Renegotiation of consumption practices in the presence of volunteering experience

Master’s Thesis
Tatsiana Padhaiskaya
2017

Department of Marketing
Aalto University
School of Business
**Author** Tatsiana Padhaiiskaya

**Title of thesis**
Renegotiation of consumption practices in the presence of volunteering experience

**Degree** Master’s of Science

**Degree program** Marketing

**Thesis advisor(s)** Kushagra Bhatnagar, Joel Hietanen

**Year of approval** 2017  **Number of pages** 72  **Language** English

**Objectives**
The main objective of the research is to understand how regular engagement into helping activities contributes to changes in consumption practices among volunteers, especially if the nature of volunteering experience is mundane rather than extraordinary. Precisely, this research aims to identify key aspects of volunteering experience that contribute to behavioral changes. The study also focuses on the process of renegotiation of consumption practices among volunteers who have been engaged in helping activities for a relatively long time.

**Methodology**
This research is qualitative and interpretive in nature. Seven regular volunteers, who are involved in organization of multicultural events at Finnish Red Cross, were interviewed. Field notes gathered during ethnographic observations in the volunteering groups complemented data collected during long unstructured interviews. Data collection, analysis and interpretations followed the narrative research approach and method.

**Key findings**
This study discovers that prolonged engagement into helping activities leads to changes in consumption practices, even if the nature of those activities is mundane rather than extraordinary. Aspects present in volunteering experience, as acquisition of cultural and social capitals as well as volunteer-related stereotypes, contribute to the process of circular self-reflection. In the presence of new knowledge and connections, volunteers renegotiate previously stable consumption practices in an attempt to become more responsible consumers. Primary socialization mediates this process. Key findings also describe various strategies that volunteers exploit to renegotiate consumption. The study emphasizes the dual role of volunteering in this process – it both predisposes consumers towards changes and sometimes acts as a reason to justify excessive spending.

**Keywords** Volunteering, helping activities, experiential consumption, primary socialization, consumption practices, consumer behavior
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

1.1. **EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION AND VOLUNTEERING**

1.2. **CONSUMER’S DISPOSITIONS, HABITUS AND CAPITAL ACQUISITION**

1.3. **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND QUESTIONS**

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

2.1. **PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON VOLUNTEERING**

2.2. **VOLUNTEER-RELATED RESEARCH IN THE AREAS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND CCT**

2.3. **EFFECTS OF VOLUNTEERING ON CONSUMPTION PRACTICES**

2.4. **EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION AS FACILITATOR OF CHANGES**

2.5. **BOURDIEU’S CONCEPTS OF CAPITAL, HABITUS AND CONSUMER DISPOSITIONS**

**METHODOLOGY**

3.1. **RESEARCH APPROACH**

3.2. **DATA COLLECTION**

3.3. **INTERVIEWEES**

3.4. **DATA ANALYSIS**

**FINDINGS**

4.1. **EXPERIENCE OF MUNDANE VOLUNTEERING**

   4.1.1. **Socialization and barriers to enter the field of volunteering**

   4.1.2. **Within the field experience**

4.2. **CHANGES TRIGGERED BY VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE**

   4.2.1. **Changes in views about own lives**

   4.2.2. **Change in previously stable attitudes and consumption practices**
4.3. (Re) Negotiation of Consumption Practices

4.3.1. Compromising

4.3.2. Distancing from conflict

4.3.3. Justification

4.4. Further Consequences of Regular Engagement into Volunteering

4.4.1. Participation in other helping activities

4.4.2. Education of others

4.4.3. Judgment of distant others

4.5. Summary

Discussion

6.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

6.2. Limitations

6.3. Directions for Future Research

Conclusions

References
Introduction

Supporting charity organizations, dropping few coins to bagger’s hand, organizing cultural events, raising awareness for social problems, teaching poor kids in rural areas, helping to preserve rainforests or donating blood and organs – all of those are only a few examples of “freely chosen and deliberate helping activities” (Ho & O’Donohoe, 2014) that millions of people around the world perform on the regular basis. Although the nature of those helping activities varies a lot with respect to amount and type of capital that is given away in the process as well as the length of involvement (Drollinger, 2010; Llamas and Thomsen, 2016), all of them can be commonly referred to as “volunteering”.

Volunteering constitutes a considerable part of the economy and aims to supply services that are either unavailable or inadequately provided by private and public sectors (Schram and Dunsing, 1981; Laverie and McDonald, 2007; Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). The value of volunteering alone has grown significantly in recent decades (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009). For instance, volunteering sector in the United States is represented by over 62.6 million individuals who provide more than US$ 184 billion to the economy (Independent Sector, 2015).

Such economic importance of non-profit organizations explains why the majority of existing research papers related to volunteering were focused on the investigation of motives for volunteering among various gender, age and social groups as well as on the development of strategies to attract and retain volunteers in the non-profit organizations. Moreover, in order to explore the topic of volunteer-related motivations, concepts from the fields of consumer behavior (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011; Ho & O’Donohoe, 2014), marketing (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996; Randle and Dolnicar, 2012) and social psychology (Elshaug and Metzer, 2001; Marta et al., 2014) were extensively adopted throughout the studies. Despite comprehensive contributions to the field of volunteering from the motivation-retention side, relatively small number of studies (Ulusoy, 2016) researched the other intriguing aspect – effects of engagement into volunteering on consumer behavior.

Hence, study aims to fill this gap and enrich the literature on volunteering and consumer behavior by understanding how regular engagement into helping activities contributes to changes in consumption practices among volunteers. Precisely, it focuses on the process of renegotiation of consumption practices among volunteers who have been engaged in helping activities for a relatively long time as well as identifies key aspects of volunteering experience that contribute to behavioral changes.
1.1. Experiential consumption and volunteering

Consumption as an activity is built upon acquisition and usage of certain goods that are prone to provide consumers with opportunities for building cultural, social and symbolic capitals as well as showing certain status within the given field (Holt, 1998). Apart from that, consumption from experiential standpoint holds potential for personal growth (Arnould and Price, 1993; Bosangit and Demangeot, 2016) and change, through the processes of self-reflection. Thus, consumers actively engage in consumption experiences not just to satisfy utilitarian needs, but also for the purposes of self-expression and self-transformation (Belk 1988; Ahuvia, 2005; Elliot, 2016; Ourahmoune, 2016).

Consumption experiences range from mundane to extraordinary (Bosangit and Demangeot, 2016). The more drastically different consumption experiences are from everyday life, the more potential for self-transformation they provide (Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015) and the more long-lasting transformational effects they are prone to trigger. This notion explains why majority of research on consumer transformations was conducted in the contexts of extraordinary experiential consumption, as e.g. travelling to long-haul destinations (Ourahmoune, 2016; Bosangit and Demangeot, 2016; Ulusoy, 2016), engagement into extreme sport activities (Arnould & Price, 1993), pilgrimage (Higgins and Hamilton, 2016), craft consumption (Elliot, 2016) or explored transformations triggered by the change in social status (e.g. parenthood - Parkinson, Gallegos and Russell-Bennett; 2016) or physical abilities (Beudaert, Özçağlar-Toulouse and Türe, 2016). Due to potential to trigger short and long term changes in consumption practices, consumer transformations represent a valuable area for researchers and marketers alike, since understanding of transformation processes allows to deliver and design more beneficial offerings to consumers (Megehee, Ko and Belk, 2016). Such focus on usefulness for the marketers may be interpreted as one of the reasons why majority of research about consumer transformations has been conducted in the context of particular market activities and almost completely overlooked non-market activities (e.g. volunteering).

There are only a few examples of studies that conceptualized volunteering as an experience available for consumption and precisely focused on changes that occur among volunteers after performance of helping activities. For instance, previous research on volunteering revealed that engagement into helping activities might trigger shifts towards more responsible consumption even among people who have participated in those activities without specific prior motives (Ulusoy, 2016). In addition to this, volunteers who have been involved in activities that included travelling to long-haul destinations and required significant amount of social and cultural
capitals to be shared (e.g. helping to preserve rainforests, teaching poor kids in Africa, etc.) reported changed attitudes towards luxury (Llamas & Thomsen, 2016) and shifts towards voluntary simplicity (Mulder et al., 2015). The above-mentioned examples clearly indicate the transformative potential of volunteering experience, however it remains unclear whether the transformative potential originates from the nature of volunteering itself (as from an act of giving away) or from its connection to extraordinary experiential consumption due to the presence of traveling to long-haul destinations as part of researched volunteering activities. Consequently, to the best of researcher’s knowledge, no study has yet investigated potential for changes in consumption practices and behavior in the context of mundane volunteering. Noteworthy, as the experience of mundane volunteering is not that drastically different from everyday life, it is assumed that it would trigger certain changes in consumption practices, however, it would not completely transform volunteers’ attitudes to consumption or related behavior.

Some research argues that traveling represents a valuable context to study consumer transformations due to presence of social-class dispositions and opportunities for accumulation of cultural capital (knowledge and skills) that in turn trigger changes (Ourahmoune, 2016). In this respect, volunteering context is comparably valuable, since it also assumes presence of social-class dispositions and provides opportunities for capital accumulation. Moreover, volunteering and travelling experiences were argued to share other common features, since they both can be characterized as (1) intangible experiences that provide little material evidence to demonstrate consumer’s involvement, and as (2) experiences that are prone to provide a sense of social prestige and generate desire to share stories about involvement (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). Consequently, acquisition of volunteering experience might provide resources for certain changes even if performed helping activities are not connected to extraordinary experiential consumption.

1.2. Consumer’s dispositions, habitus and capital acquisition

Adaptation of Bourdieu’s concepts to the field of volunteering is especially beneficial in exploring the aspects that trigger behavioral changes. According to the Bourdieu, individual’s choices and behavior are guided by the habitus – “set of unconscious and enduring dispositions, patterns of thinking and ways of acting that are acquired in childhood and that provide a tacit sense of how the world works and one’s place in this world” (Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013). In this vein, habitus “incline individuals to behave in a certain way” (Drumwright and Kamal,
Although in Bourdieu’s understanding habitus is primarily acquired in the early age through the process of socialization, it is still not fixed for a lifetime. Consumer dispositions that constitute a part of habitus are opened to modifications (Ourahmoune, 2016). One of the ways dispositions can be modified is through experience and acquisition of capital – thus, when individual is learning new skills and acquire knowledge in the particular field, those experiences become embodied in the ways of feeling, thinking and acting (Holt, 1998), which in turn results in altered practices.

In this vein, although individuals enter the new field (volunteering) with various dispositions towards consumption and various types of previous socialization, the prolonged engagement facilitates acquisition of new cultural and social capitals and thus, to some extent, modifies consumer dispositions. Moreover, research reveals that consumers need to repeatedly enter certain field (Ourahmoune, 2016) in order to gain agency, re-structure dispositions and subsequently adapt new ways of navigating the marketplace (Saatioglu and Ozanne, 2013), which calls for necessity to conduct the study in the context of mundane volunteering.

1.3. Research Objective and Questions

This research aims to understand how regular engagement into helping activities contributes to changes in consumption practices among volunteers. Thus, study applies theoretical lenses of Bourdieu’s and deals with concepts of consumer dispositions, experiential consumption and changes in consumer behavior.

Research is guided by two main questions:

(1) *What aspects of volunteering experience contribute to the changes in regular consumption practices?*

(2) *How are consumption practices renegotiated in the presence of volunteering experience?*

Research methodology combined long unstructured individual interviews with ethnographic observations. Data collection was conducted among the volunteers of the Finnish Red Cross. The choice of Red Cross is justified by the fact that it represents one of the most known and internationally recognized volunteering organizations (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011) and provides
opportunities for individuals to take part in a variety of helping activities, ranging from blood
donation to being volunteer ambassadors in foreign countries. Organization’s size and reputation
made it a perfect choice for recruiting regular volunteers for interviews as well as for performing
ethnographic observations.

Since study aims to understand feelings arising from engagement into mundane volunteering and
how these feelings interact with thoughts and behavior (Ulusoy, 2016), narrative approach to
research was used, where volunteers were encouraged to engage in natural conversations and
share stories about their volunteering experiences. Even though volunteers in Red Cross vary a
lot with respect to age, gender, occupation and other characteristics, respondents were recruited
in a way that ensured they represent particular activity group. Thus, all respondents in this study
were regular volunteers in the organization of multicultural events. Helping activities performed
by respondents did not require any specific knowledge or skills, however still were related to
significant sharing of economic capital in terms of time and cultural capital in terms of
knowledge.
Theoretical Background

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical background of the study based on the literature review. In the first section, I briefly outline the essential topics of previous research on volunteering as well as highlight the movement in conceptualization of volunteering from employment issue to marketing issue. Secondly, I argue how concept of volunteering may be situated within the field of CCT. Later, I discuss in details previous research about volunteering as an experiential consumption practice that holds potential for changes in consumer behavior. Next, I consider the experiential consumption from a broader standpoint and focus on comparison of extraordinary and mundane experiences as well as their effects on consumption practices. Finally, I introduce the Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, consumer dispositions and habitus as theoretical lenses for my research.

2.1. Previous research on volunteering

Volunteering is presented as “unpaid work provided to parties to whom the worker owes no contractual, familial, or friendship obligations” (Wymer and Samu, 2002) and refers to deliberate helping activities (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014). This definition assumes that volunteering provides no returns to the giver; however, volunteer services are prone to provide returns, even though they are non-monetary in value (Schram and Dunsing, 1981; Wymer and Samu, 2002). Moreover, amount of help given as well as non-monetary return received in the process largely depends on the type of performed helping behavior.

Helping activities vary sufficiently in nature and not all of them can be classified as volunteering. Firstly, helping activities might be categorized according to the type of capital that is given away - economic, social or cultural. In this vein, giving away economic capital refers to money and time (mostly donations), giving away social capital refers to influence and networks (e.g. promotion of good cause) and giving away cultural capital refers to skills and knowledge (e.g. teaching poor children or working in a charity shop) (Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Secondly, helping behaviors might be also categorized in terms of resource exchange theory. Thus, activities might be planned (e.g. being a volunteer festival coordinator) or spontaneous (e.g. 1$ donation with purchase) as well as classified with respect to what is given away (e.g. time, money or mixture of both) (Drollinger, 2010). Finally, individual perceptions and cultural stereotypes might influence the categorization of certain activities as pure volunteering and certain as donations (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014).
In many countries, non-profit sector constitutes a significant part of economy by providing services to public that otherwise would be unavailable in the communities (Schram and Dunsing, 1981; Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). Moreover, non-profit sector often “address needs that are inadequately addressed by private and public sectors” (Laverie and McDonald, 2007). In monetary terms volunteering activities account to 184 billion $ in the US (Independent Sector, 2015), £70 billions per year in the UK (which is equivalent to around 5 percent of UK GDP - Fujiwara, Oroyemi and McKinnon, 2013) and 25,4 billion $ in Australia (Volunteering Australia, 2010). Consequently, in order to ensure that non-profit sector functions properly and generates sufficient contributions to the economy, it is extremely important to be able to successfully attract, recruit and retain volunteers. This notion explains why majority of previous studies on volunteering were related to investigation of motives for engagement into helping activities and functions of volunteering (Clary et al., 1998). Most common motives were also uncovered and studied taking into account gender and occupational differences (Wymer and Samu, 2002), marital status (Schram and Dunsing, 1981), effects of recognition and group need (Fischer and Ackerman, 1998). Additionally, more specific groups, as for instance university students (Francis, 2011) or hospital volunteers (Zweigenhaft et al., 1996) were examined.

