my approval to use video/audio/image is voluntary and that I can withdraw consent of and the use of same at any stage without giving any reason.	☐	☐
I am aware that my results will be kept anonymous.	☐	☐

I agree to participate in the above study:

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date