Charitable Impulses: Motivations, Experiences and Effects of Volunteering

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Abstract

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Volunteering is a still relatively underexplored field of research that has, however, steadily gained prominence within the workforce and academic curriculums. This thesis will attempt to delineate the field of charitable action by examining the experiences and perspectives of twenty-one interlocutors recruited for the research. Through an in-depth analysis of their backgrounds and interests, this study will concentrate on the motivation, experience and effects of charitable action. In particular, it will argue that amongst Montreal volunteers, these stages often reflect features associated with the shift from close-knit communal forms of living to highly individualized interactions. As will be elaborated, the relationship between socioeconomic change and the actual process of volunteering can illustrate the highly flexible nature of this field and the lasting impact of structural shifts.

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Introduction

In February 2012, I attended a small panel discussion hosted by a well-known humanitarian organization in Montreal. Located in a university classroom, the goal of this event was to highlight the types of international projects undertaken by this association and the value of its volunteers. The majority of those in attendance were university students who were interested in overseas travel and assistance. As well, the organizers of this event, who were also hosting the panel discussion, were long-term members of this particular group and had extensive experience volunteering abroad. Their goal was to encourage a dialogue on the complexities and concerns regarding humanitarian aid. Although a range of fascinating topics was explored, the personal experiences and volunteer trajectories of those hosting the discussion were especially striking. In particular, many of these volunteers describe an initially idealistic and romantic attitude towards aid that had a strong influence on their early incentives. This includes the desire for travel and exploration while gaining a sense of subjective fulfillment by providing assistance. Although these sentiments may have shifted throughout their charitable journeys, I became interested in some of the unarticulated beliefs that seemed to characterize these accounts and of others in attendance. Not just limited to overseas assistance, such attitudes include a sense of subjective fulfillment for the volunteer alongside intangible improvements such as greater empathy or compassion and an enhanced appreciation for supported groups and communal awareness.

As a result of these observations, I decided to concentrate my thesis on the three main stages involved in the act of volunteering. These include the motivation to become involved, the actual experience of charitable action and lastly, its long-term effects on the volunteer. Through this exploration, I hope to delineate the charitable

field and explain some of the beliefs and influences commonly affecting this activity. Since the research is concerned with the individual process of charitable action, those recruited for the study hailed from diverse backgrounds and had experiences in both local and international forms of assistance. Such a group combined with diverse literature on the volunteer field provided a rich and substantive source of information that proved immensely useful to the research. In particular, the literature review will argue how the move from industrialization, to modernity and post-industrialization had a corresponding impact on charitable action. More specifically, it seems to have shifted close-knit forms of assistance, commonly found in traditional and agrarian societies to highly reflexive and episodic forms of participation. While these changes may have altered the general nature of volunteering, I will argue that each stage of the volunteer process is similarly affected by qualities associated with structural change.

For instance, in the chapter *Postindustrial Values and the Motivation to Volunteer*, I explore three overarching features accompanying the decision to volunteer. These include personal history and background, subjective wellbeing and the pursuit of pleasure. This chapter will argue that although these characteristics may have influenced the incentives of some participants, these qualities also reflect the highly individualized, multifaceted and reflexive features commonly attributed to postindustrial society. Whereas multiplicity, subjectivity and fluidity characterized the motivation of some participants, the actual experience of volunteering was often associated with productivity and employment. More specifically, in chapter two titled *Charitable Experiences and The Centralization of Work,* I will demonstrate how features linked to early modernity or processes of industrialization had a strong influence on the charitable experience of some interlocutors. In particular, it seems to have created an instrumental approach to charitable action that often involved the

search for employment or the desire for active retirement, in the process highlighting the underlying pervasiveness of labor or efficiency and its individual impact on the lives of some interlocutors.

The final chapter, *Communal Values and the Effects of Volunteering,* will elaborate on the impact volunteering had on some of the participants recruited for the study. More specifically, it seems that for certain interviewees, sustained and meaningful interactions elicited an enhanced appreciation for actions that reflect reciprocity, solidarity and empathy. In particular, those assisted were no longer viewed under broad terms such as 'homeless' or 'disadvantaged' but as complete persons with individual histories and backgrounds. As a result, these volunteers seem to extend their understanding of previously distinct peoples and groups, in the process creating a more inclusive definition of community.

Therefore, while volunteering can be viewed as a complex field of activities, these chapters will concentrate on some of the dynamics involved in the stages of volunteering. In particular, by focusing on the motivation, experience and effect of charitable action, I will elucidate the ever evolving and shifting charitable field. This thesis will begin with a detailed overview of the literature and themes associated with volunteering in North America. In this chapter, I will argue that the shift from preindustrial living, to industrialization and post-industrialization had a corresponding impact on the charitable field. In particular, broad socioeconomic change appears to have encouraged a shift from direct and spontaneous forms of assistance to highly institutionalized and episodic forms of giving that emphasize the subjective interests of the giver rather then the recipient of aid. The following three ethnographic chapters will elaborate on this argument. For instance, in the first chapter I describe how the motivation to volunteer often shares the hybrid and

multiple qualities associated with postindustrial living. This is in distinction to the actual experience of charitable action, which seems to highlight the productive and instrumental features often associated with industrialization. The last chapter follows this particular line of explanation by demonstrating how the effect of volunteering often reproduces the communal and collective qualities associated with traditional or preindustrial forms of living. In that respect, the diversity involved in volunteering can reflect the nature of a Rorschach inkblot, absorbing and adapting to the aspirations of individual members and the underlying beliefs that drive their participation.

Literature Review

Volunteering is often described as a broad and complex field of activities. Yet there are few systematic studies or reviews of the development of volunteering in North America as well as on contemporary trends in this kind of involvement. This review will examine the works of key contributors to this area and highlight some of its major themes and definitions. In doing so, I hope to provide a comparative context for my own ethnographic study of volunteer engagement in Montreal, Quebec. The chapter will begin by examining the main concepts and paradigms associated with the field. It will argue that the evolution of volunteering and its associated beliefs developed out of broad social, economic and religious processes that shifted concern from community welfare to individualized forms of assistance. The review will then demonstrate how life course theories and narrative approaches to charitable action can help elucidate the lasting impact of these changes. In particular, by highlighting the close relationship between structural transformations and unique biographies, ethnographic studies on volunteering can provide a more nuanced and representative understanding of current forms of charitable action. In turn, setting the foundation for a more clear and rounded understanding of volunteer engagement in North America.

Setting the Field: Paradigms, Definition and Ambiguity

A main source of ambiguity within volunteering is an agreed upon definition of the act. Rochester et al., (2010) describe volunteering as "the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain" (Rochester et al., 2010: 19). Although lack of remuneration and free choice are often attributed to

volunteering, both characteristics are equally vague and fraught with inconsistencies. In regards to free choice, Rochester et al., (2010) provide examples where volunteering is not directly enforced but strongly encouraged. These includes employer supported volunteering, unpaid work experience activities that prepare individuals for work, forms of service learning by students in higher education and community service experience by school students (Rochester et al., 2010: 20). In these instances, volunteering is encouraged by external forces and viewed as a beneficial activity that improves one's chances of gainful employment or academic success.

The belief that 'real' volunteering is defined by lack of remuneration is equally problematic. Thus Rochester et al., (2010) provide examples where volunteering is rewarded with material forms of recognition. These include concert tickets, parties, discounts, free memberships, and Christmas or birth cards. For Rochester et al, both lack of remuneration and free choice can be viewed as ideal types that distinguish volunteering from similar forms of assistance. As will be explained further, Rochester et al., (2010) provide a point of departure whereby an older tradition of aid can be compared with emerging trends. Another feature of volunteering addressed in Rochester et al., (2010) definition is the distinction between formal and informal types of assistance. They describe formal volunteering as "unpaid help through group, clubs or organizations to benefit other people or the environment" (Rochester et al., 2010: 20). On the other hand, informal volunteering is focused on providing "unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives" (Rochester et al., 2010: 20). Whereas the former provides legitimacy and recognition to the volunteer act due to its emphasis on formal organizations, groups and memberships, the latter can be easily attributed to common neighborliness, a considerate friend or Good Samaritan. The distinction between formal and informal assistance illustrates the

fine line between what is considered volunteering and alternate forms of care. However, in regards to formal volunteering, the focus on organizational commitment and period of involvement provides more delineated boundaries that can be accounted for by administrative records and statistical results. As a result, this chapter will focus on the development of formal volunteering in Canada and the United States.

Most formal volunteering takes place within Non-Profit Organization (NGOs), which encompass a range of activities from local, grass roots initiatives to large international humanitarian regimes and charities. According to Willets (2002), an NGO is "an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis, for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities" (Willets 2002: 2). Although non-profit, non-criminality and lack of political incentive are defining attributes that distinguish NGOs from similar organizations such as class or political parties, Fisher (1997) notes how "generalizations about the NGO sector [often] obscure the tremendous diversity found within it" (Fisher 1997: 9). This includes distinguishing between the diverse range of NGOs and their various and sometimes conflicting mandates. An example is the distinction between the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). On the surface, both are large, well-known, international non-profit organizations concerned with an overarching interest in the welfare of others. However, while PETA focuses on animal rights, the ICRC is an international humanitarian organization concerned with human rights. Further, whereas the ICRC follows an ethic of neutrality and non-interference, PETA is quite vocal and activist in their orientation. Rochester et al., (2010) attempt to reconcile the diversity found within the NGOs and volunteering by outlining three main paradigms associated with charitable assistance.

These perspectives, known as the non-profit, civil society and 'serious leisure' paradigms are seen as having a strong influence on volunteer roles, motivation and the type of work undertaken. By associating each perspective with a particular type of organizational involvement, Rochester et al., (2010) narrow the NGO field and make it more comprehensible. The non-profit model describes volunteering as "essentially an altruistic act often seen as the 'gift' of one's time and thus analogous to the gift of money which defines philanthropy" (Rochester et al., 2010: 11). It represents the dominant view on volunteering with assistance often taking place in the broad field of social welfare, for example, providing support to elderly citizens, children, individuals with physical or mental disabilities and those suffering from poverty or social exclusion (Rochester et al., 2010: 11). Most non-profit volunteers work within large, professional and highly structured environments alongside paid staff (Rochester et al., 2010: 11). An example of this model would be volunteering within a mental health organization. In this setting, volunteers would work alongside professionals who have an understanding of and experience with various mental health conditions.

Although similar to the non-profit paradigm, the civil society perspective is characterized by an element of activism where assistance extends "beyond social welfare to other areas of public policy such as transport, town planning and the environment" (Rochester et al., 2010: 12). According to Rochester et al., (2010) civil society volunteerism is rooted in academic disciplines such as political science and sociology. It uses a theoretical understanding of inequality and public policy to campaign for improvements in social welfare and provisions at a local level. Rather then focusing on one-sided assistance and a desire to help, this model is concerned with alleviating the structural inconsistencies that lead to disparity and in the process eliminating the dependency between volunteers and those assisted. This is

done through an effective re-organization of "areas of activity in which they are involved, the organizational context for their activities and the kinds of roles they play" (Rochester et al., 2010: 12). In turn, creating techniques that encourage self-help and mutual aid. One example would be providing the tools, skills and information necessary for unemployed people to locate housing and employment within their communities. The role of volunteers in this context is not just face-to-face assistance but "to work together to meet shared needs and address common problems" (Rochester et al., 2010: 12).

This is unlike the non-profit-paradigm where volunteers commonly work within large organizations, report to supervisors and have clearly defined tasks that are to be completed and carried out. Rather, civil society volunteers are viewed as cooperative members of an association, who are allowed to take on leadership roles and share in its operational activities. Examples include local grass roots initiatives concerned with alleviating poverty in their immediate community. Although both non-profit and civil society paradigms differ in their approach towards assistance and organizational setting, they share a broader concern for the welfare of the community and population. This stands in sharp distinction to a paradigm of volunteering as 'serious leisure'. In this model, volunteering focuses on the subjective interests and needs of the participant rather then on an overarching concern for the wellbeing of others.

Volunteering as 'serious leisure' is often pursued as a hobby that provides volunteers an opportunity to "engage in serious leisure activities because of an enthusiasm for the specific form of involvement and commitment to acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to practice it" (Rochester et al., 2010: 14). Although there can be other reasons for becoming involved, a main interest for leisure

volunteers is to participate in or gain skills in an activity they genuinely enjoy. In this context, engagement often takes place in the field of art, culture, sports and recreation where participants can take on a variety of positions that suit their interests. This includes teaching an arts class, tutoring, judging competitions or carrying out supportive roles, whereby the volunteer takes on the role of "performer, practitioner or participant" (Rochester et al., 2010: 14), for example, coaching minor league soccer or baseball. While all three paradigms provide a useful starting point to delineating field of volunteering, most forms of assistance are not easily classified or defined. Similar to the definition of volunteering and the classification of NGOs, Rochester et al., (2010) note that these paradigms are ideal types, which "do not adequately reflect the complexity of many volunteering experiences which combine more than one of these perspectives" (Rochester et al., 2010: 15). As this chapter will demonstrate, the origins of these paradigms stem from a series of overlapping structural, historical and religious processes in North America. An overview of voluntary associations in the twentieth century sets the stage for this examination. It demonstrates that while both Canada and the United States may have evolved differently, their underlining historical and religious similarity seems to influence broader attitudes to charitable action today. In turn, encouraging a more inclusive and broader perspective on charitable action in North America.

The 20th Century and the Rise and Decline of Voluntary Associations

Associations and non-profit organizations are important features of civil society and it is within this sphere that forms of civic engagement including volunteering can occur. This section will explore the development of voluntary organizations in Canada and the United States. In particular, while the twentieth-century marked the creation of a strong welfare state in Canada, the relationship between civic

associations in the United States and the federal government was more varied and complex. Elson (2006) outlines the development of voluntary associations in Canada and their relationship to the federal government. He argues that Depression era insecurity combined with rapid economic growth after WWII encouraged the Canadian government to invest in postwar reconstruction. This included social security measures that provided "protection to individuals and families against loss of income while also maintaining their consumer purchasing power" (Elson2006: 45). The Marsh Report on Social Security in 1943 was an important step in this development. Its purpose was to advance a series of proposals that would "contribute to postwar economic readjustment and reconstruction" (Elson2006: 45). As a result, a sequence of universal income and social support programs were implemented, which allowed the voluntary sector in Canada to "[grow] with and alongside government welfare services, fostering a complex and often interdependent relationship" (Elson2006: 47). This arrangement served a dual purpose for the federal government. On the one hand, it allowed the government to distribute funding to needed programs and services "while also maintaining a 'window' on community needs and trends" (Elson2006: 46).

For Elson (2006), this golden period of state sponsored support was short-lived as the decrease in Canadian economic development during the late twentieth-century led to a "decline in growth of social welfare expenditure between 1990 and 1995 and again between 1995 and 2000" (Elson2006: 51). An outcome of this was the changed relationship between voluntary organizations and the federal government in Canada. As he outlines,

> "flexible grants to meet designated community needs were replaced by short-term contracts that involved not only adherence to strict government

> guidelines and reporting requirements, but competition with other voluntary or private sector organizations" (Elson2006: 52).

Skocpol et al., (2000) alongside Crowley and Skocpol (2001), Gramm and Putnam (1999) and Hall (2000) outline a similar process of civic growth and decline in the United States. However, unlike Canada the American literature on civic associations and participation is richly detailed and more numerous.

According to Gramm and Putnam (1999) and Crowley and Skocpol (2001), the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century experienced an unprecedented growth in civic associations and membership in the United States. For Crowley and Skocpol (2001), the period during and after the American Civil War was crucial to this development. During the civil war, voluntary organizations in the American North played an influential role in encouraging national sentiment while garnering support for the cause. In particular, Crowley and Skocpol (2001) explain that since the "federal government in 1860 had no large standing army or bureaucracy, trans-state voluntary federations had to be assembled to mobilize soldiers and civilian supporters" (Crawley&Skocpol2001: 815). As the United States moved into the twentieth century, rapid socioeconomic and demographic change brought on by processes of modernization renewed the need for voluntary assistance. According to Crowley and Skocpol (2001), this was most evident in the decades preceding WWII, where voluntary associations assisted the move from "a commercial-agrarian country into an ethnically diverse metropolitan-industrial powerhouse" (Crawley&Skocpol2001: 814). Beito (2000) elaborates on the role membership based volunteer associations played in this context. As he notes,

> "the aid dispensed through governments and organized charities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not only minimal but carried great stigma. In contrast to the hierarchical methods of public and

> private charity, fraternal aid rested on the ethical principal of reciprocity. Donors and recipients often came from the same walk, or nearly the same walks of life; today's recipient could be tomorrow's donor, and vice versa" (Beito2000: 3).

Similarly Hall (2000) describes, "the hazards and uncertainties of urban life could be mitigated through fraternal associations which helped members and their families financially in times of illness and death" (Hall2000: 36). This shifted after WWII where like Canada, postwar reconstruction policies; in this case those influenced by the New Deal, encouraged the "federal government's wholesale assumption of responsibility for social insurance—old age pensions, unemployment compensation, and disability payment, [which] was a major departure from the past" (Hall2000: 50).

However, in comparison to Canada's welfare state, this assumption was at best negligible. For instance, Hall (2000) elaborates on the policies initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which favored the growth and reliance on voluntary associations in the United States. As he describes, "Roosevelt preferred to work through state and local governments and private entities, rather than creating the kind of vast central state bureaucracies that were emerging in other advanced industrial nations" (Hall2000: 50). The tax-exempt status of non-profit organizations in the United States further encouraged the expansion and dependency on non-profit organizations. As Hall (2000) describes,

> "It is no accident that the impressive proliferation of registered tax-exempt nonprofits in the United States from fewer than 13,000 in 1940 to more than 1.5 million at the end of the century coincided with legislative and regulatory policies that defined and systematically favored nonprofits and those who contributed to their support" (Hall2000: 32).

Therefore, "where charities and tax laws favored private initiatives, philanthropic and voluntary enterprises flourished. Where the law discouraged them, they did not" (Hall2000: 50). Similar to Canada, the United States experienced a noticeable decrease in civic associations membership in the latter part of the twentieth century. As Skocpol et al., (2000) note, "only after the mid-1960s did membership federations in general experience sharp decline, as new social movements and professionally run advocacy associations transformed civic life in unprecedented ways" (Skocpol et al., 2000: 542). As will be described further, this deterioration inspired Putnam's (2001) classic study on social capital and civic engagement in the United States. In turn, encouraging new approaches and perspectives on volunteer engagement in North America.

In both Canada and the United States, voluntary engagement and civic association membership underwent an increase after WWII and a decrease in the latter part of the twentieth-century. While both regions share a similar pattern of non-profit development and participation, their legislative, governmental and economic policies on growth and domestic assistance are markedly different. However, as the next section will demonstrate, the early and common ethnic and religious composition of English Canada and the American North seems to have influenced a broader more homogenous attitude towards community and individual enterprise, in the process creating a platform whereby literature on American and Canadian forms of volunteering can be applied interchangeably in both settings.

A Shared History: Canada, United States and the Protestant Ethic

Grabb et al., (2000) outline the early socioeconomic development of English Canada and the American North during the 18th and 19th century. Their analysis concentrates

on the colonial settlement of Upper and Lower Canada and the populations inhabiting the Upper Midwest and Northeast corner of the United States. The former included parts of Ontario and Quebec, whereas latter comprised of states belonging to New England as well as Michigan and Wisconsin, henceforth referred to as the American North. Grabb et al., (2000) reveal that while French Quebec and the American South can be viewed as distinct communities due to separate histories and development, the populations inhabiting the rest of English Canada and the American North were substantially similar in terms of their initial ethnic and religious composition as well as class and economic structure (Grabb et al., 2000: 412). For instance, a majority of early American and Canadian settlers were of English, Scottish and Irish descent (Grabb et al., 2000: 399). Most shared a common Protestant orientation and lived a "rural, agriculturally based, and frequently isolated, existence" (Grabb et al., 2000: 402). As they elaborate,

> "at least until the middle of the 1800s, Americans in the northern states probably had more in common with their Canadian neighbors than with their southern countryman" (Grabb et al., 2000: 406).

The communal and religious similarity between both these regions provides an interesting insight into the close relationship between Protestant beliefs and charitable action. More specifically, it was the unique combination of spiritual ideals and economic development that encouraged the growth of a separate charitable space in North America. These notions were seen as fostering a collective and enterprising attitude that continues to impact volunteering today. Innes (1995) builds on this argument and explains how the Protestant belief in predestination and vocation had a key role in this development. In particular, predestination refers to the view that an individual's "ultimate spiritual salvation or condemnation by God has been ordained in advance" (Oxford2013). For believers, there are a few signs that can determine whether one is included among the elect. One includes material

prosperity on earth and another is the level of success attained through the pursuit of a calling or vocation. Robert Michaelsen (2013) defines the Protestant notion of vocation as "the call from God which constitutes an indication of election, and to a particular calling or station in life" (Michaelsen2013: 316). It follows that the level of success a person has in pursuing this vocation can be seen as a sign of their chosen status or sanctity.

According to Innes (1994), the central tension within this intricate belief may have fostered the development of a separate charitable sphere. In particular, the lure of increased profit and self-interested actions were seen as creating anxiety as it went against religious and communal ideology. This dilemma becomes increasingly problematic when considering the Protestant ethic of self-discipline, which "fostered industrious and 'striving' behavior, communal responsibility, and a high ratio of savings and investment relative to income by its limitations on leisure" (Innes 1995: 9). Thus,

> "Industriousness and frugality brought wealth, which in turn brought temptation and worldliness…At the core of [this] ethic was a tension that was at once extraordinarily productive economically and tremendously difficult psychologically" (Innes1993: 25).