Commonly, all motives for engagement into volunteering activities might be categorized into two broad groups: altruistic and egoistic. In this respect, altruistic motives are those that associate with the satisfaction of societal needs, while egoistic are those that satisfy the needs of volunteers (Laverie and McDonald, 2007; Veludo-De-Oliveira, Pallister and Foxall, 2015). Apart from that, some research was devoted to development of promotional (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996; Drollinger, 2010), recruitment and retention strategies (Devaney et al., 2015) for non-profit organizations or to investigation of effects of cultural background on volunteering behavior (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009; 2012). Moreover, motives related to certain specific behaviors as donation of blood (Burnett, 1981; Callero, 1985), body parts (Pessemier, Bemmaor and Hanssens, 1977) as well as promotional strategies (LaTour and Manrai, 1989) that might be exploited to attract individuals to take part in those activities were extensively researched in marketing, social and health-related sciences.

In order to enhance quality of recruitment processes in the non-profit organizations, researchers also studied volunteers from perspectives of social psychology and management, which allowed identifying common personality traits (Elshaug and Metzer, 2001), uncover possible
antecedents of volunteer commitment (Veludo-De-Oliveira, Pallister and Foxall, 2015) and investigate the most attractive organizational variables for volunteer participation (Craig-Lees, Hards and Lau, 2008). However, since volunteering provides no monetary returns, managers of non-profit organizations could not fully apply human resources recruitment strategies. Thus, the focus was shifted from “the problem of recruitment (an employment issue) to a problem of attraction (a marketing issue)” (Wymer and Samu, 2002), which allowed placing the term “volunteering” in the contexts of marketing and consumer behavior and conceptualizing it as a product or rather an experience that is available for consumption (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). For instance, within the field of consumer behavior it is assumed that individuals prefer to purchase products, services and brands that match their self-concepts (Belk, 1988; Schau, 2000; Trudel, Argo and Meng, 2016). The same link was discovered in relation to volunteering, postulating that volunteers prefer to help in organization, which perceived brand is matching their self-concepts (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011).

2.2. Volunteer-related research in the areas of consumer behavior and CCT

Interestingly enough, although the shift in conceptualization of volunteering as “a symbolic consumption practice” (Wymer and Samu, 2002) clearly indicated its potential for closer examination within the areas of consumer behavior and CCT, the attempts are somewhat limited (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014). This obvious gap is even more intriguing, taking into account lively discussions of concepts such as “gift-giving”, “sharing” and “mutuality”.

For instance, Sherry (1983) theorizes gift giving as an endless process of reciprocities, where virtually any tangible or intangible resource can be used as a gift. Thus, gifts can exist in variety of forms, including services. This notion assumes that volunteer services provided by individuals or organizations may be regarded as gifts (e.g. local organization are contributing gifts in the form of certain services to the communities). Moreover, it is admitted that that certain parties may be exempt from the act of giving back (e.g. patients or students) (Sherry, 1983). In this vein, volunteering might be viewed as a specific case of gift-giving, since “receivers of help” are not obliged to reply to the act of gestation and thus, there is no fear of potential weakening of relationships between giver and receiver, or discontentment from the giver’s side due to the ignorance of the norms of reciprocity, which is frequently evident in more ordinary consumer gift-giving (Giesler, 2006). However, unlike gift giving, volunteering is not tied to particular occasion and commonly does not involve ritualistic actions (e.g. as a gift-
Another concept that has received significant attention and is even closer related to volunteering is “sharing”. Sharing refers to the process of prosocial distribution of resources (Belk, 2010). Hence, in the same vein as volunteering, the act of sharing does not hold expectations of reciprocity. In his “Sharing” paper Belk (2010) attempts to distinguish between commodity exchange, gift-giving and sharing by characterizing commodity exchange as purely materialistic and sharing as purely altruistic concepts, putting gift-giving in the middle, since even though gifts do act as creators and facilitators of human bonds, they can be equally motivated by self-interest and selfishness (e.g. in cases of self-gifting). As to one of the examples of sharing, Belk (2010) refers to charitable giving – even though it is tempting to present charitable giving as altruistic act, it is more of an egoistic action, where the consumption happens in the act of giving and were the financial help to one party is “transmuted into honor, dignity, respectability, and status…to the giving party” (Arnould and Rose, 2015). Therefore, it is evident that charitable giving, as well as other deliberate helping activities, are prone to provide non-monetary returns to the giver and thus are distinct from the Belk’s altruistic sharing. In the critique of Belk’s paper, Arnould and Rose (2015) propose the alternative concept – mutuality. It differs from the gift exchange since one is giving out without an expectation of receiving directly, but with an expectation of receiving indirectly at some point in time. Thus, mutuality is driven not by altruism (as Belk suggested with sharing) but rather by “social interest”, which is a way of acknowledging that one is “embedded in the social fabric” (Arnould and Rose, 2015). Interestingly enough, whether engagement into volunteering activities is driven by altruistic or egoistic motives, it does not affect the length of engagement or the level of commitment (Veludo-De-Oliveira, Pallister and Foxall, 2015).

Consequently, it is evident that different activities labeled as volunteering may have mutual characteristics with all three extensively discussed constructs in consumer behavior – gift giving, sharing, and mutuality. For instance, charitable giving mostly resembles gift-giving, volunteer caretakers might be better explored from the standpoint of sharing, while other voluntary actions (e.g. offering coach through Couchsurfing) are related to mutuality. However, volunteering still can be treated as a distinct and standalone construct, which is valuable to explore on its own, or along with its antecedents and outcomes. In the following sub-section, I refer to the possible outcomes of volunteering, precisely focusing on how volunteering potentially contributes to changes in marketplace behavior of consumers.
2.3. Effects of volunteering on consumption practices

Recently, Ho and O’Donohoe (2014) argued that diminishing percentage of young volunteers in the UK is caused by the wide-spread volunteer-associated stereotypes that stigmatize helping behavior and consequently reduce willingness of teenagers to engage in volunteer practices in order to avoid judgment from peers. Although research was primarily focused on investigating those volunteer-related stereotypes and corresponding coping strategies, respondents were also frequently mentioning temporary shifts in consumption practices (e.g. switch to more conservative clothing styles) during the enactment of volunteer services as a way for volunteers to better fit into the community and fulfill expectations of others. Unfortunately, due to the focus of the study on stereotypes, neither exact scope of volunteer activities nor length of involvement were mentioned, which does not allow to identify whether altered consumption practices were triggered by nature of volunteering, prolonged engagement into helping activities or some other reasons.

While changes in consumption practices were temporary in Ho and O’Donohoe’s (2014) research, other recent studies highlight the evidence of long-lasting changes that arise from volunteer experiences. As such, Llamas and Thomsen (2016) discovered shifts in perception of luxury among consumers who were involved in the activities that required a significant amount of social and cultural capitals to be given away (e.g. teaching poor kids or helping to preserve rainforests). For those consumers, experience of travelling to long-haul destination where social class dispositions were notably evident (Ourahmoune, 2016), triggered re-evaluation of their lives in terms of luxury – luxury was not linked to demonstration of wealth, power or status through profligate spending (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) anymore, but was rather seen as an act of philanthropic giving.

The potential for alteration of consumption practices through performance of volunteering services was also noted by Mulder et al. (2015). Volunteers, who travelled to Central America, to the community with no reliable access to clean water and were involved into activities as construction of feeding center and teaching of hygiene and sanitation lessons, went through epistemological change “that leads to alterations in how one acts and thinks about oneself, the world, and the interaction between the two” (Mulder et al., 2015). Precisely, factors as “drastically different social and cultural circumstances” as well as sharing of skills and knowledge with local community members triggered reflections about overconsumption back at home. Consequently, volunteers expressed shifts towards voluntary simplicity – enhanced focus on needs instead of wants, reduced consumption of water resources and expressed higher
appreciation of what they own (Mulder et al., 2015). All of the triggered changes represent increased focus on personal relationships instead of possessions (Ballantine and Creery, 2010; McGouran and Prothero, 2016).

In an attempt to uncover how engagement into volunteering activities transform consumer self-concepts Ulusoy (2016) recently studied students who have been engaged into voluntourism – “an alternative form of tourism that combines traditional tourist activities such as sightseeing with volunteer service work activities that range from construction to environmental protection”. After two weeks of engagement into those extraordinary experiential consumption practices, students who participated in it without any specific prior motivation, started integrating responsibility considerations into their self-concepts and expressed desires to engage further into volunteering practices. Observed transformations were attributed to the nature of the experience itself (voluntourism as an extraordinary experience and as something drastically different from everyday life) as well as to six interrelated factors observed throughout trip - organic community, unpretentious fun, embracing the other, developing and utilizing capabilities, challenge, and self-reflection (Ulusoy, 2016). Interestingly enough, students who expressed desires to try themselves in other types of volunteering activities after voluntourism experience were mentioning helping activities that require a significant amount of economic (in terms of time) and cultural (knowledge and skills) capitals to be shared (e.g. helping out animals or sick children).

Consequently, above-mentioned examples clearly indicate that volunteering represents a valuable context in terms of potential for triggering changes in consumer behavior, especially in cases when engagement into helping activities (1) involves travelling to long-haul destinations, (2) allows observation of social class dispositions and (3) requires significant amount of capital to be shared. Given that the nature of volunteering itself assumes sharing of various kinds of capital with non-related other, the research of mundane engagement into volunteering represents an opportunity for contributing to literature on changes in consumption practices.

2.3. Experiential Consumption as Facilitator of Changes

People engage in consumption experiences not only out of the need to satisfy utilitarian needs but also out of the need for fantasies, feelings and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). They actively consume experiences as means for self-expression and transformation (Belk, 1988; Ahuvia, 2005; Elliot, 2016). On the top of that, both market and non-market experiences that
take place in lives of consumers might facilitate changes in their behavior (Ulusoy, 2016). Those experiences may trigger various types of transformations: volitional or imposed, conscious or non-conscious, those related to macro (affect entire socio-cultural system) and micro (individual) levels (Megehee, Ko and Belk, 2016). Taking into account that this research aims to understand changes in consumption practices in the context of volunteering experience, the following review would focus on volitional engagement into experiential consumption and subsequent micro (individual) level changes.

Magnitude of changes or transformations triggered by consumption experiences is traditionally assumed to depend on their strength and presence of extraordinary activities within the scope of a given experience (Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015; Ulusoy, 2016). This notion explains why majority of research papers in the field of consumer behavior were focused on extraordinary experiential consumption – “intense, positive, intrinsically enjoyable experience” (Arnould and Price, 1993) that consists of certain extremely memorable moments (Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015) or simply experiences that combine multitude of feelings and emotions. Thus, immersion into activities that are drastically different from everyday life (Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015; Ulusoy, 2016), allow consumers to reflect on their life and might result in subsequent changes of consumption practices. Moreover, some experiences might be so extreme that they result in significant life- and perspective-altering changes (Arnould and Price, 1993). Multiple studies on extraordinary experiential consumption highlighted factors as “development of relationships with others” and “opportunities for personal growth and development through obstacle overcoming and acquisition of new skills” as essential for triggering subsequent changes in consumer behaviors (Arnould & Price, 1993; Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015).

The nature of extraordinary experiential consumption as well as factors that are acting as catalysts for consumer changes within those experiences, bring to light intriguing similarities if compared to volunteering activities. Firstly, volunteering is a nonmarket activity (Schram and Dunsing, 1981; Fisher and Ackerman, 1998), which is built on the principles of sharing, which clearly indicates its difference from marketplace activities. Moreover, the extensive research on motives for engagement into helping activities argues that volunteers aim to satisfy their needs for exciting life and true friendship (Clary et al., 1998; Elshaug and Metzer, 2001; Wymer and Samu, 2002). Consequently, in a broader sense, volunteers engage in helping behavior for the same reasons regular consumers engage into extraordinary consumption experiences – out of the need for feelings and fun, in order to escape from everyday activities. Secondly, factors that originate from engagement into extraordinary experiences and were found to trigger consumer
transformation are to some extent evident in the volunteering studies. Precisely, in Ulusoy’s (2016) research of voluntourism, student extensively reported factors as “connection to others”, “skills acquisition” and “obstacles overcoming” as crucial for their self-transformations. Similarly, volunteers in Mulder et al.’s (2015) study underwent through epistemological change due to development of relationships with local community members and acquisition of new skills.

One might argue that highlighted similarities between factors that contribute to consumer transformations in the contexts of volunteering and engagement into extraordinary experiential consumption are justified by the presence of traveling to long-haul destinations as a part of volunteering experience in the above-mentioned examples. However, it is important to take into account, that the very specific nature of volunteering is prone to provide volunteers with resources for development of factors leading to behavioral changes, without connection to extraordinary experience. For instance, regardless of whether volunteers provide helping services alone or as a part of the group, they still represent certain organization or community, which assumes opportunities for development of relationships with other people (connection to other volunteers as well as to help receivers). Additionally, engagement into volunteering generally provides opportunities for either skills acquisition or skills enhancement (Clary et al., 1998; Wymer and Samu, 2002; Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014), which explains why significant number of young people engage in volunteering for the purposes of getting an experience in a particular sphere they are planning to work in the future or for “resume building” (Ulusoy, 2016). Presented parallels between extraordinary experiential consumption, which was traditionally regarded as valuable context to study consumer transformations, and volunteering, highlight the relevance of the choice of mundane volunteering as a fruitful research context.

Another important factor that was repeatedly found to be significant for triggering changes in consumer behavior is “presence of social class dispositions”. This factor is frequently evident in the studies of traveling to long-haul destinations (Ourahmoune, 2016) as well as in the studies of volunteering that involved traveling (Mulder et al., 2015; Ulusoy, 2016; Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Social class dispositions are not necessarily evident in all types of volunteering – some activities assume sharing of resources and services with those who are in need due to lower economic standing, for instance, volunteering at a soup kitchen (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014), teaching kids in poor areas (Llamas and Thomsen, 2016) or building a feeding center (Mulder et al., 2015), while other volunteering activities assume sharing of resources with variety of
different people, regardless of their financial and social standing (e.g. blood donation, working in a charity shop, organizing cultural events). Even though social class dispositions are not always the part of volunteering, the nature of “deliberate helping activities” still assumes sharing with others, which creates “helper-receiver” relationships. Thus, potential of those relationships for triggering changes in consumption practices is yet to be explored.

2.5. Bourdieu’s Concepts of Capital, Habitus and Consumer Dispositions

Bourdieu’s theory of practice, as well as concepts of habitus, dispositions, and capital, have been extensively used by researchers in the contexts of advertising (Drumwright and Kamal, 2016), consumption (Holt, 1998; Ustuner and Thompson, 2012; Ourahmoune, 2016) and culture (Wong, 2007; Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013). In short, theory of practice states: “one’s practice results from relations between one’s dispositions (habitus) and one’s position in the field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)” (Maton, 2012, p. 50). Thus, it has three interlinked constructs: field, capital and habitus. Field represents a particular social context, which functions according to certain rules (Drumwright and Kamal, 2016). In this research, volunteering organization acts as a field in which individuals perform helping activities. Even though this study highlights particular rules according to which field of volunteering is functioning, the primary focus of the research is to uncover aspects that trigger changes in consumption practices and ways of renegotiating behavior in the presence of volunteering experience.

