The Influence of Support Motivation on Identity Motives – A Case Study of a

Community Building Project in Groningen

Greetje Scheller

S3927245

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis

Supervisors: Dr. Yasin Koc

Second evaluator: Ayca Aksu

February 3rd, 2023

Abstract

Poverty is an ongoing problem with underlying negative consequences for the people affected by it. Many organizations have dedicated themselves to tackle the issue. Understanding the function of organizations can help improve the life of people affected by it. We focused on the non-profit organization Stadjers Hand in Hand (SHH) in Groningen. They link a volunteer called coach with a person affected by poverty and in need of help, called client. We investigated how benevolent and activist support motivation of SHH impacted the identity motives of the dyadic sample of coach and client. We conducted semi-structured interviews with coaches and clients of the organization and analyzed them using thematic analysis. We found the following four themes: *Need for Stability, a Structured Lifestyle, Autonomous Perspectives on the Future,* and *Motivation to Volunteer*. The findings suggest that both benevolent and activist support is necessary for social change and that identity motives are enhanced through pro-social behavior. We demonstrated that SHH steps in by helping the client regain a structured lifestyle through an equality, autonomy, and individual focused approach. Our findings can be used to improve the integration of policies by other organizations, local governments, and SHH.

The Influence of Support Motivation on Identity Motives – A Case Study of a

Community Building Project in Groningen

Helping comes in many forms and sizes and is key to keeping a group together. It implies caretaking of people that might be temporarily or chronically unable to do so themselves (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Thus, there is no surprise that research has covered large aspects of pro-social behavior reaching from individual to intergroup level and from underlying motivations to consequences (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Especially global tragedies, catastrophic events, ongoing suffering, or the disadvantage of people in developing countries often require wide needs of assistance (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). One pressing topic that has received extensive attention from people is poverty.

When considering poverty in absolute terms, it refers to the absence of means of survival. People are risking their daily lives due to their inability to feed or clothe themselves properly (NG, 2010). According to the World Bank, in 2019, 648 million people lived below the $2.15 per day poverty line (World Bank, 2019). In wealthy countries, poverty is less defined in absolute but rather in relative terms. This implies reflecting on social survival and quality of life, including social participation, empowerment, or citizenship. (Reuter et al., 2009). We can see that poverty can be an essential determent to a decrease in well-being. The perception of social and financial standing can lead to a discrepancy between one's identity perceived through others, and the identity one perceives of oneself. The discrepancy migh also be associated with stigma, which might result in tensions in interactions with others. Stigma is a key component of social exclusion, which might be a determined of negative health impacts (Reuter et al., 2009). Furthermore, social exclusion impacts the consumption and activity that in sum also define social participation and national identity (NG, 2010). Therefore, understanding the connection between the perceived identities of people affected by poverty is essential to help improve their situations.

In the Netherlands, where this study was conducted, 13.4% of the population lived at the national poverty line in 2019 (World Bank, 2019). Focusing on Groningen, 16.6% of households lived at the social minimum in 2020 (Swing Viewer Gronometer, 2022). This implies for a single person 58.22 Euro/day and for married people 80.74 Euro/day as a social minimum income in 2022 (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen, 2022). Thus, the Netherlands, as a well-developed system of social security and health insurance, still struggles with the existence of poverty in the country (de Vos & Garner, 1991). Therefore, it is especially interesting to study factors that underlie the maintenance of poverty in order to reduce its overall effects.

In Groningen, an example of ways to deal with the poverty situation is the non-profit organization named Stadjers Hand in Hand (SHH). Their aim is to help empower people and to help them regain their autonomy in order to improve their quality of life through social participation. Their work consists of linking a volunteer, called a coach, with a client, who is someone living in poverty in need of help. The dyadic relationship is supervised by the project leader, who founded the community-building project in 2016. One positive aspect of such projects on the individual can be the perception of an altered sense of identity (NG, 2010).

In this project, we hope to understand the work of SHH by putting it in the context of different approaches to helping as proposed by Thomas and McGarty, (2017), which differentiated between benevolent and activist helping motivation. We then would like to see how their helping motivation has impacted the outcome of the project. We especially want to define the elements of the client´s identity that improved, leading them to a heightened sense of identity and thus also to improved well-being. Furthermore, not only focusing on the client, we like to study how the work of SHH has impacted the coach as well by emphasizing the dyadic relationship. We focus on elements, also called identity motives, that have been

demonstrated in the literature (Vignoles, 2011) to be essential for one´s identity, namely

belongingness, distinctiveness, continuity, meaning, self-esteem, and efficacy.

Different Motivations to Help Others: Benevolent versus Activist

Many global problems require humanitarian aid for the population and thus the

pressing issue is to motivate individuals to act and get involved. Mostly, philanthropic action

has been seen as an act of charitable generosity to decrease poverty. Generosity in this sense

refers to a "vital element in the building of social capital, community well-being, justice and

peace in the world" (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). A second approach argues that global action

can be seen as an issue of social justice that challenges the system. Here we will differentiate

two forms of generosity, namely benevolent and activist. Both support motivations aim to

challenge the same social problem with different attempting strategies (Thomas & McGarty,

2017). Having introduced benevolent and activist support motivation, it should be noted that

one´s motivation might not always correspond to its effects. For instance, while one might

attempt benevolence as a form of generosity, it might also be able to lead to transformative

and activist effects in the long run. Furthermore, it is also possible for benevolent and activist

support motivation to co-occur, as people are able to express more than one motive. Lastly, it

might also be possible for motivations to change over time, meaning, while one might start by

signing a petition in order to achieve a system change, that person might later also like to act

on a more individual level. Additionally, one's identification and perceived social norms can

be influential for their helping choices (Louis et al., 2019).

On the one hand, benevolent support motivation uses the transfer of money, goods, or

services in order to reduce disadvantages. It takes a more traditional approach as it can be

seen as a synonym of charity or philanthropy. In doing so, benevolent support focuses on

tackling the symptom and the suffering of the individual (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). The

victims in this sense are seen as blameless and as their hardship needs to be repaired.

