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(Un)Conditional Commitment

A Qualitative Study Exploring Volunteer Experiences, Disappointments,
and Their Responses in Not-for-Profit Organizations

By

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Abstract

Volunteering - the occurrence of individuals engaging in unpaid labor that benefits others - is considered a paradoxical, yet common phenomenon. The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of the volunteering experience in not-for-profit organizations, especially when volunteers feel disappointment and how they respond to it. To fulfill this purpose, the study is done through a qualitative approach conducted by eight semi-structured interviews. We have chosen to analyze our data in the lenses of Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory.

It was discovered that volunteers experience disappointment when their expectations of the volunteering work are unmet - the expectation itself varies between the informants but three recurring sources of disappointment have been identified. (1) Unmet Level of Commitment and Passion (2) Friction and Diminishment, and, (3) Mitchmatch in Perception: Role Change. To handle this disappointment, three distinct response-strategies have been found. (1) Increased level of responsibility - *The Martyr*, (2) Quit engagement - *The Quitter*, and (3) Status Quo - *The Captive.* We have seen a pattern between what type of organization the volunteers engage in and their opportunities to respond - which is what we encourage future studies to address.

A Poem About Volunteering

In a world of shadows, a light is found,
Where hearts unite, and love abounds.
Volunteering, a gift of time and care,
In every deed, compassion's there.

From shelters warm to fields so green,
In classrooms bright, where minds are keen,
In hospitals where comfort's sought,
With every act, kindness is brought.

Hands joined together, hearts in sync,
Creating hope with every link,
A common ground, a shared embrace,
In giving, we find our true place.

So let us rise, with spirits high,
To give, to care, and amplify,
The love that grows when we unite,
Volunteering, shining bright.

ChatGPT, May 29th, 2024

(When asked to provide a poem about volunteering)

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Introduction

Given the basic assumptions of human behavior as self-interested and rational; from an economic perspective - volunteering is a paradox (Hustinx et al., 2010). Out of free will, volunteers engage in unpaid labor that benefits others (Cnaan et al., 1996; Wilson, 2000) and they are less dependent on their organizations compared to paid employees (Pearce, 1993). Further, volunteering is considered an important part of a democratic and well-functioning society (Dekkers & Evers, 2009), and there are currently raised concerns that voluntary work will decline as a result of a more individualistic society (Fransson et al., 2021). As for now, however, one of the greatest challenges faced by not-for-profit organizations is to retain volunteers (Taylor et al., 2006). This implies that organizations relying on volunteers are at risk of facing even bigger challenges that eventually will have far-reaching effects on society as a whole.

Despite being paradoxical, volunteering is not an uncommon phenomenon. The workforce of non-paid labor is considerably large. For instance, a Swedish population-survey in 2019 showed that 51% of the adult population (aged 16-84) have engaged in voluntary work during the last 12 months since the date of the survey (Essen & Svedberg, 2020). Older statistics from six other countries (Japan, Australia, Canada, Germany, UK, and the US) claim that the percentages of adults that regularly volunteer ranges from 25% to 48% (Cemalcilar, 2009). Despite being considered a vital part of society; research on volunteering is remarkably scarce to this date. Previous studies have almost exclusively focused on motivations to volunteer, (Clary et al., 1996; Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Stunkel & Grady, 2011; Willems et al., 2012), volunteer role identity (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; van Ingen & Wilson, 2017; Piliavin & Callero, 1991), and work meaningfulness (Florian et al., 2019; Laura-Toraldo et al., 2019).

In this thesis, we explore the expectations held and disappointments experienced by volunteers engaging in three different not-for-profit organizations. We utilize theories of social exchange and psychological contracts to identify sources of disappointments and examine how volunteers respond to these disappointments in different ways.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of the volunteering experience in not-for-profit organizations. Specifically, we are interested in identifying the types of disappointments that volunteers encounter and how they respond to these disappointments associated with their voluntary engagement. In a broader context, we hope our findings will provide insights for future research and improve volunteer-management practices.

To correspond with these interests, the research questions of this study are the following:

- *What sources of disappointments do volunteers experience in their work?*
- *How do volunteers respond to disappointments?*

In light of these questions; we also look for recurring processes, themes, and patterns in our material in an attempt to identify similarities and differences to how disappointments emerge as well as how volunteers respond to them.

Previous Research

This section presents an overview of the existing literature regarding volunteers and volunteering that we find relevant to our project. It includes definitions, previous studies and a theoretical model explaining the main characteristics and causes for long-term volunteering. Lastly, it explains how this thesis aims to position itself in the academic field and how we aim to contribute by filling a current gap in the literature.

Volunteers and Volunteering: Definitions

Research has not yet reached agreement regarding a definition of what a volunteer is. Volunteers are to be found in very differing contexts and their roles can vary a lot in terms of duties executed, making it difficult to find a generic definition of the phenomenon (Wilson, 2000). Moreover, they are studied within various academic disciplines, making a generally accepted definition or theory difficult to find (Hustinx et al., 2010). Further, what one individual considers to be volunteering, could for someone else be considered a natural part of one's job (Hustinx et al., 2010) - e.g. a priest leading a sermon without any monetary exchange or answering calls when off-duty. In attempting to capture the term; Cnaan et al. (1996) suggest that volunteering is generally understood in association to the following four dimensions: *unpaid* work executed by *free will* in a *formal setting* that *benefits someone else*. All these dimensions are however complex in themselves and can be put on a scale. Moreover, volunteers are less dependent on their respective organizations compared to paid employees, leading to an organizational behavior characterized with less subordination (Pearce, 1993). This implies that volunteers are less inclined to retain their position if they experience issues in their organizations compared to paid employees.

According to Nichols (2013), three theoretical types of volunteering can be distinguished: Unpaid work, Political/Social activism, and Serious leisure. *Unpaid work* refers to how research previously has treated volunteering (Nichols, 2013) and is characterized by altruistic motivational factors where net costs are perceived to exceed the benefits. Volunteering as *Political or Social activism* is rooted in the civic society tradition where individuals gather around a set of shared values that drives them. For instance, the community rugby-volunteers studied by Taylor et al. (2006) are regarded as an example of activists that are motivated by the desire to promote the sport (Nichols, 2013). *Serious leisure* is defined by Stebbins (1996,

p. 215) as *"the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience"*. Volunteers that consider their engagement as serious leisure often have a strong loyalty to their organizations (Nichols, 2013), implying that they are more resistant to disappointments than other groups of volunteers. In sum; volunteers are not to be seen as a homogenous group and they have different relations to their respective organizations.

Volunteer Role Identity

It has been noted that two individuals performing the same role can differ in how strongly they identify with that role, leading to strength of identification with the volunteer role becoming a topic of investigation within volunteering-research (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). This concept of Volunteer Role Identity was developed under great influence of Piliavin and her colleagues (Charng et al., 1988; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Penner, 2002; Piliavin & Callero, 1991). The underlying assumption is that volunteers, as a result of long commitment, can come to identify with the goals of the organization (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). These types of studies are commonly conducted on blood-donors (Grube & Piliavin, 2000), which ought to be a commitment looking vastly different from those we have as informants.

Guided by theories of role identity, role substitution, or compensation theory, volunteer-research has shown that retirement (Moen & Flood, 2013; Mutchler et al., 2003) and widowhood (Tang et al., 2010) are indicators of increased engagement in formal voluntary work. Further, van Ingen and Wilson (2017) studied the phenomenon of role identity in relation to volunteering. Departing from earlier studies explaining volunteer-engagement, they studied whether role identification increased in correlation to age and retirement or not. Their findings show that older volunteers generally identify themselves more strongly to the volunteer-role compared to those that have not yet retired from their jobs. Role identity has thus been associated with demographic attributes.

Volunteer Motivations and Quitting

Aboramadan (2020) analyzes factors that encourage volunteering in relation to HR practices and their impact on motivating and retaining volunteers in non-profit organizations. He underscores the importance of retaining volunteers with the correct competence and

providing opportunities for skill development when needed. Additionally, Aboramadan (2020) highlights recognition as a key motivating factor for volunteers, suggesting that meeting this need leads to improved performance, higher satisfaction levels, and prolonged engagement with the organization.

Further, Willems et al. (2012) develops the existing research on volunteer's motives by questioning the inherent assumptions made by scholars that there is a symmetry between motives to volunteer and to quit. By using a theory of functional motives; they ask whether insufficient fulfillment of functional motives drives volunteers to quit their positions, just as previous studies (Clary et al., 1996; Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999) have shown that fulfillment of functional motives makes people choose to volunteer. Their material consists of active volunteers in a Belgian 'Scouts and Guides Movement' as well as people who have formerly been engaged as volunteers in the same movement. By utilizing the data gathered from 'ex-volunteers', their findings suggest that no such symmetry is to be found; motivational factors did not seem to be more important than other contextual factors. Another finding that came out of this study was that a significant number of people who had quit their volunteering-positions gave reasons that were grouped as *'lack of higher level support'* (Willems et al., 2012). Hence, this study further signals a need for increased awareness about volunteer expectations put on the organizations in which they are volunteering.

Fransson et al., (2021), in collaboration with The Church of Sweden (abbreviated: SvK) and affiliated organizations, have contributed with extensive research on voluntary work within youth and confirmation-activities ('confirmation-leaders') in SvK; the same type of activities which four of our informants are, or have been, involved in. By utilizing attendance-statistics from all 13 dioceses belonging to the national church and two surveys (one from 1998 and one from 2021); they explore, amongst other topics, what motives and forces are driving volunteers to start engaging in voluntary work within child- and youth-operations within SvK; why they choose to continue their engagement; and what ambitions volunteers have with their future engagement within their parishes. Their findings suggest that encouragement and recognition from employees are important practices to avoid volunteer-turnover. It is further noted that 20% of respondents in their study wish to receive more encouragement than what they are currently getting. It is also claimed that the parishes that are providing their volunteers with symbolic sums of monetary compensation generally have more active leaders in their confirmation-operations; no direct causal relationship is however established between

monetary compensation and number of active volunteers - rather, it seems like monetary compensation is connected to camp-operations. Fransson et al. (2021) also studies reasons to quit volunteering in the church. Their findings show that the most important factor, by far, is a lack of time, which aligns with earlier studies conducted on young volunteers (MUCF, 2020).