According to Bourdieu, individuals within the field gain agency and compete for various forms of capital – economic, cultural and social (Holt, 1998). Every form of capital may be presented in embodied or objectified form and takes time to accumulate (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital is represented by wealth (money, property rights, etc.). Cultural capital exists in three different forms – embodied (skills, knowledge, manners, tastes, dispositions), objectified (writings, paintings, etc.) and institutionalized (academic qualifications) (Bourdieu, 1986; Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013). Finally, social capital is represented by actual and potential resources that are linked to membership in particular groups.

Each individual within a particular field acts in accordance with habitus – “a set of unconscious and enduring dispositions, patterns of thinking, and ways of acting that are acquired in childhood and that provide a tacit sense of how the world works and one’s place in this world” (Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013). Bourdieu proposed that habitus is developing through socialization and is acquired in the early age, thus it depends on the family upbringing and
educational experiences (Maton, 2012). By implying term “habitus” Bourdieu aimed to explain how individuals reproduce social stratification in various contexts (Holt, 1998) – for instance, he noticed that in French society, wealthy parents sent their kids to prestigious schools, which allowed socialization in the elite social class. Educational experience and the process of upbringing in the particular social class allowed developing specific cultural capital, which in turn was valuable for particular job positions and predisposed them to choose occupation from particular set of options (Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013). Consequently, habitus is a powerful tool that may guide individual’s actions and practices. The same notion is evident in more recent research (Allen, 2002) – there, working-class students, guided by their habitus, were choosing Winchester Business School, that specialized in training students for clerical positions. In contrast, middle-class students were choosing liberal arts college – both assumed that the choice felt more natural (Saatcioglu and Ozanne, 2013).

In line with Bourdieu’s theory, habitus belongs to individual and it is both “structured” and “structuring” – thus, it is structured by individual’s past and present circumstances and “it is “structuring” in that one’s habitus helps to shape present and future practices” (Maton, 2012, p. 50). Consequently, habitus defines ways of thinking, feeling and being, it does not remain constant for the whole life, but rather represent an evolving construct (Holt, 1998). In this vein, habitus is opened to modifications and it is “constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures” (Drumwright and Kamal, 2016).

This dual “structure and structuring” nature of habitus makes it an extremely useful theoretical construct for investigating changes in consumer behavior after exposure to particular experiences. In line with Bourdieu’s thinking individuals have certain dispositions or patterns of thinking about the world and particular activities embodied into habitus – thus, every person has certain dispositions towards consumption. Consequently, experience acquired in a particular field might act as a catalyst for “re-structuring” certain dispositions, including dispositions towards consumption. It is important to note, that exposure to particular experiences do not change the entire habitus (e.g. the process of socialization acquired in the early age does not change), but rather various dispositions evolve. It explains, why previous studies related to volunteering reported shifts in consumption practices (Llamas and Thomsen, 2016; Ulusoy, 2016) and ways of thinking about consumption as a whole (Mulder et al., 2015) after engagement into helping behavior.
In the field of volunteering, change in consumer dispositions is also illuminated by acquisition of embodied cultural and social capitals. Since volunteering refers to the performance of “freely chosen helping activities” (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014), as a “field of practice” it does not necessarily require a particular amount of economic, cultural or social capital to enter or function within the field, unlike many other contexts. However, during performance of helping activities, volunteers are constantly engaged into process of simultaneous sharing and acquiring. On the top of that, acquired cultural capital converse into tastes and consumption practices in the marketplace (Holt, 1998). Thus, acquisition of field-specific capital may alter consumer dispositions and result in changed consumption practices.

Recent research papers in the fields of consumer behavior and consumer transformations provide evidence for the application of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and consumer dispositions as useful theoretical frameworks for studying changes in consumer behavior. In that vein, Ourahmoune (2016) aimed to discover consumer-identity transformations in the context of travelling to long-haul destinations, by building on the notions of habitus, self-concept and temporality. Consequently, research revealed the importance of habituated practice and the necessity of repeatedly entering the field to change individual’s behavior over time. Saatcioglu and Ozanne (2013) applied Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to discover how various dispositions shape consumption practices among working-class residents of marginalized neighborhood of trailer park. Consequently, study reveals that certain constructs (e.g. morals) are transporting into stable dispositions through everyday practices. On the top of that, new constructs that are embodied into habitus also reflect the ways consumers navigate the marketplaces. Above-mentioned examples provide additional support for the application of Bourdieu’s theoretical lenses as well as for the focus on mundane engagement into volunteering, since repeated entrance into the field of volunteering, might illuminate behavioral changes, caused by shifts in consumer dispositions, in the same manner as it did in the field of travelling.
Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methodology for this research. Firstly, I describe the research approach as well as the data collection methods. Secondly, I move to the detailed depiction of research settings as well as provide background information about informants. Finally, the data analysis process is described in details.

3.1. Research approach

This research aims to discover how mundane engagement into volunteering activities contributes to the changes in consumer behavior. Since the main objective of the study is to capture and interpret changes in consumption practices after engagement into helping activities, the focus is shifted towards the understanding of feelings arising from volunteering experience and how these feelings interact with thoughts and behavior (Ulusoy, 2016). Thus, this qualitative study calls for an interpretive approach to research, which helps to determine time- and context-specific subjective experiences (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In interpretive research the reality is socially constructed and holistic, whereas the individuals are proactive and voluntaristic in their behavior (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Since research aims attention at the specific experience (volunteering) and, particularly, changes that arise throughout consumption of this experience, from the methodological viewpoint this interpretive study relies on narrative approach (Haigh and Crowther, 2005). The aim is to capture and understand the experience of mundane volunteering through analysis of personal narratives. Personal narratives are assumed to be fundamental means by which people “organize, explain and understand lives” and they “are always based on human actions and experience” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 211). On the top of that, narratives are the most important means by which experiences are made meaningful (Shankar, Elliott, and Goulding, 2001) and are effective in conveying deeper meanings of a consumption experience (Pace, 2008).

In addition to this, when consumers are given an opportunity to narrate, their stories are constructed in a meaningful historical order, which allows identifying crucial aspects of experienced events (Thompson, 1997). In a context of mundane volunteering, it provided an opportunity not only to uncover the historically ordered process of change but also to investigate what particular aspects of volunteering experience contributed to reported changes.
3.2. Data Collection

Narrative perspective is best suited to longitudinal studies (Shankar, Elliott and Goulding, 2001). However, given the purpose of the research and restricted amount of time available for data collection, data for this study was generated through the combination of long unstructured interviews and ethnographic observations. In line with the interpretive research approach, both applied methods of data collection ensure the high level of interaction and cooperation between researcher and informants (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Data were collected in a form of individual, open-ended, in-depth interviews with people who have extensive experience in volunteering (e.g. have been actively engaged for at least a year) and perform helping services on the regular basis. Participants were recruited through Finnish Red Cross – a local branch of a volunteer organization, which is known worldwide and assists multiple causes on the global level (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). Red Cross volunteers may perform a variety of activities, ranging from collection of donations (in terms of money, clothes, other possessions and blood) to enactment of helping activities that require various levels of issue-specific knowledge (e.g. volunteer drug worker, AIDS and HIV volunteer, etc.). Given that study aims to understand volunteering experiences that are not related to extraordinary activities, interviewees were chosen from the participants that perform activities that do not require specific education or knowledge – volunteers in the organization of multicultural activities. This choice is also sensible since, although sample may vary a lot in terms of gender, age, education and occupational characteristics, respondents still represent particular activity group related to sharing of significant amount of various kinds of capital (e.g. economic capital in terms of time and cultural capital in terms of knowledge and skills). In addition to this, volunteering in organization of multicultural activities assumes relatively easy communication in the language other than the mother tongue, which removes the biases related to language barriers between researcher and people under investigation during the data collection stage.

The data collection started with contacting Red Cross branch in Helsinki region through e-mail. Through the local manager, the list of all volunteer groups was obtained, from where three groups for potential ethnographic observations were chosen. As the next step, I went to the training for the future volunteers organized by Red Cross. This training is not an obligatory part, if someone is willing to volunteer in organizing multicultural events, no previous training is required, however, the majority of Red Cross volunteers still go through training, thus it is
regarded as a first step of becoming a proper volunteer. The training was held in the form of presentation, where Red Cross local manager provided short information about all the groups that operate in the region as well as described in details what are the most common volunteer tasks.

After the training, the ethnographic observations began. The first set of observations was held as an event participant – all the multicultural event groups operated by Red Cross in Finland are targeted at locals and internationals, thus there are no barriers to attend the event as a participant. Consequently, during the first week of observations, I attended three different event groups. Since I officially went through Red Cross training, all the observations for the next 3 weeks were held as a volunteer – instead of just attending the events, volunteer tasks included preparation of food and drinks, updating event information on Facebook, replying to event inquiries in social media channels as well as basic cleaning after the events. Field notes collected during the period of 4 weeks allowed the better understanding of the scope of activities volunteers perform on the regular basis as well as of experiences they go through. Since the process of data collection began with ethnographic observations it also provided an opportunity to select a sample of interviewees among Red Cross’s regular volunteers and develop trust with interviewees. Below I provide the short description of event groups where ethnographic observations were performed:

**Multicultural Event Groups**

Both groups rely on the exactly the same format – outdoor and indoor activities are organized for locals and internationals alike in order to bring them together, help to deal with cultural shock (for internationals) and help with establishing new connections. Activities vary a lot seasonally – during winter time mostly indoor activities are organized (e.g. hangout in the cafes), while during summer time emphasis is made on outdoors activities (excursions, exhibitions, picnics and short-distance trips). Everyone is welcomed to attend the events regardless of age, gender, nationality or religion, which results in the especially broad set of event participants – some come alone, some with friends, some with all family members. The only difference between two groups is that they arrange activities in different parts of the city; otherwise, the format is almost identical.
Women’s Group

This group is targeted specifically at females – due to the specific focus, indoor activities prevail in this group, ranging from informal hangouts to specific cooking classes, panel discussions about women empowerment and even Lady Days that involve makeup and manicure master classes.

During the ethnographic observations, 7 regular Red Cross volunteers were recruited for the interviews. Six of them were regular volunteers at Red Cross multicultural event organization for at least two years. Most of them were also performing similar helping activities either in other Red Cross groups or in other volunteer organizations. One of the interviewees had an experience of just 6 months – she was purposefully included in the sample in order to enhance the understanding of changes that occur once somebody starts volunteering and to provide further insights into the timeframe which is required to renegotiate consumption practices in a presence of volunteering experience. Two interviewees in the sample were actively engaged in volunteering at Men’s International Group. No ethnographic observations were held in this particular group due to the evident gender barrier, however, the scope of the events arranged at that group closely resembled those adopted in other groups under research.

Data collection continued in a form of long, open-ended, unstructured interviews that appeared as natural conversations (Thompson, 1997) and were conducted in person in coffee places. All interviews started with the broad open question as: “Tell me about your experience as a volunteer”. In order to ensure that consumer narratives cover all period of time (before the volunteering started as well as nowadays) and in order to spot changes that occurred throughout experiential consumption of volunteering, participants were asked to describe their typical daily routine/hobbies/entertainment activities before and after the engagement into volunteering. The nature of any self-reported changes was further explored by probing question: “Can you tell me more about that?” Thus, the course of the interviews was defined and guided by particular characteristics of consumption experiences that were expressed by informants (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Thompson, 1997). After the completion of first interviews, the most common themes in each interview were identified and compared, which allowed discussion of more concrete topics in the further interviews. Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in verbatim, which resulted in slightly more than 70 pages of data, which was further added to the field notes and analyzed. Below I present the list of interviewees and along with short descriptions. All names were changed in order to protect the privacy of informants.
### 3.3. Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Years in volunteering</th>
<th>Current Red Cross Activities</th>
<th>Other regular volunteering activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Multicultural Activities (Group Leader) Board Member</td>
<td>Prison visitor Group leader in charity organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janne</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Men’s International Group</td>
<td>Volunteer translator at “Story Sharing” Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Women’s International Group (Group Leader)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikko</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Men’s International Group</td>
<td>Regular volunteer in organization of music festivals Host for cyclists on WarmShowers.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mari</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Multicultural Activities</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Administrative Worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Multicultural Activities (Group Leader) Board Member</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Multicultural Activities</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among all interviewed volunteers only 2 were males, which represent the official statistics, stating that females are more commonly engaged into volunteering than males (Wymer and Samu, 2002; Ho & O’Donohoe, 2014). Moreover, the specific statistics on volunteers in Finland also states that Finns with a university degree are 30 % more likely to participate in formal volunteering (OECD, 2016). In addition to this, interviewees who have been engaged in volunteering for a significant amount of time (cases of Julia, Janne, and Mikko) have been also regularly engaged in volunteering outside of Red Cross.
3.4. Data analysis

Analysis of collected data for this study followed the qualitative data manipulation operations that were classified and described by Spiggle (1994) – categorization, abstraction, comparison, integration, iteration, and refutation. These operations were systematically used during both analysis and interpretation stages.

To understand consumer narratives about mundane engagement into volunteering activities, data analysis involved several steps. Firstly, interview transcripts and field notes were read as texts in order to gain an understanding of how particular actions, events, and happenings in the context of volunteering are related to the changes in consumer behavior. After interviews were read several times as texts, all of them were separately coded, depending on the scope of emerging themes. Thus, each interview had somewhat different codes categories.

Secondly, codes were arranged into separate tables and compared with the codes from other interviews. This comparison process allowed exploring certain similarities and differences between the narratives of informants. Moreover, since data analysis phase started already after the completion of first three interviews, identification of preliminary patterns of similarity as well as irregularities aided understanding of particular types of changes that occur during engagement into volunteering and, as was previously noted, helped with conducting further interviews and ethnographic observations.

After the ethnographic observation stage of data collection was completed, findings and main themes from each interview as well as observation notes were once again compared and contrasted. This stage was especially helpful in identifying aspects that contributed to changes in dispositions and behavior. Finally, the integration stage began, which involved mapping of relationships between emerged elements (Spiggle, 1994) – this process allowed spotting the bigger picture and outlining how changes started occurring during volunteering experience, at what point in time they started occurring and what are their consequences. It is noteworthy that, if the data reported during interviews contradicted the data collected during ethnographic observations, the interpretation was based on field notes in the majority of cases.

Overall, due to the described data analysis method, final interpretations are somewhat subjective and dependent on personal understanding as well as previously gained experience of the author in the field of volunteering.
Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study. During the process of data analysis, three main themes emerged: the experience of mundane volunteering, changes triggered by volunteering experience and (re)negotiation of consumption practices. Findings on each theme are discussed in separate sections and some sections are further divided into sub-sections. In the discussion of mundane volunteering experience, the particular attention is given to the (1) motives and barriers to enter the field of volunteering and (2) rules of behavior adopted and followed within the field. Changes triggered by engagement into mundane volunteering are discussed with the focus on (1) changes in perception of own lives, (2) changes in previously stable attitudes and consumption practices. Later, the strategies that volunteers use to (re)negotiate certain aspect of consumption are presented. Finally, I discuss how the presence of volunteering experience affects (1) further engagement into helping activities, (2) education of others about the sensibility of altered consumption practices and (3) how engagement into volunteering and subsequent changes illuminates increased judgment towards close and distant others.