To reconcile the struggle between self-oriented and altruistic actions, colonial settlers developed a system of reinvestment and communal assistance. Rather then using their earnings for personal gain or desires, early followers often placed them in activities that encouraged civic engagement, support and mutual aid. Innes (1995) demonstrates this attitude in the following passage,

> "The belief that surplus wealth should be put to socially benevolent purposes – shared with the community and the church – helped restrain the Protestant ethic from turning into the [modern] spirit of capitalism" (Innes1993: 310).

While this perspective is often applied to the Protestant or Puritan influence in New England and its aggregate impact on the American economy, Grabb et al., (2000) demonstrate how a similar outlook can also be applied to English Canada. For instance, both American and Canadian settler communities are described as promoting "a sense of local communalism, emphasizing conformity to collectively held and often religiously based values and beliefs" (Grabb et al., 2000: 403). This is in addition to "considerable personal freedom in the economic sphere, including the opportunity to own and work their own land" (Grabb et al., 2000: 403). Thus the economic and spiritual similarities between both regions are seen as fostering overall commercial growth while also establishing also establishing a distinct charitable space. For instance, in the following passage Grabb et al., (2000) elaborate on the distinct religious and communal values underlying development of settler communities in English Canada, in the process highlighting a similarity with the United States. As they elaborate.

> "while it is acceptable that this life activity should produce wealth and material rewards, it should be guided by a [responsibility] to contribute to the larger community and glory of God" (Grabb et al., 2000: 394).

For both populations, the redistribution of earnings within the community served a dual function. While it temporarily abated the Protestant guilt associated with increased profit, it also produced an ongoing tension between self-interested and altruistic actions that continue to run through volunteering today. According to Friedman and McGarvie (2003), the struggle between collective and individualized forms of assistance originates from this original division. In particular, by tracing the development of charity into philanthropy, they demonstrate how the shift in forms of assistance can also reflect broad macro structural processes.

In particular, the move from a preindustrial to industrial society can underscore the dynamism between subjective and more collective kinds of aid. For instance, Friedman and McGarvie (2003) outline how the "conception and role of philanthropy changed dramatically from the 1500s when it was considered charity, to the early 1800s when it was organized philanthropy" (Friedman and McGarvie2003: 26). Whereas charity reflects small-scale communal forms of assistance and interactions, philanthropy represents a more rational and removed service. In particular, its concern with broader welfare issues such as poverty and the eradication of disease seems to outweigh the importance of direct and personal acts of assistance often attributed to charity. However, Friedman and McGarvie (2003) argue that while the shift into an industrialized society may have led to "a gradual, incremental, and sometimes temporarily reversible process of systematization and rationalization" (Friedman&McGarvie2003: 18). It has "never eradicated older, more spontaneous, and individualized traditions of helping and giving" (Friedman&McGarvie2003: 18). Thus, highlighting the ongoing dualism between individualized and collective forms of assistance that is at the heart of charitable action today.

Thus, it can be argued that while the United States experienced accelerated economic growth from the 18th to 20th century, the Protestant ethic seems to have impacted charitable action in both societies. In particular, it created a standardized understanding of aid that often distinguished between self-interested and collective forms of assistance, in the process highlighting a central tension within this religious denomination. Further, features associated with this belief system can also be found in the three paradigms proposed by Rochester et al., (2010). For instance, the non-profit model closely resembles the altruistic and collective values associated with shared religious beliefs. In particular, the notion of charitable assistance as a 'gift' can

demonstrate the intricate workings of communal norms and implied expectations of reciprocity. On the other hand, characteristics associated with the civil society paradigm seem to correspond closely the development of philanthropy. This includes its characteristic emphasis on education and the alleviation of structural concerns, such as poverty or disease. Lastly, leisure volunteering can be viewed as a unique reflection of the Protestant ethic and the value of productivity, which includes the efficient use of time. As will be described further, this paradigm also reflects the more recent and individualized need for self-improvement.

However, while the historical background of volunteering in North American alongside the three perspectives put forth by Rochester et al., (2010) may delineate the field of volunteering, it does not explain the unique ways such individualized forms of assistance are combined. The next section will elaborate on this issue and explain how processes of modernization and the rise of voluntary organizations have involved attempts to reconcile this complexity by allowing individuals to engage in both communal and individualized forms of support. The presence of both alternatives extends characteristics associated with charitable and philanthropic endeavors and provides volunteers a space where they can experience meaningful interactions and aspire to contributions with broader social impacts.

Modernity and the Rise of Voluntary Associations

The structural changes and transformations brought on by modernization processes in the twentieth century had a strong influence on the development of volunteering in North America. It replaced an older tradition of aid that focused on communal concerns with more individualized forms of assistance. Bauman's (2000) notion of community and individuality provides a useful lens through which the struggle

between self-interested and altruistic forms of civic engagement can be examined. According to his perspective, group belonging creates a type of security where norms of reciprocity and interdependent roles place members in close units that guard against isolation or misfortune. However, such belonging comes at the expense of freedom and can often undermine expressions of individuality and self-assertion. Bauman (2000) reveals that although industrialization removed people from collective environments to more individualized settings, the desire for belonging leads to a modern quandary, that "we cannot be human without both security and freedom; but we cannot have both at the same time and both in quantities which we find fully satisfactory" (Bauman2000: 5). He uses George Elto Mayo's experiment at Hawthorne enterprises to explain how the benefits of community can be managed and controlled in an artificial environment. In particular, Bauman (2000) describes how the close attention paid to the opinions and moods of employees by the managers and foreman at Hawthorne enterprises reproduced a friendly and 'homely' atmosphere illustrative of close-knit communities. Similarly, Hall (2000) reveals that,

> "based on these ideas, progressive managers implemented ambitious "welfare capitalist" programs that provided workers with education, health, housing, and other services in order to boost their productivity and discourage them from joining unions" (Hall2000: 48).

According to Hall (2000) and Bauman (2000) the need to manage what were once spontaneous and organic developments, is a key feature of modernity. Its effects can also be applied to the field of volunteering whereby once spontaneous acts of assistance or charity are now standardized under guidelines and alternatives presented within voluntary organizations. However, Oldenburg's (1989) understanding of the 'third place' challenges this assumption and provides a setting where close and meaningful relationships can be formed spontaneously rather then carefully managed.

Oldenburg (1989) describes the 'third place' as a neutral ground, a "space upon which one is not burdened by the role of host or guest" (Oldenburg1989: xviii). As the title of the book illustrates, 'third places' can take the form of cafés, bookstores, coffee shops, bars or hair salons. They are seen to offer an,

> "ease of association so important to community life. People may come and go just as they please and are beholden to no one. Eventually, meets or otherwise learns about everyone in the neighborhood" (Oldenburg1989: xviii).

For Oldenburg, such spaces are common in large, metropolitan or even suburban settings. They play an important role in integrating the need for sociality and familiarity while proving the distance necessary for separate interests and endeavors. 'Third places' are unlike the 'pure' communities described by Bauman (2000) where relationships and expectations can take on an oppressive form. Rather, they satisfy the desire for human interaction and inclusiveness while offering the freedom to disassociate if one wishes. Such places reconcile the need for community and individualization and reflect emerging hybrid attitudes towards social interaction and networks. Rather then falling into definitive categories, new types of association are more fluid and often oscillate between different types of commitment and choices. Robert Putnam (2001) expands on this and uses the term 'social capital' to describe the benefits attributed to diverse networks and human intercourse. As will be described, this term can reflect the instances of camaraderie and cooperativeness felt in Oldenburg's (1989) 'third place' or demonstrate more loose networks that bring people together.

In his comprehensive study on declining civic engagement in the United States, Putnam (2001) outlines the ways individuals have gradually disconnected from their families, friends and communities since the 1950s. One aspect of this

deterioration was an overall decrease in civic association membership in the United States. According to Putnam (2001), such forms of engagement cultivate civic mindedness central to the development of a strong civil society. He uses the term social capital to describe the value attributed to human intercourse and social relationship. As he notes, social capital refers to the broad "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam2001: 19). Two key components of this definition are bonding and bridging social capital. The former represents inward looking homogenous groups that can reinforce exclusive identities, for example, "ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women's reading groups, and fashionable country clubs" (Putnam2001: 22). On the other hand, bridging social capital describes more inclusive and outward looking groups that can encompass "people across diverse cleavages" (Putnam2001: 22). Examples include, "the civil rights movement, many youth service groups, and ecumenical religious organizations" (Putnam 2001: 22). Both features can be described as "'more or less' dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital" (Putnam 2001: 23).

According to Foster et al., (2003), the concept of social capital can be traced to De Tocqueville's study on the benefits of face-to-face participation in voluntary organizations. For De Tocqueville, these involvements not only expanded "civic skills, such as trust, compromise and reciprocity, but also binds society together by creating bridges between diverse groups" (Foster et al., 2003: 5). Putnam (2001) expands on these attributes and demonstrates how generalized reciprocity and trust are outcomes of increased social capital. Both features are interrelated. Whereas generalized reciprocity refers to the belief that "I'll do this for you without expecting anything specific back from you", trust is "the confident expectation that someone else will do something for me down the road" (Putnam 2001: 20). Together, these

attributes form relationships based on mutual trust and obligation. They are similar to the norms of reciprocity and interdependent associations found in early North American settler communities and cohesive groups. As Putnam describes, “to some extent merely new language for a very old debate in American intellectual circles. Community has warred incessantly with individualism for preeminence in our political hagiology” (Putnam 2001: 24).

Putnam’s (2001) understanding of social capital provides an avenue through which the effects of civic engagement and social networks can be articulated. However, critics have challenged his thesis on declining civic engagement with some noting an increase and shift in the type of volunteer participation. For instance, Oesterle et al., (2004) reveal how “volunteering and community participation have remained stable or even increased over the past two decades” (Oesterle 2004: 1124). Similarly, Rotolo and Wilson (2004) explain that the “rate of volunteering "for charitable causes" actually rose from 26% in 1977 to 46% in 1991” (Rotolo&Wilson2004: 1092). In particular, the “average number of times people volunteered rose from 6.3 times a year in the mid-1970s to 7.6 times a year in the mid-1990s” (Rotolo&Wilson2004: 1092). Although for Rotolo and Wilson (2004), this increase is found mainly amongst individuals over the age of sixty, Perks and Haan (2011) describe “a rise in the amount of youth involvement in extracurricular activities overall” (Perks 2011: 124). Therefore, unlike Putnam’s (2001) thesis, there is not a simple deterioration in civic engagement; rather there are periods of increase, stability and decline. Another issue in Putnam’s (2001) argument is flaws in his research analysis and data sources.

Anderson et al., (2006) explain the limitations associated with Putnam’s key data source, the National Opinion Research Center's annual General Social Surveys

(GSS). They argue that surveys offered by the GSS contain ambiguous wording that make it difficult to assess actual volunteer activity. According to these authors, GSS questionnaires "include only indicators of association *membership*, as opposed to *activity*, using simple "yes" or "no" answers to questions about 15 types of association affiliation" (Anderson et al., 2006: 377). Further, the category of association affiliation does not allow an option to list multiple memberships within a given category, for example, whether an individual is a member of more than one environmental or religious organization (Anderson et al., 2006: 377). Stolle and Hooghe (2005) demonstrate that these discrepancies obscure rather than highlight trends in civic association. A famous case is Putnam's (2001) study of declining membership within the American PTA (Parent Teacher Association). Stolle and Hooghe (2005) demonstrate that "a large number of local PTA chapters are no longer affiliated with the national umbrella organization, which would explain the downturn of national PTA membership figures" (Stolle and Hooghe 2005: 160). Further, they argue that parents are opting for less traditional more issue-oriented types of associations "that are not captured in classic PTA membership statistics" (Stolle and Hooghe 2005: 166). New forms of volunteer engagement are not just based on PTA membership; rather they demonstrate a broader tendency towards looser more fluid connections.

For Stolle et al., (2005), a key deficiency in Putnam's (2001) argument was an inability to account for emerging trends in civic engagement. As they note, "citizens today, and especially the younger generations, prefer participating in looser and less hierarchical informal networks as well as various lifestyle-related, sporadic mobilization efforts […]" (Stolle et al., 2005: 250). As the next section will explain, these new styles of volunteering are not easily captured by broad census data and statistical reviews. They reveal an increasing preference for intermittent

commitments that combines traditional forms of engagement with self-reflexive ones. The result is a unique mix that suits individual needs and interests of each participant. In that sense, volunteers are no longer just members of a group but express agency and narrative through particular choices and areas of involvement.

Postmodernism and Critical Citizens: Reflexivity, Agency and Consumption

According to Inglehart and Baker (2013), the move from an industrial to postindustrial society in Western Europe and North America led to the rise of service and knowledge sectors. These sectors are characterized by an increasing emphasis on communication and processing information rather then the production of material goods. For Beck et al., (2003) the development of a postindustrial economy combined with an increasingly precarious socio-economic environment shifted long-term institutional loyalty in favor of short-term commitments. Inglehart and Baker (2013) reveal how such processes altered the priorities of postindustrial citizens "from an overwhelming emphasis on economic and physical security toward an increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality-of-life (Inglehart&Baker2013: 22). As will be described further, the rise of episodic volunteering is a by-product of these developments and reflects a focus on short intermittent commitments and subjective well being over long-term institutional loyalty.

In their text on reflexive modernity, Beck et al., (2003) explain how processes of globalization and capitalism eroded boundaries associated with nation-states and called into question the validity and sustainability of pre-existing structures and institutions (Beck et al., 2003). For these authors, a core framework associated with modern industrialized nations include "a reliable welfare state; mass parties

anchored in class culture; and a stable nuclear family consisting of a single breadwinner, his housewife and their children" (Beck et al., 2003: 1.). The effect of alternate economic growth and decline within the last two decades is described as destabilizing this environment and creating a setting where institutional loyalty and membership-based involvements are exchanged for more transitory and fluid connections. For Cnaan and Handy (2005), these large structural changes affected attitudes towards civic engagement, particularly volunteering and led to the rise of episodic forms of commitments. They reveal how episodic volunteering is rapidly becoming an established practice, which forces organizations to cater to the shifting demands and interests of the volunteer. According to Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003), this new style of engagement echoes the values of postindustrial citizens and is concerned with the subjective interests and needs of the participant rather then a simple service ethic and focus on community welfare. However, as Hustinx (2010) notes established practices are not completely disregarded but combined with more individualistic styles of engagement. As he elaborates, "traditional, habitual and dedicated involvement is increasingly interchanged with more episodic, non-committal, and self-oriented types of participation" (Hustinx2010: 165).

Cnaan and Handy (2005) elaborate on this new form of charitable action and describe episodic volunteers as "individuals who engage in one-time or short-term volunteer opportunities" (Cnaan&Handy2005: 30). This definition reflects a common yet ambiguous understanding of short-term volunteerism. In particular, Cnaan and Handy (2005) explain how there is no time-length or specific form of involvement that can be characterized as episodic or short-term. In fact, this characterization often gains credibility when placed next to conventional, sustained and long-term types of commitment within a particular organization or group. An example would be an individual who offers one month a year to build homes in Africa. This form of

commitment deviates from a traditional understanding of long-term and sustained commitment, which can occur on a weekly or bi-weekly basis over several months to years within an organization. However, it can also be considered a consistent and sustained activity if it occurs habitually on a yearly basis within the same organization. New forms of engagement blur the boundaries associated with common understandings of volunteering and call into question the nature of the volunteer act. As a result, the authors propose a continuum approach where ad-hoc forms of involvement are placed on one spectrum and weekly, bi-weekly or monthly types of commitment are placed on another. This classification recognizes multiple forms of volunteer engagement and moves away from a categorical understanding of volunteering towards more nuanced, biographical and narrative approaches. Beck et al., (2003) put forth the concept of reflexive modernization as means of understanding a larger paradigm that influences this new form of volunteer and civic engagement.

Reflexive modernization is based on the assumption "that there will be a pluralization of natural definitions, and thus of the fictional pictures of nature that each implies" (Beck et al., 2003: 18). 'Reflexive' signifies not an "increase of mastery and consciousness, but a heightened awareness that mastery is impossible" (Beck et al., 2003: 3). It understands that perceptions are constantly revisable and "has foregone any pre-existing claims to certainty" (Beck et al., 2003: 17). Rather, it offers a contextually driven form of understanding that provides on the moment solutions within a rapidly changing environment. In this setting, the focus is not on removing previous beliefs and attitudes but on re-conceptualization. Hustinx (2010) uses the concept of reflexive modernization to explain his concept of institutionalized individualism and processes of re-embedding. For Hustinx (2010), institutionalized individualism refers to how structures adapt to the shifting needs and interests of

volunteers by providing choices and assignments that suit unique preferences. This arrangement moves away from post-modern theories of de-construction to re-structuration. It characterizes a fluid dynamic whereby both the volunteer and larger institution incorporate and makes sense of more individualized orientations. This means providing flexible assignments that suit the schedule and interests of the volunteer. Ironically, Hustinx (2010) describes how this arrangement within volunteer organization requires more management and "considerable costs to the organization" (Hustinx2010: 167). Although institutionalized individualism describes how volunteering is re-conceptualized within late modernity, this concept also reflects the incursion of market like principles into the volunteer field.

Hustinx (2010) uses the McDonalds menu as a metaphor to describe how volunteer choices and alternatives are presented in a tightly controlled and highly organized non-profit environment. According to this argument, new forms of volunteering may offer the illusion of individualized choice but are in fact constructed and presented according to organizational preferences. As he argues in the following passage,

> "The metaphor of the menu is revealing because it shows the combined existence of a more strict and rational organization and management of volunteers on the one hand, and the simultaneous presentation of activities in a 'volunteer-centred way' on the other. So while volunteers experience more choice and self-determination, this flexibility stems from a deliberate restructuring of organizational settings and a more strict organization" (Hustinx2010: 171).

Hustinx (2010) takes this menu analogy further and reveals how the presence of choice changes the role of volunteers from just service providers to consumers of experience. Hockey and James (2002) provide a different approach and argue that "consumption is an active rather than reactive process, which reflects the agency of

the individual rather than the blandishments of a capitalist hard-sell. As such, it constitutes a site for identification" (Hockey and James 2002: 192). In that sense, rather then the control of modernization processes, institutionalized individualism can also reflect a type of agency where individuals discriminate between various options and exercise choice. Both Hustinx (2010) and Hockey and James (2002) demonstrate the diverse ways volunteering can be interpreted and shift common understandings of participation from a one-sided, top down approach to a mutual exchange where volunteers are not just affected by organizational developments but influence them as well.

This fluid and dynamic approach to charitable action can also be applied to trends in overseas volunteering. International assistance is concerned with providing aid to populations affected by war, famine or natural disasters. However, researchers such as Butt (2002) and Malkki (1996) note the unequal relationship between benefactors of aid and recipients of relief. Whereas the former often hail from more affluent regions, the beneficiaries of support are usually located in poor and developing regions. According to Malkki (1996), this discrepancy influences Western discourses on humanitarianism. For Malkki, international accounts on assistance discount the individual narratives of those assisted in favor of authoritative re-telling by policy experts and developmental officials. These approaches are seen as de-historicizing and de-politicizing supported people by creating an image of a universal suffering people. In the case of refugees in conflict-ridden regions, Malkki (1996) reveals that these narratives "strip from them the authority to give credible narrative evidence or testimony about their own condition in politically and institutionally consequential forums" (Malkki 1996: 378). Similarly Butt (2002) describes how "we can expect to see a proliferation of suffering-stranger voices that will, it seems inevitable, be given more and more room to speak but will allowed to say less and

less" (Butt2002: 16). Givoni (2011) shifts attention from the recipients of aid to the providers of relief. He describes how international assistance provides an opportunity to express subjective interests rather then a broad desire for the welfare of others.

According to Givoni (2011) international volunteers are becoming increasingly reflexive in their outlook and often mix self-interested motivations with altruistic actions. He argues that in the case of humanitarianism, the ability to go abroad for sustained periods of time allows relationships to be quickly formed and then abandoned upon leaving. The superficial nature of these interactions, which can be between aid officials and volunteers as well as amongst providers and recipients of aid, creates a space for Western participants to focus on personal aims rather then just a simple service ethic. Givoni (2011) refers to this process as the cultivation of character, where the care for distance victims is increasingly intertwined with care for Western selves (Givoni 2011: 45). In this setting, the act of witnessing is conceptualized as a means of crafting more enlightened personas for overseas volunteers or aid officials. As he elaborates,

> "They serve as a reminder of the fact that in the contemporary politics of pity, witnessing and testimony have been framed as acts that generate a subjective transformation and do not just capture an objective state of affairs" (Givoni2011: 62).

The various factors involved in overseas volunteering highlight a central paradox within altruistic action. For both international and local forms of assistance, subjective interests are increasingly intertwined with the desire to assist others. In this setting, the question remains whether the volunteer is predominately focused on the welfare of another or if their involvement reflects more strategic motives or personal concerns.

As the next section will demonstrate, a categorical understanding of volunteering obscures more than it elucidates. This section will outline the argument that a narrative and biographical approach to assistance can help illuminate the various processes and dimensions involved in the volunteer act. In particular, a focus is placed on the experience of volunteering and the use of life course perspectives. The latter can help demonstrate how the meaning of volunteering changes throughout an individual's lifetime. As Gronlund (2011) explains, volunteering is a dynamic activity that shifts and "change [s] over time and with different situations" (Gronlund2011: 854). An outlook that considers these variations provides a more representative and nuanced understanding of charitable action and how it relates to distinct biographies. This, in turn, can provide the foundation for a more systematic study on volunteering in North America.