Sustained Volunteerism

Penner (2002) is one of the most influential researchers in long-term volunteering (Marta & Pozzi, 2008). He attempts to present an integrated model called *"The Causes of Sustained Volunteerism"* arguing that demographic-, dispositional-, and organizational variables, as well as situational factors and social pressures all influence the individuals' choice to volunteer. By *volunteerism*, he refers to prosocial behaviors that involve planned, long-term behaviors that benefit strangers - we treat 'volunteerism' as synonymous to 'volunteering' in this thesis. The model outlines the journey from the decision to start engaging as a volunteer to the sustained involvement within the non-profit organizations. Penner (2002) discusses how this model should be interpreted as a working model aimed to be of heuristic value to others, rather than a definitive statement.

The temporally organized model starts with examining the factors that encourage individuals to begin volunteering (Penner, 2002). Social pressure from peers and the perception that society would look positively at you if you start to volunteer seems to be of greater importance in pushing individuals towards engaging in volunteer work. Penner (2002) further explains several different factors that push individuals towards volunteering - where the majority of the factors are connected to the individual itself, such as prosocial behavior or personal beliefs or values. When the individual later on has taken the decision to volunteer, other factors play a significant role in making the volunteer retain their position - two variables that stand out are organizational attributes and practices as well as relationship with the organization. It is crucial to recognize the bidirectional relationship between individual and organizational variables, as these factors can impact the individual both directly and indirectly (Penner, 2002). Lastly, Penner (2002) argues that in order to become a sustained volunteer, the vital factor one needs to develop is a role identity associated with the volunteer-role (Penner, 2002). Despite that the model includes other factors, such as organizational, it is strongly focused on individual traits as the main driver towards sustained

volunteering. Weaker relationships are illustrated by broken lines in the model (Penner, 2002).
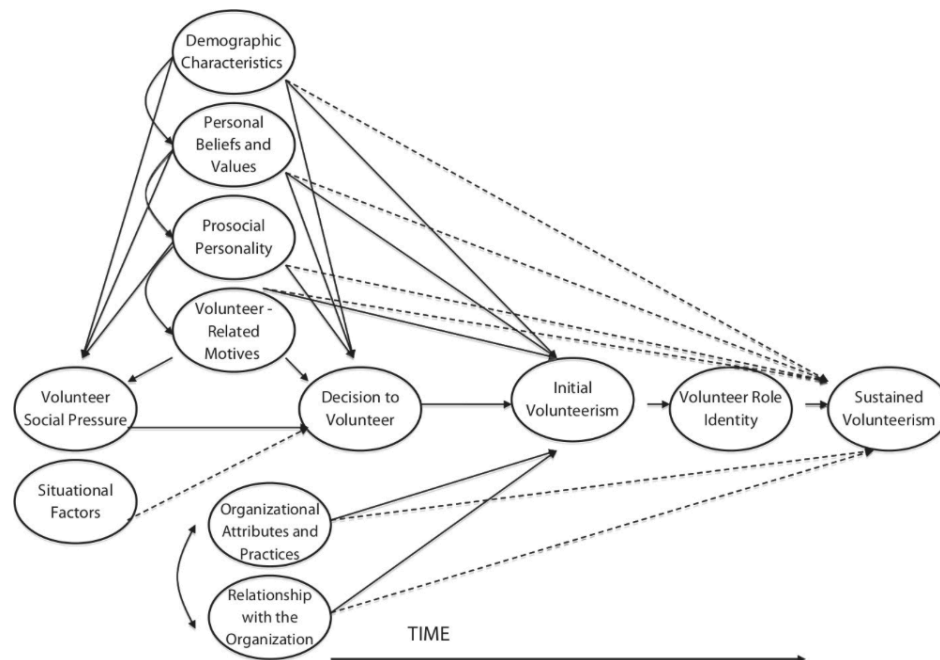
Figure 1: The Causes of Sustained Volunteerism (Penner, 2002).

Penners' (2002) model is utilized as a tool to understand the different steps of becoming a sustained volunteer and the reasons behind it (Cemalcilar, 2009; Kronholm & Wästerlund, 2013). Without being empirically secure, the model provides us with vital insights regarding the complex nature of volunteer-behavior, it also tells us that volunteering can be seen as a gradual process rather than an immediate shift from one role to another. Hence, volunteer disappointments and their reactions can potentially vary depending on all these factors as well.

Volunteers and Psychological Contracts

This study utilizes theories of psychological contracts to understand and explain the volunteering experience by identifying expectations that volunteers have on their respective organizations, as well as understanding the dynamics of unbalances emerging from unmet expectations. Psychological contracts are defined as *"an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party"* (Rousseau, 1989) and will be further explained in the theoretical framework.

Even though studies using psychological contracts on volunteers are scarce to this date, it has recently gained attention in research. One of the earliest studies was done by Farmer & Fedor (1999). Their findings suggest that fulfillment or breaches of psychological contracts amongst volunteers affect level of participation. They further highlight that the level of support volunteers believe they are entitled to play a crucial role in increasing volunteer participation and reducing withdrawal and turnover. Taylor et al. (2006) utilizes psychological contracts to explore expectations and obligations that volunteers perceive as parts of their volunteering-experience in community sport clubs, more specifically, rugby-clubs. Their findings suggest that volunteers are less concerned with transactional contracts and primarily interested in doing rewarding work in an environment that is socially pleasant.

Starnes (2007) departs from earlier studies done on psychological contracts amongst paid employees and explores whether the same relationships develop for unpaid workers. Her findings show that volunteers do constitute psychological contracts with their respective organizations and that breaches of the contracts result in a decrease of spent hours volunteering. The findings further show that breaches of contracts increase the quality of (perceived) contributions and have no effect on intentions to leave or remain in the organization.

As mentioned earlier, in the section "Volunteers and Volunteering", Nichols (2013) argues that there are three distinct types of volunteers: Unpaid work, Political/Social activism, and Serious leisure. He argues that depending on how volunteers perceive their engagement in relation to these types affect the values ascribed to different components of the psychological contract. Therefore, he calls for a new research agenda for psychological contracts within volunteer research. He argues that previous research on psychological contracts applied to volunteers are constrained because of direct transfers from studies of paid employees. Moreover, current studies are done, almost exclusively, on large not-for-profit organizations where volunteers are led by employees, which risks a neglect of grass-root organizations where volunteers are managed by other volunteers.

Vantilborgh (2015) utilizes theories of social exchange and psychological contracts to examine reactions to levels of psychological contract fulfillment amongst volunteers. His findings suggest that volunteers experiencing a low level of contract fulfillment can start questioning their continuous engagements in favor of other engagements. They can also

respond to their disappointments by adjusting the balance in the exchange agreement with the organization by decreasing the level of effort and neglect duties. He further claims that volunteers experiencing a lack of contract fulfillment can respond with *aggressive voice,* i.e. a contending behavior, perhaps used to bargain for better benefits in the future or to seek revenge.

Summary of Chapter & Knowledge Gap

It is evident that existing research on volunteering is scarce. This section outlines the previous studies conducted on volunteers and volunteering. As seen, most existing research has been focused on work meaningfulness (Florian et al., 2019; Laura-Toraldo et al., 2019), role identity (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017), and motivational factors (Stunkel & Grady, 2011; Willems et al., 2012). Penners' (2002) model of Causes of Sustained Volunteerism was mentioned and presented as an integrated model of how volunteers enter several stages upon reaching a sustained commitment - a process dependent on various factors, with role identity as the most central. Few studies acknowledge that volunteer-commitments vary significantly in extensiveness, duties executed and are placed in various contexts, making it look like findings identified amongst one specific group are generalizable to the whole phenomenon.

In this study, we are interested in examining different types of disappointments that volunteers experience in their roles. We are further interested in how volunteers chose to react to such disappointments. In light of Nichols (2013), there is a demand for further research on volunteering that acknowledges the distinct differences of various types of volunteers and the organizations they are in. Therefore, to address this gap, by acknowledging held expectations, prior experiences, and perceived obligations amongst volunteers - we build on previous volunteering-research and explore the dynamics occurring in different types of not-for-profit organizations in order to challenge and inform already existing theories and models.

Theoretical Framework

This study examines perceived expectations, disappointments and relations between volunteers and not-for-profit-organizations. To mirror the interest of the study; the theoretical departure-point consists of theories covering social exchange and psychological contracts.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is amongst the most influential concepts in research of organizational behavior, and can be traced back to as early as the 1920s (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Since then, many interpretations of the theory have emerged and there is currently no consensus regarding an absolute definition; scholars usually agree, however, that social exchange entails a sequence of interactions resulting in mutual obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). One of the most influential figures of SET, Blau (1967), refers to social exchange as *"voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the return they are expecting to bring and typically do in fact bring to others"* (Blau, 1967, p.110). One of the foundational principles of SET is that relationships develop into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as both parties abide by certain 'rules' of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Such rules typically include reciprocity and repayment; meaning that contributions or actions of one party obligates the other to respond and vice versa (Saks, 2006). In practice, this could mean that an individual feels obliged to increase their level of engagement, as one type of repayment, in an organization because of previously gained economic or socioemotional resources from that organization (Saks, 2006).

SET circles around that individuals perform favors for another person and therefore expect some kind of future favor in return. Such favor can usually not be forced, but the expectation of future reciprocation is essential for sustaining the relationship. What makes social exchange complicated is that it entails unspecified obligations and the amount of the exchange is not by nature exactly stipulated in advance (Blau, 1967).

A common process of social exchange is that development from minor transactions to increased engagement. Individuals begin with smaller services where less trust is required due to the small risk of not getting what you expect back. When these actions get rewarded, more engagement follows in the hope of receiving more. The process therefore gradually

builds up trust over that others will discard their obligations (Blau, 1967). The value of the total transaction for the volunteer depends on what he gets back but also how one is treated. For example, one will be more satisfied with the social transaction if the same advice is received in a positive manner than a negative. Even though there is no binding contract forcing social obligations people usually tend to discharge their obligations due to the number of disadvantage consequences ignoring it might lead to. Not fulfilling the social exchange can lead to distrust from other people which can negatively impact your reputation. The rewards people are seeking to get in exchange for these voluntary activities are often based on intrinsic needs such as getting admiration, respect or to be socially accepted (Blau, 1967).