4.1. Experience of mundane volunteering

The purpose of this section is to provide a descriptive overview of the volunteering experience at Red Cross, precisely covering the motives for engagement as well as certain rules that are adopted within the field of volunteering.

4.1.1. Socialization and barriers to enter the field of volunteering

Interestingly enough, the majority of interviewees did not state any particular motives for the engagement into those experiences, which resemble the findings from the study of students, who have been engaged into voluntourism (Ulusoy, 2016). Inability to formulate a particular motivation may be attributed to the primary socialization of some regular volunteers – majority of them were growing up in the families, where helping behavior was simultaneously encouraged and portrayed as an inherent or integral part of life. Julia, a foundation manager from Helsinki, started volunteering 8 years ago and was nurtured on the ideas of being “socially responsible and helpful to others” by her parents, who have always been working in non-profit organizations. The same link between motives for volunteering and the primary socialization is evident in the narrative of Sanna, “helping others in need” was one of the values inculcated to her by a religious mother.
Sanna: I thought that actually, my mom has always been that strong Christian, like living according to those Christian values. And then I have been also brought up like that quite strongly…. And I guess in a broader sense I’ve been brought up on those values of helping others. And my dad, like he never volunteered, but he was always helping those who need that, so if he has an opportunity, he helps. So I think that somehow my volunteering drive might be coming from upbringing.

Even though the importance of primary familial socialization seems to be profound in driving prolonged commitment to volunteering among informants, it is not an obligation – one of the interviewees, Janne has never been taught that “helping others is good”, but rather picked up volunteering in an attempt to follow his friends. Arnould and Rose (2016) emphasize that close to 90% of non-genetic influence on children comes from their friends and thus, individual propensity towards helping may be equally likely arising from peers rather than family. Noteworthy, primary socialization might be also a country-specific issue – one of the interviewees, Diana, a Sociology student, points out in her narrative the prevalence of encouragement of helping behavior in Finland and how it was never the case in her own family:

Diana: In my family volunteering was never there and wasn’t really discussed... At least in my family we never talked about volunteering or how important it is to help others... in other families it’s different. Like I know that lots of parents in here [Finland] encourage their children to volunteer, they talk to their children like: “You have many toys, don’t you wanna donate?” or “Do you wanna donate money to this cause?”

The evident link between primary socialization and prolonged engagement into helping activities echoes the recent switch in the conceptualization of volunteering. Instead of framing volunteering as a form of work, from consumer behavior’s perspective, it is an experience that is available for consumption (Wymer and Samu, 2002), which in turn is attractive for individuals since through this particular type of consumption they might be able to express their values and beliefs to others (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). Thus, some regular volunteers perceive helping out experience as something natural to be engaged in, something that is integral: “It’s a way of living, like you have to help, help with money or action, you choose, but you have to help. It’s just something that you have to do if you don’t have a lot of issues in your life” (Anna).

Interestingly enough, informants who has been encouraged to help out and learned it through the process of either familial or peer socialization, found it much easier to enter the field of
volunteering at first place – growing up around people who voluntary help others allowed them to get acquainted with representatives of particular social circles and build a certain amount of social capital. Consequently, those informants either were invited to volunteer at certain groups (e.g. Julia, Sanna, Mikko) or got involved through friends or relatives (e.g. Janne and Anna). Hence, they relatively easily found ways to integrate themselves into Red Cross. On the contrary, Diana, whose primary social circles were not connected to volunteering, found it increasingly hard to enter the organization:

Diana: But actually my very first impression about Red Cross was not that good cause I contacted lots of different organizations...so I contacted Red Cross among them and e-mailed to them and I filled in the form but I never get any reply or answer. So I was like...hmm...I think I wanted to call but I didn’t know whether it would be appropriate cause I already did what the website told me to and I filled the form. And luckily one friend of mine knew Julia and she told to call her, so that’s how I ended up in the Red Cross. But it is so frustrating, I contacted so many different organizations and they have working web pages but I never got any reply. Because hey, here I am! I’m willing to give you my time...and no one answered me. And Julia explained to me that it’s much easier if you already know people in the organization and join volunteering through them.

The absence of social capital related to the field of volunteering due to the different type of socialization closely resembles the Bourdieu’s examples of socialization of kids from wealthy French families – socialization among others like them (e.g. attending prestigious schools) allowed to develop particular social and cultural capitals that helped in acquiring prestigious jobs (Maton, 2012). In Diana’s narrative, it is evident that absence of social capital in the field created a burden of prolonged waiting for the reply. Moreover, Red Cross was not the only volunteering organization where dealing with applications from future volunteers takes a long time, which in turn demotivates volunteers-to-be. In addition to this, Diana admitted that, even though she went through official training at Red Cross and she regularly volunteers there for a bit more than two years, she never got any reply for her initial e-mail and she would have never become a volunteer at Red Cross if not the friend who eventually acquainted her with one of active Red Cross volunteers. Consequently, even in the field of volunteering, which implies engagement into “freely chosen activities” (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014) and which is thought to have no barriers to enter, social capital plays an important role and allows lowering the field entrance barriers.
On the personal account, author’s own entrance to Red Cross was characterized by the same problems as were described in Diana’s narrative – while I already had extensive volunteering experience in the past, I was lacking one in Finland, thus possessed no social capital in the field. Moreover, collecting data for research assumed official contacting of organization’s management. As data collection was planned to start with ethnographic observations, I firstly filled in all the necessary forms on the organization’s web page. However, after not receiving any reply in two weeks, I started sending e-mails to the Red Cross’s Helsinki Office – after three e-mails and another three weeks of waiting I finally succeeded and got an invitation to the Head Office for the meeting. However, imagining myself in the shoes of regular volunteer, rather than the researcher, I would have been fairly disappointed with the length it takes to receive a reply and would have likely experienced lower levels of motivation to help out.

4.1.2. Within the field experience

Once volunteers officially enter the field and start regularly perform helping activities, they engage in the endless process of sharing and acquiring – primarily social capital in the form of connections as well as, to the lesser extent, cultural capital in a form of knowledge and skills. At the very first stages (e.g. on average first till the third event) volunteers go through the process of adaptation, which involves learning about certain rules and practices adopted within the Red Cross.

Adaptation: “Hierarchy” and Organizational clash

Multicultural events organized at Red Cross vary a lot depending on the season, particular activities and number of people attending. At every event, volunteers divide into certain groups, where usually at least two volunteers are responsible for preparing event scene (e.g. going to the café and preparing food and drinks) and others are responsible for meeting the event participants at a certain pre-agreed place. As a rule, volunteers who are engaged in event scene preparation are considered to be more knowledgeable and mature, while new volunteers typically start with meeting event participants. Such “hierarchy” is not only admitted by volunteers but also recognized and appreciated by event participants:

*Field notes (second meeting): The guy comes to the meeting... I haven’t seen him the last time, but it seems like he’s regular at the meetings, since everyone knows him. He brought few friends and started introducing them to Julia. She later tells...*
me that it’s like a ritual, if you’re introduced to the main volunteer, you’re free to join the meetings on your own and you’re free to bring friends. I ask further whether it is necessary since events are promoted as free to everyone. Julia further explains that it’s not a rule, and everybody indeed would be welcomed.

Interestingly enough, such division between volunteers into “leaders” and “newcomers” create certain obstacles in event organization and sometimes hinders group’s ability to function in the absence of a leader.

Julia: So, you actually have to try to build it in a way that if one person just quits, the work will still continue... for example, when Mari started coming to the events regularly I just gave her the admin rights on Facebook and said: ”Go and do it”. And that’s the hardest part, people are not necessarily comfortable with that...not everyone is, comfortable to just start doing that on their own and take the responsibility. So, it’s a big work if you try to engage others. So, at those times [when new volunteers join] I feel like it’s much easier to organize the events just by myself...

In her narrative, Julia points out the reluctance of or lack of desire from certain volunteers (especially newcomers) to actively take on the leader’s responsibilities and try themselves in coming up with ideas for, organizing and managing upcoming events. Those issues pose an additional burden on the leaders since they are responsible for integration and teaching of new volunteers as well as for managing the group. Consequently, the increased amount of responsibilities is acting as a demotivating factor for group leaders.

However, as was previously noted, the division between leaders and newcomers quickly fades away once volunteers become regular (e.g. attend the meetings for at least three times) and are expressing a willingness to take on more responsibilities. The same time span is needed to get acquainted with all volunteers within the certain group as well as to become “recognizable by event participants”. Noteworthy, at the very first stages of volunteering, individuals are more welcomed to their own groups – during the times when Red Cross organizes certain big events, they seek cooperation from other volunteer organizations, thus it is relatively common to meet up with volunteers who do not belong to Red Cross or even those who do not belong to any organizations. Consequently, apart from division into “mature-immature” volunteers, the division exists among organizations. If new volunteer represents the same organization, he or she is welcomed immediately, practical tips are shared, if the organization is different, that would be the
first issue emphasized:

*Field notes (5th meeting): During the event, one of the Swedish volunteers asked me why I decided to join tonight and I briefly introduced myself and mentioned that I conduct the research and study volunteers at Red Cross. She looked at me a bit offended and told that she is not from Red Cross, she’s from Swedish Women Group. Apparently, volunteers get really attached to the community they represent.*

Consequently, during the adaptation process new volunteers are primarily building connections with more mature volunteers from their own organization, in an attempt to gain knowledge about internal processes adopted within the group. At the later stage, communication is developing with the rest of in-group volunteers. Finally, as the last stage of “adaptation”, volunteers start socializing with the rest of the volunteers (e.g. ones from other organizations). In the broader perspective, this resembles the behavior of consumers within the particular brand communities, when e.g. practical tips and related brand knowledge are shared within the community members (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009). Contrary to brand communities’ practices, with the pace of time, the organization person volunteers for looses its meaning, thus volunteers start easily building connections with everyone, regardless of organizational membership.

**Rules/no rules paradox**

Once the connections with other volunteers are established, individuals start grasping the “rules of behavior” related to the interactions with the event participants. At this point, the very nature of volunteering, as well as the nature of activities related to event organization, illuminates the ways of how volunteers perceive the rules. In a broader sense, volunteering relies on the logic of division between those who provide help and those to whom this help is addressed. However, particularly in event organization, the “receiver of help” is not that much evident as in other forms of volunteering that involve more apparent social class dispositions (e.g. feeding the poor) (Mulder et al, 2015). Since majority of volunteers, especially in the very beginning, are commonly trying to enact the model of “helper-receiver”, some of them become engaged into rules/no rules paradox – even though as volunteers they are supposed to help, in order to successfully fulfill the purpose of the group (bring together locals and internationals and help the latter to deal with cultural shock), volunteers are supposed to perceive event participants as friends:

*Julia: And that’s actually the real purpose of our group. Just to hang out, so that it wouldn’t be like that division... US organizing something for THEM. It’s just us going somewhere and inviting them along...But still, it doesn’t always work. Like*
you’ve seen that many times in the events. People are coming and volunteers are staying in the row and talk, or they go to the kitchen and hang out there. And the idea is that “no!” You have to sit down, take your coffee, take your food and hang out, and talk, and relax and enjoy. If you wouldn’t enjoy it, why would they enjoy it? We’re supposed to enjoy it together and have a conversation. So what often happens is that many of the volunteers disappear to the kitchen and start serving others. Which is perfectly fine, but the idea is not “you serving them, it’s us, serving each other”. So it should be them going with you to the kitchen, or them making you the tea, so the rules wouldn’t be that strict so to say. Or there would be no rules...If to think about that, it’s not even a volunteering in a traditional way like “now I will help you”, it’s more or less the role is to get to know everyone, answer the questions, and be just a friend.

The absence of the traditional volunteering role of being a helper is further reinforced by the perceived easiness of volunteer tasks, which in turn sometimes leads to the situations where volunteers do not see the point of “just drinking coffee” and withdraw from regular volunteering. Due to the fact that tasks are mundane and ordinary, it is relatively hard to fill the impact during the first couple of meetings. Contrary to extraordinary experiences related to volunteering, where individuals typically learn new skills in completely new environments, which are drastically different from everyday life (Ulusoy, 2016), volunteering at event organization closely resembles hangouts with friends, which are relatively common for the majority of people to plan and engage into:

Sanna: It’s also very disappointing for many people, cause they are so eager to help, they want to do something concrete but actually it’s just about drinking coffee with them. And spending time with them. And some volunteers who are coming, they feel like no, I wanna do something big, I really wanna make an impact. And it’s hard to make people understand that that’s how you make an impact. It’s by sitting next to them, drinking coffee with them, having a conversation, just being a human to another human person.

Volunteers who stay in event organization despite above-mentioned perceptions of easiness are able to define themselves within the community and adapt to certain rules, which contributes to the increased awareness of being a true and recognized volunteer. Drawing from the personal example acquired during ethnographic observations, this awareness came after the organization of 5 events. After that point in time, hang out with event participants started feeling like family
gathering – thus, not only I as a volunteer started feeling myself completely comfortable taking on the responsibilities, but also to share my experience and knowledge with newcomers. In addition to this, I finally was able to perform my role with confidence. During the few first events, volunteers normally experience moments when they feel lost, especially when it comes to communication with event participants and building of trust. Majority of them are internationals with relatively distinct backgrounds, thus it takes time and effort from a newcomer volunteer to learn how to build a conversation without the risk of accidentally offending someone (e.g. due to the differences in cultural beliefs or certain unspoken norms of behavior adopted in different countries). Noteworthy, since I have organized meetings in more than one group, the feeling of being comfortable with volunteering experience came earlier for me than for other regulars, who usually arrange events once in a week, rather than 3 times a week as I did. From their narratives, it is evident that feeling of being an accepted volunteer within the community became apparent after first 2 months.

As soon as the adaptation stage is over, volunteers actively engage in rather mundane activities that, however, allow acquisition of social and cultural capitals. This fact, in turn, impacts volunteers’ perceptions of own lives and contributes to subsequent changes in consumption practices.

4.2. Changes triggered by volunteering experience

As was previously mentioned, factors that were reported to trigger changes in consumer behavior after the performance of volunteer services in previous studies as, for instance, skills acquisition (Ulusoy, 2016) or evident social class dispositions (Mulder et al., 2015) are either absent or not sufficiently present to facilitate change in the context of mundane volunteering. Thus, the main resource volunteers repeatedly report as being responsible for contributing to changes in the ways volunteers see their own lives, in previously stable attitudes and consumption practices – is the acquisition of social and cultural capitals.

4.2.1. Changes in views about own lives

Since volunteering in organization of multicultural events provides increased number of opportunities to get acquainted and build connections with people who possess cultural background of significant difference from volunteers themselves, both establishments of those
connections as well as knowledge acquired through connections provide endless opportunities for volunteers to self-reflect on the ways they see themselves and their own lives.