The Volunteer Act

For Hockey and James (2002), life course studies provides "a way of envisaging the passage of a lifetime less as the mechanical turning of a wheel and more as the unpredictable flow of river" (Hockey&James 2002: 5). Similarly Johnson-Hanks (2002) uses the notion of 'vital conjunctures' to describe understandings of motherhood amongst young Beti women in southern Cameroon. For Johnson-Hanks, 'vital conjunctures' "refers to a socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives" (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 871). This can be the completion of an academic degree, the death of a family member or loved one, marriage or birth. Such events have a strong transformative power on individual development and can potentially alter the course of a person's life. Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) use a similar approach when describing the effect certain experiences had on Israeli volunteers who work with at risk youth.

They argue that emotionally charged interactions between the volunteer and those assisted in the field can impact an individual's transition from nominal participant to established member. As they reveal in the following passage,

> "Analysis of the interviews and observations show that it is not only the passage of time that encourages these transitions; rather, that the dominant occurrences, emotional changes, rituals, and internal changes bring about the transitions" (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal 2008: 95).

Similar to the notion of vital conjunctures, the significance attributed to particular events and relationships can have a critical influence on the volunteer. They can determine the level and length of an individual's involvement within a particular organization as well as their continued involvement in the more general field of volunteering. Though the experience of volunteering is an important feature to examine, Omoto et al., (2000) argue that as individuals move across the life course "they attach different meanings to the volunteer role, and that these meanings are directly related to the agendas they pursue through volunteerism" (Omoto et al., 2000: 182).

For instance, Ekerdt (1986) argues that for retirees, volunteering can serve a work-like function where "existing beliefs and values about work [are integrated] into a new status that constitutes a withdrawal from work" (Ekerdt 1986: 243). This is in part influenced by a 'busy ethic', which "esteems leisure that is earnest, occupied, and filled with activity" (Ekerdt 1986: 239). In particular, this ethic is concerned with the efficient use of time, energy and involvement. It is focused on tangible outcomes and the effective use of social or relaxed forms of engagement. For Ekerdt (1986), the 'busy ethic' legitimates the leisure of retirement and "defends retired people against judgments of obsolescence" (Ekerdt 1986: 240). It demonstrates that while withdrawal from work can signify a new and lenient stage in an individual's life, volunteering provides a space where individuals can engage and disengage from

work-like and communal activities while maintaining their independence. As a result, "the busy ethic helps individuals adapt to retirement, and it in turn adapts retirement to prevailing societal norms" (Ekerdt 1986: 244).

Similar to retirees, Oesterle et al., (2007) note the impact that volunteering can have on a young student's search for work opportunities, scholarships and admittance into particular programs. As they reveal, "young adults are at the beginning of their work lives and careers, still learning new roles and establishing themselves in the labor market and in communities" (Oesterle 2007: 1125). For both retirees and students, charitable action can play an important transitional role that assists admittance into and from the labor force. Handy et al. (2010) reveal that while initial motivations for volunteering are an important feature to examine, the actual experience of volunteering often determines the consistency and duration of an individual's involvement and whether they decide to take on more activities.

In their text on volunteer motivations, Handy et al., (2010) reveal that while resumé building can have a significant impact on the initial decision to volunteer, "once students get involved they learn about other meanings and values of volunteering through their experience" (Handy et al., 2010: 517). A comparable argument is made in Henderson et al.'s (2007) study of mandated community service in Ontario high schools. Henderson et al. argue that volunteering allowed some students to disregard labels such as the 'homeless' or 'poor' and experience "these people as individuals, and [come] to see issues such as homelessness and poverty from a different perspective" (Henderson et al., 2007: 850). Due to the complex nature of modern forms of volunteering, Henderson et al. recommend new approaches to the study of volunteer action. This includes a comparative focus on whether an activity was sustained or consistent and a focus on the level of satisfaction attained from a particular activity. As they explain,

> "we expect to find differences in civic engagement not between mandated and non-mandated cohorts, but rather between those who volunteered—whether mandated or not—in a sustained and regular way, and those who did not" (Henderson et al., 2007: 852).

Taylor and Pancer (2007) echo this line of thought and describe how the quality of an individuals experience while volunteering plays a strong role in their continued participation. As they explain,

> "both intention to volunteer and actual volunteer behavior indicate that the kind of experiences one has while serving in the community may play a critical role in determining the impact that community service will have on the individual" (Taylor&Pancer2007: 338).

This is further exemplified in Wilson and Musick's (1999) study of mandatory community service for young offenders. They argue that the number of hours volunteered had no effect on whether an individual would re-engage in problem behaviors. Rather a change in attitude was often found through experiences that were considered enjoyable or rewarding. These types of involvement taught problem youth to think about their future and learn new skills.

The act of volunteering provides an interesting insight into the history of civic engagement in North America. Through the various styles and approaches, volunteers are inadvertently expressing the impact of broad structural change that shifted communal forms of involvement to more individual ones. The above researchers have demonstrated that although forms of volunteering have changed throughout the years, the experience of charitable action and the relationships built through direct participation highlights the profound impact social contact can have of forms of altruistic action. Such interactions underscore a rooted desire amongst individuals to be recognized for their assistance and contribution while remaining

secure in a web of generalized reciprocity. Although processes of individualization have shifted how individuals relate to one another, the need for both freedom and security continues to influence how volunteers approach charitable action. In particular, current volunteers tend to seek out activities where they can attain the benefits of direct assistance and remain free of communal obligations. However, while processes of industrialization might have created more self-reflexive types of involvement, the research will demonstrate how the potential for transformative experiences through volunteering continues to hold as it did during the early colonial settlement of English Canada and the American North.

Fieldwork Methods and Background

The initial purpose of the research was to examine a broad array of individual and contextual factors that may have influenced or affected volunteer engagement. While this objective remained the same throughout the exploration, the thesis did have to adjust to several limitations encountered in the research. Initially, the research, which was carried out in Montreal, Quebec from April 2012 to October 2012, was centered on a humanitarian organization whose overseas work depended on international volunteers. However, since permission to examine this agency was denied, attention had to shift from an organizational focus to an emphasis on international volunteers who are involved with a variety of nonprofit associations. Similar to the first undertaking, there were several difficulties and restrictions encountered in this new area of interest. In particular, not enough overseas participants could be identified and enlisted to retain a single concentration. Therefore, research had to expand to include individuals who have assisted both internationally and locally. As a result, the final outcome of these changes was an exploratory study on volunteers and their attitudes toward charitable assistance. This revised area of concentration offered a more open-ended and flexible approach to data acquisition and enlistment. More specifically, it created a broader base whereby twenty-one interlocutors could be recruited for the study, all of who came from a variety of backgrounds and were living in Montreal during this period. Further, the predominance of women in this group was essentially the result of sampling techniques alongside the availability of contacts. As well, the general prevalence of women in nonprofit organizations or volunteer endeavors may have also played an extraneous role in this selection. The following sections will elaborate on the approaches used to identify and enlist volunteers for the study.

These methods include a reliance on known acquaintances, snowballing and direct participation in a volunteer organization. The last approach involved the cooperation of a local volunteer bureau. In particular, this bureau agreed to distribute a short survey on behalf of my project to individuals listed in their database. The questionnaire was then followed by an e-mail request to respondents willing to be interviewed for the study. As will be described further, this last technique seemed to generate the most contacts. However, all the methods of recruitment I've listed played a useful role in delineating the field and establishing a diverse mix of interviewees and experiences. The following sections will provide a brief overview of the techniques and associations used to recruit interviewees alongside an introduction to those selected for the research. In particular, it will first examine interviewees recruited through my direct participation in several distinct nonprofit associations. It will then expand on participants who were made aware of the research through the survey with a final look at contacts who were acquaintances and referrals. In the interests of confidentiality volunteers and non-profit organizations mentioned in this and ensuing chapters will be referred to under pseudonyms. In particular, attention will be placed on reducing any features that could identify participants and associations, thus respecting the privacy and confidentiality of all those involved in the study. Moreover, each participant was made aware of his or her rights alongside details regarding the research by signing a consent form. As well, before volunteering at any nonprofit association, I received verbal consent from both a volunteer coordinator and a senior officer within the human resource department to conduct research and interview volunteers on behalf of the study.

Humanitarian Aid and Emergency Assistance Now (EAN)

An initial source of recruitment was through the Montreal office of an international humanitarian organization that will be referred to as Emergency Assistance Now (EAN). A global aid organization, EAN specializes in providing emergency medical relief to regions affected by war, famine and natural disasters. In some areas it also undertakes long-term sustainable projects that can last upwards from several months to a year. Through my direct involvement within this association, I was able to enlist three volunteers for the research. All came from a diverse array of backgrounds and were thus able to provide distinct perspectives to the research. These interviewees, who will be referred too as Chloe, Gabrielle and Anita, seemed to share a common underlying interest in humanitarian aid and overseas development. For instance, originally from Senegal, Chloe was in her early twenties at the time of the research and had recently moved to Montreal to complete her undergraduate degree in the Social Sciences from a Montreal university. Like other volunteers that will be discussed further in the chapter, Chloe had a knowledgeable background in the area of international aid before becoming involved. In particular, since her father is a United Nations official, she was already familiar with the work of several humanitarian organizations before starting her charitable participation with EAN.

A similar trajectory can also be applied to Anita, who was twenty-two during the study and in the process of completing an undergraduate degree in the Sciences from a Montreal University. Born in India and raised in Ontario, she first became aware of this humanitarian organization while vacationing with her parents in the south of India. In particular, while on this trip she received a polio vaccination from a camp set up by EAN on the side of the road. This experience combined with family expectations to become a physician encouraged her initial involvement with this

association and academic interest in the field of medicine. As a result, Anita became involved with a student run chapter of EAN organized at her university. Her first and ongoing charitable engagement, she quickly moved up the group to become its vice-president. Thus, Anita and Leila demonstrate an early awareness of humanitarian aid prior to their engagement. Moreover, through their respective involvements, they were interested in learning more about this association and the field of international aid. This attitude can also be attributed to Gabrielle, who began volunteering in her early thirties.

In her late thirties at the time of the interview, Gabrielle describes an early and ongoing desire to work in the field of humanitarian aid and development. Rather then pursuing this area of interest, she decided to embark on a career in business and marketing. The decision to renew her interest in overseas assistance appeared to arrive at a transitional moment in her life. In particular, she had just returned to Montreal after living abroad with her husband for several years. As she was readjusting to these surroundings, she began to question her professional choices and was determined to align her personal desires with a potential career or charitable trajectory. As a result, she started volunteering as an event coordinator for EAN and was then recruited for an interview. For Gabrielle, charitable action offered an opportunity to explore a long-term interest in overseas aid while considering the types of options available to her in this area. Whereas several interviewees were recruited through EAN, the following participants became aware of the research through a survey that was distributed by a local volunteer bureau. This method of recruitment attracted the most interviewees, all of whom were Montreal natives and community volunteers.

Volunteer Bureau and Survey

The local volunteer bureau, situated in a suburban area of Montreal, enables charitable action by training, recruiting and referring members to groups and nonprofit organizations located in this community area. As an office volunteer with this association, I was given permission to distribute a survey through its e-mail database. The purpose of the questionnaire was to pose a series of multiple-choice questions that could assess the types of charitable work respondents were interested in alongside basic biographical details such as nationality, age and gender. This survey included an e-mail call for participants who would be interested in being interviewed for the research. The six volunteers who were recruited through this method were all residents of this particular suburban area. They will be referred to as Ava, Charlotte, Sarah, Emilie, Natalie and Abigail. Aside from Abigail, all these women were middle aged or older and demonstrated an active interest in the nonprofit field. For instance, at the time of the study Ava was in her early fifties and involved with several community groups and one international association. These engagements include weekly visits to a veteran hospital, mentoring young businesswomen at a Montreal university and serving as a volunteer board member for a fundraising organization. Further she also provided monetary assistance and counsel to a grassroots humanitarian association located in Montreal. In addition to these volunteer contributions she was also the owner of a large recruitment agency. Like Ava, Charlotte and Sarah also held executive career positions prior to or while becoming involved in charitable work.

For instance, Charlotte was in her mid-fifties at the time of the interview and slowly retiring from her managerial position at a Montreal hospital. A registered nurse, the majority of her recent charitable engagements were in fields closely

associated with her professional background in the healthcare field. In particular, her impending departure from employment saw an increased and more diverse involvement in volunteer activities. For example, during the research she was volunteering as a local nurse for an international humanitarian association and contemplating an overseas trip with this group. As well, she had renewed an early involvement with a nonprofit association that delivers free meals and was considering a long-term engagement with a palliative care institute. Whereas Charlotte became interested in charitable action while gradually retiring from work, Sarah elaborates on her experience after employment.

In her sixties at the time of the interview, Sarah had been retired for eight years. Prior to this period, she was the manager of business applications at a large manufacturing company and had a limited background in charitable activities. However, immediately after her departure from work, Sarah became involved with several community organizations. It was through such engagements that she was able to determine the types of engagement best suited to her interests and skills. More specifically, she seemed attracted to direct forms of assistance that also offered an ability to impart skills and knowledge. As a result, she began teaching English at a community association and computer basics at a senior resident home. An avid reader with a recent undergraduate degree in library studies, she also commenced volunteering at her local library where she delivered and suggested books to individuals with reduced mobility. While Ava, Charlotte and Sarah demonstrate an active charitable orientation with an extensive career background, Emilie and Natalie were homemakers who combined domestic obligations with nonprofit interests. In particular, Emilie was in her early fifties during this period and had two adult daughters living away from home. She began volunteering in her mid-thirties after being diagnosed with a serious illness. This form of participation offered an

opportunity to remain occupied while battling this condition. As a result, she began volunteering as a secretary for this bureau and recently became involved with a mental health organization.

Whereas Emilie began her engagement after a period of illness, Natalie demonstrates an extensive charitable background that spans several decades. She first began volunteering in high school where she was involved with a senior resident home. From this period onward, her participation diversified and began to include other community groups alongside family oriented activities. In particular, after marriage and the birth of her three daughters, her commitments seemed to shift toward school related activities and events. For instance, she joined the board of several parent teacher committees and organized events at her daughters' elementary and high school. In this case, charitable action seemed to offer an effective way to keep occupied while monitoring her children and their development. In addition to these contributions, she was also volunteering as a bookkeeper with a senior resident home. Similar to Natalie, Abigail seems to exhibit a genuine interest in the charitable field and was engaged in several volunteer activities at the time of the interview. The youngest of the interviewees, she was seventeen at the time of the interview and in her first semester of college. First introduced to volunteering at the age of twelve, her initial participation centered on creating food baskets for the homeless. However, as Abigail entered high school, her charitable action became more extensive and diverse.

For instance, during this period she volunteered for two years at a senior resident home for Alzheimer patients, was an animator for a non-profit organization that assists special needs children and also participated in a pen-pal program with an international advocacy organization. The latter placed her in contact with individuals

wrongly detained during times of war. During her last year of high school, she organized an information session for an international humanitarian organization. As she entered college, her commitments appeared to decrease slightly and became associated with academic activities. In particular, during the study Abigail was responsible for organizing a school career fair and was a part of a college association that supports international students throughout the campus. As well, she was also preparing for her first overseas volunteer trip to Sri Lanka where she would be teaching English while living with a host family for one month. Thus, while Ava, Charlotte, Sarah, Emilie, Natalie and Abigail may share underlying characteristics that include Montreal residency and local types of participation, all display individual forms of engagement that reflect varied interests and backgrounds. A similar approach can also be applied to Olivia, Mia and Camilla. However, unlike volunteers who were recruited through a survey or a particular humanitarian association, these interviewees were enlisted through my direct involvement in several nonprofit organizations.

Direct Participation

At the time of the interview, Olivia, Mia and Camilla were Montreal residents who had previous experience volunteering for organizations in which they were now employed. Prior to becoming engaged with these multiple associations, I received permission from its respective coordinators to recruit volunteers and conduct research for the study. As will be elaborated in the thesis, these interviewees demonstrate a broad outlook that can provide insight into the shift from volunteering to working for a nonprofit group. For instance, at the time of the interview Olivia was in her early forties and the executive director of an umbrella fundraising organization that will be known as the Rivergarden Community Fund

(RCF). A prominent association within a Montreal area that will be called Rivergarden, it is responsible for raising and distributing funds to over thirty charities and groups located in this community. In addition to its staff of five employees, it has a functioning board of directors that is meant to ensure financial transparency. I recruited Olivia for an interview while volunteering as an office assistant at this association. A Montreal native, she first became involved with RCF in her late twenties after relocating to Rivergarden from a downtown residency. Her first and only charitable engagement, she undertook several large projects for its marketing department and was responsible for revitalizing this division. Due to a strong set interpersonal skills and business background, she was eventually offered and accepted a full-time executive position with this group. Like Olivia, Mia presents a similar trajectory and elaborates on the shift from charitable action to employment.

A Montreal native who was in her early thirties at the time of the interview, Mia began volunteering at a local community pool in high school and renewed her charitable activity once she entered university. In particular, while completing an undergraduate degree in the health sciences from a Montreal university she decided to volunteer for a mental health organization. Her charitable background combined with long-term participation in this association led to a paid offer within the group. A similar process can also be applied to Camilla, who was in her late twenties at the time of the study and employed with a local advocacy organization. Unlike Olivia and Mia, she was born in Belgium and demonstrates an active charitable background prior to employment. For instance, she has provided overseas assistance on two different occasions and was volunteering as a local correspondent for an advocacy organization when she was offered a salaried position with the group. As will be elaborated in the following chapters, the move from charitable action to employment can provide a broader understanding of volunteering and the common beliefs

underlining this activity. Whereas Olivia, Camilla and Mia were enlisted in the research through my direct participation in their associations, the following interviewees were either personal acquaintance or referrals.

Snowball Sampling: Friends and Referrals

Sophia, Allison, Leila, Lauren and Emma were personal acquaintances that agreed to be interviewed for the thesis. In their early to mid-twenties all these participants, aside from Leila, were Montreal natives who reflect diverse backgrounds and attitudes toward charitable engagement. For instance, Sophia was in her mid-twenties at the time of the study and completing a graduate degree in Art History from a Montreal university. She first began volunteering at a senior resident home in high school and seemed to shift focus once she entered college and university. More specifically, while completing an undergraduate degree in Art History, Sophia became involved with several art related activities in Montreal and her university. This form of participation was similarly exhibited during her graduate studies when she was responsible for a student run information center geared towards Art history majors and those interested in the field. Like Sophia, Allison demonstrates a particularly narrow form of engagement that was often centered around her academic and career interests. In her mid-twenties at the time of the interview, she was in the process of completing a graduate degree in Social Work from a Montreal university. Unlike other volunteers discussed in the chapter, a vast majority of her early charitable engagements were related to her family and church. For instance, her father established a charitable organization that provides monetary donations to family and children affected by neuromuscular conditions. From an early age, she would participate in fundraisers associated with this group and offer ongoing assistance at related events.

As a practicing Christian, Allison began volunteering for a church based youth group when she was thirteen years old. In this role, she would collect and distribute clothing and food to low-income families residing in a particular region of Montreal. She continued to volunteer for her church and father's charitable organization until commencing her graduate degree in 2011. From this period onwards, her charitable involvement seemed to expand and become associated with activities related to her thesis topic. For instance, since the focus of her research concerned children and loss, she began volunteering at a palliative care institute and had recently completed an internship with child welfare services. Whereas Sophia and Allison outline a particularly fixed and local form of engagement, Leila, Lauren and Emma present a distinctly international style of participation. For example, originally from an island in the Caribbean, Leila was in her mid-twenties and completing a graduate degree in the Social Sciences from a Montreal university. Her first ongoing volunteer involvement was with an international nonprofit association that provides overseas assistance to children in regions affected by war, famine and natural disasters. As a volunteer, Leila provided administrative duties at the Montreal office of this association. After several months, she assumed these responsibilities full-time and was given living accommodations at a reduced rent, as a form of appreciation. In addition to domestic arrangements, this participation influenced some of her personal and academic decisions. In particular, she had just returned from her first overseas volunteer trip with this organization and was interested in using her charitable experience as the basis of her graduate thesis. In this case, it can be argued that volunteering was not only a form of occupational development, but appears to have taken on additional functions the longer she was involved with this association.

While Lauren has never volunteered abroad, her extensive charitable experience seemed to combine local interests with humanitarian concerns. In her

mid-twenties at the time of the study she was completing a graduate degree in the Social Sciences from a Montreal university. An avid volunteer, she commenced her involvement at the age of ten while participating at variety shows for her grandfather's senior resident home. In high school, she set up a chapter of an international humanitarian organization, where she raised funds for, and awareness of children who were affected globally by disease, poverty and conflict. As she began college, Lauren's non-profit participation became more extensive and diverse. She collected non-perishable items for local food banks during Christmas and Halloween. Along with her sister she also coordinated a non-profit student performance group that developed benefit shows for senior resident homes. In addition, she also volunteered as a mall fundraiser for a variety of international humanitarian organizations. However, as Lauren entered university, her non-profit participation appeared to have become more focused and international in orientation.