Characteristics of benevolent support include feelings of sympathy or compassion (Thomas & McGarty, 2017), empathy, and affirmation through friendly and positive contact (Louis et al., 2019). Therefore, people of benevolent generosity seem to be motivated by inner qualities and appear to be receiving internal rewards following completed help-giving. When in contact with outgroup members, it can facilitate that the outgroup becomes included in the self (Louis et al., 2019). Additionally, through these emotional antecedents, one believes that one´s own personal actions can address the situation effectively. Through personal financial resources, people try to treat the outcome of global inequality. Benevolent support focuses on the social cohesion approach. It views conflict as a negative force and thus prefers harmony between groups. According to this form of helping, their strategy focuses on helping particular subgroups out of their disadvantage. This subgroup mobility strategy hence does not achieve social equality for everyone. The focus lies on agents such as privileged and advantaged groups that have the resources to help (Thomas & McGarty, 2017).

On the other hand, activist support motivation blames third parties or governing authorities for the suffering of people, while they attribute blamelessness to the victims. It can come in different forms, such as supportive contact, allyship, or solidarity (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Furthermore, people are characterized by the belief that the most successful way to address the issue is to target the system and by the feeling of moral outrage and anger. Thus, they take action in a sociopolitical way to address the political issue. For the movement of social change to start, conflict is a necessary side effect of the struggle of the disadvantaged. This approach is called social competition (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Both support motivations are essential to improve the situation of people affected by poverty. Benevolent support tends to lift subgroups of individuals though, without changing the whole structural inequality. Therefore, activist support motivation is required for sustainable change

in the deep-grounded structural inequality of the system we live in (Thomas & McGarty, 2017).

In regards to SHH, both benevolent and activist motivations can be linked to the organization. In terms of benevolent motivation, SHH works by connecting the coach with a client supporting the individual in order to reduce the effects of poverty. The coaches are motivated by a feeling of sympathy for the individual, as they appraise blamelessness to the clients for their situation. Furthermore, the coaches are mostly coming from an advantaged group themselves, and therefore possess the resources to enact. However, SHH also shows activist motivation, by working completely without money, direct donations, or giving of material products. Furthermore, through their excellent work, they have caught the attention of government agents that invite regularly to discuss issues with the project leader. Thereby the project aims to challenge the causes of poverty at a larger level too.

The Potential Impact of Support Motivations on Identity Motives

People belong to social groups and they value these group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Feeling committed to the social group that shares one's worldview can act as a link for people to feel effective, complete their goals, and to co-act. Thus, social identification might be an important antecedent to both activist and benevolent support motivations (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Identity is defined here as "all aspects of the image of oneself as represented in cognition, emotion, and discourse." (Vignoles, 2011). People construct and reconstruct their set of ideas about themselves actively throughout. The idea is that the construction then is guided by principles that have motivational functions. Such principles are referred to as identity motives. Motives guide processes of identity enactment and definition. Generally, people desire and strive for identities that align with meeting the six motives as defined in Motivated Identity Construction Theory (MICT; Vignoles, 2011). Therefore, people try to satisfy their self-esteem motive, continuity motive, distinctiveness motive, and

their meaning motive to define their identity. Hence, their efficacy motive, and belonging

motive are more relevant to enact an identity. It is assumed that all six are universal, but may

differ in societies by the means of satisfying them (Vignoles, 2011). Next, I will discuss how

these motives could be related to helping motivations.

First, self-esteem refers to the positive or negative attitude towards the self as a totality

(Rosenberg et al., 1995). Research shows that self-esteem also seems to be contributed

through enactment of pro-social behavior (Alfieri, et al., 2022). Second, the distinctiveness

motive argues that individuals have the urge to see themselves as different from others

(Vignoles, 2011). Helping an outgroup could be intended to either restore or maintain one´s

positive ingroup distinctiveness (Tung, 2019). In order to be distinctive one relies on being

included within a relationship network. Therefore, the need to belong and desire for

interpersonal relationships, which are fundamental human needs (Allen et al., 2022), come

hand in hand with the need to be distinctive (Vignoles, 2011). It seems that pro-social acts are

encouraged due to its positive effects on belongingness (Twenge, 2007). Having a meaningful

life refers to the need of finding purpose and significance in one´s existence (Vignoles, 2011).

By acting in pro-social activities, such as volunteering, the sense of meaning might increase

(Klein, 2017). Next, the efficacy motive describes the need to feel competent and in control.

This relates to the identity feature to be able to experience oneself as a subject or an actor that

is able to influence one's environment (Vignoles, 2011). Various studies also have

demonstrated the positive association between efficacy and pro-social tendencies (Cheng et

al., 2020). Lastly, the continuity motive refers to the need of feeling a connection between

one´s past, present, and future identities (Vignoles, 2011). This can be meaningful in terms of

volunteering behavior as research by Nourkova and Gofman (2023) explored that COVID-19

medical volunteers integrated their experience as meaningful and satisfying into their

narrative identity.

Overview and Research Question

Having introduced both support motivation and MICT as separate research domains, we aim on connecting both concepts and fill the research gap. By doing so, we hope to answer what role the (mis-)match of support motivation has on satisfying the identity motives of both the client and the coach. Additionally, we would specifically like to see what role SHH plays in this link. Accordingly, by following a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, we aim on deriving theoretical and practical insights to improve the outcomes of SHH.

Method

Participants and Recruitment

The sample consisted of two coaches and two clients from SHH. The coach, Anne, is linked to the client, Ashley, and Lisbet is the coach to the client, Marit. All the coaches and clients were female. The age range was between 27 and 41 years old. We used the convenient sample and found the participants over the organization. We first got in contact with the coaches who contacted their clients to see about their availability. We used pseudonyms for names of the participants and anonymized the details about them to protect their privacy.

Interview Methodology and Procedure

I conducted semi-structured interviews with both the client and the coach. I interviewed the coach alone at a place of their convenience in English. The clients were interviewed by me, asking questions in English and having their coach present. The interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Afterward, the interviews were transcribed by a third party. The question included various aspects, such as demographic information, views on Stadjers Hand in Hand, volunteering, poverty, and a general view of their human relationships (see Appendix A for the interview questions).