Mari: [At first] it was really challenging because I’ve realized that when you say I’m not a racist, those are just words. It is totally different from when you suddenly go there and see so many people from different cultures and ethnicities. It was a really big challenge for me. When you realize you’re not better than them. They’re so educated people, there are multicultural families with children sometimes coming to the meetings and those children usually speak at least 3-4 languages and you realize it might be more than you actually speak and they’re just children and you’re an adult. I like how it helped me to realize that there is no difference between me and them. There is no difference between humans at all. We are all the same and there is nothing, which makes me superior. And I kinda tested myself with those volunteering experiences, being able to communicate and be friends with people from a different culture different background, different religions.

For Mari, the experience of being a volunteer in organization of multicultural events uncovered previously hidden clash between her perception of self as being “not racist” and the actual stereotypes which prevailed once she had a chance to actually experience the situation. Hence, this particular narrative illustrates how seemingly mundane experience of volunteering still holds the traces of “something drastically different” and how in consumption of volunteering individual can learn about oneself and others around. The example of Mari is one of many reported, where volunteers acquired a new piece of knowledge about self throughout the volunteering experience. In this vein, Janne admitted that participation in Red Cross’s helping groups taught him to be more patient towards people, whose life views were different from his own, were conflicting or “seemed stupid” to him. Moreover, as he was gaining more the experience in the field, Janne learned to “look deeper” and fully understood how important it is to take into account one’s background before making judgments. To continue with, Mikko managed to build a true friendship with event participant from Iraq – someone, with whom he thought to have no common interests or even topics to discuss.

Volunteers actively exploit opportunities to build connections with people from different backgrounds and once they become comfortable with “finding a common ground for connections”, the division between “us” and “them” blurs out. This, in turn, allows volunteers not
only to recognize and alter certain aspects of self (e.g. case of Mari), character (Janne) or fulfill the goal of “building a true friendship” (Mikko) but also to grasp new knowledge and educate themselves about problems that exist in different countries and societies and were previously unnoticed:

*Julia: If you haven’t traveled you might not know that somewhere out there schools are not free and healthcare is not for free. And you start to realize. So in that manner volunteering in multicultural events really helps you to understand it without even travelling.*

In Julia’s understanding, volunteering in organization of multicultural events provides identical opportunities for acquiring new knowledge as traveling to long-haul destinations (Ourahmoune, 2016). In that sense, even though such mundane volunteering experience does not allow to personally spot social class dispositions, those activities allow broadening the understanding of how others live and how that life might be totally different from everyday routine of volunteers. For Julia, this understanding reinforced the feeling of “being lucky and privileged”:

*Julia: Volunteering definitely has an impact on the way you see the world. It makes you realize how lucky you are. So, you don’t take anything for granted. You understand that there is a very thin line between why you have a job and somebody doesn’t, why you’re healthy and somebody else is not, why somebody is a drug addict and you’re not. Those roles might change really quickly.*

Moreover, increased awareness of “being lucky and privileged” arises from just meeting the event participants who lack stability in life. Even though majority of internationals, who come to the events, do not require financial help and are able to provide themselves, most of them are changing from stable and secure life in the home countries to unstable and uncertain future in a foreign country. Thus, their unstable position within society resonates with stable positions of volunteers, which causes the latter to give more appreciation towards their own lives as well as certain things in their lives, both material and immaterial. For instance, after visiting the apartment of the event participant with whom she became close friends, Diana felt extremely fortunate to be able to enjoy her own bright and spacious home, even though before engagement into volunteering she used to call it “rather small” and was constantly complaining about it to her friends. Anna, on the other hand, was repeatedly recalling in her narrative how getting to known recently moved internationals triggered feelings of gratefulness for what she has but sometimes underappreciate – financial stability and beloved family.
Consequently, experiences volunteers go through during performance of helping activities force them to re-evaluate own life and, by enabling comparison between selves and others, trigger increased feelings of appreciation of one’s life, possessions and people around.

4.2.2. Change in previously stable attitudes and consumption practices

The increased level of appreciation of what one has, as well as increased level of being grateful combined together, act as a catalyst for changing previously unquestioned practices volunteers engage into on the regular basis. For instance, in her narrative of volunteering experience, Anna mentioned a notable change in her attitude towards lending money to friends or distant others. During one of the events organized by Red Cross a new international girl shared the story of recent financial struggle and asked for 50 euros loan from Red Cross to pay for moving services:

Anna: You know Red Cross cannot just give money to a particular person...so I didn’t really know what to do and I explained it to her and I told that I’m a student and I cannot pay myself. And I’m usually always like that for the money asking, I mean even with friends. And if I say yes...even if I use some of group’s budget that we receive from Red Cross for that, then some others might ask as well...you know it’s a really shitty situation. And I was thinking, 50 euros, it’s a big money for me cause I’m a student but actually later I’ve realized that I’m lying to myself, it’s not that big money. Because actually when I was thinking like how many times in at least past two months I have been eating out in a restaurant or going for a coffee to a nice place and drinking. So, I called her and gave her 50 euros. And I was thinking even if she goes and spends it all for shopping or something else, ok, go for it girl (laughing). I don’t mind!

Anna’s narrative serves as a perfect example of how experience in the field of volunteering caused a re-evaluation of one’s status within the society. Previously, Anna was reluctant to lend money even to close friends, since she perceived herself as a student who does not have a stable job and thus, is not capable of landing. However, after volunteering, it became obvious that she already has a lot and landing money to someone who is in need, is what she is perfectly capable of doing. Hence, Anna underwent a change in perception of self – from a typical student to a generous helper.

From the standpoint of consumption practices, enhanced appreciation of own possessions facilitated feelings of being more conscious of what one consumes and in what quantities. The major shift in
this respect is connected to the reduction of overconsumption – throughout the process of being more and more engaged in volunteering, informants were reporting increased number of occasions when before purchasing certain item they had to question the necessity of purchase – something that was relatively rarely happening before they have started volunteering. For instance, Anna described herself, as someone who used to be “keen on fashion and was shopping like crazy”, whereas nowadays she shops way less frequently and mostly at the flea markets in attempt to “buy things that have been already used and do not contribute to overconsumption” and sincerely cannot understand her previous “reckless behavior” in terms of shopping for clothes.

Similar issues are evident in the narrative of Diana, her observations about how others live in less comfortable conditions than she does and how others appreciate their possessions, made her rethink her own consumption practices related to shopping for clothing and made her regret about how wasteful she once was.

_Diana: I used to shop according to what is the latest trends and I used to be so crazy about buying jackets, different colors and different seasons and I think I had more jackets that the average person would have over lifetime... But now when I’m been volunteering, I became more conscious about what I buy. I remember how I was complaining like “Oh, I need a new jacket”, and my jacket was like still brand new, but I needed new jacket, for example, cause the color was out of fashion or something. Now it sounds crazy. What the hell was I thinking then?_

The above-described shifts in the perception of own consumption practices closely resemble shifts observed among volunteers who performed helping activities in the rural areas located far from volunteers’ homes (Mulder et al., 2015; Ulusoy, 2016). Notably, in cases when volunteers go abroad to help out in poor communities the changes in views of own lives and subsequent changes in previously stable attitudes and consumption practices are attributed to the extraordinary nature of experiences – drastically different environment facilitate reflections upon own lives (Arnould and Price, 1993; Ulusoy, 2016). Contrary to this, event organization in Red Cross does not involve traveling or change of habitual environment. However, the repeated and regular entrance to the field of volunteering illuminated by building of connections to others results in self-reflection and subsequent behavioral shifts. This closely matches the findings from research of consumer transformations through traveling to long-haul destinations, where repeated entrance to the field was found to be crucial in changing behavior over time (Ourahmoune, 2016).
Noteworthy, not all shifts in consumption practices are arising solely from building connections with international event participants. As was previously mentioned, on average volunteers who regularly perform helping services are sharing a set of common values and are already conscious about certain issues. Prolonged engagement into field assumes building of relatively close relationships with other volunteers – through regular meetings and discussions of everyday life issues the cultural capital is spread and shared within the organization. Volunteers share their personal views, narrate about previous helping experiences and simultaneously educate each other about various issues. In this vein, Julia recalled how her fellow volunteer in the Red Cross is working in the company, which produces fabrics from sustainable materials. For Julia, the trust developed through regular engagement into certain tasks allowed viewing another volunteer as a credible source of information about sustainable consumption as well as a valid role model to follow – Julia follows the advice and clothing purchase practices adopted by the volunteer colleague. Acquired knowledge reinforced her desire to learn more about the issue at hand and facilitated the inclusion of more sustainable options into list of regular purchases. She currently became more aware of the positive impact of sustainable consumption and admits looking for “greener” products in food and clothing stores.

Clothing options overall represent an interesting topic for discussion among volunteers. Shifts in perceptions of fashion, luxury and shopping for clothing as such are reinforced not only by the increased appreciation of possessions or new knowledge gained from others but also by the stereotypes that volunteers consciously or unconsciously choose to follow during performance of helping activities. Majority of interviewees admit that they have spent an extended amount of time on choosing clothes for their first event organization experiences due to the fear of “looking way too fancy for a volunteer” (Sanna). For instance, for Mikko, the main points of concern were “to look overdressed” or to “stand out” among other volunteers, since volunteering for him represents stereotypical field were everyone in the position of helper should choose “plain or less colorful” options.

Mikko: In the beginning, I was really nervous cause I thought that I could be overdressed, so I thought I should wear something plainer or less colorful...But I guess I wasn’t standing out, so it all went well. With time I eventually started wearing that kind of clothes to work.

Such stereotypical attitude towards clothing is indeed not surprising and was widely discussed in the previous research – both volunteers and non-volunteers typical imagine a person in the position of helper as someone who wears “old-fashioned”, “typically grey cardigans” and overall
have “plain-looking hair, shoes, and clothes” (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014). Even though majority of volunteers honestly admits there are no specific “dressing rules” adopted within the field and no one ever felt judged by others, they still prefer to be on the “safe side” when it comes to dressing up for volunteering. As it is evident from the narrative of Mikko, conscious choice of plain and comfortable over fashionable and colorful became so natural with time that it eventually transformed into his everyday clothing choice, since his other regular activities (e.g. work) did not require particular dress code. In addition to this, some volunteers explained their clothing choices through emphasizing the issue of multiculturalism – for instance, Mari and Diana admit taking an extreme care about clothing options to be worn at events, since “something that seems normal to you might be too short or inappropriate for others”. Hence, plain and simple clothing options are in a way essential for volunteers – you have to make sure that the way you dress would not hinder your ability to perform volunteer functions and would not act as a barrier for communication (e.g. if an event participant of different religious views would consider your style too revealing).

Drawing on the personal experience acquired during ethnographic observations I assume that transition in consumption of “plain” clothes from something to be used for volunteering only to something that volunteers eventually incorporate into everyday style requires significant amount of time. At first, my own attempts to dress up according to stereotypical “unspoken” rules were facilitated by issues of multiculturalism and the desire to be accepted within the group:

**Field notes (1st week of observations):** Every single time I’m coming to volunteer I genuinely feel overdressed. Everyone is wearing something rather plain and not colorful: black, navy, beige, grey. Plain sweaters and jeans, sneakers and shoes, no color spots whatsoever. I also wear pretty regular jeans and black sweater but somehow still feel not that comfortable, I feel like I stand out...

**(2nd week):** Today I’m wearing even plainer jeans and grey sweater but the feeling doesn’t go away, so I’m paying particular attention to who is wearing what...I guess I finally know what makes me stand out! Purse, jacket, and jewelry – none of those in my case is expensive or luxurious but no one wears any jewelry and everyone is coming to the meetings with backpacks.

**(2nd week):** Today I came prepared, old jeans, grey sweater, no jewelry and backpack instead of purse. This is not helping much, Anna came in sports clothes and running shoes, Diana is wearing “No racism” oversized t-shirt. However, I at least do not stand out that much anymore.
However, as soon as I finally “learned” the dressing rules, it became relatively natural for me to dress in similar “plain style” firstly during the event days, later during the weekdays. Hence, supposedly, volunteers how are engaged in helping out for a prolonged amount of time indeed unconsciously incorporate particular clothing style in their everyday routine. Moreover, from the ethnographic observations, it is evident that “getting used to volunteer-related way of dressing” additionally resulted in altered perceptions of fashionable and luxurious items among informants. As volunteers consciously restrict themselves from displaying fashionable items during performance of volunteering activities, they start to cherish those items more and perceive them as being more luxurious than they actually are from the outsider’s perspective:

(Field notes – casual meeting over coffee with Julia to plan upcoming event)

Julia: Oh come on, people always think that since you’re a volunteer you shouldn’t have luxury and nice things. Look at me, I don’t care. I can bring my nice bag when I go volunteering. I have that luxurious Louis Vuitton bag and some accessories (pointing at her ring and earrings).

From my personal perspective her ring and earrings did not stand out at all, I haven’t even noticed them unless she pointed out. The bag, even though she explicitly described it as luxurious Louis Vuitton bag, did not seem so luxurious. By just walking on the streets one can see dozen of similar purses. However, from Julia’s perspective, those items were indeed luxurious. Therefore, volunteer-related stereotypes, multicultural nature of events and repeated entrance to the field with time contributes to the changes in the ways volunteers dress, purchase clothes as well as perceive luxury. Consequently, experience volunteers acquire during performance of helping activities is illuminated by three crucial factors (1) acquisition of social capital through building connections with event participants as well as other volunteers (2) acquisition of cultural capital in terms of knowledge about previously unknown or unnoticed societal problems and (3) stereotypical view of volunteers as an ultimate helpers who unlike many others should not possess or at least display luxurious items. Those three building blocks of volunteering experience reinforce staged changes through the process of self-reflection. At first, the stable ways of thinking about one’s life are challenged by acquisition of social and cultural capitals. Later, generated knowledge about various societal problems as well as increased appreciation of one’s possessions forces volunteers to question their everyday consumption practices. At the final stage, certain practices are changed or altered presumably due to the repeated entrance to the field, which partly influences certain consumer dispositions.
It is extremely important to note, that the length and magnitude of changes in consumer behavior through mundane volunteering experience are highly personal in nature and depends on the primary socialization of volunteers. In this vein, volunteers who have been brought up on the values of “helping those in need” are already conscious about certain problems, thus for them, newly acquired social and cultural capitals do not result in dramatic changes, but rather “bring consciousness to the next level” (Sanna). Thus, some volunteers incorporate changes unto previously stable consumption practices, however those changes do no bring huge changes into their lifestyles. In contrast, volunteers who did not possess any volunteering-related values or connections before engaging into helping experience undergo through much more prominent and critical changes. The potential magnitude of change is evident in the narrative of Janne:

Janne: My family is quite wealthy, my father was always making good money, so... he always seen me in business, as someone who would continue his job and he was in a way preparing me for that role. And I always had that picture in mind how I would be that guy in expensive suit and with expensive watch and cool car... So when I was a teenager I already demanded a good laptop and I wanted the best phone among my friends, I was really materialistic one. And my dad wanted me to get the best business education possible so I moved to England. And then after graduation, I started working in advertising, I was making lots of money... And after I started volunteering it all changed... I started seeing lots of people volunteering and I started educating myself about those different causes. So, I realized the world should be about equality and volunteering is a part of it, it’s a way to make people understand what is truly important in life... I no longer wanna be that person, you know that business guy, I wanna dedicate myself to something bigger, I see myself in volunteering being a simple person.