In particular, she had just completed an involvement with a prominent medical humanitarian organization where she was responsible for conducting telephone interviews and collecting online surveys from overseas volunteers who had just returned from their mission abroad. As well, she had recently ended a one-year volunteer engagement with an international non-profit advocacy organization where she provided local assistance as a desk monitor. For Lauren, the decision to pursue a graduate degree in the Social Sciences was in part motivated by a desire to apply her charitable experience to a field that could allow for a broader community impact. This is not the case for Emma, whose volunteer experience seemed centered on travel and experience abroad. More specifically, in her early twenties at the time of my fieldwork and completing an undergraduate degree in Political Science from a Montreal University, Emma demonstrates an active overseas presence that began at eighteen years old. In particular, her first charitable experience was in Nicaragua

where she was involved with a local organization that provides wells and schools for local communities. In the two years following this contribution, she volunteered for ten days in Ghana and five weeks in Tanzania.

In Ghana Emma was involved with a nonprofit organization that helps build schools for villages located in this area. A year after this engagement, she taught English and Economics at a local orphanage based in Tanzania. In addition to these experiences, she has also volunteered at a soup kitchen situated in the downtown area of Los Angeles known as "Skid Row". According to Emma, volunteering offered an opportunity to experience new locales while exposing her to distinct worldviews and ways of living. Through these overseas experiences and interactions, she was intent on expanding her capacity for adaptation while developing the skills necessary to address challenging situations either at home or in an international setting. Like Sophia, Allison, Leila, Lauren and Emma, referrals Julia, Steven and Evan also present a diverse blend of overseas and local forms of aid.

For instance, Julia was in her mid-forties at the time of the interview and was initially referred to me by Olivia. Originally from Bulgaria, Julia holds a medical degree from a European university and was unemployed during the period in which we met. However, it can be argued that since her husband served as the vice-president of finance at a large banking firm, the financial need for work did not appear to be a pressing matter. Nonetheless, Julia had recently become involved with several nonprofit organizations that concentrate on women and health. More specifically, she was on the board of a cancer research organization, an umbrella fundraising group and healthcare businesswoman association. In this capacity, her role was to organize fundraisers, network and raise awareness for a variety of related causes. As well, she also began volunteering for a domestic abuse shelter

where she was in charge of initiating several healthcare projects. Whereas Julia seems interested in activities that align her professional and academic background in the healthcare field, Steven exhibits a particularly personal and altruistic approach. More specifically, Steven was in his early forties at the time of the interview and working full-time for a locally based manufacturing company. Born in Cambodia to impoverished circumstances, he immigrated to Quebec at the age of twelve with the help of a Montreal based nonprofit organization. Through this association he was also able to sponsor his parents and four other siblings to Canada. According to Steven, this early experience had a strong influence on his decision to begin volunteering in his early thirties.

In particular, since he had just commenced working full time during this period, he was interested in becoming involved in activities where he could redistribute the kinds of resources and opportunities that have been given to him. As a result, he became involved with a nonprofit organization that provides overseas assistance to children affected by war, famine and natural disasters. It was through this association that he developed an acquaintance with Leila who then referred him to me in respect to my study. As a local and international volunteer, Steven often volunteers abroad with this particular group while he is on vacation from work. During his overseas assistance, he has personally financed the construction of several schools. He has also donated resources, such as wells and educational material, to children and families living in rural and often impoverished regions. For Steven, charitable action can be viewed as a reciprocal activity closely associated with feelings of good fortune and indebtedness. Through these engagements he seems to be acknowledging his early background and connection to an underprivileged population.

Unlike Julia and Steven, Evan provides a distinctly leisure form of involvement that combines personal interests and enjoyment with the desire to assist. At the time of the interview, Evan was in his early twenties and completing an undergraduate degree in Political Science from a Montreal University. Originally from Nova Scotia, he had an extensive and early background in charitable action. He began volunteering in high school where he was vice-president of the student council. In this role, he was responsible for coordinating school events and fundraisers and encouraging participation. In addition, he also volunteered for several years at a summer day camp for special needs children and helped organize food donations at a homeless shelter throughout high school. Similar to other leisure volunteers that will be discussed in the ensuring chapters, Evan seems to enjoy and is genuinely interested in the types of activities he pursues through charitable action. His early volunteering was not a school or family requirement but a hobby that kept him productively and socially engaged. This attitude can also be applied to his charitable experience during his undergraduate years where he was volunteering as a community facilitator with a student based international advocacy organization. As well, he was also in the process of completing an involvement with a non-profit journalist association where he contributed a range of articles on topics concerning democratic governance, justice and international solidarity.

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the methods used to recruit volunteers alongside a background introduction of the interviewees that will be discussed in the ensuing chapters. The diversity of charitable experiences and motivations can provide deeper insight into the complexities and nuances involved in this field, in the process offering a distinct perspective into an underdeveloped field of research. This thesis will elaborate on the various stages involved in the act of volunteering, which includes the motivation to become involved, the actual

experience of this undertaking and finally its impact. It will demonstrate how broad structural shifts associated with the move from a preindustrial society, to early modernity and post-industrialization had a corresponding influence on the motivation, experience and impact of charitable action thus closely intertwining the act of assistance with economic change. The first chapter titled *Postindustrial Values and the Motivation to Volunteer* will begin this study by examining some of the eclecticism involved in the initial decision to volunteer.

Chapter 1: Postindustrial Values and the Motivation to Volunteer

The shift from an industrial to a postindustrial economy had a strong impact on the volunteer activity and motivation of those selected for the study. In particular, it will be argued that this structural change encouraged a highly individualized and subjective approach to charitable action. Within this context, the decision to volunteer is not just concerned with a simple service ethic; rather it reflects a range of issues that emphasize quality of life and wellbeing. Amongst some of the contacts selected for this study, the result is an increasingly reflexive and personal account of charitable incentive and engagement. As will be elaborated, there are several main features that can be attributed to this postindustrial orientation. These include but are not limited to an emphasis on biographical construction and self-reflexivity, personal development or self-actualization and the pursuit of pleasure. The following sections will expand on these points by first illustrating the multifaceted and narrative account of volunteer motivations. It will then detail the transformative assumptions commonly linked to overseas assistance and conclude with an examination of leisure volunteers. In the process, this chapter will demonstrate how volunteer choice is inextricably linked to the postindustrial or "postmodern embrace of individuality, difference and uncertainty" (Ansell2008: 236).

A Process of Becoming: Interrelated Motives and Reflexive Biographies

For Inglehart and Baker (2013) and Beck et al., (2003), postindustrial society can be characterized by two main developments. First the rise in service and knowledge sectors has placed communication and processing information over the production of material goods. Second, a progressively unstable socioeconomic environment has shifted institutional loyalty to short intermittent commitments. A consequence of

these developments is an increasingly subjective orientation alongside a transient and fluid approach to participation and charitable action. It can be argued that since the postindustrial context is in constant flux, volunteers make sense of their involvement by actively creating narratives that substantiate their charitable involvements. More specifically, by associating their engagement to an early upbringing or future aspirations, these contacts seem to create personal trajectories that challenge the ephemeral and variable qualities associated with post-industrialization. As a result, volunteering is not just based on a service ethic but can be used as a "tool for coping with biographical uncertainty and as an instrument for active biography construction and personal goal setting" (Hustinx 2010: 5).

Anita, Allison, Camilla and Chloe illustrate this reflexive and multifaceted orientation. In particular, by associating their volunteer motivation to their history and interests, they highlight "the personal ways individuals relate volunteering with their own identities and values as an integrated part of one's identity" (Gronlund 2011: 855). For instance, Anita was twenty-two years old during the study and completing an undergraduate degree at a Montreal University. Originally from Ontario, she was born in India and began volunteering for an international humanitarian association once she entered university. This organization, which will be referred to as Emergency Assistance Now (EAN), provides emergency medical assistance to regions affected by war, famine and natural disasters. For Anita, volunteering was not an isolated choice but closely associated with an individual background alongside career and academic ambitions. For instance, she first became aware of EAN while vacationing with her parents in the south of India. A child at time, she received a polio vaccination from one of its relief camps set up by the side of the road. This experience combined with personal and familial expectations to become a doctor had a strong influence on her volunteer motivations. As she reveals,

> Initially I got involved because I wanted to hear more about the organization and like through the speakers bureau and like the events that I organized, I got to hear about stories and stuff and peoples experiences as expats and people's experiences as administrators working at a local level […] I appreciate the fact that like as a medical doctor, hopefully in the future, like I want to work for them. So I guess it's like a career goal not so much as a career thing I'm doing to get there. I mean obviously its like on my cv, I'm not going to like not put it on my cv but like yeah, I think the campaigning that they do is more effective [Anita: April 25, 2012].

Anita presents an interrelated and multifaceted approach to charitable action. While an early exposure to the humanitarian field may have influenced her initial commitment with EAN, her continued engagement can be attributed to professional and school related ambitions. A similar approach can also be applied to Allison, who was in her mid-twenties at the time of the interview and in the process of completing a graduate degree from a Montreal university. Like Anita, an initial exposure to a nonprofit association seemed to have a strong influence on her charitable and academic trajectory. For instance, her father established a charitable foundation that provides monetary donations to family and children affected by neuromuscular conditions. From childhood, Allison would participate in associated fundraisers and offer assistance at related events. As she elaborates,

> It was mainly like to serve meals and we would have like a supper benefit and that was probably the earliest thing I did, like serving meals and being a hostess at these events but I really enjoyed it because you got to meet a lot of different people and I think it was an early chance of – to be aware of what people would go through right [Allison: July 19, 2012]

Further as a practicing Christian, Allison began volunteering for a church based youth group when she was thirteen years old. In this role, she would collect and distribute clothing and food to low-income families residing in a particular region of Montreal. In response to whether her church background influenced a more charitable orientation she reveals,

> I would say yes because that's how I learned what volunteering was right, because I was never paid for the work that I did as a volunteer and like to be honest too, starting off when I was thirteen years old you know I did it because a lot of my other friends were doing it so in that moment when I chose to be a volunteer, I don't think I realized what it meant to be a volunteer, but I was doing it because everyone was doing it [Allison: July 19, 2012].

According to this passage, charitable action can be viewed as a familiar and integral part of her upbringing and past experiences. She continued to volunteer for her family and church until beginning her graduate degree. From this period onwards, her charitable involvement seems to have expanded slightly and become associated with activities related to her thesis topic. For instance, since the focus of her research concerned children and loss, she began volunteering for a palliative care institute and had recently completed an internship with child welfare services. According to the above examples, volunteering offered an interdependent and multilayered function for Allison and Anita. In particular, while it may have stemmed from childhood experiences, it later became associated with career and academic aspirations. As Allison encapsulates,

> I always saw myself going into this field and I think its because as early as I can remember, its kind of like what I've been doing anyways right so why don't I just get a degree that validates everything I've been doing, it's kind of been a life pattern or a vocation whatever you want to call it [Allison: July 19, 2012].

Like Anita and Allison, Camilla provides an interdependent account of charitable action that combines personal background with the decision to volunteer. In her late twenties at the time of the interview, she was working as an executive assistant for a Montreal based advocacy organization. Originally from Belgium, Camilla moved to Paris at the age of ten to attend an international school in the city. After relocating to Montreal to complete an undergraduate degree, she then

transferred to London to begin a graduate degree in a related field. For Camilla, a childhood visit to a Holocaust museum in Belgium sparked an interest into the affects of war and genocide. This ongoing area of awareness encouraged an overseas volunteer trip to Rwanda and Ghana when she was in her early twenties. As she explains in the following passage,

> At one point I was like, I am sick of reading books, I want to go there and see what it looks like. I think you can't get into the humanitarian field without actually going on the field and see if you're going to be able to handle it [Camilla: August 21, 2012].

While volunteering offered Camilla an opportunity to explore the humanitarian field, it also impacted many of her subsequent engagements. For instance, as a volunteer Camilla taught English and Economics at two distinct orphanages located in Ghana and Rwanda. These experiences were eventually used as the basis of her Masters dissertation, which studied the enduring impact of war and ethic violence on a particular population. After completing her graduate degree, Camilla moved to Paris and volunteered remotely for a Montreal based international advocacy group. This association specializes in providing research and policy recommendation on issues concerning conflict resolution and its avoidance. After a year of assisting this group, she then relocated to Montreal to work full-time for its executive-director.

For Camilla, Allison and Anita, volunteering was an interdependent and holistic activity that allowed them to combine past experiences and personal interests with career and academic aims. In particular, through volunteering they were able to make informed decisions regarding their future life courses. A similar approach can also be applied to Chloe, who was in her early twenties during the research and volunteering at the Montreal office of EAN. Originally from Senegal, Chloe moved to Montreal several years before the interview to complete an

undergraduate Social Science degree. Initially interested in a broad array of nonprofit organizations, her family background seems to have influenced some of her charitable choices. In particular, since her father is a United Nations official, Chloe was already familiar with the work of several humanitarian organizations before becoming involved. As a result, given this family background and upbringing her participation with EAN seems to have been a logical choice. For instance, in response to whether her engagement with EAN encouraged a further interest in the humanitarian field she responds,

> I think that my experience with [EAN] did motivate me more to want to get involved in this kind of stuff. It's always been an interest of mine; I've grown up in this, in this realm let's say. My parents have been working for the UN and other large organizations like this since I was born, so a lot of our family friends they work in this field, my dad works in this field and so it's always been something that has interested me. I think that even if I hadn't gone to work with [EAN] now I would've eventually liked to work with an NGO or try to do something along the lines of development and sustainability [Chloe: April 25, 2012].

While Chloe may express an interest in working for an NGO or in development, she is not as explicit in her future aim as Anita, Allison and Camilla. Nonetheless, by negotiating various objectives and involvements through charitable action, all these interviewees expressed the dynamic and fundamentally creative qualities that can be associated with the motivation to volunteer. In particular, their capacity to shape a distinct charitable trajectory around personal interests and upbringing demonstrates some of the narrative and holistic features that can be associated with postmodernism or the post-industrial society. For Hustinx (2003), this critical ability characterizes a generation of 'clever volunteers' "who are fully capable of matching individual biographical conditions with appropriate volunteer opportunities" (Hustinx 2003: 183). Moreover, he argues that in this context such individuals can,

> "actively pursue personal interests, and who dispose of substantial educational, professional, and organizational qualifications to meet the standards of highly specialized and self-organized volunteer activities" (Hustinx 2003: 183),

as a result, illustrating some of the selective and formative capacities of current volunteers. Whereas the above interviewees reflect an interrelated and biographical approach to charitable action, as I will discuss in the following section, Emma and Gabrielle exhibit a distinctly subjective style of participation. For Emma and Gabrielle, the desire for self-improvement or personal development seems to have a strong influence on their motivation to volunteer. As will be elaborated in the following section, this individualized orientation is often associated with overseas assistance and travel, in turn, linking a distinctly postmodern form of international assistance to an established practice and narrative.

Eat Pray Love: International Assistance and Subjective Wellbeing

International aid and overseas volunteering is an evolving and popular field of participation. Although inclusive of all demographics, this field of assistance is often especially marked by the participation of students or young adults transitioning from school to employment or from one academic program to another. There are two main beliefs usually associated with international volunteering. On the one hand, overseas assistance provides volunteers the skills and experiences necessary to participate in an increasingly unstable competitive economy. From another angle, volunteers may use their involvement as a tool for self-actualization or individual growth. For Heath (2007) and Wearing et al., (2007), both perspectives are deeply intertwined and reflect the consumptive practices of the new 'experience economy'. According to this view, international assistance allows individuals to partake in a range of ventures that support the development of a distinctive self, in turn, creating

a world of savvy volunteers that "identify and select specific experience attributes and use them to negotiate the fast-changing world by being masters of multiple and fragmented subjectivities" (Wearing et al., 2008: 69).

While a subjective and variable approach to charitable action can be attributed to the rise of postindustrial society or a postmodern perspective, the transformative and narrative potential of travel is an established pursuit. For instance, Heath (2007) illustrates the similarity between overseas volunteering and the "'Grand Tour' undertaken in the Victorian period, largely by well-educated upper-middle-class young men" (Heath2007: 100). As he explains in the following passage,

> The Grand Tour provided a moratorium between the completion of education and the commencement of a professional career, and invariably involved 'improving' experiences such as visits to sites of classical European culture as well as to sites of outstanding natural beauty (Heath2007: 100).

For Heath (2003), the parallels between such excursions and privilege distinguish individuals who can indulge in self-oriented and developmental activities from those unable to. According to Anita, such discrepancies are not just relegated to the Victorian age but exemplified through modern practices and beliefs. In particular, films such as *EuroTrip (2004)* and the book *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia (2006)* can reflect common assumptions associated with voyage and self-discovery. Whereas the former is an American teen adventure comedy, which depicts four American friends touring across Europe after graduating from high school, the latter is a memoir written by American author Elizabeth Gilbert. For Gilbert, the book chronicles her journey as a recently divorced woman who voyages across Italy, India and Indonesia in search of enlightenment and spirituality. Although *EuroTrip* and *Eat, Pray, Love* may appeal to distinct audiences,

both highlight the revitalizing features often attributed to overseas travel and exploration. Anita elaborates on this by explaining the influence such narratives can have on international assistance.

For example, in response to why young adults are interested in volunteering abroad she replies,

> Ok I always use this analogy, have you seen those people where like these people go on a *EuroTrip* and like the end of the movie they like jump off a cliff and they find themselves, do you know what I'm talking about? I think that's what it is, I think they want to go into a different place so they can learn about themselves, like the way that they interact with others, the way that they interact with the new context that they're in, I think they do it for a very selfish reason […] [Anita: April 25, 2012]

While the above passage may refer to a younger demographic, *Eat, Pray, Love* demonstrates the wide applicability of this particular orientation. As she reveals,

> That's why I mention *Eat Pray Love* like the fact that in that kind of narrative where this poor, not poor sorry, this like sad lonely white man or woman goes to India or like some place in Kenya and this old man with a broken English, tells her these wise things that changes her life, I think a lot of people fall for that shit [Anita: April 25, 2012].

In both instances, the subjective and transformative qualities associated with relocation and distinct encounters are seen as developing an enhanced and more cosmopolitan image. However, the subtle inequalities inherent in this form of engagement are not lost on Anita. In the following passage, she reverses the dynamic between Western volunteers interested in personal growth and the residents encountered during their trips. As she explains,

> Well what do they know that you couldn't have figured out yourself, why did you have to go all the way over there, and why is it that you have the right to

> do that, like you have the resources to be able to do that, where would that old person in India go to find himself, like I'm being totally serious [Anita: April 25, 2012].

For Ansell (2008), the relationship between privilege, travel and subjective wellbeing can be applied to the motivation to volunteer. In these instances, international assistance not only encourages altruistic acts but also offers an opportunity to "perform individual achievement, strength of character, adaptability and worldliness […], characteristics which gain new meaning at home" (Ansell2008: 222). For some volunteers, the financial ability to assist abroad for sustained periods of time is often viewed as a distinguishing marker. It separates their experiences from local volunteers and in the process creates a mutable biography that can reflect multiple versions of the self. According to Desforges (2000), this includes "a fulfilled self, an educated self, a youthful or even a mature self" (Desforges2000: 937).

Elizabeth and Gabrielle illustrate some of the diversity and variability embodied in overseas assistance. For these interviewees, the postindustrial emphasis on subjective wellbeing alongside the grand narrative of travel seemed to have a strong influence on their decision to volunteer. Through international participation, they were interested in experiencing a range of involvements that could provide insight into their own strengths and capabilities. In this case, volunteering was not a fixed or stagnant process but a fluid journey of self-actualization and personal improvement. This is particularly the case for Emma, who was twenty-one years old at the time of the study and completing an undergraduate degree at a Montreal University. Initially referred to the research by a personal acquaintance, she demonstrates an active overseas presence that began at eighteen years old. For instance, her first charitable experience was as an overseas volunteer in Nicaragua. In this role, she was placed with a host family for one month and was

responsible for helping build a local community well. Although this engagement was a course requirement mandated by her college program, it offered Emma an opportunity to travel and experience new locales. As she explains,

> To be perfectly honest, I wasn't going there [like] oh I want to help people, it was more, I'll call it selfish, I wanted to see a different culture, I wanted to see different things, I wanted to see Central America, I wanted to experience rougher living conditions, like it was more, like, yeah I wanted to experience things [Emma: September 8, 2012].

According to the above passage, Emma seems attracted by the novelty and adventure associated with her act of assistance. This initial attitude appeared to have influenced many of her subsequent charitable involvements, all of which were unrelated to course requirements. For example, in the two years following this contribution, she volunteered for ten days in Ghana and five weeks in Tanzania. In Ghana she was involved with an international nonprofit association that builds schools for local villages in the region. A year after this engagement, she taught English and Economics at a local orphanage based in Tanzania. As well, she also volunteered at a soup kitchen situated in the downtown area of Los Angeles known as "Skid Row". In response to her underlying motivation, Emma explains,

> It's not like an adrenaline rush for me, it's more like every time I go I test my limits like you know, like you grow your spirit, like how uncomfortable can I take, like how can I deal with [Emma: September 8, 2012].

For Emma, international assistance offered an opportunity to visit new locales while exposing her to distinct worldviews and ways of living. Through these overseas experiences and interactions, she was intent on expanding her capacity for adaptation while developing the skills necessary to address challenging situations either at home or in an international setting. According to Ansell (2008), the desire

for self-improvement through challenge is a significant and rewarding element of overseas assistance. Within these settings, volunteering can add, "authenticity within an adventure narrative, embeds people in a place, but not the nicest part" (Ansell2008: 235). Emma elaborates on this perspective in the following passage,

> That's why I say I get annoyed when people say oh you're such a good person, like I look at it as kind of selfish, like I want to have certain experiences and I want to grow as a person but then at the same time every time I do a trip like that and I have a different experience and it grows me as a person I become a better person and then I can do better, I don't know it just makes me more well rounded [Emma: September 8, 2012].