Coaches were contacted and recruited through a text message. I informed them about the study by giving general information. The clients were recruited through their coaches as they have already established a trust foundation. At the beginning of the interview, the coaches and clients were asked to give their consent to participate and to have the interview recorded. After the interview, a debriefing followed. As the sample concerns a sensible group, anonymity is established by using pseudonyms and by excluding any information that could reveal their identity. The audio was deleted after transcription. A document linking the pseudonyms with the actual names and email addresses will be kept for two years in order to ask the participants whether or not they agree with our interpretations. The transcribed data will be kept for five years for research and publication purposes. The study is approved by the Ethics Committee of Psychology at the University of Groningen.

Analysis

I transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using this method, I went through six stages. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reviewing the interviews multiple times. Then, I started generating initial codes by taking notes while going over the interview. Afterward, looking at the codes, I identified themes that I could gather from the comments I made in step two. Applying an inductive approach, I derived themes by detecting patterns from the answers of the interviewees. Later, I reviewed the themes by consulting my supervisor, who commented on them and gave me feedback. Lastly, I defined and named the themes intending to be as close as possible to the data.

Personal Reflection

When conducting research, it is necessary to reflect on one's own position and group belonging in one's own work. Thus, I will individually reflect on the process of this research.

This idea of the research came after finishing a three-month internship at Stadjers Hand in Hand, in which I worked on understanding the coaches' motivation to volunteer for the organization. Even though I tried to keep the experience I had with the organization neutral, what I learned and my assumptions about the issue have probably shaped the design of the research initially, as well as the general approach. Also, knowing some of the coaches and having worked with them might have influenced the interview as well.

Additionally, I am a white, cis-gendered, queer woman from Germany. I have grown up with no financial difficulties. Therefore, I probably hold underlying assumptions and stereotypes about people affected by poverty. This might have influenced me while interviewing and interpreting the data. However, consulting my supervisor and reflecting on my analysis for potential biases throughout makes me confident that it is a strong research project nonetheless.

Results

Both clients have experienced multiple negative consequences of poverty. Specifically, financial worries impacted their life greatly. Withdrawing from social activities or isolation due to perceived stigma were some of the experiences of people affected by poverty. Additionally, mental health problems were also related to the situation of both clients. It impacted their ability to keep a structure, which impacted other aspects of their life negatively. They have been through many sectors of the social support system until they found SHH.

> That's I think that that's something Stadjers Hand in Hand does; giving support to people who don't have the money but also seeing how to help with seeing that we can have money. (Marit)

Marit simply describes how SHH supports people affected by poverty by not only helping them with everyday functions but by also empowering them individually. They show them that their life is not determined by their financial problems and that they too can get out of the circle of poverty. They do so by helping them to regain structure, fulfilling their social

need, and supporting them with administrator tasks increasing their independence. The results show a more autonomous lifestyle, higher self-esteem, and higher ambitions for the future. In the end, we identified four themes: A *Need for Stability, a Structured Lifestyle, Autonomous Perspectives on the Future,* and *Motivation to Volunteer.*

Need for Stability

A low socioeconomic status (SES) is an essential determinant for various negative health outcomes. This is due to the unavailability of necessary resources such as income, wealth, or power in order to first avoid health risks and second to engage in health-promoting strategies. Furthermore, many psychosocial processes, for instance, depleted personal and material resources, increased stress, coping behaviors, and maladaptive forms of emotion regulation, act as mediators (Inglis et al., 2019). People living in poverty oftentimes are in need of stabilizing their life and managing the many stressors affecting it. Therefore, we identify the most pressing ones that have been mentioned during the interviews.

> Sometimes I have a hard time organizing my own life. I'm having ADHD big time. And I see myself procrastinating a lot of administration tasks. Having trouble with overseeing stuff like finances, really, those subjects. (Marit)

Marit describes how her mental health has impacted her ability to maintain a structured lifestyle. Lacking the ability to overview the administrator's workload can have negative consequences in various aspects, for instance, the ability to receive additional benefits from the government, and oversee bills, or meet deadlines. Specifically, she has difficulties keeping an eye on her finances, which can lead to further problems in the future, making it harder to escape the cycle. Having to deal with mental health problems can additionally worsen the situation for people affected by poverty. On the one hand, it is that mental health might impact one chance in life: Hence, individuals might be deprived of necessary social resources, which in turn might impair existing problems even more. On the other hand, poverty might negatively impact one's mental health due to exposure to environmental stressors, for instance (Díaz et al., 2022).

Social exclusion is another aspect that people affected by poverty might have to experience and is an additional determinant of health. A key component that is included in the processes is stigma. People affected by poverty are a stigmatized group and therefore prone to be socially excluded (Reuter et al., 2009).

> So that's also a bit strange because if you if you live in poverty and there's not much money and and your parents don't have that much education. It it doesn't say about the thing about your your brains. But you will get a lower advice then then the child who's living here in Helpman. (Anne)

Anne as a coach, describes how social stigma underlies the inequality of accessible resources. Individuals affected by poverty are evaluated more negatively and, despite the same capacities, believed to be less capable. Therefore, some institutions might deny their services, because it might be seen as a waste of goods. The person is often not seen only as an individual but connected to their social circle and background, such as family and educational history, or urban neighborhood, and thus judged perhaps, if it does not portray the norm of society. Furthermore, Anne also mentions the importance of the urban environment. Helpman, a neighborhood of Groningen, which apparently seems to be seen as better than others in society, which Anne also is a part of. Neighborhood poverty has various social and economic outcomes, such as educational attainment, cognitive advancement, or socio-economic advancement. Moreover, living in such areas has negative consequences for one's quality of life and risks violent victimization (Bolt & van Kempen, 2003). Therefore, living in poor neighborhoods can add up to the negative connotations about oneself through perceived stigma.

Enacted stigma can lead to a negative perception of one's social identity. The feelings of shame then might suggest that the stereotypes have become internalized, which people affected by poverty might have intended to refute initially (Reuter et al., 2009).

> […] in the beginning there was some self-stigmatization because I want to do it myself. […] I think I should be able to do this myself. I'm highly educated. Why can't I do this stuff myself like feeling a bit dumb about us having to ask for help. (Marit)

Marit was ashamed and embarrassed to ask for help when she needed it and tried to convince herself to tackle her issues on her own. By comparing herself with a standard set by herself, asking for help did not fit her construction of who she was. Further, these negative feelings might then lead people to withdraw even more from social situations in order to avoid being judged. Additionally, it suggests that she might as well have internalized the stereotypes associated with people affected by poverty needing help. Therefore, Marit might try to distance herself from the self that was implied by her social identity to increase her self-esteem (Reuter et al., 2009).

> If they (the government) could put out use (the money) to either pay off their debt or eat better, I think it would at least make them feel a little bit more normal. (Ashley)

> Or the its the if you are normal you are crazy enough normality. You have to be as normal as you can be. (Ashley)

Furthermore, by aligning with the thought-dominant cultural belief of what is considered to be normality, Ashley tries to maintain her positive identity. She does not refer to herself when talking about the people receiving benefits from the government. This underlies her attempt to distance herself from her own group that she belongs to. Marginalized groups oftentimes try to gain acceptance to the majority group manage possible negative feelings due to the internalization of negative stereotypes. However, these behaviors retrospectively might have negative health implications as they reduce sources of support and eventually lead to further isolation (Reuter et al., 2009).

> [...] it's horrible to be an adult and have to ask for money. [...] you can't think in the solutions anymore. Because you only see the obstacles that are in the way the things that may cost yourself money [...] (Marit)

For Marit being an adult implies financial stability and, therefore independence as well. If that criterion is not met, it might lead to an increase in stress. She describes how she was not able to step back and stop ruminating about her problems. She might have tried to ignore them or kept being overly engaged,leading them to fire back. (Marguc et al., 2012).

Constant rumination or worrying about money might affect one´s mental health, psychological well-being, and cognitive functioning (de Bruijn & Antonides, 2020). Through the ongoing stress, Marit has trouble being cognitively flexible, which might impair other aspects of her life that she has to deal with, increasing the negative impacts on her life.

When I asked what could be done to improve the situation of people affected by poverty, the notion of community became clear.

> This already being kind to each other or say hi or good morning yeah, and they feel they they already feel seen and and my mind go happy to work or whatever they are doing and just like going to the neighbors. Do something. Ask about the day or if they need any help. Even if it´s smelling the grass or do some vacuum cleaning or cook something together. (Ashley)

Ashley talked about the importance of interpersonal contact. As mentioned earlier, social exclusion can lead to self-isolation in order to cope with the negative feelings associated with it (Reuter et al., 2009). Ashley describes small actions, such as greetings, cooking, or generally spending time together that can make her feeling seen and increases her mood. People affected by poverty often isolate themselves in order to cope with the societal stereotypes and prejudices they have to face on a regular basis. Having cross-group friendships might reduce the avoidance of outgroups, social distance between groups and increases the well-being of the minority group (Bagci et al., 2018, 2022). For minority groups, contact can also be an opportunity to increase integration or assimilation into the dominant culture. An increase in a sense of acceptance, familiarity, and comfort could be an additional effect of contact and further, lead to a desire to strive for more, for instance (Bastian et al., 2012).

A Structured Lifestyle

Having introduced the needs as described by the participants, it becomes clear that the problem of poverty is quite complex and broad. Thus, it is not only fixed by focusing on one factor. SHH is a successful organization helping many people by connecting them with a coach to support them. They create a connection on a personal and trusted basis, through

which the individual receives the help that in turn might lead to the ability to help tackle

multiple struggles at once. We now present what SHH means to the client and how they

support them in their life.

> I think the most important thing is that you're the same the coach and the
> participants. You are on the same base, and there's not something like a boss
> or. You're all the same, you could talk about everything and it's not like I'm I.
> I have to do something if I need something from her or she needs something
> from me, but it's about what she would like, what she wants to tell. (Anne)

First of all, SHH works on an equal base where the mindset is not primarily to provide

a service but is based on altruistic and understanding factors. The coaches like to volunteer

without expecting any external rewards and generally enjoy social interaction. Working on the

same base gives the possibility to the client to connect with the coach on an interpersonal

level. Furthermore, it gives the opportunity to really get to know the client in order to figure

out what it is that they need. There is no hierarchy in which a service is offered that the client

could claim.

> That I don't work following the book. […] And here it´s just what do you
> need? How are we going to do it? Okay come on we are doing it. And you can
> just go from step one to shaking your hand and introduce yourself to the thing
> you actually need instead of step by step by step and a very long process, so
> you're finally there […] (Ashley)

Furthermore, Ashley describes a crucial part of SHH, namely that they use an applied

approach. This means it is not based on a procedure, which might be derived from a

theoretical background, but it is specified to the individual needs. For many people, the

theory-based approaches might be working well. Nonetheless, there might be some individual

differences for which the approach is not working out. Ashley mentions that for her, SHH is

really focused on her individual needs and what she would like to do instead of following

given procedures and seeing what it suggests fits her profile. Big organizations working with

many people often might not have the capacity to specify the needs of every individual, due to

which evidence-based approaches might be helpful in certain situations. SHH is a smaller

organization that makes it possible to keep an overview to ensure that the dyadic relationship between coach and client is working well.

> I will do it myself most of the time. So, it means to kind of helping me with my executive function. (Marit)

A part of the practical approach is that the coaches help the clients with tasks that need additional attention. However, the focus is on helping them to do tasks on their own and help when needed. Furthermore, the coaches help keep an overview of the responsibilities in order to be able to remind the client if they oversee tasks that need to be done. Thus, SHH encourages autonomous working, which enables the client to also focus on other aspects of their lives and to have more room for development. Receiving help with administration tasks and through regular meetings, the client is able to build a routine. Building a routine is helpful for the future, in which the client can perhaps be independently picking up tasks that come up regularly.

Besides helping the clients with everyday tasks in their life, their coach also fulfills another important role. Through their regular close contact, they build a social connection.

> And then we also can talk about the normal things in life, and I think that's also that's also good to do so, not only see the problem but also see the person. (Anne)

The regular meetings are not always only about solving a problem but also encourages positive intergroup contact. If there is nothing to do having a nice conversation and spending some quality time together helps see the client beyond their struggles. The coaches are able to really get to know the person, which is also encouraged through their equalitarian values. For the client on the other hand it would mean that it might decrease their experience of negative evaluations of their identity and perhaps prevents isolation through regular meetings.

Having introduced the various fields that are covered through the work of SHH, Anne summarized it by saying: "With Stadjers Hand in Hand, for me, it's the whole package.". This underlies the complexity of poverty. In the end, it is not one single factor that makes people

poor, and therefore various ways to support people affected by it. SHH covers multiple aspects as shown that all aid the clients in their life.

Autonomous Perspectives on the Future

Having talked about the issues people affected by poverty face and when and how Stadjers Hand in Hand steps in, we now look at the outcome of the organization and its work and try to understand what benefits their approach brings to the client.

> […] It it may, it makes me feel relaxed because sometimes I can still be a little bit harsh on myself. But I've why one day that we see each other and it's like well, if I can't do any everything off my To Do List. It's OK if there's something that that slipped my mind and I can do it with my coach. Yeah, yeah. […] (Ashley)

A strong outcome of the project seems to be that the client can buffer against the fact that she is self-critical. As people often internalize stereotypes of poverty, Ashley seemed to distance herself from that mindset and instead reflects on it in a positive sense. She acknowledges that she has negative thoughts and the urge to be in control. However, through the work with her coach, she is now calmer and does not get stressed about maybe forgetting something. It indicates that she is more confident and trusts her coach.

Furthermore, although she might rely on the help of her coach, already acknowledging and reflecting on what needs to be discussed with her coach, helps improve her life in aspects such as her work.

> When I just came to work there I was like, well, I think I should guide these people, but I'm I might be guided as well because I fit in perfectly and now it's. I start to see that I actually can guide the people and I can pick up assignments by myself and see what needs to be done without anyone telling me so. I can actually not only see what is fronted in front of me, but also the the like bigger picture. (Ashley)

Before Ashley started working with SHH, she could not identify with her position as a social care worker. She still saw herself in the role of needing help and thus was unable to imagine helping others. Now, she is more confident and distant herself from the people she is guiding but instead identifies with the care workers. She is able to work more independently

and pick up work by herself. The success she perceives at work makes her able to brighten her

perspective and look toward what is ahead of her. It underlies that she indeed does not only

worry about the present and her struggles but can look beyond it.

> I am feeling way more at ease. More confident. I have less impostor syndrome
> because I know I will do the things I have to do. […] I do feel again, but I'm
> less emotionally all over the place. Starting to settle down. I've got more time,
> it feels like I have more time. I started the job again, having more money.
> More overseeing the household the things in the house, and everything in my
> life. (Marit)

Marit also describes how she has become calmer and more confident, through which she does

not feel the need to pretend. She is able to acknowledge her capabilities. Furthermore, not

only has she regained some structure in her life in areas such as administration, but it seems

that she also regained some structure mentally. Moreover, the sense of relief from all the

stress might make her perceive that she has more time. That may be due to the fact that she

has to worry less leaving her able to experience everything more clearly. Furthermore, she

was able to pick up a job, which gives her a regular income, and moreover, she has gained a

structure in her life that made her able to have a better overview of her life.

Motivation to Volunteer

Having looked at the outcomes for the client, we now would like to see the perspective

of the coaches. We are interested in their motivations to volunteer and how the work has

impacted them.

> I was thinking about okay, I am like, really lucky and really well. I really have
> it okay; I have a good job and enough money and enough money to feed my
> kids and to give them all they want and more and too much, I think. So, I was
> like I want to do something, like good or something back or whatsoever […]
> (Lisbet)

Lisbet is talking about her fortunate life, which includes financial stability and a job,

and therefore makes her able to take care of her own family. This has led her wanting to

volunteer in order to give back, suggesting it made her think about the less fortunate.

Moreover, she might be implying wanting to do something for others in a way to compensate for not having any struggles.

> It's nice that you can help people, and it's like we also do that in the
> supermarket if someone can gets the bag on the bike or something like that and
> it's also good to learn the children how to be helpful to other people […]
> (Anne)

Anne describes helping as a general norm that should be taught to everyone, especially children. For her doing something good is a positive value that should be implemented as a norm. She describes it in an everyday context to underlie the normality of helping, which suggest it to be also an altruistic value.

Besides, giving something in return for their good life, the coaches also described the work with their clients as enriching.

> […] you have like it is not a friend but a new acquaintance and it's like giving
> you another view on some topics another view of how life is for her or for her
> friends or family whatsoever. So, it's really like enriching to get someone
> else's views and not in my bubble but next to my bubble I think. (Lisbet)

Through the contact, the coaches get perspective outside their social circle. People might tend to surround themselves with like-minded people, leading them to have less input from other-minded people. Especially, because people with similar backgrounds or SES's might be living closer by, which adds to the feeling of a social circle. This also suggests that they might not have a lot of contact with people affected by poverty, emphasizing the separation or exclusion of people suffering from poverty. This is also due to the urban environments, which are considered as either more poor or rich neighborhoods. This has also come to the attention of Anne.

> I also see the other side of the city, because that is also there, but now yeah I
> am living here I am not seeing it, but it is still there, […] (Anne)

Through the urban separation of rich and poor, often people not affected by poverty do not see the effects of it, because they are geographically separated, which overall undermines cohesion in society (Barkema & Koc, 2021). Through the work

with her client, Anne became more aware of this fact again. It also demonstrates how easily people living in better neighborhoods can look away and not be confronted with reality. This might also underlie the social distance between the groups.

The intergroup contact not only has positive outcomes for the minority group but also can affect the majority group, as described by Allport (1954).

> […] it makes it easier for me to put it in perspective sometimes. To put it in like, okay, you can do a lot about your own situation and not only like, "Oh, I'm a victim and it's it's right it's it's the world against me" […] (Lisbet)

Lisbet describes that intergroup contact can have multiple positive outcomes, such as strengthened self-esteem and heightened buffer against life struggles, as demonstrated. Instead of victimizing herself, she talks about being able to see her accomplishments and puts herself in the present, and retrospectively connect it to the past. This strengthens her efficacy beliefs.

As the coaches have reflected on what working with SHH does to them, they have put volunteering in the perspective of the general public and specifically in terms of their surroundings. Both clients have experienced different reactions to their volunteering.

> But that's, uh, yeah, the people think it's it's good to do, but there's also a that they don't go. They don't take action. (Anne)

> I'm a mother of three and also working full time. So that's also a negative connotation for some people. (Lisbet)

For Anne, it seems that volunteering is seen as generally positive. However, a positive attitude does not result in action necessarily. Specifically, in her neighborhood, not many people are volunteering. For Libset, some reactions were somewhat negative. People that are occupied with work and family might see volunteering as too time consuming. Thus, when people do find the time, it might be viewed negatively by others.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the connection between benevolent and activist support motivation and identity motives. Specifically, we wanted to gain insight into how these

concepts influence the work of SHH and the dyadic sample of client and coach. We thought to explore how the possible (mis-)match of support motivation impacts the participant's identity motives and the general outcome of the organization. Therefore, we conducted four semi-structured interviews with the coaches and clients of SHH. We identified the four following themes: (a) *need for stability*: multiple stressors impact the life of people affected by poverty, leaving them with an unstructured lifestyle, (b) *a structured lifestyle*: SHH provides a coach to support the clients enabling them to find stability, *(*c) *autonomous perspectives on the future*: decreased stress facilitates possibilities for the client to have aspirations beyond their struggles, and *(d) motivation to volunteer:* through the initial motivation of giving back, the coaches have gained positive outcomes through the intergroup contact.

For the clients, poverty had multiple negative consequences. Through the constant worry about making ends meet, it impaired other aspects and needs of their life. They withdrew from social activities because they were not able to afford it and isolated themselves more due to the perceived stigma they experienced throughout, undermining their self-esteem and their desire to have meaning in life. The need to belong and the need for distinctiveness were also affected through their experience by distancing themselves from their identity by wanting to belong to the majority group. Both clients struggle with mental health, which negatively influenced their ability to keep a structured lifestyle leading to further problems such as not paying bills or debts, which underlies their lack of efficacy. This was also visible while struggling at work, which undermined their confidence and ability to make logical conclusion of their life and their sense of continuity. SHH stepped in by building a connection with the client helping them regain stability in their life. Furthermore, through the regular contact, they were able to decrease the distance between majority and minority groups, which positively affected the clients need to belong and need to be distinctive. This might also decreased their negative self-evaluation and retrospectively increased their self-esteem. By

applying an autonomy based approach, the clients are supported in doing tasks independently instead of having them done for them. This encourages autonomy of the clients and a heightened sense of efficacy. The results are a more relaxed lifestyle, less worrying due to more organizational overview, and most importantly, aspirations and goals for the future leading to heightened perception of meaning and the satisfaction of the continuity motive. The coaches motivation to volunteer was based on their fortunate life and the need to repair that by helping the less fortunate. Doing something valuable increases their self-esteem and gives them more meaning. Through the work, the intergroup distance has decreased, increasing a sense of belongingness. Therefore, we can see that identity motives are enhanced through volunteering and pro-social behavior for both client and coach.

Through our analysis we can see the positive impacts of the activist and benevolent approaches of support motivation of SHH. By working without money, the clients are able to afford getting the help they need. This also creates an autonomy based approach leading to more independence. By focusing on the individual and thus taking a benevolent stance, SHH is able to connect to them and really adapt to the personal needs without hierarchies. Moreover, SHH is an opportunity for the clients to get out of the system of poverty and thus also applying an activist approach of helping behavior. Therefore, our findings underlie the need of activist and benevolent support motivation to fight poverty.

Practical Implications

Putting emphasis on the individual seems to have positive outcomes for the clients. Through the past experiences of bigger social care facilities, individualizing their needs was not possible. Due to the small size of the organization, it is possible to adjust the care now to the person. Nevertheless, in the bigger picture it might be hard to facilitate it. The bigger the organizations get, the harder the personalized contact. Regardless, organizations working with people affected by poverty should try to implement a more individual focused approach. This

might imply working without hierarchies or emphasizing autonomous working, for example by helping them understand the administrative chaos of governmental bureaucracy.

The size of the SHH makes it possible to keep an overview of the clients and coaches. However, through ongoing and future social challenges, the question arises how sustainable and resistant the organization is. It should be considered to add additional positions in the organization to ensure a well working system in the future. An additional position could work on creating a platform with an overview of information, guides, and hotlines that have helped the client´s in the past and throughout. Additionally, a platform that shares experiences and struggles of clients for future participants to relate to could be implemented. The ultimate goal would be to create a safe community, in which people can help each other.

Limitations and Future Directions

After interpreting the results, it is important to mention a few limitations. Firstly, the sample only consisted of four participants, which makes it not possible to generalize any claims. Secondly, all of the participants spoke English as their second language, which might have influenced the interview. Furthermore, if the interview had been conducted by a Dutch speaking person that was familiar with the organization, perhaps more participants could have been found. Additionally, we only had a specific time frame to conduct the interviews, which might have influenced the interview sample.

In order to overcome these limitations, we present some suggestions for future research. First, we suggest conducting more interviews and perhaps compare them with other organizations in the Netherlands as well to ensure more generalizability. Second, the interviews should be conducted in the mother tongue, which helps reduce limitations due to language. It could also ensure having more individuals participate which might not feel comfortable to be interviewed in a different language. Furthermore, we suggest conducting a study that has a greater time frame to ensure the greatest possibility for clients and coaches to

participate. As it is a relative sensitive sample, we must ensure working with their availability.

Regardless, these interviews provided crucial and valuable insights into the lives and

motivations of both clients and coaches, which can help improve the organization. Moreover,

we bring the first empirical link between helping motivations and identity motives to be

further explored.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the current study looked into the experiences of coaches and clients

from SHH to understand how the (mis-)match between their support motivations affected

their identity motives. Despite the limitations, this study brought several practical insights for

future research. Additionally, implications for local governments and other organizations

were brought up to consider in their policies to reduce poverty and its impacts on people

affected by it. Poverty is a global problem, which organizations such as SHH try to tackle.

They intend to improve the life of individuals, by working without hierarchies, by

strengthening their autonomy, and by seeing them as they are. Nevertheless, the majority

group should try to be more integrative and kind to people not belonging to their social circle,

because by building a community each and every one is able to enjoy its perks.

References

Alfieri, S., Marzana, D., D'Angelo, C., Corvino, C., Gozzoli, C., & Marta, E. (2022).

Engagement of young immigrants: The impact of pro-social and recreational activities.

Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 50(4), 344–360. https://doi-

org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1080/10852352.2021.1935199

Allen, K.-A., Gray, D. L., Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2022). The need to belong: A

deep dive into the origins, implications, and future of a foundational construct.

Educational Psychology Review, 34(2), 1133–1156. https://doi-org.proxy-

ub.rug.nl/10.1007/s10648-021-09633-6

Allport, G. W. (1954). The nature of prejudice. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley

Bagci, S. C., Turnuklu, A., & Bekmezci, E. (2018). Cross-group friendships and

psychological well-being: A dual pathway through social integration and

empowerment. British Journal of Social Psychology, 57(4), 773-792.

Bagci, S., Turnuklu, A., Tercan, M., Cameron, L., & Turner, R. (2022). Have some

confidence in contact: Self-efficacy beliefs among children moderate the associations

between cross-group friendships and outgroup attitudes. Journal of Applied Social

Psychology.

Barkema, W., & Koc, Y. (2021). Facilitators and barriers to contact between asylum seekers

and their Dutch neighbors. Analyses of social issues and public policy, 21(1), 833-852.

Basismonitor Groningen. (2022). Rondkomen. Retrieved from: https://basismonitor-

groningen.nl/standvangroningen/rondkomen/

Bastian, B., Lusher, D., & Ata, A. (2012). Contact, evaluation and social distance:

Differentiating majority and minority effects. International Journal of Intercultural

Relations, 36(1), 100–107. https://doi-org.proxy-

ub.rug.nl/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.02.005

Bolt, G., & van Kempen, R. (2003). Escaping poverty neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Housing, Theory and Society, 20(4), 209-222, doi:10.1080/14036090310018941

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cheng, L., Ye, Y., Zhong, Z., Zhang, F., Hu, X., Cui, R., & Chen, Q. (2020). Mediating effects of general self-efficacy on the relationship between the source of meaning in life and pro-social behaviours in vocational college nursing students: A cross-sectional study. *PLoS ONE*, *15*(12). https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1371/journal.pone.0243796

de Bruijn, E.-J., & Antonides, G. (2020). Determinants of financial worry and rumination. Journal of Economic Psychology, 76. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1016/j.joep.2019.102233

de Vos, K., & Garner, T. I. (1991). An evaluation of subjective poverty definitions: Comparing results from the U.S. and the Netherlands. Review of Income and Wealth, 37(3), 267–285. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4991.1991.tb00371.x

Díaz, Y., Hessel, P., Avendano, M., & Evans-Lacko, S. (2022). Multidimensional poverty and adolescent mental health: Unpacking the relationship. Social Science & Medicine, 311, 1–9. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115324

Inglis, G., McHardy, F., Sosu, E., McAteer, J., & Biggs, H. (2019). Health inequality implications from a qualitative study of experiences of poverty stigma in Scotland. Social Science & Medicine, 232, 43–49. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.04.033

Klein, N. (2017). Pro-social behavior increases perceptions of meaning in life. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12(4), 354–361. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1080/17439760.2016.1209541

Louis, W. R., Thomas, E., Chapman, C. M., Achia, T., Wibisono, S., Mirnajafi, Z., &

    Droogendyk, L. (2019). Emerging research on intergroup prosociality: Group

    members' charitable giving, positive contact, allyship, and solidarity with others.

    Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 13(3), 16. https://doi-org.proxy-

    ub.rug.nl/10.1111/spc3.12436

Marguc, J., Van Kleef, G. A., & Förster, J. (2012). Stepping back while staying engaged:

    When facing an obstacle increases psychological distance. Social Psychological and

    Personality Science, 3(3), 379–386. https://doi-org.proxy-

    ub.rug.nl/10.1177/1948550611423842

Ng, E. C. W. (2010). Community-building: A strategy to address inequality of health in

    Australia. Journal of Health Psychology, 15(7), 1020–1029. https://doi-org.proxy-

    ub.rug.nl/10.1177/1359105310378911

Nourkova, V., & Gofman, A. (2023). Everyday heroes: Graphical life stories and self-

    defining memories in COVID-19 medical volunteers. Journal of Personality, 91(1),

    85–104. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1111/jopy.12747

Reutter, L. I., Stewart, M. J., Veenstra, G., Love, R., Raphael, D., & Makwarimba, E. (2009).

    "Who do they think we are, anyway?" Perceptions of and responses to poverty stigma.

    Qualitative Health Research, 19(3), 297–311. https://doi-org.proxy-

    ub.rug.nl/10.1177/1049732308330246

Rosenberg, M., Schooler, C., Schoenbach, C., & Rosenberg, F. (1995). Global self-esteem

    and specific self-esteem: Different concepts, different outcomes. American

    Sociological Review, 60(1), 141–156. https://doi-org.proxy-

    ub.rug.nl/10.2307/2096350

Swing Viewer Gronometer. (2022). Percentage Minimahuishoudens. Retrieved from:

    https://groningen.buurtmonitor.nl/

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G.

Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), The social psychology of intergroup relations (pp. 33-47).

Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Thomas, E. F., & McGarty, C. (2017). When giving isn't enough: Responding to

humanitarian emergencies through benevolent and activist support. In E. van Leeuwen

and H. Zagefka (Eds.), Intergroup helping, 369-388.

Tung, V. W. S. (2019). Helping a lost tourist: The effects of metastereotypes on resident pro-

social behaviors. Journal of Travel Research, 58(5), 837–848. https://doi-org.proxy-

ub.rug.nl/10.1177/0047287518778150

Twenge, J. M., Baumeister, R. F., DeWall, C. N., Ciarocco, N. J., & Bartels, J. M. (2007).

Social exclusion decreases pro-social behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social

Psychology*, *92*(1), 56–66. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1037/0022-3514.92.1.56

Vignoles, V. L. (2011). Identity motives. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles

(Eds.), Handbook of identity theory and research., Vols. 1 and 2. (pp. 403–432).

Springer Science + Business Media. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1007/978-1-

4419-7988-9_18

World Bank. (2019). Poverty and Inequality Platform. Retrieved from:

https://pip.worldbank.org/home

Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen. (2022). Actuele Bedragen. Retrieved from:

https://www.uwv.nl/particulieren/bedragen/detail/sociaal-minimum

Appendix A

Questions Client
1. First, can you tell me about yourself
   a. Could you describe me, in as much detail as possible, how you describe yourself?
      i. Where were you born?
      ii. Where did you grow up?
      iii. Did you go to school?
         1. If yes, for how long?
         2. Did you go to university?
            a. If yes, for what?
      iv. Do you work?
         1. If yes, what do you do for work?
2. I would like to talk about your experience with Stadjers Hand in Hand (Can you tell me how this collaboration started?)
   a. What does Stadjers Hand in Hand mean to you?
   b. How did you hear about Stadjers Hand in Hand?
   c. Did you ever contact other organizations before SHH?
      i. If yes, how was your experience?
      ii. What was similar to SHH?
      iii. What was different to SHH?
   d. How has your life changed since you became part of Stadjers Hand in Hand? or How was your life before SHH? How is it now with SHH?
      i. Can you give me some examples?
      ii. How was your personal life before SHH?
         1. How is your personal life now?
         2. What has changed?
      iii. Did SHH have an impact on your work?
         1. If yes, can you explain that more?
      iv. Think about yourself when you were younger: What would you have liked to know back then that you know now?
   e. How does it make you feel being part of Stadjers Hand in Hand?
      i. What role does your coach play in your life?
   f. What ideas or beliefs do you have that are important to you?
      i. What ideas or beliefs of yours might be similar to the ones of SHH?
      ii. How are they different from the ones of SHH?
3. What do you think about poverty, specifically in Groningen?
   a. What does being poor mean to you?
   b. What do you think being poor means to other people?
   c. What do you think or have heard people say or think about poverty that might not be true?
   d. What do you believe are reasons why the situation of poverty does not change?
   e. There are many ways in which people can do good
      i. What do you think people can do to help people affected by poverty?
         1. What would you tell people why it is important to help?
      ii. How can an individual help?
      iii. What can society do to help?
   f. What influence does SHH have on the situation of poverty in Groningen?
      i. How does SHH impact the situation of poverty in Groningen?

       g. What does SHH do that other organizations could learn from?
4. How would you describe how people get along with each other?
    a. Can you name some characteristics of people in Groningen?
       i. What connects them?
       ii. What differentiates them?
    b. If you were to describe to someone what Groningen is like, what would you say?
    c. How much do you feel yourself being a part of Groningen?
    d. What ideas or beliefs do you think are shared among people in Groningen?
       i. Which ones do you also share?
    e. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose to live?
       i. Can you explain why?
    f. Which people around you are most valuable to you? (Family, Friends, etc.)
       i. Can you tell me about them?
       ii. What makes them valuable to you?
5. Is there anything you would like to add?

Questions Coach
1. First, can you tell me about yourself
    a. Could you describe me, in as much detail as possible, how you describe yourself?
       i. Where were you born?
       ii. Where did you grow up?
       iii. What is your educational status?
       iv. What is your occupational status?
2. I would like to talk about your experience with Stadjers Hand in Hand
    a. What does Stadjers Hand in Hand mean to you?
    b. How did you hear about Stadjers Hand in Hand?
    c. Why did you choose SHH and not another organization?
    d. How has your life changed since you became part of Stadjers Hand in Hand
       i. If yes, can you give me some examples?
       ii. What about in your personal life?
       iii. What about your professional life?
    e. How does it make you feel being part of Stadjers Hand in Hand?
       i. What role does your client play in your life?
    f. How might the values of SHH be similar to your own? (how do you connect with SHH)
       i. How are they different to your own?
3. What is your opinion on volunteering?
    a. Have you volunteered before?
       i. If yes, what kind of work did you do?
    b. What are positive aspects of volunteering?
       i. What can be negative aspects?)are there thoo)
    c. What does volunteering mean to you personally?
    d. What does it take to be a volunteer?
    e. What values should a volunteer embrace in your opinion?
    f. How has volunteering influenced your life? what does volunteering mean to you,
       i. Can you give an example
    g. Do you know other people in your environment that volunteer?
    h. How did people close to you react when you started volunteering?

4. What is your opinion on the current situation of poverty? (specifically in Groningen)
    a. What does poverty mean to you? how would you define poverty?
    b. How do you think other people perceive poverty?
    c. What do you believe are some misconceptions regarding people affected by poverty?
    d. What do you believe are the main drivers of poverty? (maybe explain better what you mean with main drivers)
    e. There are many way in which people can do good
        i. What do you think can be done to improve the situation of people affected by poverty? (
        ii. What roles does the individual play in social change?
        iii. What roles does the mass play in social change?
        iv. What is one's personal role in reducing poverty? (same as individual)
    f. What influence does SHH have on the situation of poverty in Groningen in your opinion?
    g. What does SHH do that other organizations could learn from?
5. How would you describe the human relationships in Groningen?
    a. How are people connected to each other in Groningen? (confusing)
        i. Is there a sense of solidarity?
        ii. What separates them?
    b. What does it mean to live in a city like Groningen?
    c. How much do you feel yourself being a part of Groningen?
    d. What values do you think are representative to Groningen? (what if people say pff idk)
        i. Which of those you think are also a part of you?
    e. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose to live?
        i. Can you explain why?
    f. Which human connections are most valuable to you? (Family, Friends, etc.)
        i. Can you tell me about it?
        ii. What makes them valuable to you?
6. Is there anything you would like to add?