Janne has been growing up to become a wealthy businessman and during childhood he has been living on a dream of successful job and luxurious life that is free of material problems, however the engagement into volunteering has not only changed his perception of luxury and consumption but also forced him to completely re-think own sense of self – from dreaming about a high-status goods and respect, he switched to completely opposite, to viewing himself as a “good citizen” who is fully dedicated to certain cause and live a life that is distant from worrying about material. Hence, Janne’s narrative serves as a perfect example of how prolonged engaged into mundane experience can still contribute to the changes, which were previously evident only after engagement into extraordinary activities.
4.3. (Re) negotiation of consumption practices

Active acquisition of social and cultural capitals within the field of mundane volunteering forces individuals to question their regular consumption practices. As was previously illustrated, majority of volunteers are trying to reduce the levels of consumption. However, while changes into some consumption practices are incorporated relatively easily, volunteers are usually reluctant to alter the consumption practices connected to favorite activities and hobbies. In this section I present three strategies that volunteers use in order to overcome the internal conflict between increased level of consciousness with respect to various causes and performance of beloved activities in the marketplace.

4.3.1. Compromising

Increased awareness, as well as newly acquired knowledge about sustainability, ethical consumption or consequences of overconsumption, result in the increased desires among volunteers to (re) negotiate their usual behavior in the marketplace. In an attempt to align knowledge and behavior consumers often rely on compromises – while cutting on consumption in one sphere, they leave another one unaffected or only slightly affected.

For instance, from Diana’s perspective, her previous obsession with shopping (and especially shopping for jackets) is under control now, since she allows herself buying clothes only when she has an absolute need to do so. On the top of that, she developed certain shopping rules: “high-quality expensive clothes for items that are meant to last and second hand for more frequently purchased items”. Thus, she does not refuse to purchase luxury items, but rather do it selectively and with caution. This serves as a prominent example of finding a balance between previous attitudes to shopping as to something that “makes me feel good” and increased awareness of overconsumption problems that originated from volunteering experience.

Moreover, Diana admits becoming more judgmental about previously unquestioned activities – before the regular engagement into mundane volunteering she had a habit of going out with friends every Friday night and “testing food” in luxurious restaurants. After two years of active volunteering, she admitted doubting the value of those going out events. In an attempt to align self-proclaimed principle “I consume with purpose” with other regular consumption practices, she started repeatedly raising the question of whether it is sensible to “throw money away to go to those restaurants”. With time she resolved the tension by reducing the frequency of restaurant visits as well as by looking for cheaper options and “not so fancy places”. Therefore, Diana’s example
illustrates how one can compromise within one particular sphere (shopping for clothes or entertainment) by just altering the ways certain activities are performed.

A somewhat similar strategy was used by Sanna. Her prolonged engagement into volunteering made her renegotiate the usual way of traveling – instead of staying in the expensive hotels for the whole vacation period, she started combining it with less expensive options as staying in hostels or even spending nights on the beach in the sleeping bag. With time those combination options became so routine that she started cutting on comfort further in order to be able to engage into favorite hobby activities, since keeping both seemed like “too much”. The following narrative illustrates how in Sanna’s perception, pleasure, fun and positive emotions derived from the experience of skydiving in Honduras over-weighted inconveniences of staying in the cheap hostel surrounded by insects:

Sanna: Once we were in Honduras and I wanted to try skydiving and it was not in our plans... We initially wanted to stay in a nice hotel but I’m fond of diving and this was something that I really wanted, so I decided to try it anyway. But I couldn’t allow myself to do both, so to stay in a luxury place and to go try skydiving. So we first found that really really cheap place…and it had a cold shower and it still had sand on the bed and spiders and ants, everything (laughing). So once we found it I went to skydiving.

Noteworthy, even those both Diana and Sanna used compromises, there are still different. While Diana was altering the ways of performing activities in one sphere (e.g. still purchasing luxuries but only in case of particular items), Sanna was balancing consumption between two different spheres (hobby and comfort traveling). One way or another, both examples perfectly illustrate (re)negotiation strategy of compromising adopted by volunteers.

4.3.2. Distancing from conflict

In case of Anna, the tension between “being a volunteer” and allowing herself consumption of certain goods and activities was so robust that she has altered almost all previously beloved hobbies in order to resolve it. In this vein, from being a serious sports hobbyist who regularly attended gym, yoga and dancing classes she switched to being a “serious runner” cause compared to regular visits to gym “this is relatively cheap hobby”. Even though she still practices yoga, she now prefers to do this at home and watch video lessons rather than pay for the classes. Once all usual hobbies where altered, the tension still remained between “being a serious runner” and
newly incorporated practice of “shopping less or spending on clothing less”. Such tension forced Anna to distance herself from the conflict by delegating the decisions to purchase items related to professional running activities to her fiancé:

Anna: I don’t allow myself to over consume anymore and to buy expensive stuff. Like even my usual hobbies do not require much money anymore...

Interviewer: Quality running shoes can be really expensive.

Anna: Well yeah, but that’s the only thing that should be expensive. And I can see the point like if run a lot you have to make sure you have appropriate shoes cause you should take care of your legs. But I’m still in a way…like I don’t really buy them myself. I still don’t know what part of the money I actually pay for the health and comfort of my legs and what for the brand, so usually my fiancé buys them, not me, so I don’t have to think about that.

Doubts about the necessity to spend money on something that is not rationally justified guide Anna’s choice to distance from the purchase decision. Even though she still consumes the high-quality running shoes, she perceives them more as a gift that conveys caring feelings of her fiancé.

Overall, if in volunteers’ perception the experience and feelings they derive from performance of certain activities are not significantly affected by alteration, compromising is observed to be a reliable strategy to manage the tension between increased consciousness and previously habitual patterns of indulgent or excessive consumption. On the other hand, in situations when alterations are hardly possible, consumers might distance themselves from the purchasing decision. Obviously, not all consumers are having an opportunity to delegate purchasing decisions to someone else, thus it frequently results in the reluctance to incorporate any changes into consumption practices. This issue is further discussed in the following sub-section.

4.3.3. Justification

Even though volunteers acquire new knowledge and increased awareness about various causes during performance of volunteering activities, those factors do not necessarily result in changed consumption practices. In those cases, volunteers come up with various excuses in an attempt to justify consumption practices that do not align with the experience of volunteering in the eyes of interviewees themselves or the eyes of society.
One of the justifications that are regularly exploited by volunteers is an argument that certain experiences result in reduced level of satisfaction or pleasure in case they are altered or rejected. For Janne, his engagement into volunteering and desire to be a “good citizen” who values immaterial over material in a way contradict with his somewhat excessive and costly going out habits. However, the compromising strategies he can use (e.g. stay at home and drink beer bought in the store) would definitely result in absence of possibilities to make new connections. For him, value from going out activities is particularly derived from the ability to meet new friends, thus compromising strategies transforms the experience of going out into “drinking alone”, which doesn’t fit Janne’s desires.

A similar logic of justification is evident in the narrative of Julia – for her, traveling is the most cherished and beloved activity available, so while consuming traveling experience, she tries to enrich it by incorporating wide range of luxuries: 5-star hotels, eating in expensive restaurants, etc. In her perception, she works “hard enough” to afford it, thus compromising on traveling experience would decrease its value, especially cause certain things are available only abroad and not in Finland (e.g. having an outside swimming pool):

*Julia: When I went to Hong Kong to volunteer, I wanted to have a place of my own and when I went to Mexico to volunteer I wanted to have a swimming pool and people were like: “Oh, you can’t have it! You’re a volunteer”. And I think you know, I’m going to the nice place and I want to have nice things there. Come on, I worked pretty hard and I’m going to the warm country. I could never have for example a swimming pool anywhere else, like here. It’s always cold. Of course, I wanna have it. But people think if you’re helping others you can’t have nice things for yourself.*

One more important issue is evident in Julia’s narrative – she raises a previously discussed topic of stereotypes that usually surround volunteering experience. In the large part of the society, volunteers are perceived as being “too good” (Ho & O’Donohoe, 2014) and as someone who is almost obliged to voluntarily refuse from any luxurious or simply pleasant consumption practices. For Julia, desire to have own place with a pool while performing volunteering activities abroad does not seem to be contradicting with her volunteering activities, since she claims that travelling is the most beloved and enjoyable activity for her and it has been always associated with opportunities to indulge oneself and “get the most out of it”. Consequently, in Julia’s perception, even though she volunteers, she still should allow herself luxuries of traveling, regardless of how it looks in the eyes of society, simply because its her favorite hobby.
Surprisingly, in cases when volunteers do not feel like compromising on certain consumption activities, they frequently justify it by volunteering itself. Due to the fact that they regularly give away lots of cultural capital in terms of knowledge and skills as well as economic capital in terms of time, they feel like they deserve certain indulgence. In this vein, majority of interviewees repeatedly used justifications as “I’m a volunteer, I’m already giving away so much that I deserve it”. This notion was previously recognized in the research of Hyo-Jin and Dong-Mo (2015) – people who have been engaged in helping activities or pro-social behavior use it to reduce the level of guilt during purchases of luxury items. Thus, volunteers frequently allow themselves to enjoy favorite activities and play on the feelings of “doing good” as on the mean to overcome the conflict between stereotypical “too good” volunteer and person that spend money simply to indulge oneself.

In the similar vein, some volunteers admit that even though they are aware of certain issues or problems, they are reluctant to (re) negotiate particular consumption practices due to the lack of time – volunteering takes majority of their free hours. For instance, despite the fact that Sanna acknowledges the rise in her consciousness about sustainable consumption after she started volunteering, the very fact that she spends increased amount of time on performance of helping activities justifies why she doesn’t incorporate principles of sustainable consumption into her regular shopping practices:

*Sanna: Now I need a new jacket and I went to the second-hand store and I didn’t find it from there. So I probably would go to the regular store and look there. Because there you can clearly see what they have and what not, it’s fast, they have different sizes and then I can get it fast. So sometimes the convenience goes over sustainability... Sometimes I’d love to buy something second hand, cause there are already so much clothes and I guess on average we over-consume, so obviously, clothes should be reused. But I just don’t have that much time, I’m doing so much volunteering that I cannot spend 3 hours looking for one jacket.*

In Sanna’s case, volunteering activities in the Red Cross require lots of time. Thus she cannot fully commit to the reduction of overconsumption (e.g. by purchasing clothes in second-hand stores) since it is a time-consuming process. However, in her understanding, the increased level of consciousness is already a major step to start incorporating sustainable consumption practices, thus there is no burning conflict between knowledge and practice – when and if the time or opportunity comes, she would definitely shop second-hand.
Finally, in order to justify spending sufficient amount of money on certain activities volunteers commonly rely on comparing themselves to others. For instance, apart from being a regular volunteer, Mikko is a serious cyclist. Although he found himself consuming more ethically after becoming a regular volunteer when it comes to cycling, he justifies ownership of three different bicycles by comparing himself to people who own cars instead of bicycles:

_Mikko: Cycling is of course not free and if you’re serious about that and wanna have good stuff, it obviously cost money. But it’s not like buying and maintaining cars or boats or sailing, it’s still cycling, it’s less expensive. Sometimes, of course, I think that maybe owning three bicycles is a bit too much but I use them all and it’s still a bicycle after all. For most people, the car is the first and the bicycle is second. For me, it’s just bicycle. And cars are obviously not sustainable if you compare them to bicycles. So it’s not just my hobby, it’s also good for my health and environment._

In this respect, Mikko portrays himself as a person who cares about environment and own health, whereas the people who own cars are presented as individuals who do not think much about environmental consequences. This notion partly resembles the research of Ho and O’Donohoe (2014) where volunteers, during discussions of consumption practices that not necessarily align with their volunteering identities, were extensively relying on comparisons to non-volunteers. Moreover, through being a volunteer at Red Cross Mikko managed to become friends with another “serious cyclist” volunteer, who own a bicycle repair shop in Helsinki. Due to the existence of friendship, Mikko admits enjoying discounts there. This issue serves for him as an additional justification for owning three bicycles – even though there are three of them, repair and maintenance costs are still low, so money is saved to support good causes. Overall, it is evident that although volunteers incorporate changes into their regular consumption practices as a result of increased awareness about various causes, those changes do not necessarily spill over to all spheres of life. Volunteers are usually reluctant to alter consumption practices related to favorite activities and hobbies; consequently, those are usually remaining unchanged.

4.4. Further consequences of regular engagement into volunteering

Prolonged engagement into mundane volunteering might result not only in subsequent changes in consumption practices. In this section, I present the changes that occur to volunteers with respect to (1) higher level of participation in other volunteering and charity activities (2) education of others about the sensibility of altered consumption practices and (3) judgment towards profligate spending of close and distant others.
4.4.1. Participation in other helping activities

Once the performance of helping activities becomes habitual to volunteers, they start actively seeking for other volunteering opportunities. In certain cases volunteers perform a wider array of responsibilities within the organization (e.g. simultaneous volunteering in several helping groups), sometimes they even express desires to go volunteer abroad. For Diana, acquiring an experience of a regular volunteer triggered the concrete desire to try volunteering abroad, since the helping out felt much easier than she was previously expecting. Thus, she now plans to graduate from the university, get a job to be able to save up for the trip and then travel to Africa to volunteer for a year or two. This notion echoes the findings from Ulusoy (2016), where students after engagement into voluntourism experiences as well were expressing desires to continue volunteering by performing activities that require sharing a significant amount of capital and traveling to long-haul destinations. However, example of Diana is rather exceptional, other volunteers reported increased participation in formal and informal helping and donating activities.

Noteworthy, with the pace of time, experience of being a volunteer becomes so natural and integral to one’s behavior that volunteers start helping others around them outside of the regular field (Red Cross), just due to the fact that they have “seen an opportunity to do so and could not miss it”.

_Sanna: On Saturday, at the Shopping Centre there were two guys who were asking whether people want to buy something and they were taking that directly to the place for refugees. So, I bought shampoo and soap. And I wasn’t even going to supermarket, I was going to check out some sunglasses (laughing), they are next door. So I actually didn’t have any need to go to the supermarket, but I still went just to buy few things to help out._

Hence, it is evident that prolonged engagement into volunteering might increase one’s propensity towards helping out – those consumers are becoming extremely responsive towards opportunities to help, even in cases when it changes the initially planned consumption activities (e.g. spending time to unplanned trip to the supermarket instead of shopping for sunglasses).

On the top of that, some volunteers go beyond the borders of particular organizations and simply create the opportunities to help others by themselves – as a result, participation in both formal and informal helping out is evident. In the letter case, volunteers actively exploit social capital, which they acquired throughout the helping experience. For instance Mikko shared the experience of
organizing a photo exhibition, which was meant to raise money for charity – obviously he had to pay a certain amount of money by himself, however majority of organization-related costs equaled zero, since he managed to get free help or huge discounts from art-related friends, who he initially met through Red Cross. Noteworthy, willingness of volunteers to help out more forces them to exploit not only volunteer-related connections but also connections from other fields (e.g. work). In this respect, Julia recalled, how she recently saw the news about lack of hats for cancer-fighting patients in the hospitals and immediately decided to suggest helping out with the issue to her work colleagues who are keen on knitting – together they have knitted and sent dozens of hats to the hospitals.