In this excerpt, Emma acknowledges the highly individualized nature of her assistance. A similar approach can also be applied to Gabrielle who began volunteering in her early thirties. Whereas Emma demonstrates an active overseas presence concerned with personal development, Gabrielle is a local humanitarian volunteer whose assistance seems to emphasize self-awareness. For instance, in her late thirties at the time of the interview, Gabrielle describes an early and ongoing desire to work in the field of international aid and development. According to the following excerpt this interest appears to have originated at a young age,

> Well, I started being interested in this field when I was a very young teenager and I was dreaming at the time that I would go work in Africa and just help the people over there [Gabrielle: April 25, 2012].

While the above passage may reflect an idealized understanding of support, it demonstrates the beginning of a lifelong fascination with humanitarian aid. However, rather then pursuing this area of awareness Gabrielle decided to embark on a more financially stable course in business and marketing. The decision to renew her interest in overseas assistance appeared to arrive at a transitional moment in her life. In particular, she had just returned to Montreal after living abroad with her

husband for several years. Although her overseas residency seemed to satisfy an interest in voyage and exploration, she was still interested in humanitarian aid and development. As she elaborates,

> We went to live abroad for eight years, but not in a developing country and not doing humanitarian work and somehow I thought that this would satisfy my need – my curiosity for other cultures and it was indeed very interesting and I learned a lot and it satisfied many aspects of my desire to understand other cultures. But I realized many years after coming back that I was still thinking about the humanitarian work and although I had lived abroad for eight years that was not quite enough [Gabrielle: April 25, 2012].

As a result, Gabrielle began volunteering at the Montreal office of EAN where she provided local assistance as an event coordinator. Through this form of support, she was able to determine some of the qualities that initially attracted her to the humanitarian field. As she explains,

> So the motivation was not really to help but to really get to know another culture from the inside. Okay, I'm not talking about traveling but really be there and in a culture that is so different from yours, being in an underdeveloped country, that it can only change you tremendously. Just because it's such a drastic change from your normal life, so for me the motivation is yeah, getting to know a culture from the inside to change as a human being. That's what it is, it's to really discover who you are, what they are and it brings you so much further, its hard to talk about this for me in English because these are very subtle things so I feel so much comfortable in French, […] [Gabrielle: April 25, 2012]

Similar to Emma, Gabrielle articulates a common narrative associated with international aid and travel. In this setting, charitable action can serve a transformative function that shifts individual perceptions to a new understanding of the self. For Wearing et al., (2008), this process seems strengthened by the unique and distinctive environment such volunteers often work in. In addition, the

relationships built during these involvements and activities undertaken can also influence self-perception. As Wearing et al., (2008) elaborate,

> "Being in the context of 'otherness' and removed from the influence of traditional reference groups may encourage the individual to think more for himself/herself and assume a proactive role in decision making […] Interactions that volunteer tourists have with new surroundings including people, places and activities are often profound and not only can provide opportunities to experiment with representations of the 'me' but also may lead to long-lasting reworkings of the "I"" (Wearing et al., 2008: 69).

According to the above passage, it can be argued that Gabrielle is fascinated by the subjective qualities often attributed to international aid and support. Through her account, she provides an insight into the common assumptions associated with this form of assistance, in the process, highlighting the individualized and often consumptive practices of postindustrial volunteers. Although Gabrielle has never volunteered abroad, Emma seems to validate some of the general expectations associated with overseas assistance. In particular, her desire to experience rougher living conditions and expand personal skills demonstrates a more subjective and postmodern approach to volunteer motivation. Whereas the above interviewees appear to focus on travel and personal interests, the following contacts illustrate a more leisure understanding of charitable action. In these instances, the motivation to volunteer is not just associated with an early upbringing, family background or the desire for self-awareness. Rather it reflects an emphasis on enjoyment and the pursuit of pleasurable activities. As will be elaborated in the following section, a vast majority of these leisure volunteers also exhibit a strong work ethic and productive orientation, in the process, linking two seemingly distinct attributes to a single act of assistance.

Serious Leisure and the "Busy Ethic"

According to Stebbins (2010), volunteering as 'serious leisure' can be described as the efficient pursuit of an activity or hobby considered so fascinating and rewarding that individuals form a pursuit "centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience" (Stebbins2010: 30). In this case, an ongoing commitment to a particular or range of charitable involvements is often the main condition for this form of participation. Stebbins (2010) elaborates on this point and argues that for volunteers "looking for long-term altruistic involvements would be looking for opportunities to volunteer as serious leisure" (Stebbins2010: 31). However, there seems to be a commonality between the qualities associated with serious leisure and a work ethic often attributed to employed positions. Freeman (1996), Rotolo (2004) and Lee and Brudney (2009) elaborate on this point and note the link between serious leisure volunteers and high productivity. In particular, they argue that individuals who exhibit an active and busy lifestyle outside of charitable action tend to volunteer more and for sustained periods of time. As Freeman (1996) describes "for the most part, volunteers are people with higher potential earnings or greater demands on their time" ((Freeman 1996: 146). Further, Lee and Brudney (2009) reveal "the higher probability of volunteering by people holding multiple jobs" (Lee and Brudney 2009: 526).

It can be argued that the commonality between features associated with serious leisure and employment may have originated from the Protestant work ethic, which instilled values such as the efficient use of time and constructive participation. Therefore, volunteers who exhibit an active and productive orientation may be reproducing this deeply rooted value through their charitable involvements. While a serious leisure work ethic may be based on communal notions of labor, the

postindustrial emphasis on multiplicity and hybridity has allowed for the ceaseless transition from work to leisure and vice versa. As Wearing et al., (2008) elaborate,

> "The traditionally dichotomous relationship between work and leisure has been somewhat redefined to take into consideration the new attitude of postmodernism, such that leisure has become part of the representational and symbolic machinery that we use in order to negotiate daily life" (Wearing et al., 2008: 66).

According to this excerpt, features commonly attributed to employment have been reconstituted so as to mirror the personal interests and characteristics of serious leisure volunteers. Abigail, Lauren, Evan, Natalie and Ava reflect this unique juxtaposition and reveal how the amalgamation of work and leisure can offer a distinct approach to charitable action.

For instance, Abigail was seventeen at the time of the interview and in her first semester of college. Willing to share her volunteer trajectory, she was first introduced to the field of volunteering at the age of twelve when she came upon a non-profit fundraiser organized at her local hospital. The festive environment created by coordinators and attendees as well as the games played seemed to have a strong influence on her initial decision to become a volunteer. As she elaborates,

> I went to the hospital with a friend because she had to get a blood test and they had an event for a – it was really a movie moment. It was one of those events where they sell off men, like you know what I mean [laughs] raffles and like you bet on men and then you get them to go on a date with them if you win. I was twelve and I was like oh my god that's so awesome [laughs]. I got all excited so I went and I looked it up and obviously I couldn't volunteer for that like cause I was twelve but I discovered all these other volunteering things [Abigail: October 14, 2012]

For Abigail, the cheerful environment created by this event encouraged her to seek out related forms of involvement. As a result, she contacted her local volunteer bureau soon after the fundraiser and was referred to a series of activities suited for her age. A vast majority of these initial involvements included holiday activities such as creating Christmas food baskets for the homeless. While the pursuit of entertainment might have motivated her initial charitable engagements, an active and productive orientation seems to drive her continued participation. For instance, when asked to describe a particular charitable involvement she reveals,

> It was fun. I'm one of those people who enjoy work like I know it sounds weird but I enjoy – I don't have a problem waking up in the morning and being like ok I have to go and do this today it gives a purpose to me so I'm good with that (Abigail: October 14, 2012).

According to the above passage, Abigail appears to combine a leisurely pursuit with an industrious work ethic. This attitude also characterized many of her subsequent engagements during high school. In particular, throughout this period she volunteered for an extensive and diverse range of nonprofit organization that included a senior resident for Alzheimer patients, a community organization that assists special needs children and an international advocacy organization. For the latter, she was apart of a pen-pal program that placed her in contact with prisoners wrongly detained during times of war. As well, during her last year of high school she organized an information session for an international humanitarian organization. Its purpose was to provide a platform where students could learn and engage with global policy issues and initiatives. Due to all these involvements, she was offered four thousand dollar scholarship by her high school to study and teach English in Brazil for one year. However, considered too young by her parents to embark on such a lengthy trip, she was forced to decline the offer.

According to the above examples, Abigail seems to characterize an active and productive lifestyle that keeps her continuously occupied. In addition to her volunteer engagements and academic responsibilities during high school, she was also working three jobs. In the following passage, Abigail elaborates on these extensive involvements and her charitable activity during college. As explained,

> Honestly at the moment I'm kind of taking it easy just because during my last few years of high school I was working three jobs, so it's my first semester of college and I kind of quit everything and I'm just taking it easy but I'm volunteering in the school. For example, I volunteered at the international day where like all the new students from other countries come in, you have to show them the school and teach them and make friends with them and I volunteered for – well I'm volunteering for the career fair, where like we're organizing the games and what not, so right now I've kind of gone back to like small scales, just because I think that if you do give your name in to help something you should be 110 % in it and I'm not, like if I did something big right now I wouldn't be a 110 % in it, so I'm taking it a little easy (Abigail: October 14, 2012).

According to this excerpt, it seems that while she may be interested in reducing her volunteer engagements, her participation is still quite proficient. In this case, a sustained and committed leisurely involvement often reflects an industrious orientation that is equally assiduous in areas outside of charitable action. Like Abigail, Lauren presents a similarly active approach to volunteer engagement.

In her late twenties at the time of the study, she was in the process of completing a graduate degree at a Montreal university. An avid volunteer, Lauren began her involvement at the age of ten where she participated in a range of variety shows associated with her grandfather's senior resident home. Her charitable engagement continued in high school, where she set up a student chapter of an international humanitarian organization. Its purpose was to raise funds and awareness for children affected by disease, poverty and conflict in regions around

the world. As Lauren began college, her nonprofit participation appeared to become more extensive and diverse. In particular, she habitually collected non-perishable items for local food banks during Christmas and Halloween. Along with her twin sister, she also coordinates a nonprofit student performance group that organizes benefit shows for senior resident homes. In addition, she also volunteered as a mall fundraiser for a variety of international humanitarian organizations.

In university, her charitable action seemed to have become more focused and clear. Prior to being interviewed, she had just completed a yearlong involvement with an international nonprofit advocacy organization, where she offered local assistance as a desk monitor. This recent role required her to monitor the daily news and policies of a particular region and then submit a weekly report of her findings. These observations were then uploaded on the organization's website. In her spare time, Lauren also contributed articles to a student newspaper on issues pertaining to international development and regional conflict. Further, she has won several awards for her community involvements and has completed two undergraduate degrees prior to commencing her graduate studies. Like Abigail, Lauren seems to demonstrate an extensive charitable background alongside an incredibly productive focus. Her success and recognition in areas outside of her volunteer engagement reflects this unique relationship between serious leisure and a strong work ethic. Whereas Abigail and Lauren illustrate an accomplished and highly effective approach to charitable action, Evan and Natalie exhibit a more subdued association.

For instance, Evan was in his early twenties at the time of the interview and completing an undergraduate degree at a Montreal University. Originally from Nova Scotia, he had an extensive and early background in charitable action. Similar to Abigail and Lauren, he began volunteering earnestly in high school where he was

vice-president of the student council. In this role, he was responsible for coordinating school events and fundraisers and encouraging participation. Further, during this period he had also volunteered at a summer day camp for special needs children and helped organize food donations at a homeless shelter. In the following passage, he explains the motivation behind his early volunteer engagements. As he reveals,

> I mean I just, it kind of just happened like I was just like – once you start getting involved even a little bit it just kind of snowballs from there and you just suddenly you're like oh yeah I'll take on more responsibility and then more responsibility and sure I'll join this other organization like why not and you just get really involved like yeah and you don't even notice and I'm not like complaining either like I love it (Evan: July 19, 2012).

Like Abigail and Lauren, Evan seems to genuinely enjoy the types of activities he pursues through charitable action. His early volunteering was not a school or family requirement but a hobby that kept him constructively and socially engaged. Similar to Lauren and Abigail, he continued this type of participation once he entered university. For instance, at the time of the research he was volunteering as a community facilitator for a student based international advocacy organization. Further, he was also involved with a nonprofit journalist association where he contributed a range of articles on topics concerning democratic governance, justice and international solidarity. In this position he regularly updated the website's social media content and encouraged online participation with other members. In addition to all these involvements, he was also employed as a resident coordinator for a campus housing organization. According to the below passage, Evan seems to associate his volunteering with the postindustrial emphasis on individual enjoyment and pleasure. As he describes,

> Its kind of like, I mean, this is super like our generation but I prefer to do things that I'm genuinely happy doing and often you'll stumble into positions that are just like, I don't know, you don't enjoy them all the time right and I know that you shouldn't enjoy positions like a hundred percent of the time but when I'm volunteering [...] it's just like having so much fun like all of the time [Evan: July 19, 2012].

Nonetheless, whereas Abigail and Lauren reflect a strong relationship between industriousness and leisure, Evan presents a more tempered approach. Rather then undertaking an extensive range of charitable involvements, his engagement often centered on a select few organizations. Therefore, while the degree of participation may differ, all three volunteers exhibit a sustained form of participation that often combines a productively active orientation with leisurely pursuits. A similar approach can also be applied to Natalie and Ava, who also began their charitable action at a young age and continued their commitment as they became older.

For instance, Natalie was in her early forties at the time of the research and began volunteering in high school. As she describes,

> Well I guess it started, the basic stuff started at school when you help out the teacher you help out the office, student council. I mean I did that as soon as they created it, as soon as I realized one existed I wanted to be on it [Natalie: October 17, 2012].

This active and enthusiastic approach to assistance seemed to characterize many of her subsequent involvements. For instance, during her high school studies she also became involved with a senior resident home. In this role, she helped accompany residents to various activities and also worked as an animator. From this stage onwards, Natalie describes an ongoing community involvement with various nonprofit organizations and local groups. As she reveals, "I was always doing something for somebody, there was never a break let's say" [Natalie: October 17,

2012]. This includes organizing fundraisers for several community organizations and managing local welfare associations. In terms of the latter, she would help arrange meal services and offer assistance to individuals with reduced mobility. This form of engagement continued until she married and had children. As her daughters entered elementary and secondary school, her charitable involvement seemed to shift toward school related activities and events.

In particular, she joined the board of several parent teacher committees and organized events at her daughters' elementary and high school. For Natalie, volunteering offered an effective way to keep occupied while monitoring her children and their development. Central to these benefits was a genuine enjoyment in the types of activities undertaken through charitable action. As she reveals, "I'm not doing this to establish my life, this is, I'm doing this because it's fun" [Natalie: October 17, 2012]. When asked to elaborate on this form of leisure she describes,

> Well, what I really like is, I really like being with a group of people, bouncing off ideas and developing something and making it work, that I find fun you know and enjoying the success with somebody, by myself you know you do that at work, you work by yourself, you see how well you did at work and you pat yourself on the back, but that's not fun, what's fun is when you're together in a group, that I really like.

In that respect, volunteering was a pleasurable hobby that offered Natalie an opportunity to exercise social and productive skills. Ava presents a similar approach to charitable action and began volunteering in a senior resident home in high school. Initially inspired by an ongoing affinity with a senior citizen population, this involvement seemed to encourage subsequent forms of participation. In particular, after completing secondary education, she became involved with a domestic abuse shelter and a suicide help line. Although proficient at first, her charitable action

appeared to lessen after she completed her undergraduate studies. Nonetheless, it was later renewed in her late forties when she commenced her own online recruitment firm. Prior this new position, she was an executive manager of a large staffing agency.

As Ava adjusted to this new role, she also became involved with several community groups and one Montreal based international organization. Some of these engagements include weekly visits to a veteran hospital, mentoring young businesswoman at a Montreal university, becoming a volunteer board member of a fundraising organization and providing assistance to a grassroots humanitarian association. For Ava, charitable action seemed to offer an opportunity to remain socially connected while transitioning jobs. This is particularly the case when she shifted work from a large corporate office to a remote home based business. While the desire for interaction may characterize a portion of her volunteer engagements, she also exhibits an ongoing empathy and concern for the populations and individuals being assisted. This is reflected in the quality and quantity of involvements she seems to undertake alongside professional obligations. Further, she also provided periodic donations to local community groups in need.

For leisure volunteers, charitable action offered an ability to pursue personal interests and hobbies alongside academic or work commitments. The sustained nature of their commitment often distinguishes this form of engagement from other interviewees discussed in the chapter. Nonetheless, all contacts discussed in this chapter seemed to characterize a particularly postindustrial approach to motivation. In these instances, an emphasis on individual biography, subjective wellbeing and pleasure seems to have a strong influence on the decision to volunteer. As the next section will demonstrate, the actual experience of volunteering can reflect qualities

associated with modernization or industrialization. In these instances, charitable action often demonstrates the dual need for individuality and community. More specifically, while the centrality of work seemed to characterize the experience of these interviewees, the transformative potential of social interaction and reciprocity appeared to shift this perspective towards a more communal orientation. The second chapter will elaborate on these changes by highlighting the impact volunteering can have on the transition from work to unemployment and vice versa, in the process, shedding insight into the actual act of assistance and the impact such interactions can have on the individual.

Chapter 2: Charitable Experiences and The Centralization of Work

In *Postindustrial Values and the Motivation to Volunteer,* the shift from an industrial to postindustrial society appeared to create a more individualized and variable approach to charitable action. In this case, motivation was strongly associated with subjective features that include personal background, leisure and wellbeing. In *Charitable Experiences and the Centralization of Work*, I will expand on this structural change by examining how characteristics associated with industrialization can be found in the actual experience of volunteering. More specifically, while the increasingly rational and bureaucratic developments associated with early modernity encouraged the separation of labor from family, it also highlighted the important role employment plays in organizing social life. The chapter will elaborate on these developments by illustrating a similar process found in charitable engagement. In particular, whereas some interviewees display a particularly fixed and goal-oriented approach to charitable action, others demonstrate the desire to replicate features associated with professional identities. For the former, this usually involved academic or career interests while the latter can be attributed to retirees. However, few participants exhibit a more complex orientation that seems to combine the early modern tension between individual autonomy with the communal need for connection and solidarity. In these instances, volunteering offers a space where both wants can be satisfied to certain degrees.

According to Indergaard (2007), industrialization led to broad socioeconomic and technological shifts that included "an extended division of labor, separation of family and enterprise, and rational forms of calculation and investments" (Indergaard2007). Although these advances supported an underlying emphasis on labor alongside a highly individualized outlook, it also affected the manner through

which social life was organized. For instance, Hockey and James (2002) reveal how "entry into and exit from the work became key experiences through which life course passage was experienced" (Hockey and James 2002: 183). This development was not just relegated to the economic sphere but could also be found in activities unrelated to work. In particular, this chapter will demonstrate how an industrious orientation seemed to fuel a distinctly productive approach to charitable activities that often concentrated on the admittance or departure from work. This will be explained by first examining the process through which instrumental approaches to charitable action can assist volunteers in acquiring the networks and skills needed to facilitate admission into the labor force. It will then describe the enduring influence long-term employment had on the charitable experiences of retired volunteers. In particular, demonstrating how traits acquired through work are replicated through the types of activities these participants pursue in charitable action. Finally concluding with a study on how the contention between individuality and community can be reconciled through charitable action.

Purposeful Orientations: Volunteering and the Search for Employment

For some interviewees, volunteering offered a flexible of range of activities that allowed interlocutors to occupy time while seeking work. Sophia, Olivia and Julia elaborate on these points by illustrating the role volunteering can play in creating a reprise from pressures associated with career or academic decisions while bridging the transitional gap between unemployment and employment. In these cases, the search for employment was not an isolated development but often associated with significant changes in their personal lives. As a result, demonstrating an interdependent and strategic attitude towards charitable action that can reflect the highly individualized and productive features attributed to early modernity. This

approach can be applied to Sophia who was in her mid-twenties at the time of the interview and completing a graduate degree in Art History from a Montreal university. A personal acquaintance, the majority of her charitable engagements seemed to include career and academic interests in the area of art and art history. This narrow form of participation was not a recent development but similarly displayed in some of her early charitable participation. For instance, she first began volunteering at a senior resident home in high school. A course elective, she was responsible for providing after school visits and coordinating activities.

As Sophia entered college her charitable involvements appeared to diminish and were later renewed once she commenced her undergraduate and graduate studies in Art History. During this period, she began volunteering for several Arts related festivals in Montreal and also provided assistance at a student run information center for individuals interested in the discipline. In addition, she also completed an overseas internship at a museum located in Italy and was applying for jobs related to the field. For Sophia, volunteering and internships can provide young students an opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge needed to bolster a career or academic resume, which can also assist individuals in acquiring a promising position. As she elaborates,

> I mean, because it's like the way you kind of gain experience, right? And especially when a company and stuff sees that you dedicated your time and you didn't receive any compensation for it, you know it looks good, right? [Sophia: August 27, 2012].

According to this passage, Sophia understands the value of the signal that an active charitable background can present to prospective employers. In this setting, undertaking roles and positions without remuneration can demonstrate an active individual who is sincere in their interest in a certain field. Olivia displays a similarly

career oriented and fixed approach to her charitable engagement. More specifically, while her intentions may not be as explicit as Sophia, she demonstrates a distinctively purposeful attitude.