We will utilize Social Exchange Theory in order to explain individual behavior within the organization but also to understand why the informants express disappointment and their strategies to handle them. It can additionally explain power dynamics within organizations and how that affects the volunteer services.

Psychological Contract Theory

Stemming from Social Exchange Theory, is the theory of Psychological Contracts (Cullinane & Durndon, 2006). Psychological work contracts was initially coined by Argyris (1960) and has since then been developed and expanded considerably, much under the influence of Rousseau (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). The psychological contract refers to *"an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party"* (Rousseau, 1989, p.123) i.e, the organization. This means that a psychological contract emerges once an individual believes that his or her contributions obligate the organization to reciprocity or vice versa (Rousseau, 1989; 2001b). There are various factors that can affect the likelihood of constituting a psychological contract. These are for example: if a promise is made, how explicit and verifiable that promise is, and if such a promise is made before or after an employee's contribution (Rousseau, 1989). If the promise is overt, highly verifiable and made before the contribution; it is more likely shaping a psychological contract.

There are three identified types of psychological contracts: relational, balanced and transactional (Rousseau, 2001a). *Transactional contracts* are characterized as short-termed, and primarily centered around monetary exchanges. They often cover specific and narrow

duties which the employee is to execute in exchange for monetary compensation, with no or very limited influence or involvement in the organization apart from doing what he or she is paid to do (Rousseau, 2001a). *Relational contracts* are more stable and long-term. They are based on trust and mutual loyalty, and rewards are vaguely conditioned (Rousseau, 2001a). The organization is providing the employee with training, security, development and sense of community in exchange for commitment, loyalty and involvement (Taylor et al., 2006). Relational contracts are also characterized by open-ended relationships signified with a high level of investments of both parties - leading to high degree of mutual interdependence and barriers to exit (Rousseau 1995). In between the two, the *balanced contracts* are signified with being dynamic and conditioned on economic success for both parties. The employee is obligated to develop skills that the current employer values while the demand can change drastically in the future (Rousseau, 2001a). Rousseau is also mentioning *transitional* as a fourth dimension of psychological contracts - this is not a contract in itself but rather a cognitive state which is the result of organizational change and previously established employment agreements.

Fulfillment of relational contracts are claimed to be correlated positively with work engagement (Bal et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2013; Soares & Mosquera, 2019; Yeh, 2012). Given the large emphasis put on relational contacts previously identified amongst volunteers (Taylor et al., 2006), and the viable transferability of psychological contracts to be applicable to volunteers as well as paid workers (Farmer & Fedor, 1999), this correlation ought to be present with volunteers as well.

Important to note is that the conceptualization of psychological contracts are only focused on the employee - or, in this case; the volunteer. Even though the organization acts as the other party, it is solely providing the context, and can not in itself have a psychological contract with its employees (Rousseau, 1989). Even though there seems to be a general consensus regarding psychological contracts - there is currently no existing agreement regarding an exact definition of the term. Acknowledging that it has been said to be *"an analytical nightmare"* (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006), in our own use of the concept; we will consider all expectations that the individual has on the organization and their representatives to be included in their psychological contract.

When an organization fails to adequately respond to an employee's contributions in ways that the individual employee believed they were obliged to, the psychological contract is violated, or breached (Rousseau, 1989). A violation of a psychological contract is in many ways considered to damage the relationship between the two parties, and is often difficult to restore (Rousseau, 1989).

By utilizing theories of psychological contracts on our data, we are able to unveil and explain volunteer's organizational behaviors as well as better understand how volunteer's relations to their respective organizations are constructed. By identifying perceived expectations and obligations, we can also understand the relational dynamics occurring in not-for-profit organizations and identify occurrences of violations of such expectations - when contract violations are identified, we assume that disappointment is found.

Summary of Chapter

Our theoretical framework encompasses Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Psychological Contract Theory. By utilizing Psychological Contract Theory, we can identify the expectations among volunteers and assume that disappointments emerge from identified contract violations. To understand the different responses used by volunteers to handle their disappointments, we apply SET to examine balancing behaviors and understand how volunteers react.

Methodology

This section is dedicated to present the outline covering our methodological approach: (1) how we are conducting our study, (2) how we have analyzed the material, (3) how our sample was gathered and what implications that might have, (4) the trustworthiness of our study, (5) how we perceive our own roles in relation to the material and the results, (6) how we have treated our material and (7) ethical considerations.

Research Approach

The study is inductive and exploratory to its nature. By utilizing qualitative interviews; we had our informants in focus, letting them co-dictate the conversation in search for what was interesting. This type of approach, according to Gioia et al. (2013) requires a couple of ground assumptions: (1) that the organizational world is socially constructed and thus can be seen as a world of meaning, (2) that our informants are knowledgeable agents and carriers of experiences and data which they can express, and, (3) that we ourselves are knowledgeable agents, able to recognize patterns and identify relationships in the data and capable of formulating concepts of theoretical relevance. Hence, we will treat our informants as carriers of knowledge and their experiences will be interpreted as socially constructed. Having acknowledged this is fundamental for understanding our findings and conclusions; our findings do not necessarily mirror reality - they are merely interpretations and reconstructions of the same.

To mirror our approach, we have conducted semi-structured (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) interviews. One benefit with conducting semi-structured interviews is that the study will obtain retrospective and real time experiences of the phenomenon (Gioia et al. 2013) making it easier to comprehend. Moreover, this approach also enables us to ask follow up questions and allows us to explain the interview questions which limits the confusion. We chose this method to build upon the already existing studies and to get a deep understanding of the phenomenon - and we believed semi-structured interviews to be the best method to achieve this.

Having acknowledged that the social world is a world of meaning affects how we study organizational behavior (Gioia, 2021). During the interviews; our highest priority was trying

to understand the informant's lived experiences and their understanding of that same experience - this is because we need to grasp the informant's sensemaking of reality in order to be able to theoretically model the same (Gioia, 2021). Questions were thus not asked in a straight set of order, rather we used open questions and utilized an interview guide to make sure we had addressed all topics of interest. We started the interview with open-ended questions and continued with follow up questions. This led us to see the experiences of the informants and themes such as disappointment and expectations arose alongside the interviews. After having conducted a couple of interviews, we were able to successively narrow down our focus and ask more specific and clarifying questions regarding what we had found with previously interviewed informants - the interview guide was thus not static during the whole project.

Our initial ambition was to have the majority of interviews in person but because of geographical limitations and a concern for access - many of the interviews were held on digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meets, etc. instead. Despite some interviews having bad internet connection during a short amount of time, we do not believe that this has affected the quality of our material significantly.

Analysis of Material

Our primary data consisted of eight interviews. We conducted a thematic analysis (see Naeem et al., 2023) by identifying common underlying themes and patterns occurring in our material. We began the analysis-process by transcribing the interviews via digital tools, so the coding step would be more time efficient and easy to conduct. When starting the analysis process, the first-order analysis (Gioia, 2021) took place by splitting the informant's answers (keywords from significant sentences and quotes) into codes. This was made by utilizing the digital tool Nvivo, making it easier to process the data and get an overview of our material. When all the codes were identified, we reduced the number by looking at similarities and differences in the data - clustered them into themes, reducing the keywords. When the first-order analysis was completed, we looked at the existing literature to identify concepts that had not yet been massively covered or that stand out due to their relevance in a new field, (e.g psychological contract in volunteering setting) this is described as the second-order level of analysis (Gioia, 2021). To explain our data in theoretical terms, we identified relevant concepts based on the themes and connected them with theories. As shown in the figure

below (see figure 2) these are the fundamental steps in the thematic analysis process (Naem et al., 2023). As every step builds upon each other the analysis develops a comprehensive understanding and depth of the findings according to Naem et al. (2023).
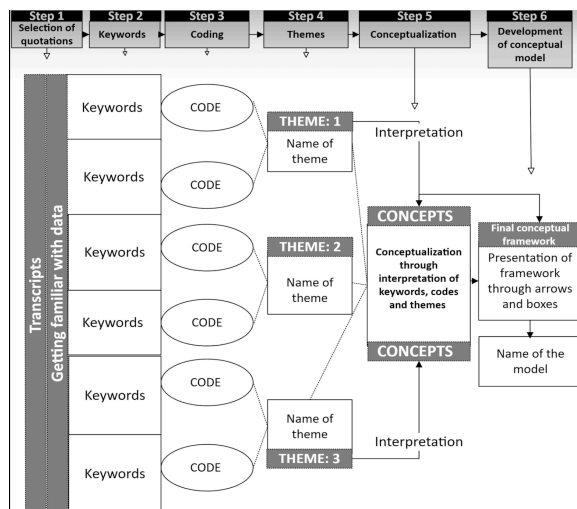

Figure 2: Overview of thematic analysis

The fact that we have had previous experience with being volunteers could potentially have affected how we analyze and interpret the material. To avoid biased conclusions, we will aim to present our findings in transparency with quotations that make reasons for our conclusions.