Interestingly enough, if volunteers have been already performing certain helping activities before active engagement Red Cross, the increased awareness about various causes acquired within the field results in doubts about whether their previous help was actually reaching the people in need. In order to make sure that donation of money/clothes or other items is indeed reliable, they reportedly change previously adopted helping behavior. For instance, due to the recent rumors about unreliable practices in certain ‘give away groups’ or used clothes collection organizations, both Sanna and Julia decided to change previously adopted helping behavior with respect to donation of unnecessary clothing items – in this vein, instead of dropping clothes to recycling points, nowadays Sanna simply takes the clothes directly to people in need, while Julia prefers to sell unnecessary items to charity shops, which on one hand resolves the issues of reliability and, on the other, support certain good causes. Hence, volunteers not only engage in the increased number of helping activities but also cautiously evaluate them and adopt new practices in order to make sure their help is actually reaching the needy ones.

Consequently, volunteers are actively using their own connections (including both those acquired through volunteering and those outside volunteering) in order to satisfy the increased desire to help out more. From the standpoint of volunteering as an experiential consumption practice (Wymer and Samu, 2002), with the pace of time volunteers become so accustomed to performing helping activities that they are seen as a part of unquestionable everyday routine. Moreover, if for some reasons volunteers are unable to organize the meeting at certain week (e.g. due to illness or increased workload), they commonly experience the feelings of “missing something” and try to contribute more during further events or to help out in other ways. Drawing on the experience acquired during ethnographic observations, I can note that temporary or permanent withdrawal from helping activities facilitates the feelings of guilt, which further drives the engagement into other volunteering or donation activities in an attempt to reduce its level.
4.4.2. Education of others

As volunteers actively work on resolving the conflict between increased awareness about various causes and regular consumption behavior by altering certain practices, this effect spills over to individuals into their close circles – family and friends. Once volunteers (re) negotiate own behaviors they start actively educate others about sensibility of change by sharing cultural and social capitals with them. Even though all informants admitted that they do not “push” family members or friends to volunteer, they sometimes engage in arguments about sensibility of particular consumption practices.

For instance, through engagement into volunteering experience, Anna went through rather radical change, from a person who purchases and consumes clothes in large quantities to someone who shops on flea markets and carefully evaluates the necessity of buying a particular item. Apart from that, she is also trying to integrate the same approach to shopping into consumption practices of her fiancé:

Anna: I’m trying to make my fiancé think the same way, like to consume a bit less or at least not to over-consume. Like recently we got invited to our friend’s wedding, and since I didn’t have any dresses at all, I went to the store to buy one and my fiancé also needed a new suit. So, I chose two dresses and I was like “Honey, which one?” and he’s as always “Take both”. And I was like “No, it’s either or, never both, I don’t need both, choose one” (laughing). So, now with some time, I see how he’s also changing like he went through his closet and gave away all unnecessary stuff and he also shops much less. I’m really proud of him.

Thus, engagement into helping activities evidently changes not only the consumption practices of volunteers but also partly spills over the consumption practices of their close ones, through the means of educating and sharing newly acquired cultural capital. Interestingly enough, volunteers admit engaging in arguments only about the most important issues for them, while being more forgiving about issues that volunteers themselves haven’t yet completely integrated into their consumption practices. For instance, Sanna, who has recently switched from luxurious holidays to combination of latter with independent backpacking, admits being more understanding if her husband asks to increase the number of “luxurious” days due to recent hard workload or not opposing complete switch to previously adopted practice of travelling if they are on a trip with friends.
4.4.3. Judgment of distant others

Even though volunteers seem rather forgiving when it comes to the family members and close friends, they tend to express judgmental claims towards their acquaintances or even distant others, especially when it comes to cases of evident profligate spending:

Anna: I see lots of people, young people nowadays with designer bags…I’m just hoping that it’s a phase and they’ll soon stop wasting money on that bullshit. For me it’s…for example, someone buys a really expensive car and they explain this purchase with weird reasons. Something like “You know I drive quite a lot” or “It’s nice” or “I deserve that”. And usually I say to those people “Ok, this is, for example, Audi, why did you have to buy Audi? Why haven’t you bought KIA for example? It’s cheaper, maybe not that luxurious but it’s the same car”. Ok, I have this one friend, she owns like hundreds of designer things, like bags and clothes and shoes. From my perspective, I won’t be able to even…you know…her bags are so expensive that I don’t even know how could she ever use it outside. Like someone may accidentally damage it and she paid a ridiculous price for that. I don’t agree with that lifestyle and she knows that but what I appreciate is that she’s honest. She tells straight away “I love those bags, those are super expensive, I’m really selfish”… But I cannot understand people who buy expensive cars and are like: “No, no, no, I bought it not a status thing, it just drives good”.

From Anna’s perspective, the issue at hand is not the profligate spending itself, but rather the reasoning behind that spending. When people are purchasing and consuming expensive goods out of the desire to show off, this is a valid reason in her understanding, as long as it is admitted. When people consume certain good in order to show off but rather justify it by other reasons (e.g. it looks nice), this dishonest reasoning drives Anna’s judgment. It is important to note, that this judgment might be also caused by the evident clash between regular consumption practices adopted in various social cycles. As a volunteer, Anna regularly helps out and acquires connections with people who share similar values and thus, also perceive luxury as rather an act of philanthropic giving than profligate spending (Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Consequently, while interactions happen outside of habitual cycle of volunteers, consumption of luxurious items for status showing becomes more prominent. The shift in perception of luxury acts as a decisive issue in dividing people into “us” and “them”, where “us” are volunteers who learn to indulge themselves by helping others and “them” are careless individuals who spend money on expensive
items and cannot even honestly admit the real reason for consumption of certain good.

As this division becomes more prominent in the minds of volunteers, it becomes incorporated into ways how volunteers see society and volunteers within that society. For instance, in Anna’s and Diana’s understanding, people like them, volunteers, are consciously choosing to live less material lifestyles, while others (“people who are keen on making money” - Anna) are stupid and lost. This example of division into “them” and “us” is admittedly way too judgmental, however, this level of judgment may be partly explained by the fact that both Anna and Diana went through a radical change in terms of both attitudes towards and practices of excessive consumption. They portray themselves as a “good people” who managed to commit oneself to volunteering and changed in order to increase the level of personal contribution to the society, while those who are actively engaged in consumption of status items and money-making are rather “lost dupes” who cannot even imagine that for someone material possessions do not necessarily bring happiness, until it’s too late.

In addition to this, Anna and Diana have been regularly volunteering at Red Cross for 3 years and 2 years respectively. This time span was enough for them to undergo through change in perceptions of luxury and overconsumption, but might be not yet enough to reduce the level of judgment towards “others”. Interviewees who have been engaged in volunteering for sufficiently long periods of time (e.g. Julia – 8 years, Janne – 7 years, Mikko – 10 years) also recall going through times of increased judgment towards “others”, especially those who do not share volunteering values. However, with time this judgment fades, since volunteers learn to “look deeper”:

*Julia: Through volunteering, you start understanding why some people ended up being volunteers and why some spend a lot and don’t even think about helping. They simply might have not the same background as you had. And the answer is not to judge them right away or to say to them “You’re an idiot, stop buying this unnecessary shit”. You have to teach them, share your knowledge and experience, give them support and network. It’s really hard for people to change when they don’t have support or network. Obviously you cannot oblige people to go and volunteer. And obviously, not everyone would change; some people still wouldn’t change their habits. But I guess what we should do is not to judge others, but to involve them. The more people you involve, the more impact we would have...everyone who can, should give money and who are passionate about doing the work should do the work. And the rest – just filling some gaps. Not everybody has to do something big, but if everybody would do something even little the world would be a much better place.*
Consequently, even though an evident tension exists between volunteers and non-volunteers, it seems to resolve with time. As volunteers acquire more experience within the field and learn to build connections with people from completely different backgrounds and life views, this knowledge mediates the tensions. As a result, with a pace of time, volunteers perceive society as not divided into “people like us” and “money makers”, but rather “people like us” and those who need our guidance and support to understand the true value of being a volunteer as well as its impact on society.

4.5. Summary

The Figure 1 below summarizes the process through which prolonged engagement in mundane volunteering affects consumer dispositions and regular consumption practices. Once volunteers enter the field and start experiencing it on the regular basis, they actively engage in the processes of capital acquisition through building connections to both other volunteers and event participants. Moreover, widely accepted stereotypes related to the performance of helping activities forces volunteers to adopt certain rules of behavior within the field (e.g. dress code). Consequently, both acquisition of various forms of capital and stereotypes trigger the process of self-reflection.

Although mundane volunteering does not provide opportunities to spot evident social class dispositions, it still allows comparisons with event participants, which are considered to be in less stable positions than volunteers themselves. Thus, volunteers report feeling higher level of appreciation for one’s life and possessions. As volunteers regularly perform helping activities, repeated entrances to the field cause them to continuously self-reflect upon own lives. Newly acquired knowledge about various causes as well as increased level of appreciation forces regular volunteers to question their dispositions and habitual consumption practices. In the presence of increased tension, consumption practices are (re)negotiated by implying certain strategies: (1) compromising - volunteers reduce or change the consumption in certain spheres (2) distancing – volunteers delegate the purchasing-related decisions to someone else (3) justification – volunteers are reluctant to change their beloved consumption practices and come up with various excuses to hinder the conflict between their volunteering experience and desires for “excessive” activities. The magnitude of the volunteering-related changes is highly dependent on the primary socialization. In cases when volunteers have been brought up on values of “helping others in need”, consumer dispositions are not sufficiently altered, thus volunteers become just more
conscious about certain issues. However, if primary socialization differs a lot from typical volunteer-related values, changes are much more prominent. Finally, people who are regularly engaged in helping activities usually report sharing new knowledge with close others (e.g. family members and friends) and encouraging them to incorporate changes into regular consumption practices as well.

Regular engagement into volunteering assumes spending a large amount of time among people with similar values. Consequently, once volunteers enter other social cycles, the difference in consumption practices become more prominent, which forces them to judge others (non-volunteers) and their “excessive” levels of consumption. The judgment of distant others is evident among volunteers who themselves have undergone through relatively radical changes in terms of consumption. However, with further engagement, volunteering teaches helpers to react less judgmentally and rather educate others about sensibility of certain practices.
Figure 1. Process of change through experience of mundane volunteering

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

(1) Changes in views about own life

(2) Questioning of previously stable attitudes and practices

(3) Renegotiation of consumption practices

(4) Sharing of cultural capital with close others

(5) Education of distant others

(6) Judgement of distant others

Compromising Distancing Justification

Societal level

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months

Values

Social Capital

Volunteering
Stereotypes

Acquisition of
social capital

Acquisition of
cultural capital

Field of volunteering

Primary Socialization

Self- reflection

Strategies

1-2 years

3-5 years

4-6 months
Discussion

This research aimed to discover how regular engagement into helping activities contributes to the changes in consumption practices among volunteers. The precise focus was shifted towards two major questions (1) what aspects of volunteering experience contribute to the changes in consumption practices and (2) how consumption practices are renegotiated in the presence of volunteering experience. Previous research in the area of volunteering and changes in consumer behavior was related to extraordinary experiences, while this study purposefully dealt with mundane volunteering experience. In this chapter, I elaborate further on the above-mentioned questions by discussing findings of the research. Later, I present implications of the study along with its limitations and recommendations for the future research.

To begin with, my research highlights the importance of primary socialization as of the tool that might predispose consumers to enter the field of volunteering and simultaneously help to reduce entrance barriers. Previous research on volunteering has commonly classified motives for engagement in volunteering activities into altruistic and egoistic (Laverie and McDonald, 2007), even though no relationship has been found between particular type of motive and length of engagement (Veludo-De-Oliveira, Pallister and Foxall, 2015). Current research supports this notion – volunteers are participating in helping activities due to various reasons (both altruistic and egoistic) and regardless, all of them have been regularly volunteering for a relatively long period of time. Instead, findings suggest that commitment and length of involvement into helping activities might depend on the primary socialization. In this respect, volunteers at the Red Cross repeatedly admitted growing up on the values of helping out that were inculcated by either parents or friends, hence volunteering has always been an integral and natural part of their lives. Moreover, commonly consumers are ought to possess certain levels of cultural, social and more importantly economic capitals in order to engage in certain activities. In this vein, it is tempting to present volunteering as a barrier-free field, which does not require particular knowledge or skills due to its deliberately chosen nature. However, entrance to the volunteering field (at least in case of Red Cross) appears to be much easier and faster for consumers who have been brought up on the values of being helpful. This issue predisposed them towards the acquisition of informal volunteering experience along with volunteer-related connections, which in turn allows quicker entrance and adaptation within the field. On the contrary, volunteers who have been primary socialized in non-volunteer circles usually lack volunteer-related social capital and thus find it harder to enter the field, which may result in temporal lack of motivation to perform helping activities.
Transformational consumer research has been traditionally conducted in the contexts of extraordinary experiences, where consumers face environments that are “drastically different” from everyday life (Ulusoy, 2016) and where they are provided with “opportunities for personal growth and development through obstacle overcoming and acquisition of new skills” (Arnould and Price, 1993). In addition to this, traveling context has been always fruitful for transformational research, since evident social class dispositions are also proven to contribute to self-reflection and change processes (Ourahmoune, 2016). Hence, logically, mundane experiences in comparison to extraordinary hold relatively limited if any potential for triggering changes in consumer behavior. On the contrary, my research highlights several aspects that are evident in the rather mundane experience of volunteering and, if combined together, nevertheless contribute to the changes in consumer behavior – acquisition of social and cultural capitals as well as volunteer-related stereotypes.

Once volunteers enter the field, they simultaneously become a part of the community; this fact encourages individuals to acquire social capital. At the beginning, it is easier to build connections with other volunteers, since they usually share a similar set of values (Belk, 2010). In a broader sense, volunteers in a certain organization behave similarly to brand community members, thus they are sharing tips and advice as well as recommend ways of behaviors to newcomers (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009). Acquisition of social capital, in turn, provides opportunities to obtain new knowledge and skills (cultural capital). Knowledge is typically acquired from both fellow volunteers and receivers of help. The latter share information about problems in other countries, while former actively recall previous and current volunteer-related experiences or awareness with respect to certain causes. Finally, volunteers to some extent develop skills – in the particular sphere of event organization, interpersonal or communication skills are enhanced, thus volunteers become more knowledgeable about how to facilitate conversations with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Consequently, if compared to extraordinary experiences, mundane volunteering does not provide opportunities for personal growth or for development of completely new skills (Lindberg and Østergaard; 2015), but rather brings awareness to the higher level and enhance certain abilities. Another aspect that is reportedly responsible for triggering behavioral changes – social class dispositions (Mulder et al., 2015; Ourahmoune, 2016) – is not sufficiently present in the field of mundane volunteering. Help receivers and givers do not differ much in social standings, however former are considered to be in less stable life positions – this observation causes the feelings of appreciation of own life, family and possessions among regular volunteers.
Furthermore, my research uncovers another aspect of volunteering experience that is crucial in driving behavioral changes – volunteer-related stereotypes. During the adaptation stage within the field volunteers consciously or unconsciously follow the stereotypical representation of a helper (e.g. in a way of dressing) in an attempt to fit into the community. Later, once the volunteering activities become habitual enough, stereotypes are further imposed by society – in the eyes of public individuals who perform helping activities should not consume or at least show the expensive or luxurious possessions (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014). In this vein, the comfort of “simple and plain clothing” along with the reluctance to explain own profligate spending results in a notion, where volunteers start questioning the sensibility of owning expensive or luxurious things. Consequently, three aspects – acquisition of new connections, increased awareness about certain causes (gain of new knowledge) as well as the enactment of volunteer-related stereotypes – facilitate the process of self-reflection. Throughout the process, volunteers start questioning the sensibility of previously stable practices, experience changes in attitudes towards own life and behavior and seek for ways to renegotiate own consumption.