In her early forties at the time of the interview, Olivia was the executive-director of an umbrella fundraising organization that will be referred to as the Rivergarden Community Fund (RCF). An influential association, the RCF is responsible for raising funds and distributing proceeds to over thirty charities and groups located in a suburb of Montreal that will be called Rivergarden. A pseudonym for an actual foundation and region, RCF was founded by a group of prominent Rivergarden residents. This includes the former president of a large pharmaceutical company and a philanthropic family foundation. It is currently staffed by five people and operates from a donated office suite located in a large commercial building. Its employees include an executive-director and several other coordinators. In addition, this association also has a functioning board of directors, which is comprised of executives from companies engaged in the Rivergarden community. The purpose of its board of directors is to ensure financial transparency and that funds are distributed accordingly. I recruited Olivia for an interview while volunteering directly for this association. A Montreal native and an astute businesswoman, she exhibits an active and social demeanor that appears balanced by a deliberate approach to volunteer engagement.

For instance, she first began volunteering for RCF in her late twenties after relocating to this suburb from her downtown residency. Since this was her first and only charitable commitment, the decision to become involved seemed to arrive at a transitional moment in her life. More specifically, during this period she had recently married and moved to the suburb of Rivergarden after living in the city for several

years. According to the following passage, Olivia initially began volunteering with RCF as a way of re-acquainting herself with the new community. As she explains in detail,

> I am a [Rivergarden] native and I had gone to live downtown in my twenties, got married came back to [Rivergarden], got a pamphlet in the mail about community shares. It really seemed like an interesting model and I call and I said listen I'd love to volunteer, get re-connected with my roots, with my community where I group up and I kind of lost touch of while I was away and what do you think I should do. So I had a business background she suggested I get involved on a committee. Got involved on the marketing communications committee and worked on some big files. We re-vamped the whole website at the time, we did a whole calendar fundraising project. So I got to present a lot of these projects to the board, got to know the board members and when the executive director left for another organization, they asked me if I would be interested in stepping in as the executive director. The timing wasn't right for me at the time, they hired someone else, didn't work out, came back and asked me again if I would take on the position. And I thought about it and obviously my situation had changed then and I said absolutely [Olivia: August 15, 2012].

While Olivia may have initially become involved with RCF as way of familiarizing herself with a new area, it is interesting to note that during this period she also had her own business. As the following passage will demonstrate, this fact was mentioned in passing and mostly served to illustrate the amount of hours she contributed to RCF. For example, in response to whether she was working full time while offering assistance she reveals,

> Yeah but I had my own business so I was able to – I was volunteering at least the equivalent of eight to fifteen hours a week so it was a lot. Like a day or day and a half a week where I was working on big projects but it was by choice and after that I was working full time and still helping out here and there [Olivia: August 15, 2012].

In this instance, it can be argued that charitable action provided Olivia an opportunity to develop a strong network base for her own business. More

specifically, a majority of RCF volunteers, who are either board members or office assistants, often hold prominent positions within the community as either commercial owners or executives. As a business owner, Olivia may have sought to expand her contact list while becoming acquainted with the board of directors and widening her career prospects. In particular, when asked to describe her volunteer contribution she explains,

> I applied more my business skills, which I knew how to do and got results with it and then built the network and then there was an opening and eventually it all kind of worked out [Olivia: August 15, 2012].

According to this passage, Olivia seems focused on the outcomes and relationships built through her charitable involvement. This results oriented approach can suggest a more deliberate form of participation that would assist career interests. Julia also displays a narrow yet precise range of nonprofit experiences that began at a later age. Although her participation was not directly associated with the search for employment, her areas of involvement and personal background appear to indicate a purposeful orientation. For instance, originally from Bulgaria she was in her mid-forties at the time of the interview and was initially referred to me by Olivia as a potential participant in the study. Recently married and unemployed, her husband was the vice-president of finance at a large banking firm, thus serving as the primary breadwinner of their household. Like Olivia, Julia also provided broad and generic reasons for becoming involved in the charitable field. For example, in regards to what she hopes to achieve through her charitable participation she explains, “my main goal is very simple; it’s to help others. It’s a great personal fulfillment; you don’t think only about yourself, it’s helping others” [Julia: August 28, 2012]. This general style of speech is reflected throughout the

interview. Therefore, much had to be inferred from the facts surrounding her background and various commitments.

In particular, Julia has a medical degree from a European university and had recently become involved with several nonprofit organizations. These include a cancer research organization, an umbrella fundraising group and healthcare businesswoman association. In this capacity, her role was to organize fundraisers, interact with members and guests while raising awareness for a variety of related causes. Further, she also began volunteering for a domestic abuse shelter where she was in charge of initiating several healthcare projects. While Julia demonstrates an active charitable background, a vast majority of her participation appeared to involve women and health. According to her background, such engagements can serve two interrelated functions. On the one hand, they may offer Julia an opportunity to acquire contacts and experiences within a certain field in turn, facilitating her search for a related area of employment or position. As well, through volunteering she could also be maintaining a strong community presence for her spouse whose work position entailed a certain degree of civic engagement. For instance, in response to whether her husband demonstrates a similar array of public engagement she reveals, "Oh he does, he does a lot of fundraising for different events, he has experience [laughs]"[Julia: August 28, 2012].

In that respect, Julia demonstrates an informed background well acquainted with the benefits of social networking and communication. Her emphasis on connection and sociality through volunteering might suggest prearranged intentions not necessarily only associated with the altruistic desire to assist. Therefore, while Julia seems to describe her charitable engagement in a vague manner, her range of involvements and their relationship to her husband and academic background

appear to indicate a more fixed orientation. Similar to Sophia and Olivia, this can be associated with either strategic advancement or career attainment. However, whereas charitable action could have provided Sophia, Julia and Olivia the skills and experiences needed to enable access into the workforce, Charlotte and Sarah present a similar yet distinct approach. For these retirees, volunteering offered an ability to remain engaged while replicating some of the activities and roles they took on when employed.

Staying Relevant: The Transition from Work to Retirement

According to Ekerdt (1986), retirement is often managed and legitimated by an ethic that "esteems leisure that is earnest, occupied, and filled with activity" (Ekerdt1986: 239). Described as the 'busy ethic', its origins are attributed to the early Puritan concept of vocation, which tied diligence, temperance and industriousness with heavenly awards. Ekerdt argues that the coming of the modern factory system "created a moral uncertainty about the essential nobility and instrumentality of work that made individuals want to take refuge in the old phrases and homilies all the more" (Ekerdt1986: 239). As a result, work ideals while still persistent became increasingly abstract and lacking "as do many other of our moral precepts, those contexts from which their original significance derived" (Ekerdt1986: 240). For the author, the 'busy ethic' is an enduring notion that validates the leisure of retirement by integrating "existing beliefs and values about work into a new status that constitutes a withdrawal from work" (Ekerdt1986: 243). This section of the chapter will expand on this notion by illustrating the lasting influence work has on the types of roles taken by retired volunteers. In this case, charitable action not only provides meaning to the retirement phase but can also reproduce the functions taken on when employed. This can thus serve as a form of continuity between different life course

stages while illustrating the overarching influence of paid work on individual trajectories.

For example, Sarah was sixty years old at the time of the interview and had been retired for eight years. Prior to this period, she was the manager of business applications at a large manufacturing company and had been employed with this organization for thirty-five years. As she explains in detail,

> For me working was a big part of my life and as a kid I wasn't – I'm not competitive. Like I play sports and I, you know, I don't care whether I win or lose because for me I do my best and what the hell. And when I started working, its not that I was competitive in a different way, in that like I would never stab somebody in the back to get what I wanted. I always figured you know, I'm doing a good job, I'm smart, I can do this, I can get you – if you recognize it that's fabulous, if you don't recognize it well so be it. And I was lucky enough to work for a company, especially when you start to get into the late seventies; the company realized that they had a whole – a whole mass of good talent that they weren't exploiting so to speak. I mean all of these woman that worked there that were smart you know and they had careers and they wanted to do good and get ahead, so that, that helped as well because a few of us kept moving up the corporate ladder [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

In this passage, Sarah attributes her ascendency within the company to a strong work ethic and single-minded approach. In particular, her career background seemed to have fostered a results oriented attitude that craved appreciation and acknowledgement. As the following passage will elaborate, this had a significant impact on her identity and subsequent volunteer activities. For example,

> But never competitive in that I would do anything to get what I wanted but every time I did something and I – it was a good thing or I got a promotion and I did something, that sense of accomplishment then became more and more important - more and more important to me again not to a point where I'd be mean to somebody or stab somebody in the back to get it but I realized that that's my character. It wasn't seeing a kid take his first steps, it wasn't – I

> mean you know, money is nice and all that kind of stuff but money is not – its not a continuing motivator, it gives you that – that little spark but eventually – so what you've given me money and a promotion, tomorrow I want something else. I want to be able to say I did that and I accomplished that and this is the result of my hard work. So I knew that was the kind of volunteering work I would have to do, that I would get that little high [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

According to the above account, Sarah acknowledges the effect long-term employment had on her interests and goals after retirement. Following her departure from the company, she immediately became involved with several nonprofit organizations and quickly discerned the types of charitable involvements that best suited her interests and skills. More specifically, her strengths and preferences were realized during her first volunteer experience with a well-known organization that caters to terminally ill children. Within this association, she was responsible for administrative functions such as setting up events and assisting the organizers with small tasks. As she elaborates,

> It's a big impersonal volunteer organization, so you know they're having an event. They send you to where they're having the event, you set up or you do whatever it is you're supposed to do and then that's it. You don't really participate in the event per se because in that case, there's the parents and the support and whatever. So for me that was too impersonal. I didn't like that so ok I've learnt something about myself. I like to teach, not that I – I mean I would do - not teaching at work, but I did stuff like that at work. So when I did the literacy I though oh you know, I think I'm ok, I'm pretty good at it, I'm ok at it and I like that, I like that kind, so that's kind of, kind of the volunteering I do now [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

In this passage, Sarah describes a penchant for activities that allow her to impart skills and offer direct assistance. Since these were the types of roles and endeavors she undertook when employed, volunteering can provide a flexible arena where she is able to reacquaint herself with previous work like functions, in the process, providing a sense of meaning to her new position as a retiree. Ekerdt elaborates on this point and explains how "transitions are easier to the extent that the new position

has a well-defined role, or provides opportunities for attaining valued social goals" (Ekerdt1986: 240). In that respect, charitable action can play an important part in assisting retirees who are searching for a sense of identity and purpose after a large transitional shift.

After her initial experience, Sarah began teaching English at a community association and computer basics at a senior resident home. Further, as an avid reader with a recent undergraduate degree in library studies, she also started volunteering at her local library where she was responsible for delivering and suggesting books to individuals with reduced mobility. In the following passage, Sarah describes her volunteer experience with this association. More specifically, she elaborates on the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment gained through direct forms assistance. As explains,

> I mean as a I say to you, it's a selfish feeling, people volunteer to make yourself feel good. So when I go to Mary and I bring her these books and she's like oh thank goodness, I've finished my last one yesterday, thank you for bringing the books. It's like wow, I did that you know, so its certainly you know, I'm happy that she's happy but its because I feel I've done something [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

This form of achievement was also expressed through her charitable involvement with a local community center. In this capacity, she was responsible for teaching English to a middle-aged South Asian woman who will be referred to as Sonia. Sarah explains that Sonia has been living in Canada with her family for over twenty years. However, while her children and husband were proficient in three languages, she still had difficulty mastering English. As a result, Sarah embarked on a two-year commitment of imparting the basic words, rules and grammar of this language to

Sonia. A turning point in this relationship occurred when Sonia was instructed to take out a deposit from a local bank in English. As she explains,

> It's amazing, I didn't think I would get – I mean I knew people do volunteer work to make yourself feel good right, that's the reason people do it. But I didn't think I would get so emotionally invested in it. That when she had this success to me and to her, which was a great success, that it would be like wow look at what she did you know, it was quite something [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

It can be argued that this sense of amazement stemmed from a feeling of success and recognition. More specifically, through her contribution and direct assistance Sarah was able to have a significant impact on another life. In particular,

> Well I think you see, you see the progress when you deal with somebody one-on-one […] I'm helping somebody do something they can't do for themselves. I think for me I'd like to see, I'd like to see, this is going to sound so corny so just bear with me. I like to see how happy they get because I've done something for them, you know [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

For Sarah, such forms of appreciation and influence were a strong component of her job and are seen to be otherwise lacking in retired life. Through volunteering, she is able to replicate some of these qualities and activities and in the process gain the types of benefits that were often acquired through employment. As she elaborates,

> Being retired, I know people that work, do volunteer work, but when you retired, the first thing you – the first thing that happens to you is that you realize that nobody wants your opinion. Nobody cares about your experience, nobody asks you advice anymore because in your job, that's part of your job, so and you don't - you don't get a feeling of accomplishment I think so much when you retire. I mean I can clean my house, but who cares right? I run, I, you know, I go to the gym, so those things certainly give me a feeling of accomplishment but we need our little hit of happiness everyday, so for me that's doing volunteer work helps me [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

According to the following passage, this type of fulfillment was not only a symptom of work but appears to be a key component of her personality. For instance,

> I'm a runner and lots of people run everyday and that's what they do. Me because of the type of person that I am, I always need to have a race somewhere in the future that I'm training for. I need to have that goal, so even if I do two races a year, I always have that goal and then that accomplishment. So for me I need that I've done this today. So I think that's my motive behind volunteering is that it gives me a sense of accomplishment and the fact that I say, I'm such a lucky person why not [Sarah**:** October 14, 2012].

In that respect, charitable action offers an opportunity to combine the skills and traits learned through years of employment into particular types of activities that seemed to help express a learned identity. A similar approach can also be applied to Charlotte, who began volunteering sporadically in her early twenties and had recently renewed her involvement.

Charlotte was in her mid-fifties at the time of the interview and gradually retiring from her managerial position at a Montreal hospital. A registered nurse, the majority of her recent charitable engagements were in fields closely associated with her professional background in the healthcare field. However, she first began volunteering in her mid-twenties, when she was involved with a local nonprofit organization that delivers free meals to individuals with reduced mobility. For Charlotte, this initial engagement offered an opportunity to keep occupied while waiting for her subsequent nursing shifts at a local hospital. Further, it also provided a chance to use her newly purchased car. As she describes in detail,

> The earliest I can remember volunteering was when I was a young nurse in my twenties and I worked twelve hour shifts, so I had a lot of days off and I saw – and I was very proud of my little Honda civic car that I had bought [laughs] with my first salary that I had so I could drive and I saw that _____ in my community, I lived with my parents in _____ at the time,

> were looking for drivers. So because I had lots of days off and I had a car that's how I started volunteering when I was in my twenties and didn't have a lot of other responsibilities so I loved it. I used to do the driving but I didn't have a lot of interaction with the clients because somebody else would deliver the meals and so I did that for a few years and then you know, life got kind of busy. I got married, had children and then my volunteer work was mainly related to the kids so volunteering with sporting events and cubs, as a nurse I was often asked to go to like brownie camps and things like that as the volunteer nurse to be there for camps [Charlotte**:** October 14, 2012].

While her charitable action shifted towards family related activities after marriage, her impending retirement saw an increased and more diverse charitable involvement. For example, at the time of the study she was volunteering as a local nurse for an international humanitarian association and contemplating an overseas trip with this group. In addition, she had renewed her early involvement of delivering meals to individuals with reduced mobility. In the following passage, Charlotte elaborates on her career trajectory and the impact it has had on her personal interests, skills and worldview. As she explains,

> I guess as a nurse doing direct patient care for a very young age from when I was in my twenties, I understand or I realize how much satisfaction comes from doing something concrete that you can see benefit someone else and to understand what that feeling is. It's a different feeling from having a big job title or having a big paycheck, not everybody gets that – has the opportunity to get that kind of satisfaction out of their work […]. I learnt a lot through my direct patient care and I also got a lot of satisfaction. But you know the way things go, you gain a certain amount of experience and expertise and the next thing you know, you're the manager. So you're kind of far removed from what you originally set out to do so at different times in my life I've left management positions to go back to direct patient care, because I miss that satisfaction of working with people and being able to have almost instant gratification you know. Like by your actions you can see that you've really helped someone. Being a manager you know you clear your desk of a whole bunch of problems and you feel good that you've done that, but then there's a whole bunch of problems on your desk, you know its not the same [Charlotte**:** October 14, 2012].

According to this passage, it seems that Charlotte genuinely enjoys providing direct care and assistance. Through this form of support she was able to witness the transformative effects of her contribution in the process, acquiring a sense of gratification and meaning from her work. While this type of contribution was previously associated with her nursing background and job, it appears to have been transferred to her volunteer activities and interests. As she explains,

> You know, I've been thinking too if I don't end up doing one of the humanitarian missions, that I'm considering looking at working in palliative care because I feel like now, with all the years of experience that I have and you know all the patients that I've looked after, all the people that I've met, I've honed my communication skills and I kind of feel like maybe that would be something I'd like to do now. Instead of trying to cure people, more just caring for people, like helping them to die in the way that they want to die and make sure that they die comfortably and with dignity and I'm kind of interested in that. I've been looking at it and thinking about it, you know, maybe I want do that too when I retire from my current management position [Charlotte**:** October 14, 2012].

According to these passages, it can be argued that charitable action offered Charlotte the chance to undertake and experience an array of roles and functions that she might have been accustomed to when employed. This in turn provided a form of continuity between a previous career identity and the new phase entering her life. The same can also be applied to Sarah, who actively acknowledges the work-like function her volunteer activities seem to hold. Thus, whereas Julia, Olivia and Sophia were interested in enhancing their employment opportunities through volunteer activities, Charlotte and Sarah were concerned with managing their spare time without work. In both instances, entry into and exit from employment can be seen as important transitions easily facilitated through volunteering. While Emilie and Natalie were also interested in gaining work through their volunteering, a majority of their experiences illustrate an ongoing tension between community and individuality. The desire to reconcile both features is an enduring and central

quandary often attributed to early modernity. As will be elaborated in the following section, it continues to influence the experience of volunteers interviewed for the research.

Charitable Action: Negotiating Community and Independence

For Bauman (2000), community can indicate a type of security where norms of reciprocity, solidarity and interdependence can help guard against alienation or hardship. However, such belonging comes at the expense of freedom and is seen as undermining expressions of individuality or agency. Thus, while industrialization removed people from collective settings to more individualized environment, the desire for connection often leads to the modern tension between individualized orientations and communal aspiration. According to Bauman (2000), the George Elto Mayo experiment at Hawthorne enterprises illustrates how communal benefits can be simulated within an artificial environment. For instance, through the close attention given to the moods and opinions of employees by managers and foreman, the company seems to have reproduced a sense of familiarity and homeliness within a work environment. As a result, productivity increased within the company alongside worker satisfaction. This section will elaborate on a similar process found in charitable action. In this case, it will be agued that volunteering provides a range of activities that can reproduce both the collective qualities attributed to communal settings and the autonomy and freedom found in work. In particular, through the transition from assistance to employment, interviewees like Emilie and Natalie illustrate the complex manner by which the dynamic between community and independence can be mediated.

Emilie was in her early fifties at the time of the study with two adult daughters living away from home. A homemaker, her husband was the owner of a successful manufacturing company. Thus, the need for financial security did not appear to be a pressing matter. She first began volunteering in her mid-thirties after being diagnosed with a serious illness. As a result, she lost her secretarial position with a local political party. According to the following passage, the isolation and fear caused by this illness had a strong influence on her initial decision to volunteer. In particular,

> Well I must say there was another thing, when you're alone and scared its awful and also I thought if ever I feel better, I have to get out of this house to change my mind, you know, there was also that point like when I'm with people, you don't think about yourself as much and you're not saying oh my god is it cancer? So it was a bit to get back into the swing of things [Emilie: October 17, 2012].

For Emilie, the collective features associated with charitable action were seen as alleviating the alienation and fears brought on by her illness. More specifically, through close contact with individuals other than her immediate family and friends, she was able to concentrate on matters unrelated to her personal distress. This involvement thus helped reduced feelings of uncertainty and provided a type of relief through a multitude of social relationships. However, as the interview progresses it appears that the decision to volunteer was not just associated with illness but also influenced by feelings of solitude and redundancy experienced in her marital and domestic life. As she explains,

> I'm just tired of always being alone, and you're not there in your life, but when your husband comes back, he's tired. You're not there you know like so what did you do, what did you talk – so he watches the news and then we talk at supper, but its pressure for him too, so its important to have a life for yourself there outside of you know, I cleaned, like I washed the laundry today [laughs] [Emilie: October 17, 2012].

In this account, Emilie acknowledges an ongoing sense of loneliness that may have been triggered by her disease but seems to have been present longer. It can be argued that through volunteering she is able to develop a variety of roles and connections outside her marriage and home in the process, cultivating a more rounded social identity that can help mitigate feelings of remoteness felt in others areas of her life. Li and Ferraro (2006) expand on this point and describe the manner through which multiple social roles can foster bonds and duties that may provide volunteers with a feeling of meaning and purpose especially in the face of disease or despair. However, while the communal benefits of volunteering may have motivated Emilie's decision to become involved in the field another feature of her participation entailed the search for a paid position.

As the following examples will illustrate, Emilie demonstrates an especially close relationship between volunteering and employment. In particular, two of her only charitable engagements have resulted in paid positions. For instance, she first began volunteering as a secretary for a local volunteer bureau. Shortly after commencing this engagement, she was offered a waged secretarial position within the group. After ten years of employment, Emilie quit the organization and commenced an accounting certificate from a local adult education center. Following its completion, she started volunteering as a bookkeeper for a mental health organization. While her former commitment may not reflect strategic intentions, her subsequent involvement demonstrates a particularly instrumental motive. As she explains,

> I like where I'm volunteering as a bookkeeper [but] I'd like to be paid for that [laughs]. I'd like them to hire me two days a week, because I'd like to – I'm not volunteering enough, its just two mornings a week right now and the accounting is slowly retiring. So I'm slowly taking over, but I mean, there's still a limit between being a volunteer and being stupid. I mean I'm starting to

> do all the accounting work, so at one point I say, start paying me. So you know like I'm not a sucker. So now I'm trying for two years, it didn't work, anyways that's another story, so I'm waiting for, to see – normally they should hire me its just matter of time [Emilie: October 17, 2012].

According to this excerpt, Emilie describes an ongoing interest in obtaining a job with this organization. Her decision to complete a certificate in accounting combined with volunteer experience with the group can be viewed as a strategic move positioning her as an ideal candidate for the role. Further, in response to whether she sees herself involved with this mental health agency long-term she reveals, "yeah and get my money you know, I like to travel so it would be my money [Emilie: October 17, 2012]. It can be argued that her emphasis on personal income may suggest a need for independence and autonomy that might not be provided at home. In particular, as a homemaker whose finances are contingent on a spousal salary, work may offer a type of freedom that could be lacking in her personal life. Emilie's account thus reveals a complex dynamic between the initial desire for connection through volunteering and the resulting need for financial independence.

Fearfull (2007) expands on this point and argues that the benefits generally attributed to charitable action can also be found in work. This includes, "having an imposed time structure to one's day; having social relationships beyond those formed within the family unit; having a sense of purpose; and the development of identity (Fearfull2007). In that respect, the shift from volunteering to employment may reflect a desire to gain a range of both collective and individual advantages. However, whereas Emilie demonstrates a more individualized approach to volunteering, Natalie characterizes a strongly communal attitude. Nonetheless, both women share several overlapping qualities that include a background in accounting and long-term unemployment.

Natalie was in her mid-forties at the time of the interview and had three daughters under the age of thirteen. A homemaker, her husband was the sole financial provider in their household. Unlike Emilie, Natalie demonstrates an extensive and rich charitable background that began at a young age. This form of participation continued until the present time where she became involved with several diverse organizations. As she explains,

> Then I became active in so many different organizations in the _____ and then of course the kids got older. As the kids got older I had to start going back to work. I couldn't stay home anymore and I started working for the seniors club as a bookkeeper because accounting's my background. So I figured every time I volunteer I'm doing somebody's books, so I might as well get a job doing that in the area that I like, which is volunteer organizations. It was a paid position though and then from there I was introduced to the volunteer bureau because they had come and they had set up a kiosk and I got to know who they were so I thought that was an interesting way to organize them and I put my name down on the e-mail list [Natalie**:** October 17, 2012].

According to the above passage, Natalie demonstrates a more organic approach to volunteering and employment. More specifically, the decision to start working was not the main motivation behind her charitable engagements; rather it seemed to have emerged gradually from her extensive volunteer experience. This is further exemplified by her involvement with a local volunteer bureau, which occurred during her employed position.

Therefore, while Natalie and Emilie may share some overarching commonalities that can include roles such as mother, homemaker and wife, Natalie displays a sincere interest in volunteering, which is exhibited by extensive and ongoing participation in the field. Further, the cooperative attitude exemplified in the following passage stands in sharp contrast to the more individualized approach often expressed by Emilie. As she explains,

> I'm definitely – you know that expression 'it takes a village to raise a child'? I'm definitely of that mentality, I really – I don't believe in going into your house closing your doors and not being involved with anything around you. [Natalie**:** October 17, 2012].

This communal outlook seems to have characterized many of her volunteer experiences and aspirations. For instance, at the time of the study she was the president of a local community pool. Threatened with closure by the local municipality, Natalie elaborates on the collective impact this pool has had on the community and children involved. As she explains,

> They have to have that sense of belonging and slowly that is contagious and everybody gets that sense of belonging. So that's what we get out of our community pool and that's all volunteer [work] I mean we do it because we want to have a place to go, we want to have our pool [Natalie**:** October 17, 2012].

The pool can serve as an analogy representing the shared features often lacking in contemporary society. In particular, the desire to keep this establishment accessible and open may reflect a need to challenge the individualistic features common in modern establishments and interactions. Natalie elaborates on this dialectic in the following passage,

> The little children, the little – the people the seniors that can only walk to where they have to go, like if everybody broke down everything to 'can I walk there'? Everything would be more successful, can I – it would cost more, because you would need more facilities but will it really cost more, that would be another analysis to make, will it really cost more to have a lot more smaller pools or one big huge pool. You know, who's it going to benefit that one big pool, is it going to benefit the people around it that can walk to it or is it going to benefit the people who are going to drive to it, who is it going to hurt not having a lot of little pools that everybody can go to [Natalie**:** October 17, 2012].

Her emphasis on a singular space where individuals have to drive and access can be viewed as a comment on the impersonal and abstract nature of organizational decision-making. In this case, the cost effective nature of building one pool as opposed to many can illustrate a larger government inability to invest in open and accessible areas where individuals are able to congregate and socialize. This type of frustration is also apparent in other areas associated with her engagement. For instance, when asked to expand on some of the comments made in the discussion, she instead opted to describe some of the negative features associated with charitable action. In particular, Natalie expresses a dislike for volunteers who accept gifts. As she explains,

> I hate that, I hate that because it singles people out, its my communist side again [laughs] it singles people out. I like awards and recognizing someone's contribution, I'm all for that but sometimes what happens with a small organization when its – its kind of like corruption, you know, somebody wants your organization to support them so they're going to give you personally something, I don't like that, it makes things foggy [Natalie**:** October 17, 2012].

According to this passage, Natalie seems to prefer collective forms of acknowledgement and participation that recognize the shared contribution of the group rather than individuals. More specifically,

> When you're working in a group I feel it's so important to recognize the group. Not the one person in the group, but the group, so sometimes I feel uncomfortable when I'm singled out, when you know, I know that I'm the leader in the group but I'm doing it to get that group going and I want that group to work together and if somebody from the outside comes in and says wow you did such a good job, well no I didn't do such a good job, we did such a good job.

However, while Emilie may characterize an individual approach to charitable action and Natalie a more communal attitude, in both instances the decision to start

working was facilitated through their volunteer engagements thus revealing the complex manner through which both individual and collective aspirations can be mediated through charitable assistance and employment.

This chapter has demonstrated the varied ways in which the experience of volunteering can be associated with employment or features related to work. For some interviewees the entrance and exit into work served as impetuses for much of their charitable participation. This could occur either through the goal-oriented or productive approach they undertook when engaged or the particular qualities they were interested in attaining. For instance, while some interlocutors hoped that their participation would serve as a resource or training for employment, Sarah and Charlotte appeared to replicate the roles and functions they took on when employed. On the other hand, Natalie and Emilie demonstrate the varied manner through which conflicting impulses can be reconciled through transitions from volunteering to employment. Thus, whereas the motivation and experience of volunteering was linked to post-industrialism and modernity respectively, the impact of volunteering can reflect some of the features generally attributed to traditional close-knit communities. In particular, for some participants, long-term involvement within the field or meaningful interactions seemed to encourage a communal outlook where norms of reciprocity, solidarity and collective undertakings were strongly retained and appreciated even after their commitment had ended. The next chapter will elaborate on these points through a close look at the impact of volunteering for some interviewees.

Chapter 3: Communal Values and the Effects of Volunteering

For some interviewees, the impact of volunteering was closely associated with the types of interactions and relationships they formed while in the field. In these settings, significant occurrences and affiliations had a strong influence in developing a sense of collectivity, empathy and mutual aid. As a result, creating a more inclusive and complex understanding of charitable action and those assisted. In this chapter, I will argue that an appreciation for traditional and classic conceptions of charitable engagement, which emphasized long-term civic involvement alongside reciprocity and solidarity, emerged from the experiences of some international and local volunteers recruited for the study. In particular, whereas overseas participants demonstrate a more rooted orientation after their participation abroad, local volunteers explain the influence direct assistance had on their attitudes toward supported people. In regards to the latter, this involves a more enhanced and empathetic approach towards assisted groups. Moreover, in all instances there was an increased appreciation for collective action, mutual aid and commonality after their charitable participation. The chapter will begin with a close examination of overseas assistance and the disjunction between expectation and reality. For some of interviewees, global forms of involvement created a more grounded understanding of their involvement, which also influenced their career, academic and charitable trajectories. It will then describe local forms of assistance and the lasting affect certain relationships and experiences had on the desire to re-engage in the field.

A collectivistic understanding of community giving is generally attributed to pre-industrial societies or a nostalgic understanding of early North America. According to this perspective, sustained homogenous groups are seen as fostering shared norms and associations that are then interwoven in a web of generalized

reciprocity and recognition. Although such notions of community are often relegated to the past and distinguished from the individualism present in modern societies, Eckstein (2001) demonstrates how cohesive and embedded groups can coexist within an increasingly personalized environment. In particular, through a close examination of a particular community in Boston, Massachusetts, she demonstrates how assumptions of "individualistic cultural values obscures as much as it elucidates contemporary reality" (Eckstein2001: 849). A similar approach can also be applied to some of the volunteers interviewed for the research. For these contacts, charitable action seems to have replicated features associated with community by providing a space and activity where prolonged and meaningful relationships can be formed. Through diverse interactions, such interlocutors developed a more inclusive understanding of those assisted and thus created a new expanded version of collectiveness that also included supported people. Overseas participants elaborate on this process by describing a renewed appreciation for community and locality through their international experience.

International Assistance: The Disjunction between Expectation and Reality

For some volunteers, their involvement in overseas assistance seemed to have produced several conflicting emotions. On the one hand, the daily struggles associated with international participation created a sense of disillusionment that obscured the intimal idealism associated with their support. To reconcile such issues, Emma and Camilla placed an emphasis on the relationships built in these settings alongside the impact certain experiences had on their worldviews and involvements abroad. As a result, providing a more interdependent and holistic account of their international engagement. For instance, at the time of the interview Emma had volunteered overseas in Nicaragua, Tanzania and Ghana respectively. While her

initial involvement in Nicaragua was a course requirement managed by her academic institution, the engagements that followed were unrelated to school-related obligations. According to the interview, the generosity and consideration displayed by her host family in Nicaragua had a significant influence on her decision to pursue subsequent trips abroad. In particular, one instance seemed to have a strong influence in shaping her perceptions of the host family and community being assisted. Invited to a neighborhood wedding with limited outfits to wear, her host sister offered to lend her one of the few dresses she owned. In the following passage, Emma elaborates on the impact this gesture had on her outlook. As she details:

> She was very petite, she had taken it in around here to make it fit her and I put it on and it was snug around me here, and without even thinking she goes and takes a knife and rips out the stitching she had done to make it fit her so that it would fit me and I was just like wow like that's like, I don't know, and then after that experience, umm, I did want to go and - she made, that made such an impression on me and I wanted to go and leave that kind of impression on others [Emma: September 8, 2012].

The selflessness displayed by a young woman with relatively limited means left a lasting impression on Emma. According to the following passage, it highlighted the hospitality and kindness exhibited by individuals meant to be supported, in the process creating a more expansive understanding of supported groups and reversing the dichotomy between benefactor and beneficiary. As she elaborates:

> It was just like she has nothing, this was maybe one of three dresses that she has that she took the time to sew and make it fit her and then without even thinking, to like make me confortable and happy and to make sure it fit me well, she just wanted me to, you know, she went and like, it was just so selfless and it was just their mentality that they just want, they want you to be comfortable. Even when I would eat dinner, everyone got a plate and my plate was bigger, they gave me more, they just wanted to make sure I was comfortable [Emma: September 8, 2012].

The altruism illustrated by her host sister was extended to the family at large and seemed to encourage a mutual desire to provide similar forms of assistance and support. According to Taylor and Pancer (2007), the quality and significance attached to meaningful occurrences can predict future forms of charitable involvement. More specifically, they describe how "such experiences are empowering to young people, and may well awaken the desire to volunteer and to explore other opportunities" (Taylor&Pancer2007: 339). However, for Emma the transformative potential of charitable action seems to underscore a common narrative whereby assisted groups may offer Western travelers insight into more communal and shared ways of living. This perspective is often juxtaposed against the subjective individualism present in some Western affluent nations. For instance, in the following passage she uses her overseas experience to provide a more general account of aid. As she explains:

> With people who have everything and there with people who have nothing and they want to, everyone is always just helping everyone in any place I've been like that. Like everyone in communities like they all help each other and its not really like that here [Emma: September 8, 2012].

In this passage, it can be argued that the collective and often simplistic understanding of assisted and distinct people can serve as an anchor in times of uncertainty and distress. In particular, it may allow international volunteers to structure their participation within a basic framework of self-improvement, enlightenment and support while this may not always be the case. For example, Emma details the isolation and discomfort felt on her volunteer trip in Tanzania, a marked distinction from her insulated engagement in Nicaragua. As she explains:

> When I went to Tanzania, like everyday, I was very tired by the end of my trip. I was very like frustrated because everyday, like, when I was in Tanzania it

> wasn't very sheltered kind of trip where I was with a group. I went off everyday and took like a bus, a twenty-minute bus to like an orphanage, like I was very much on my own, so I really interacted with locals not anyone who is used to seeing volunteers. Like I really experienced what the people, how the people look at white people and everyday people were trying to rip me off everyday for everything, trying to get money out of me. Like making comments at me, by the end of five weeks I was just like exhausted by it and I was like offended and I was just angry [Emma: September 8, 2012].

In this instance, the stark reality of her engagement in Tanzania exposed her to the vicissitudes of overseas living and involvement. Removed from the sanitized and generally touristic forms of humanitarian assistance, Emma may have sought to gain a sense of perspective regarding her contribution by clinging to an accustomed understanding of travel and transformation. In particular, she describes the important role connections can play in maintaining a positive and learned understanding abroad. As she reveals:

> In Nicaragua […] those were the strongest relationships because I lived with them [host family] alone for a month and yeah building those relationships on my first trip in Nicaragua is what made me want to go and try and help in other areas where I though I might be needed just like for a set of hands. In Tanzania, I didn't really build any relationships which is why I didn't have the - the experience in total was great, I learned so much but people wise I didn't leave feeling the people were that great. Partly because I was all day with little kids who couldn't speak English what kind of relationship could I possibly build and the people who I chilled with everyday were not too kind and in Ghana I build, yes with one specifically and with one older girl [Emma: September 8, 2012].

It would seem therefore, that reciprocal forms of communication between the volunteer and assisted populations could strongly impact the types of experiences certain individuals wish to remember through their overseas engagements. More specifically, through direct interactions, participants are able to build meaningful interactions that can help shape their understanding of humanitarian aid and the contribution provided, in turn, offering significance to an otherwise limited and at

times arduous encounter. More specifically, Emma elaborates on some of the difficulties confronted when volunteering abroad for long periods of time or working as a humanitarian professional. This includes an inability to raise a family, lack of rootedness, reduced pay and challenging climates. As she details:

> But yeah, like also there are jobs that don't pay so well and you're in very difficult positions for long periods of time because you're probably staying somewhere. It's a lot to consider, I don't know if I would do it as a profession or maybe do it – maybe help an organization here who sends people somewhere else you know, just to be perfectly honest, especially now I'm young, it's easy for me to do these kind of things, when I'm older to be in like such heat or you know it's harder when you're older to be in these kinds of conditions [Emma: September 8, 2012].

Thus, through overseas engagement Emma was able to withstand some of the challenges encountered during her trips by adjusting her expectations and underscoring the importance of forming durable relationships with those encountered. As a result of these shifts, she was able to develop a realistic assessment of her engagements abroad while maintaining a positive outlook and downplaying some of the complications she had faced. A similar perspective can also be applied to Camilla, who had also volunteered in Ghana and Rwanda. Unlike Emma, her overseas encounters had lasting and detrimental consequences on her health and future participation in the field.

For Camilla, the decision to volunteer abroad offered an opportunity to explore a long-term interest in humanitarian affairs and global conflict while preparing for graduate school the following year. Although her main involvements were in Ghana and Rwanda, certain experiences in Rwanda seemed to have a significant impact on her life course and the types of choices she made regarding international aid and work. In particular, the daily reminders associated with the

1994 Rwandan genocide combined with her participation at a malnutrition center in Ghana seemed to have triggered an eating disorder that continues to affect her life and areas of interest. As she explains in detail:

> Well – I think like – and it is going to be pretty personal but you can use it, after Rwanda and even now I still suffer from anorexia. I lost – I'm one meter seventy-two, I used to weigh about sixty-two kilos and now I went down to forty-one and Rwanda was probably a part of that, because in Ghana especially working with really really skinny kids, like maltreated, well you know I worked in a malnutrition center so I think that really affected me in a way, like – so after that, I saw, you know, doctors and psychiatrists and they were like, but you still want to do that job and I'm like yes I can't live without it. I don't know what keeps me going, but I don't see myself without it either, I don't see myself doing anything else than that, then studying, you know, genocide or traveling to conflict ridden countries or – I don't see – even though it had you know very bad consequences on my health and – I'm still, I still have a lot of problems and I have a hard time dealing with it and gaining weight even like after a year, its still – I don't know, it's what keeps me going too.

According to the above passage, Camilla outlines the complex issues arising from her charitable involvement. However, as the ensuing passage will illustrate, she seems to downplay the adverse impact of her charitable engagements by emphasizing the positive and often collective feelings attributed to her time in Rwanda. This is highlighted in the following account:

> But then again in Rwanda there was a lot of violence but there was a lot of happiness as well like a lot of community feeling, but you just had violence because you had memorials everywhere and bodies exposed and everything so you still see the violence, but then again people are nice, very nice, like you don't feel like, because everybody here is very like all me, me, me and over there its not like that at all [Camilla: August 21, 2012].

As I noted earlier, Emma had expressed a similar set of sentiments by contrasting the solidarity and collectivity experienced in overseas settings with the individuality present in Western affluent countries. As Camilla elaborates:

> The thing with Rwanda or Ghana is that you know compared to here, there is a real community feeling, everyone watches over everybody else, yeah, even like kids especially, they like run around but even like people who are not relatives they'll tell them don't cross the street, there's a car or they'll tell them to be careful. And it's the same for us, like if you're lost they're going to help you, if – I mean they're really, really, really nice and they even like, they say hi and I would go running every morning and they would laugh because they're like why you're running? I'm like, I don't know it's fun, you know, I made really good friends over there because people are very nice, especially like you're white, they take a real interest in you but not for money, they just want to know about you [Camilla: August 21, 2012].

Like Emma, it can be argued that Camilla's ongoing emphasis on the solidarity and generosity exhibited by the people she was assisting could have stemmed from her desire to preserve initial and idealistic understandings of assistance while confronting difficult circumstances. This can be the case for encounters that might have had a drastic impact on personal welfare or challenged accustomed beliefs and worldviews. In such instances, communal outlooks concerning reciprocal and collective forms of cohesion can offer comfort during times of distress or uncertainty. For overseas volunteers, this can refer to the culture shock, which has been experienced in distinct regions, which includes demanding conditions or the effect of violence. Further, the notion of community could also refer to an underlining affinity or humanity that might salve some of the stark realities associated with their international participation. However, in the following passage Camilla seems to take this shared understanding further by elaborating on a memorable occurrence in Rwanda. As she explains in detail:

> It's funny because [laughs] it sounds strange but I went to see the gorillas, it's just on the border to Uganda to the DRC, and basically your entire week you deal with people who suffer from poverty and stuff like that. You get really sad sometimes, you're really like, how come people can inflict so much pain on each other and you're really depressed sometimes. And on the weekend, you have some time off and you get to travel, and I was like, ok I know it's a lot of money but if I'm in Rwanda I might as well go and see the gorillas because

> that's the only place where you can see them. And you go there and it's like a one day trip, you go with like armed soldiers and you travel for hours like through the mountains and everything and you have to walk for like two, three hours and you get there and you try to find them because they travel a bit and run, and then it's such an experience, you see, you regain some confidence just by looking into a gorilla's eyes. They look at you, they're so human in a way, like, for example, the mother feeding its baby, it's just like you see so much humanity in a way, it's really strange, it's like some – I know other people had said the same thing as well, they're like, we experience violence everyday and then we take time off to go see the gorillas and it helps [Camilla: August 21, 2012].

According to this passage, it can be argued that the harsh reality of conflict and poverty experienced in Rwanda and Ghana encouraged her to seek out alternative avenues where she could encounter a sense of collectivity and humaneness that was lacking in her other engagements abroad. Ironically, through a visit to the gorillas Marie was able to reclaim a simplified and idealistic understanding of community that may have been absent during her stay in these regions. In one respect, the conserved nature of these gorillas can serve as an analogy reflecting an enduring yet archaic Western notion of the modest and content native living a preserved state of communal solidarity thus upholding a slightly distorted but expected image of international assistance while reconciling the disjunction caused by moments of personal unrest and uncertainty. Nevertheless, through her overseas involvement, Marie, like Emma, was able to discern the types of activities best suited to her and accordingly adjusted her interests and expectations. In particular:

> I'd like to do that, you know, a mixture of like being here and doing like research and being on the ground, because it's – I can't live in Rwanda, it's just too hard, it's too different and there are too many things missing, you miss like your little comforts, you know like your TV your fast internet, not have like a lack of electricity all the time [laughs] [Camilla: August 21, 2012].

Whereas Emma and Camilla may have sought to counterbalance the stark reality of volunteering abroad with optimistic outlooks, Leila maintains a rather discouraging view of humanitarian aid. For instance, she first began volunteering locally for a global nonprofit organization based in Montreal. After several years of involvement, she decided to volunteer overseas with the group. Like Camilla, this shift was not a spontaneous move but closely associated with her graduate school research. However, unlike Emma and Camilla, Leila seems to have developed a more skeptical view of humanitarian aid. In the following passage, she elaborates on this disenchantment by detailing the problematic nature of donating artesian wells to rural and disadvantaged communities in Southeast Asia. As the following passage will illustrate, in these contexts the lack of interaction between the benefactors and beneficiaries can reflect a larger issue where the needs of those assisted are often assumed rather than ascertained. For instance:

> You know when you give an artesian well – this is also something that amazed me when I was in Cambodia is like there are many places where NGOs gave artisan wells but one or two years after they don't work anymore because it was not well taken care of by the people themselves. Even though they were taught how to use it and how to keep it in a good way they didn't follow this. So it bring a lot of questions of what is underneath you know all this humanitarian aid that you give to these people, did you really give something to them? You know, so this asks a lot of – for me it's like existentialist questions because I put humanitarian aid into my existentialist ideal vision you know of life, and it was a lot of sort of disillusion when I went there because I saw what other NGOs did and I was always scared of my NGO doing the same [Leila**:** April 25, 2012].

In this excerpt, Leila appears to challenge the traditional and often idealistic understanding of humanitarian aid by offering a more critical and honest account of her engagements. This is further elaborated in the following passage:

> The majority of people that I saw who went abroad in developing countries were involved locally in helping people, they always say that oh I had such an amazing experience it changed my life and I didn't know why but it didn't happen for me. Maybe because I was expected to see certain things and I don't know it didn't work at all for me, it didn't change – I don't want to say it changed my life, it changed my perspective on humanitarian aid for sure but it didn't change my life in amazing way as people tell it, so I don't know if this is maybe a sort of cliché or I don't know if many people went into the same experience but […][Leila**:** April 25, 2012].

Similar to Emma and Camilla, the disjuncture between expectation and reality for Leila seemed to have shifted her academic and career trajectory. Rather then internationally oriented pursuits, she appeared interested in pursuing a more local and manageable position. As she explains:

> Because I didn't really appreciate my experience in Laos and I find it really hard in Cambodia to be there in certain times, I don't think I will go abroad anymore, maybe because I found it easier for me to work directly in Montreal then work in Cambodia. I don't say I will never go there, but not now I need this time for […] [Leila**:** April 25, 2012].

Thus, while Emma and Camilla may demonstrate an enhanced appreciation for communal forms of assistance and residency through their charitable engagements, Leila maintains a generally negative attitude towards her overseas experience. However, in all instances, a more realistic desire for local forms of work and residency appeared to have emerged from their volunteer experiences. Similarly, John and Gabrielle also describe a more rooted orientation after a long-term period abroad. However unlike the above-mentioned interviewees, they seem intent on establishing a more entrenched home base.

Rootedness: Overseas Experience and Local Involvement

For John and Gabrielle, long-term overseas participation motivated a distinctly communal orientation where traits such as solidarity, interdependence and group identity appear to take prominence. In these instances, the desire to build lasting relationships and connections within a local setting can overshadow the need to reside or volunteer abroad for extended periods of time. For instance, at the time of the interview, John was in his early forties and had over a decade of international experience either assisting or working abroad within a range of global nonprofit organizations. A humanitarian professional, he was interested in managing this diverse background with a more fixed orientation. As he reveals:

> It's a matter of balance and my balance asks me to be here as much as possible, eighty percent of the time if I can and that would be easy to continue to go in the field, but I would miss it if I would not travel for a year, but I don't miss being nine months stationed at a place because that becomes your way of life. You become – you know that's your surrounding and – as its fascinating. I think that's how you can best help is to be there as long as possible if you have a mission of at least nine month one year that's where you can sit, understand, talk to people. So I want to support the people that are doing that but for me I'm – maybe later, with a family, but I want to do it – I want to contribute differently [John**:** May 7, 2012].

In this passage, John describes a sense of fatigue associated with continuous displacement. However, while he prefers to remain in Montreal he is also interested in returning to the humanitarian field with a family in the future. Although unmarried at the time of the interview, the prospect of returning to the field with a family can illustrate a desire for greater stability, concerned with establishing residential ties and obligations. Further, it may also reflect the desire to form a more stable identity, distinct from the ephemeral qualities often attributed to voyage. This gradual shift could also be applied to Gabrielle, a Montreal based volunteer who had

just returned to Montreal after living abroad for several years. Unlike John, Gabrielle was able to expand on the transition from overseas living to rooted engagement.

For instance, in her late thirties at the time of the interview Gabrielle was engaged locally with a Montreal based humanitarian organization. Although interested in global forms of development, she has never volunteered abroad. However, her overseas residency in Spain and France can offer insight into the various dynamics attributed to international participation. In particular, she highlights a distinction between communal relationships and those produced while living abroad temporarily. Whereas the latter can be formed and abandoned quickly, the former are often viewed as more durable. For instance, in regards to expatriate living Gabrielle reveals, "the downside to that type of lifestyle is that you don't really get involved in anything long term, whether it's the country you live in or the relationships that you have" [Gabrielle**:** April 25, 2012]. In the following passage, she elaborates on this perspective by explaining how the shift from overseas engagement to domestic support transformed her understanding and commitment to civic participation. As she details:

> So after eight years I realized that these relationships were starting to erode, plus the fact that I was telling you, the social implication that you're there for a little while but you won't be there forever. So your implication in your country and your community is not the same and I was not socially involved before I went abroad, but when I came back, I felt the need to do things that mattered to me, realizing more if something – you don't agree with something, well do something about it because if you don't you can't rely on other people to always do these things for you. You have to get involved and get out there and do it and if you have to go to the city council and prepare your dossier about a file, about whatever is important to you well you just do it [Gabrielle**:** April 25, 2012].

In this account, Gabrielle reveals that while long distant associations between friends and family may remain intact for months or even a year, such connections if

not maintained through direct and sustained interactions can disintegrate over a period of time. In that respect, John and Gabrielle demonstrate the local impact international form of participation can have on an individual. More specifically, the transient nature of overseas involvement seemed to have produced an appreciation for enduring relationships characterized by affinity and locality. However, Gabrielle seems to take this transition further by illustrating a more socially conscious and shared outlook. As she details:

> I felt the need to get involved in my community, you know and take the things into my own hands when it was important to me, things that I didn't do before I went abroad [Gabrielle**:** April 25, 2012].

As the following passage illustrates, this includes a more active approach to community participation and a renewed commitment to extracurricular activities involving her children. As she details:

> Yes and the importance of – if you want things, you know you believe in something, just do something about it. You know so many parents at my kids school I hear complaining about this and that, you know, if you're not happy get involved. I mean great, you have great ideas, just do something about it you know, stop talking and just do something, and that's something I started to apply in my life. Of course you can't get involved in everything, you have to choose what's important to you, so that's what I did [Gabrielle**:** April 25, 2012].

According to the above passage, Gabrielle seems to embody traditional conceptions of civic engagement, which often combine roles such as member, volunteer and citizen into an interdependent system "firmly rooted in the organizational bases of civil society" (Lorentzen&Hustinx2007: 105). However, she seems to depart slightly from this classic definition by describing an interest in both civic and humanitarian forms of involvement. Thus, illustrating the inherent complexity in some volunteer experience and their long-term affects. Unlike

Gabrielle, John maintain a more resolute interest in international development but is intent on exploring this field from a more rooted home base. Thus, while both interviewees are concerned with establishing themselves locally, their volunteer participation is still oriented towards international associations thus, demonstrating a more balanced and experienced approach to civic participation. However, whereas John and Gabrielle illustrate the civic impact of overseas involvement, local volunteers Sophia, Allison and Mia demonstrate the transformative potential of direct assistance or prolonged support. As will be elaborated in the following section, such forms of aid can be seen as eroding boundaries between the volunteer and the disadvantaged groups s/he is trying to assist, in the process establishing a more inclusive and collective environment characterized by solidarity, mutual respect and reciprocity.

Local Volunteering and Direct Assistance

According to Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008), the organizational experience of volunteering can be reduced to five main transitions. These include nominee, newcomer, emotional involvement, established volunteering and retiring. Whereas the first two stages are introductory, the third phase are viewed as an important feature of the volunteer process. More specifically, the emotional involvement commonly "occurs after a meaningful event or giving actual help to the clients" (Haski-Leventhal&Bargal2008: 83). It serves a transformative function that allows volunteers to become more invested in a particular, issue, individual or cause. Since this stage can be distinct for all individuals involved, a general outcome is an increased commitment and interest in the charitable field. Further, some volunteers describe a more inclusive outlook after meaningful experiences or outlooks. In this setting, delineations associated with a disadvantaged other seem to diminish, in its

place is a more complex understanding of those assisted. Henderson et al., (2007) elaborate on this perspective and argue how prolonged forms of assistance may diminish stereotypes associated with individuals labeled as homeless, poor or afflicted. Consequently such people come to be viewed through a more expanded perspective that takes into consideration a complex background and underlying commonality.

This approach can be applied to Sophia, Allison and Mia who demonstrate a more enlightened understanding of assisted people and charitable action. Unlike international participants whose overseas involvement created an appreciation for local and more rooted forms of engagement, these local volunteers acknowledged the significance direct assistance had on their worldviews. More specifically, meaningful associations were seen as creating an interdependent relationship based on mutual understanding and trust. For instance, a graduate student in the field of Art History, Sophia describes early experience of volunteering at a senior resident home in high school. It was during this period that she became acquainted with an elderly resident who was also a well-known artist. Her ability to recollect conversations with this resident can illustrate the long-term value of association and underlying commonality. In this case, a shared interest in the field of art seems to have initially developed and later maintained this relationship. As she describes,

> It's funny, because I remember, you know, going to the old folks home like one of the people I met there was actually an artist, umm, his name was like _____ and he like actually gave me his book, like somebody had actually written a book and he was like a European artist that toured and I used to always go and we used to have these great conversations that always led back to like art, you know how things made you feel or why he painted the things that he did and stuff like that. And sometimes because art can be so personal, it gives you the best conversations, you know, because you don't necessarily see eye to eye.

Through prolonged discussions, Sophia was able to develop an enlarged understanding of this resident. Rather then viewing him as a senior citizen in need of assistance, he was instead seen as a layered individual with a unique history and perspective. As she elaborates:

> I think that really simply put, just a human connection. It was kind of, I mean it was nice to talk to these people who are probably often neglected by their family or their own society and they would just talk to you about their lives and what they've experienced. They would give you their wisdom and it was just kind of nice, there was nothing, you know, nothing being held over your shoulders or - it was just a free conversation. You didn't look at them in any way and they didn't look at you, you just kind of just sat there and started talking and it was - it's nice to hear other people's experiences and they were so eager to know about your life, even though you had no root connection to them in the sense that you weren't family, you weren't even a friend you were just kind of there [Sophia: August 27, 2012].

The ability to converse openly without prescribed roles or intentions can be viewed as a liberating encounter that is often lacking in interactions outside of charitable action. Further, the absence of pressures associated with identity formation, class structure or obligation can create an open space where some volunteers are free to assume or abandon a range of roles. As Sophia reveals,

> It really had nothing to do with the ego, because I feel like, I don't know your ego kind of gets checked at the door in volunteer work and you don't, it's not necessarily like your preoccupation, you know, so it was just kind of like no pressure for anything which is why it kind of just felt good. Does that make any sense? [Sophia: August 27, 2012].

A similar approach can also be applied to Allison, who began volunteering through her family and church. Whereas her early charitable engagements often involved serving meals during fundraisers, her subsequent volunteering at a palliative care center and youth protection home exposed her to a range of concerns and individuals. Within these settings, sustained or meaningful interactions offered an

opportunity to develop a more rounded outlook while also forming key interpersonal skills. As she explains,

> Well like I said before, I gained awareness, I don't want to say you gained like you learn, I think you learn by the people. You're there, I don't want to say serving, but you know interacting with, you learn a lot from them as people and I always left feeling like, oh I know something more about the world and about people and it just makes, I think it helps you be a better individual because you're able to interact with people of different backgrounds and different experiences. I guess you can get that in the work experience, but you have a lot more flexibility as a volunteer because you're not going to work you know with certain expectations that have to be met, you're going there fulfilling any role that has to be done that day you know [Allison: July 19, 2012].

According to this excerpt, there is a significant distinction between the kinds of relationships built respectively through work and volunteering. Whereas the former is often defined by a set of obligations or duties, the latter seems to illustrate a more fluid atmosphere where individuals can learn to communicate on the basis of shared affiliation or underlying commonality. For instance,

> It's what I learned from people I meet, I've had such great conversations with people because while my experience, in the volunteer sector I feel like you bring a little bit more of yourself so you're having genuine conversations with people whereas in the work field you're presenting a role right? You're a professional or you're a worker so it's like you're going in to help people but you can't really divulge too much of yourself so the dialogue is really one way whereas I think in the volunteer sector I get to you know meet people in the situations that they're in but I get to converse with them and it's like it more reciprocal if you want to say you know [Allison: July 19, 2012].

For Allison, charitable engagement provides a flexible space where individuals can engage openly in honest dialogue without the types of expectations or repercussions associated with employment or categorical identities. Further, the fluidity associated with the volunteer role may allow participants to gain an improved understanding of

the kinds of issues affecting the people they are assisting, in the process creating a broader and more empathetic outlook. For example, in the following passage Allison describes her charitable experiences at a palliative care center and youth protection home. As she reveals,

> You're learning how to interact with people from different areas, like this week I spoke to a woman who's dying of cancer so it's like you're speaking to a dying person but you get to realize oh but this person is still a person like you go in there and you're so afraid because you know death is not something that you speak about in society but you go and you're like ok this person is alive today and we're having such a great conversation. Or you can be speaking to a mother who just got her kids taken away but you get to see how resilient she is and it and honestly I find it's very encouraging to speak to a lot of different people, but it also it brings you to another level of understanding and awareness and I think it helps you interact with everybody better because you're not stuck in what you've learned you know and you're not rigid in how you converse with people [Allison: July 19, 2012].

In this case, volunteering allows individuals to develop diverse and significant connections within an organized and cohesive environment. Through such interactions, some participants are able to cultivate a sense of collectivity and understanding that can temporarily or enduringly bind previously distinct people, as a result developing a more inclusive and cooperative perspective that may have been absent beforehand. Like Sophia and Allison, Mia also elaborates on the experience and impact of working for a marginalized or disadvantaged population. According to Mia, the relationships and experiences acquired through such engagements seemed to have encouraged her to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of the challenges faced by a particular population.

Mia was in her early thirties at the time of the interview and employed as a coordinator with a mental health organization. Her previous volunteer experience with this group combined with her work to provide some insight into the issues

faced by this particular group. For instance, in the following passage she describes some of the stereotypes commonly attributed to the group:

> Honestly I didn't find it a challenge with the population itself, I find it more of a challenge with other people around that are associated with the person, there's a lot of stigma attached to these populations. There's a lot of misunderstanding, misrepresentation of these populations so I think that was the part that made it more difficult, because working with the populations that I've been working with, I've never had any issues, there more down to earth then a lot of people [Mia**:** August 17, 2012].

According to Mia, the labels commonly applied to this population can obscure some of the complexities and positive features that can be associated with individuals afflicted with mental health. This may include a more honest disposition, generosity and a more understanding approach to other disadvantaged people. In the following passage, Mia elaborates on this outlook by describing the strong impact certain acts of kindness had on her worldview:

> Like we went on an outing and the participants are all on welfare and they don't have any money, well not all, but a lot of them have no money and they're struggling and they saw a woman on the metro carrying a baby and panhandling and these people only have ten cents in their wallet and for them that's all they have left, they're only half way through the month and that's all the money they have left and they're giving money to somebody who has less than them? And then you have people dressed in business suits who give nothing? So it makes you reevaluate things a little bit [Mia**:** August 17, 2012].

In this passage, the altruism exhibited by members of a comparatively underprivileged group seemed to have had a transformative affect on her perspective. In particular, it appeared to have encouraged a more layered understanding of those being assisted and the significance behind seemingly minor acts of consideration. More specifically:

> The person who received the money doesn't know where it's coming from, right she's like ok I got ten cents, it's ten cents but that person doesn't know what they're actually receiving. So that's what I'm saying, with these people, what you see is what you get and they're genuine and they want to help and they feel bad for other people which – it's a lot of selflessness. Yes they're struggling through a lot and yes they have really bad days, but at the same time you see how different life could be [Mia**:** August 17, 2012].

In an increasingly individualized socioeconomic environment, it can be argued that the relationships and experiences acquired through charitable activities may replicate the types of features generally associated with community or close-knit communal groupings. This includes a long-term presence within a particular area, sustained affiliations alongside norms of reciprocity, solidarity and an acknowledgement of other members. For both local and international volunteers, the desire for shared undertakings can be fulfilled through various ways. In particular, Sophia, Mia and Allison demonstrate how direct forms of local interaction provided volunteers an opportunity to develop stronger and more meaningful forms of association, which in turn created an expanded understanding of those being assisted. More specifically, through such involvements, participants seemed to have replaced previously stereotypical understandings of poor, homeless or deprived peoples with more complex and empathetic perceptions of otherwise socially distant interlocutors. In this setting, assisted groups were no longer viewed through a removed understanding but a more inclusive approach that can reflect notions of community. A similar attitude can also be viewed among overseas volunteers who illustrated a more local and rooted orientation after long-term engagement abroad. In both sets of circumstances, the social interactions associated with volunteering, helped foster a greater understanding and mutual interchange between people who might otherwise have had little or no contact with each other.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to highlight the various processes involved in the act of volunteering. Through a close examination of the motivation, experience and affect of charitable action, I have demonstrated how a single charitable trajectory can reflect both individual interests and aims alongside qualities associated with broad socioeconomic change. The presence of both autonomous choice and underlying beliefs can illustrate an interesting juncture between subjective desires and longstanding attitudes toward assistance. For instance, in the chapter *Postindustrial Values and the Motivation to Volunteer,* I explained how for some interviewees, the decision to become involved in this field was often a self-reflexive and highly individualized act that reflected the search for personal wellbeing, leisure pursuits and unique biographies. According to this argument, potential volunteers shape their incentives around a range of interests and preferences that can mirror the diversity and fluidity accompanying post-industrialization. As a result, charitable action not only involves the selfless desire to assist but may also serve a range of subjective benefits for the volunteer. Whereas an eclectic array of choice and background seems to have characterized the incentives in motivating some interviewees, the actual experience of volunteering revealed a particularly industrious and work-centered approach.

For instance, in *Charitable Experiences and The Centralization of Work*, I explained how the search for employment and the need to remain occupied appears to have characterized the engagement of selected interviewees. In this case, charitable activities were often linked either to professional histories or academic and career interests. In regards to the former, retired volunteers often participated in undertakings that were closely linked to previous career positions as either a

nurse or management executive. In these instances, charitable action can offer an opportunity to maintain the skills and habits acquired through previous work positions while navigating an uncertain trajectory outside of their habitual areas of occupation. For others, formal assistance can provide an ability to develop new skills and explore potential areas of employment while staying productive. It can be argued that while these purposeful orientations may not have been apparent to the interlocutors discussed in this chapter, it does reveal the pervasiveness of work in modern society and its influence on organizing social life, a development that can be attributed to the industrialization processes of the early twentieth century.

Therefore, whereas the motivation and experience of volunteering seem to embody features associated with distinct socioeconomic processes in North America, the impact of charitable action can reflect nostalgic understandings of a preindustrial form of community and interrelatedness. In particular, through prolonged and significant interactions, selected interlocutors expressed feelings of solidarity and an expanded understanding of assisted people that may replicate notions of communal relatedness or association. For instance, in *Communal Values and the Effect of Volunteering,* I demonstrate how the experience of overseas volunteering created a paradoxical appreciation for residential forms of assistance or rootedness. In these instances, international participants acknowledged the value associated with building lasting relationships and long-term domesticity in single area or locale. While they maintain an interest in global affairs, much of their volunteer engagement is now assumed from a more local base in Montreal. A similar process can also be found amongst Montreal based community volunteers. For this group, sustained and meaningful interactions amongst a particular individual or persons had a transformative affect on attitudes toward charitable assistance and those assisted. In

particular, it developed an expanded and inclusive understanding of individuals previously considered as 'other'.

According to these chapters, charitable action is a mutable activity, strongly affected and shaped by the interests and beliefs of those involved. As socioeconomic shifts and history impact the decisions and attitudes of the general population, it also affects how some members view charitable action, thus creating a reciprocal and enduring relationship between institutional transformations and individual attitudes towards this field of activity. It can be argued that in some ways volunteering can incarnate these structural shifts, in the process leaving behind a lasting impression of these institutional changes. Although this study has offered an overview of the charitable field, volunteering is still an under researched topic that can benefit from further ethnographic studies. More specifically, since the act of assistance is often a strongly individual activity unique to each person or group involved, fieldwork can provide insights into the varying dynamics characterizing each type of involvement. This includes the current rise in strategic assistance amongst high school and post secondary students alongside the prevalence of senior volunteers. Multiple examinations of these and other emerging factors can offer insight into the complexity involved in charitable activity and in the process develop a clearer understanding of this fluid and ever-changing environment.

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