Selection of Informants

Before selecting the informants, Moser & Korstjens (2018) describes the importance of making a sampling plan and discusses three key features: (1) participants are sampled deliberately, (2) have a small sample, (3) samples emerge during the process and based on further questions raised from the data collection and analysis, inclusion and exclusion criterias might be altered or changed. Finally, Moser & Kortjens (2018) explain that the sample is chosen by conceptional requirements rather than representativeness, so one can fully comprehend the phenomenon. For our first interviews, we contacted two individuals who we believed had experiences about our chosen phenomenon and could enlighten us with a broad understanding - afterwards, we proceeded to contact the rest. According to Moser & Korstjens (2018), to gather detailed data, it is important to involve informants from different settings and situations. Therefore, our study includes participants from three different not-for-profit organizations: (1) a parish belonging to The Church of Sweden, where informants have fulfilled various roles, such as youth-leaders for children and young adults in

educational settings, as well as providing assistance in other, more comprehensive roles. Such as leading other volunteers in projects on behalf of the church - or participating in the governance as a board member of the parish. Secondly, (2) a sport organization where informants have been exercising roles as coaches. These roles involve planning and execution of team-exercises and practices, as well as managing internal and external communications. The informants in this group have transitioned from once being active athletes themselves prior to becoming coaches. Third, (3) Members of a student-nation in a Swedish university-town, where engagement typically begins during one's student life to build social connections. These varied forms of volunteer work offer a diverse range of perspectives on volunteering. This sample includes not only eight diverse informants from various organizations but also encompasses a range of genders, ages, and backgrounds. By having this composition of informants, we have a wider range of volunteer-representatives compared to what previous studies often have - we hope that this can give us insights regarding differences between groups of volunteers.

Our informants are, or have been, dedicating their spare time to contribute to various not-for-profit organizations alongside with other occupations - making them fall into the definition of volunteers provided by Cnaan et al. (1996). One group, namely coaches in the sports-association, are however receiving small sums of monetary compensation for their time spent in the club. These sums are described as 'symbolic' and are not comparable with a paid occupation that could finance a decent life in Sweden. Further, the roles practiced by this group requires planning, administration and communication with participants and parents - these 'working hours' are outside the scope of monetary compensation. We are thus considering them to be volunteers regardless. Others may receive monetary compensation for expenses associated with the engagement, this is however used as a way for organizations to avoid volunteer engagement to be associated with financial costs and neither something that volunteers benefit from financially. Further, many of our informants express that they have practiced various volunteering roles, both in the same and in different organizations. We will treat all volunteer-roles practiced by the same individual as separate practices, meaning that the same informant can be seen to react to different disappointments in different ways.

Trustworthiness: Ensuring the Quality of the Study

The objective of qualitative studies is to establish trustworthiness, ensuring that readers have confidence in their understanding of the study, while recognizing that their findings may vary if they were replicated (Stahl & King, 2020). Stahl & King (2020) outline four criterias for achieving trustworthiness: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability and (4) conformability. This study will only discuss the first three criterias, though according to Stahl & King (2020) conformability is rarely met.

Credibility

Credibility is a highly subjective criteria which is relied upon individual judgements, though it aims at showing how congruent the findings are to reality. It involves understanding the relationship between the findings and how they are interconnected (Stahl & King, 2020). One approach to enhance credibility, as described by Stahl & King (2020) is through "triangulation" which involves utilizing multiple sources to identify consistent patterns. In this study, we seek to achieve credibility by environmental triangulation and supporting the findings through theoretical triangulation. Environmental triangulation refers to the use of different settings (organizations) when explaining the phenomenon while theoretical triangulation means the use of multiple theoretical frameworks to explain the findings (Stahl & King, 2020). This will be done by engaging a sample of eight informants from diverse organizations and settings to offer a comprehensive perspective to validate the identified patterns. Moreover, after conducting the analysis, we will back up the findings with theoretical frameworks to make the study more credible.

Transferability

Qualitative research is often criticized for not being generalizable - meaning that the gathered data is considered not enough for an observed phenomenon to be universally applied (Gioia, 2021). In order to reach legitimacy and credibility, Gioia (2021) suggests that qualitative research should reach transferability - a state in which one observation can draw a principle that can be applied to various contexts, so called "portable principles". The portable principles that can be drawn from our study is a matter of discussion. Our material consists of individuals that are currently engaging, or previously have been engaged, in voluntary work in Sweden. We have data on people aged 17 to 77, with most of them being younger (only one above 35). They are engaged in three different organizations; a community sports club, a

student association and a religious organization. We have only spoken to volunteers living in Sweden, meaning that concepts identified are more likely to be transferred to Swedish settings rather than others.

Given that previous research (Hustinx et al., 2010; Wilson, 2000) has concluded that volunteering includes activities of very differing natures, making a general theoretical definition hard to find, our findings are more likely to apply to similar types of volunteers as those we study. Ultimately, a qualitative study of this kind is used to challenge existing literature in order to inform theories further (Gioia et al., 2013). Therefore, portable principles are subject for further research.

Dependability

Lincoln & Guba (1985) define dependability as trust in trustworthiness. They suggest that trust can be established by allowing external parties to review and provide feedback on the researcher's work. By letting others read, react and interpret the collected data, researchers can confirm if their understanding is aligned with that of others. This process establishes a shared reality for the researchers and enhances the dependability of the study (Stahl & King, 2020). Moreover, knowing that one's study will undergo peer-review encourages researchers to be clear in distinguishing between facts and interpretations, thereby instilling greater confidence in the study (Stahl & King, 2020). In this study, we have utilized the opportunity for peer-reviewing by getting feedback from both fellow students and our supervisor ensuring dependability for this study.

Role of the Researchers

Having settled that the social world is constructed and built on meaning, we as 'researchers' have not been acting in a vacuum. Neither have we been 'flies on the wall'. During the interviews, the data was produced in collaboration between informants and researchers. The material was thus not existing before the interviews occurred in the sense that informants 'possessed' it and then could 'give' it to us - it emerged during the interview. This means that if someone else would have done this project with the same informants, the data would most likely have deviated from the one we got.

Many of the informants in this study have known at least one of the researchers since before the interview. In many of the cases; this relationship was directly connected to their voluntary involvement and the not-for-profit organization they volunteered in. We can see that this pre-existing relationship in some cases potentially could have hindered informants from speaking freely about the subject. For instance, two informants stated that one of the organizational representatives, who acted as their employer, was the same person that interviewed them.

Our knowledge about the organizations and pre-existing relations to the informants settled us in a position where informants could both know that we were interested in what they did, and understood what they said. Informants' perception of us had an effect on how they spoke, what they chose to say, and what they did not - it also ought to affect our own analysis of the gathered material. We potentially have a better understanding of the context, their duties and roles that exist within the organization compared to someone with no prior experience or understanding of the organizations - meaning that we could avoid unnecessary explanations and potentially reach a further depth during the interview. Likewise, interviewing children and adolescents generally requires higher demands for creating a natural context during the interview-situation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 35). The previous relations to our interviewees could thus also constitute a safer environment for them to speak more freely than what they would have done with strangers - perhaps then, especially with the younger informants.

On the other hand, this prior knowledge could also make us jump to conclusions. To avoid this, most interviews, with very few exceptions, were conducted with both authors of this thesis present. Since none of the informants knew both of us, we utilized this complementarity among us by using the one of us that was not as familiar with the context to ask clarifying questions when the discussion went too narrow for outsiders to grasp what was actually said. Prior to beginning the interviews, we also emphasized that we strive to keep their confidentiality and that what is said will only be presented as anonymized results in this paper. We do however acknowledge that despite trying to mitigate informant censorship - this risk can never be eliminated completely.

Language & Transcriptions

The interviews were conducted in Swedish and lasted for about 30 to 60 minutes. They were recorded and then transcribed by technological tools available online to ease the process of analysis. This made it possible for us to both read and listen to the recordings simultaneously during the analytical process. It also saved us a lot of time. All transcriptions and citations from the interviews occurring in this thesis are however translated into English by us for presentation purposes. The translations prioritizes functional equivalence over formal equivalence to ensure that the message remains consistent while also accommodating linguistic nuances. Apparent unintentional repetitions of words, e.g. stuttering, are removed from the transcription unless they have a purpose for the analysis, as a sign of hesitation for example. Square brackets are used to clarify unfinished messages and to replace specific names of organizations and individuals in order to secure confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to our interviews, all interviewees were informed that they are participating in a study that is interested in their experiences with volunteering, and that everything they say will be anonymized in the final product. They are also told that they can withdraw their participation at any time on request until the date of hand-in. We have chosen to not utilize any formal documents or contracts with the informants because of administrative ease.

There are however some factors that can jeopardize the confidentiality of our informants. In order to give the reader of this thesis a comprehensive understanding about the material in which we base our analysis upon; the informant's experiences and backgrounds sometimes need to be presented in a way that a small group of third-party individuals can identify who they are. This is partly because we have already existing relationships with our informants; making other individuals able to add up their pre-existing knowledge of informants with the presented background-information available in this thesis. Further, in some occasions, the interviews have been held in the facilities of the organization they are active in - it is therefore possible that third party-individuals have noticed that an interview has occurred and with whom, making it easier to identify who the informant is whilst reading the thesis. We have also been open to show and discuss how we have treated their participation in the paper during the process.

To reduce the risks of jeopardizing our informants' anonymity; we have used figured names and randomized their genders. Our ambition has also been to not mention any obviously unnecessary information that has the potential to uncover the identities of our informants, especially with those under the age of 18. This is also the reason why we chose to not provide the reader of this thesis with a compiled table of demographic attributes of the informants. Doing so would also be unnecessary since it would not enrich the findings of this paper.

Findings

In this section, our findings will be presented thematically. As mentioned before, this thesis studies the sources of disappointment and responses to such. First, three types of identified sources of disappointments will be presented. Second, strategies used to handle these disappointments will be covered. Third, identified relations and connections between disappointments and responses will be outlined. To ensure confidentiality, informants' names are figured and genders are randomized in transcriptions. Interviewer quotations are shown with our initials; SE and HZ.

Disappointments

In analyzing the disappointments expressed amongst our informants, we have identified three different types. The first is expressed as a clash of volunteer and employer commitment, where volunteers get disappointed with low employer-commitment. The second is described as friction in the relations between volunteers and employers. The third originates from a misconception in how volunteers thought the volunteer-role would be like in reality compared to how the role was experienced.

Unmet Level of Commitment & Passion: Clash Between Volunteers and Staff

Especially evident in organizations where volunteers are managed by employed staff; volunteers express disappointment that originates from an unbalance in level of commitment and passion between volunteers and paid employees. Some volunteers justify their expressions by emphasizing the responsibilities towards whom they are serving, others claim that they are dedicating their free time to work without any monetary compensation and believe that such behaviors obligates the organization to match their level of engagement and passion - a psychological contract is thus constructed amongst volunteers that contains beliefs of how paid employees are supposed to behave in return for the volunteer's passion and commitment. When volunteers and staff have different perceptions of their role-responsibilities - conflicts emerge, and a breach of the volunteer's psychological contract occurs. This is illustrated very explicitly by Charlie:

> *CHARLIE: The Church of Sweden has a big problem, like other public organizations, that many of the employees are not directly passionate about their jobs, they hardly go outside their little 'boxes' to solve situations. And that clashes when you work with a lot of passionate volunteers that really do go outside of their boxes to solve things. And that takes a lot of my energy - to be in contact with very 'boxy' people that can't help me despite that being their jobs.*

This is exemplified by the same informant:

> *CHARLIE: These are often some silly things. Take the parish-board for example: I think it is important to have meetings in all three churches so that, for example, youths can see that we exist. But then they [the administrative employees] think it is too burdensome because they would have to carry around their papers. And it is apparently very difficult to move these papers once a month. I get so frustrated because it is really about them not wanting to leave their offices.*

Charlie expresses that the organizational representatives (in this case: paid workers) are showing less commitment and passion for their jobs than Charlie would expect. He believes that volunteers that dedicate their spare-time to engage in the organizations deserve to be met with the same level of passion from those who are full-time employed in the organization - especially when volunteers are trying to combine their engagement with a full-time employment elsewhere. It becomes evident during this interview that this clash causes Charlie to feel frustration and disappointment. Charlie's psychological contract is therefore breached when he believes that the paid employees are not fulfilling his preconceptions of their duties.

A similar phenomenon was identified with another volunteer, Fiona, in a similar organization where paid employees collaborate with volunteers. The church she volunteers in regularly offers services at the local retirement home. Sometimes, the priest that is assigned to lead the weekly service is absent or sick, which makes the organization cancel the service rather than finding a substitute:

> *FIONA: I get so angry when we cancel. I don't accept it. We did that very carelessly many years ago. I have said that: 'You're not allowed to. They [the elderly] don't have any other service. They can't go to [the church] for another service. They are dependent on us!'*

Fiona implies a held expectation on the organizational representatives to make sure someone from the staff, a priest, will show up in time for the service. If the assigned priest is unable to participate, she wants the organization to find a substitute so that the service still can be conducted. When that does not happen, she refuses to accept a cancellation and expresses disappointment, frustration and anger. In the case of Fiona, the clash, hence the breach of

contract, is originating from a level of perceived responsibility toward the participants that she feels is unmatched by the organization. She believes that her perceived level of responsibility and commitment exceeds the perceived level of responsibility and commitment held by the organization - constituting a state of imbalance between her and the organization.

Fiona is having other volunteer-roles in the same organization. She is also responsible for a group that is coordinating the whole parish's international charity work:

> *FIONA I am a bit concerned [...] I think they are a bit unengaged in this. I am not even sure that they are aware of the campaigns we are participating in.*
>
> *(...)*
>
> *FIONA: It would have been much easier to run this [the international group] if I had felt that the employees expressed things like: 'Wow, now we're doing a Christmas-campaign! Now we need to begin with that." or: 'Now we're having the lent-campaign!'. But I feel that I am handing out flyers and then they are just laying around unless we're having a volunteer that is very active. And I don't think they have that in [Church 2] and [Church 3].*

What Fiona is referring to in the last sentence is that the parish consists of three churches whereas she is mostly active in one. The group she is put to run is however covering all three. What is seen in the statement above is to be seen as another clash of commitment and passion between volunteers and paid employees. Fiona expresses that she dedicates time and commitment in this group and that she would prefer to be met with more enthusiasm and engagement from the employees - she also states that the only way the campaigns can get some attention is if any other volunteer engages more, signaling that the relationship to the employees have been strained.

Ethan has had various volunteering-roles in the same type of organization, also a parish belonging to The Church of Sweden. One of which was a chairman-board position within the local youth-organization. In his case, the organizational representatives, the managers of the organization, have not been showing the level of commitment and engagement as he expected when accepting the role:

> *HZ: And did you have any expectations regarding them [the managers] ?*
>
> *ETHAN: Yes, I thought that they would supervise me and make sure I did my tasks correctly. And maybe they could have done that better. I have not had any communication with them whatsoever in particular.*

(...)

HZ: Do you think that you would have done more if they were easier to get a hold of?

ETHAN: Yes, or if they had contacted me.

(...)

HZ: Would you have hoped to get more [support/guidance] from the rector?

ETHAN: Yeah, yes… Probably…

When accepting the role, Ethan believed that the managers of the organization would show more interest in his engagement - when this did not occur, he expresses disappointment. It could be argued that this is not illustrating the same level of clash as with the previous examples because Ethan's implies a low level of commitment himself. However, because he clearly expresses that he would have expected more guidance and supervision parallel to expressing that he would have engaged more if that was the case - his own level of engagement is rather seen as a coping mechanism to deal with this unbalance, which will be presented further later in this chapter.

Summing up, this section shows that a common theme emerging from our gathered data is disappointments that originate from an unmet level of passion and/or commitment on the part of the organization and its representatives. Volunteers' psychological contracts contain beliefs regarding their roles, responsibilities and the relationship to their respective organizations and according to their experiences - organizational representatives do not always align with these, implying an unbalance, hence contract violation. Noteworthy is, however, that all informants expressing disappointments as unmet level of commitment and passion are volunteers in organizations where volunteers are managed by, and collaborates with, paid employees. Further, these disappointments were never targeted to other volunteers in the organizations.

Friction and Diminishment: Challenges in Volunteer-Employer Relations

Unlike those volunteers that experience an unmatched level of passion/commitment in their organization; others express that the organization is working against, or without, them. This is our second source of disappointment found amongst informants. Volunteers characterized by this are often found in environments where volunteers manage other volunteers and the problem lies not in a lack of engagement, but rather in opposing forces in the organization -

where the individual volunteer and the organization have different opinions. This creates tension within the organization that affects the volunteers' experiences negatively.

Both informants Alex and Betty have had similar experiences with disappointment in regard to the employer. Alex expresses that certain coaches are favored by the employer, who tends to take their side in conflicts. He believes that there is a lack of trust in him and that decisions are often made behind his back, which he, according to himself, should have been involved in:

> *ALEX: There have been many that have gone against us. A team and the coach for that team. They seem to think that they own the whole association despite not being part of the board as far as I know. Decisions have been made over our heads like: 'we do as we want because we know best and are the most experienced'. But they don't really know anything about our team. The board also has kids in that team so they have taken their side… There are some weird power-relationships. We don't get to know everything and some things happen behind our backs and others get favored. I have felt that it has been super sad and many times thought that: 'no one trusts us anymore, despite having recruited us as coaches'. [...] They seem to have lost trust in me…*

In this case, friction between the two parties emerge because Alex expected to get support from the employer when in reality they counteract each other. This type of friction makes Alex's volunteer-experience more difficult and less fun - he also feels diminished by being excluded from decisions. He is directly relating this to his own recruitment process which is further inforcing that this is something he did not expect when he entered as a volunteer-coach. It is thus to be perceived as a breach of his psychological contract.

Betty expresses that the employer undermines and competes against her and her coach-colleagues. This creates conflicts between the parties making volunteering more difficult. Initially, she believed they would receive support from the employer but in reality they worked against each other and argued about meaningless things:

> *HZ: What were your expectations from the board when entering this position?*
>
> *BETTY: Yes, I had expectations that me and my coach colleagues would have a good partnership with the board, because we are in the age between 17-21 and need a lot of support from the board because we do not have the skills to do everything.*
>
> *SE: How did the collaboration between you and the board look during this season?*
>
> *BETTY: It was very good in the beginning of the season, but there have been some challenges and now they have been very involved and competing with us. Even though they don't have experience in the sport themselves, it feels a bit difficult like that.*

HZ: What are your thoughts regarding this? I can imagine that it is more boring to engage when this occurs?

BETTY: Yes of course it is.

It becomes evident that Betty's disappointment stems from the lack of support and collaboration with the employer. She believed that they would assist in tasks which she lacks expertise in, but instead, they interfere and compete against her, hence breaching the psychological contract and making her experience disappointment.

George's initial thoughts when enrolling a volunteer-position in a student-association were that all volunteers would be treated equally and welcomed into the organization. When he started his position, he did believe that these expectations were met, but after a while it turned out that the people who devoted more time and effort into the position got special treatment:

GEORGE: I expected a lot of support from them and that they would welcome me into the organization. Which they did in the beginning - but then not so much. I think that people who dedicate all their time to the engagement got more support [than me].

George experienced that volunteers were appreciated based on how much effort they devote to the organization, leading to favoritism. For George, who had a lower level of commitment compared to others, this resulted in a feeling of diminishment and exclusion - the psychological contract was breached as a consequence.

To conclude, these findings show that the second source of contract violation amongst volunteers is found in the volunteer-employer relation. Volunteers expect to be recognized, listened to, and taken into consideration in return for their commitment and they get disappointed when they believe that they are treated unfairly by representatives. Those that gave signs of such violations were exclusively found in organizations completely consisting of volunteers.

Mismatch in Perception: Role-Change

The third source of disappointment we have identified lies, not in the relation between volunteers and organizational representatives, but rather in the volunteers' initial perception of how the volunteering-role would be experienced. These types of expectations were often constructed as a result of having spent time in the organization as a participator/practitioner

and seen others exercising a volunteer-role. Such expectations were in most cases fulfilled by the volunteers' experiences - but with one of our informants, Ethan, this was not the case.

After having seen his own volunteer-youth leaders the year before, Ethan thought that the role would be fun and socially rewarding - leading him and his two friends to together show their interest to join as volunteers for another group the year after. They did however have a very different experience compared to what he had seen with his own leaders. He had hoped to form connections and befriend the participants who were at the time only a year younger than him:

> ETHAN: This was marketed by [employees and young volunteers] as fun… The youth leaders were there in their free time and they said it was very good and fun. That made me think it was a fun thing to do.
>
> (...)
>
> ETHAN: It was very messy in the group [the participants to which he was a leader].
>
> (...)
>
> ETHAN: It was a lot of waiting. [...] We did not feel needed.
>
> (...)
>
> ETHAN: I thought I could become friends with the kids. But that wasn't the reality. And they sort of mocked us leaders. They were difficult to organize and we were assigned [by the staff] to do the 'dislikeable' tasks - collecting their mobile phones and trying to make them quiet for example. That's not something you connect over really…

This data shows that Ethan experienced a discrepancy in how he perceived the role looking at it from an outsider-perspective, compared to how he experienced the role himself. He was both disappointed with the group he was set to lead, hoping that they would have been more friendly and positive, as well as disappointed with the paid employees managing the group for being assigned to do tasks that contradicted his ambitions and expectations. It is worth noting, however, that the organization that offers these activities he engaged in has several groups running parallel every year. When Ethan decided to transition from being a participator to become a voluntary leader, he engaged in a group led by other employees than the one he himself had had as a participator - meaning that he did not join the group of individuals that he himself had as leaders. He did however expect the environment and roles to be similar regardless of which individuals he collaborated with. It is therefore shown that

Ethan had many expectations in his psychological contract that were violated when enrolling as a volunteer in the same organization which he himself already was a part of.

The same was shown with Charlie, who also engaged in a similar role in the same organization many years prior to Ethan:

> *CHARLIE: I am not sure about the word 'expectations'. I had had these people as leaders before so I kinda knew what I got. You could say that my expectations of them were to behave as they had before - I think it was more about this being a fun thing to do.*
>
> *(...)*
>
> *CHARLIE: It was nice, but in reality we [boys/girls] weren't allowed to do that much. We mixed juice for two years. The [girls/boys] were assigned to do the fun stuff, because they were apparently a lot more fun than us.*
>
> *SE: Did that affect your level of experienced fun?*
>
> *CHARLIE: Yes it was a lot less fun and I believe many quit because of this.*

Even though Charlie expresses that he 'knew what he got', it became clear during the conversation with him that there was a discrepancy in what he expected of the volunteering-role compared to what he later experienced as a volunteer. The third source of disappointment found is thus that volunteers create psychological contracts based on experiences prior to engaging in the volunteering role themselves - often believing that it will be similar to their old roles as participants in the same organization. When these expectations are unmatched with the reality of the volunteering-experience, the contracts get violated and disappointment is shown. These violations seem to both be because of the organizational representatives directly assigning tasks that volunteers are unhappy with as well as new participants in the activities that behave in other ways than that the volunteer is used to.

Reactions & Responses

After having identified various sources of disappointments amongst volunteers in not-for-profit organizations, we will now proceed to explain how volunteers respond to their disappointments in the organization.

Increased Level of Perceived Responsibility - The Martyr

As a response to a contract violation, some informants increase their level of commitment and sense of responsibility in order to compensate for their disappointment - we call them *The Martyrs*. This was often shown amongst volunteers that had a contract breach stemming from an unmet level of commitment and passion from the organizational representatives. Returning to Fiona, who earlier expressed anger and a sense of responsibility when asked why canceling the weekly service at the retirement home because of an absent priest is not considered an option:

> *HZ: Why do you feel responsible?*
>
> *FIONA: Haha - I don't know. But I do.*

Later, she says that she initially intended to quit her engagement in the retirement home for a reason unknown to us. However, when hearing about the evaluation done of all activities in the whole retirement home - which concluded that the church's visit is the most appreciated - she changed her mind.

> *FIONA: [When I heard,] I got very eager: 'we must do this good', that's why I am still there. I feel a bit responsible - If my husband and I are going to play golf or travel, I try to make sure it doesn't interfere.*

Despite contemplating quitting this specific engagement, Fiona was informed that this role was the most appreciated by the recipients, i.e. the elderly living at the retirement home, of all activities offered to them. Given this new information, from a SET perspective, she reevaluates her stance and decides to continue. This could thus be understood in terms of a reevaluation of the social currency, i.e. appreciation, which now seems to exceed the costs of a contract violation from the organizational representatives. It also reinforces that Fiona's previous experiences of canceled activities have made her undergo behavioral changes that extend over her voluntary engagements and affect her overall life - again showing an increase in commitment, sense of responsibility, and level of organizational subordination - i.e. embodying the Martyr-role. A similar thing occurred to Denise. She was involved in the parish as a voluntary youth leader and tells us about a period of turbulence and lack of engagement from some employees:

> *DENISE: We did more work than some of the employed leaders. That was probably not the initial intention.*

(...)

HZ: How did that make you feel?

DENISE: We probably thought that it was still very fun [to be there]. But it was more turbulent, and a lot of drama. And that was both exciting and troublesome.

HZ: But quitting was not an option?

DENISE: No, that was not even on the map. There were some situations that you had to get through and manage the problems.

Like Fiona, Denise expresses that she and her friend group increased their experienced level of responsibility and engagement as a result of a contract breach that originated in a lack of engagement from the employees - but even in this case, it seems like the social benefits gained from being part of the community exceeded the costs of the contract violation, making them all remain. From a social exchange perspective, this response could be interpreted as a result of the organization having provided Denise with more social currency than her contribution was worth to her, making her increase her level of contribution and still feel rewarded - making her remain regardless of the contract violation.

Returning to Charlie, which was seen in the previous section. He was a voluntary youth leader in his parish, and is now engaged as a board member for the same organization. He expresses frustration regarding how the employees of the organization treated him when he needed to sign an official document:

CHARLIE: My expectations are the following: If you work for free for an organization, then it should be in the employees interest to make the voluntary engagement as frictionless as possible for the volunteers. I don't get paid, but I could perhaps get some help. They demanded that I must sign the annual report on a specific date. I was clear that I can't because I am participating in a conference [with his full-time job] that is coordinated nationally, which I can't change. One could have thought that they could have been more helpful: 'Okay, can you come here another day?' or 'I can bring the paper to you' or something. I feel like I do this for free and I told them with a long-term notice. Then you don't want comments about that this is something you agreed to do when you were elected to this board [three years ago]. That is the least I can demand I think.

HZ: How did you react when you got that response? What happened? Is it resolved now?

CHARLIE: I described, in a very clear way; that I do this for free. I couldn't foresee what date this annual report was going to be signed three years ago and that I can't change the national conference. And that I can, but not without issues, offer to go there on a Thursday evening to sign the report - and then it eventually worked out.

Charlie is here very explicitly expressing that he was disappointed with how the employees treated this situation, also expressing how he would have preferred them to handle it - implying a violation of the psychological contract. In his reaction, he got upset and attempted to resolve the issue by embodying a role of increased responsibility towards this specific problem which he initially thought was for the employees to solve - hence becoming a Martyr.

Quit Engagement - The Quitter

In contrast to those who increased their level of responsibilities, other informants made the choice to quit volunteering because they expected more from their employer and the organization - making them *The Quitters*. Ethan, who had had a different idea of how the volunteering-role would be compared to how he experienced it in reality, made the choice to quit his engagement:

> HZ: So why did you quit, then?
>
> ETHAN: It was time-consuming, it wasn't that fun.
>
> (...)
>
> ETHAN: There were some fun elements to it [but overall - not].

After quitting as a youth leader, however, he still chose to remain in other roles in the same organization. We also speak about his future career-plans, where remaining in the church seems to be an obvious option:

> HZ: What is alluring about a career within the church?
>
> ETHAN: It is a very… a fantastic place… And you work for something good. Nice people, really. Cozy building. I love everything about it.

It seems like Ethan is feeling very strongly for the organization in general - implying a sustained commitment - but that the specific activity he volunteered in was not meeting his demands. Because this organization seems to offer more options to engage, he could thus quit his engagement within that specific activity and still remain in the organization. By responding to the contract violation in such a way; he was able to still gain all social benefits without 'paying' the costs related to this specific engagement.

Moving on, George has also stepped down in the volunteering role due to unmet expectations regarding the volunteer-employer relation. We saw earlier that his expectations were met initially but that he later felt judged by his level of engagement compared to other volunteers:

> SE: And how did you react to that?
>
> GEORGE: It was then I took the decision to quit volunteering.

In exploring what made George willing to quit his engagement - we return to his underlying reason to begin volunteering. The main reason for George to enroll into his volunteering-role was to quickly gain social connections in his new city. He did however have other connections from before, outside of the organization:

> GEORGE: My ambition when I entered [the organization] was always to keep my own community and do the engagement as a side-thing. [...] For many, I think, the [organization] becomes their whole social-life when they move to [student-city]. [...] I had my own social context that I wanted to keep and therefore, the [organization] was not my whole life.

Similar to Ethan, George had the option to fulfill his need for social context without having to pay the price of his contract violation - by utilizing other social arenas outside the organization that seem to demand less in contribution. From a social exchange perspective, it makes it easier for George to leave the organization compared to if he would not have had the other social connections in his new city. The main difference between the cases of Ethan and George lies probably in the nature of their respective organization in terms of offerings - one could believe that George would be more willing to remain in the organization if they offered him roles that were less demanding in terms of responsibilities and engagement.

Status Quo - The Captive

The third response is characterized by neither increasing nor decreasing engagement and commitment in the organization. Despite frustration and anger, volunteers in this group seem to respond with few or no behavioral changes - making this look like a passive response. The roles of these volunteers are often fixed and the options to transition to other roles within the same organization, or other similar organizations, are limited. Volunteers that are 'stuck' in their roles often remain as a result of an experienced obligation to do so - leaving them with few options to adjust their engagement, hence *The Captives*. These volunteers often express that the reason for their engagement is a love, or passion, for the sport/community and they

have often started in the organization as young practitioners/participants. They are justifying their continuous engagement by expressing a desire to contribute in giving younger generations what they themselves have got, and that they find it difficult to leave the community connected to the sport and organization.

The reason why Betty started volunteering in the sport association was because she wanted to remain in the organization when she no longer practiced the sport herself. She states that she had previous experiences of great coaches and that being a coach was a natural next-step for her:

> *HZ: Do you want to elaborate on what exactly made you want to remain [as a coach after having been a practitioner]?*
>
> *BETTY: Well, I have had a bunch of fantastic coaches in the club myself and I felt that; if I can't practice [the sport] myself, it feels like the right path to take. Moreover, I had been a coach for two seasons parallel to my own practice and I felt like it was super-fun and received the offer to coach a competitive team this year, and it felt completely right. I think that it is important to, if you feel that you have a heart for it [the sport], that you take upon a role as coach. Simple as that.*

Alex had a similar view on why he started to volunteer. He had had great sets of coaches and wanted to become a role model for others:

> *HZ: Why did you start volunteering?*
>
> *ALEX: First it was because I really loved the sport. But then it is also because I had incredible coaches and I felt that I really wanted to contribute. Because I notice how much I take after my coaches. Maybe I also want to become some kind of role model and show others how the sport works. And I really want others to feel the same for the sport as I do.*

What we see with both Alex and Betty is signs of an experienced obligation to provide to younger generations what they had been given themselves. From a social exchange perspective, their choice to remain despite experiencing issues and contract violations might be because of a perceived 'debt' they owe to the organization or community - in which they can pay back with their continuous commitment. This retrospective repayment could thus settle them in a period of a bigger loss than benefit gained, in return for the opposite earlier.

Comparing these to some of the other organizations we have seen, they do not seem to have any other options than to continue their engagement unless they cut their relation to the organization completely - making the social factor a big one as well:

SE: Aren't there any other associations you can join?

BETTY: There is only one other, and I have been there before and felt even worse. So that is not an option, unfortunately.

And even if there were proper alternatives, they seem to both feel a strong connection for their sport:

BETTY: But as I said before, I like the sport so much so I will probably stay even if it looks like this.

The same is said by Alex:

ALEX: Yes exactly, it is the sport itself actually. I think the sport is so fun that the rest can be. And there is only one other association in [the city], and they take even more favor for some teams.

Later in the interview with Betty, we return to the question of whether her commitment is directed to the sport or to the specific organization:

HZ: In the beginning, you said that it is because of the sport, but I am curious about whether it is the sport or the association [the club/organization] that is the most important factor?

BETTY: Actually, it might be the association. I have a huge heart for [the club]. I have been there so long and I have so many memories and it might be the association as you say. I love the sport but the association…

HZ: I can imagine that it could be a mix of both as well…

BETTY: Yes, absolutely.

HZ: But the association might not be totally unimportant?

BETTY: No, absolutely not.

Moving back to Ethan, he left his position as a youth leader but is still volunteering in other positions in the organization. Today, Ethan is chairman of the board within a youth association in the parish - a role that he does not engage in very much as a consequence of low engagement from the organizational representatives:

To label Ethan as captive in this role might be perceived as exaggerated, but like the previously mentioned individuals in this group, his engagement is in a status quo. The level of engagement was never high because he 'waits' for the staff to engage with him - making

his level of engagement unaffected by the psychological contract violation. He does not perceive the role to be very demanding, making him continue because of a perceived obligation to do so - and is not expressing any mentionable degree of frustration, like the other Captives:

> HZ: So how do you think about your future engagement [in this organization]?
>
> ETHAN: It will probably continue in the same way - meaning that I won't have the time to engage but that I will help out because it is a nice thing. And because I really like to be there.

When speaking about the chairman board-role; Ethan gives the impression that he would be glad to hand over the responsibility to someone else that could dedicate the time, but because no-one else is willing, he remains in a low level engagement - which out of a SET perspective could be interpreted as because of a perceived obligation to do so. This is why he can be labeled a Captive. It is however questionable whether he actually will stay in this role for a longer period of time - at one point, the social currency lost ought to exceed what is gained even retrospectively.

Disappointments and Responses: Relationships

We have identified some signs of existing relationships between disappointments and responses amongst our informants. The most coherent is volunteers that have their psychological contracts violated as a result of an unmatched level of commitment and passion from organizational representatives who seem to react by becoming *Martyrs*, increasing their own perceived level of commitment themselves.

There is no distinct relationship identified between types of disappointments and the *Quitters*. For example, Ethan was disappointed because of a mismatch between role-expectations and role-experiences on a general level whilst George was having issues with his relationship to the organizational representatives - both decided to quit their engagement as a result. Further, these two organizations are different in terms of volunteer and employee-ratio - meaning that this could be a factor in play. Ethan did however remain in his organization after having quit the specific role whilst George left the organization completely.

All Quitters have in common that they seem to have alternative ways of retrieving what they initially expect to get from the organization in a more 'cost-effective' manner. Neither do

they experience any obligation to continue their engagements - likely because they do not believe that the organization has provided them with enough social currency prior to breaking their contracts. This is the most distinct difference between *Quitters* and *Captives*. Captives have few or no other options than to continue their volunteer-engagement if they want to keep receiving the social currency provided by the organization. They were also expressing a need to give further what the sport had given them. This combination of few options and a perceived obligation to 'repay' a social debt is what holds them captivated in their respective organizations.

The difference between Captives and Martyrs is less obvious. Martyrs are identified in organizations where volunteers collaborate with paid employees and Captives are engaged in organizations consisting completely of volunteers. This does not in itself, however, explain why some become Martyrs whilst others become Captives. One possible answer could be the following: Captives do not necessarily experience any disappointments in the level of commitment with the employer - they are only expressing their disappointments in how the employer's commitment is acting as an opposing force for their own. Martyrs, however, believe that their employers lack commitment - and if an individual believes that they are obliged to provide value for something they themselves received prior, one way to provide the organization's total value is thus to increase one's own contribution. Hence, this could be seen as a measure to balance the 'total output' of services provided by the organization.

However, the Martyrs in this study are found in organizations that offer more roles and have a broader range of activities than the Captives we have identified. This could mean that Martyrs have greater freedom and organizational opportunities to increase their commitment whilst this is not the case for Captives. In sum, the reason why Captives won't increase their level of responsibility or commitment is not captured by our theoretical framework - but because these differences are notably divided per organization, it seems like it has to do with other factors embedded in the different organizations. The only expectation for this division is Ethan, who is also deviating in why being labeled as a Captive compared to the other Captives.

Organizational differences

Different organizations offer different possibilities in terms of access for outsiders, which in turn affects both how individuals can shape expectations prior to engaging as volunteers as well as the consequences for quitting a volunteer role. Our informants are, or have been, engaged as volunteers in three different types of organizations. These organizations also differ in ways that affect the possibilities for individual engagement within the respective organization.

The church, which four of our informants have engaged in, has a wider offering in terms of activities and target-groups. An effect of this is that roles that individuals could choose to engage in as a volunteer are many: child-activities, youth-activities, choirs, coordinating-roles, assisting in the liturgy, or political engagement and board-work are some examples. This makes it possible for volunteers to quit their positions in favor of other roles in the same organization - hence not losing the relation to the organization/community. Further, the way to begin a voluntary engagement in this organization seems to be less 'generic' and is not associated with a specific interest, such as a specific sports-interest for example. It is also possible to quit volunteering but still be present as a participator - making it possible to still have an active relationship to the organization but without having a volunteer-role. Paradoxically is, however, is that Martyrs are found in these organizations. Looking at the sports-club and student-association; these possibilities seem more limited and if an individual wants to quit their voluntary engagement, it would in most cases also imply to end the relationship to the organization. Circumstances like these ought to affect how individuals respond to disappointments.

Discussion

In conducting this study, we were interested in understanding the volunteering experience by exploring expectations and sources for disappointments amongst volunteers in not-for-profit organizations, as well as how volunteers handle such disappointments. To capture this interest, the research questions were the following: 'What sources of disappointments do volunteers experience in their work?' and 'How do volunteers respond to disappointments?' We utilized theories of social exchange and psychological contracts in order to make sense of our material.

To summarize our findings: volunteering, the volunteering experience, and reactions to disappointments amongst volunteers are phenomena difficult to capture and more complex than what many previous studies seem to depict. We identify three different sources of disappointments and three different strategies used by volunteers to handle them, that in many ways are counterintuitive to each other. The findings further suggest that different responses to breaches of expectations can be explained by the potential value in social currency that the organization provides, or previously have provided, to the individual volunteer. Moreover, volunteers that have alternative ways of receiving the demanded social currency in a more cost-effective manner have lower exit-barriers than those that do not. In this section, our findings are compared to what earlier studies have found.

Volunteer Role-Expectations and Perceived Obligations

Previous studies have shown that volunteers emphasize the relational aspects of their psychological contracts compared to employed staff in the same organizations (Taylor et al., 2006). We have not been interested in incorporating expectations amongst paid employees in our study. Our findings suggest, however, that one source of volunteer-disappointment commonly found in organizations where volunteers are led by, and collaborates with, paid employees is a perceived clash of commitment. In the light of Taylor et al.'s (2006) study, these findings could thus be interpreted as a result of employees and volunteers placing different emphases on their expectations and perceived-role obligations - resulting in a clash that triggers disappointment amongst volunteers. These findings also build on Nichols' (2012) proposition that volunteers and employees ought to vary in how they construct their psychological contracts.

Moreover, Starnes' (2007) findings suggest that volunteers that perceive breaches of psychological contracts perceive their own contributions to be increased in value and that intentions to remain in their respective organizations are unaffected. This appears to be similar with what we have found in organizations where volunteers engage together with paid employees - referring to Martyrs that embrace a higher sense of responsibility as a result of a contract breach. We have however identified differences amongst our informants that contradict these claims - highlighting the need for acknowledging different types of not-for-profit organizations and distinctions between groups of volunteers, also in line with Nichols (2012). This will be elaborated further down in the section "Organizational Context and Volunteer-Possibilities".

Moreover, Farmer & Fedor (1999) claims that fulfillment and breaches of psychological contracts amongst volunteers affect the level of participation, which again is correct - in some cases. Ethan is the only Captive expressing that he would increase his engagement if he was met with higher commitment and support from the organization, hence as a result of contract fulfillment - which would enforce the results of Farmer & Fedor (1999). However, our findings suggest an additional response as well - one that neither increases nor decreases engagement but remains the same despite a breach of psychological contact. Our data does not show, however, if the other Captives, apart from Ethan, would increase their engagement if the contract was fulfilled. If their engagement would have increased, then Farmer & Fredors (1999) findings would be reinforced. Due to this lack of data, we can not with certainty comment on this matter.

Our findings challenge Farmer & Fedor significantly in other informant-groups: *"one thing is clear from this study: volunteers participate more and intend to stay longer if administrators create and nurture a truly supportive, two-way relationship between the voluntary organization and the volunteer"* (Farmer & Fedor, 1999, p.364). Our results suggest that this is certainly not the case with those we have labeled as Martyrs - who increase their commitment and feel more obliged to remain in the organization as a result of a bad relationship with organizational representatives. To shed light on these deviant findings, we again call for greater intersectional perspectives on volunteering in research. Whether these differences stem from individual or organizational differences, or other factors, is unclear to us.

Encouragement and recognition have previously been recognized as important factors of employee satisfaction and for lowering volunteer turnover (Aboramadan, 2020; Franson et al., 2021). Comparing this to our study it can be shown that some volunteers choose to stay within the organization despite low recognition. Alex, for example, expresses that he felt the employer went behind his back and took decisions without acknowledging him. He also tells us that he feels like the employer has lost trust in him - illustrating a lack of recognition. Being labeled a Captive, he is still retaining his position regardless. However, this finding is not directly contradicting claims that recognition would lower turnover, since Alex would probably be more satisfied, thus more likely to retain his position, if that was the case. This is rather reinforcing that Willems et al., (2012) were correct about the inherent "symmetry-assumption" to be wrong. Our findings therefore contribute to developing an understanding that other contextual factors, rather than unfulfilled motivational factors, are in play when volunteers choose to retain or quit their position despite being disappointed in their organizations.

Comparing our results to those of Vantilborgh (2015), who found that volunteers experiencing unfulfilled psychological contracts may respond with contending behavior. Our findings deviate in this aspect. Even though we have seen volunteers who increase their level of perceived responsibility and engagement as a result of contract violation. These do not necessarily contend the organizational representatives - they seem to solely increase their level of responsibility in order to make up for what the organization is lacking, in order to be able to provide the same level of service for participants of activities.

"The Role of Role-Identity"

Although we ascribe our informants with certain roles (Martyrs, Quitters, Captives), we have not been specifically interested in their role-identities. We do however note that there seems to be a relationship between time spent in the organization and responses used. Because role identity is seen to develop over a long-term commitment (Cnaan et al., 1996; Penner, 2002), this difference could be explained as whether the individual has developed such an identity or not. Further, there might be an underlying moral factor to these ascribed roles that finds support in earlier research. For instance, The Martyrs, who react to disappointment by increasing their level of perceived responsibility and commitment, and The Captives, who

are experiencing an obligation to remain in their roles despite being unsatisfied with their organization, seem to have in common that they experience a great responsibility and pride for their voluntary work - it is thus not impossible to imagine that such behaviors also can emerge from a deep moral ground, where embodying, the Martyr-role for instance, is seen as virtuous and self-fulfilling - hence rewarding - in itself.

Given that this is not the case for our Quitters, there is a chance that such behaviors are associated with an experienced role-identity. Quitters found in this study did not have long-term engagements in their roles, possibly meaning that they had not reached the stage of *sustained volunteerism*, - whose primary mediator is role identity (Penner, 2002). The Martyrs and Quitters, however, express extensive relations and long-term engagements to their organizations. In line with Grube & Piliavin (2000); Martyrs and Captives could thus have been aligning their individual goals with those of the organization as a result of a long-term previous commitment - implying that their role identity is the reason for why they chose to retain their positions. One suggestion for further research could thus be to explore whether altruistic rewards are perceived as higher if the volunteer role identity is stronger - such studies could potentially contribute to a better understanding of the behaviors of Captives and Martyrs. This can be interpreted as a sustained volunteer has a higher exit barrier to leave the organization, despite the feeling of disappointment - aligning with Penners' (2002) findings.

Organizational Context and Volunteer-Possibilities

As mentioned in the section above, having developed a volunteer role identity could be a shared attribute for Martyrs and Captives. The difference between them however, seem to be in what opportunities they are offered to adjust their level of engagement to handle their disappointments. For instance, compared to the other organizations, volunteers in the church had more opportunities and could transition between roles instead of quitting when they experienced disappointment. This signals a need for further explorations of organizational differences in not-for-profit organizations.

Nichols (2012) mentions that previous research on volunteers often neglect grass-root organizations. Also, we have seen signs of volunteer-freedom in professional not-for-profit organizations, where volunteers increase their level of perceived commitment and

responsibility as a result of unmet level of commitment from staff. Since earlier studies (Taylor et al., 2006) have seen that employees and volunteers place different emphasis in their psychological contracts - it is possible that volunteers in these organizations are able to increase their level of commitment specifically because of this difference. In grass-root organizations consisting solely of volunteers, this might not be the case. Hence, volunteers that have developed a volunteer role identity in a grass-root organization, and experience disappointment and opposing forces are, as far as we know, heavily excluded from current research.

To illustrate this further, Vantilborgh (2015) utilized similar theoretical concepts as we did in our study. According to his findings, volunteers experiencing low levels of contract fulfillment can begin to contemplate quitting their engagement in favor of other commitments. They can also respond to psychological contract violations by decreasing their level of effort or engagement in the organization - as a way to adjust the balance of the exchange agreement. The same is seen by volunteers present in our study (Martyrs and Quitters) - but again, this is not the case for all groups. The Captives identified in our study seem to have few to no options in adjusting their exchange agreement apart from leaving completely. And as already shown, leaving does not seem to be an option despite contract violations.

Even though Penner (2002) claims that organizational factors play a weaker role compared to other factors in becoming a sustained volunteer; our study highlights that understanding organizational factors could be vital in order to understand how volunteers reason when experiencing disappointments. This fundamental difference found between Martyrs and Captives requires further research and acknowledgement - especially because we believe that being a Captive that experiences being confined and diminished potentially can be unhealthy in a long-term perspective.

Critical Review & Limitations

Having only eight informants, we acknowledge that our study would have benefited from a larger group of interviewees in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and more ground to stay on - especially because we have a low amount of informants from each organization. Without making any ultimate claims however, we do

believe that our study identifies certain phenomena that research needs to explore further in order to confirm or deny what is seen in our study - conclusively, this is what was doable for us within our time frame.

Additionally, the limitation of only interviewing individuals we were familiar with prior to the study may certainly have affected the material. It has most likely affected our analysis of that same material as well. As discussed in the methods-section however, we see both positives and negatives with this approach. Hence, before being perceived as generalizable and fully legitimate, the findings of this thesis require future studies to further explore this phenomenon.

Summarizing Implications

Ultimately, our study has opened up new domains for future research by acknowledging the inherently existing diversity amongst volunteers that affect the volunteering experience. Our findings shed light on several, yet unexplored areas, of volunteering research that need further addressing in the future. Previous research has treated the phenomenon of volunteers and volunteering as a homogenous phenomenon without acknowledging their differences. Our findings, however, reinforces the propositions of Nichols (2012) that there are sub-groups within the label of 'volunteers' that come with differences to what types of disappointments occur in not-for-profit organizations as well as what opportunities there are for volunteers to handle such disappointments.

Given the limitations mentioned in this specific study; we advise future research to consider conducting similar studies with other approaches. For example, we believe that longitudinal observational studies on volunteers and their responses to disappointments could help reinforce or reject what we have found.

Conclusion

Volunteering, the volunteering experience, and reactions to disappointments amongst volunteers are phenomena difficult to capture and more complex than what many previous studies seem to depict. To answer the following questions: 'What sources of disappointments do volunteers experience in their work?' and 'How do volunteers respond to disappointments?', this study has incorporated informants from both employee-led, as well as 'grass-root' organizations consisting solely of volunteers. The results show that volunteers-disappointments stem from three different sources: (1) Unmet level of commitment and passion, (2) Friction and diminishment, and (3) Mismatch in perception. Moreover, individuals then react to disappointments in various, sometimes paradoxical, ways; they (1) either increase their perceived level of responsibility, they (2) leave their positions, or they (3) keep passive by staying within the organization in the same role and responsibility.

How these disappointments and strategies used to respond to them relate to each other are complex and still unknown to us. We do however see that organizational factors seem to be in play regarding what possibilities sustained volunteers (Penner, 2002) have to adjust their engagements to handle their disappointments depending on what organization they are in. Our findings illustrate a need for further research on the topic, specifically; research needs to further explore differences in various types of volunteers and the organizations in which they engage in to understand what elements are in play in the volunteering-experience. Perhaps, research needs to make clearer distinctions between different types of volunteers rather than implying that 'volunteers' as a group show certain attributes that only are applicable to blood-donors or sports coaches - since these ought to be vastly different.

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Figures

Figure 1:

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Figure 2:

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Appendix

Interview Guide

- Berätta mer om hur du engagerar dig ideellt?
  - Hur hamnade du där?
  - Varför började du?
  - Rekryteringsprocess?
- Hur mycket tid lägger du ner på detta?
  - Hur länge har du varit engagerad?
  - Vem skulle du säga är "arbetsgivaren"?
- Har du något anställningskontrakt?
  - Andra överenskommelser/ förhållningsregler?
- Ersättningar?
  - Utbildningar?
  - Pengar?
    - Om ja, hur stor roll spelar de? Hur mycket? Hade du kunnat göra dem utan pengar?
- Vad hade du gjort om du inte spenderat din tid här?
- Hur bunden känner du dig?
- Vilka förväntningar har du på motparten?
  - Är det något som inte varit som du tänkt dig?
  - Har du någon gång känt att motparten inte uppfyllt dina förväntningar?
    - Vad gjorde du då?
- Vad är det bästa/sämsta med detta?
  - Vad hade motparten kunnat göra för att göra ditt engagemang roligare?
- Har du utvecklats något när du gjort detta?
  - Hur då?
  - Personligt/Professionellt
- Hur tänker du kring ditt framtida engagemang?
- Umgås du med andra som engagerar sig?
- Får du stöttning av din arbetsgivare?
  - Hur då?
- Vad hade fått dig att sluta engagera dig?