Moreover, the process of self-reflection volunteers go through is relatively lengthy and requires sufficient amount of time – it is not linear, but rather circular, thus the repeated regular entrance to the field is what reinforces the process’s circularity. In reference to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, the process of change in the contexts of both extraordinary and mundane experiences seems to undergo almost identically – presence of new experience, new knowledge, and new skills re-structure one’s habitus and adds up to changes in consumer dispositions (Drumwright and Kamal, 2016). However, time is crucial in case of mundane experience – it is required to (1) get enough experience to trigger self-reflection and (2) transfer acquired experience into new patterns of marketplace behavior (Holt, 1998; Ourahmoune; 2016). Hence, the regular, repeated entrance to the field where certain mundane experience is available, in a way substitutes extraordinariness of “drastically different” experience. Instead of entering the field once and acquiring life-changing experience, volunteers come repeatedly and by accumulating “bits and pieces” gain identical opportunities for self-reflection and subsequent changes in consumption practices.

In the previous research of volunteering connected to extraordinary experiences, volunteers were expressing the shift in consumption that corresponded to enacted helping activities. For instance, those individuals who were constructing feeding center in the area with no reliable access to clean water, expressed shifts toward voluntary simplicity (Mulder et al., 2015), while those who have been engaged in environmental protection, reported switching to responsible consumption
(Ulusoy, 2016). In contrast to the previous examples, activities performed by volunteers in this research were relatively neutral and did not belong to a particular good cause. Hence, they expressed undergoing through a variety of different changes, connected to both attitudes and consumption; however all of them lay in the array of “being good” – increased level of money and clothing donations, shifts towards more sustainable consumption (of both food and non-food products), reduction of overconsumption, etc. From the broader perspective it is evident that mundane volunteering experience has not converted individuals into radical voluntary simplifiers, but predisposed towards focusing on “needs rather than wants” (Ballantine and Creery, 2010).

Moreover, in line with the previous research, volunteers expressed shifts in perception of luxury – hence luxury for them is not connected to profligate spending, but is seen as an act of igniting giving (Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Interestingly enough, regular volunteers not only learn to indulge themselves by giving but also, due to the imposed stereotypes that volunteers are not supposed to display luxurious possessions during the enactment of helping activities, perceive previously owned items as more luxurious than they are in reality. It is extremely important to note, that changes regular volunteers go through are staged, time-consuming and highly dependent on individual’s primary socialization. If a volunteer has been growing up on the values of helping out and being socially responsible, the magnitude of change is relatively small – he or she is already partly aware of the sensibility of certain practices and usually just engage in them further to the deeper extent. However, if one’s primary socialization was not related to volunteering, individuals undergo through much more prominent and even radical changes. This notion brings to light the importance of primary socialization in the process of individual change through volunteering experience.

Research revealed three main strategies that consumers exploit in an attempt to renegotiate their previously stable consumption practices, due to increased awareness about a certain problem or changed attitudes – (1) compromising, (2) distancing and (3) justification. Compromising strategy is one of the most used ones, and consumers actively apply it to renegotiate consumption in one or more spheres. In this vein, if used in one sphere (e.g. clothing), consumers come up with the rules of purchasing, by prioritizing certain purchasing options over others – for instance, they continue purchasing expensive shoes but stockpile on t-shirts in second hands. If compromising strategy refers to several spheres (e.g. clothing and entertainment), consumers might cut activities in one or another and balance between several options until the feeling of being a rational consumer is achieved. In cases when consumers actively renegotiate their consumption but still are unable to
refuse purchasing certain goods, distancing strategy is employed. In this respect, consumers delegate the purchasing decision to someone else in order to avoid possible concerns about its sensibility. Hence, distancing occurs only at the purchasing stage, consumption, in this case, is unaffected. Finally, consumers frequently express reluctance to change or avoid certain beloved marketplace activities even if they are admittedly costly or unsustainable. In an attempt to justify particular types of consumption volunteers come up with various excuses that can be narrowed down to two major types: (1) activity would bring less pleasure if changed and (2) activity is way too important to one’s self to alter or avoid. Moreover, in accordance with the previous research, volunteers frequently exploit their helping activities as a mean to justify an expensive purchase (Hyo-Jin and Dong-Mo, 2015). Consequently, volunteering plays a dual role in the process of renegotiation of consumption practices – it simultaneously acts as a catalyst that drives behavioral changes and as a mechanism to reduce guilt over the purchase of luxury items or even as justification for those purchases.

Ulusoy (2016), in his study of voluntourism, observed that students expressed desires to try themselves in other types of volunteering activities after completion of a particularly extraordinary type of helping out. My research supports this notion – majority of regular volunteers, once feeling comfortable within the field are willing to expand their scope of responsibilities further within the particular organization or, even, outside organizational boundaries. In this vein, further engagement into volunteering activities might be compared to Belk’s (2010) “sharing in” and “sharing out” concepts. As volunteers regularly participate in helping activities, they establish strong connections, friendships and even sometimes treat fellow volunteers and event participants as their extended family. Consequently, when volunteers start performing helping activities outside of the organization, they engage in “sharing out”. Moreover, since sharing becomes extremely habitual and natural to volunteers with the course of time, it unconsciously drives individuals to “grab” helping opportunities when possible or even create ones. Overall, in line with the previous research, engagement in one type of volunteering activities triggers desires to try out other helping possibilities, regardless of whether the initial experience was extraordinary or mundane in nature. Noteworthy, contrary to previously observed stereotypes that volunteers are typically “obsessive” with helping activities (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014), my research highlights that regular volunteers not just blindly engage in further helping out, but rather consciously evaluate every occurring opportunity and even incorporate changes into previously stable ways of helping if there is a possible threat that their efforts might not reach those who are in need.
Changes volunteers go through during the engagement into mundane helping activities are not restricted to just individual level. Once volunteers acquire new knowledge and start actively re-working own consumption, they are also trying to incorporate certain practices to the familial level. In this vein, volunteers willingly share knowledge and tips related to the reduction of overconsumption, sustainable consumption, and other issues. From the broader standpoint, volunteers readily educate close others (family members and friends) about the sensibility of certain practices, which, in turn, facilitates their adaptation within broader social cycles.

Notably, volunteers are commonly rather forgiving if their family members or friends are reluctant to share similar views on consumption or deny incorporating certain practices as regular to their households. On the contrary, own changes through the experience of volunteering increase individuals’ judgments towards distant others or, precisely, the postmodern society in which consumption practices are used as means to attain certain status (Holt, 1998), rather than means to help others. On the top of that, the increased amount of time dedicated to helping activities, limits the time spend on the marketplace (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998) – thus, nonmarket activities become more habitual and more meaningful with the pace of time than marketplace ones. Hence, volunteers commonly portray themselves as rational consumers, who managed to combat major culture production systems (e.g. fashion industry – Thompson and Haytko, 1997), which force consumers to purchase particular products and build particular identities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Instead, volunteers find meaning in non-market consumption or consumption in giving. Noteworthy, the increased level of judgment is typical to volunteers who themselves underwent through a radical change during the volunteering experience. Moreover, in line with the previous research (Ulusoy, 2016), in my study volunteers exploit judgment as more of an educational tool – through it they are trying to educate others, rather than “validate” themselves at the expense of others (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014) or engage in impression management (as e.g. moral protagonists - Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010).

Consequently, this research represents how prolonged engagement into rather mundane helping activities provide consumers with opportunities to self-reflect on own lives, renegotiate previously stable practices and, moreover, simultaneously predispose consumers towards becoming more rational and responsible with respect to their consumption. Hence, engagement into volunteering is not regarded as a tool to become a responsible consumer but is rather seen as an intriguing consequence of this engagement.
6.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research provides new insights into the consumers’ volunteering experience and provides new context for the transformational consumer research – this study highlights the possibilities for consumer transformation in the context of mundane rather than extraordinary activities. Furthermore, I contribute to the previous literature on volunteering and consumer behavior by suggesting a novel idea of the relationship between primary socialization and magnitude of subsequent behavioral changes. The study also emphasizes the role of primary socialization in the predisposition of individuals towards engagement into helping activities as well as its ability to lower field entrance barriers. In addition, research offers a detailed description of the change process that covers not only changes in attitudes but also illustrates particular strategies exploited for renegotiation of concrete consumption practices. Finally, the study provides novel insights into how mundane experience of volunteering results in changes beyond the individual level.

This research brings to light important issues with respect to demotivation practices within the non-profit organizations that can be taken into account by managers. For instance, volunteers-to-be commonly feel reluctant to offer help if their initial inquiries do not receive fast replies. Hence, non-profit organizations can easily recruit new eager helpers if more efficient ways of communication with future volunteers are adopted. Apart from that, in order to ensure the prolonged engagement into the activities, managers of non-profit organizations might benefit from matching the volunteer’s needs with particular tasks – careful and clear communication with newcomers is profound in identifying whether an individual strives to take a traditional helper role (e.g. caretaker) or rather assist in more mundane manner (as in event organization).

Even though the study was conducted in the non-market context of volunteering, it still offers several practical implications for marketers. Since regular volunteers actively renegotiate their consumption practices in an attempt to become more rational and responsible consumers, they are increasingly attentive to more sustainable product options and thus, are becoming a perfect target group for new products and/or services in the category of sustainability. Hence, marketers can readily use regular volunteers from various organizations as specific brand ambassadors. Furthermore, since volunteering organizations serve as a platform for sharing knowledge and information about particular practices, responsible brands, etc., if a certain product is used by one particular volunteer, the information about it would be likely shared among other volunteers within the organization.
6.2. Limitations

Data collection for the study was conducted using qualitative research methods and interpreted narratives of volunteers, to be precise. Hence, findings of the research cannot be as such applied to another context, and present only the concrete experiences of volunteers in the particular organization, which represents a relatively common limitation in interpretivism (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Moreover, the interpretations of the collected data were guided by researcher’s own pre-understanding, experience and behavior – thus, if the data would be interpreted by another person, especially the one with no previous volunteering background, the results could have been relatively different (Spiggle, 1994). Finally, as was mentioned in the methodology chapter, narrative perspective for research is better suited to longitudinal studies, thus, if the original purpose of the research would be different, more data could have been collected, which in turn could influence final interpretations (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Informants for this study were purposefully selected in a way that they represent a particular activity group, which is related to mundane volunteering experience – event organization. Organization of event in Red Cross closely resembles regular hangouts with friends and hence was considered to lay in the array of mundane, rather than extraordinary experiences. Moreover, it does not demand special skills or knowledge from helpers. Other volunteer-related tasks in Red Cross allow engaging into both mundane and extraordinary activities and require various skill levels. Hence, if research would be conducted in different groups, the process, time required and scope of changes would definitely differ. In this vein, it is safe to suggest that changes would occur faster, given volunteers engage in slightly more extraordinary experience (e.g. working with refugees) or slower, in case of even more mundane activity (e.g. collection of donations).

Finally, this research was conducted in Finland, where society favors volunteering and more than 43% of the Finnish working-age population report that they are engaged in formal volunteering (OECD, 2016). Previous research on the relationship between volunteering and cultural background (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009) discovered that attitudes towards volunteering significantly differ with respect to cultural groups. Consequently, research findings might vary sufficiently compared to other countries, especially in terms of specific volunteer-related stereotypes, which were discovered to be one of the main aspects that contribute to changes in consumption practices.
6.3. Directions for future research

Even though volunteering activities have been extensively studied with respect to possible motives for engagement as well as differences in those motives among various age, gender and social groups, my research suggests that volunteers with various motives (both altruistic and egoistic) are capable of becoming regular and dedicated volunteers. Instead, what might be driving the prolonged engagement is the individual’s primary socialization. Hence, further research is recommended to explore the role of primary socialization in the context of volunteering and, especially, its ability to drive prolonged engagement. Moreover, the study uncovered few problematic issues, related to management of volunteers within the organizations (e.g. demotivation of future volunteering due to the prolonged waiting time for reply or lack of ability to enter organization without particular social capital). Those issues call for further research in the area of non-profit organization’s management.

As was previously mentioned, research has been conducted in Finland, where society overall favors volunteering and additionally, only particular activity groups were studied. This fact limits the study, but at the same time provide opportunities for future research among groups related to more (or less) extraordinary activities than ones studied. On the top of that, due to the cultural differences in perception of volunteering, research in other countries might bring new and interesting insights.

Finally, this study encourages further research on the topic of volunteering within the area of consumer behavior and consumer culture theory (CCT). Therefore, volunteering can be studied on its own, as a specific resource-exchange concept as well as an experiential consumption practice on the basis of which consumers are building certain identities. Besides, since volunteer-relates stereotypes act as an important aspect, which drives behavioral changes, the topic of stereotypes within the field of volunteering can be studied further, taking into account impression management techniques or differences with respect to various age, gender, and social groups.
Conclusions

The empirical part of this research aimed to fill the gap in the current literature on volunteering and transformation of consumer’s behavior. Previous research has explored the changed triggered by engagement in helping activities in the context of extraordinary experiences. Instead, my research revealed that prolonged engagement into volunteering leads to subsequent behavioral changes even if the scope of performed activities is connected to mundane rather than extraordinary experiences.

Prolonged engagement into mundane helping activities provides volunteers with opportunities to gain new connections and acquire knowledge about various causes. Hence, such aspects of volunteering experience as the acquisition of new cultural and social capitals, along with conscious or unconscious aspiration to behave in accordance with volunteer-related stereotypes force individuals to engage in the lengthy, circular process of self-reflection about own lives and sensibility of previously adopted consumption practices. Regular entrance to the field of volunteering mediates this process. Due to the mundane nature of performed activities, volunteers undergo through various behavioral changes, which are not related to one particular concept (e.g. sustainability). Nevertheless, all observed changes are related to the notion of being a “rational and responsible consumer”. In addition to this, research revealed that all behavioral changes are individual and time-specific; moreover the magnitude of change is likely dependent on the primary socialization of volunteers. Therefore, primary socialization plays a triple role in the process of change in the context of mundane volunteering; it simultaneously predisposes individuals towards engagement into helping activities, lowers barriers to enter volunteering organizations and mediates change process.

The research illustrated how volunteers renegotiate previously stable consumption practices in the presence of volunteering experience by exploiting three main strategies – compromising, distancing and justification. Justification strategy is mainly used in cases when volunteers are reluctant to change consumption practices even in cases when they are evidently excessive or costly. Volunteering experience plays a dual role in renegotiation process, it simultaneously acts as a catalyst that drives behavioral changes and as a mechanism to reduce guilt over the purchase of luxury items or even as justification for those purchases. Finally, in this research volunteering experience has been discovered to contribute to changes beyond the individual level. Thus, volunteers not only change own consumption practices but also educate family members and friends about their sensibility, which facilitates adaptation in broader social circles.
References


Online sources:


