

WOMEN'S PAID AND UNPAID WORK
IN THE UK VOLUNTARY SECTOR SINCE 1978:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE
ORGANISATIONS IN BRADFORD

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ABSTRACT

Since the publication of the Wolfenden Report *The Future of Voluntary Organisations* in 1978, the UK voluntary sector has grown exponentially and become an important actor in the delivery of welfare services. In this thesis, I examine women's reported experiences of paid and unpaid work within this sector. I investigate why women continue to outnumber men in the sector's workforce, and identify the ways in which voluntary-sector work is gendered. To do this, I draw on twenty-eight semi-structured 'work history' interviews with women who were volunteers, paid staff or both within voluntary organisations in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

The analysis is split into three chapters. The first explores women's initial engagements with the voluntary sector and pinpoints the times in women's lives when they are more likely to enter into either paid or unpaid work in the sector. The second focuses on working conditions in the sector, and examines what factors make voluntary-sector work both desirable and possible for women. The third discusses how the voluntary sector has developed since 1978 and how these changes have impacted on its predominantly female workforce, with a particular focus on changes since the 2008 financial crash.

Unlike previous research, this thesis focuses on women's work in the voluntary sector specifically. My findings demonstrate that voluntary-sector work is particularly accessible to women and more aligned to their work prioritisations, career trajectories and lifestyles. I also discuss what the persistence of gender segregation in the sector means for the women who work within it.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the research and writing presented in this thesis is original and my own. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I investigate women's reported experiences of paid and unpaid work in the UK voluntary sector. In 2012, I conducted twenty-eight semi-structured 'work history' interviews with women who were volunteers, paid staff or both within voluntary organisations in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Using this rich data source, I analyse how women discuss key aspects of their work in the sector. This includes their motivations, points of entry into the sector, and career trajectories. Applying gender as the main category of analysis, I focus on what these accounts reveal about working conditions in the sector. I also use the interviews to explore the development of the voluntary sector over the last forty years and ask how this has affected its volunteers and employees.

When I first proposed this research in December 2010, the voluntary sector looked to be on the brink of change. After years of growth under New Labour, the 2008 financial crash and subsequent recession had ushered in a new wave of austerity politics. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government was in its infancy. Cut backs to the welfare state were already taking place and the 'Big Society' slogan of the Conservative Party's 2010 election campaign was still ringing in the ears of many. My reaction was to ask how these changes would impact on the voluntary sector and its workforce.

My interest in the voluntary sector and its workforce stemmed from two previous research projects. My undergraduate dissertation focussed on women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century England. In it, I asked why philanthropic work was so popular amongst middle-class women and whether or not this work could improve their social and political position. I concluded that participation in these semi-professional work environments did have the potential to erode some of the restrictions placed upon women within the public sphere, offering them a degree of freedom and autonomy. For my Masters dissertation I conducted an oral history of the women's liberation movement in Bradford. Within this, I began to study feminist organisations, such as Women's Aid and Rape Crisis, which had developed in the

1970s and 1980s as part of this movement. Aside from their political motivations, I became interested in the experience of forming and being part of what were initially very small, women-only organisations, and the transition from informal political groups into fully-fledged registered charities. Although the realities of their lives were very different, I saw some parallels in the motivations of both sets of women. For both the Victorian philanthropists and women's liberationists, voluntary work was a site to effect political and social change and an opportunity to feel socially useful and valued within an unequal society. Since then, my aim has been to explore the association between women and charity work further.

Women continue to be more engaged in charitable work than men. In 2014, women were over-represented in the voluntary sector's paid and unpaid workforce (DCLG, 2009a; Teasdale et al, 2010; NCVO, 2014a). My primary research objectives were therefore to explain their preponderance in this field and to ask what voluntary-sector work offered women today. Is the work itself inherently gendered? Are the traditional associations between women, caring and charity still relevant? What is it about women's lives which makes work in the voluntary sector both desirable and possible?

Despite its recent expansion, the voluntary sector (a term which will be defined and discussed in the literature review) still employs only a small proportion (2.7 per cent) of the entire UK workforce (NCVO, 2014b: n.p.). My approach in part uses the voluntary sector as a microcosm to explore issues of women and work more generally. Through analysis of some of the specific, and possibly unique, qualities of work in the voluntary sector, I explore the ways in which certain kinds of work can be more compatible with the realities of women's lives.

Whilst relatively few women in the UK engage in paid work in the voluntary sector, volunteering is a much more common experience. It is estimated that in the UK there are 15.2 million people volunteering at least once a month, and 23.1 million volunteering at least once a year (NCVO, 2014c: n.p.). According to a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) survey conducted in 2008/9, 42

per cent of women formally volunteered at least once a year compared to 38 per cent of men (DCLG, 2009b). Given that most women's experience of work in the voluntary sector is via volunteering, examining the narratives of volunteers is essential to understanding how that work is accessed and experienced.

My research therefore focuses on the experiences of both volunteers and paid employees. I have chosen to define both groups' involvement in the sector as work, not to claim that they have the same experience, but in order to indicate the commonalities in the way their work is organised and what it can offer women. Although pay usually determines what is defined as work, work covers both paid and unpaid activities, particularly for women (Taylor, 2004, 2005; Sayer, 2005). I have chosen to side-line the paid/unpaid distinction because it ultimately devalues unpaid work and because this distinction has also been traditionally highly gendered. To reduce the concept of work to paid employment can be particularly unhelpful when discussing engagement with the voluntary sector as it makes invisible the labour done by volunteers (Taylor, 2005: 122).

It is also important to recognise that the changes which have taken place in the voluntary sector over the last forty years, and in particular since 2008, have affected both paid and unpaid workers in the voluntary sector. The maxim of the 'Big Society' concerned both groups, even if in different ways. Gauging a range of experiences has enabled me to have a broader perspective on these changes. I wanted to test some of the assumptions about why people engage in voluntary work (paid and unpaid). Those who work in the sector are often regarded as more caring and more altruistic than the rest of society. It was my aim to look beyond these assumptions and discover how my participants got to where they were, the choices they made and the circumstances that propelled them into this work, whether they were currently paid employees, volunteers or both.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In this introduction, I will move on to examine the existing literature on the voluntary sector, drawing attention to what is missing and discuss where my research fits into the existing work. I will focus on

how the voluntary sector has been defined and what has been written about who works in the sector, their motivations and experiences. I will also review some general literature on women and work, as this is a significant aspect of my research. In the second chapter I discuss my methodology, my research perspective and its impact on my research. I will explain my research decisions, the ethical considerations I took into account and some specific issues which emerged within the interview process.

The analysis of my empirical data is split into three chapters: 'Making Choices? Initial Engagements with Voluntary Work'; 'Flexibility, Fluidity and Freedom: Working in the Voluntary Sector' and 'Voluntary Sector Changes 1978-2012'. In Chapter 3 'Making Choices? Initial Engagements with the Voluntary Sector' I discuss when, why and how the women I interviewed first entered into paid or unpaid work in the voluntary sector. I examine their early histories of voluntary work and the most prominent motivating factors. By focusing on the stage in life when my participants entered the voluntary sector, I reveal the complexities of women's orientations to work. In Chapter 4 'Flexibility, Fluidity and Freedom: Working in the Voluntary Sector' I discuss the interviewees' experiences of work in the voluntary sector and explore the alignment between the working environments of voluntary organisations and women's lifestyles. I also discuss some of the negative aspects of work in the sector for women. In Chapter 5 'Voluntary Sector Changes 1978-2012' I analyse how the voluntary sector has changed since the publication of the influential Wolfenden Report in 1978 and how these developments have impacted on its workforce. I pay close attention to the period 2008-2012, examining how the 2008 financial crash, subsequent recession and the formation of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government in 2010 put the sector under a new spotlight and increased pressure. In the conclusion, I draw together the different strands of my research. I suggest that whilst work within this relatively new and constantly evolving sector is potentially more accessible and convenient for women, it is not without its drawbacks, contributing to the continued gender segregation of work, and to the entrenchment of gender norms.

Literature Review

The purpose of this review is to discuss key themes within the existing literature on work in the voluntary sector in the UK. I examine how the focus of these discussions has changed over the last forty years and identify what is missing. I will first discuss attempts to define the voluntary sector, and why it appears to have become increasingly difficult to produce a singular definition. Secondly, I will consider the voluntary sector's relationship to the state, primarily because it features so prominently within the literature. Since the focus of my thesis is on the people who work in the voluntary sector, I shall, thirdly, examine what has been written about the demographics of people who volunteer/work in the voluntary sector, and if these have changed over time. Fourthly, I shall discuss the motives of those who volunteer/work in the voluntary sector, examining how the literature discusses the reasons why women in particular become involved in voluntary organisations and their experience of this work. Finally, I will examine what has been written on women and work generally, focusing on debates around gender segregation and the feminisation of labour. I will suggest what my research on women who work in the voluntary sector can add to this literature.

What is the Voluntary Sector?

There has been much debate as to how the 'voluntary sector' can best be defined (Marshall, 1996; Taylor and Langan, 1996; Courtney, 2002; Kendall, 2003). Whilst it is generally agreed that 'voluntary' is the most appropriate term for this diverse and sprawling sector, other terms commonly used include: the charitable sector, the third sector, the non-profit/not-for-profit sector and the voluntary and community sector (Kendall, 2003: 6; Paxton and Pearce, 2005: 6). The word 'voluntary' seems to be at odds with the number of paid employees (648,000 full-time equivalent paid staff in 2012) working within this sector (NCVO, 2014b: n.p.). Morris (1969: xvii) describes voluntary workers or volunteers as 'people who undertake unpaid work for the community as a whole or for individual members of it'. Holme and Maizels (1978: 17) suggest that the term 'voluntary worker' began to be used more widely

when, following the Second World War, state welfare provision expanded dramatically and it became necessary to differentiate between paid professionals and unpaid volunteers, and to demarcate their 'respective spheres of influence'. Most commentators now take the view that whilst a 'voluntary worker is unpaid', a 'voluntary organisation may use both paid and unpaid workers' (Johnson, 1981: 13). However, there is still some dispute as to whether the sector can strictly be called 'voluntary', given the high numbers of professional and paid workers it employs (Courtney, 2002: 37). There also is a difference drawn between formal volunteering, activity which takes place within a formal voluntary organisation, and informal volunteering which takes place outside of any formal organisation. This could involve neighbourly help or caring for a friend or family member (Morris, 1969: 213; Anheier, 2005; Milligan and Conradson, 2006: 3). Despite these complexities, the main causes of concern within the literature centre on what makes the voluntary sector distinctive from the private and public sectors, and how, considering its diversity, the differences in scale, method, and aims, the umbrella term 'voluntary sector' can effectively incorporate and represent a disparate, often unrelated, set of organisations. Paxton and Pearce (2005: 6) argue that organisations should be seen as part of the voluntary sector if they are 'neither part of the state nor in the private sector'. However, although the voluntary sector occupies a place between the private and public sectors, it is intrinsically linked to and shares common features with both (Oerton, 1996a; Lewis, 1999; Kendall, 2003).

In the 1940s, the sector was described as an area which was free of state control, and although voluntary organisations were expected to perform tasks on behalf of the state, there was a belief that a degree of independence and autonomy should be retained (Bourdillon, 1945: 3; Beveridge, 1948: 8). In 1962, Morris (7) offered a similar definition, describing a voluntary organisation as 'independent of statutory authority which makes and carries out its own policy and controls its own funds'. Gladstone (1979: 4) described voluntary action as the 'antithesis' of statutory action which is activity carried out 'under the aegis of local or central government and their associated agencies within the framework of statutory obligations laid down in

legislation'. In contrast, voluntary organisations should be independent, 'established and governed by their own members, without external intervention'.

Since the 1970s, the link between the state and the voluntary sector has strengthened, evidenced by an increase in the funding of voluntary organisations by both central and local governments.¹ Some argue that the sector's autonomy can be weakened by this kind of financial dependence (Hatch, 1980; Rekart, 1993: 124). It does appear that this relationship has become more complex and most researchers agree that, over the last thirty years, those in the voluntary sector have been expected to act more like their counterparts in the public sector, demonstrated by tighter regulations, the striving towards greater professionalism², the push to be driven by 'consumer needs' and the use of buzz words like 'choice' and 'efficiency' (Deakin, 1995; Taylor et al., 1995; Russell and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 1999: 260; Harris et al., 2001; Kendall, 2003). This was, in part, a direct result of the growth of a 'contract culture', which Sheard (1995: 125) considers to be a defining feature of welfare delivery since the 1980s.

Margaret Thatcher's government 'opened up' welfare in an attempt to create a 'mixed economy of care', allowing private, profit-making and voluntary agencies to be contracted by the state to provide welfare. Some have argued that this made the division between what can be considered 'public', 'private' and 'voluntary' even less apparent (Finlayson, 1994; Prochaska, 2006). Finlayson (1994: 399) suggested that the experimentation with a 'mixed economy of care' effectively created "quasi-markets" within state-financed services, which involved a greater recognition of, and role for, the commercial sector', cultivating an environment driven by results and

¹ It is difficult to make a direct comparison, and inflation must be taken into account but, as an example, central government grants to welfare voluntary organisations increased from 19.2 million in 1974/75, to 28.0 million in 1975/76, to 35.4 million in 1976/77. In 1992, local governments granted £588 million and between 2001 and 2002, £2.03 billion was given by central government and £1.87 billion by local authorities to voluntary organisations (Finlayson, 1994: 322; Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 255-6; Etherington, 1996: 15; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2006: 3).

² Professionalism and professionalisation are used throughout this thesis to denote the formalisation of voluntary work and organisations, and the adoption of more professional organisational practices, such as employing trained, specialist staff. A career in the voluntary sector is not regarded as a 'professional occupation' because, for example, it does not require a professional education and its workers do not have to be registered with an independent professional membership body (Taylor and Garrett, 2008).

targets. By the mid-nineties, some thought that the 'concept of distinct public, private and voluntary sector sectors [was] becoming more and more inadequate', particularly within the field of community care (Taylor et al., 1995: 59). As the three sectors were put into direct competition, they inevitably became more homogenous, and some claim that the voluntary sector lost part of its distinctiveness and independence as a result (Billis, 1993: 14; Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 232; Deakin, 2000: 255).

It has been argued that the voluntary sector can be defined by what it is not; 'there can be little disagreement that profit making excludes an organisation from the voluntary sector' (Hatch, 1980: 29). Milligan and Conradson (2006: 3) state that the voluntary sector encompasses organisations that are 'formal, non-profit distributing, constitutionally independent of the state and self-governing' and that while these organisations can employ paid staff and receive funding from the state they should 'act for public rather than shareholder benefit'. Yet, for some this remains a complicated issue. Over the last twenty years, we have seen a substantial growth in the number of social enterprises (an estimated 62,000 in 2007), which often come under the 'voluntary sector' banner, although they can be for-profit and use commercial models (Spear, 2001: 252-255; Buchanan, 2010: 7-8; Lyon et al., 2010: 1).

Cooperatives, mutual aid organisations and friendly societies also fall into a grey area as they are usually structured to benefit those who contribute to them, rather than outsiders. Kendall and Knapp (1995: 91) remark that it is particularly hard to draw a dividing line 'between member serving or mutual aid and primarily public benefit or altruistic organisations'. As early as 1978, the Wolfenden Committee described what they saw as the blurring and crossing of boundaries of what makes voluntary organisations different from statutory, commercial or informal organisations, using housing associations and universities as examples (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 31-33). In 1996, Taylor and Langan (24-5) observed that organisations which would loosely be categorised as 'voluntary', such as housing associations, now considered themselves to be part of the 'business world', and had modelled themselves accordingly. Furthermore, several commentators have

highlighted that many charities, particularly larger ones, invest money in the corporate sector and use this to fund their works, rather than relying on individual donations and government grants alone (Leat, 1995: 177; Whelan, 1995: 73). Therefore, whilst the majority of organisations within the voluntary sector remain not-for-profit, the existence of social enterprises, the way in which many voluntary organisations now follow a corporate example, and the widespread practice of making commercial investments, has complicated the picture somewhat. The financial distinctions which once separated the voluntary and private sectors are less obvious.

One of the reasons why it is difficult to grasp what makes the voluntary sector distinct from the public and private sector is its diversity, and this has proved problematic for researchers in the field. This is not a recent development; in 1978 the Wolfenden Committee (1978: 2) contended that ‘voluntary action in Britain covers a myriad of different activities undertaken from many different motives’ and that ‘it is not helpful to imply that there is anything like a unified voluntary “movement” with a common philosophy guiding its work’. Taylor and Langan (1996: 22) argued that the voluntary sector looks different depending on ‘where you come at it’ from, as some people might describe it in terms of ‘large household name charities’ whereas ‘others refer to countless small community and self-help groups, run purely on voluntary effort’ and each person will have ‘different expectations of what it should do and where it fits in society’. The differences in size, structure and who is employed (the number of paid employees compared with the number of volunteers), means that voluntary organisations vary considerably (Paxton and Pearce, 2005: 6; Taylor and Langan, 1996).

Their broad range of objectives is another factor to consider, as what influences an environmental agency may not be significant for a health project or an arts group (Taylor, 1996: 13-14). Furthermore, although we can largely equate the voluntary sector with ‘charity’, not all organisations which are nominally part of the voluntary sector can be defined as charities by the Charity Commission. This can be due to financial and legal reasons, as for instance in the case of cooperatives, mutuals and

social enterprises which are ‘borderline’, or because of what an organisation does, whether it is linked to political campaigning or is a trade union (for example) (Johnson, 1981; Kendall and Knapp, 1995; Salamon and Anheier, 1997). For instance, until 2006 Amnesty International could not be registered as a charity, because the Charity Commission did not recognise that to campaign for the advancement of human rights was in itself a charitable purpose (Hanvey and Philpot, 1996: 2; Courtney, 2002: 37). Researchers in the field have responded to these complexities accordingly. Salamon and Anheier (1997: 17) argued that the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom is, in legal terms, ‘a bewilderingly confused set of institutions with poorly defined boundaries’ which is ‘not easy to specify with any real precision’. Kendall and Knapp (1995: 91) referred to the voluntary sector as a ‘loose and baggy monster’ whereas Ralph Dahrendorf (in Kendall, 2003: xiv) considered that ‘what has come to be called the voluntary sector is in fact a delightfully creative chaos’.

The voluntary sector has never been an easily defined category, particularly when including organisations such as cooperatives and mutuals (Hatch, 1980). However, over the last forty years some of the features which have been traditionally associated with the sector, e.g. autonomy from the state, reliance on voluntary workers, and separation from commercial ventures, have diminished. Although the voluntary sector can generally be defined as ‘something which is for the good of society’ (Courtney, 2002: 37), this in itself does not make it distinct from the public sector, nor the private sector, especially in view of the attempts to create a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ and the subsequent rise of a ‘contract culture’. Some have suggested that using the term ‘social economy’ may be more appropriate. This refers to ‘organisations which run as efficient businesses’ where ‘their prime interest does not lie in profit-maximisation but in building social capacity’ (Amin et al., 2002: 1; Davis, 2010). I have decided to use the term ‘voluntary sector’, which although not ideal, best defines and incorporates the organisations which I have focused on, registered charities. Consideration of what is meant by the ‘voluntary sector’ is a useful exercise in itself. It is clear that its meaning has shifted over time, and that it does not occupy a stable place in society. What is missing from the literature are the

personal accounts of those working within the sector and their responses to these structural changes, which this thesis seeks to address (see Chapter 5).

Relationship to the State

I have briefly discussed how the existing research maps a changing view of the voluntary sector in relation to the public and private, but I will now examine its relationship to the state in further detail, chiefly because it features so prominently within the literature. Kendall and Knapp (1996: 2) suggest that ‘the relationship between the state and key parts of the voluntary sector has always been essentially symbiotic, and characterised by mutual dependence’. Discussion about what this mutual dependence entails, and what the exact nature of this relationship should be, has, unsurprisingly, changed over time. The welfare state was established in post-war Britain to provide ‘cradle to grave’ social insurance, ranging from Family Allowances (renamed ‘child benefit’ in 1977) to old-age pensions (Harling, 2001: 155). Although some voluntary organisations were replaced, notably voluntary hospitals by the NHS (National Health Service), the sector continued to have a significant role (Deakin, 1995: 42-3; Thane, 2011). However, the merits of voluntary action began to be contrasted with the apparent failures of the welfare state during what has been referred to as the ‘rediscovery of poverty’ in the 1960s (Gladstone, 1979: 25). One of the publications which best represents this sea-change is Audrey Harvey’s *Casualties of the Welfare State* (1960) which suggested that the ‘welfare state “safety net” was failing to catch large numbers of people and this sparked off vigorous debates’ (in Gladstone, 1979: 25). Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend’s *The Poor and the Poorest* (1965) was also significant, estimating that 7.5 million people were still living below the official poverty line, and Ken Loach’s television play *Cathy Come Home* (1966) revealed the widespread problems of homelessness in Britain.³ These texts played a central role in the formation of three major charities, the Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter and Crisis.⁴

³ *Cathy Come Home* was a television play broadcast in 1966. Directed by Ken Loach, it portrayed a family’s slide into homelessness and poverty, using a documentary style. The play stirred up public

It was within this environment that Mary Morris published *Voluntary Work in the Welfare State* in 1969, which focuses specifically on the voluntary sector's relationship with the welfare state. Morris suggested that after the welfare state was established, many people were 'led to think that the days of voluntary action were over, since it was commonly thought that the state would provide for the needs of all of its members "from the cradle to the grave"' (Morris, 1969, xiv). She explained that this attitude was 'short-lived, and it is now generally agreed that voluntary societies and voluntary workers are as active and as numerous as they have ever been' (Morris, 1969, xiv). However, Morris was largely optimistic that the welfare state can expand to meet the needs of society, and estimates that less will be required of voluntary workers in the future (Morris, 1969: 254-5). Unlike Morris, the Aves Committee⁵ report, also published in 1969, took the view that the state could not provide a comprehensive social and welfare service without the aid of voluntary workers, arguing that 'social services have become more comprehensive and complex than ever before' and expressing 'doubts about the wisdom – even if it had been practicable – of trying to meet all these needs by the use of paid staff' (Aves Committee; 1969: 16). Instead, the Aves Committee recommended that stronger partnerships be formed between statutory and voluntary services and that volunteers should directly participate in the social services, 'complementing the work of paid staff' (Aves Committee, 1969: 195). Although Morris and the Aves Committee held some contrasting views, they demonstrate that the role of voluntary workers within the welfare state was coming under increased scrutiny at this time.

outrage about the plight of homeless people and demonstrated 'how far drama could influence the political agenda' (Duguid, 2014, n.p.).

⁴ Child Poverty Action Group is a registered charity that was set up in 1965. It works to 'end poverty among children, young people and families in the UK' (Child Poverty Action Group, 2014, n.p.). Shelter was founded in England in 1966, and is a homelessness charity which campaigns on housing issues. It was launched days after the broadcast of *Cathy Come Home* (Shelter, 2014). Crisis is a charity founded in 1967 and focuses on single homeless people and also campaigns around homelessness and housing (Crisis, 2014).

⁵ The Aves Committee was set up in June 1966 by the National Council of Social Services (later NCVO) and the National Institute for Social Work Training and was chaired by Geraldine M. Aves. The committee's objectives were 'to enquire into the role of voluntary workers in social services and in particular to consider their need for preparation or training and their relationship with professional social workers' (Aves Committee, 1969: 15).

It was not until the late 1970s that growing ‘political disenchantment’ with the welfare state really manifested itself within the literature (Gladstone, 1979: 21). Commentators began to question the limitations of the welfare state, expressing doubts about a ‘uniform provision’ and concerns about increasing bureaucracy and centralisation (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Gladstone, 1979; Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Kramer, 1981). There was a widespread assumption that the government no longer had sufficient resources to expand the welfare state, in part exacerbated by Britain’s stagnant economic position and the industrial disputes that led to the ‘Three-Day Week’ in 1974 and the ‘Winter of Discontent’ in 1978–79 (Whitehead, 1985; Beckett, 2010; Sandbrook, 2011). The discussions were framed within a debate which placed the voluntary sector in opposition to the state, constructing the voluntary sector as an alternative provider of welfare, and a solution to the problem of limited government resources (Hatch, 1980; Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Kramer, 1981).

This trend is marked within an influential report by the Wolfenden Committee⁶, *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*, which was published in 1978. The committee expressed dismay at the centralisation of welfare, arguing that work within the voluntary sector was a chance for ordinary people to make a difference and have direct involvement in a state which was ‘dominated by large-scale political, economic and social institutions’ and where ‘most people have little opportunity to shape the society in which they live’ (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 29). They too predicted that public spending on the welfare state over the next twenty-five years was unlikely to grow as it had done given Britain’s financial situation, although they did acknowledge that there would be continued demand for its expansion (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 74).

Some commentators took a more extreme view. For example, Francis Gladstone, a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), suggested

⁶ The Wolfenden Committee were appointed by the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust and Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in October 1974 to ‘review the role and functions of voluntary organisation in the United Kingdom over the next twenty-five years’ (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 9). The Committee was chaired by Lord Wolfenden.

that the welfare state had largely failed, raising ‘serious doubts about the “Grand Design” approach to social welfare’, asking: ‘might it be, in fact, that local mass production from a centrally determined blue-print is not the ideal recipe for effective social welfare provision?’ (Gladstone, 1979: 44). Hinton and Hyde (1982: 12), also members of the NCVO, argued that the welfare state was too large and inflexible, advocating ‘welfare pluralism’ in which a ‘gradually increasing number of groups should have access to central and local government funds for the purpose of providing welfare services’. The voluntary sector discussed in this context appears to embody a particular ideological position, and was inevitably used as a political tool by those on the right, and sometimes the left, to advocate a rolling back of the state (Gladstone, 1979: 22; Brenton, 1985; Kendall and Knapp, 1996). Kramer (1981: xv) considers the ideological space that ‘voluntarism’ can occupy and how it can be used to justify ‘a reliance on free markets’, describing it as ‘hostile to state intervention generally and to social policy in particular’, emphasising ‘the role of philanthropy and self-help in the solution of social problems’. In this scenario ‘the government should deliver cash and services only when the normal structures of supply, the family and the market, break down’ (Kramer, 1981: xv).

Some observers were more critical of this position. As Thatcher’s government settled into their second term, Brenton (1985: 2) expressed her concern about the political right’s ‘mounting enthusiasm for reprivatisation, or a return of social service functions to the commercial market and the supposed efficiencies of supply and demand dynamic and the profit motive’, remarking that voluntarism was being constructed as the ‘human face of capitalism’. Brenton did not agree with the assessment of the welfare state as a ‘failure’. She suggested that this model of the state being reduced to an enabler to ‘empower people in their own limited local spheres of interest’, ignores a ‘structural view of society’ and raises concerns about who will access and control resources in a future of ‘welfare pluralism’ (Brenton, 1985: 172). She argued that although not perfect, a statutory welfare system can provide greater equality than an exclusively voluntary system. However, although not a lone voice, Brenton did appear to be in the minority, as academics and those working within the sector seemed to welcome what they saw as the recognition and

celebration of the voluntary sector's merits, contrasted with the presumed flaws of the welfare state (Wolfenden Committee, 1979; Gladstone, 1979; Hatch, 1980; Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Hinton and Hyde, 1982: 12).

Thatcher's government paved the way for welfare services to be contracted out to private and voluntary organisations, most prominently through the NHS and Community Care Act in 1990⁷ (Home Office, 1990a: 42; Walsh et al, 1997). Some commentators embraced these policy changes, seeing the greater contribution of voluntary and private organisations as an opportunity, promoting 'diversity' and providing service users with more 'choice' (Taylor et al. 1995: 72). Whelan (1996: 82) suggested that the state had taken power and incentive out of people's hands, making them unable to help themselves and others:

Helping the poor and oppressed used to mean visiting unpleasant areas and meeting people in distress. Under the new dispensation, however, these tiresome acts can be avoided...Now all that is required is political lobbying...Instead of putting your hand in your own pocket, you can feel virtuous by demanding higher taxes to finance increased public expenditure-which is effectively putting your hand in other people's pockets.

During the mid-1990s, research into the voluntary sector underwent a revival, in Europe and the United States, articulated through the *John Hopkins Nonprofit Sector Series* which published ten volumes between 1994 and 1997. Significant UK publications included edited volumes by Kendall and Saxon-Harrold (1993), Davis Smith et al. (1995), Hanvey and Philpot (1996), and Billis and Harris (1996). This renewed interest focused on the voluntary sector's links with the state, in particular, the rise of the contract culture and how to effectively manage relationships with the government, in sum what Deakin (1995) referred to as the 'perils of partnership' (Lewis, 1995; Flynn, 1996). A report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1997 discussed the development of a 'contract culture' which led to contract or service agreements replacing 'existing grant aid', meaning that voluntary organisations became exposed to 'tighter service specifications, increased accountability and managerialism' (Russell and Scott, 1997: 2).

⁷ The NHS and Community Care Act (1990) permitted the contracting out of community care to voluntary organisations and private agencies (Home Office, 1990a).

In the late 1990s and 2000s the literature turned to focus on the ‘mainstreaming’ of voluntary sector concerns within the social policy agenda (Lewis, 1999; Kendall, 2003; Alcock, 2010a). Since the 1970s, there had been a push to involve the voluntary sector in government policy decisions (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Leat et al., 1981). This was notionally cemented in the 1998 ‘Compact’ between the New Labour government and the voluntary sector, which encouraged partnerships between the state and voluntary organisations beyond ‘vertical funding’, making the voluntary sector an important ‘policy actor’ (Lewis, 1999; Kendall, 2003). The Compact was heavily influenced by two reports, the first commissioned by the NCVO, *Meeting the Challenge of Change: Voluntary Action into the Twenty-first Century* (1996), often referred to as the ‘Deakin Commission’ after its principal author, the second, *Building the Future Together* (1997), a review led by the Labour MP Alun Michael (Kendall, 2003). This period has been referred to as the ‘community turn’ when the UK government embraced an ‘enhanced role for the voluntary and community sector’, as New Labour distanced itself from Labour’s traditional focus: the state (Lewis, 1999: 265; Deakin, 2001; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Taylor, 2003; Macmillan and Townsend, 2006: 15).

Subsequent literature has centred on how far the Compact framework was implemented, and how the voluntary sector’s relationship to the state changed during New Labour’s thirteen years in government (Kendall, 2003; Macmillan and Townsend, 2006; Zimmeck, 2010; Alcock, 2010a). Most commentators argue that the relationship continued to be vastly unequal, and that although there was more funding for community projects and encouragement for voluntary sector development, this went hand-in-hand with a weakening of the sector’s autonomy, as financial dependence and service agreements demanded further accountability and responsibility (Scott and Russell, 2001; Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Prochaska, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Poole, 2007). However, Kendall (2003) suggests that New Labour transformed the voluntary sector into an awkward but valued customer for policy makers in both central and local government, forcing them to take notice of voluntary organisations’ concerns and ideas. Alcock (2010a: 15) contends that the

New Labour era was a time when the voluntary sector garnered a high profile, and was effectively mainstreamed into the policy agenda, suggesting that ‘history may judge it to have been a “high water mark” in partnership’.

Since the Conservative-led coalition came into power in May 2010, the focus in much of the literature has been on David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’. There have been several attempts to try and unravel this ‘big idea’, and discussion about how it might be implemented and its potential to change the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state (Alcock, 2010b; Kisby, 2010, Scott, 2011; Thane, 2011).

Although most commentators are largely in support of a greater recognition of the voluntary sector and the role it plays in society, they are suspicious of the conservative ideology behind it, anxious that it will be used as a ‘cheap fix’ to justify rolling back the state (Alcock, 2010b, Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, some are unconvinced that the vision of a ‘Big Society’ can be fully realised given the economic circumstances, and suspect it will only lead to a reduction in funding (Alcock, 2010b, Taylor, 2011; Evans, 2011). It appears as though many in the field are waiting to see what happens, concerned that the achievements of New Labour’s Compact were too superficial to withstand drastic changes, and that the tentative partnership between the state and the voluntary sector could be easily eroded (Alcock, 2010b; Kisby, 2010).

The relationship between the state and the voluntary sector has been conceptualised as a ‘moving frontier’: the boundaries are constantly shifting as their respective roles change (Beveridge, 1948; Finlayson, 1994). Since the 1970s, we can map a change in the literature, as it reacted to and influenced a transformation in social policy, whereby ‘welfare statism’ was replaced by ‘welfare pluralism’ (Harris et al., 2001: 3). The subsequent increases in state funding, the growth of the ‘contract culture’ and financial dependence have complicated the relationship, inevitably producing an unequal balance of power. The literature often places the state and the voluntary sector in opposition, particularly since 1979, and some think that voluntarism has been characterised as a by-word for privatisation. The majority of observers do recognise the potential for the voluntary sector and the state to work in partnership,

and regret that this has not yet been fully realised. Again, the voices of those who work and volunteer within the voluntary sector are largely absent from this literature. Nonetheless, Ian Cunningham has continually used qualitative methods, particularly interviews, to examine at how particular government policies, such as New Labour's 'Best Value'⁸ or 'Personalisation'⁹ have impacted on voluntary-sector workers (Cunningham, 2008; Cunningham and Nickson, 2010). Building on this, this thesis will analyse how workers have personally negotiated the changing relationship between the sector and the state, using their work histories as the starting point.

Who Works in the Sector?

Research on the voluntary sector often tries to confront the stereotype that most volunteers are middle-class, middle-aged, white women (Morris, 1969; Aves Committee, 1969; Wolfenden Committee, 1979; Sherrott, 1983; Sheard, 1995; Wardell et al., 2000; Taylor 2005). Traditionally, and certainly in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, organised voluntary work was seen as a socially acceptable activity for middle-class women to participate in outside the home, as it was deemed to be an extension of their domestic duties (Prochaska, 1980; Lewis, 1991; Elliott, 2006). Social mores have changed, and women's employment has significantly increased, especially over the last forty years (Lewis and Campbell, 2007). Neither working-class nor middle-class women can now be expected to have 'free time' to volunteer (Wardell et al., 2000). There has also been a change in the structure of the voluntary sector, as the number of paid employees has grown (Weinstein, 2003: 251). Those who volunteered for organisations in the 1960s and 1970s, and those who do paid work for voluntary organisations in the 2010s, may therefore have little in common. Furthermore, the diversity of the sector is such that certain organisations attract certain volunteers/workers, and there can be a difference between the type of people who work/volunteer for organised charities, and those who partake in informal

⁸ 'Best Value' was introduced via the Local Government Act, 1999. It was concerned with trying to improve how statutory services contracted out services to voluntary (and private) organisations.

⁹ The concept of 'Personalisation' in social care emerged the late 1990s and aims to give service users more choice over which services they use (Cunningham and Nickson, 2010). The impact of this is discussed further in Chapter 5.

charitable activities such as neighbourly help (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Hatch and Sherrott, 1983). It is therefore difficult to glean from the literature how the demographics (age, sex, class, ethnicity) of those who work (paid and unpaid) in the voluntary sector have changed over the last forty years.

Nonetheless, there is plenty of research from the late 1960s to the early 1990s which is concerned with the types of people who volunteer. Morris (1969) cites a survey carried out in Bradford by students from the University of Bradford in 1967, the purpose of which was to 'discover the involvement of ordinary people in social interaction' and to find out 'how many people were doing voluntary social work of any kind and who those people are' (213, 250). The primary finding of this survey was that 36 per cent of their sample was 'involved in giving neighbourly help or in membership of voluntary organisations or both' (Morris, 1969: 252). The study concluded that women in classes I and II (professional, managerial and technical occupations) were the section of the population most likely to belong to voluntary organisations, whereas women in the lower socio-economic class III (skilled occupations) were the 'backbone' of voluntary work, less likely to be a member of a voluntary organisation but giving 'a more than average amount of neighbourly help' (Morris, 1969: 254-5).

The Aves Committee (1969: 33) also sought to answer the question of 'what sort of people are voluntary workers'. They refuted the view that the typical voluntary worker 'is a middle-aged, middle-class, married woman' (Aves Committee, 1969: 33). However, the surveys they carried out found that this was a stereotype based in reality, although they vaguely suggest that 'men are playing a much greater part than is sometimes realised' (Aves Committee, 1969: 33). The report also recognises that those who could be considered working-class, in this case residents of a block of council flats, were more likely to be involved in informal voluntary work, 'helping friends or relatives privately' than their wealthier counterparts, who were more likely to be 'engaged in organised voluntary work' (Aves Committee, 1969: 35; Brenton: 1985: 44-45). The Wolfenden Committee (1978: 56) reported similar findings, stating that 'the kind of people usually described as middle class are more disposed

to belong to voluntary associations than manual workers and their families', but interpreted the 1967 Bradford survey differently from Morris, arguing that the 'propensity to give help in an informal, unorganised way was much more evenly distributed over the social classes'. Morris and the Aves and Wolfenden Committees give the distinct impression that middle-class women were the most likely people to be involved in organised voluntary work, with informal voluntary work being done primarily by working-class women.

The Wolfenden Committee (1978: 57) reported that there was a relation between the type of voluntary organisation under examination and the class of those who volunteered, finding that some organisations such as 'amenity societies' (e.g. local history groups) had a 'very strong middle-class flavour', whereas organisations such as tenant associations had a much more 'working-class flavour'. Stephen Hatch and Roger Sherrott (1983) showed that the age of volunteers varied greatly depending on the type of organisation. Ian Mocroft (1983: 14) discussed a survey carried out on 1,000 volunteers involved with the Volunteer Bureaux, which was a 'national network of agencies whose aim it is to recruit and place volunteers'. He found that the bureaux attracted 'three women for every man', and also 'attracted mainly young people' and included a 'disproportionate number of "white-collar" workers', e.g. office/clerical workers (Mocroft: 1983: 21-22). Mocroft explained that the Volunteer Bureaux was partly established to facilitate people's first experiences of volunteering, which could explain the youth of the sample. He does not explain why women are over-represented, and only suggests that the disproportionate number of office/clerical workers is the result of women being over-represented within this sphere.

Mocroft (1983) also cited Robin McCron's analysis of the people who responded to the Granada television programme *Reports Action*, which asked the audience to express interest in specific appeals. He found the respondents were 'predominantly female (62 per cent); they included a high proportion of younger people, and there were proportionally fewer people from a working-class background' (Mocroft, 1983: 21). McCron explained that this could partly be because the programme asked the

audience to telephone in and not all working-class people had telephones of their own (Mocroft, 1983: 21). This brings up the somewhat obvious issue of the lack of material resources, which could prevent working-class people in particular from volunteering. Jos Sheard (1995: 120) argued that higher rates of voluntary participation were associated with access to resources: 'higher income levels, being in paid employment, higher levels of skills and education, owner-occupiers, having access to a car and telephone'. More recent surveys have demonstrated that these are still relevant factors. The DCLG 2007/8 Citizenship Survey (2009a: 15) found that 'participation in formal volunteering was higher among those in higher socio-economic groups'. For example, 35 per cent of people whose occupations were classified as 'managerial or professional' regularly participated in formal volunteering, and this was significantly higher than for all other groups. In contrast, 17 per cent of people from 'routine' occupations (e.g. restaurant workers, cleaners, labourers) formally volunteered. These differences were not so pronounced when it came to informal volunteering (e.g. babysitting, doing shopping, filling in forms). The survey found that 38 per cent of people in the highest socio-economic group regularly participated in informal volunteering compared with 31 per cent of those in 'routine' occupations and 30 per cent of those who had never worked. Similarly, the survey found that those with more education and qualifications were more likely to formally volunteer on a regular basis (37 per cent of those with a degree or equivalent volunteered compared to 15 per cent of those with no qualifications) (DCLG, 2009a: 16). The impact of socio-economic status on individuals' rates of volunteering dominated much of the early literature, and there is still some indication that those from middle-class backgrounds are the most engaged in formal volunteering (Taylor, 2005; Dean, 2012). In Chapter 3, I will explore this in greater depth, examining how socio-economic background influences orientations to volunteering and paid work.

Another issue affecting rates of participation in some sections of the population is lack of time. Barbara Mostyn (1983: 28), through conducting semi-structured interviews with thirty volunteers connected to the Volunteer Bureaux and the Volunteer Centre, found that working in a full-time job was not a deterrent to

volunteering, but could affect the amount of time given. Time was a significant factor when considering the extent of women's participation in volunteering. Wardell et al. (2000) and studies conducted in the United States demonstrate that the increase in women's employment has contributed to a decline in married women's volunteer participation, and that women in full-time work are less likely than women in part-time work to volunteer (Tiehen, 2000; Taniguchi, 2006). Referencing a national survey carried out by the Social and Community Planning Research for the Volunteer Centre UK (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991), Sheard (1995: 120) disputes the idea that most volunteers are middle-class, middle-aged, white women. She argues that 'overall levels of participation are about the same for both men and women'. However, she does recognise that there is a gender bias in the type of activity carried out, with more women than men involved in more 'caring activities' such as 'health and social welfare services, fund-raising, church and school-related activities, while men tend to gravitate to committee work, sports, hobbies, advice work and transport' (Sheard, 1996: 120). This is a gendered division and reflects the continued association between women and caring (Fine, 2007: 149). Studies on care work have found that women are the main providers of care within the home, in employment and in voluntary organisations (Hicks, 1988; Hancock and Jarvis, 1994).

So do more women than men volunteer? According to the DCLG Citizenship Survey (2009a: 12), women are slightly more likely than men to participate in both formal and informal volunteering. 39 per cent of women participated at least once a month in informal volunteering compared to 31 per cent of men. In terms of formal volunteering, 29 per cent of women participated at least once a month compared to 25 per cent of men. In the last fifteen years, the voluntary sector's paid workers have received closer attention, demonstrating a shift in the sector's structure, as the number of paid workers has increased (Weinstein, 2003: 251). Here, the difference in the numbers of female and male workers is starker. A Labour Force Survey conducted in 2010 found that over two thirds (68 per cent) of those employed in the voluntary sector are women, compared to 64 per cent in the public sector and 39 per cent in the private sector (Clark et al., 2011: 7). Women employees are particularly concentrated in the sector's largest subfield, health and social care (Fine, 2007).

Throughout this thesis I examine why women are generally more engaged in the voluntary sector than men, deconstructing how the association between women and caring is expressed within the sector.

In terms of other demographic factors, the Labour Force Survey also found that the voluntary sector employs a 'slightly lower proportion of black and minority ethnic people (7 per cent) than in the public and private sectors (9 per cent and 10 per cent)' (Clark et al., 2011: 7). Sheard (1995: 121) suggests that although black and ethnic minority volunteers were, on the whole, proportionally represented in the sector, 'evidence suggests that black and ethnic minority people are more likely to be involved in informal voluntary activity, and are under-represented in formal "white" voluntary organisations'. In addition, the Labour Force Survey found that 20 per cent of those in the voluntary sector have a disability, compared to 15 per cent in the public sector, and 14 per cent in the private sector (Clark et al., 2011: 7). In 2009/10 22 per cent of those with a long-term limiting illness or disability formally volunteered compared with 26 per cent of those with no long-term limiting illness or disability (DCLG, 2011: 80). There is limited data on the number of disabled people working as volunteers/paid employees in the voluntary sector prior to 1998, so a direct comparison is difficult.

The literature suggests that there has been a general push to include young people in volunteering since the 1960s, although these schemes have had varying degrees of success (Aves Committee, 1969; Hobman, 1971; Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Finlayson, 1994; Sheard, 1995). Commentators point to the growth in young people volunteering abroad in developing countries, so-called 'volunteer tourism', although they largely highlight the negative impacts of these schemes (Sharpley and Telfer, 2010; Stebbins and Graham, 2004). A 1991 survey carried out by Lynn and Davis Smith found that 'peak ages for involvement in voluntary work are from the mid-20s to the mid-50s', but older people often spent more hours per week volunteering than younger people (Sheard, 1995: 120). The DCLG 2007/8 citizenship survey (2009a: 6) found that people aged 16 to 25 were less likely to participate in regular formal volunteering than people aged 35 to 74, but quite a high proportion of people aged 16

to 25 were regular informal volunteers (41 per cent). In terms of paid work, the voluntary-sector workforce is marginally older than the public and private workforces, 35 per cent are over 50, compared to 32 per cent and 27 per cent in the public and private sectors (Clark et al., 2011: 7). The growth in young people's volunteering, and the push to encourage this through schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award (which I will discuss in Chapter 3) has not fully undermined the 'middle-aged' label voluntary work holds. In my work I will explore the reported experiences of volunteers and paid workers of different ages, using life stage as a way to explore the differences in their entry points, motivations and career trajectories.

It is difficult to say what characteristics the average volunteer or paid worker in the voluntary sector might have. This is partly due to their and the sector's diversity; different types of organisations attract different sorts of people. Certain groups of people are more likely to engage in the type of volunteering (formal and within organisations) that I have chosen to focus on. In discussing this it has been difficult to compare like with like, as older research tends to focus on volunteers, whereas more recent literature concentrates on paid employees, reflecting the sector's expansion. However, the DCLG Citizenship Survey (2009a) suggests that a person is more likely to volunteer if s/he is a woman, over 35, has a higher income and higher levels of education and qualifications. Similarly, the Labour Force survey data indicates that paid workers in the voluntary sector are mostly women, relatively older and disproportionately white (Clark et al., 2011). I found that one of the most striking features of the literature were the attempts to refute the public belief that the 'typical volunteer' was middle-class, middle-aged, white, and a woman (Morris, 1969; Aves Committee, 1969; Wolfenden Committee, 1979; Sherrott, 1983; Sheard, 1995; Wardell et al., 2000; Taylor, 2005). Many commentators may have wished to distance the perception of voluntary workers away from the much maligned 'Lady Bountiful'¹⁰ image (Sheard, 1995). Yet it seems that women underpin much of the

¹⁰ The character of the 'Lady Bountiful' emerged in the eighteenth century and is 'a woman noted for patronising and interfering generosity' (Penguin Dictionary, 2004: 782).

work carried out by the voluntary sector, and this thesis explores why this continues to be the case.

Workers' Motivations and Working Conditions

It is difficult to understand what motivates people to take voluntary positions or paid employment within the voluntary sector without asking them. There have been relatively few studies which include individuals' accounts of why people become involved in the sector. This has perhaps led to certain assumptions, either that these people are especially altruistic and kind, or that they are selfish, 'busy-bodies' using voluntary work as a 'flagrant display of self-merit' (Fenton et al., 1993). As I have discussed, women have traditionally been associated with voluntary activity, and in 2014, they are over-represented within the sector's paid workforce. It is therefore useful to discuss the literature which focuses specifically on the motivations of women in the sector, to try and understand why work within the voluntary sector appeals to women and how this has changed over time.

Three of the most comprehensive studies which contain personal accounts have been conducted by Mostyn, Leat and Sherrott, contributions to the edited volume *Volunteers: Patterns, Meaning and Motives* (Hatch, 1983). This volume was published by an organisation (The Volunteer Centre) which wanted to demonstrate the value of volunteers, at a time when the voluntary sector was being heralded as a viable alternative to the state. This could explain its focus on individual volunteers' experiences. Mostyn (1983) identified three key areas of 'personal satisfaction' that people obtained from volunteering: emotional benefits (ego-boosting, therapeutic, pride in achievement); social benefits (meeting new people and making friends) and intellectual benefits (learning something new, developing new skills). Sherrott (1983), who analysed fifty interviews with volunteers from a range of organisations, found a similar set of motivations: people volunteered to make friends and for affiliations, people found that the voluntary sector offered flexibility and the chance to learn new skills, and they found their paid employment insufficiently rewarding. Sherrott (1983) also discusses some of the 'moral' reasons why people said they

volunteered: religious beliefs, a sense of social duty and to appease feelings of guilt. Fenton et al. (1993: 84) stressed the sociability dimension of volunteering. They argued that most volunteers 'expressed enjoyment from social contact with other volunteers, participating in a collective venture, and from knowing that they are doing something for a good cause in the process'. Sheard (1995: 121) identified six main reasons why people volunteer: 'altruism, personal interest in a specific activity, responding to a direct request for help, religious concerns, filling in spare time and gaining work experience'. In 2007, a report which considered the experiences of volunteers and paid workers within women's voluntary and community services in Hull found similar motivations. The volunteers wanted to give something back to the community/women's centre; they had become involved as service users and wanted to help other women in similar positions; they wanted to gain work experience and they saw volunteering as an opportunity to meet other people (Miles et al., 2007: 54). Overall, this research suggests that the motivations of those working within the sector have not changed significantly over the last thirty years. However, there has been hardly any research which focuses on the motives of paid employees specifically, and which asks if working within the voluntary sector as a 'career' changes people's motivations.

Mostyn (1983: 36-7) found motivations varied between men and women. For example, it was mostly women who mentioned the therapeutic advantages of voluntary work, and it was mostly men who discussed pride in their achievements through voluntary work. Mostyn (1983: 30) also observed that the reasons why men and women became involved in voluntary work were different, with men indicating that it was 'important for them to feel needed' and for them to be explicitly asked to participate, whereas women were more likely to actively seek out voluntary work. Mostyn (1983: 30) suggests that 'this may have something to do with the traditional reputation of voluntary work as a female preserve, which makes women feel more at home when they enter it'. This idea of the voluntary sector being an acceptable field for women to enter is also present in Sherrott's (1983: 98) analysis, as he found that some respondents volunteered because their husbands 'did not approve of wives who go out to work', but considered voluntary work to be a suitable occupation for

married women. It is difficult to imagine this being offered as a reason in 2014. Leat (1983), however, identifies other motivations which may still be relevant for women today:

For many women, volunteering may be seen as one of the few activities that offers a (pseudo) work identity without the fixed hours, rigid routines, male control, regularity, monotony and 'all or nothing' choices that part-time paid employment may demand. Its close identification with traditional female skills and virtues may make it more acceptable to both women and their husbands. The rhetoric of 'spontaneity', 'naturalness', 'caring' and 'everyone has something to give', as well as the lack of accountability and the less easily measurable goals, may service to bolster a woman's confidence in the transition from home to work (Leat, 1983: 56).

Leat (1983: 54-55) discovered that her female respondents preferred work in the organised voluntary sector, rather than offering informal neighbourly help, as they felt they could obtain greater recognition and there was the opportunity to create a formal identity, away from the home. Similarly, Mostyn (1983) and Sherrott (1983) observed that working for an organisation offered women who did not work or had given up work to look after children the chance to create a distinct identity outside of the home, obtain skills, and enhance their employment prospects and to occupy their time, particularly after their children had grown up. This idea of voluntary work facilitating the transition from employment to 'unemployment', or from 'unemployment' to employment, was apparent in the motivations of people who had recently retired, who were keen to 'retain professional contacts' and who still wanted to feel part of the community and be intellectually stimulated (Sherrott. 1983: 65-8; Rochester et al. 2002). Although women who do not work now make up a smaller section of the population, these kinds of motivations may still be prominent (Lewis and Campbell, 2007).

Sherrott (1983), Justin Davis Smith (1992) and Rebecca Taylor (2005) draw attention to the potential problems with data collected around volunteer motivations. Taylor (2005: 121) suggests that this type of research is conducted by stakeholders uninterested in actual motivations and only keen to discover how to recruit and retain volunteers. Davis Smith (1992: 84) argues that most people, when faced with a questionnaire, will choose the most 'socially acceptable' reasons such as the desire to

help others. Sherrott (1983: 62) states that this type of research can mask other motivations and does not give enough 'attention to the circumstances and life histories of which these motives are a product'. The need for a more holistic qualitative approach is evident. The factors which motivate people to take on voluntary work, both paid and unpaid, are bound to be very individual, varying from person to person, dependent on their circumstances and beliefs. Research on volunteers suggests that although altruism is a factor, the element of sociability, making friends and meeting new people, is also very significant. Examining individuals' circumstances when they begin to engage in voluntary work may be the most revealing. Volunteering has traditionally been seen as women's domain, a place where they can assume a pseudo-professional identity, in a secure and 'suitable' environment. This thesis will explore whether or not this is still a relevant factor, both in orientations towards volunteering and paid work in the voluntary sector.

Paid workers' motivations and expectations have received limited attention. The search for job satisfaction may be a significant motivation as it is reported that job satisfaction is generally higher in the voluntary/non-profit sector compared to the public and private sectors (Benz, 2005; Donegani et al., 2012). This seems to imply that the sector offers more favourable working conditions, yet much of the literature suggests otherwise. O'Donovan and Varley (1992: 63-4) state that voluntary sector employment is 'characterised by poor pay and conditions, lack of job security, poor training opportunities, low or non-existent levels of unionisation and the absence of career structures'. The reasons for this are a combination of internal factors (e.g. management practices) and external factors (such as dependence on state funding) (O'Donovan and Varley, 1992: 64).

Pay is certainly lower in the voluntary sector. A review conducted in 2011 found that the average gross weekly wage of a voluntary-sector worker (£373.65) was lower than the average gross weekly wage of workers in the public (£477.53) and private (£457.52) sectors (NCVO, 2013a: n.p.). Therefore, workers within the voluntary sector can expect a certain 'wage discount' compared to their counterparts in the

public and private sectors.¹¹ Harris (1990: 127) suggested that ‘people employed in voluntary agencies may be expected to work longer hours for less pay because they are also expected to have altruism and commitment’. Rutherford (2011) also asks whether the expectation of the ‘warm glow’ (the feeling of altruism and the self-satisfaction of doing something ‘good’) is embedded within the wages of those working within the charitable sector. He considers whether, in anticipation of this supposed ‘warm glow’, charity employees receive a relative reduction in wages, and are paid less than those doing similar-level jobs in the public or private sector (Rutherford, 2011: 2). Rutherford finds that although there is still an expectation of a ‘warm glow’, the expansion of the charitable sector and its increasing involvement with both the private and public sectors (as work is contracted out), has led to a blurring of the disparity in pay across the sectors (Rutherford, 2011: 152). Despite this, when workers are divided by sex, male workers are more likely to experience wage discount whilst working in the voluntary sector, compared to the wages they could get in the public or private sectors, whereas female workers are marginally better off in the voluntary sector than they would be in the private sector, although their wages are slightly lower than their equivalents in the public sector (Rutherford, 2011: i-ii). Overall, it appears as though there is an expectation of an added reward, the ‘warm glow’, embedded within the pay structures of the voluntary sector, particularly for men who could earn more elsewhere. This might account for the predominance of women in the voluntary sector, and why voluntary-sector work remains unappealing to men. My research considers how women discuss this ‘warm glow’ in relation to their paid work in the sector and whether or not this is presented as gendered.

It is not just lower pay that is a potential problem for paid workers in the voluntary sector. Voluntary-sector work is often perceived to be insecure, primarily due to organisations’ reliance on government funding (O’Donovan and Varley, 1992;

¹¹ This review did not make clear whether it accounted for the high proportion of part-time workers in the voluntary sector (40 per cent). However, in 2012, half of voluntary sector employees earned less than £11 per hour, compared to £10 in the private sector and £13 in the public sector (NCVO, 2014d, n.p.). These figures suggest that private sector employees tend to work more hours and/or there is a greater disparity between higher earners and lower earners in this sector.

Lewis, 2008). Cunningham and James (2009: 370), when discussing the contracting out of social care to the voluntary sector, found that the ‘current contract culture was intimately connected to increased levels of employment insecurity’. Their interview respondents were able to identify organisations which had made ‘redundancies because of the loss of significant contracts’. On the face of it, the sector’s terms and conditions of employment are not significantly worse than the public or private sectors¹². However, this dependency on the state does mean that voluntary organisations are potentially more vulnerable to top-down changes, making the threat of redundancy more likely (O’Donovan and Varley, 1992). Cunningham and James (2009) also found that the competition for resources inherent in the contract culture can increase work intensification, as organisations try to reduce costs by eliminating support staff and front-line managers. Voluntary organisations can also make savings by side-lining staff training and personal development, potentially halting workers’ progression (Cunningham and James, 2009). Trade union presence, a factor usually associated with better job protection and employment conditions, remains relatively low: in 2011, 17 per cent of voluntary-sector workers were trade union or staff association members, compared to 12 per cent in the private sector and 55 per cent in the public sector. Since the 2008 financial crash there has been some indication that conditions in the sector have deteriorated. For example, staff turnover in the voluntary sector, normally higher than the UK average, peaked at 18 per cent in 2011 (NCVO, 2013b: n.p.). This thesis will explore how workers perceived these negative aspects. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the effects of the 2008 crash, subsequent recession and new government in 2010 on voluntary organisations and their staff.

These seemingly poor conditions may be offset by other benefits, benefits which may attract women in particular. There is some evidence to suggest that women face less gender discrimination in paid employment in the voluntary sector. Teasdale et al. (2010) proposed that women may face less discrimination and have more opportunities to obtain senior positions, compared with their counterparts in the

¹² For example, NCVO (2014d: n.p.) found that in 2012, 89 percent of voluntary sector employees were on permanent contracts, compared to 95 per cent in the private sector and 92 per cent in the public sector.

public and private sectors. They reported that women represented 50 per cent of higher managers/professionals in the third sector (although they comprised 67 per cent of the workforce) and this compared to 46 per cent in the public sector (64 per cent of the workforce), and 24 per cent in the private sector (40 per cent of the workforce) (Teasdale et. al., 2010: 3). As a result, the report suggested that ‘women working in the third sector are less likely to face gender inequality than those working in the private sector’ (Teasdale et. al., 2010: 3). The difference between men and women’s wages are also smaller within the voluntary sector, compared to the difference in the public and private sectors. Teasdale et al. (2010: 3-4) reported that women on average were paid 16 per cent less than men (per hour) in the third sector, compared to gaps of 22 per cent in the public and of 33 per cent in the private sector. They suggested that, in general, the third sector might offer more opportunity for ‘women to establish and run organisations as well as gain employment with higher rates of pay than they could find in the private sector’ (Teasdale et. al., 2010: 4). The suggestion that women might be better off in the voluntary sector, as they may face less sex-discrimination and have more access to opportunities, could be significant when considering why women ‘choose’ to work within this sector. In light of this, how women access the sector and their career progressions through it are discussed in Chapter 4.

The literature suggests that working conditions in the voluntary sector are poor, yet job satisfaction amongst its workers is high. Financial rewards for work within the voluntary sector are less than the rewards for work in the public and private sectors, jobs are potentially more insecure and career development opportunities can be hampered by cuts to funding. In this thesis I investigate whether the women I interviewed saw the promise of the ‘warm glow’ as enough to negate the most negative aspects of voluntary-sector work, or whether other factors were more significant, including flexible working, stronger work relationships and increased autonomy. I will also explore what this outwardly more gender-equal environment means for women working in the voluntary sector.

Gender at Work

The past 40 years have seen a rise in the percentage of women in employment and a fall in the percentage of men. In 2013, around 67 per cent of women aged 16 to 64 were in work, an increase from 53 per cent in 1971. For men the percentage in 2013 was 76 per cent, compared to 92 per cent in 1971 (ONS, 2013a: 1). The Office for National Statistics (2013a: 3) suggests several factors which may have contributed to this change: the 1970 Equal Pay Act; the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and Employment Protection Act; greater income support for lone parents; an increase in state pension age for women in 2010 and a decline in the manufacturing industry and growth in the service sector. Both the European Commission (2009) and the UK Government (Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2013) have made it a policy objective to support women in accessing and remaining in employment. Arguments for increasing women's access to work are often couched in economic terms: governments do not want to see the wastage of women's potential and the resources that the state has expended on them (Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2013).

Women's greater participation in employment and the subsequent rise of dual-earner families and growth of female-headed, single-parent families has gone some way to eroding the model of the male breadwinner (Bradley, 1999: 19). This model is based on the gendered division of labour: men earning enough to support their wives and children and women assuming the responsibilities of the domestic sphere (Crompton, 1999: 2; Yeandle; 1999; Crompton et al., 2007: 2-3). The concept of the 'breadwinner' emerged in the nineteenth century and reached its peak in Western countries in the mid-twentieth century (Crompton, 1999). It has since been unravelling, propelled by social and economic change, yet it continues to frame how women's work and men's work is conceptualised and experienced (Crompton, 1999, Crompton et al., 2007). Giele and Holst (2004) and Glover and Kirton (2006: 2) refer to this as a 'lag' between 'the reality of these life patterns (e.g. more women working) and societal institutions and cultural beliefs'. They argue that this lag persists in an institutional context as 'workplaces, school, service providers and so on

all assume that a full-time homemaker is available' and a lag in policy context, where there is a disparity between 'private needs and public willingness to provide support' (Giele and Holst, 2004: 3; Glover and Kirton, 2006: 2). Scott (1994: 20) agrees, arguing that 'gender ideology strongly permeates the labour market as well the family'. Women are in general paid less than men, they are more likely to be part of the informal economy, receiving irregular wages or none at all, more likely to work in jobs which are less secure with inferior conditions and more likely to work part-time (Woodfield, 2007: 6) Using the pervasiveness of the gendered division of labour as a starting point, I will explore the main themes in the literature on women and employment.

Gender segregation in employment is the tendency for women to work in jobs and occupations dominated by women and men to work in jobs and occupations dominated by men (Scott, 1994: 1). Debates around gender segregation are prominent in much of the research on women and employment because it is strongly related to 'inequalities in pay, career prospects and employment protection' (Scott 1994: 1). In 1979, Hakim divided occupational segregation into two elements, horizontal and vertical, and this division is still used in discussions about gender segregation and employment. Horizontal segregation refers to the concentration of women and men in certain occupations. Vertical segregation refers to the 'tendency for women and men to be concentrated in different jobs within occupations, with advantage running from low to high' (Glover and Kirton, 2006: 25). Both forms of segregation can be a barrier for women's equality in employment. Bradley suggests that horizontal segregation has a greater impact on women as women's employment is more concentrated in certain industries than men's, and that 'the range of occupations and industries in which they are found is more restricted' (Bradley, 1989: 12). Fagan and Burchell (2002: 24) found that within European Union countries, over half of all employed women work in the sales, hotels and catering sector or the health and education sector. It has been argued that this can leave women's employment especially vulnerable to economic downturns and changes to working conditions (Fagan and Burchell, 2002: 24; Glover and Kirton, 2006: 23). This concentration has other implications. Miller et al. (2004: 22) suggest that 'the

areas of work within which women traditionally tend to be concentrated are generally those with lower average pay and lower status', and therefore gender segregation 'serves to perpetuate the gender pay gap'. Some commentators view horizontal segregation more as a mixed blessing for women. For example, the clustering of women in the service sector, a sector which has grown exponentially over the last forty years, has no doubt contributed to the growth of women's employment (Rubery et al., 1998; Glover and Kirton, 2006). On the other hand, horizontal segregation both produces and reproduces general inequalities, restricting the choices and opportunities available to both women and men (Glover and Kirton, 2006: 31). It is clear that some form of horizontal segregation in the voluntary sector is at work, offering an explanation as to why the sector is female dominated. This thesis will explore how this impacts on the quality of jobs in the sector and how and why this segregation is maintained.

Vertical segregation denotes the concentration of women in low-level positions and men in high-level positions, regardless of the occupation, sector or industry. Woodfield (2007: 2, 9) argues that 'women have made remarkable inroads' and vertical segregation has been somewhat eroded over the last forty years. In the 1970s, one in ten women were professional workers compared to two-fifths in 2006 and the number of women in senior and managerial positions has continued to increase (Crompton, 1999; Miller et al., 2004; Woodfield, 2007: 9). Yet gender-based vertical segregation affects all sectors and workplaces, even those that are female dominated (Woodfield 2007: 10). For example, in the traditionally female-dominated occupation of nursing, a disproportionate number of men reach elite and managerial positions; this has been termed the 'glass elevator' (Williams, 1992; Evans, 1997; Lupton, 2000). In her study of women and men's careers after leaving university Purcell (2002: 1) found that 'male graduates with similar qualifications are much more likely to work in higher level managerial and professional occupations'. Even the roles and tasks performed within jobs are gender segregated, with men 'typically being assigned the work tasks with the most prestige' (Bloksgaard, 2011: 6) Most commentators agree that vertical segregation has negative consequences for women's pay and prospects (Glover and Kirton, 2006: 30). Some argue however that vertical

segregation can sometimes be advantageous for women, as they tend to be concentrated in the mid-level occupational levels, which although potentially low paid, are not the lowest paid occupational categories (Blackburn and Jarman, 2006; Woodfield, 2007: 11). Men as a group are more polarised. Although they are more prominent in high-level positions, they are also 'dominant at the bottom of the occupational ladder, in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled and manual work' (Woodfield, 2007: 11). What is clear from the literature is that gender segregation is persistent and has its roots in the gendered division of labour, although Bradley (1999: 61) argues that the process of gender segregation 'should not be seen as fixed but as fluid' as historically jobs can change from men's to women's and vice versa. As I discussed previously, there appears to be less vertical segregation within the voluntary sector than in other sectors, although it is still visible (Teasdale et al., 2011). It is my aim to find out how this is understood within the sector and whether women think there are fewer barriers to their career progression.

Why does gender segregation persist? Bradley (1999: 81) has argued that gender segregation has been maintained:

- By the collusion between male employers and unions
- By employers' wishes to pay female workers less which sustains a gendered division of labour
- By male views about their own superior abilities and commitment which give them rights to the best opportunities
- By a symbolic apparatus which maintains a powerful set of gendered images about masculine and feminine attributes and their association with particular jobs and forms of employment
- By gendered work cultures based on homosociality which cause difficulties for those cross the boundaries of gendered jobs and deter many from leaving the shelter of sex-typed work
- By constraints placed on women by domestic responsibilities

This argument centres on the constraints women (and men) face and the impact of cultural expectations. It appears to refute directly Hakim's preference theory. Hakim (2000: 14) argued that research on women's work often focuses 'on what they are *expected* to do and what they are *prevented* from doing, but never on what they want to do'. Her main thesis is that most women are not career-orientated and women's choices ultimately underpin their success in employment. She has categorised

women into three types: work-centred, adaptive and home-centred (2000: 274). In 2013 she said:

Roughly 20% of women in all societies are work-centred and careerist in the way men are. Roughly 20% of women are home-centred, family-orientated in the way that very, very few men are. Roughly 60% are in the middle wanting the best of both worlds, a combination of family life, paid employment and success or achievement in the public sphere, whether it is in politics, sport, art, the workplace or whatever. The ones in the middle group are the ones that are always dominant in any survey results because they are the ones who are the most numerous. However, an awful lot of policy is based on the assumption that women would be careerist and work-centred, just like men, if only culture and society allowed them to. The evidence is that they simply are not (Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2013).

This universal categorisation of women into ‘types’ has been disputed. Crompton and Harris (1998: 132) argue that to assert that ‘patterns of occupational segregation in Britain represent the outcome of women’s choices neglects important factors relevant to the British case’. These factors include lack of regulation in the labour market, the weakness of job protection and the promotion of labour market ‘flexibility’ which encourages the growth of poorly paid, non-standard employment (Crompton and Harris, 1998: 132). Referring to women’s ‘choice’ to take part-time work, Glover and Kirton (2006: 71) argue that the “‘choice” between full-time and part-time work only begins to be a real choice if there is no difference between the two in terms of status and skills levels, hourly pay, conditions and long term prospects’. Crompton and Harris (1998) do agree that women make choices, but insist that the context in which these choices are made and the structural constraints they face cannot be overlooked. Woodfield (2007: 3) suggests that ‘there is a need to examine in more depth how women account for their own agency in the decision making process’ in order to reveal the influence of ‘micro-sociological factors such as parental expectations and peer pressure, and the effects of macro-sociological factors such as equal opportunities policies and media representations’. Bradley (1999: 108), drawing on material from interviews with 198 employees (female and male) in five organisations, found that there can be no simple division of women into ‘career orientated’ and ‘family orientated’ as ‘women’s aspirations and orientations change as they moved between jobs and between stages in the life-cycle’. Examination of women’s working-life histories is therefore essential in

understanding not only the choices women make, but the constraints they are faced with.

Britton (2000: 426) argues that organisations and occupations are gendered ‘to the extent that they are ideologically and symbolically perceived in these terms by workers themselves and by culture at large’. Workers bring gender into the workplace but ‘jobs in turn have a gender character that rubs off on the people that do them’ (Cockburn, 1988: 38). Halford et al. (1997: 18) suggest that ‘organisations are thus “contested terrains” as are the specific configuration of gender relations therein’. With reference to bureaucratic organisations, Acker (1992a: 255) argues that there is a ‘gendered substructure’ which prioritises men’s lifestyles:

The gendered substructure lies in the spatial and temporal arrangements of work, in the rules, prescribing workplace behaviours, and in the relations linking work places to living places. These practices and relations, encoded in arrangements and rules, are supported by assumption the work is separate from the rest of life and that has the first claim on the worker.

As I have discussed earlier in this chapter and in more depth in Chapter 6, the voluntary sector is relatively new. The voluntary sector therefore has inevitably undergone a process of ‘socialisation’ as work which was once unpaid and largely informal has transitioned into work which is paid and formalised, and occupations within the sector emerged. Socialisation in this sense is the ‘way in which people acquire the expected behaviours seen as appropriate to members of a particular profession’ or in this case, occupations within a particular sector (Widom and Burke, 1978: 550). As the two sectors have become more closely tied, workers in the voluntary sector may take cues from their counterparts in the public sector (Baines et al., 2012). It is therefore worthwhile to examine how the voluntary sector has developed and the extent to which its organisations are gendered. When looking at research on the ‘feminisation of work’, the sector certainly appears to be feminised, in that there are more women than men working in it (Rich, 1995). Yet this is only one element of feminisation. The feminisation of labour also refers to the sex-typing of work, as occupations and jobs start to be seen as ‘women’s work’ (Britton, 2000). The process of feminisation is often characterised by de-skilling, lower pay and less job protection (Acker, 1992b). The brief analysis above of working conditions in the

sector certainly seems to suggest that voluntary-sector work is feminised. But the literature also reveals that in the last two decades there has been a push for the sector to become more professional and regulated, values associated with more masculine work practices (Osgood, 2006; Bondi, 2011). Baines et al. (2012) found that within the female-dominated non-profit social services there was the co-existence of a 'caring femininity' among the front-line staff, a discourse of self-sacrifice within a context of high pressure and limited funding, and a masculinist managerialism. This study focused on a particular set of organisations within a sub-field of the voluntary sector, and the 'gendered substructures' will inevitably differ between organisations. Connell (2006: 845) suggested that the gender regime of every organisation will be different 'produced by a different organizational history and associated with a different configuration of personal experience and consciousness'. Although my focus in this thesis will not be on organisations per se, it will discuss workers' interactions with their organisations, and the gendered processes operating in their orientations towards and expectations of work and their experience of work within voluntary organisations. I will discuss how the sector is 'feminised' in certain ways and how this can be both advantageous and disadvantageous for its female workforce.

The proliferation of women in paid employment has meant that the model of the male breadwinner is no longer consistent with labour market realities, yet the gendered division of labour inherent within this model continues to exist in the home and in the workplace, and the places in between. Gender segregation is ubiquitous within most occupations, although it can be fluid (Bradley, 1999). Horizontal and vertical segregation, both visible in the voluntary sector, can be major barriers to women's progression, pay and status. In this thesis I will investigate the extent to which women perceive this segregation and examine the ways in which segregation can have both positive and negative implications for women's work. I will also explore how gender operates within voluntary organisations and what the adoption of more 'masculinise' values means for women that work in the sector. The problem with much of the literature on women and work is that it focuses either on paid employment or unpaid domestic work. As Taylor (2004: 37) suggests, this focus

often leads to the categorisation of women as either ‘work-orientated’ or ‘family-orientated’, and other forms of work like voluntary work are ‘not given equal weight in the analysis’. There is also the implication that women engaged in voluntary work are inherently uncommitted to work (Taylor, 2004). Taking a more holistic view of work within this small but significant sector is therefore more appropriate, and ultimately more valuable, in the examination of the choices and constraints women face.

Conclusion

In this introduction and in particular in the literature review, I have covered the three main dimensions of my thesis. I have sought to define the voluntary sector and offer an overview of its relationship to the state. I have discussed what the literature reveals about who works in the sector, their motivations and their experiences. I have also discussed how some of the existing research on women and employment can be applied to the voluntary sector. The gaps in the research appear to stem from a lack of real engagement with workers themselves, and a marked differentiation between paid and unpaid workers in the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector is too disparate, too ‘baggy’, to take a top-down perspective when discussing the effects of structural changes on its workers. Similarly, surveys and questionnaires may obscure workers’ real motivations, and cannot necessarily ascertain the circumstances which bring people into the voluntary sector. The forced disconnection between paid and unpaid work, in both the literature on the voluntary sector and women’s work, is often unnecessary and does not take into account the realities of women’s lives.

I have sought to address these issues by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women who work in the voluntary sector. Using a life/work history approach I examine in detail the choices women make, what facilitates their engagement with work and what restricts them. My objective was to use the interviews to look beyond the motivations often pronounced by those who work in the voluntary sector and to examine other, possibly more significant factors in their orientations to work, avoiding attributions of either altruism or self-interest.

Voluntary-sector research has a tendency to focus on certain groups of workers in the hierarchies of organisations, e.g. frontline workers or mid-level managers. My approach is to consider a broader range of perspectives, in order to obtain a more nuanced view on how women report experiencing work in the sector. I also draw on the participants' life histories to explore the history of the voluntary sector and chart its development over the last forty years, with a particular focus on changes after the 2008 financial crash. Throughout this thesis I bring together two quite separate bodies of literature, using gender and work research and voluntary-sector research to frame my analysis. This approach enables me to explore what voluntary-sector work can offer women individually, whilst acknowledging that the very gendering of the sector can contribute to its degradation and lack of status.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

I begin this methodology chapter with a discussion of my research perspective, outlining how my political standpoint, my feminism in particular, influenced this research, from its genesis to its realisation. Secondly, I will consider the choices I made prior to conducting the research, detailing why I decided to focus on women volunteers and paid workers in the voluntary sector, why I chose to conduct interviews and why I decided on Bradford as the location for my fieldwork. Thirdly, I will discuss how I recruited participants, who the interview sample consisted of and what the ethical considerations were. Fourthly, I will consider some specific issues which emerged during the interviews. Finally, I will discuss the process of transcription and analysis, and outline the main themes that emerged in my interviews.

Research Perspective

Gayle Letherby (2003: 9) has argued that our ‘personal biographies’ impact on the ‘choice of topic and method, relationship with respondents and the analysis and presentation of the “findings”’. I have a feminist perspective and this informed some of the decisions I made during the research process. By this I mean that I acknowledge that we continue to live in a patriarchal society, and that our structures and institutions are set up in ways that hinder women and devalue their contributions. There are many different definitions of feminism (Kemp and Squires, 1997), but my own feminism is particularly concerned with the economic oppression of women. I see work as a key battleground in the liberation of women and in the fight for equality. In this sense, my perspective is closely aligned to the objectives of socialist feminism, although this term has been debated since its inception (Evans, 2003: 162). Unlike some liberal or Marxist feminists, I would argue that ‘men have a short-term interest in maintaining present gender inequalities’, particularly in the sphere of work, but unlike some radical feminists I do not see the interests of women and men

as ‘permanently opposed’ (Bryson, 1992: 4). Ultimately, I believe, the dismantling of patriarchy will be beneficial for both women and men.

I chose this subject because I wanted to consider the experiences of a certain group of women, those who work and volunteer in the voluntary sector. My research is feminist because it was conceived as a piece of work ‘not just *on* women, but *for* women’ (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008: 328). I was drawn to researching the voluntary sector because it is an environment where women make up two-thirds of the workforce and I wanted to know why this is. I wanted to explore: 1) how gendered the voluntary sector is, 2) how its associations with care and altruism contribute to it being dominated by women employees and volunteers, 3) the advantages and disadvantages of working (paid and unpaid) in the sector for women. The desire to investigate these issues was guided by my own feminism, which is concerned with thinking about women’s experiences, disseminating them and, I hope, using the research to effect change.

Whilst my research focus had strong foundations in my feminist perspective, I question the extent to which my feminism influenced the actual research design. I decided interviews would be the best method for accessing women’s experiences in the voluntary sector, which I will discuss in detail below. Interviewing as a method has historically been linked to feminist research, but I am inclined to agree with Holland and Ramazanoglu (2002) and argue that there is nothing inherently feminist about interviewing. Since the 1970s, interviewing has been favoured by feminist researchers who regarded quantitative methods as positivist and male-centric (Oakley, 1974; Mies, 1983; Graham 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1990). In 2014, interview methods are ubiquitous across the social sciences, and since the 1990s, many feminist researchers have critiqued the ‘binary oppositions which construct the counterposing of qualitative/quantitative, traditional/feminist research methods’ (Kelly et al., 1992: 150). However, although my decision to interview was not necessarily feminist, the research I conducted *was* feminist because it was always informed by feminist theory, even if I was sometimes sceptical about how it worked in practice (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 2002; Westmarland, 2001).

Throughout the research, I kept in mind the primary contributions feminist researchers have made to the field of interview methodology, in particular, the interrogation of power relations between the interviewer and interviewee and how the role/identity of the interviewer shapes the research. I will discuss how I engaged with these elements of feminist methodology below.

Kelly et al. (1992: 150) have suggested that feminist researchers should 'locate ourselves within the questions we ask and in the process of conducting research'. It is important for all researchers to make explicit their positions and the impact of one's position on one's research, and acknowledge that our experiences and our beliefs make it impossible to be fully detached from our research. This is particularly pertinent for me because my political views did contribute to my interest in the voluntary sector and informed my research decisions. The inspiration for writing my research proposal stemmed from my concern about the UK Conservative Party's much publicised concept of the 'Big Society' (Cameron, 2010). I was concerned about what this meant for paid work, both in the voluntary sector and the public sector. I wanted to know who would be expected to carry out the activities of the Big Society. I would describe my politics as left-wing, but without any party allegiance or an adherence to one particular political school of thought. In addition, I have worked in the public sector. This experience means that although I can be quite critical of public sector practices, I am largely in favour of a 'big state' approach to social welfare. In my view, the vast majority of welfare services should be provided by the state and not run as commercial enterprises, driven by the market and profit. However, I do think there is also a place for the voluntary sector, and that it performs a role which cannot be done by the public sector. Conducting the literature review and the interviews helped to reinforce this viewpoint, although I remain critical of attempts to 'roll back' the state under the guise of promoting the voluntary sector. Therefore, my political views have impacted on my research and vice versa. The questions I chose to ask and the way I asked them were guided by my politics, although I always tried to not let my personal biases inform how I engaged with the interview participants. I would, for example, ask 'what do you think of the Big

Society?’ (often after the interviewee had mentioned it themselves) and I would find myself nodding along when the interviewees (more often than not) expressed their suspicions regarding the policy.

One of the most challenging interviews, for many reasons, was with Jane, who was someone I knew prior to the interview. Essentially, I disagreed with the job she was doing and her attitude towards the public sector, and this, *inter alia*, in my view impacted on the interview. I was flustered and uneasy during the interview, and afterward I was quite unsettled by this. Luckily, this was a relatively early interview (interview eight), and I reflected on my reactions and tried to take a more relaxed approach in future interviews. In this way, I attempted to recognise and confront my biases, accepting that whilst I could not eliminate them, I could become a more reflexive interviewer, aware of my own subjectivity and its effect on my research (May, 2011). My awareness that I was guided not only by my feminist perspective and my engagement with feminist theory, but also by my politics, beliefs and personal biography, were key facets of my methodological approach.

Research Decisions

Deciding Whom to Interview

As I have discussed in the literature review, over the last forty years the voluntary and community sector has changed dramatically. It has undergone significant growth, becoming further integrated into central and local governments first through a system of direct grants, then later a ‘contract culture’. This has led to an increase in professionalism, a focus on accountability and results, and a push to make voluntary organisations more like businesses (Sheard, 1995; Taylor et al., 1995; Deakin, 1995; Russell and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Harris et al., 2001; Kendall 2003). Hardly any literature has engaged with those who work and volunteer within the voluntary sector, to assess how they have understood these changes, and to discuss what makes working within the voluntary sector different from working within the public and private sectors. I thought that interviewing people about their experiences of working

and volunteering in the voluntary sector could unravel some of these complexities, and help us to understand what motivates and drives people in this sector. Policy papers on the voluntary sector often take a top-down approach, and it was my aim to look beyond these impersonal documents and consider the accounts of people who work and volunteer on the frontline.

According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), in 2011 there were 161,266 active voluntary organisations in the UK (NCVO, 2014e: n.p.). Over half (51%) of these organisations were ‘micro’ organisations and had an income of less than £10,000. They were therefore unlikely to be able to employ any paid workers. I decided to focus on organisations which were more likely to have a mix of volunteers and paid employees, small (£10,000 to £100,000) and medium-sized (100,000 to £1 million) organisations which account for approximately 46 % of the voluntary sector (NCVO, 2014e: n.p.). These small-to-medium-sized charities are the ones which are most prevalent in cities such as Bradford; larger, national charities are usually based in bigger provincial cities or in London. As a result, the sample was made up of women who worked in local charities, a minority of which were under the umbrella of national charities. Although the term ‘voluntary sector’ can encompass a range of organisations, I decided to focus on registered charities to simplify the recruitment process, although as I discuss below I did not always strictly adhere to this. The choice to concentrate on small-to-medium-sized charities was pragmatic, due to the proposed location of my research, but also very deliberate, as this would mean that my sample would be made up of fairly typical voluntary-sector workers.

I decided to focus on women who work as paid employees or volunteers in the voluntary sector. Women have historically been seen as the backbone of voluntary work in Britain (Morris, 1969, Wolfenden Committee, 1978). In 2014, women are over-represented within the voluntary-sector workforce, particularly when considering frontline staff exclusively (Clark et al., 2011; Teasdale et. al., 2010, NCVO, 2014a). I wanted to explore this, and discuss women’s motivations for working in this sector. Research has also shown that the voluntary sector may offer

women more opportunities for career development (Teasdale et. al., 2010), and I wanted to ask women how they had negotiated their careers within the voluntary sector, and whether they thought the voluntary sector offered them more gender equality in terms of progression and pay. I also thought it would be significant to interview women who volunteer for voluntary-sector organisations, to talk with them about their motives and what they gained from their volunteering. I wanted to consider whether their responses could still be linked to the traditional view that voluntary work is 'women's work': socially acceptable, informal and flexible work, which fits around women's family lives whilst offering them the opportunity to feel appreciated and assume a pseudo-professional identity, as discussed by Leat (1983), Mostyn (1983) and Sherrott (1983). I hoped that examining their motivations would reveal whether or not these were still relevant factors. I was interested in assessing how far the professionalisation of the voluntary sector has impacted on women who volunteer and whether or not they have seen this as advantageous or limiting. I did consider interviewing men, in order to discuss their experiences of working in the apparently female dominated voluntary sector; however, whilst I think these accounts would have been a valuable comparison, the scope of my project was constrained. I opted for depth over breadth. Overall, I thought there were many topics to be explored when considering the extent to which work in the voluntary sector is still gendered, and by interviewing women exclusively I could study this issue from a particular and key angle.

Deciding to include both paid workers and volunteers was a difficult decision because I predicted that there would be differences in the experiences of both groups. The attitudes, motives and commitment of someone being paid to do a job and depending on it for their livelihood may not be easily compared with someone who does voluntary work in their spare time for no financial reward. I was aware that the average wage in the voluntary sector is markedly less than average wages in the public and private sectors, implying that when people make the decision to work in the voluntary sector, financial reward may not be the primary concern (Clark et al., 2011; Rutherford, 2011). The differences in the motives of paid workers and the motives of volunteers may not be as great as one would imagine, and I considered

this to be an interesting aspect to explore. I also thought it would be relevant to compare the responses of women who have pursued careers in the voluntary sector and women who volunteer. I hoped this would help reveal whether the gendered aspects of charity work are more or less prevalent in the paid elements of the voluntary sector, compared to the completely voluntary elements. I decided that comparing the experiences of both paid and voluntary workers would add depth to my research, making it more complex and the experiences of my research participants more variable. However, during the interviews I found that the distinction between paid workers and unpaid workers in the voluntary sector was often blurred; several participants were, at the time of the interview, both paid workers and volunteers, whereas others had gone back and forth from voluntary work to paid work within the voluntary sector. In this way, the diversity of the sample (discussed below) reflected the fluidity between paid and unpaid work in the voluntary sector. I found that in the areas I focused on, the interviewees' experiences of the voluntary sector were quite similar, whether or not they were currently engaged in paid or unpaid work. As a result, I did not make a significant distinction between the accounts of paid employees and volunteers within my analysis. I discussed the differences only when they became apparent and pertinent.

Why Interviews?

I decided that conducting semi-structured interviews would be the best method of gathering the data I required. Previous research, such as that by Clark et al. (2011), Teasdale et. al. (2010) and Lewis (2012), had focused on statistical data, for example, the percentage of women working in the voluntary sector and the percentage of voluntary-sector women in high-level management posts. These have been useful in gaining an overall picture of women's work in the voluntary sector but it was my aim to go beyond these figures and ask women about their experiences. Furthermore, there have been few recent studies based on the first-hand accounts of volunteers, which I consider to be an oversight. I thought interviews would be one way of rectifying these omissions. However, I was aware of Silverman's (2011: 45) warning not to choose interviews as a result of having 'unthinkingly assimilated a

romantic outlook' regarding the advantages of interviewing. I did consider using open-ended questionnaires instead, but I decided that interviewing would be more appropriate to the research. Nicole Westmarland (2001: 10) argues that whilst 'a survey may be the best way to discover the prevalence of problems, interviews are needed to fully understand women's experiences and theorise these experiences with a view towards social change'. I was predominately interested in what my participants said about why they did what they did. For example, the reasons why people made the career choices they did or their motivations for partaking in voluntary work and the 'meanings' they gave to these decisions (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Byrne, 2012). I chose to interview because I wanted to have the opportunity to ask further questions and have a more interactive research experience, where I could adapt my questions more easily, within each interview, and from interview to interview. Therefore, interviewing offered me the flexibility that surveys or questionnaires could not (Byrne, 2012: 209). It is important to note that I do not assume that the interviews offered me access to 'raw' experiences; the interview is a highly structured social interaction that can produce multiple outcomes, which I discuss later in this chapter (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). Overall, my interviewing produced rich data from which to make my analysis.

Why Bradford?

I chose Bradford District in West Yorkshire as the location for this research. Bradford has been disproportionately affected by industrial decline and is an area with high levels of deprivation and wide social and health inequalities. It is the fourth largest metropolitan district in England, its population is growing at a faster rate than the regional and national average, and significantly, it has the youngest population of any English city outside of London, with 22.6 % of its population under sixteen compared to the national average of 18.7% (Invest in Bradford, 2012a: n.p.). In 2011, 24% of all households in the district were workless, which was higher than the regional (20.6%) and national (18.9%) averages (Invest in Bradford, 2012b: n.p.). Bradford also has a high proportion of people without qualifications, 21.8% compared to 13.8% nationally (Bradford and Airedale tPCT, 2008: 16). The district

has been identified as an area with significant health inequalities, for example, the infant mortality rate, a crucial indicator of mothers' socio-economic status, was 9.1 per 1,000 live births in Bradford in 2006, compared to 5.3 in England and Wales as a whole (Bradford District Infant Mortality Commission, 2006: 21; Bradford and Airedale tPCT, 2008: 19). The city also has a mixed cultural and ethnic population, with 26.8% of the population defining themselves as Asian or Asian British, and this population tends to be highly concentrated in certain areas of the district (ONS, 2011: n.p.). Maintaining cohesion between communities in Bradford is difficult. There is tension between the white and Asian populations, and in recent years between these settled populations and migrants from Eastern Europe. These tensions have been exacerbated by the recession (2008 onwards) (Hudson et al., 2011: 6). Unemployment figures also suggest that Bradford has been disproportionately affected by the recession (Athwal et al., 2011: 9; Hudson et al., 2011).

The response to this complex picture of deprivation and decline has been the development of a strong and diverse voluntary sector in Bradford District. Following the 2001 riot¹³ and the subsequent Ouseley Report (2001), resources were invested into Bradford in an attempt to improve community cohesion and regenerate the city, although the distribution of resources received local criticism. Nevertheless, over the last decade, voluntary and community organisations in Bradford may have at least benefitted from an increase in funding opportunities (Russell, 2004: 71). There has also been a distinct focus on building partnerships between the statutory sector and the voluntary sector, demonstrated in the establishment of the Bradford and District Community Empowerment Network (CNet) in 2001, and the Bradford District Assembly, which both aim to connect the work of the voluntary sector with the work of the council, local authority and health services. These initiatives demonstrate an acknowledgement of the work of the voluntary sector in Bradford and its importance in the provision of services.

¹³ The 2001 Bradford riots began 7th July sparked by rumours of a National Front meeting in the city centre. The riot was mainly a confrontation between young Asian men and the police. The overall property damage was estimated at £7.5 million and 305 people were arrested (Hussain and Bagguley, 2008: 58). It followed similar riots in Burnley and Oldham earlier that summer. In 1995, there had been a smaller riot in the Manningham area of Bradford.

This recognition is not unique to Bradford, as government spending on the voluntary sector nationally increased year on year in the period from 2000 to 2007, from £8.4 billion in 2000/1 to £12 billion in 2006/07 (Clark et al., 2009). However, what is distinctive about the voluntary sector in Bradford is the diversity and complexity of the problems it is trying to tackle. I chose Bradford partly because I thought this would make it more interesting and potentially more productive to study than to consider an area of comparative affluence. I also chose Bradford for a practical reason; I know the area well, having lived there and worked for the Bradford and Airedale tPCT (Primary Care Trust) and Bradford Hospitals Trust. Through these jobs, I have developed links with people working within the voluntary sector, and I used them to recruit participants.

Recruiting Participants

I recruited my participants primarily through a snowball sampling method, which Johnston and Sabin (2010: 38) describe as ‘a chain referral sampling method that relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects’. The people who work and volunteer for the voluntary sector are reasonably accessible, and are not what Babbie (2010: 193) would refer to as ‘members of a special population’ who are ‘difficult to locate’ where it might be particularly appropriate for researchers to target groups through snowball sampling. However, the voluntary sector is a ‘loose and baggy monster’, made up of many different and dispersed organisations, and it would have been excessively time-consuming to gather information on each organisation and contact them individually (Kendall and Knapp, 1995: 91). Instead, I decided to make use of the voluntary sector network and the partnerships between voluntary-sector organisations and statutory services in Bradford. I composed a paragraph which explained what my research was about (see Appendix A), who I was looking to interview and what the interview would involve and included my contact details. I e-mailed this to the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Manager at the local NHS Primary Care Trust and asked her to e-mail it to her contacts. She forwarded my call for participants to ninety-six voluntary organisations in Bradford,

and this e-mail was forwarded onto their staff and volunteers, or other voluntary organisations. In this sense the 'quasi-snowballing' that took place was quite indiscriminate and far-reaching, and was not driven by a small group of participants passing it on to their own social networks, which can result in 'a final sample that is over-represented by the characteristics of those respondents with more social connections and underrepresented by the characteristics of those respondents with fewer social connections' (Johnston and Sabin, 2010: 38-9). Yet there was an issue with this method as it had a bias towards paid workers, as volunteers may be less likely to be on an organisation's emailing list or respond to such emails.

Furthermore, it excluded people who might not have IT skills or access to computers, such as older women or women from disadvantaged backgrounds. These people were the most 'hidden' population I was trying to gain access to, and I recognise that this method of sampling excluded them to a large extent (Heckathorn, 1997; Atkinson and Flint, 2001). I tried to reduce these biases in the selection of my interviewees, but this most probably was the main problem with choosing e-mail, through this particular third party, as the main method of recruitment. I was only able to arrange interviews with the older women in my study because their friends or relatives had e-mailed me and passed on their telephone numbers. I recruited a few participants through people I knew, for example the pilot interview was with a family friend, and she suggested a few names to me. Without my knowledge, my call for participants was placed in the May 2012 newsletter of the Bradford and District Community Empowerment Network (CNet), and several women contacted me as a result of seeing this publication.

I was inundated with e-mails from the moment the call for participants was sent out. In total, seventy women working and volunteering in the voluntary sector contacted me expressing their interest and willingness to take part in the research. At first I was so relieved to receive responses that I was trying to set up interviews with everybody, suggesting times and dates we could meet. When I had attempted to arrange interviews with around eighteen women, I decided to stop. I was worried that I would have too many interviewees and I would have to cancel, which would seem very ungrateful. In retrospect, I should have been more careful about using the

snowballing method. If I had delayed the interview arrangements further, I could have included some participants more appropriate for my research. For instance, there were a few people I would have excluded, not because their accounts were uninteresting, but because their experiences were too particular to make associations and connections, such as the women I spoke to who worked in social enterprises (Jane and Diane), or the woman who had stopped being a volunteer twenty years ago (Clare). The reasonable desire not let to potential interviewees slip away made me overly hasty in making arrangements.

Given that many more offers arrived than I had expected, I soon began to regret the rush. To try to ameliorate this, I sent an e-mail out to those who had contacted me to say how appreciative I was of their offers to help, how overwhelmed I had been by the responses and that as a result, I was holding off on arranging any more interviews. I then became more selective about the people I interviewed, making sure I obtained a diverse sample, a balanced mix of volunteers and paid workers and women from different organisations. This was quite problematic; I had to make assumptions about these women based on the limited information they provided in their e-mails. I was also concerned with getting a representative group in terms of age, ethnicity and socio-economic background so I began to use a more targeted sampling technique, such as that proposed by Watters and Biernacki (1989). In particular, it was important for me that the sample reflected Bradford District's population, so I actively sought to interview women of South Asian heritage. There was another problem with using e-mail as a method of recruitment; my call for participants did not specify that I only wanted to interview British-born women, and as a result I interviewed two women from the United States. This was not a major problem, as both had done the majority of their voluntary work in Britain, but it could have been an issue, and one that might have been avoided if I had arranged the interviews face-to-face or by telephone. Although I did encounter some issues in recruitment, I was happy that the issues arose from over-subscription rather than under-subscription. The fact that so many women contacted me demonstrates that the method of recruitment I chose was effective and very productive.

In total, I interviewed twenty-eight women. I made sure that I contacted the women whom I was unable to interview to thank them for their interest, and I also asked that if they did not mind, I would like to keep in touch with them about my research and any related events or publications. I asked the same question of my interviewees, directly after the interview and in the thank-you cards I sent out. Both groups appeared to be very interested in the results of my study, and expressed their enthusiasm and support for my research. Overall, I felt that the vast majority of the interactions I had with the women who had initially contacted me, whether I interviewed them or not, were very positive.

The Sample

I interviewed twelve paid workers, eight volunteers, and eight women who were both paid workers and volunteers (see Table 1 below). The participants' paid worker/volunteer status was based on their current or most recent role at the time of interview. Many paid workers had been volunteers in the past and vice versa (see Appendix E for the participants' mini-biographies). As discussed above, this blurriness between the status of paid and unpaid workers appears to be quite common in the voluntary sector. Nevertheless, paid workers did dominate in my sample, perhaps due to my methods of recruitment. My sample was therefore atypical, as volunteers outnumber paid workers in the voluntary sector (DCLG, 2009b; NCVO, 2014c). As a result, my analysis has a stronger focus on the reported experiences of paid workers, which was not my original intention. My sample also reflects the fact that there is now a much larger group of paid workers in the sector than there might have been twenty years ago.

Table 1. Participants' occupational status within the voluntary sector and other relevant information

Name	Paid Worker	Volunteer	Paid Worker and Volunteer	Age	Parent	Worked in Other Sectors
Amanda	X			30		
Angela	X			52	X	X
Anna	X			60	X	X
Ayesha	X			31		
Christine	X			50	X	X
Diane	X			45	X	X
Ellie	X			45	X	X
Fran	X			32		X
Haleema	X			29		
Jane	X			46	X	X
Kerry	X			37	X	
Rebecca	X			46	X	X
Claire		X		51	X	X
Gillian		X		56		X
Grace		X		62	X	X
Jessica		X		33		X
Kathleen		X		64	X	X
Rose		X		67	X	X
Shirley		X		74	X	X
Suzie			X	63	X	X
Fahmida			X	43	X	X
Fiona			X	45		X
Karen			X	24		
Laura			X	28		
Louise			X	44	X	X
Natalie			X	38	X	X
Nasreen			X	37		X
Rokeya			X	58	X	X

Source: Interview Data, 2012.

I am certain that all my participants identified as women, as they had responded to the call for participants which specified that I sought to interview only women (see Appendix A). I made a decision not to ask for any demographic information on ethnicity, class, religion or sexuality, as I decided that if the respondents thought it was significant, it would emerge over the course of the interview, and it largely did. For example, the seven women whom I expected would have identified themselves

as black or minority ethnic (BME) were the only ones who mentioned their ethnicity in the interviews¹⁴, and several women discussed their religion (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) as an important factor. The choice not to collect demographic information was deliberate, as this sort of data is often skewed due to people being compelled to make a choice, for example, a surprising number of interviewees talked about their Catholic upbringing, although most admitted they were no longer practicing Catholics. If I had asked the respondents to fill in a demographic form it is likely that these interviewees may have ticked the 'Christian' tick-box or perhaps no tick-box at all. This data may have been misleading and ultimately a distraction, concealing the specific significance of being raised as a Catholic on attitudes towards voluntary work. I wanted to discuss the importance of religion based on the respondents' own words during the interviews, not on information gained from a tick-box.

Similarly, the collection of demographic data usually deemed important, such as ethnicity, religion and sexuality, might have obscured other important factors. For instance, a noticeable proportion of the women I interviewed were single mothers and this often affected their career choices much more obviously than their religion or sexuality. I wanted the important factors for the individual to emerge from the interview and not force a prioritisation of one aspect over another from the start. I am confident I obtained a diverse and rich sample judging by the content of the interviews. I did ask participants their age at the interview itself, because one of my research aims was to examine how the voluntary sector has changed, and I wanted to ensure that I had a range of women of different ages. Table 2 shows a summary of the age of my respondents:

¹⁴ It was noticeable that none of the white women I interviewed discussed their ethnicity (apart from Anna who discussed her Eastern European heritage). When interviewing white women exclusively Bridget Byrne (2006) found that whiteness was never expressed as part of her interviewees' identities. She argues that whilst 'race' was 'present in the interviewees' lives in terms of their interactions with others, it was not something that they were conscious of intimately affecting their own sense of themselves' (Byrne, 2006: 103).

Table 2. Age of respondents.

Age of youngest respondent	Age of oldest respondent	Mean age of respondents
24	74	45

Source: Interview Data, 2012.

The nature of the recruitment meant the sample was skewed to workers in the health and social-care field, although the sample did include workers from education, environment and community development charities (see Appendix E for more details). All the participants in the sample had worked (paid or unpaid) in the voluntary sector, but some had also engaged in other types of volunteering, such as helping out at their children’s schools or nurseries. I have discussed these experiences of volunteering within my analysis, as I think they were significant and were sometimes the starting point for engagement in the voluntary sector itself.

Ethical Concerns

I conducted my research in line with the Centre for Women’s Studies ethical policy, which is in accordance with the University of York’s policy, and is informed by the ESRC’s Research Ethics Framework. It requires research students to be constantly reflexive and acutely aware of ethical concerns throughout their work. My research involved human subjects and this was the primary ethical issue I faced. This meant that I had to consider three issues: I had to obtain informed consent from my participants; I had to ensure my participants’ anonymity and keep the data I collected confidential; and I had to be aware that my personal safety could be compromised during the process of interviewing.

The women I interviewed were all adults and appeared to be in reasonable physical and mental health. The respondents had been given a brief description of the research and interview process in the call for participants, but prior to each interview, each respondent was given a ‘participant information sheet’ (see Appendix B) to read which outlined what the research was about, what the interview would involve, how it would be used, where it might be published and how I would guarantee their

anonymity/confidentiality. This information sheet also made it clear that they could withdraw their consent at any time, and that they did not have to answer my questions if they felt uncomfortable. After reading this document, I gave the respondents the opportunity to ask questions, they then signed a consent form (see Appendix C) which summarised these points and asked permission to use their interview data in my thesis and any subsequent publications. They kept a copy of the participant information sheet, which included my contact details, and I reiterated after each interview that they could contact me if they had any queries or issues. I am as confident as it is possible to be that each respondent was aware of what my research entailed and that they gave their informed consent.

I was very careful to ensure my participants' anonymity and that the data from each interview would be kept confidential. This was important as the interviewees sometimes discussed sensitive information, for example, they would often be critical of their current or previous employers, and one respondent discussed the corruption that had occurred at her previous workplace. I never used the names of any organisations in my analysis. Once downloaded onto my computer, the audio files were renamed as a number, and later, as a pseudonym. Neither the audio files nor the transcriptions ever had the real interviewees' names attached to them. The files were kept on the secure university network, and I took special care to keep the hard copies of the transcriptions accessible only to me and my supervisor. The biggest worry I had was that the participants could be identified from the biographies produced on each of them, for instance, there are only two or three environmental charities working in Bradford District. I tried to reduce the possibility of recognition by omitting key identifiable details. I never discussed other participants during my interviews, and the participants did not seem very interested in this regard. Overall, the voluntary sector in Bradford District is a 'small world' and this was a concern, but I took appropriate steps to preserve the anonymity of my respondents and keep their interviews confidential.

The locations of the interviews varied. The majority of the interviews with paid workers took place at the participant's place of work. These were relatively safe

environments, as all the women I interviewed worked at registered charities which were well-known in the area. Arranging interviews with volunteers was more difficult, as they usually did not have easy access to the organisation that they volunteered at. As a result, we either met in a public place, usually a café, or I travelled to their homes. Conducting an interview in a stranger's house carries certain risks which I was aware of, but I made sure family or friends knew where I was going and when they could expect me back. I also conducted one interview at my parents' home, with my parents in the house. This person was an acquaintance of a family friend, so I felt secure inviting her into this environment. I was also conscious of how I could make this group of participants feel safe and secure, as they might have felt uncomfortable inviting an unknown person into their home. I made sure that we only met at their houses at their suggestion, so that they did not feel I was pushing for this outcome, and I also tried to speak to these participants on the telephone beforehand, so we had communicated in a more personal way than just by e-mail.

The Interviews

I conducted the vast majority of my interviews in little over a month. This was because my call for participants received a good response and I did not want to keep the people who had contacted me waiting or for them to lose interest. As I have said, the location of the interviews varied, but most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' workplaces and homes or in cafés. The location of the interviews was decided by the interviewee after I had given them a few location options. Elwood and Martin (2000) have discussed how interview location impacts on perceptions of power and relations between participants and researchers. For example, the women whose interviews were conducted in their own homes might have felt more relaxed and open compared to the women whose interviews were conducted in a public place. A lot of the interviews took place at the participants' place of work, and whilst these almost always took place in a private room (with exceptions such as Adele and Laura), they may have felt inhibited by this location and unable to make criticisms of their workplace, as MacDowell (1998) has

suggested. There are no simple solutions to this issue, no location is ideal or without meaning. However, in offering them location options and communicating to them (via e-mail or phone) what the interview would consist of prior to making these choices, I hoped that they could make informed decisions and feel more in control. I also noted down the location in my interview notes (see below), and considered its effect on the interview and what this could add to my analysis.

Before the interview, I would introduce myself (if I did not know them already) and offer a summary of my research. At this point, we would have a chat over a cup of tea, which gave them the chance to ask me any questions. I would then give them the participant information sheet and consent form, allowing time for further questions. Some interviewees asked a few questions about the interview process at this point, but most asked questions during the interview itself or after. These questions were usually concerned with anonymity, as participants began to mention specific charities or people. I would reassure the interviewees that all names would be excluded from the research.

The interviews were often interrupted, particularly those that took place at a participant's home or workplace. I tried to be as relaxed as possible about these incidents, assuring the respondents that interruptions were expected. I did not stop the recording when this happened, partly because the interview would usually restart again very quickly. After the interview, I would have a five or ten minute chat with the interviewee, as a sort of 'de-brief'. They often wanted to know if what they had said had been useful, and I would tell them that it had. The majority of the participants seemed to really enjoy the interview and told me that the process had caused them to think about things they had not previously considered. Table 3 illustrates the length of the interviews I conducted:

Table 3. Length of Interview.

Shortest interview	Longest interview	Average length
45 minutes	1 hour 47 minutes	1 hour 15 minutes

Source: Interview Data, 2012.

When saying goodbye, I would let them know that they could contact me at any point if they had something to add or felt uneasy and wanted to withdraw their consent. No participant withdrew their consent, but several did contact me afterwards, usually because they had received the thank-you card I had posted to them. Overall, the organisation of the interviews went very smoothly, and although each interaction was very different, the format was quite uniform and there were no major issues with the interview process.

All the interviews took place over a short and therefore intense period, which had its advantages and disadvantages. I was completely focused on the task of interviewing and felt well practised before each interview (indeed, in the two interviews I conducted out of this time period, I felt perceptibly 'rusty'). At the same time, I had very little time to reflect on my interview skills and style. I listened back to two or three interviews in this period, but I did not have much opportunity sit down and really listen to the interviews I had conducted, and as a result, I was less able to be fully reflexive about my mistakes and make the appropriate adjustments. My previous experience of conducting research interviews had been for an oral history project, which meant I was used to framing questions in a chronological way, following a life-history approach. This research project required a different approach, however. In retrospect, and perhaps as a result of my familiarity with oral history methods, the questions I developed were a little disjointed. The questions were divided into two distinct parts: one set of questions was asked to elicit working-life histories from my respondents, and the other set were questions on specific aspects of the voluntary sector (see Appendix D). On paper, these questions seemed fine, but the reality was more complex and I sometimes felt I was flitting between these two aspects during the questioning, and potentially disturbing the respondents' thought processes. To try and mediate this, I often let the interviewee steer the interview, hoping my questions would be answered as they gave their own narratives of their working lives, and asking specific follow-up questions if they were not. This method generated some rich and varied data. However, I do feel that I may have missed out on opportunities to ask further questions and to press my respondents on certain points due to disruptions to the interview schedule. If I were to do the interviews

again I would have a more robust and coherent set of questions, to ensure I was able to guide the interview more effectively. Mason (2002: 68) suggests that during the interview, decisions about the 'substance, style, scope and sequence' of the questions have to be 'made and acted upon quickly' but should 'nevertheless be strategic and considered rather than *ad hoc* and idiosyncratic'. The researcher's ability to make these decisions is not obvious, and I think that I needed practice and experience to develop these skills.

Power Relations

Some questions were not asked and some of the interviews went off track through a lack of confidence on my own part. The dismantling of the 'hierarchical' relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which Ann Oakley advised in 1981, felt quite irrelevant in the context of my research because I did not feel powerful. Although I cannot claim to know how my interviewees felt, I do not think I came across as an authoritative interviewer. Reynolds (2002: 307-8) has questioned the concept of the all-powerful researcher, suggesting that 'the interaction between race, class and gender suggests that power in social research is not a fixed and unitary construct, exercised by the researcher over the research participant'; instead 'power is multifaceted' and 'constantly shifting' between them. In many ways, I did not want to assume the role of a commanding and self-assured interviewer, as this would have been false and a difficult act to maintain, especially when considering that I was younger than all of my participants and most were professionals or ex-professionals. Essentially, I was aware that their experiences made them more knowledgeable about the subject than I was. The idea of me having to 'come down to their level' seems patronising, and misguided. For instance, I was left feeling quite upset and deflated after my second interview, because I felt I had been undermined (unintentionally, I am sure) by my respondent (Christine) who had advised me to act more confidently and authoritatively during the interviews. However, despite this one criticism, the majority of my interviewees seemed to respond well to my general persona. I was aware that I had to play to my strengths, and being the junior person (both in age and work experience) in the interview was quite advantageous; it allowed me to confess

my ignorance of certain subjects without judgement, eliciting fuller explanations of people's experiences and the working culture of the voluntary sector.

While I might have appeared to my interviewees as quite a reserved, casually-dressed young woman without 'the usual signs of professional status (suit and car)', I was associated with a well-regarded university, producing my 'tools of the trade' (consent forms, recording equipment) and 'these seemingly contradictory signs of status seemed to make me rather hard to place' (Richards and Emslie, 2000: 73). To the respondents, I was the one with the questions and I was ultimately the person who would analyse the data and produce the research. In that sense, the source of my 'power' was my control over much of the research process. During my interviews, I was acutely aware that this glaring inequality could not be eliminated, because although my research was envisaged as 'for women', I could not assume that I could speak 'for women' (Reinharz and Chase, 2001). From the 1980s onwards, feminist researchers have warned against the perils of assuming that women can speak on behalf of other women, primarily due to the intersection of many factors, including race, class and age (Reisman, 1987; Zavella, 1996; Ribbens, 1998; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). However, it is perhaps easier for women to build a rapport with other women in an interview situation, and I think this was a factor in the interviews I conducted. Some feminist analyses have defined qualitative interviewing as intrinsically 'feminine because the interviewer's job is to facilitate speech and not to interrupt it' (Green et al., 1993: 630). Women are habituated into freely conversing with other women, even if they are strangers. I imagine (although I cannot be certain) that if I had been a man, it would have taken longer for my participants to feel comfortable being interviewed. Furthermore, I suspect that some of my respondents would not have agreed to an interview in the first place if I had been a man, some because of personal safety concerns and perhaps a few would not have responded due to cultural reasons or their political views, e.g. Suzie, who expressed quite separatist beliefs during our interview. However, although I have suggested that it is often easier to build rapport between women, I am hesitant to claim that the interviews were the basis for the formation of friendships, as Oakley suggested in 1981. I am very grateful to the women I interviewed, and in the vast majority of

interviews, my interviewees and I got on very well, but it was in many ways a professional interaction.

It is important to note that I was acquainted with several of my participants, and sometimes this would alter the power dynamic during an interview. I was not friends with any of the women I interviewed; the closest to me were Louise, my pilot interview and a family friend, and Jane, who was a former boss. I had met Christine and Clare once or twice before the interviews, and although I had never met Fiona or Nasreen, they had worked with my mother. The only other interviewee I had any connection with was Rokeya, who had known me as a child. Interviewing a person whom you have a prior relationship with can be problematic, particularly with regard to the maintenance of confidentiality and trust following the interview (Browne, 2005). This can also be an issue during the interview. I am concerned that the participants who knew my mother may have felt exposed, suspecting that despite my assurances to the contrary, I might tell my mother what they had said. Of course, I did not do this, and I have no proof that my interviewees consciously suspected I would do this, but I think it important to recognise that this may have been a factor during the interviews. Wengraf (2004: 106) suggests that both the interviewer and interviewee's awareness of the 'post-interview consequences' can mean you both are 'tempted to avoid asking "dangerous-to-the-later-relationship" questions and giving "dangerous-to-the-later-relationship" answers'. My research was not designed to elicit emotive responses, yet my interviewees did touch on personal topics, including divorce/relationship breakdowns, single parenthood, financial worries and health problems. When interviewing people I knew I did find it more difficult to ask certain questions and this was because I was worried that they would interpret my question as 'pointed', and that I was using information acquired from previous encounters. For example, I knew that Louise, one of my interviewees, had been a lone parent and when she mentioned working with lone parents in the voluntary sector, I wanted to ask her about her personal motivations for doing so. This resulted in a rambling question which was a bit confusing:

B: Do you think you had an insider status, if that's the right phrase, with all your jobs? Because you said you did the lone parent thing, do you think there was a personal motivation in that that sense, or did it just happen?

Luckily, she understood what I meant and gave a frank answer to the question, but she may have felt that I was being intrusive and had used my prior knowledge inappropriately.

Knowing too much about your interviewees or assuming to know them can also be a problem when interpreting the interview data. In my analysis of these interviewees' accounts, I sometimes wondered if I was drawing on information I had gleaned from the interview or my prior knowledge about that person. In response, I had to be vigilant, and constantly question the source of my knowledge. Similarly, researchers may misinterpret friends' accounts due to the closeness of their relationship. It is easy to make the assumption that your friend will share similar views to you and you can be in danger of allowing your commonalities to mask 'important differences' (Borland, 1991: 72) Fortunately, I did not know any of my interviewees well enough for this to be an issue.

I felt that when I was acquainted with my interviewees, the power balance did shift, but it was not always in one direction. On the surface, being familiar with my participants inflated my position of power; I knew more about these participants and this may have had an adverse effect on what they wanted to share with me and how they felt about doing so. Yet, these participants also knew more about me, and I was very conscious of how I interacted with them and how they would perceive me. For instance, in my interview with Jane, my ex-boss, I felt very awkward and I found the whole experience quite difficult because I felt I had something to prove to her. In general, I found the interviews with strangers to be much more relaxed and enjoyable because there was no past or future to contend with. This is in part why, contrary to Oakley's (1981) suggestions, I did not actively pursue friendships with any of my interviewees. I was also aware that presenting yourself as a friend in an interview situation can raise the expectations of your respondents, leading to feelings of betrayal and deception if a friendship does not develop (Glesne, 1989; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). But then Oakley (1981) was talking about forming friendships with women like her (in this case, mothers of a similar age) and was asking intimate

questions about experiences with which she was familiar. In this context, it was natural that some friendships might develop, whereas I doubt whether my participants ever viewed me as a potential friend, even if we got along well during the interview. This was in part due to the focus of my research, but it was also because of differences in age, class, ethnicity, religion, experience and so on. The women I interviewed were both like and unlike me, and during the interviews, I occupied both insider and outsider roles and it is this issue which I will discuss in further depth.

Being an Insider/Outsider

I am going to explore the insider/outsider debate through the questions my interviewees asked me before, during and after the interviews. What my interviewees thought of me and where they placed me in relation to themselves, occupied my thoughts throughout the interview process, and I wrote in detail about this in my field diary. Acknowledging positionality and being reflexive about how it impacts on one's research is a significant feature of feminist methodological literature and was a fundamental part of my approach (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 2002; Letherby, 2003). I cannot eliminate the power I have as a consequence of being the interviewer but I can try to 'even up the imbalance' by putting myself into my research (Stanley and Wise, 1983: 181).

In many ways, I was an obvious outsider during my interviews. I do not work in the voluntary sector and I have limited experience of volunteering. The people I interviewed often asked me why I was interested in the subject. I told the truth; I had studied Victorian women who engaged in philanthropy and how this related to the suffrage movement and, more generally, ideas about women in the public sphere. I also told them that I thought it was an interesting time to do this research due to the recession and because the voluntary sector had recently come under the spotlight, as the 'Big Society' idea (or agenda) was being discussed by politicians, journalists and academics. I explained that I had found a lot of what was being written about the 'Big Society' did not engage with the people who worked and volunteered within the

voluntary sector. When I offered my participants this explanation, they tended to agree. I assume that they had asked me this question for a reason, to assess what my experience was, and to find out why I would be interested in researching the voluntary sector, something so central to their lives, if I was not in the sector myself. Several of the interviewees who were volunteers asked me whether I had volunteered, and I would tell them that my experience was quite limited. Diane in particular was very keen for me to volunteer and gain some knowledge of the sector:

D: Have you done any work in voluntary organisations?

B: I've done a little bit, but not much.

D: No, it would be quite good to get inside an organisation and see how they work, how they run, and get some different experiences. I think that would be useful [Diane goes on suggests which organisations I should approach and how].

It was natural for my interviewees to be curious about my experience of the voluntary sector, but I do wonder how this knowledge influenced what they shared with me and how comfortable they felt being interviewed by me. There has been much debate as to whether it is more advantageous for an interviewer to be an insider or an outsider. If I had been an insider, 'someone who has special knowledge by virtue of being a group member' (in this case, being part of the voluntary sector), I might have been offered a 'more rapid and more complete acceptance' by my participants, and I could have used my insider knowledge to ask more pertinent questions (Bailey, 1994: 514; Dywer and Buckle, 2009: 58).

There are problems associated with being an insider. If I had, for example, been working at a well-known voluntary sector organisation in Bradford, my interviewees might have been less open with me, not wishing to say anything which could expose them or threaten their jobs. Furthermore, if I had been occupying this 'dual role', I might have encountered what Adler and Adler (1987: 73) refer to as 'role conflict' as a result of 'trying to sustain full membership and the researcher perspective simultaneously'. I might have felt unable to ask certain questions or been unable to see beyond the issues at my particular organisation. As an outsider, I was freer to ask what I wanted, using the knowledge I had gained from my research into the

voluntary sector instead of being burdened with an organisation's agenda. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, my relative ignorance of the subject allowed me to ask the 'stupid questions' without facing judgement from my interviewees and I did not have the 'baggage' of an organisation for them to contend with or make assumptions about. Tinker and Armstrong (2008: 55) have outlined four benefits of being an outsider:

By acknowledging their lack of cultural knowledge the researcher can: (a) elicit detailed responses, (b) minimise the respondents' fear of being judged, (c) ask some questions that a researcher from the same cultural group may not feel able to, and (d) maintain a critical distance from the data.

Overall, my distance from the voluntary sector had discernible advantages and disadvantages. My outsider status meant I was on a journey of discovery during my interviews and I had to constantly ask my participants to clarify and explain aspects of the voluntary sector which were new to me or that I did not understand. These were usually due to my unfamiliarity with the structures of organisations in the voluntary sector; for example in my interview with Rose, a trustee, I asked some questions about the legal status of charities and in my interview with Jane I asked 'what makes a social enterprise different from a charity?' My inexperience may have meant I was distracted and missed some significant issues during the interviews. Conversely, I was learning about the voluntary sector and its intricacies with fresh eyes, which may have made my analysis more comprehensive and potentially more objective. Merriam et al. (2001: 415) suggest that 'what an insider "sees" and "understands" will be different from, but as valid as what an outsider understands'. On the whole, I found that it was beneficial to be an outsider, but I might have had a different experience if the people I interviewed had been part of a closed, tight-knit group, suspicious of outsiders. The character of the voluntary sector, its diversity, its 'bagginess' and its inclusiveness was also an asset during the research process.

I was never just an 'outsider' during the interviews. My status changed from interview to interview, and often during an interview. The only obvious attribute I shared with all my interviewees was our gender. The fact that we were all women and that it was important to discuss women's experiences was assumed. I was not at

any point asked ‘why are you only interviewing women?’ There are a few possible explanations for this. I could infer that the women I interviewed felt that they had experienced the voluntary sector differently from men, or felt that specifically women’s voices needed to be heard. After all, this was a self-selecting group and the women who had contacted me had done so for a reason. On the other hand, it could have been simply because they knew I was coming from a Women’s Studies department, and so it was already acknowledged that this would be my focus, and it did not need to be questioned. However, if I had been a man, I might have been met with some suspicion as to why my research was only on women. In this sense, being an ‘insider’, in this case being a woman, was useful. But this is not always this case. Mullings (1999: 347), describing her experience of conducting interviews with female workers in Jamaica, reflected that she had been ‘unsuccessful in creating a gender-based positional space’ because other factors were more pervasive, such as class and hierarchy within the workplace. In this sense, the respective genders of the interviewer and interviewees are not always the overriding identities within their interaction.

It is also interesting to consider how my interviewees responded to my feminist identity. Unless prompted, I never explicitly referred to myself as a feminist, or mentioned feminism in the interview questions, yet it would not have taken a big leap of the imagination for my interviewees to assume that as a Women’s Studies PhD student, I was likely to be a feminist. This may have created an initial selection bias, as some women who were more ambivalent towards feminism or did not regard it positively may not have responded to my advert for this reason. As a result, the women in my sample may have been more ‘feminist-friendly’ than the general population. Some of my interviewees may not have made this connection, or felt that it was not important. Others, including Christine, Suzie, Kathleen, Rebecca, Gillian, Angela, Laura, Clare and Fran all discussed their engagement with feminism in relation to their work or volunteering in the voluntary sector. I wonder if they would have done this if they did not think I too was a feminist and it was what I wanted to hear. The subject matter was obviously influential, and for those who had considered it, my work had a clear, feminist agenda. Moreover, I have to admit that the

interviews with women who discussed their feminism were generally more relaxed and congenial. It seems that acknowledging this shared standpoint was significant, making both the interviewees and I feel like ‘insiders’.

The interviewees’ question I found most personal was ‘why are you researching Bradford?’ This was relatively easy to answer: I was using Bradford as a case study, it has a rich and diverse voluntary sector, I am from Bradford and I thought I could use my contacts to recruit interview participants. This was accepted and everyone who asked the question appeared to feel comfortable with the answer. Yet the fact that they had asked this question meant that a significant proportion of my participants did not recognise me as being from Bradford. This brings to the fore certain issues about class and belonging. My accent is not pronounced, and although I was born in Bradford and lived there until I was nine, I then moved out to a suburb and attended a Leeds school. I often felt like I was a fraud when saying I was from Bradford, and in some cases I felt like I had been ‘found out’. For instance, prior to the start of our interview, I was asked by Shirley’s husband which school I had attended, an innocent question because he was a retired headteacher. I felt quite uncomfortable revealing that I had not gone to a secondary school in Bradford, despite my claims to have lived ‘just up the road’ (even though it was true that I had). The fact I had not attended a Bradford secondary school demarcated me and my socio-economic background, implying my parents had the money and the drive to move to a better catchment area. Of course, the participants did not need to know this information for them to make class assumptions about me. The fact that I was a PhD student was enough. This was evident when Angela was discussing where she went to school:

A: I were at [Catholic comprehensive school], I don’t know whether you know it, you probably went to Bradford Girls [a fee-paying school]...

B: No, I didn’t [laughs].

A: [laughs].

It is clear from the excerpt that I felt quite defensive, and was worried that she would think I was more middle-class than I was. Although I could accept being an outsider

to the voluntary sector, it was important for me not to be considered an outsider in this regard. I wanted to be legitimate. This is perhaps because of Bradford's national reputation, and I know that those from the area, aware of the stereotypes, may be more suspicious of outsiders interfering. It was also because I felt that being thought of as 'posh' would put me at a disadvantage, causing some of my participants to be less open with me about their experiences. Yet, when I was interviewing women whom I considered to be more middle-class than myself (using imperfect social cues like accent and economic status), such as Grace and Rose, I reacted differently and was perhaps more open about my background. In this sense I was constantly constructing and re-constructing my own identity during the interviews (Reinharz, 1997; Best, 2003).

I have outlined some key areas where I felt discernibly similar to or different from my interviewees; my experience of the voluntary sector, my gender, my feminist views, where I am from and my social class. Yet the picture was much more complex, and the interviewees and I had many more identities. I am white, British and was twenty-three years of age at the time of the interviews. As I have discussed, seven women identified their ethnicity (which fell into BME categories), two participants were American and all of them were older than I was. Two-thirds of the respondents were mothers and I am not. Many of the participants discussed their religious beliefs or upbringings and I am an atheist. Therefore, there were countless connections and disconnections being made during each interview and my insider or outsider positions were never fixed. As already indicated, it has been suggested that there is always 'slippage and fluidity between these two states' (Mullings, 1999; Dowling, 2000; Merriam et al., 2001: 405; Dwyer and Buckles, 2009).

It is impossible to assess how each similarity or dissimilarity influenced the interactions that took place. However, it is interesting to consider which insider/outsider identities I imbued with significance at the time of interviewing, and which I overlooked. My field diary does not contain any references to the ethnicity of my participants or any encounters with cultural difference. I was perhaps not conscious of my own ethnicity, my 'whiteness', during the interviews, because,

regrettably, it is the 'taken-for-granted norm' (Best, 2003: 906). Furthermore, although I interviewed seven women who did identify as having a different ethnicity from me, we were culturally quite similar. They were all born in Britain (with the exceptions of Jessica and Gillian, who were American) and had worked in mixed environments. However, cultural differences were obviously at play during the interviews and my ethnicity and cultural perspective as well as theirs played a part in our interactions. Ayesha, for example, when referring to the role her faith played in her desire to be in the voluntary sector, told me that 'as Muslims, we believe that...' and at the end of the interview she explained her Islamic beliefs in greater detail. For Ayesha, the fact that I was white and the lack of other signifiers, e.g. a headscarf, excluded me from being thought of as Muslim, and I was constructed as an outsider. In retrospect, my awareness of cultural sensitivities meant that I skirted around certain issues. For instance, in my interviews with Fahmida and Rokeya, I did not ask them whether they were single mothers, even when they implied it, because this can be seen as a taboo subject in the South Asian community. It is also important to recognise that I shared my 'whiteness' with three-quarters of my participants, and this too was tacitly acknowledged and constructed during the interviews. Rebecca and Shirley both described the dominance of South Asian men in the Bradford voluntary sector, a topic they might have omitted if I had been South Asian. In doing so, they may have unconsciously made an assumption that I would identify with our 'shared whiteness' (Best, 2003: 906).

It is only on reflection that I have recalled these instances. At the time I was not conscious of how the cultural and racial identities of the interviewees and I had manifested themselves during the interviews, even though with hindsight, it seems quite obvious. I think this is because of the constant fluctuation of my status. I was never just an insider or an outsider, I sometimes occupied both roles, neither, or 'the space between' (Mullings, 1999; Dwyer and Buckles, 2009). This became increasingly evident as I began my transcriptions and data analysis.

Transcription

Before I began the transcriptions, I assigned each participant a pseudonym (the interview files had previously been given only a number). I chose to give first names to my participants rather than calling them 'Interviewee A' etc., in order to make their responses seem more personal and individual. I did not select these names at random. The pseudonyms were chosen because they were of a similar genre as the participants' original names, reflecting their identities in some way. For example, names were chosen to reflect the age of the participant and the women I interviewed of South Asian heritage were assigned names compatible with that. This may have an effect on how my analysis is read, and it is possible that certain assumptions will be made. However, I think the names I chose can offer the reader a brief snapshot of that participant. It was essential that the interviewees' accounts remained anonymous, but I did not want to strip them of their identity completely, and naming them in this way helped me to avoid that.

Transcribing the interviews was a lengthy and often quite tiresome process, yet in retrospect, this period was absolutely crucial to my research, as I was able to reflect on the interviews, formulate ideas and begin an in-depth analysis of my data. I only encountered one major problem whilst transcribing and this was due to the fact that I had conducted several of my interviews in noisy environments, e.g. coffee shops. This meant that I sometimes had to listen to certain sections of my interviews multiple times to understand what was being said. However, because I transcribed the interviews one or two months after conducting them, I could largely recollect how my respondents spoke and what they said, making this task a little easier. I had intended to transcribe each interview directly after it had taken place, but at one point I was doing six interviews per week, so this became unworkable. As it was, I conducted the vast majority of my interviews in June 2012, and had transcribed all twenty-eight interviews by the end of September 2012.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim, without 'cleaning up' the language. I only edited parts of the interview if there had been an interruption e.g. a phone call, or

when the interviewee had gone completely off topic. For instance, my interview with Ayesha included a lengthy story of someone's conversion to Islam, which I decided to omit, but I still gave a brief summary of what she had been speaking about. I included pauses, repeated or filler words and made a note of laughter or a particular tone of voice. Including these speech foibles was useful later when I was trying to recall the mood of each interview. It is generally agreed that transcribing is an interpretive act; a transcription is not a true representation of an interview and therefore the researcher is, consciously or not, selective (ten Have, 1997 in Bird, 2005: 228). Bird (2005: 229) suggests that 'although many of these interpretive acts flow from the social, cultural, and linguistic location of an individual transcriber, others are grounded in the transcriber's methodological stance'. I cannot begin to analyse the assumptions I made during the transcription process due to my social, cultural and linguistic standpoint, although I accept that I may have made many. In terms of my methodology, it was important for me to record as much information as possible about each interview from the recording and include it within the transcriptions. Poland (1995: 291) has argued that the 'emotional context' of interviews and nonverbal communications are almost always omitted from the audio-recording, and as a result, the 'audiotape itself is not strictly a verbatim record of the interview'. In an effort to alleviate this problem, I made field notes after each interview, writing bullet points on how I felt the interview had gone, noting any significant issues and which themes stood out for me, for example:

Field Notes for Interview Ten 'Adele'

- Interview a bit difficult at first, colleague was present.
- I felt a bit all over the place, did I let her think about the questions?
- Motivations-security for family, found it difficult to get flexible job after having children.
- Voluntary sector less professional, more informal and family friendly.
- Private sector-may have to move around the country (she can't because of children) and is also more ego-driven.
- Why more women in the voluntary sector? Men more interested in money and women more interested in care.

After I had listened back to each interview and typed up the transcription, I expanded my field notes into a paragraph, reflecting further on the interview, how I felt about it

and what the key themes were. This really helped to capture the atmosphere and content of the interviews, for example:

Interview Notes for Interview Ten ‘Adele’

This interview started off quite badly as her colleague was hanging around at the start and it put me (and her) off. As a result, my questions were a bit unstructured and I think I should have allowed for more silences in the interview. However, this was a really good insight into a person who does a job (she is a landscape architect) which could be done in the public and private sectors, but who instead has chosen to do this job in the voluntary sector. On the whole, this seems to be because it fits better with her circumstances, she has three children and is a single parent, and this job allows her to work from home two days a week, and is generally quite flexible. I have highlighted a section (on page 12) where she discusses volunteering during a seven-year break from work to have her children, she offered her skills for free to keep her ‘hand in’, so that when people looked at her CV they couldn’t say she had done nothing for seven years. She also volunteered for a charity which supports struggling families, and she helped a family with twins as she had had twins herself and knew how difficult it was. This interview reveals some of the difficulties of being a mother and working, especially when you do not have a supportive partner, and how the voluntary sector can ameliorate some of these difficulties.

These paragraphs grew in length with each transcription, as I became more reflective about my interview style and began to link themes and ideas. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999: 82) have suggested that ‘analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing’. Including these notes and taking the time to consider each interview individually meant that transcribing became part of the analysis, rather than just a necessary step in the research process.

Data Analysis

The analysis of my data began during the interviews themselves, and continued as I recorded the field notes, listened back to the interviews, produced the transcriptions and made more comprehensive interview notes. Analysing the data whilst I was still conducting the interviews allowed me to amend the interview questions, for example, a number of early participants mentioned the lack of trade union membership in the voluntary sector, so I decided to incorporate a question about the voluntary sector

and trade union involvement into the interview schedule. The detailed notes I had produced when transcribing proved to be invaluable as I began to identify common themes. The interview data were therefore coded using a thematic analysis approach. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006: 82) describe thematic analysis as ‘a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis’. This method has its risks, as a researcher can be accused of only ‘seeing what you are looking to find’ (Babbie, 2011: 444). However, I read and re-read the transcripts, and through discussions with my supervisor, who had also read the transcripts, I devised three organising themes which were prominent in the data: how women got started in the voluntary sector; the working conditions of the voluntary sector and how the voluntary sector had changed over the last forty years. Looking back, these central themes were already prominent within my interview schedule, and so to some extent I had already decided which topics my research would focus on, based on the literature review I had conducted. Yet, I did encounter several surprises, for example, my first question at every interview was, ‘How did you get into working/volunteering in the voluntary sector?’ but I had not expected the respondents’ answers to be so long and detailed, revealing a great deal about why women in particular chose to work/volunteer in the sector. I did not predict that this initial question, intended to be a casual opener, would be the basis of my first analysis chapter, pushing me to consider whether there were particular times in women’s lives where they sought out voluntary work, or how family background impacted on attitudes to voluntary work and charities.

Once I had decided on these three organising themes, I then coded sub-themes within the data, cutting and pasting text under headings in Word documents. As an example, under the theme ‘working conditions in the voluntary sector’, I created several sub-themes, including: pay, career progression, attitude of management, job security, flexibility and childcare. The majority of these issues had appeared in my interview schedule, but I did not know how significant some would be and why. For instance, I underestimated the importance of flexibility in the voluntary sector for both paid workers and volunteers, and did not fully realise that whilst job insecurity was a major factor, most paid employees in the voluntary sector had learnt to live with it.

This method of data analysis effectively organised my data into themes, whilst allowing for the unexpected. I decided not to use a specific computer programme to code my data, due to the relatively small sample size and because I had conducted all the interviews myself and could remember them well.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored why I made the methodological choices I did. These included: how my political views and personal biography had a guiding influence on the whole research process; why I chose to focus on women in the voluntary sector; why it was important to interview both volunteers and paid workers and why I chose Bradford District as the site of my study. I have explained why I took the decision to conduct semi-structured interviews. This was primarily due to a historic lack of engagement with first-hand accounts of those who work and volunteer in voluntary sector and because I wanted to explore participants' motivations, and considered interviews to be the most effective method of doing so. I have outlined the ethical issues involved in researching human subjects and my response to them. This chapter has described how I obtained my research sample, and the problems which emerged when using the 'snowballing' method, namely being overwhelmed by respondents and as a result arranging interviews with women who did not quite fit with my research, and also the potential exclusion of women who did not have access to e-mail. I also discussed how and why the sample ended up being dominated by paid workers and how this is reflected in my analysis. I have detailed how I approached the transcription of my interview data, demonstrating that this was an important part of my analysis. I have also outlined the methodological approach I took during the analysis and have outlined the emergent themes in my data.

This chapter contained my in-depth reflections on the process of interviewing. I have suggested that some of the questions I posed did not work that well in practice and that my relative inexperience as an interviewer affected my confidence during the interviews. I have described why I often played the subordinate role during the interviews, and how this was both advantageous and disadvantageous. During my

discussions on power relations, the insider/outsider debate and how I managed the relationships between the interviewees and myself, I have discussed that whilst I have engaged with the canon of feminist methodological literature, I have not always agreed with it. However, the crux of my methodology has been my reflexive approach, which is a significant aspect of most feminist research. I have acknowledged my standpoint, and consistently reflected on how my identity and my actions have influenced this research project.

CHAPTER 3. MAKING CHOICES? INITIAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

In my literature review, I reported that women continue to be over-represented in the UK voluntary sector's paid and unpaid workforce, particularly in the sector's largest sub-field, health and social care (Fine, 2007; DCLG, 2009a; Teasdale et al., 2011: 65). Yet there has been little analysis of why and how this gender segregation has developed. Left unquestioned, it is easy to characterise all work in the voluntary sector as a form of 'care work' and lean too heavily on assumptions about the association between women and caring. This casual assumption was reinforced by the interviewees themselves, who, when asked 'why do you think there are more women in the voluntary sector?', often discussed a link between women and caring/care work. There also exists, within the literature and general discourse, the notion that those who choose to work (unpaid) in the voluntary sector have an inherent inclination to 'do good', and are particularly altruistic in nature (Sheard, 1995). The lower wages in the voluntary sector compared to the public and private sectors have led some to surmise that there is an expectation that voluntary-sector workers are content to receive less money because their jobs offer them an emotional satisfaction, a 'warm glow' bonus (Andreoni, 1990; Rutherford, 2011). Job satisfaction in the non-profit sector is measurably higher than in other sectors and in countless studies women frequently report greater job satisfaction than men, and usually prioritise job satisfaction over financial rewards (Hodson, 1989; Clark, 1997; Benz, 2005; Donegani et al., 2012). Yet whilst much of the literature on the voluntary-sector workforce hints at why people, particularly women, may seek work (paid or unpaid) in the voluntary sector, there has been very little discussion of the specific motivating factors people regard as significant, and perhaps more importantly, the pathways people follow into and through the sector, and how these pathways themselves may be gendered. This chapter focuses on how the women I interviewed described their initial engagements with the voluntary sector, in order to understand what underpins motivations for working in the sector and offer some possible explanations as to why more women than men find work in this sector.

When examining the interviewees' narratives of how they came to be in the voluntary sector I found, as I shall elaborate, that neither the desire to care nor the urge to satisfy an altruistic nature were the most relevant reported motivating factors. This chapter argues that the interviewees' initial encounters with voluntary work were either due to what they perceived as a lifelong engagement with voluntary activities and/or were based on pragmatic decisions dependent on and restricted by their circumstances. These circumstances were usually associated with the lived experience of being a woman, most prominently with motherhood and childcare issues. Decisions to work in the voluntary sector were thus *not* made because the interviewees believed they possessed any typically 'feminine' attributes, such as heightened empathy or the desire to care. Their choices were limited by economic and structural factors. The different way in which each interviewee discussed her disposition towards voluntary work was strongly influenced by her particular cultural and class background. The search for job satisfaction was a recurrent theme, as was the impact of encountering unexpected opportunities. In the interviewees' stories of their respective journeys into the voluntary sector, narratives of choice, circumstance and culture were pervasive.

I have decided to concentrate on the most common routes into the sector as described by my interview participants. I will discuss the interviewees who felt that voluntary work was 'second nature' to them because it had been part of their childhood and upbringing. Related to this, I will analyse the dispositions - religious, political and altruistic - that were regarded as motivating factors for a lifelong engagement with voluntary work. I will suggest that there appeared to be certain times in women's lives when they were more likely to enter into either paid or unpaid work in the sector. For the volunteers, this was early motherhood and at retirement age. In relation to paid workers, I will discuss the young women who started their careers in the voluntary sector and the women who made the decision to join the voluntary sector after years of working in the public or private sectors. I will examine the particular career trajectory of the service user turned paid worker, and what this can reveal about why women engage with the sector. The routes I identify are not linear

and there are countless overlaps. However, the central thesis for this chapter is that women's participation in the voluntary sector, either as paid workers or volunteers, is not primarily motivated by either altruism or empathy. Instead, the women in this study followed established and conventional paths into voluntary work, making pragmatic decisions based on their social and economic circumstances. The chapter is divided into four sections: Early Histories of Voluntary Work; Charitable Dispositions; Life Stage and Service User Trajectories.

Early Histories of Voluntary Work

In this section I analyse how an early engagement with volunteering can embed a disposition of charitable working into women's lives. Not all the interviewees had volunteered as children but those who had usually began their adult volunteering/voluntary work earlier than those who had no experience of volunteering as a child. I will discuss the particular influence of parents, socio-economic background, school activities and the church in developing the will and capacity to be involved in this kind of work.

Upbringing and family background were cited as major influences for engaging in voluntary work. Several of the interviewees discussed their parents' voluntary work within their communities. These were often informal activities, such as work for the local school or church, or cooking and cleaning for elderly neighbours. In their narratives, the impulse to do voluntary work was often constructed as learnt behaviour. Kathleen discussed the voluntary work carried out by her parents for the Labour Party and the church, 'but none of us thought in terms of voluntary work, it was just a way of life'. Similarly, Gillian referred to voluntary work as 'a family tradition', and by going into it herself she was merely 'modelling' her parents. Fiona described her parents instilling within her and her siblings the obligation to help and give to others in their community and Ellie observed that 'it's kind of been something that I've always done'. Here, voluntary work was described as an activity that they had been socialised into from an early age. Rebecca Taylor (2002) and Jon Dean (2012) have discussed volunteering in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's (1992)

theory of habitus. They use Bourdieu's framework of how we embody and reproduce social norms to explain why some people are more orientated towards voluntary work than others. Taylor (2002: 86) argues that:

Habitus gives rise to particular set of expectations and priorities about what labour is, what work is possible and how work should be balanced in different spheres. To use Bourdieu's terms, it 'makes a virtue out of necessity' so that particular forms of labours are not forced but appear as logical choices resting on class and gender identity.

Modelling their parents, the motivation to volunteer appeared to have come 'quite naturally' to the interviewees.

Not all the women I interviewed rooted their desire to participate in voluntary work in their parents' example. Some felt that they had actively gone against what was expected of them. Suzie suggested that she had become involved in voluntary work through the Duke of Edinburgh Award¹⁵ scheme because she 'never liked being at home' and that within her family 'you didn't do anything for anybody else, unless it was family'. She goes on to explain the benefits she gained from volunteering as a teenager and the lasting effect it had on her life:

But I found that you gained a bit of status by doing something which was perceived to be good, so, that's where it started really, and I've worked all my life doing voluntary work.

Similarly, Christine remarked that although her upbringing on a council estate had been very influential, leaving her with 'a sense of the collective, the communal', she had forged her own path from an early age:

It wasn't about being given a sense of community and that being about my parents or something, it was what was important to me. Because none of my family have done what I've done, they all think I waste my time and energy on other people.

It was obviously not a requirement for the interviewees to have had an encouraging or inspiring parent directing them towards voluntary work, although for many of the women I interviewed this factor appears to have been quite influential. However,

¹⁵ The Duke of Edinburgh Award was established in 1956. The Award focuses on young people and is run through youth clubs, voluntary organisations, schools, colleges, young offenders' institutions and businesses. One of the Award's four programmes focuses on volunteering, where participants must 'undertake service to individuals or the community' (Duke of Edinburgh, 2013).

what is clear is that even those without this positive familial influence still felt that their propensity for charity work, which had been with them from an early age, was something they had prioritised and something which had ultimately defined many of their life choices.

Although during the interviews I did not ask explicit questions about participants' socio-economic backgrounds or ask the interviewees to self-define their class, their narratives suggest that Suzie and Christine were from the most working-class backgrounds among my interviewees, bringing to the fore questions about class and the culture of charity work. Historically, formal voluntary work has been seen as an activity for middle-class, 'do-gooder' types (Morris, 1969; Aves Committee, 1969; Wolfenden Committee, 1979). In 2014, there is still a tendency for volunteers to come from middle-class backgrounds, and they dominate the more professional and managerial voluntary roles, e.g. charity trustee positions (Vernon and Stringer, 2009; Mohan, 2011). Taylor (2005: 128) suggests that this trend signifies who holds social and cultural capital, as those from the established middle classes are more able to use their 'family's social networks in the charity world' to 'access public positions of power'. The narratives of the interviewees who were, outwardly, the most middle class (based on their jobs and family background), Grace and Rose, demonstrated the impact of middle-class culture and capital on orientations towards voluntary work. In terms of culture, whilst Grace did not refer to a particular familial influence, she did describe voluntary work as 'a kind of moral obligation'. These remarks are comparable to the discourse used by middle-class Victorian philanthropists who regarded charity as a moral and social duty (Taylor, 2005; Prochaska, 2006). Rose did not rely on family connections to obtain a public position of power, but was able to use her education and experience of teaching, as well as her wider social networks to access posts on governance boards, eventually attaining a post as a non-executive director for the local NHS. In contrast, Suzie and Christine, coming from unsupportive and uninterested families, were not imbued with a sense of moral duty nor could they rely on existing networks directing them towards work in the voluntary sector. This is perhaps why their narratives suggest that they entered into voluntary-sector work in spite of their family backgrounds, not because of them.

Taylor (2005: 134) argues that class and ‘cultural inheritance’ fundamentally shape attitudes towards unpaid work, making it “‘something you do”, even “‘something you have to do”, or “‘something you don’t do””. Similarly, Jon Dean (2012: 3) in his work on youth volunteering and Bourdieu, suggested that a middle-class child is more likely to be orientated towards volunteering because of an ‘advantage’ and ‘self assurance’ which are not innate but have ‘been trained into their bodies and brains over time’ and become ‘second nature’. For children from poorer areas, Dean (2012: 2) argues, formal volunteering is ‘simply not part of their habitus’. If family background and class are as significant in shaping dispositions to volunteer as Taylor and Dean suggest, this could explain why Mohan (2011: 9) found that 7.6% of the population do 49% of formal volunteering hours, and that this engaged ‘civic core’ are more likely to be middle-class. Yet, interestingly, none of the women interviewed identified their parents as having been involved in any formal charity work for registered organisations, except Gillian whose father was a Christian minister. The women I interviewed had gone one step further than their parents and had engaged with formal volunteering. This could reflect the exponential growth of the voluntary sector over the last four decades, and how, unlike before, work in the sector is now seen as a viable career path. It could also suggest that dispositions towards voluntary work cannot easily be divided along class lines. Although there was a disparity in the ways the more middle-class interviewees and the more working-class interviewees talked about their orientations towards volunteering, for them and for the interviewees in-between, formal volunteering had become part of their habitus and a life-long activity.

Out of twenty-eight interviewees, ten first encountered voluntary work through school, particularly the Duke of Edinburgh Award but also through church and youth groups such as the Girls’ Brigade.¹⁶ Being encouraged to participate in voluntary

¹⁶ The Girls’ Brigade is a Christian organisation run by local groups throughout the UK. Its membership is girls aged four to eighteen. The Brigade encourages community involvement (often through schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award) but has an overtly Christian message: ‘it is committed to seeing lives and communities transformed and enriched as individuals seek, serve and follow Jesus Christ’ (Girls’ Brigade, 2013).

work through these means opened up that world, whether as a form of escapism and gaining status outside the family (Suzie), 'being part of something' (Natalie) or as something they enjoyed (Amanda). Many school pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (two million young people participated between 1956 and 1989 - the period in which the majority of my interviewees attended secondary school) or will get involved with volunteering through church or youth groups, and most will not go on to volunteer as adults or work in the voluntary sector (Duke of Edinburgh, 2013). However, if a person has from a young age done some form of voluntary activity, it is perhaps *more likely* that they will feel able to and want to carry this on.

The influence of school activities was discernible, particularly if the interviewee had attended a faith school. At Natalie's (unidentified) faith school, voluntary work was part of the curriculum:

It was very much encouraged at school that you had...in sixth form you had half a day out to do some good work, so you had to go into a school or visit an older person. It was in there, it was part of what you did, that was part of your week.

Karen also discussed her school's charitable focus: 'I went to a Catholic school where I did a lot of fund raising and things, and we were always raising for some charity or doing something for another charity or whatever'. The particular influence of having a Catholic upbringing and attending a Catholic school was marked. Five interviewees explicitly discussed their Catholic upbringing, although none of them were still practising. They commented that they had been 'dragged up Catholic' and that having a 'Catholic indoctrination' had influenced their decisions to participate in voluntary work (Angela and Louise). In the UK, Catholic schooling usually incorporates some form of voluntary work/community action in the curriculum and offers religious instruction on the value of charity and helping others (Grace, 2002). Louise commented on being inspired by missionaries and nuns visiting her school to talk to students about their charitable work in Africa and Natalie mentioned the influence of 'diocesan visits and things like that'. There is not enough evidence here to suggest a correlation between attending faith schools, particularly Catholic schools, and future participation in voluntary work, but this does demonstrate the

significance of early participation in voluntary activities and of growing up in a culture which places a high value on charitable work.

The role of the church, parents and schools in socialising volunteering behaviours has been well documented (Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Raskoff and Sundeen, 1998; Jones, 2000; Sundeen and Raskoff, 2000; Haski-Leventhal, 2009). However, the particular features which have encouraged youth engagement with volunteering in Britain between the 1960s and 1990s, such as faith schooling and the Duke of Edinburgh Award, have not received much attention. Highlighting these features can help us look beyond volunteering as a predominantly middle-class activity, as participation through these means cuts across class divisions in the group of women I interviewed. Chance was also a factor here. It is unlikely that when choosing which school their children attended (if they had a choice) parents prioritised a school with a history of charitable involvement. Yet attendance at certain schools which worked to incorporate charitable activities into the curriculum seemingly affected some of my interviewees' lives forever, firmly placing them on the path to voluntary work. Many of those involved in voluntary work today are not there because they have a completely different outlook or world view from the majority of the population; they are there because they were given the opportunity to volunteer at a young age.

The participants in my study often described voluntary work in terms of it being 'second nature' to them (Suzie). I have suggested that an early engagement with volunteering has a lasting effect, potentially encouraging those who had this experience to seek out voluntary work as adults. Equally, those who are in the voluntary sector may search for an explanation of how and why they got there, and root it in their participation as children. Either way, whilst participation in youth does not equate with participation in adult life, it can perhaps make one more open to work in the voluntary sector when opportunities are presented.

A Charitable Disposition?

The search for an explanation can also be seen in the articulation of certain dispositions: religious, political and altruistic, which I will discuss in the following section.

The Influence of Religion

I have focused on Catholicism above because it was signposted as influential by those who had been brought up as Catholic and/or had attended a Catholic school, despite the fact that these participants no longer practised this faith. It seemed that their early experience with Catholicism had not left them with the religiously inspired disposition to participate in voluntary work, but had ingrained a disposition of charity in their lives. Even those who self-identified as practising Christians (Church of England and Nonconformists) did not dwell on how their faith as such had influenced their decision to engage in charity work. Instead they focused on the voluntary activities they did through the church.

However, when other interviewees discussed different religions, they were more explicit about how their faith had shaped their attitudes towards charity. Jessica observed that ‘as a Buddhist I think I’ve got a strong feeling that...that helping people is the main thing I want to be doing’. Haleema, Ayesha and Nasreen described themselves as Muslim, and commented on how Islam inspired them to do voluntary work. Haleema remarked that, ‘We never turn a blind eye to anyone that wants your support, and not just because of their skin colour, and that’s what my religion teaches me. You look after those that are less fortunate than yourself’.

Ayesha said:

I think it’s been a huge motivational tool for me and I don’t know how that fits in with anything else but I think religiously I’ve grown over the last few years and I think it...it has, I don’t know, it might sound all wishy washy or something, but in terms of my purpose in life, and in terms of why I’m here, as Muslims, we do believe we’re here to help people, we’re here to help mankind, we’re here to serve one another, and I think that’s one thing that I’m always mindful of.

In the methodology chapter I discussed what I believed to be Ayesha's tacit acknowledgement of my 'whiteness' and her assumption that I lacked knowledge of Islam. She and the other Muslim women I interviewed may have felt they needed to explain Islam and its links to charity to me, perhaps more than the Christian women I interviewed (who may have assumed that we shared a cultural perspective). This may be one reason why the Muslim women (and the Buddhist woman) I interviewed were more descriptive about their faith's attitudes toward charity. Nevertheless, in these interviews, I was left with the distinct impression that Islamic scripture and teaching had encouraged their voluntary activities rather than the cultural or social practices associated with this religion.

The practice of charity, certainly the giving of charitable donations, is fundamental to Islam. One of the five pillars of Islam is the zakat, which requires that a contribution of one's income be redistributed amongst the poor. This takes the form of a tax in most Islamic countries, but can also be seen in the UK in the donation of money to international Islamic NGOs, which is particularly encouraged during Ramadan (Singer, 2006; Kochuyt, 2009). The extent to which the culture of charitable work is ingrained in Islamic institutions in the UK (in comparison to Christian institutions, for example) is more open to debate. In the UK, churches and church-related organisations are often regarded as centres for voluntary activity and there is a solid Christian tradition of philanthropic work (Harris, 2002). Mosques and Islamic organisations are a visible feature of the UK voluntary sector, particularly in Bradford, but are (inevitably) less established and lack the infrastructure of their counterparts in the church, perhaps because they are a more recent feature. This could be a substantial reason why the Muslim women I interviewed discussed their faith motivations, but did not discuss involvement in voluntary activity within or through their mosques.

The participation of women in different religions may have also been a factor. Those who were Christian or Christian-raised discussed the 'community hub' aspect of their churches for both their parents and their own activities within it, e.g. running

children's groups (Natalie, Amanda, Anna). In comparison, whilst Fahmida (who did not explicitly identify as a Muslim but indicated that she had a Muslim upbringing) did connect her voluntary work back to her father's heavy involvement in mosque activities (allotment/building projects, organising events), her mother and the children only had a supporting role, e.g. catering for these events. In fact, as a teenager Fahmida had had to give up helping her father at the allotment project because her father did not like her being around other men. In the UK, more women than men are 'active churchgoers' and women are more likely to be involved in the running of the churches' community activities, e.g. Sunday schools and fundraising events, whereas in Islam (and Judaism) women are less involved in the organisational aspects and generally have fewer obligations (Loewenthal et al., 2002; Levitt, 2003: 61). The mosque and the running of the mosque and other Islamic organisations tend to be very male-dominated. This could account for why, although they may have felt influenced by their faith, the Muslim women I interviewed had not had the opportunity to be involved in the formal charitable aspects of Islam.

Even though the mosque and related organisations did not appear to play a role in facilitating their initial encounters with voluntary work, these three women did cite Islam as a motivating factor. However, their religious beliefs were just a small part of their path to voluntary work, paths which appeared to be dominated by a drive to be successful and have a job they enjoyed which benefitted the community. For example, Ayesha's first formal encounter with charities was during her Masters course when she decided to create a multi-media installation to promote the Make Poverty History campaign¹⁷. This experience spurred her on to seek work in the voluntary sector, where she felt her skills could be used to their best advantage:

I think that just gave me a flavour of actually using my skills as a platform in terms of working in the voluntary sector, and maybe using my communication skills as a stepping stone in...not just sharing their message but maybe promoting it in a more effective way because you can have a fantastic message but if it's not delivered in the right way then it just gets

¹⁷ The Make Poverty History Campaign is a coalition of charities, religious groups, campaigning organisations and trade unions which focus on reducing global poverty through lobbying governments. In the UK, the campaign rose to prominence in 2005 when Britain hosted the G8 summit (Make Poverty History, 2014).

lost. So I thought I would use my communication skills as a way of maybe helping to make a difference in the community. I think that just set the tone, after my Masters and my final year project I knew what I wanted to do, and I think that from there my aim was just to try and get into the voluntary sector somehow.

I do not want to minimise the importance of religious motivations; rather, I want to highlight that these women did make pragmatic, career-focused decisions to enter into paid work in the voluntary sector, and these decisions appear to have been made independently of their religious views. It may also be relevant to note that discussions on religious motivations usually took place towards the end of an interview and in the vast majority of interviews, religious belief was not referred to unprompted. For the women who were religious, the fact that they could align their religious beliefs with their work appeared to be an added bonus, rather than their faith being the ultimate guiding force behind their aspirations to work in the voluntary sector. Similarly, it is important not to over-emphasise the influence of religion on the interviewees' choices to participate in voluntary work. Many participants did not discuss the influence of religion and when asked the question about religious motivations described themselves as non-believers or atheists. Suzie observed:

But I'm not religious, I had too much of that as a child. It was a great escape, I was sent off to the Sunday school...but no, I don't have any kind of moral thing, I like doing it, and I love working in it, and if I don't like it, then I'll stop doing it.

The influence of religion was recurrent theme in the interviews. This could be because the interviewees' first encounter with voluntary work was through their church, or because the interviewees felt their faith explicitly encouraged them to participate in voluntary work. Yet religion was never suggested as the sole reason for involvement in the voluntary sector. As we will see, the trajectories of participants' careers and activities were instead guided by a series of circumstances and pragmatic decisions.

Influence of Political Engagement

The line between volunteering/paid voluntary work and political involvement is often blurred. A number of the interview participants' initial engagements with voluntary work coincided with the start of their political activism, usually in their late teens and early adult life. Some were affiliated to political parties and campaigns, e.g. Kathleen and her family campaigned for the Labour Party, Gillian volunteered for the campaign of Democratic Party presidential nominee, and Ayesha campaigned for the Palestinian cause. For several participants it was as though they had actively sought out an environment where they could combine their politics with their work. This was particularly the case for those with an interest in feminist politics. In the 1970s, Kathleen searched for volunteer work at a women's shelter after she and a friend watched the documentary 'Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear'.¹⁸ This evolved into a long-term involvement with domestic violence organisations. In the 1980s, Claire was eager to find a feminist collective which did more than just consciousness-raising, one which did something 'practical and useful', so joined a local rape support service as a volunteer. Both Kathleen and Claire were then recently politicised young women who wished to channel their feminism into making a discernible difference to women's lives. This desire was not confined only to volunteers; Suzie had also been involved in a rape support service for many years and was very clear about how her political motivations drove her to do the job she does:

You know, well I'm a feminist, so it's part of that political thing to work within an organisation like this but also know how the organisation works. It's that holistic thing, rather than just think 'oh, I've got a job, I'm just going to do that job 9-5, then I'll go home'. My politics, my feminist politics, doesn't go like that.

Feminist voluntary organisations are perhaps a good example of where an ideological focus is directly mapped onto the work carried out. For instance, when organisations

¹⁸ 'Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear' was a documentary broadcast in February 1974. Made by Thames Television, it focused on the work of Erin Pizzey and Chiswick Women's Aid (established in 1971) and was one of the first documentaries to show the pervasiveness of violence against women and children (British Film Institute, 2013). Pizzey published a volume with the same title in 1974.

like Rape Crisis and Women's Aid were established, they were run solely by volunteers, who were willing to devote a lot of their time and money to provide services for women in need (Women's Aid, 2013; Rape Crisis, 2013). Now these organisations have evolved and can employ some paid workers and there is the opportunity for women to make a living whilst pursuing their feminist politics.

Some form of engagement in feminist politics was a common experience among the women I interviewed, but other political motivations also emerged. Rokeya, for example, focused on anti-racism politics and helping disadvantaged BME groups. Through her voluntary work as a teenager, Laura became very involved with environmental politics and this had a big impact on her life, especially her career choices:

So that political side grew for me, and I guess then lifestyle choices...it started to affect my whole life, not just in terms of 'oh, this is a fun thing to do and I'm enjoying learning this, and I feel more confident because I've got these skills now' it was also...what I cared about in my personal life as well. So I moved back to Bradford, didn't know what to do with myself, then again, I volunteered for [an environmental charity], the organisation that started me off with the whole thing, and then got a bit of work with them at [young persons' charity], so trying to do youth work/environment stuff.

Registered charities can never have only a political purpose, but 'charities can campaign for a change in the law, policy or decisions where such change would support the charity's purposes' (Charity Commission, 2008). Thus, the nature of voluntary-sector work, providing and campaigning for services that the state does not or will not adequately provide, can be both inadvertently and advertently political. The sector is often regarded as a site of rebellion and protest for those working within it and this was very much the case in the 1980s under Thatcher's government (Lewis, 2008). Shirley observed:

So, 1989...it was when Mrs Thatcher was declaring that there was no such thing as community, but the power was going to the community, I don't know how she squared that, no such thing as society but she was putting power into the community, she said I think. So I thought 'aright, I'll go and work with the community and see what power we can take.'¹⁹

¹⁹ Shirley was referring to a quote from an interview with *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987, where Margaret Thatcher remarked that 'there is no such thing as society' (Thatcher, 1987).

Political motivations, like religious motivations, were never cited as the only reason why an interviewee became involved in voluntary work. However, if, as a young person, they had undergone significant politicisation, this did encourage them to seek out voluntary work and perhaps go on to choose a career where they had the opportunity to exercise and apply their politics.

An Altruistic Disposition or the Desire for Job Satisfaction?

A number of the interviewees reported altruistic motivations for engaging in voluntary work, separate from any religious influences. For example, when asked what motivated her to volunteer, Grace observed: 'I suppose it's just a question of doing what you think is a sort of good thing, a right thing to do, it wasn't a religious motivation at all'. Other interviewees talked about volunteering as a way of 'giving back' (Natalie) and doing something that was 'socially aware' (Diane).

The paid workers I interviewed were always very eager to point out that they were not in the voluntary sector for the money or just to do a job. Christine commented: 'If I really, really wanted to make some money, I could go and do that but you know what, it really wouldn't feel right'. Fahmida remarked that:

For me, because I was volunteering and then got into it, and because I do care about it, for me personally that's how it is, but I know there are one or two people that to them it is a job, they do their hours and they go home. But I don't feel like that.

Fiona and Angela (both paid workers) were also keen to clarify that they would continue to be involved in voluntary work even if they were financially secure:

Even if I won the millions on the lottery, I could go buy a Euro ticket tonight, I could win £135 million, I would probably still do something in a voluntary capacity. Yeah, I think I would, it's always been there, whether I worked in the voluntary sector or not, or whether I didn't work at all, I would still do something in my local community, without a doubt (Fiona).

I can totally understand full-time volunteers, and if I was a millionaire, if I won the lottery, I'd still have to do some work. But I wouldn't do paid work, I'd do the voluntary work that I wanted to do (Angela).

These remarks may seem a little clichéd, but they are actually quite complex. It was clear that neither Fiona nor Angela would be willing to do the same job they do now if they were unpaid. Instead, they would like to make the choice of where they worked and how much they worked, to carry out voluntary activities without the pressure of needing to earn money. This is significant, and is a reminder that although the majority of my interviewees indicated that they did not view their paid work in the voluntary sector as ‘just a job’ and were categorically not ‘in it for the money’, these were still jobs, jobs which they were paid to do and which, economically, they were dependent on. This is not to diminish any altruistic motivations that the interviewees may have felt, but instead to suggest that for the paid workers at least, the desire for ‘job satisfaction’ may be a more useful term through which to view their dispositions.

Davey (2001) found that women are more likely than men to look for jobs with ‘social value’ and which ‘contribute to society’ and that they do not prioritise financial rewards. Haleema’s views seemed to epitomise these findings:

With women it’s more about morals and principles, and if you can do a job well and you still don’t get the amount of money that you expect, but you get the job satisfaction, then that is more than enough. I think that’s more an emotional character of a woman, rather than a male.

Haleema’s idea of what contributes to ‘job satisfaction’ for women is interesting. I would argue that women’s prioritisation of work which makes a ‘contribution’ or has ‘social values’ is inherently linked to a desire for and the fulfilment of ‘job satisfaction’. Karen’s comments are a further example of this:

But no, I think the main reason why I wanted to work in the voluntary sector is that I feel like I’m doing summat, I can’t...I don’t think I could do something that I wasn’t interested in, do you know what I mean? I could get up and go and sit in a bank from nine ‘til five, and I’ve not always known what I wanted to do, but I’ve always known what I didn’t want to do, if that makes sense. It’s like I just couldn’t get up and be bored all day, every day, and it’s like even if I made a bit more money doing something else...it would be awful, I just don’t think it’s a good way to live! I think if you’re doing something that you’re interested in and that’s exciting and you get to meet some of the most wonderful people in the world, then it’s not really like a job...well it is, but it’s not a chore like I know a lot of people’s jobs are.

Karen, like most of my interviewees, felt that the benefits derived from work in the voluntary sector outweighed the loss of any potential earnings. Yet the benefits Karen described were still self-related: she wanted to feel like she was doing something, she did not want a boring job, she wanted a job that she found exciting and where she could meet interesting people.

As I have discussed at the beginning of this chapter, job satisfaction in the non-profit sector is higher than in other sectors and in general, across all sectors, women are more likely than men to report greater job satisfaction (Hodson, 1989, Clark, 1997; Benz, 2005; Donegani et al., 2012). Clark (1997) has put forward a possible reason for this apparent relationship between gender and job satisfaction: women have lower expectations of work than men. This is convincing because the evidence suggests that women actually have worse jobs than men do, and as Clark (1997: 364-5) notes, 'women's higher job satisfaction does not reflect that their jobs are unobservably better than men's'. In fact, women still have unequal access to employment opportunities and continue to be paid less than men for doing equivalent jobs (Manning and Swaffield, 2008). Women are socialised into accepting, and are expected to accept, lower-status and lower-paid jobs (Rowe and Sniznek, 1995; Bradley, 1999). Within this restrictive and unequal job market, women may prioritise the 'social rewards' over the financial, tying their job satisfaction to work which makes them feel valued for helping others and which makes a discernible contribution to society. This could be one explanation as to why more women than men are attracted to work in the voluntary sector.

Although some of the women I interviewed expressed altruistic motivations for engaging in voluntary-work, all felt that they had made a choice to align their beliefs with their work and had experienced the benefits, the satisfaction, of doing so. As I have discussed, these choices were not made in a vacuum. The organisation of paid labour is set up in a way that disadvantages women and limits their opportunities (Evetts, 2000). This means that women may choose to pursue different work-related

rewards than men. Women's prioritisation of work which offers 'social rewards' can be viewed as the search for job satisfaction within a restricted environment.

In this section, I have discussed how differences in religious background can impact on participation in charity work. The women who had been brought up in Christian households, particularly those who had come from a Catholic background and/or had undergone a Catholic schooling, linked their early participation in charity work to church activities, whereas the Muslim women I interviewed first encountered voluntary work outside of the mosque and mosque activities. I discussed how religious motivations, although important, were never the central reason for the interviewees' participation in voluntary work. I have discussed the interview participants whose political beliefs led them to work (paid and unpaid) in the sector and vice versa. I argued that the voluntary work those in this study engaged with allowed them to align their politics with their occupations and interests. I have also examined the narratives of those who referred to their altruistic motivations, arguing that these motivations were often couched in terms of personal benefit and job satisfaction. I did not argue this to suggest that the interviewees' motivations were somehow selfish, but rather to propose that women's prioritisation of jobs with 'social value' may be the consequence of unequal access to employment opportunities. I suggested that this may be relevant in explaining why women are over-represented in the voluntary sector.

Life Stage

So far I have discussed the significance of women's engagement with voluntary work in their teenage years, and the motivating factors which came to the fore in this period and in young adulthood. I now move on to analyse when the women I interviewed were most likely to have begun their adult engagement with voluntary work. Focusing on (but not exclusively) volunteering and unpaid work, my data indicated two crucial life stages: early motherhood and retirement. When considering paid work and careers in the voluntary sector, I will focus on two groups, women starting their careers in their twenties and women changing their careers in their

forties and fifties. By concentrating on these life stages, I suggest that women make decisions to enter into the voluntary sector based on what they know and what they have experience of, following well-established paths that are considered accessible and acceptable for women to take. I argue, like Crompton and Harris (1998), that women do make choices, but that these are very dependent on access to opportunities and are constrained by employment structures which restrict women's access to the labour market. The voluntary sector was regarded by the women I interviewed as a 'way out', an alternative path and a solution to the limitations placed upon them.

Early Motherhood

Early motherhood can be identified as a time when women are perhaps more likely to get involved in the voluntary sector, particularly as volunteers. Many of the women I interviewed seemed to have assumed a volunteer role by getting involved in the groups their own young children attended. This story from Fahmida, who was encouraged to start volunteering for her local mother and toddler group, is typical:

With the children still being young, I started taking them to a mother and toddler group, and the mother and toddler group just...it was running and I got to know some of the mums on the run and there was one or two, because the children had gotten older and they wanted people to help out and I just ended up...because I'm not one of these people that sits around and just...doesn't do anything, I like to get my hands in and get on with it. So I started helping with the...voluntarily, with the mums and tots, erm...and they introduced me to little bits like 'oh, if we apply for this sort of funding we can go on a trip or we can buy some equipment...' That was my first sort of introduction into volunteering and applying for little bits of funding.

This type of voluntary work is accessible to women because childcare is included, and disruption to the daily routine is minimised. These women had usually taken a career break to look after their children full-time. Their narratives suggested that there were few pressures on them to earn a wage during this time, as they were financially supported by their partners. They had not actively sought out voluntary work, but had been willing to take opportunities if they arose.

Shirley's experiences were similar to Fahmida's and illustrate the role of circumstance in this particular route into the voluntary sector:

It started with me going where the children were because that's how I could do it and look after the children. It was never about getting a job, because I always used to say, 'I don't want a job, I don't want a job, I've got plenty to do thank you'.

Shirley did not want or expect that her volunteering would result in a job, but often a few hours volunteering quickly escalated into a much more substantial or permanent role. Rose's trajectory is a good example of this:

I'd started going...and I guess this is my first experience in the voluntary sector...I had started working as a school's liaison worker, so when I wasn't working and the children were little, I used to take them into schools to parenting classes and things like that, you know, this is what it's like being a parent and so on. And from that work I was offered a place on the Community Health Council, which was like the public group of the NHS.

Her first experience of volunteering at her children's school paved the way for Rose to forge a 'second career' in higher NHS management, as a non-executive director, a remunerated role. This highlights the life-changing potential of this informal and often unrecognised type of volunteering. Despite an initial reluctance, both Fahmida and Shirley's volunteering experiences led them to paid work. These pathways are particularly gendered because 'following the children' into voluntary work and possibly paid work is an opportunity that women have that is usually less open to men.

Not all the women I interviewed happened upon voluntary work as a result of 'following the children'. Some women I spoke to, such as Grace, made a definite decision to find voluntary work which would fill their time after their children had gone to school, or as an extra activity separate from their children:

Well, I had two children both at school and I was doing some freelance work but I still had some spare time, and I thought well, you know, I'd like to do something voluntary because I was in a position where I was fortunate enough to be able to do that and spend an afternoon a week somewhere[...] working with the elderly appealed to me because I'd spent a lot of time with small children, obviously my own two, but I'd also helped out at the primary school and I thought I'd spent...well as you do when you are a youngish mother, you spend a lot of time with children, your own young people. So I

thought it would be quite nice to be with people reasonably sane and...
[laughs].

Grace actively searched for a volunteer role which was separate from her own children and unrelated to childcare (yet we also find out that prior to this, she too had 'followed her children' and helped out at their primary school). The extent to which women with children who do not work or work part-time are expected to volunteer may also be a factor here. Women who take their children to play groups or school clubs may feel pressured to participate as other mothers they know do. None of the interviewees who volunteered in early motherhood referred to this, but this was a self-selecting group of women who had enjoyed volunteering and progressed through it, so it is unlikely that they would have felt this way. It is easy to see how assuming the role of the active volunteer mother may present a burden, rather than an opportunity for some women.

Some women who had dropped out of work to have children volunteered as a way to regain experience of the labour market or to learn new skills. They expected that they might find it difficult to get work after a significant career break, and saw volunteering as one way to become attractive to employers. Ellie, a landscape architect, explained why she volunteered to do a landscaping/garden project at her children's school during her time out of work:

And I suppose part of the reason for that was to keep my hand in, in terms of...you know, if you don't keep your knowledge up then you forget it, don't you? So in terms of that...it was helpful for me to...just keep my brain ticking over in terms of landscape and also...I suppose in a way, something that you can put on your CV, so when somebody says 'oh you've had seven years off with children, what have you done' and at least if you've got some examples of things that you've done, that's relevant to what you might be applying for, then they can see that you haven't just done nothing for seven years and therefore it might take you a long time to get back up to speed, in a new job.

Ellie was willing to offer her skills for free, making a pragmatic decision that she felt would boost her career prospects. She also recognised the lack of value placed on domestic and child-related labour. Women are still expected to be the primary carers for children, yet this has a lasting and damaging effect on their careers, the so-called 'motherhood penalty' (Budig and England, 2001; Gangl and Ziefle, 2009; Benard

and Correll, 2010). Volunteering during a career break is perhaps one way to mitigate the damage, but may leave women with the double burden of managing childcare commitments whilst also trying to keep their careers on track so that they can return to the labour market.

Women with young children also sought paid work in the voluntary sector, because they thought that the voluntary sector offered them opportunities for flexible working and training. Diane described why she had sought work at a particular voluntary sector organisation:

When I had my children I didn't want to work full-time and I wanted something that was a bit more flexible, I couldn't really...I didn't really want to go re-train, couldn't afford to take three years out to go to college, and I really quite pragmatically looked at what else was around and realised that the advice work that I was quite interested in had a lot of part-time work, it was local and that there was training.

Diane made a financial decision to join the voluntary sector as a paid worker, as she did not have the time or money to retrain, and knew that this role would offer her training on the job. She also knew that the voluntary sector would offer her flexible hours which would fit around her childcare commitments. She sought out a new career in advice work, enabled by the accessibility of the voluntary sector. Catherine Hakim (2006: 288), in her discussion of women and employment, contends that women can be split into three groups: women who prefer not to work, women who want to work but are 'not totally committed to [a] work career' and the 'minority' of 'work-centred women' who work full-time. I would argue that Diane, like the majority of my interviewees, does not fit into the categories described by Hakim. She wanted to work and have a career, but was constrained by the responsibilities of motherhood and restricted by the availability of opportunities.

These responsibilities and restrictions were especially felt by the women I interviewed who were or had been single parents. Nine out of the eighteen interviewees who had children were single parents when they entered into work in the voluntary sector. Since the 1990s, just over a quarter (26 per cent) of UK families with dependent children are single-parent families, the vast majority of which are

women (ONS, 2012a). This means that the number of single mothers in my study was significantly higher than the UK average. The women in question had often felt the restrictions of motherhood deeply, and were concerned with gaining independence from the welfare system, like Christine and Louise:

I only worked for a couple of years because then I was pregnant, and I hadn't worked with them long enough for them to keep my job so I then had to go on the dole. While I was on the dole and my daughter was a baby, I thought 'I can't just be a mum' (Christine).

I wasn't quite sure what sort of job I wanted. I just knew that I wanted to make some changes in my life. I wanted to get out of this benefits trap that I was in, working family tax credits and just like this cycle that you can never get out of. So you can't really move up, in life. You just always stay at the same place. So I was just aware that I wanted to make changes and I wanted to do a job that paid me enough money to live on (Louise).

Neither Christine nor Louise were looking specifically for work in the voluntary sector, but the opportunity for employment in this sector arose and they took it enthusiastically. The role of chance and a lack of planning are contributing factors here, but this lack of planning does not equate to a lack of commitment to a 'work career', as Hakim (2006) suggests. Instead, these women were ambitious, (Christine set up her own voluntary sector organisation when her daughter was still a baby), but had not yet found work to suit their circumstances.

Women's choices and opportunities are particularly limited during early motherhood (Crompton and Harris, 1999). The women in this study had often dropped out of the labour market to have children or had not yet been able to establish their career before becoming parents. Their interaction with volunteering, often through their children's activities, offered them an opportunity to be active and feel some degree of job satisfaction, beyond the confines of paid employment. For a young mother, volunteering was accessible and sometimes led to paid work and a new career. This can be advantageous for the women involved, who gain valuable workplace experience and access to new opportunities, but perhaps does not represent progression in general for women in the workplace as it can reinforce gender expectations. Yet these women were actively forging identities and careers where they could, using the opportunities that were available to them. The paid workers in

this study, who entered into work in the voluntary sector as young mothers, clearly understood the limitations placed upon them. They made pragmatic decisions, aided by opportunity, to obtain paid employment in this sector.

Retirement

One of the women I interviewed, Kathleen, discussed a volunteer literacy scheme she was involved with in the 1970s, when she was a mother of three young children:

There was a massive, massive army of volunteers; I think a lot of them were either retired teachers or people like myself who were at home with small children.

The interviews indicated that retirement and early motherhood were significant life stages, times when women were likely to be involved in some form of unpaid volunteer work. The interviews also suggested that retired women were motivated to volunteer for similar reasons as women in the stages of early motherhood: to occupy time, offer them a different focal point and to keep them engaged with the world.

Rose was a good example of this:

So then I found myself with nothing to do, and I'm not the person with nothing to do. So that's when the voluntary sector stuff really kicked in [...] I get an awful lot out of it, because I'm not the kind of person who...I don't like housework...and I've got plenty of things to keep me occupied, but I do need to keep my brain going! And this is a fantastic new way to do it, and to me, it's given me far more back than I would ever give to it.

Grace, although she had not yet retired, reflected on the importance of volunteering in retirement and the personal benefits it could offer:

I think it would be awful to retire from work and not have anything to do. I mean, you know, going on holiday is only a pleasure because you are working the rest of the time. I think if you know that you are volunteering on a particular day of the week, it also helps you arrange other stuff around it, you know. I think it gives people an absolute reason for getting out of bed in the morning. If you are retired, sometimes people get quite depressed actually when they have retired. So...yeah, I think it's a very, very good thing, it gives you a sense of purpose, and there's always more that you can do.

There is a general perception that the volunteer force is largely made up of men and women who have retired from paid employment. Rose described herself and those

she came into contact with as a ‘group of people who accept that there’s a certain time in your life when you’ve done your day-to-day work and you reach a stage when you want something different’. It is true that nearly half of charity trustees (people like Rose and her counterparts) are aged sixty or over (Vernon and Stringer, 2009: 1). But in reality, it is between the ages of thirty-five and forty-nine that a person is most likely to participate in formal voluntary work and the average age of a volunteer is forty-nine years.²⁰ Indeed, the four women I interviewed who were retired, Rose, Shirley, Suzie and Kathleen, had long been involved in the voluntary sector, and had already held several volunteer roles by the time they reached retirement.

However, for Rose and Shirley at least, it was difficult to say when exactly their retirement had begun. Rose, a trained teacher had moved in and out of paid and unpaid work whilst her children were young, eventually making the decision to ‘retire’ early from teaching after her youngest child left to go university. It was at this point that she became a full-time volunteer, a trustee for several charities and a board member of some public organisations. Within these public-sector posts she received some financial remuneration and it also became apparent during our interview how much time she spent working on these various committees and boards. Shirley, also a trained teacher, engaged in paid work until the age of fifty-one, at which point she described herself as taking ‘what they euphemistically call “early retirement”, because I didn’t really want to work full-time, I’d got things I wanted to do’. She then went on to set up a local community centre, work which she described as ‘mostly voluntary’, although she did negotiate payment when there was available funding because she felt that she was being taken advantage of and that her skills were not being recognised:

I was paid as a consultant for a while, basically because I was going to meetings where there were council officers, teachers, sitting round the table being paid for their time there, and I was the only volunteer and I was taking the minutes and sending them out! [laughs] I thought ‘now, come on’, here’s a highly qualified person, community developer, here and you’re expecting

²⁰ Unfortunately, there are no figures which show whether or not the average age varied between men and women (Communities and Local Government, 2009).

me to service you. So I said, 'I think you maybe ought to pay me for...' what did I say? 'nothing less than twenty pounds an hour for ten hours a week and I'm not going to count the hours that I do', which was about seventy.

At the time of interview, Shirley, then seventy-four, was no longer working seventy-hour weeks, but was still an active volunteer. Suzie was in a similar position, as although she had recently retired from paid work in voluntary organisations, she told me that she was now part of a women's housing group and on the board of two management committees, adding, 'since I've been retired, I've not stopped'. Rose, Shirley and Suzie's experience of 'retirement' appears to be quite different from the norm, but this may be because our view of what retirement is orientated towards men's experience, rather than women's.

It has long been suggested that men find the adjustment to retirement more difficult than women (Parsons, 1942; Tibbitts 1954). This is because a man's sense of identity is very much tied to his occupation, and this is problematic when he retires, as he may no longer have a distinct role (Parsons 1942). Tibbitts (1954) suggests that women are more prepared for retirement because there will be a continuation of their domestic role, and they are more likely to have developed stronger social networks outside of work. Here, men's work is characterised as 'full-time, lifetime, uninterrupted labour-force participation', which comes to an abrupt stop upon reaching retirement, whereas women's work is depicted as lacking in career focus and centred on domestic life, making retirement a less life-changing event (Crompton, 1999: 2). The age of these studies is significant and they do not take into account growth in women's employment over the last fifty years, and changes to employment and in society more generally, as the reality of a 'job for life' dissipates and the model of the male breadwinner erodes (Crompton, 1999; Woodd, 2000; Barnes and Parry, 2004). Yet it is still the case that men and women experience retirement differently, and this because they have experienced work differently. Simmons and Betshild (2001: 58) argue that 'women's experiences do not fit the male work/retirement model due to work discontinuities, life choices and circumstances'. Women are more likely to hold low paid and part-time positions, and 'follow more fragmented career trajectories' as a result of the childcare burden

(Barnes and Parry, 2004: 215). This experience of work may have the effect of making retirement from work less definable for women, and possibly less desirable. Szinovacz (1995) suggests that because they have had a more disrupted, and therefore shorter, working life, women may feel that they have not yet achieved their career goals by the time of retirement. This could account for why Rose, Shirley and Suzie continued to do what was at times full-time work for several years after their so-called retirements. The accessibility and structure of the voluntary sector (specifically, the availability of unpaid management roles) allowed them to assume new professional identities, make proactive choices and effectively continue their working lives. If they had been looking for paid employment at this age, it is perhaps unlikely that they would have been able to attain roles with the same status and responsibility, due to their age and disrupted career paths. For these reasons, we can see why voluntary work may be particularly appealing to some women of retirement age.

If women take time out of work to look after children it is likely that they will bear the economic cost of doing so, their careers prospects will be more limited and their pensions sizeably reduced (Budig and England, 2001; Gangl and Ziefle, 2009; Benard and Correll, 2010). As a result, women may be less prepared and less able to retire at the statutory age (Barnes and Parry: 2004). This may not have been a problem for Shirley and Rose whose husbands were in paid employment until retirement age. Rose even referred to herself (jokingly) as a 'kept woman'. Yet Kathleen, who had been a single parent since her children were young, was presumably more dependent on her own income. Since her career-break, she had worked full-time in paid employment at an education charity until the age of sixty-three. On retiring, Kathleen began a new volunteer role, taking calls for a homeless charity one night per week. She referred to this role quite excitedly, 'oh I do voluntary work now by the way, [...] I've been doing it for about a year, since I retired...full-time'. This comment about retiring from full-time work suggested that she saw her new volunteer role as a form of part-time work. It was unpaid, but it was work she had chosen to do and which was removed from any financial imperatives. Moreover, it was work that fitted around her care for seven grandchildren. She told

me that once all her grandchildren had gone to school she would be released to do more voluntary work, at her local theatre perhaps. After a disrupted career trajectory, the voluntary sector offered Kathleen work which she was excited to do and which fitted around yet another set of childcare commitments. For women considering the prospect of retirement, voluntary work is not only a way to continue a career or even to start a new one, it is also a way to find different and fulfilling work, which is flexible and free from the financial pressures that may have constrained their choices in paid employment.

The numbers of lone parents in the UK have been increasing since the 1970s; in 2011 there were two million lone parents with dependent children, 92 per cent of whom were women (Millar, 1994; ONS, 2012a). This means that there are significant numbers of women approaching retirement age who have been lone parents, or that have gone through periods of lone parenting. They are likely to have experienced ‘the motherhood penalty’ more than other mothers, and be economically disadvantaged as a result (Budig and England, 2001). As I have mentioned previously, the number of my interview participants who were single parents was significantly higher compared to the UK average. This could suggest that single mothers are more oriented towards voluntary work, which might then also lead to higher rates of participation amongst this group in retirement. Single mothers, as a consequence of having particularly disrupted working-lives, may be more willing to pursue a second career in voluntary work or want to find to a fulfilling, pressure-free volunteer role.

The retirement age is changing, and the age when women can claim state pension will rise from sixty to sixty-six by 2020 (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013). This may affect the rate of volunteering for women aged sixty and above. There may also be a further generational shift. When I asked Rose to comment on why she thought more of her volunteer ‘colleagues’ were women, she remarked:

There are more women I think, but I think that goes with the work pattern type thing. Although that might change now that...sort of the next generation of people are coming through who have still got...women who have

developed...I am generalising here, but developed stronger careers than we had.

If women are developing stronger careers and have not spent significant periods out of the labour market to have children (and therefore may not have had time to volunteer in early motherhood) they may not feel the need to continue their careers in a voluntary capacity upon their retirement. Yet, if women have children, their careers will almost always be negatively affected and marked by a series of discontinuities. This may encourage them to actively seek out volunteer opportunities upon retirement. For the supposedly 'retired' women I interviewed, submitting to full retirement was not an option.

Career Beginners and Career Switchers

I interviewed seven women in their twenties and thirties who had begun paid employment within the voluntary sector in their mid-twenties: Fran, Karen, Amanda, Haleema, Laura, Natalie and Ayesha. This group had begun their careers in the voluntary sector, getting jobs in voluntary organisations straight after finishing university, or within the first few years following this. I identified this group of women as 'career beginners', who, when beginning their careers, did not have children or elderly parents to care for. Their narratives suggested a lack of planning in terms of their career decisions, and it became clear that the majority had not actively sought out work in the voluntary sector. Amanda described her entry into the voluntary sector as 'accidental':

I didn't really have a grand plan. I went to uni, went travelling, came home, saw a job and applied for it. That was kind of how it went. I didn't even think about what sector I was in, I just saw a job that I liked and I worked in Doncaster and then sort of stayed in the voluntary sector ever since really. [...] I guess I'm a bit of a funny one, I know a lot of people are really passionate about...and obviously my job is in the voluntary sector, but *I just sort fell into it*, and stayed in it, and I kind of...don't necessarily think it would be selling out to move out of it, but like I said, some people are really passionate about that (Amanda, emphasis added).

According to Amanda, most of her colleagues had specific reasons for working in the voluntary sector, but she felt differently. For her it was more about finding an available job that she would enjoy doing. Karen expressed similar views:

I think...I'd have been happy to have got a job in any kind of sector at that time I think, but I was really overjoyed with where it was, because then you're actually helping people, so that was good (Karen).

It is unsurprising given their young age that their experiences of paid work and the voluntary sector (although some had been volunteers) were quite limited. Haleema had become interested in youth work during her time at university and had volunteered and briefly worked for the council on the Youth Offending Team. It seemed that she did not quite know how she ended up working in the voluntary sector and, at the time, what to expect:

When I finished university I went to work for the council, and it was totally different from working for the Youth Offending Team on a voluntary basis. And *all of a sudden*...I worked for the council and then the post came up here, within this organisation and *I was told* this was a voluntary sector organisation, and it was slightly different in terms of your pay, your expectations, your turn around and so on. I applied for the post and I've been here now seven years (Haleema, emphasis added).

For this group of younger women, although the voluntary sector was a relatively unknown entity, it was an option available to them, and opportunities to work in voluntary organisations were seemingly easy to come by in the early years of their working lives. One reason for this could be the sector's exponential growth over the last thirty years, and in particular, the last decade (Clark et al., 2011). When the women I interviewed who were then in their forties and fifties: Diane, Jane, Fiona, Rebecca and Anna, began their working lives in the 1970s and 1980s it was perhaps not as easy to find paid work in the voluntary sector. They had not begun their careers in the voluntary sector (with the exception of Rebecca, who worked in a women's hostel after she finished university) and by the time of their entry into the sector, they had already built quite substantial careers in the private and public sectors. For example, Diane and Jane had worked in retail and Fiona had worked for social services. They made a move into the voluntary sector in their forties partly because of its reputation and aims. Diane commented that she began volunteering and then paid work in the sector because she'd 'always wanted to do something a bit

more socially focussed'. I have dubbed this group of women 'career switchers', because they had all changed careers at least once.

Rebecca, who although was slightly unusual because she had begun her working life in the sector, had made several switches between the public and voluntary sectors over the course of her career and offered this response when asked why she had made the employment choices she had made:

I don't stop and think about why I make the choices that I do. It's very much what feels right at the time. So that thing about the advantages and disadvantages, it depends what the experience I've had, the local authority experience I'll be looking more favourably at the voluntary sector, and when I've been a long time in the voluntary sector I'll probably look more favourably at the local authority, I don't know [laughs].

Rebecca alludes to the advantages and disadvantages of working in both sectors, which I will discuss further in the next chapter, but she also highlights her lack of planning and the influence of pragmatic, situation-dependent decisions when it came to making her career choices. I also found that a couple of the women I interviewed from this age group had been worried about their future employment prospects prior to making the switch to the voluntary sector. Anna, who had been a teacher and was, at the time, self-employed, said: 'I was panicking a bit, thinking I need...where am I going to get this...you know, I need money to keep myself going'. Finding a job in a voluntary organisation suited to her interests was just what she 'needed' (Anna). Another of my participants, Jane, predicted, in light of the political and economic situation, that she would have been made redundant at the NHS Primary Care Trust where she worked, so decided to set up her own social enterprise. For this group of women, entering the voluntary sector at a later age, the sector offered an alternative to work within the public or private sectors. This alternative was perhaps not such a viable option when they were starting out in the world of work because the voluntary sector was smaller and less diverse than it was in 2012. These women, like the colleagues Amanda referred to, extolled the virtues of the voluntary sector and could be more specific about its advantages and disadvantages, due to their prior experience of other sectors.

The main difference between these two sets of women is that for one set, opportunities in the voluntary sector were more available at the time when they were looking for their first jobs. For both age groups, their career planning appeared to have been quite limited and their moves into the sector were often facilitated by chance. When active choices were made, they were made with the knowledge that the voluntary sector offered a viable alternative. This lack of career planning is perhaps not unusual. Halford et al. (1997) asked male and female workers (nurses, bank workers and social service workers) to discuss how much career planning and strategising they had engaged with and found that very few had been strategic and involved in active planning. Most, regardless of sex, had built 'contingent careers', rather than careers based on an active pursuit of promotion (Halford et al., 1997: 10). Yet the interviewees' particularly *ad hoc* approach to career planning fits with the general pattern of women's work and, moreover, the way in which work is structured in the voluntary sector. The development of women's careers tends not to follow the traditional linear route more associated with men's working lives, and is often punctuated by time out of work (Patton and McMahon, 2006: 117). As a result, women are more likely to change their careers and to have worked in multiple fields, just like the women in their forties and fifties that I interviewed. Similarly, a career in the voluntary sector is unlikely to follow linear progression, as voluntary organisations tend to have a less hierarchical structure and paid roles are often temporary, dependent on current funding streams. By necessity, voluntary-sector workers build a 'portfolio career', working in several different voluntary organisations and some are prepared, like Rebecca, to move back and forth across sectors. The younger women I interviewed appeared to have stumbled upon the voluntary sector, and had begun to forge reasonably successful careers. For the older women I interviewed, the voluntary sector had represented a new beginning.

Service User Trajectories

In this last section which centres on service user trajectories I shall discuss two interviewees: Kerry and Fahmida. Out of all the women I interviewed, these were the two who had most clearly experienced a service user progression, entering the sector

as services users and then going on to find paid work. I think these specific case studies aptly demonstrate how and why women may be drawn into work in the sector. Fahmida, as I have discussed above, began to volunteer at the mother and toddler group that she attended with her three children and it was through this group that she started to apply for small amounts of funding. Another woman involved in running the group asked her to become a board member for children's centre, and later she joined the governing board at her son's school. She explained how this led to paid work:

It just sort of escalated from there, and I'm just trying to think...then what did we do? I just ran along with it for a while, and then because my kids got older...both my boys went into school then and then my daughter went into school, and I had a lot of support from [the children's centre] at the time, with my son having a lot of problems and because I had three young kids, sometimes it just got really hard [laughs][...]There were just lots of training courses and things [run through the children's centre and school], it were really useful because...and I think, to be honest, I found it financially hard as well because I'd sort of gone from having a full-time job, no kids, having a lot of money and to be honest, spending it, you know, just on holidays and going away, the things you do when you've no kids and little responsibilities. And all of a sudden I wasn't working and I'd got three kids...and I was like 'oh, I'm starting to find it hard now'. So I started looking, I thought I'd get a little part-time job or something. And at the time the schools were starting to have these community rooms, and the head teacher said to me 'well, would you like to come and work in the community room, work with parents' and I thought, 'oo, I'd get paid for the job'.

This part-time job involved running parent classes and coffee mornings in a community room attached to the school. It gave her the confidence and experience (along with the other volunteering that she had continued to do) to obtain her current job, working as a Community Development Officer at a community centre (this job was originally full-time, but her hours had just been reduced at the time of our interview). She remarked that this whole transition had occurred 'naturally...from the women's group [the mother and toddler group], I just got onto this full-time job'. Fahmida's service user to volunteer to paid worker progression was not always linear. For example, whilst at the children's centre, Fahmida occupied a dual role: she was both a board member and a service user, receiving support primarily due to her son's health problems. Furthermore, she had continued unpaid work as a school governor and for a health charity. Yet, Fahmida's story shows the apparent

accessibility of work in the sector if one is able to capitalise on available opportunities. Of course, Fahmida's 'natural' transition was aided by a set of skills she had already developed during her time working in a technical role within the NHS, prior to having children. In comparison, Kerry, my other case study, who had children at a younger age, had a more limited experience of work.

Kerry was someone whom I had initially turned down to interview (after being inundated with responses to my call for participants), but she sent me a follow-up e-mail detailing her path into voluntary work and her passion for the sector, and I decided her story was too interesting to omit. During our interview she explained more about how she came into the sector:

I left school at the age of sixteen and became a mum straight away, and then kind of...became a mum again quite quickly after [laughs], so before I was twenty I had two children, and then worked in various kind of jobs, supermarkets, charity shops...little bits of money here and there, I didn't have anything that I'd call a career. Then I got married, had two more children [laughs], I just create children! And then my marriage broke up and I moved to Bradford, and then I was exploring different ways of...boosting my chances of getting an office job really was what I was trying to do. I connected with a charity called [Lone Parent Charity], which was my first experience of being in the charity...anything. I didn't know what the sector was. They helped me, and they supported me, I kind of linked in with them and then lost them again, and then I did an IT course [for lone parents run by another voluntary organisation] and when I was starting to look for a job there was a vacancy at [Lone Parent Charity] so I went for it and I was successful. So that was like my first break into the voluntary sector, and ever since then it's...it's kind of in my blood now, I feel so passionate about the sector as a whole, it's overtaken me.

Unlike Fahmida, Kerry's way into paid work in the voluntary sector was facilitated not through volunteering, but through the experience and skills she'd obtained as a service user of these organisations. In her e-mail she explained that the IT course had given her 'far more than IT skills' because 'it was supportive of individuals' circumstances and gave an opportunity for friendship and mutual support (I'm not sure that added extra would have been factored into a commercial enterprise)'. At the time of our interview, Kerry was thirty-seven and by then had a strategic role at a charitable organisation for older people. Like Fahmida, she had been facing financial struggles before finding work in the voluntary sector and was also coping with the

additional pressure of being a single parent. Fahmida never explicitly said she was a single parent and I never asked, but her narrative suggested this situation, although she commented that her own parents had been on hand to provide childcare.

Fahmida and Kerry's stories illustrate the complexity of work and progression within the voluntary sector. Compared to equivalent organisations in the public and private sectors, the distinction between service users, volunteers and paid workers is more blurry in voluntary organisations, particularly in grass-roots welfare organisations, as discussed by Milligan and Fyfe (2005). Volunteers and paid workers may have had a service user history, and service users are often encouraged to volunteer. A good example of this is within mental health organisations (Truman and Raine, 2002). Women are more likely than men to be users of public services (voluntary and statutory), and, I suggest, are therefore more likely to find paid work in the voluntary sector via the service user trajectory (UK Women's Budget Group, 2010). Moreover, if women use more services than men and on a more regular basis, then the stigma attached to the role of 'service user' is inevitably diminished. Women are not only placed in a better position to take up opportunities within the sector, but may be more open to accepting them and more able use them as a starting point for their careers. The accessibility of voluntary-sector organisations and the support they offer to their services users, volunteers and paid workers will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, but it is important to note that this environment is particularly facilitating for those in difficult financial circumstances and/or who are single parents like Kerry and Fahmida. Kerry and Fahmida's first experiences of the voluntary sector was as service users and their trajectories demonstrate the possibilities and accessibility of career progression within the voluntary sector and can help explain why women are over-represented in the sector's paid and unpaid workforces.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on women's initial engagements with the voluntary sector in order to understand the sector's gender segregation. I have discussed the

significance of an early exposure to voluntary work, particularly family activities and schooling, in creating a certain attitude and realisation of the possibilities of charity work. I analysed the different religious, political and moral dispositions that my interviewees identified as important in shaping their approach to voluntary work. I have examined the way in which the women I interviewed discussed their initial motivations to work in the sector, and suggested that these were often self-related and centred on the search for job satisfaction. I have argued that women may prioritise jobs which have social rewards due to lower expectations and unequal access to employment opportunities. I have focused on volunteering in early motherhood and how this activity is a potential stepping stone to a career in the sector. I have examined the narratives of the interviewees who had retired from paid employment, and offered an explanation as to why they had continued to volunteer. I have discussed the paid workers' reflections on how they found work in the voluntary sector, discovering that this was not always an active decision, certainly for the younger women I interviewed, for whom sector opportunities were more readily available. For certain interviewees in their forties and fifties, the voluntary sector had enabled their career switching. I have analysed the progression of two interviewees who had previously been service users of voluntary organisations but had gone on to find full-time paid employment within the voluntary sector. I suggested that this particular trajectory had a gendered dimension, because women are more likely to be service users.

Women's orientations to voluntary work are shaped by the culture and religious environment they grew up in and by an early engagement with politics. The interviewees did discuss the relationship between women and care work, but never suggested that this was the reason why they themselves had become involved in voluntary work. Instead, their narratives pointed to the role of circumstance, making the most of opportunities, the search for job satisfaction and taking pragmatic decisions within a restricted environment.

CHAPTER 4. FLEXIBILITY, FLUIDITY AND FREEDOM: WORKING IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

In the previous chapter, I argued that an analysis of the specific routes women take into voluntary work can be useful in explaining why women are over-represented within the voluntary-sector workforce. Yet examining initial engagements with voluntary work and the choices women make upon entering the sector does not fully account for why and how this gender segregation has developed and is sustained. What is perhaps equally important is why women choose to stay in the sector and what it can offer women, particularly those with children. In this chapter I examine the interviewees' descriptions of voluntary-sector work, discussing both the positive and negative aspects of their working lives. I will compare work in the voluntary sector with work in the public and private sectors, using the interviewees' experiences to analyse differences and similarities.

As I discussed in the literature review, the voluntary sector is very diverse, encompassing organisations which range dramatically in size and structure. My research sample focused on a small number of organisations, small-to-medium-sized charities (mostly working on health and social care issues) within a specific geographical area, and only two of the participants (Anna and Fiona) worked for the same organisation. As a result, the workplace experiences of the women I interviewed were varied, determined to a large degree as the data suggests by relationships between individual staff members. It is thus not easy or advisable to make generalisations about voluntary-sector work. I will however argue that the interviewees' narratives did suggest that there is a certain ethos and management style that many voluntary-sector organisations seem to espouse and aspire to. In addition, I will also discuss how the set-up and structure of the types of voluntary sector organisation I focus on fostered a certain kind of workplace culture. I will argue that, on the whole, the working environments of these voluntary-sector organisations were amenable to women's lifestyles and work priorities.

This chapter focuses on the aspects of the voluntary sector which appeared to have the greatest influence on the participants' daily working lives and their overall career progression. I have grouped these into five broad themes, expanding on Rubery and Grimshaw's (2001: 167-8) discussion of the factors involved in determining 'job quality': employment relations and job protection; time and autonomy; and skills and job prospects. In terms of 'employment relations and job protection', I discuss career opportunities and management practices as well as job insecurity and risk. Related to these, but also linked to 'time and autonomy', I explore the availability of part-time work and flexible working practices in the voluntary sector and examine the relative freedom, creativity and autonomy afforded to ordinary workers within these organisations. Using 'skills and job prospects' as a starting point, I analyse the accessibility of work in the sector and organisations' focus on training and personal development as reported by my interviewees, as well as the effects of the sector's flatter hierarchies and the typical patterns of career progression. I will take into account how the voluntary sector is structured and how this impacts on its management and organisational culture. I focus mainly on the experiences of paid workers because I interviewed more of these and they had, in general, more experience of the voluntary sector as a workplace. However, I will also discuss the experiences of the unpaid workers I interviewed for comparison. The chapter is divided into five sections: Part-time Work and Flexibility; Accessibility and Training; Hierarchy and Career Progression; Freedom, Creativity and Autonomy; and Job Insecurity and Risk.

Part-time Work and Flexibility

Since the 1960s there has been a steady increase in the number of people working part-time in the UK; in 2012 around 27% of workers worked in part-time roles (Jenkins, 2004; Booney, 2005; Connelly and Gregory, 2008; ONS, 2013b). This is not evenly balanced across the sexes, as 42% of women in employment work part-time, compared to just 12 % of men (ONS, 2013a). The generally greater availability of part-time work has been cited as one of the major factors contributing to more women, and in particular, more working mothers, participating in the labour market

(ONS, 2013a). In the voluntary sector, 40% of the workforce is employed part-time, a much larger proportion compared to the public sector (30%) and the private sector (25%) (NCVO, 2013c: n.p.). At the time of interview, six out of the twenty paid workers I interviewed (30%) worked part-time (under 30 hours per week), working as administrators, project workers and project managers. However, most of the paid-worker participants had been employed part-time at some point during their voluntary sector careers.

The fact that there are more part-time opportunities in the voluntary sector can be explained, in part, by a circular process: the sector's workforce consists predominantly of women, women are more likely to want and need part-time jobs, more part-time work is available and as a result, more women are drawn into work in this sector. This is not voluntary sector specific; there is increased availability of part-time work within all female-dominated workplaces (Jenkins, 2004). But there are also some structural reasons which contribute to the availability of part-time work within the voluntary sector. The small-to-medium-sized charities that the women I interviewed worked in were largely reliant on relatively short-term (1-3 years) funding streams, project-based funding and local government contracts. Funding and contracts are often offered on a limited basis for specific projects, so of necessity, organisations employ part-time workers to save money. Rebecca and Fiona both discussed this:

Staffing-when it comes to the voluntary sector, it can be an issue because you don't always have the funding to employ the staff that you might need or you might only be able to employ part-time staff rather than full time staff (Fiona).

I don't know whether there's far more part-time working in the voluntary sector than there is in the statutory sector, it certainly feels like that but that . . . I don't know if that's true, that might be funding-y stuff, and again that would support women (Rebecca).

When Rebecca suggested that part-time work 'supports women', she was presumably referring to women with young children, those who choose part-time work to strike a balance between work and childcare. Other participants did infer that the availability of part-time roles in the voluntary sector was a primary benefit for women with

children, and there were those interviewees like Diane who had purposely looked to the voluntary sector for part-time work after having her children. This relative abundance was sometimes contrasted with a lack of opportunities for part-time work in other sectors. For example: the apparent impossibility of doing her job part-time was the main reason why Jane left the private sector:

When I became a mother eighteen years ago, they wouldn't let me work part-time, they didn't allow part-time working. So I had to give up really. And it was a really good career, I've travelled to Hong Kong, India, it did teach me really valuable skills, really interesting but it didn't sit well with being a mother, the long hours which were expected.

Jane's dilemma, having to give up a 'good career' upon motherhood, is common. Most women who work part-time do so because of family commitments (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005). The main concern for women who go from full-time to part-time work is that they will be unable to, or will be prevented from, retaining the position they held previously, and they will ultimately have to 'downgrade' and accept lower-paid and lower-status jobs (Connelly and Gregory, 2008). Most part-time roles are considered to be 'bad jobs', low paid and low status, and on average, women who work part-time have hourly earnings which are 25% less than the hourly earnings of women who work full-time (Higgins et al., 2000; Walsh, 2007; Manning and Petrongolo, 2008: 1; Mumford and Smith, 2009). This is largely because part-time work is concentrated in low-paid areas. In 2003, almost 25% of women in part-time work were shop assistants, care assistants or cleaners, and only 4.4% were managers, compared to 15.1% of women in full-time work (Manning and Petrongolo, 2004: 3). There is often the assumption that part-time workers cannot fulfil managerial responsibilities, as they are unable 'be there' at all times or work overtime and therefore cannot engage in a culture of 'competitive presenteeism' (Simpson, 1998; Lawrence and Corwin, 2003; Durbin and Tomlinson 2010). Manning and Petrongolo (2004, 2008) refer to this distinction between 'good' full-time jobs and 'bad' part-time jobs as the 'Part-time Pay Penalty' which contributes to significant pay inequalities between women, and between women and men. In 2005, the Equal Opportunities Commission report 'Britain's Hidden Brain Drain' concluded that four in five part-time workers were 'working below potential', i.e. working in jobs that did not use their education, skills and previous experience,

and these people were predominantly women (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005: 18-19).

It is also recognised that although part-time work promises ‘the best of both worlds’ of work and home, part-time workers find it difficult to fully integrate into the workplace and can be marginalised by their full-time colleagues and managers (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003; Dick and Hyde, 2006; Walsh, 2007). This can mean that they will continue to miss out on opportunities to progress and fail to ever reach their ‘potential’. For example, Francesconi and Gosling (2005) found that part-time workers received 40% less training than their full-time counterparts. The impact is long-term. Even workers who have worked part-time for just one year face a 10% reduction in earnings after 15 years, compared to those who have been in continuous full-time employment (Francesconi and Gosling, 2005). The lasting reduction in earnings in turn affects pension contributions, and as a result, women (who represent the majority of part-time workers) continue to have less to live on in retirement than men. This under-utilisation of the work-force, the wastage of skills and the inherent gender inequity is recognised as hugely problematic (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005; Connelly and Gregory, 2008).

Within the voluntary sector the negative impacts of part-time working might be less exacting. This is partly because there are, proportionally, a greater number of part-time opportunities, making part-time working more normalised than it is in other sectors. The small size of many voluntary-sector organisations is beneficial, meaning that part-time workers have more direct contact with their full-time colleagues, encouraging integration. Furthermore, the jobs which my part-time interviewees did were not the lowest-paid or lowest-status within their organisations. It was still difficult for them to be managers, but they could hold mid-level positions, managing and supervising projects. The correlation between part-time work and ‘bad jobs’ is perhaps not so strong within the voluntary sector.

The ability to move fluidly between part-time and full-time working within the sector, described by a number of the interviewees, also appeared to counter some of

the negative effects associated with part-time work. In her interview, Fran tracked her evolution from part-time worker to full-time worker within her organisation:

This was a part-time post in youth work and I did quite a lot of work of proving how much it was needed, which meant that we managed to siphon more money into my post and we managed to get more funding into the post until it became a full-time post, and it also involved volunteering stuff as well, getting volunteers involved in the organisation. So I started supervising volunteers and volunteer coordination as well, and then. . . and then it's been nearly a year and a half now since I've gone into the Operations Manager post for the organisation.

Similarly, Nasreen described the progression of a woman who began working for her organisation as a volunteer and then went on to obtain a part-time position which eventually led to a full-time job:

She was a good asset to us, and then she did that for about. . . probably about three to four months, and a part-time opportunity came up and we took her on, and she worked. . . she worked for about a year probably, part-time, that led onto a full-time job, and when that led onto a full-time job and she worked with us for another two years.

The way the voluntary sector is organised and its reliance on different pots of funding is a significant factor here. In both cases, part-time hours were extended to full-time hours presumably after more money was found or made available and after the employees had proved themselves within their role. There appears to be inherent flexibility within voluntary sector jobs, which means that their part-time or full-time status can be changed, dependent on funding, allowing workers to take the step from part-time to full-time work. This could mean that part-time workers are not so peripheral in the voluntary-sector workplace and that managers are more prepared and/or more able to recognise their potential.

Both the above accounts suggest that even for these women full-time work occupies a higher status and is more desirable than part-time. Part-time work is a stopgap for the 'real' full-time work. So although the fluidity between part-time and full-time working may mitigate the marginalisation of part-time workers, part-time work was still regarded as transitional. In addition, the dependence on funding and the lack of role stability can have repercussions. Fahmida went from full-time to part-time

hours, partly because of family issues but also because her organisation did not receive enough funding to pay her full-time wages:

I did work full-time, like I was saying, and partly through my own personal situation because we lost my dad last year so it was too much for my mum with the kids. . . that I decided to go part-time, but because there wasn't enough money to pay for me full-time.

I will discuss job insecurity later in this chapter, but Fahmida's experience demonstrates that the flux between part-time and full-time employment in voluntary organisations can sometimes be problematic for its workers. In addition, it is possible that those in part-time jobs may be more vulnerable to funding cuts than their full-time colleagues.

In both Fran and Nasreen's examples the women in question actually wanted full-time work, but took part-time work as a stopgap. Their part-time working was thus involuntarily. However, it is important to recognise that some women actively choose part-time work, and for reasons other than childcare commitments. Four out of the six part-time workers that I interviewed did not have young children (Amanda, Anna, Karen and Laura). The two youngest participants, Karen and Laura, had both opted for part-time work so that they could continue other voluntary activities, Karen at a day centre for asylum seekers and Laura on other allotment projects. Neither suggested they were negatively affected by this decision in terms of training, inclusion and access to other opportunities, perhaps because many of their colleagues were also part-time. Their narratives indicated that they were able to do this because they did not have any dependents and Bradford's living costs were relatively low. They also felt that they were perhaps less 'career driven' than others and preferred a less work-oriented lifestyle. That women are prepared to work part-time even if they do not 'have to', i.e. do not have childcare commitments, suggests that there is perhaps less stigma attached to part-time work in the voluntary sector than there is in the public or private sectors, where part-time work is less common and roles are more rigid. This could indicate that taking part-time work in the voluntary sector might not have such a negative impact on women's careers and the 'downgrading' may not be so severe. Yet the apparent acceptability of part-time work in the voluntary sector might not be enough to mitigate the long-term financial cost.

Mumford and Smith (2009: i71) found that part-time employees in more feminised workplaces like the voluntary sector have lower relative earnings than their full-time counterparts. The female-dominated nature of the sector's workforce appears to act as a disadvantage in this respect. Moreover, one substantial cost of part-time work, smaller pension contributions, was not diminished.

The interviewees did recognise that the extent of part-time work opportunities in the voluntary sector was beneficial for women with children and some of the participants had switched from jobs in the public and private sectors for this reason, in order to balance work and childcare. However, I found that for the majority of my participants, it was not that their work was or could be part-time which was most significant. Part-time working was, on the whole, still regarded as a temporary measure. It was the flexibility embedded in their roles, flexible hours and flexible management approaches, which made work in the voluntary sector especially advantageous, particularly for those participants who had young children. This flexibility made it possible to carry out these roles part-time or full-time and combine them with motherhood. The necessity to work part-time was therefore reduced.

Part-time work is just one example of a flexible working arrangement. ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) describes the most common types of flexible working as home-working, part-time working, flexitime, job sharing, term-time working and shift-working (ACAS, 2013). The past two decades have seen a growth in the number of people opting for flexible working in the UK, particularly flexitime (working outside of the normal 9-5 working day) and working reduced hours. This has been encouraged by legislation such as the 2003 Employment Act which introduced the right for parents with children under six or disabled children under 18 to request flexible working. This was further extended in 2007, 2009 and 2014, and now all employees have the legal right to request flexible working, not just parents and carers (Jones and Jones, 2011; Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2012). In 2012, most employers offered some form of flexible working, although interestingly there was no general increase in UK employers' provision of flexible working between 2004 and 2011 (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008;

Wanrooy et al., 2011; Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2012). In general, the public sector is more open to flexible working and does offer more provision than the private sector (Confederation of British Industry, 2011; Waanrooy et al., 2011). Voluntary organisations are widely viewed as workplaces open to flexible working arrangements and this is cited as a primary reason why people choose work in the voluntary sector (TPP Not For Profit, 2012). Yet the TPP Not for Profit Flexible Working Survey (2012) found that many charities were not 'actively promoting flexible working and most employees don't realise all the options that exist', and that 15% of voluntary-sector organisations still do not offer any flexible working options at all. My interview data did not reflect the results of this survey, perhaps because I had focused on small-to-medium-sized charities, where flexible working practices appeared to be the norm.

Nearly all of the paid workers I interviewed discussed the flexible working arrangements in their organisations, and how this impacted positively on their working lives and the working lives of their colleagues. This flexibility was not always agreed on a formal basis. Flexitime or home-working was not necessarily written into contracts, but the interviewees did describe a general atmosphere of flexibility and understanding. For example, Amanda discussed both the formal and informal flexible working arrangements at her workplace:

It's very much geared towards. . . you can work your hours flexibly, and quite a few people work less hours for school times, you know, one of the girls. . . there's three of us in our project, the other two have both got children, and one of them finishes mid-afternoon. We all do four days a week but she actually works five days, there's one long one until six at night, and then does four days where she finished at two o'clock or half one, so that then she can have the afternoons with her child. So I think it is really flexible and that kind of thing of. . . quite often it just seems a lot more like, 'my child's not well so I need to go home' and people are like 'go, worry about it later, work from home or sort out the hours later' kind of thing.

Amanda described flexible working as embedded in the organisation and management ethos rather than just within the guidelines of individuals' contracts. This theme recurred in other interviewees' narratives. At the time of interview, Louise had just had her contracted hours increased, not something she had requested,

but she did discuss the flexibility offered to her by her managers, and the potential to change this arrangement if she was unhappy:

Yeah, well, definitely, the organisation that I work for is very, very flexible. And, my hours have just changed, they've gone up from nineteen to twenty-eight, which I didn't really want, so I said I'd trial it for a little while. But they said 'you can work from home, you can just do whatever fits in with you' kind of thing, so they really are very flexible. And because there is that trust, you know, they know that you're going to get on with your work, they know I am, [laughs], can't speak for everybody in the organisation!

Louise and her managers regarded the ability to work from home as positive, increasing the flexibility of Louise's role and enabling her to work more hours. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of people working from home, assisted by technological advances which mean that workers can more easily communicate with each other off-site (Felstead et al., 2005; Confederation of British Industry, 2011). In 2002, one in ten workers worked from home or used their home as a work-base (Felstead et al., 2005: 419). One of the interview participants, Ellie, suggested that working from home helped her to balance her work and home life more effectively:

It's also down to flexibility, flexible working, understanding that work is not the only factor in your life. And you know, I've just been doing my appraisal here and what I'd said was. . . it said 'where do you see yourself in two years' time?', I mean partly I see myself. . . hopefully in a job. . . just with the situation as it is. . . But erm. . . I just put that because there's flexibility within work, I don't feel like I'm neglecting work or my home responsibilities, because I can work from home, I often. . . I'm quite creative late at night and so if I have a plan to draw up a scheme, I can often. . . the kids have gone to bed. . . and maybe that's just when I have time for my brain to switch off. . . [laughs] But that's when I get most creative, so I can sit and draw that up at night, whereas I think some places may see. . . if you're not sat at your desk every minute of the day, then you're not working. But that is down, a lot down to trust. . . and productivity, and doing your job and showing that you've done your job, and I do appreciate that that is a lot down to those factors, that allow that to happen. And I'm not sure. . . certainly in local authority that couldn't happen, they want you at your desk, nine 'til five, and I can't imagine that there's many people in local authority that work from home[. . .] I work at home two days a week because I live quite a distance from here.

For Ellie, being able to work outside the normal working day enabled her to be more creative and productive. Both Ellie and Louise agreed that they were only able to

work flexibly because their managers trusted them. This was reiterated by Natalie ‘the voluntary sector gives you a lot more flexibility, every week I do is different, and as long as my job’s done, then it’s okay’ and Kerry:

Obviously it depends what jobs you’ve got within the sector, but in the jobs that I’ve had, the last two jobs that I’ve had, I’ve been able to clock on when I want, clock off when I want, and nobody has ever questioned it. They see the reports that I do, they see where I’ve been, there’s an online calendar of where I’m going to be, nobody’s ever checked up on me, as far as I know. But there’s that trust, and I think having that trust really creates a sense that you’re . . . you’re trusted to do what you’re meant to do, and that they can rely on your honesty, if you know what I mean. I’m sure it could be abused and I’m sure there are people out there that do abuse it. But I think you kind of get to learn, you get a sense of it, a good manager would know what you were doing and whether you were producing the outcomes you were meant to. At the end of the day, we’re all getting paid by public money so you’ve got to be accountable, haven’t you? But also, flexible (Kerry).

Louise, Ellie, Natalie and Kerry were all caring for children at the time of interview. But trust was also extended to those without children, such as Amanda:

I can just talk to [manager’s name], and I had some health issues, and with me he’s brilliant, he’s like ‘if you need to, take a couple of hours off in the day and do it on your day off or do it the evening, whatever works for you, that’s absolutely fine, as long it works out at the end, and if it doesn’t, then come and talk to me and we’ll see it’s because you need to reduce your workload or if you’ve got too much work to fit into the hours or whatever it is’. Which I just think is brilliant, and I think you can’t kind of, knock that attitude and that real trust. I work from home quite a lot, like I said before, and actually they ask very little from me in the way of proof of what I’ve done, but I keep a record myself, but they’re like ‘it’s fine, we trust you’ (laughs), but I worry one day somebody might come in and go ‘oo, what have you been doing for last six months’. So yeah, I think it is really supportive in that way.

The flexible working practices the interviewees described were not just about being able to work from home on a fixed day of the week or having set flexible hours. Instead, it was a very real flexibility, informal and irregular, facilitated by a sense of trust between their managers and themselves and this contributed to overall job satisfaction. Their narratives suggested that they had developed an understanding and open relationships with their managers and that they were more effective in their roles because of the flexibility offered to them. They did recognise that this might not be the case for everybody within their organisation. Louise said that although they

trusted her she could not 'speak for everybody in the organisation' and Kerry suggested that there could be people who 'abuse' that trust.

Home-working and flexible hours can appear problematic for employers and managers, as it is more difficult to monitor employees' work output (Warne and Holland, 1999; Dex and Scheibl, 2002), something both Kerry and Amanda referred to. The small size of most voluntary organisations is perhaps advantageous in this regard, encouraging more interaction between workers, so that trusting relationships are more easily forged. In addition, within small organisations, managers might be quicker to recognise if someone is not fulfilling their duties, and abusing their trust. Voluntary organisations may also choose to encourage flexible working practices, such as reduced hours or home-working as a way to reduce costs and maximise their limited resources. Across the sectors, 'teleworking' (remote/home working) is more common in small organisations because it can reduce fixed costs (Confederation of British Industry, 2011). Ellie, although initially disparaging about the local authority's policies on flexible working, did discuss how council cutbacks had instigated a policy of home working within the local council as a way to cut overhead costs. Yet this was an enforced 'flexible' working practice, rather than something council workers had opted for. A number of the interviewees, like Ellie, using their experience of both sectors, contrasted the flexibility of the voluntary sector with the apparent rigidity of the public sector. It was not that the public sector did not have flexible working policies. Angela and Diane suggested flexitime was ubiquitous at the council and local authority, yet they still cherished the informal and underlying flexibility the voluntary sector offered.

The main beneficiaries of the voluntary sector's flexible working practices described by the interview participants were parents of young children who wanted to balance work and home more effectively. I found that in some cases, organisations and managers went one step further to create a family-friendly environment. For example, Fahmida took time off when her children were ill and was allowed to bring her children into the workplace during school holidays:

My kids spend half their school holidays here, because they're at that age now where they're too old for play schemes, but not old enough to be left at home on their own (laughs). . . getting a bit old now to go to grandma's, so half the time they'll spend here, and they love it. Sometimes I'll be the one telling them off and the boss will be encouraging them, they'll be running around playing football outside in the patio area. So. . . it's brilliant, you know, I've got. . . my daughter's off. . . they are doing some. . . I think it's some training day or something, they're taking next Friday off so she'll just come in here with me. So it's really, really supportive. And again, occasionally if they've been off sick and my mum's not been able to have them and stuff, I've had to take the time off and be at home with them and it's never been an issue. No, it's very supportive.

Bringing children into work may seem like quite an unusual arrangement which would be considered unacceptable in many workplaces. Yet perhaps because Fahmida worked at a community centre, where children and parents were already in the workplace as service users, it was more accepted. When I asked Kerry, a lone parent, how working for one organisation during her children's early years had fitted in with childcare, she responded:

K: Yeah it was. . . it was actually really. . . that was probably the best thing because the hours fitted in well, but also because of the organisation, they have a child-friendly policy, so if my children were off because it was teacher training day, they were allowed to come to work with me, which is not expected at most places. So I'd kind of sit them down in one of the rooms and give them some stuff to do, and they'd be quite happy to do that [. . .]

B: So it was made easier for you?

K: Yeah, they had a lot of understanding, I felt that understanding of the situation I was in and the circumstances that I had. Holidays were able to be taken when the children needed me to be there, and if the children were ill, it was recognised that that's where I needed to be, you know. Again, I'm not sure you would get that in the private sector, it would be a lot more problematic.

At this time, Kerry worked for a charity which provided advice and services to lone parents, so it was likely that their employment policies and ethos would reflect this. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the division between service user and worker is more fluid within the voluntary sector. Workers can end up providing services for people like themselves, people that are faced with similar issues, and there is perhaps more empathy for and understanding of employees' circumstances as a result.

Anna, who worked for a mental health charity, discussed flexible working arrangements for parents in her organisation, and specifically, the support given to her by her managers and colleagues when her parents died:

They tend to come a bit later, you know, if they're called away by the school there's no 'you've had three days off this week', there's none of that because they know that people work. . . well that's my style of management as well . . . actually people will give you far more, the more you give them. And you know, it's been great because I don't think anybody's abused that, and if they have, and they've been told, it's inadvertently. . . it might have happened inadvertently. But people don't take advantage of that. . . because we're pretty much like minded. So. . . yeah, it's very flexible, very flexible. In the same way that people want to go to pray to the mosque at any particular time, or like when my parents died. . . I happened to be working here when my, both my parents died, and they just shut up the office and they came to the funerals, and obviously my parents were Catholic, so it was a Catholic funeral mass etc. etc. but everybody came irrespective of their creed, you know, and generally. . . to support you, because that's what you're going through so therefore that's what you do, you know. You can feel that and you respond to that. . . and so if somebody does more work today, well, you know that tomorrow it is somebody else's turn, to cover for each other, so yeah. . . it's a really nice place.

Anna was not a service user, but the fact that she worked in a mental health organisation meant her colleagues were encouraged, were more able and were perhaps expected to respond supportively to her bereavements.

For Fahmida, Kerry and Anna, the aims and the activities of their organisations fostered and almost necessitated a flexible approach. It seems that the particular nature of voluntary-sector organisations, what they are there to do, who they are there to support, can be very influential. Diane, who had worked for an advice charity, discussed why she believed voluntary organisations were more flexible:

I think they're more accommodating of erm. . . people's lives, in general, not just childcare, but older people and some of that's to do with the fact that a lot of voluntary organisations are working in environments around advice giving, or people's rights, or changes in people's circumstances or illness, so there's an awareness that actually that for a lot of people, life is about much more than work and they might have lots of issues, so I think that's reflected in the way that they treat employees.

Diane here suggests that voluntary organisations have a more holistic ethos, a greater understanding of employees' lives and circumstances because of what they do.

Ayesha's sister-in-law worked for a domestic violence charity, and Ayesha intimated that this impacted on the charity's attitude towards her childcare commitments:

But my sister-in-law, she works for [name of organisation], and she works until three and she picks her kids off, and they're very accommodating, so I think it's also the nature of the actual charity that you work for as well, if they're quite good and accommodating, they'll give you flexibility.

Fiona felt that the very presence of more women in the sector encouraged organisations to be more 'nurturing' and flexible:

I think generally it is mainly women that work in the voluntary sector, and I wonder whether that's because of personal issues around family, child care, I think sometimes you get more flexibility within the voluntary sector for that, more flexibility sometimes. And I think sometimes, depending on the organisation, the voluntary sector is looked at as more nurturing, which I think people tend to think of as more towards the female side, that kind of nurturing element of being human I think, yeah.

In essence, voluntary organisations like the ones I focused on are there to support people and provide services for them and this shapes the way they are expected to treat their employees.

There are inevitably problems with these informal flexible arrangements, which some interviewees did discuss. One is the potential disparity between organisations, as they range in size, scale, purpose, make-up etc. Amanda, who worked with a lot of different charities in the area, commented that 'there's masses of difference in their policies and things like that, and how organised they are, because, you know, you go from your sort of, literally run by volunteers right through to your bigger organisations'. If there are no uniform policies, workers may move (and movement is constant) from one organisation with a very good attitude towards flexible working to one that is completely unsupportive. Diane also discussed this inconsistency in some depth:

D: But it varies from one to the other, you know, you might have one organisation that's an absolutely brilliant employer and another that's absolutely terrible.

B: So there's a disparity?

D: Yeah, huge disparity, yeah. Because a lot of that. . . well, most of them are run by management committees and a manager, and they are as good as their

management committees, and if you've got a really supportive, really hands-on management committee, that can be absolutely brilliant. But a lot of them have people that are on every committee in the town and turn up once every month and go away again. So that means that things can be really difficult and managers can end up not feeling very supported.

An informal approach to flexible working will only work if there are good, well-supported managers to sustain it. The small scale of most voluntary organisations is a disadvantage here. Senior management is likely to consist of only one or two employees, supported (in theory) by a volunteer-comprised management committee/board. Flexibility is dependent on trust and if relationships break down between managers and the people they manage, there is often no-one else to turn to. When this did happen to the women I interviewed, as it did to Ayesha for instance, they were compelled to move to another organisation.

While a large proportion of the interview participants commented on the sense of trust placed in them by their managers, this was not the case for all my interviewees. For example in Gillian's last job she had felt excessively monitored and restricted by her managers:

I was shocked when I moved to the small community centre in my last job because I assumed that although it was part-time I would not be doing just the time, I would be putting extra in because I was more responsible, I was coming back to Bradford, I was happy to help. And then I found that they wanted me to log my hours, and again, I felt irritated by that because it didn't feel like them caring for me, it felt like them wanting to make sure they were getting enough out of me. So it was something about the way it was put to me, I'm sure it could have been put to me in a different way, if they had said to me that 'we want to be sure that if you do overtime you get time off in lieu' or something, I might have been more happy about it, but I remember distinctly being shocked and thinking 'oh, they want me to log my hours, well in that case I'll do the hours I've been set'. And I had to point out to them that they wanted me to be. . . all my working hours they paid for they wanted me to be at the centre, so I said 'excuse me, you want me to do outreach and make contacts and attend meetings, well I can't because of my presence here all the time, so hello' (laughs).

Gillian was working part-time but was initially prepared to do unpaid overtime. Feeling untrusted and too closely monitored made her reluctant to work extra hours, and she felt unsatisfied in her role. This was not the experience of most of the paid

workers I interviewed, but does demonstrate that openness to flexibility is not universal across the sector, and is very dependent on individual managers.

The preparedness to work over the paid hours was a common theme throughout the interviews, with half of the interviewees stating that they worked more hours than they were paid for, partly because of the flexibility afforded to them. Kerry admitted that she had got 'in trouble' for working over her hours, so much so that 'I didn't record it anymore, I didn't stop doing it, I just didn't record it'. Karen had similar problems, but felt, unlike Gillian, that her managers recognised her overtime:

So it's my own fault really but. . . I find it quite. . . because I'm only part-time I find it quite hard to keep track of my hours, I only have to be in the office from nine until one, so I only do four hours a day but then the rest of the hours I make up. . . I either stay later in the office or a lot of it like the publicity things I can do from home. [. . .]I do find it really hard to keep track of my hours, but generally I do think I do work more than twenty-five, but I think they recognise that. . . like my line manager. . . like last week I had two days off to go to Wales and I was like 'can I just take these two days as holiday?' and she's like 'oh, just make up the hours elsewhere'. It does make it quite flexible like that, and because I only have four set hours a day and the rest of it I can do in my own time, it does make it really easy to make up the hours. So it's not a flexitime job because I have to be in the office from nine 'til one, but on the other hand it does make it so I can move it around quite a bit. So yeah. . . they are quite good for that, so I do think I do over my hours, but I do think I get it back, if that makes sense.

Karen did not feel she was being taken advantage of because her bosses acknowledged the extra time she would put in. Yet the issue she and Kerry highlighted, working overtime, is one of the problems associated with flexible working practices, particularly with flexible hours and home-working. Kattenbach et al. (2010) and Kelliher and Anderson (2010) have also highlighted issues such as work intensification as a result of feeling indebted to managers and the lack of boundaries between work and home life which can lead to work-home conflict. Furthermore, flexible working practices can reproduce gendered assumptions, and a gap can develop between the flexible worker and the 'ideal', 'committed' full-time worker (Lewis and Humbert, 2010).

This could explain why, even in the voluntary sector, it was apparently difficult to work flexible hours as a manager. Angela, who worked as a middle manager in a relatively large youth charity, discussed her arrangements around flexible hours for the woman she managed, but seemed disappointed she was not afforded the same treatment by her own managers:

I'm just discussing that at the moment, about if [name of colleague] can go onto flexi, but there's only two of us so I can't have a very flexible flexitime, because one of us would have to be in for nine. But just in terms of. . . like she was going to a Smoking Cessation clinic, she's only twenty-eight, but I said, 'don't be taking leave, just come in when you're finished and make your hour up later on sometime', which to me is just being flexible as a manager, *I don't get that upwards* [emphasis added].

This is a problem across the sectors, as it becomes increasingly difficult to work flexibly further up the hierarchy of an organisation. In the voluntary sector, where organisations are quite small and the levels of management are reduced, this problem is intensified. Flexible working is perhaps not possible for those who play a major part in running voluntary organisations.

In sum, the women I interviewed were particularly enthusiastic about the flexibility of their work in the voluntary sector and felt that it had a positive impact on their lives. Kelliher and Anderson (2008) found that flexible working was strongly linked to greater job satisfaction, despite some downsides. There was no blanket policy across all the organisations, or even within organisations, regarding flexible working practices, but rather a fundamental commitment to flexibility. The flexibility was often agreed informally and hinged on mutual trust between managers and workers. The nature of their work, the aims and objectives of the organisations discussed seem to have made them more open to flexible working. But this is not universal and there was disparity across organisations. Furthermore, there was an indication that this self-selecting group of participants were particularly committed and some in the voluntary sector could take advantage of its informality and abuse trust. As with part-time work, flexible working became harder in roles with more responsibility, and may only be afforded to those in low to mid-level jobs. Yet overall, 'flexibility' was the word most repeated by the interviewees, particularly for those with children, and was an aspect of their work which they really valued.

Accessibility and Training

In the last chapter I discussed some of the ways in which the women I interviewed entered into work in the voluntary sector. I found that there was no set path. Many came to voluntary work mid-career or following a significant career break. I suggested that there seemed to be an inherent accessibility in voluntary-sector work, particularly for those with children. For example, there were those who ‘followed the children’, volunteering in playgroups etc. and this sometimes led to a paid role or was used as a way to gain work experience after a career break in order to obtain paid work elsewhere. Interviewees such as Ellie and Kerry felt able to access work in the voluntary sector despite their disrupted career paths (as a result of childcare), and in Kerry’s case, lack of formal qualifications. Yet the accessibility of the voluntary sector was not just perceptible to those with young children. The interviewees’ narratives suggested that jobs in the voluntary sector were generally more accessible and open, compared to the public and private sectors. For instance, Anna, who described her career as having a ‘chequered history’, worked as a qualified teacher but had to retire early on the grounds of ill health. When she was able to work again she felt potential employers would view her sickness record negatively so she opted for self-employment. After her parents became ill she found her self-employed sales jobs difficult to maintain and so applied for a vacancy at a local mental health charity:

The job application for this particular organisation was something that appealed to me, it was my interest, and at the time I needed. . . I was working for myself, having been on long-term sick, and I knew nobody was going to employ me because when they ask you how many days you’d had off, it didn’t look very promising, as an employer. So I set up a business of my own, my parents were ill and running a business from a bedside in hospital was proving difficult because people perceived it that when you’re working at home that it wasn’t proper work. . . and doing sales, you know, you’re only as good as your last sale and if you’re not accessible for. . . you know, there’s no loyalty. And it, there just happened to be an advert in the paper, I think it was September. . . for this, and another job which I did at the time which only lasted two years due to funding, and it was working for the benefit of central and eastern European migrants, supporting them and helping them, so it was

something that was close to my heart. And it was opportune for me. . . I applied and obviously I got the job. . . so I'm still here.

There seemed to be no doubt in Anna's narrative that she could have been discriminated against by the charity for her 'chequered' career history and sickness record, as she predicted other employers might have done. She could have assumed, because it was a health charity, that the management would be more understanding than other employers, most of which are hesitant to employ people who have had long periods of illness (Brohan et al., 2010). Similarly, Amanda was unexpectedly offered a job in a voluntary organisation following a period of illness, having only made an application as a way to get some 'practice'. In her current role within a different organisation, Amanda described how her manager was particularly understanding about her health issues. The voluntary sector has a particular ethos and reputation as the 'caring sector'. Issues such as long-term illness, usually regarded as barriers to work, are often better understood and tolerated, making work in the sector more obtainable for those who have experienced personal problems and/or disrupted careers.

Anna also knew that she had the specific skills and experience (ability to speak fluent Polish and understanding of the eastern European migrant experience) that those hiring her were looking for. The project-based nature of many voluntary sector jobs perhaps enables managers to look for the skills and experience required for a particular role, and to single out people who fit their organisation's particular ethos. Natalie argued that skills, experience and personal ethos were often prioritised over formal qualifications within her youth charity and the voluntary sector in general:

[In] statutory. . . you've got to tick those boxes, have you got a qualification in. . . ? But the voluntary sector lets us have a bit more of that flexibility to actually say. . . skills, skills are more important than qualifications, experience is more important than qualifications and in some ways our ethos is more important than a qualification. Most people can get a qualification. . . can you use it? Actually. . . that's very different, isn't it? Can you actually relate to a young person? No, okay. It doesn't matter whether you've got all the youth work qualifications in the world, if you're the one doing the tuck shop. . . it doesn't necessarily make you a youth worker, and that's something that we recognise quite strongly in our training routes for our staff.

Natalie remarked that her organisation had become less focused on employing people with youth work qualifications and instead looked for workers with a more diverse range of experiences and qualifications.

This notion that the voluntary sector was more accepting of different skill bases, an acceptance that the interviewees felt was lacking in the public sector, was a recurrent theme. Rose described the recruitment process at her charity from a board member's perspective:

The majority of paid staff have actually done appropriate training, core training, but they have to. . . in the voluntary sector you have to apply it in lots of different ways I think, and you're constantly, when your recruiting somebody, you are looking for that balance between experience and potential. Someone that's worked for a different organisation. . . somebody that works upstairs, she came to us having worked with [a mental health charity], so you think. . . she's excellent, she really is, but we were wanting to appoint somebody to a health partnership, working with statutory bodies and with the voluntary sector, pulling the two together. Now would she just really focus on people with learning disabilities or could those skills be transferred, because she'd obviously got the degree, that was her experience and so on. . . And she's been one of the best appointments we've ever made. And a lot of it is just about learning on the job, but we are constantly looking for that flexibility in there, and the staff that we've got will sometimes find themselves working with. . . If we've got someone working on a project, if their funding comes to an end, we will look at ways of supporting them to move to a different kinds of project and so on. Because we believe that people can have flexible career paths. I think we give much bigger organisations a run for their money in terms of the skill base I think.

Rose argued that her organisation not only acknowledged and understood workers' unique skills, but was also committed to offering its employees new opportunities to prove themselves. Jobs in the voluntary sector are often short-term and project based. Workers may change roles more frequently than in other sectors, building new skills and knowledge. There is not one clearly defined route into or through the voluntary sector. Instead there is constant movement. Those making recruitment decisions take this into account, expecting workers to have had a flexible career path. They are perhaps more open as a result and willing to recognise potential. For women, whose employment patterns are generally more unsettled, the sector's outlook and role flux may be more attuned to their experiences and lifestyles, enabling them to access

work without facing some of the penalties associated with career-breaks and/or having had periods of part-time/low-paid employment (Bimrose, 2001).

Another contributing factor to the accessibility of the voluntary sector may be its relatively low wages. Gross hourly pay was £12.02, less than both the private (£12.60) and public (£14.20) sectors (NVCO, 2013a). The lower wages may make paid work in the voluntary sector seem more attainable, particularly for women who are, in general, conditioned to expect and ask for fewer financial rewards (Clark, 1997). When I asked Rebecca why more women than men worked in the sector she revealed the complexities of this issue:

It's lower paid, therefore in my head, it's within my reach. I struggle applying for jobs that are well paid, justifying it to myself. Somebody once told me that. . . it's an old wives' tale, it stuck with me, that a man would apply for a job if he can do two thirds of it, and women will only apply for a job if they can do it all! And that, you know, nonsense. . . BUT, that kind of stuck in my head because unless I felt very confident in applying for that job, and unless it felt like the kind of money I should be earning. . . and I think women struggle with that. I had a female friend who applied for a Chief Exec post and. . . good luck to her and she got it, but it was huge amounts of money, and the rest of us were all going 'oh my god', and she said 'I'm as good as any of them that are going for it', but that that was really unusual for women to have that attitude. She said, 'if I didn't go for it and some person got it that wasn't really as good as me, how would I feel then?' She is absolutely right but I think there is something in. . . it seems to fit, it seems to be achievable for women.

This idea that a career in the voluntary sector is attainable for women because the financial rewards are not great is persuasive. The reason why women are less likely than men to prioritise financial rewards at work is partly because they have lower expectations of what they can achieve (Clark, 1997, Davey, 2001). Diane also intimated that one of the reasons why the voluntary sector attracts women was due to the low wages, and discussed why this was:

I think [the voluntary sector] has got far more women than men. Some of that's because of the salaries, which I think are quite low and it's often part-time work. So you do get far more women than men. Sometimes I think the wages are artificially low because. . . partly because it's a voluntary. . . a charity or voluntary organisation, so there's an emotional pressure to accept a lower wage and that means that you do end up with it being a second income, not a main income.

Diane suggested that women may feel more emotionally pressured to accept lower wages in the voluntary sector, because of the work these organisations do. For her, a voluntary sector wage did not equate to a breadwinner salary, it was a second or supplementary income, and therefore gendered. This could account for why there has been a predominance of women in the voluntary sector: women view it as a form of employment that is within reach. However, the idea and reality of the male breadwinner is in decline (Crompton, 1999). A large proportion of the paid workers I interviewed were lone parents, they *were* the breadwinners in their families. The low pay of the voluntary organisations was an issue referred to numerous times during the interviews and was perceived as a barrier to future career prospects within the sector. This could signal a change both within the sector and its workforce. The culture of low wages, which perhaps made the sector more accessible to women, could no longer be viable.

Volunteers are a significant part of the voluntary-sector workforce and this contributes to its accessibility, increasing the multiplicity of entry routes into the sector, underpinned by the apparent fluidity between unpaid and paid work. When describing the establishment of a local charity, set up voluntarily by just one woman and which now employed ten people, Rose remarked:

A lot of the people who work in the voluntary sector didn't start out with training to be a voluntary sector person, they started the project because they saw a need where they lived, and they learnt the skill.

There were other interviewees, like Rebecca, who had experienced this first-hand, developing important skills within their volunteer roles:

So, I had six months there, came back to Cardiff and volunteered at [a domestic violence charity], and after. . . I don't know, a period of time, I got a paid post with [the same domestic violence charity], and that's where it started. So, at that time, that was a half-time post so I was still volunteering at other places. I volunteered at the local law centre and later a drug and alcohol counselling agency and got counselling experience and skills, and training.

Rebecca was able to access the voluntary sector through volunteering, finding both paid work and invaluable training opportunities. Rokeya suggested that people volunteered at her organisations specifically for the training and to gain experience:

We had volunteers, we had clients that became volunteers, then they got training, and then they become paid workers. So it's a circle, it's a success I have seen in our organisation where we were able to give confidence by training, but also by giving information, and then they become a volunteer, and they get training and they become paid staff [. . .] There are some young people who have law degrees but have no jobs so they came here to gain experience, and they also feel like that they are part of the organisation and are doing some work for their communities.

Within the majority of the organisations the interviewees had worked for, volunteers were regarded as an integral part of the workforce and were offered multiple opportunities for training and development. Commitment to training volunteers and staff appears to be one of the voluntary sector's core strengths. This was viewed as a way to differentiate the sector from others and acquire greater status. Kathleen described training as a means to make voluntary-sector workers, paid and unpaid, as professional as their public-sector counterparts:

When I moved into management, I took the training of volunteers very, very seriously in the [community and education charity]. We had a volunteers' charter, and we both had to sign, and they had regular, we had induction, and induction packs and all the rest of it, and very regular in-house training and reviews. Personal profiles, of what their progression was, because we'd learnt by then, you see, that we had to be as professional, or more professional than people in the public sector, if we were going to win our way through. So our volunteers had to acquire the professionalism as well.

It seems as though the accessibility and openness of the voluntary sector may mean those within it are more focused on being and appearing to be as well-trained and professional as workforces in other sectors.

For most of the interviewees, the training offered to them went above and beyond the kind of mandatory training expected across all sectors, such as the training Grace received in manual handling and first aid whilst she was a volunteer. Rokeya described personal development as a core part of voluntary sector:

Personal growth and personal development. . . I think people come in the voluntary sector, whatever organisation it is, one of the reasons they come is . . . obviously they want to give something to the community and help others, but one of the reasons is because they have. . . they learn and they develop things. Like I've done my paid job, I was also a REC-Racial Equality Counsellor, and I was the chair for a couple of years, I learnt quite a lot in race discrimination, and gender and race, and I also worked for a law centre,

on their management committee, five or six years as management committee member. So, you know, there's always a reason for me to go there, because I was I think at that time. . . that even though I work full-time, go home and then I have to go out to these meetings, because you care about the work they do, but also because you felt that you're learning something. And for me it was that experience. . . it was very useful because then it helps you to get further into management, into other posts. So management committees are another area in the voluntary sector where people can be developed in management, so yes definitely. The personal growth, and learning, and work experience is very valuable, which the voluntary sector offers more than the public sector offers.

The paid workers I talked with remarked on their managers' commitment to their career development through more personalised training opportunities. For example, Natalie discussed how her organisation was contributing half the tuition fees of a sports science Master's degree for one of their workers, so he could develop his current role, organising a sports programme for young people. Similarly, Fran was funded to do a post-graduate diploma by her organisation's training budget, which no doubt helped her to progress within her organisation. Since becoming a manager she had become more involved in this process:

As an organisation, we're quite good at that and I know now that I'm supervising lots of staff, you know, our supervision includes 'what are your training needs?', that's every six weeks with every staff member that's mentioned at least once, and you know, we're always sending out training opportunities to different staff and we have a training budget for every staff member.

I will discuss career progression further in the next section, but I wanted to draw attention to the personal development focus within voluntary organisations and the more flexible approach to training tailored to employees' particular requirements and aspirations.

In 1999, Cunningham (22) reported that 'a lack of adequate training provision is seen as a key constraint on the effectiveness of the voluntary sector'. The group of women I interviewed were largely the success stories of the voluntary sector, and therefore not a representative sample, but I found that for the majority of their organisations, a real commitment to training and personal development was reported. The availability

of training might be what makes the voluntary sector accessible to those outside it, and could well be a major factor in what enables those within the sector to progress.

The factors that make the voluntary sector accessible are multi-dimensional. There is a holistic approach to recruitment in the sector which takes into account more than qualifications and direct experience. There also seems to be an acceptance that people will have had varied work experiences and will perhaps not have had a traditional linear and continuous career path. This may be particularly advantageous for women who have experienced disrupted careers due to career breaks, caring responsibilities or illness. Voluntary organisations are perhaps more able and willing to incorporate people at different stages of their lives, and with varied educational and employment histories.

Hierarchy and Career Progression

Most voluntary-sector organisations, and certainly the registered charities I focused on, have a clearly defined structure and hierarchy, which is essential to the maintenance of their legal status. The women I interviewed all worked in small-to-medium-sized charities, employing at least one paid member of staff and usually incorporating volunteers within their workforces. Some, like Karen, worked in organisations where there were only three paid workers, whereas others, like Angela, worked in reasonably large organisations which had over fifty paid employees. Despite this disparity, the make-up of the organisations was relatively similar: volunteers, frontline staff (support workers, project workers etc.) and administrative staff, managers (at different levels depending on the size of the organisation), a chief executive and a management board/board of trustees. This uniformity might suggest that voluntary organisations are highly structured and hierarchical workplaces. Indeed, Christine felt that the prescribed structure of charitable organisations was too constricting:

So my hunch when I first set up [a community arts charity], was to have a flat structure when we eventually became an organisation, but the fact that we were a charity created delimitation between responsibilities between board and staff, and I had to apply for my own job, to become the director of the

organisation that I'd set up, and that was just about the structure of the legal entity. So I always fought with that because straightaway you are creating a division between staff, director, board members, and that division is reinforced by the law.

Yet I found that, for the most part, the interviewees worked in relatively flat organisations, and this was largely a result of their small size. There were fewer steps between frontline workers and chief executives, particularly in comparison to the public sector, enabling easier communication at all levels, as demonstrated by this extract from Louise's interview:

L: I think as well, it's not as formal; it's not a competitive place. You know, the environment, from all the voluntary organisations that I know. It's not formal, it's not intimidating, it's just kind of like, we are here to do the job and we want to do it well kind of thing. And there doesn't seem to be that much of a hierarchy even with your chief officers and your workers, there doesn't seem to be that hierarchy, and people are just on the same level if you like. But I think when you get into the council and things there is a hierarchy that starts to appear. And that's changed how it feels, and how it works I suppose. And in the voluntary sector, you know, I don't particularly feel intimidated by the chief officer, it's like 'so what?', we're all people, but I think when you go to like Early Years [at the council], and you've got all these different layers of people, and then you've got your top [laughs], it can suddenly feel a bit like, look at them up there. But in the voluntary sector, it doesn't feel like that, which is quite good really, quite interesting how it works.

B: Why do you think that is, why do you think that environment exists?

L: Because nobody gets much money [laughs]! I dunno.

B: Do you think that's what it is?

L: It could be actually. I don't know how much the chief officer gets, but it's not huge, huge amounts of money, and yet somebody else in her position would maybe be on double that, do you know what I mean?

B: So there is less disparity between the bottom and the top?

L: Yeah.

Louise compared her experiences of public sector and voluntary-sector work, suggesting that the flatter hierarchies of voluntary organisations made managers seem more accessible and on a similar level. She also suggests that the pay gap between the lowest paid workers and the highest paid workers was reduced within

voluntary organisations, intimating that in the public sector, chief executives posts are much better remunerated. This is largely true; the pay differential between the highest and lowest paid workers in the voluntary sector is on average 6:1, compared to 12:1 in the NHS (NCVO, 2012c; 2013a: n.p.). The fact that, according to Louise, ‘nobody gets much money’ in the voluntary sector reinforced a sense of equality and lessens hierarchical divisions. The ‘voluntary’ aspect may also be a factor. Organisations have unpaid trustees at the top and unpaid volunteers at the bottom, disrupting the link between power and financial reward.

Fran, who worked in an organisation which employed less than twenty paid workers, discussed the effect of having a flatter hierarchy within her workplace:

We’re not small, we’re a medium-sized charity now, but we do all know each other and we do know how to ring each other for this, that and the other, and anybody in the organisation can chat to somebody else. I suppose I’ve said a couple of things about hierarchy previously, but we’re very flat in terms of our hierarchy, most people are in the same level of chatting to each other, and then there’s about four of us that are a bit above that kind of thing, and we all can talk to each other, anybody could ring me up tomorrow and go ‘ergh, what’s this about?’ And likewise, the director is the only person above me and I’m pretty certain that anybody would feel comfortable ringing him as well, and that’s great. I mean I don’t know how much of it is voluntary sector and how much of it is our organisation, but I think a lot of it is voluntary sector, I think.

Most voluntary sector employees work in small workplaces. In 2012, 49% of employees in the voluntary sector were employed in workplaces with less than 25 paid staff members, compared to 42% in private sector and 16% in the public sector (NCVO, 2014f: n.p.). Only 4% of the workforce was located in organisations with 500 or more employees (Teasdale et al., 2011: 66). Reliance on insecure funding streams and donations restricts the growth of organisations and reduces the number of bureaucratic roles. The relative smallness of Fran’s organisation meant that she knew all her colleagues, was aware of what their roles and responsibilities were, and felt comfortable contacting them, regardless of whether they were below or above her in status. There was only one paid staff member, the chief executive, above Fran in the chain of command. This was the case for a number of the participants, even though they did not occupy particularly senior roles within their organisations. The

small size was definitely the key factor here. Laura had briefly worked for a large charitable trust and described her frustration at not being listened to:

It was a massive hierarchy, because it was a trust, it was quite a few different managers and it was all quite difficult to get your voice heard, even though you were the person doing the really important, physical work for them. So in a way that it was worse for a worker, being part of a trust, than if it was just a voluntary sector organisation, because there was so much more hierarchy, so many more levels to get through, to change anything.

Fran indicated that the flatter hierarchy of her organisation made her job easier.

Rokeya, who had worked in social services before the voluntary sector, suggested that the sector's structure offered her more autonomy and helped her to feel more connected to the service users:

In the voluntary sector I think there is more flexibility, I enjoy working for the flexibility and I feel like I'm free, I feel like I'm able to identify community, my clients, my service users' needs, and then look at how we can address those needs. I don't think. . . especially in my role, I was right at the bottom as a family care worker and even if I became a social worker and had a higher position, I think it was the type of organisation where directors and policy-making people are quite higher up and very distant sometimes from the grass-root level. Well, I like to be involved with people, working with people and pick up the issues, so that's the difference (Rokeya).

It is evident that the way the voluntary sector is structured, the small size of organisations in particular, is intrinsic to its workers' sense of freedom and autonomy. There is some evidence to suggest that women are more successful in flatter structures, and are more likely to try and replicate flatter hierarchies as managers (Oerton, 1996b; Cantzler and Leijon, 2007). This could be another reason why women are attracted to working in the sector. Flatter hierarchies enable easier communication between workers and a sense of unity, and women are more likely than men to prioritise workplace relations (Clark, 1997). My interviewees constructed the working environment that flatter hierarchies produced as positive.

The main issue with flat and small organisations is the lack of career progression. The very concept of a career in the third sector is seen as problematic because following a straightforward upward and linear progression is often impossible (Onyx and Maclean, 1996). Many of my participants saw their only option as moving sideways, into different projects or organisations.

Here there are quite a few different projects, so you could potentially move within them if there are opportunities and you had the experience and you wanted them. I think here people are quite happy in the roles that they're doing, but there's no reason why. . . I mean, for example, we've got things that have been recently set up like a manager's meeting and things like that, so actually there's personal development even though there's not necessarily a job, but it's supporting you if you want to apply for another job [in a different organisation]. So I think that's kind of the way the field is, that you . . . it's not quite so precious, we might not be able to give you the job, but we can help you get the opportunity to get it, to get the experience (Amanda).

L: There isn't really a career progression. And that. . . two people who I work with, they both wanted a bit more, and they got a bit frustrated that there wasn't any kind of. . . they could get the responsibility, they could take on a line manager's role, supervisory role, and do things, but there weren't any extra money to go with it [laughs]. So you take on more responsibility, but you don't necessarily get paid. Unless, somebody applies for some money somewhere and you can take a bit of a slice of that, you know, it just depends because everything's a bit of a jigsaw of funding and commissions. Erm, but this one person, she was saying she wanted to do something more, because she'd been doing this job for ages now and she could do it with her eyes closed and she was just getting a bit bored of it, and then an opportunity came from [the public sector], so she went on a secondment for six months, and now she's got a paid post for two years. So, she's actually moved out of the voluntary sector now. So yeah, there aren't many opportunities if you want to climb the ladder so to speak.

B: You have to move across?

L: Yeah, yeah. That kind of thing. But I suppose that's probably why it suits a lot of women as well because if they've got families and they don't necessarily want to start climbing the ladder, they're just comfortable in what they are doing, and they've got a good work-life balance. Yeah, so that could be one factor why it appeals to women (Louise).

Coincidentally (I was not referred to one through the other), I interviewed Kerry, who I deduced was the person covering for the secondment Louise discussed:

Yeah, I'm covering. . . I'm covering a secondment actually so if the lady I'm covering stays on, she's been seconded to [the public sector], if she stays on . . . if she comes back then I'll go back, but if she stays on then I may stay on. So it covers your back a little bit, that's an opportunity that you wouldn't get in the private sector [laughs]. So I mean my employers agreed to that because I think they wanted to see me develop personally, which is a fantastic thing, and they also thought that if I do come back then I will have gained strengths from that development and be able to bring that back to the organisation. And that opportunity has given me a different view on the job that I did, so even though I'm not doing that job, I can see where things could have improved

and areas that need reshaping, so I'm kind of doing one job with an eye on the other one! Kind of thinking. . . I've got ideas of how it could work better.

Louise suggested that the relative absence of a career ladder to climb was the reason why work in the voluntary sector might appeal to women. Some women who have young children and have a good life/work balance may want to remain in the role they are in (or a similar one), without the pressure of having to develop their careers further and constantly progress. It is also clear that the voluntary sector provides opportunities for women to develop their careers even if this does not always take place in a typically upward trajectory. The accounts of Amanda, Louise and Kerry demonstrate that there is a lot of mobility within the sector. Workers have the capacity to move into different projects or organisations and this movement is encouraged and aided by a management focus on personal development. The desire for new experiences can be met through this mobility (sideways or otherwise), preventing boredom and apathy. A role that one person might find boring and can do 'with her eyes closed' might give another person 'a different view' and ideas about how to improve.

This coincidence also demonstrates that this mobility often takes place within a small geographical area. Women, as a result of childcare demands, often feel less able than men to take jobs further afield and less inclined to uproot their families for work reasons (Bielby and Bielby, 1992; Perales and Vidal, 2013). Ellie felt unable to move into private-sector work because of this:

I think possibly working for private practice may put more pressures on you in terms of where you might have to work. So a lot of private practices work . . . nationally, and if they get a job in John O'Groats you may have to go and work there, which would cause me problems being a single mum of three, erm. . . in terms of childcare it would mean that I would not be able to do that, and therefore. . . it would either hold me back in my career, in terms of promotions or. . . it may end up that I wouldn't have a job, if I couldn't do what the job spec asked me to do.

Ellie had concluded that her inability to move geographically would have been much more detrimental for her career had she been in the private sector. The voluntary sector offered less obvious opportunities for her career progression, but was more suited to her needs, it was the safer option. In this context, although the local

voluntary sector organisation may not be able to offer a dramatic upward career trajectory, it can offer women, and particularly those with children who may require it more, a relatively stable income and some low-key opportunities for career development.

For those without children, progression within the voluntary sector, as in all sectors, was more accelerated. Several of the younger women I interviewed had progressed quite rapidly within their organisations, and were now senior managers. Natalie, who at the time of interview had recently become a parent, had worked in the same youth organisation for eleven years, first as a frontline youth worker, then as a project coordinator and was now a ‘behind the scenes’ senior manager. Fran had had an even quicker trajectory in the seven years she had worked in her organisation, turning a part-time youth work post into a full-time one, and going from managing volunteers to becoming Operations Manager for the whole organisation. Fran was obviously quite ambitious; she was enjoying her current role and was proud of what she achieved, but had been thinking about her future progression:

B: What about you and your career progression? The post you’re in at the moment is quite senior, where do you think you can go from there?

F: I don’t know at the moment, I’m bloody happy to have got here really, I was over the moon, you know, over the moon to have got to a fairly senior management position by the age of thirty, it was a tick on my personal list, it was pretty damn good really. From here. . . I’m not sure where I’ll go. . . one of the options is statutory, one of the options is being more strategic somewhere in a statutory organisation, commissioning or something, which might be interesting, but it would feel a little like selling my soul to the devil. I don’t know, I did look at a post not so long ago, I’ve only been in this management post since November 2010, so it’s just over a year and a half. I think personally, for my own CV, I definitely want to be in this post for at least two years, I think that just looks good, two years of definite learning. As it is, you know, I love the organisation, I want to be here, I don’t think I’m ever going to be the director of the organisation because he’s never going to leave.

The option of moving to the public sector, although not looked upon too favourably by Fran, was regarded as perhaps the only possible way to progress. In the last chapter I discussed ‘sector switchers’ and this fluidity between public-sector and voluntary-sector work did appear to be quite common. The problem for Fran and

others was that with only one role above theirs in their organisations, the director or chief executive, they would have to leave the organisation if they wanted to continue in an upward trajectory. The public sector, with its larger organisations and more delineated hierarchies, could offer them an intermediate role, which would act as a step towards a chief executive job.

Amanda faced a similar predicament. Before moving back to the Bradford area, she had worked in a much larger organisation in London, where her progression was very quick:

I mean I was lucky in that I did progress quite quickly because I worked for a bigger organisation, so I went from doing sort of eighteen months with the young offenders at a support worker kind of level, to then going into the new organisation as a higher, a senior support worker, because I was working on a specific project [. . .] I had quite a lot of. . . they gave me quite a lot of responsibility. So basically I pretty much ran the contract and my manager signed it off and authorised things when I needed her to. And then. . . I guess I was quite lucky they offered me another job, managing a hostel for homeless people and then the social inclusion project, I kind of moved around and up, and certainly up the pay scale quite quickly. But then coming here I took a step back because actually it was kind of. . . London's a funny place, you get caught in world of how much money you can earn and how quickly you can go up the ranks, and actually it was kind of for personal reasons that we moved back up here and actually had a bit of re-think and I was actually like, this is actually a job that I think I'd really enjoy, and it's still on manager level, and could do quite a lot.

Amanda experienced a rapid career progression, both in terms of pay and responsibility. She indicated that this was not something she felt quite at ease with and this had some influence on her decision to return to Bradford. The job she found on her return was still a management position, although she suggested it was a 'step down' in terms of pay. At the time of the interview, she was unsure of where she could go next and explained the problem with progression in her organisation and the voluntary sector in general:

So it kind of wasn't quite so much a step up, but then within this organisation there isn't much progression for me, apart from the CEO's job, at the minute, because that's kind of the next thing above me, and I did actually contemplate applying for it when it came up, a couple of years ago, and then went 'no, what are you doing?' That's just mental, I don't think I want to. . . , you know, because I was like 'well, where would I go then?'. At the time I was in my late twenties and managing a. . . being a CEO of an organisation. . . kind

of where do you go then? You either go up into a bigger organisation, and it was not for me. So I think you can progress quickly if there's opportunities, but there's not always. . . but then like I say, you can make your own opportunities because actually if you see things like funding and you apply for them, there's no reason why. . . If we saw a bigger contract that we wanted to apply for, and there was potential that actually I could go apply to manage that. It's hard to know, but I know a lot of organisations that only have one or two workers, so actually progression is difficult and quite often you come in as a support worker and then you end up being manager because actually you've been the one who's been there longest, and not always where you thought you'd be, and sometimes it's fantastic and sometimes you think 'I never signed up for this!'

Amanda's experience of working in a larger voluntary organisation highlights the specific issues around career progression within the smaller, local organisations I have focused on. Natalie, Fran and Amanda had experienced almost meteoric rises within their organisations, taking on more responsibilities and moving further up the organisations' hierarchy. Yet these trajectories were halted when they achieved senior management positions either because they did not feel experienced enough for chief executive positions and/or they did not expect these roles to become available. They all felt a strong commitment and loyalty towards their organisations and did not want to leave, but they were also aware that they had hit a ceiling, and would not be able to progress further within them. Underlying their narratives was also an inherent contradiction. It appears as though, on the one hand, a person has to be exceptionally driven in order to progress in the voluntary sector, by putting themselves forward for promotion, finding funding or deciding to move to a different organisation in order to find new opportunities. On the other hand, there is the unwanted 'progression' some voluntary-sector workers experience, as described by Amanda, whereby people find themselves in management roles and with responsibilities they did not always want or ask for. This is both a positive and a negative of voluntary-sector work, demonstrating that its non-linear trajectories can work for some and not for others.

These non-linear trajectories may be feature of a 'career' in the voluntary sector, but they are also symptomatic of a more general change. The traditional idea of the career as a linear, upward trajectory has been called into question and it has been suggested that the 'nature of future careers will be increasingly nonlinear, indeed that

a combination of a number of positions, projects and roles, or of jobs, may constitute a career' (Patton, 2013: 7). The portfolio career, in which 'individuals develop a portfolio of skills that they sell to a range of clients' where 'work in organisations will shift from position-centred to portfolio-centred' may be one way to conceptualise this new career format (Templer and Cawsey, 1999: 71-72). The voluntary sector still comprises of organisations which employ permanent staff, but the small size of most of its organisations and the project-based nature of the work means that its workers have what some refer to as a 'rucksack career'.²¹ This type of career may be more suited to women's experiences of work, where the relatively static, occupation-led and typically male career path has never been that applicable, due to periods of childcare (Woodd, 2000; Patton, 2013). Climbing the ladder in the voluntary sector, although perhaps easy at first, becomes difficult and the ladder can end abruptly. Career development is possible, but it is more incremental, enabled by sideways movement and mobility.

The voluntary-sector workforce is dominated by women, yet 21% of men working in the sector are in high managerial positions compared to 10% of women (Teasdale et al., 2011). When I asked her why she thought there were more women in the sector, Kerry remarked on this vertical gender segregation:

If you look at the majority of men that work in the sector, most of them, I would say, are in management positions. I'm just thinking about the places I know, of larger organisations, they tend to be run by men or there are men within that higher management structure. I've never thought about it before, but like you say, I'd say the majority of people, generally, are women, but it's strange how the management structure doesn't reflect that, maybe I'm just thinking of the one. . . I don't know if that's been brought up before.

Kerry's comments were echoed by a number of the interview participants. Yet the voluntary sector still has less vertical segregation compared to other sectors. In the voluntary sector, 50% of higher managers are women, although they comprise 67% of the workforce. In the public sector, where women make up 64% of the workforce, 46% of higher managers are women and in the private sector only 24% of high-level

²¹ I first heard this term used during the 'People' Workshop at the TSRC National Conference 'What is the future of the voluntary sector?', 19th April 2013.

managers are women, even though they comprise 40% of the workforce (Teasdale et al., 2011). Although there is obviously still a problem with women attaining higher management positions in the voluntary sector, there may nonetheless be more opportunities for women in voluntary organisations to do so.

The flatter hierarchies of the voluntary sector can be beneficial in creating a more communicative and egalitarian work environment, but they also mean that there is usually only one person at the top, in a director or chief executive role, and they carry immense responsibility. Fran described her boss as the very ‘fabric of the organisation’ and that ‘if you cut him in half like a piece of rock it says [name of organisation] all the way through’. The people in these roles were often present when the organisation was first set up, and were absolutely integral to its success. Ayesha suggested that the reason why her organisation had thrived was due to the chief executive’s direction and hard work:

I think we’ve been very fortunate, but I think the charity is very fortunate that [name] the manager is very good at what she does, she’s been in this job for thirty years and I think looking at her, I think she’s been quite a source of empowerment thinking that. . . she’s really invested in this charity, she really wants to make it work, I mean she works fifty/sixty hours a week.

The passion and investment described by Fran and Ayesha of those running these voluntary organisations is evident, as is the responsibility they hold. Of course, they are assisted by a board of trustees/management committee and these can be very ‘hands on’ and supportive. However, as Diane alluded to, organisations can run into extreme trouble when a management board is unsupportive and bad relationships develop.

Two participants, Christine and Rebecca, had been in the most senior positions in their organisations when they experienced what they both referred to as ‘burnout’. Christine had established and run her own charity for over ten years, which although very successful, had taken a personal toll:

I think the top and bottom of it was that I was really knackered, so we were talking about 2007 when I left, I’d started writing bids in 1996, and the whole time I was a single parent, no family around here, and I don’t have the support that I have now. So the pressure on me was enormous. And I was just

absolutely knackered, and really, really importantly, I'd run out of my own skills and capabilities. In that time, nobody ever taught me how to do anything. I was literally making it up as I went along, or if I couldn't, didn't know how to do that, I'd ask somebody and I'd find out. Now, if I couldn't do something, I'd ring up a specialist or somebody who was really good at it, and it was what they really loved and I'd go 'can you help me with this?' But then, I had it in my mind that I was failing if I didn't do it myself. So of course, if you run a business like that for ten years, you are going to be pretty fucked at the end of it.

It was only after taking some time out to take part in a leadership programme that she began to see what was wrong:

I could see why I was burning out, I could see what the problems were, I could see that my skills and capabilities weren't enough and I had to begin to delegate far more effectively. I needed to have a different approach to the strategic development of the organisation, about the politics of how charities operate and the local area, and the national picture, all of that, just everything about being a CEO of a charity, just emerged in front of my eyes, and I could see how wrong, how much I'd been doing really brilliantly, because the organisation really thrived.

Rebecca was offered a position running a community centre in a deprived area which, although she faced enormous pressure to do so, she could not make self-sustaining. She talked about her experience in depth:

I had three weeks off work where I cried [laughs]. I had to stop crying before I came back to work. That was because of the financial pressures, really. Trying to keep the. . . it was an open-door community centre, it was called a healthy living centre, but really it was a community centre, open door, people wander in just to chill, and that was the point. So, I could have been on reception, I could have been unblocking the toilets, I could have been putting a funding bid in or I could have been doing supervision with some of the staff. . . or. . . chasing the kids off the roof, or. . . being called out at night because there are kids on the roof. And. . . we were lottery funded and those kinds of, those returns were not easy also, and it was just. . . it just got too much[. . .] So I worked far too many hours and didn't get the right work-life balance for a number of months. . . and eventually it just took its toll. So I took three weeks off, went back, re-focused, re-focused the work I think as well, because I think we were trying to be all things to all people. And then . . . I stayed a little while, I didn't leave after that, it didn't kind of affect my decision to leave, but I think it was probably from then that I thought, 'I've probably brought the project as far as I can, and it needs some new blood', so it may have been six months or so after that that I started to look around and move on.

In both Rebecca's and Christine's case, the burnout was the result of taking on too much personal responsibility and having a poor work-life balance. It is evident that the problems of career progression in the voluntary sector do not end when a person reaches the top. This could be one reason why, as Louise indicated, some workers in the sector are not interested in climbing the ladder.

Burnout theory developed in the 1970s as a description of a 'specific kind of occupational stress among health care workers that results from demanding and emotionally charged relationships between caregivers and their recipients' (Maslach et al., 2001; Bakker et al., 2006: 32). It has since been identified in workers across the spectrum (although is still closely associated with health and social care work), and is usually defined as a 'psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment' (Lloyd et al., 2002; Bakker et al., 2006: 32). However, this experience of burnout was not conceived as entirely negative by Christine or Rebecca. Christine was able to see what her organisation had achieved, and, with some distance, what she had been doing wrong. Similarly, Rebecca took this experience of burnout as an opportunity to re-focus and begin the process of moving on and finding new opportunities. It has been argued that burnout is not necessarily 'an unavoidable and negative process going from bad to worse' (Kristensen et al., 2009). Campbell (2012) suggests that burnout 'can be seen as a dynamic experience in which workers' personal lives and working lives interact with our organisational cultures to shape the energy and commitment they can give to our work'. Nevertheless, Christine and Rebecca's experiences highlight the potential unsustainability of maintaining lone senior posts within the voluntary sector.

Freedom, Creativity and Autonomy

Job satisfaction in the voluntary sector hinges, to a large degree, on workers' sense of freedom and autonomy, and this appears to be a direct effect of the sector's smaller organisations and limited hierarchies. I was struck by how often the interviewees discussed feelings of freedom, creativity and autonomy in the voluntary sector. These

were often compared to feeling restricted within the public sector, where the interviewees either recalled or imagined feeling suppressed by the extended hierarchies and levels of bureaucracy. For example, Jane, who had just set up her own social enterprise, compared the running of this organisation to her previous experience in the NHS:

It's very different because you've got the big hierarchy structure in the NHS, and now if we need something, we just do it. Well I suppose I have to do everything, whereas before I had the HR team, occupational health, finance, pay roll. . . now I have to do it all, and organise it all. Which is great, I've learnt an awful lot from it [. . .] We've got all the functions that the NHS has, but we've got smaller. . . we haven't got the same red tape.

Jane had to do everything now, but was more in control. Haleema also preferred having more individual responsibility and cutting out what she regarded as the bureaucracy of the public sector:

If you were in the statutory sector, you would have to go to your hierarchy to even put the proposal forward before you could even. . . whereas my line manager saw the proposal and within an hour I'd authorisation to go do everything that I wanted to do. You have the scope here.

Employees' sense of freedom and autonomy over their own work was reinforced by their managers' and their organisations' confidence in them:

It's just a really lovely job, and there's so much freedom, and you know, there's a lot of trust from the organisation and you can just get on, and do the job and be as creative as you want to be. There's nobody asking you 'well, why are you doing that?' it's just really easy to work in the voluntary sector (Louise).

This freedom could be ascribed to the nature of the voluntary-sector workforce, including both paid and unpaid workers. Grace, a volunteer, described why she enjoyed volunteering and the freedom she felt:

Well yes. I suppose the big, big difference with volunteering, is that you don't have the kind of pressure that you do when you're being paid to do a job. That doesn't mean to say you don't take it seriously, or you're not responsible about it, like you know, meeting a deadline, or whatever it might be. But you know that there's not going to be that ton of bricks coming down on you if you haven't done it because everybody knows you're doing your level best in your spare time. So that kind of frees you from the feeling that you're working, I think. It is a different, a very different feeling. And you think, oh, everything I'm doing is a sort of bonus, because it's voluntary I think.

For Grace the freedom came from being unpaid. Yet I would argue that the ‘voluntary’ aspect of the sector may resonate with its paid workers as well, particularly because the wages are distinctly lower than in the public or private sector. These complexities were summarised by Natalie in her discussion of why she chose to work in a voluntary organisation rather than for a statutory organisation:

I felt that the voluntary sector gave me that flexibility because. . . in the voluntary sector, back then, you evaluated everything in a very different way. You had the flexibility to decide how you were going to evaluate a project, you. . . got the ability to work with young people, to fundraise for what they wanted to do, all of which I didn’t think I’d get if I went into statutory youth work. I also. . . didn’t just want to work in an evening [. . .] There wasn’t that many roles around in the statutory sector because by the time you get to be full-time you were managing services, and that’s not where I wanted to be then, I wanted to be that hands on. . . but without working five nights a week. And I felt that the voluntary sector gave me much more flexibility, and when you sort of weigh up. . . for me, the salary in the voluntary sector was lower . . . but the job satisfaction was higher, because you got to spend much more time with young people, and in felt much more like you were in control of your own self-direction.

In the voluntary sector there is more opportunity to take on active roles. The narratives suggest that there is greater freedom to forge your own path within the sector, to choose the projects and groups you work with (within reason), and find the funding to do so. In the public and private sector this level of autonomy and self-direction is perhaps only available to those in managerial positions. In voluntary organisations ordinary workers seem to have more independence and responsibility without the demands associated with more senior roles.

Voluntary organisations are often regarded as ‘inherently creative’ and ‘responsive to change and able to translate innovative ideas into action quickly’ (Schwabenland, 2006: 105). Indeed, there seemed to be a universal agreement within the interviewees’ accounts that the voluntary sector fostered a particularly creative environment. Kerry discussed how the voluntary sector ‘lets you be kind of innovative, to be able to. . . create things and be listened to within your organisation, flexibility. . . those are the major things. . . helping people and doing your bit’. The

participants felt that the lack of structure and individualism of the sector encouraged them to take more creative approaches to meeting service users' needs:

I find the voluntary sector. . . obviously it depends where you work and what kind of management structure you're under, but for me, I think the voluntary sector gives you more freedom, more creative. . . the kind of person that I am and the way I work as an individual, I found work in the voluntary sector suits my style of work better than statutory (Fiona).

I really get the feeling that I don't want to work for the statutory sector at any point, I think there's creativity as well in the voluntary sector, a lot more, there's that direct link to your communities, to the cause or the people that you want to work with, there's less bureaucracy, although there is more at the moment than there was. There is less money, and you know I have looked at a few different posts and I know doing the same kind of work that I'm doing now in the statutory sector I could be getting an extra five or six grand a year which wouldn't go amiss! [laughs] But I can imagine feeling my shoulders round my ears. . . just comfort at being. . . I don't know, forced down a tube on some level, forced to do. . . not forced, but having limited ability. At the moment I can manage my team fantastically and they can come up with an idea and it takes half a day and that idea can be approved and it can happen . . . just the stifling nature of various bureaucracies which are much more there within the statutory sector, would stifle me (Fran).

Fiona and Fran both argued that the structure of voluntary organisations suited their personalities and enabled their creativity. They both agreed that this creativity would be stifled within the 'bureaucratic' and 'rigid' public sector. Again, the issue of salary was raised in Fran's narrative, suggesting that the freedom, autonomy and creativity attached to voluntary-sector work comes with a financial penalty, and this was an aspect that the participants had to come to terms with.

The small size of voluntary organisations means that workers often have multiple roles within them. Louise discussed this in some depth, arguing that the opposite was often true within the public sector:

When you go into the voluntary sector and you do anything, you end up doing loads and loads of different roles and jobs, and you wear different hats all the time. Whereas in the council, in my experience, you have one particular job and it was really kind of like quite narrow and somebody else did something which was very, very similar and lots of overlaps but theirs is that narrow bit as well. And that's how I saw it, it's like lots and lots of slices, but all overlapping, and actually you could have just had one person doing a lot more than what they were doing. It's quite interesting. But in the voluntary sector, you have all the slices, and you're doing it all.

The ability to inhabit multiple roles was viewed by most of my participants as a distinct advantage of the sector, allowing them even more autonomy and offering them further opportunities to develop skills and knowledge. Others, like Rebecca, whilst acknowledging how difficult the bureaucracy of statutory organisations made some aspects of work, appreciated the support it offered. Rebecca called her return to the public sector after her burnout ‘amazing’ partly because there was less financial pressure but also because she had less personal responsibility:

[In the public sector] we’ve got a finance department, we’ve got an HR department, they’ve got a communications department, all these people. . . it meant you couldn’t ever get anything done because it took too long. But there was all this support there, people with specialist skills, so you didn’t need to muddle through and do the research and stuff yourself. Thinking about HR. . . at the [community centre] you’d have to do all the research before you got yourself a policy together, you know, copy and paste other people’s that are similar, and think how does that relate to us? If you’ve got a HR department, you just say ‘oh can you do me their maternity. . . oh yeah, there it is’ fantastic. So it meant that you could focus on your specific bit of the job really. So I found it difficult to readjust because it was weird. . . having, not knowing everything, whereas previously, because it’s a small organisation you know everything whether you’re in charge of it or not, people tend to know what’s going on with everybody else. But when I moved to the local authority, you’ve just got a small, tiny little piece, erm. . . and you don’t always know where it connects to things. So it was far more relaxed, which I wasn’t really expecting, far more relaxed, but worrying. . . I never really got to grips with not knowing the whole organisation.

Whilst Rebecca was disconcerted by the distinct role division and lack of self-sufficiency within the statutory organisation, she did find working there a more relaxing experience. Interestingly, Rebecca re-joined the voluntary sector after a couple of years, but indicated in the interview that she might switch sectors again in the future. This suggests that although the structure and ethos of voluntary organisations encourages an atmosphere of freedom and autonomy, it can become difficult to perform multiple roles long-term.

Job Insecurity and Risk

Rubery and Grimshaw (2001) defined 'job protection' as one of the key factors contributing to perceived job quality. On the face of it, the voluntary sector, with its insecure funding streams and propensity towards short-term contracts, offers little job protection. In 2011, 89% of voluntary sector employees were on permanent contracts, compared to 95% and 92% in private and public sectors (NCVO, 2013b: n.p.). Most of the women I interviewed had permanent positions within their organisations, but the futures of the organisations themselves were uncertain.

Amanda discussed the professional and personal implications of this insecurity:

I think it's really hard to plan for the future, I'm sure you'll hear this many times from different people, and that's. . . as much as I say people get used to kind of that you're only here for a year and then you hope for the best kind of thing, and you work in the hope that you'll carry on. But I do think it's a really unfair way to be. I think. . . even three, three years is great because it gives you time to plan, time to prove that something works, and a lot of funders will fund a start-up thing but won't fund a continuation, and that's really difficult because it's like we put all this effort into this, and we know this works but you want us to try and do something else just for the. . . why don't you want to fund our work? So I think it has its own stresses that are different, you know, and the stress of a) not knowing you've got a job, b) those relationships could be really difficult, certainly in terms of groups who say they don't know who the commissioners are or how to get to them. . . And, you know, the amount of notice that people are given as well, when you're made redundant by the council, for example, you generally have a consultation period and then your redundancy and all the rest of it, in the voluntary sector the commissioners tend to leave things to the last minute although there's a compact that says they have to give three months' notice . . . it's right up to the wire, so actually you find, if you're the only person working on the project, you'll be having to wind everything up, not have a job, but have no time to look for job because if you were working in the council you can probably get away with having some time to look for another job.

All the interviewees agreed that job security was the one area where the public sector had the edge over the voluntary sector. In the past, public-sector jobs have been regarded as relatively fixed, 'safe' jobs, more insulated from labour market shocks (Clark and Postel-Vinay, 2008). Although most voluntary organisations try to mirror statutory employment conditions, they cannot, due to size and funding constraints, offer the same kind of security and benefits. However, this particular distinction

between the voluntary and public may have been somewhat eroded by the global recession that began in 2008. For example, Rose, a trustee of a local umbrella charity, discussed the problems with employment protection in the voluntary sector, but lamented the increasing lack of security in the public sector as well:

They seem to take more of a gamble I think around issues of employment in the voluntary sector. That's the bit I don't like about it, but like I say, in my experience at the moment, over the past three years or so in the NHS, I haven't seen anywhere where anybody's job I safe really. It's really sad.

I will discuss the impact of the economic and political climate on both the voluntary and public sector further in the next chapter, but it is important to note that job insecurity is increasingly ubiquitous across all sectors.

The risks associated with working in the voluntary sector extend to employees' long-term financial security. Even though pension contributions are now relatively generous, it took some time for voluntary organisations to catch up with the public sector in this respect and there is some concern about the voluntary sector pensions' 'timebomb' whereby 'many of the sector's pension schemes combined with poor investment returns, low interest rates and greater member longevity, [have] pushed some scheme liabilities to unmanageably high levels' (Jones, 2013, n.p.).

Furthermore, the organisations' social aims and the overall volatility of the sector may make workers less inclined to take out pension schemes. Kathleen, now retired, had worked at the same charity for twenty-three years but had only contributed for six:

I think I didn't take a pension out until my last six years at the [organisation name] [laughs] by which time I was in my fifties [. . .] I mean there were some weeks where we didn't know if we were going to get paid, never mind thinking about a pension. There were many, many times when we took a cut in our salaries just to keep the place going.

That Kathleen and her colleagues could put the charitable goals of their organisation before their own needs and security fits with a conventional idea of what women want and expect from work. When discussing job satisfaction, women often prioritise social rewards over job security, including pensions. This partly accounts for why women are less financially prepared for retirement than men (Barnes and Parry: 2004). The voluntary sector, with its predominantly female workforce, its focus on

social rewards rather than financial ones and its more *ad hoc* approach towards job protection, perhaps preserves this delineation between women's and men's employment, and reinforces different work priorities and expectations.

It is interesting to examine how the participants dealt with the job insecurity they faced. When I asked Amanda if she could cope with job insecurity, she responded:

Not always, if I'm completely honest. I know last time when the re-commissioning support went on two summers ago, and we were providing support to groups, workshops on how to make the best out of your applications and that kind of things, and we were in that same pot with those people in getting through it. And I actually don't think I stopped and thought about the fact that I wouldn't have a job, not because I believed I would have a job, but because I spent so much time worrying about everybody else [laughs] and trying to be calm for all the other groups, that it was actually, suddenly, when we found out we were re-commissioned it was like 'oh, we've got a job, brilliant, great'. Actually I think I was quite stressed that I might not have had a job but I never actually sat down and went 'how the hell am I going to pay my mortgage?' [. . .] There's definitely times when it's really stressful working in this field, and I think finance is the big bit of it, not knowing if you've got a job and. . . and I guess kind of. . . it's not been too bad previously when contracts have run out but because of the current economy, it is a bit like if we haven't got re-commissioned last time, would there have been jobs? Whereas before there was always that thing that we'd find something somewhere, yeah. I guess I'm lucky in that my partner has a relatively stable job, hopefully, so at least we've got a wage coming in and I'd wait on tables, I'd do whatever, do a cleaning job just to get a bit of extra money in if needs be. So yeah maybe that is a personality thing. But not everybody has that, single-income families don't have that element like us.

Amanda described the anxiousness she felt when her job was in jeopardy. It was not something she thought about all the time, but instead it was an underlying strain. Interestingly, she discussed what she would do if she lost her job, explaining that, if necessary, her partner could financially support her. In the event, she would be prepared to take any job she could to supplement the household income. Here, Amanda positions herself as working in a more insecure, and possibly disposable, job compared to her (male) partner's more stable job, modelling a traditional male-as-breadwinner arrangement.

Amanda acknowledged that not every worker in the sector had the support she had, identifying single-income families as particularly vulnerable to the sector's

insecurity. Yet the lone parents that I interviewed did not appear to be more worried about job security than those with partner support or those without children. For example, Fahmida, whilst recognising the insecurity of her organisation, appeared to be quite relaxed about it:

It's that insecurity sometimes as well, and a lot of the time when funding comes through it is only fixed-term so you never have that 'well this is a job for life' because, you know, if the money's run out, the money's run out. You're just constantly looking. . . I mean, I've just been very, very lucky here that I've been here for five years and we've had one lot of funding that ran out and another one came in straightaway and we carried on [. . .] I think it is that in the voluntary sector, it's just never that security. . . of having that 'yeah, I've got a job for life', because next year I might not have [laughs].

Fahmida declared that if her organisation did run out of money and she lost her job, she would be prepared to work unpaid: 'I know that personally, if I've no other job, rather than being sat at home, I'd still end up coming and still doing something'. This seemingly casual attitude to job security, displayed by Fahmida and others, can be explained by a number of factors. The first is that this was a hypothetical situation; they had not encountered the reality of job loss yet and felt that 'luck' was on their side. Although they knew their organisations had struggled, there was an expectation of resilience. Amanda suggested that this might be perceived as a kind of 'arrogance', indicating that certain personality types were more able to cope with this insecurity. I certainly found that for some of the interviewees, the instability of the voluntary sector corresponded to their own desires and expectations of work. Laura, for instance, explained why she had chosen to change jobs so frequently:

B: It seems like you've moved around from job to job in quite a short space of time, do you think that's the pattern of working in the voluntary sector, is that you move around quite a bit?

L: Yeah, especially for the environmental voluntary sector stuff, in my experience anyway. Also, I think it's just me, I get a bit restless and tire quite easily of things, and I think I'm too critical as well, I see. . . yeah. Not that I'm perfect, far from it, sometimes I've left because I've felt not right for the job, and other times. . . quite a lot of the time it's been because it's temporary contracts [. . .] I think the opportunities in the voluntary sector just seem more interesting to me as well, I guess it's a bit creative thinking and interesting positions are available in the voluntary sector. Because I know I got bored very easily, I wouldn't stay in an office job, I would just go crazy.

The voluntary sector perhaps attracts those who want a more varied work experience and are less adverse to risk. At the same time, the constant movement within the sector, the fluidity of roles and organisations, may also reduce perceptions, and perhaps the reality, of job insecurity.

Another explanation for voluntary sector employees' casual attitude towards job security is a belief that the state will take care of them. None of the participants discussed the prospect of unemployment or living on benefits in any depth, but a number of my participants had been in this position before, and although it was never presented as ideal it was not an alien concept. Clark and Postel-Vinay (2009) found that perceived job security in non-public sector jobs is higher in countries with more generous unemployment benefits. The state can also act as a safety net for voluntary-sector workers in a different way. Several of the interviewees, particularly those who had already been 'sector switchers', viewed a career in the statutory sector as a fall-back in case they ended up losing their jobs in the voluntary sector:

I think in this current climate I think no matter where, in any work there's that lack of safety, there's a lot of instability and insecurity. But generally, I have always felt quite secure, I always knew how long my funding was for my particular post, I knew my job here at [organisation] was a permanent post for as long as they could have funding, I knew it wasn't time limited as in 'we're going to employ you for eighteen months and that's it'. Unlike some of my colleagues here I have a social work qualification so if the worst came to the worst and we could no longer get funding beyond next March, then I could sign up to social work agencies and get work elsewhere [. . .]I'm not too worried at the moment, but I think maybe if the end of the year comes and we're thinking 'okay, funding is looking a bit dodgy, better start looking for a job' and jobs are very hard to come by now, that might be a different story (Fiona).

Fiona's narrative does point to a general change in job security, with the implication that the state can no longer act as a safety net.

I predicted that the research participants would identify job insecurity as the major disadvantage of working in the voluntary sector. Instead, I found that whilst it was seen as an issue, it was something that, on the whole, they had learnt to live with. Job insecurity is a common feature of women's work, particularly if it is low paid and low status (Rowe and Sniznek, 1995; Bradley, 1999). Compared to men, women

often have more transient employment patterns, and as a result, the prospect of changing jobs and undergoing periods of unemployment is something that women may be more accustomed to. Dependency on partners, family or the state may also be something that is a more acceptable for women, even if the ability to access this support is not there. Voluntary-sector work, with its inherent insecurity, corresponds to the reality of many women's working lives, whilst also reinforcing some of the problems women face in employment. Furthermore, the women I interviewed had started work in the voluntary sector during a time of expansion and prosperity. They were aware that job insecurity was a feature of voluntary-sector work, but most had not yet experienced it first-hand. The effects of the new economic and political environment might make job insecurity within the sector more acute and harder to live with.

Conclusion

Rubery and Grimshaw (2001) grouped the key components of job quality into three themes: 'employment relations and employment protection, time and work autonomy, and skills and careers'. In this chapter I have used these themes as the basis for discussion, expanding them to include elements such as accessibility and burnout and the impact of working in small, less hierarchical organisations. The participants in this study were largely optimistic about the quality of employment in the voluntary sector, valuing its strengths and often glossing over its weaknesses. They prioritised the things the sector did well: employment relations (trust and communication), time (e.g. work-life balance) and autonomy. They were less concerned with some of the negative aspects of voluntary-sector work such as pay, job security and career progression. Their attitudes to work and determinants of 'job quality' were in line with gendered norms and expectations of what women want from work (Clark, 1997).

The ways that work in the voluntary sector is structured, managed and its outcomes assessed are more suited to the realities of many women's lives. The availability of part-time work, as well as the formal and informal flexibility in voluntary

organisations, can make women's lives considerably easier, especially if they have children. For those that have had time out of work for childcare, it seems that the voluntary sector is more accessible and open to recruiting people who have had less traditional work and educational experiences. This initial accessibility is further boosted by a commitment to training and personal development. The flatter hierarchies of small-to-medium-sized organisations can benefit women who do not wish to climb the career ladder, and instead want to maintain a good work/life balance whilst holding down a decent job. The small size and flatness of organisations enables better communication between colleagues, and between managers and their staff, breaking down hierarchical barriers. Cutting out levels of bureaucracy means that ordinary workers have a greater sense of freedom and autonomy than they do in the public sector, and an opportunity to be more creative. For those who do want to progress in the sector, career development is complicated. Movement is more sideways than upwards, progress more incremental, and there is the potential for burnout in senior posts. Yet the non-linear trajectory of a career in the voluntary sector may be more typical of women's experience of work and there is less vertical gender segregation than in other sectors. Job insecurity was identified as an issue, but the adaptability of the sector, and the fluidity of work within it, could counteract some of its effects.

Many of the conditions I have outlined stem from the voluntary sector's informality and lack of job definition (e.g. the performance of multiple roles). Traditionally, women's work has been less defined and its outcomes more difficult to measure, in comparison to men's work (Hearn, 1987). This may account for the sector's popularity with women and explain why men do not seek work in the sector in equal numbers. Men may be more inclined to occupy posts with more clearly defined outcomes and delimited hours, following a more industrial work model. Similarly, the notion of a male-breadwinner, although less relevant today, is still psychologically significant for men in determining their work choices, heightening their fear of unemployment (Forret et al., 2010) For women, the informality of work in the sector enables work to become less distinguished from other parts of their lives. As I have shown, this means that they can be very committed and work

overtime, and on the other hand, this means that work can be more easily dropped when personal crises occur. This is beneficial for women on one level, but it also means that their work can be regarded as disposable by those within and without the sector, contributing to its lower status.

Overall, the working environments of voluntary organisations do appear to be more suited to women's lifestyles and work priorities. However, some of the factors which make work in the voluntary sector accessible and manageable for women may also perpetuate and reinforce the marginal status of women's work. The sector's low wages and relative job insecurity (both in the short and in the long term) fit with a standard model of women's employment, as low status and disposable. The way that the voluntary sector has developed over the last thirty years, shaped in part by the needs, expectations and experiences of its female-dominated workforce, undoubtedly has many advantages for the women working within in it, but may also be contributing to the continuing ghettoisation of women's work.

CHAPTER 5. VOLUNTARY SECTOR CHANGES 1978-2012

In the literature review, I traced the voluntary sector's transition over the last forty years from a disparate group of small, relatively 'outsider' organisations, to a more integrated and mainstream 'third' sector. The expansion of the voluntary sector in this period, its increased potential to attract government money as well as changes in legislation affecting charities, pushed organisations into becoming more professional and accountable. More recently, economic and political conditions have brought about changes in the way the sector is funded, and there has been an increased focus on sustainability and continued calls for partnership with the public and private sectors (Taylor et al., 1995; Deakin, 1995; Russell and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Harris et al., 2001; Kendall, 2003). In this chapter I will discuss these processes in further depth, and, perhaps more significantly, examine how these developments have affected the voluntary-sector workforce and workplace culture.

The chapter is divided into two main sections, Voluntary Sector Changes 1978-2008 and Voluntary Sector Changes since 2008. My analysis starts at around 1978, the year of the Wolfenden Committee's report *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*. The publication of this influential report, which brought the activities of a growing voluntary sector into sharper focus and closely examined its relationship with the state, coincides with the time that the more experienced women I interviewed began to get involved in the voluntary sector, e.g. Shirley, Kathleen, Suzie and Claire. However, the main focus of my analysis will be the period from 1997 (the start of the New Labour governments) to 2012. This era witnessed a rapid growth in the voluntary sector and its move towards becoming a major policy player and provider of social services. It was during this period that all the interviewees were engaged in voluntary-sector work of some description, and were able to comment on these changes from personal experience.

I conducted the interviews in 2012, four years after the start of the global financial crisis in 2008 and two years after the election of a Conservative-led government in 2010. The effects of public sector cuts and other austerity measures were not yet

certain in 2012 and a number of the women I interviewed were unsure about the future of their organisations. I shall therefore discuss workers' perceptions of change within the voluntary sector between 2008 and 2012, and reflect on the long-term repercussions of the political and economic decisions post 2008.

Building on the last two chapters' discussions of how and why women enter into paid and unpaid work in the voluntary sector and their experience of this work, this chapter will examine the specific impact of continued voluntary sector changes on its female-dominated workforce.

Voluntary Sector Changes 1978-2008

The 'Invention' of the Voluntary Sector

Since the 1970s, the UK voluntary sector's status and remit has grown significantly. A major contributing factor has been increasing government interest in voluntary organisations. Consecutive governments, informed by a neoliberal perspective, have viewed voluntary organisations as a method of providing welfare and other services outside statutory bodies, so-called 'welfare pluralism' (Halfpenny and Reid, 2002). As early as 1973, the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) was established by Ted Heath's government with three main functions: 'to make grants to certain voluntary organisations; to co-ordinate and develop Government policy towards the voluntary sector as a whole; and to take initiatives to encourage voluntary effort in the community' (Raison, 1980: 1660; Brenton, 1985). This unit has retained its place in central government, although it has undergone several name changes in recent years: the Active Community Unit (2001), the Office of the Third Sector (2006) and the Office for Civil Society (2010) (Alcock and Kendall, 2010). It was also during the 1970s when central government grants to voluntary organisations rose significantly, from 19.2 million in 1974/75, to 28.0 million in 1975/76, to 35.4 million in 1976/77 (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; 255-6 Finlayson, 1994: 322). Yet the real 'invention' of the UK voluntary sector came with the publication of the Wolfenden Committee's report on *The Future of Voluntary Organisations* in 1978 (Rochester, 2013). The

report can be read as a reaction to the stagnant economic climate of Britain in 1978, when an increase in government expenditure on public services was looking improbable and unpopular. The committee predicted public spending on the welfare state over the next twenty-five years would be unable to grow as rapidly as it had done since 1945, but acknowledged that there would be continued demand for its expansion (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 74). To meet this demand, the report proposed ‘the development of a new long-term strategy, by a new examination of the potential contributions of the statutory, voluntary and informal sectors, and their interrelationship’ in order to recognise the contribution ‘which voluntary organisations, both corporately and individually, are in the position to make’ (Wolfenden Committee, 1978: 74). The Wolfenden Report was crucial to the emergence and development of this new sector, defining for the first time what it was and what it could do (Rochester, 2013). According to Harris et al. (2001: 2-3) it was this shift which brought about real change in the way welfare provision was conceived:

The ‘invention’ of the voluntary sector in the 1970s also provided one of the intellectual segues into the radical social welfare reform seen in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Once welfare services were conceptualised as occurring in different sectors. . . ‘welfare pluralism’ could replace ‘welfare statism’ as a plank of social policy.

Voluntary organisations would become more and more central in the delivery of welfare services during the Conservative governments of 1979-1997, but this development did not happen exactly in the way the Wolfenden Committee had imagined. Under Margaret Thatcher’s government, there were repeated suggestions that the voluntary sector should take over some parts of the statutory services as a cheaper and more effective alternative, and government grants to charities did increase significantly in this period, from £93 million in 1979/80 to £293 million in 1987/8 (Brenton, 1985: 143-7; Prochaska, 2005). Yet, as Prochaska argues, these grants were very selective, and the ‘cuts imposed on local government reduced the money available for local institutions’, making the sector increasingly centralised and state-controlled (Prochaska, 2006: 162).

As the voluntary sector grew, it began to receive more attention. Voluntary sector studies emerged as a field of research within universities during the 1980s, expanding in the 1990s. The sector itself turned towards self-improvement, as organisations engaged in sector-specific management training, workforce development programmes (Rochester, 2013: 50). This period also witnessed the rise of the voluntary sector career. This was in large part due to the growth in government investment, making ‘voluntary’ work a more viable and stable financial option. The political situation may have also pushed people into work in the voluntary sector. Lewis (2008), who analysed the life histories of individuals who had repeatedly crossed the boundaries between the public and ‘third’ sector, found that many who had begun careers in the 1970s in statutory social work and planning (seen as ‘desirable places to work for people with left-of-centre or community-based politics’) changed course after 1979 when

it became clear that Conservative politics was ascendant, that such people moved into the third sector as a refuge from the change of political leadership or, in the case of councils that remained Labour controlled, an exit from an increasingly constrained wider policy climate in the public sector, and into a location from which to contest it (Lewis, 2008: 567).

The voluntary sector was not only a growing possibility for those who wanted to pursue a career in welfare, it was also increasingly a place from which to challenge government policy and reform.

The early 1990s saw some significant legislative changes which increased the scope of voluntary organisations, reflecting their growing importance. The NHS and Community Care Act passed in 1990 allowed, for the first time, the contracting out of community care to voluntary organisations and private agencies (Home Office, 1990a). In April 1990, the Home Office published *Efficiency Scrutiny of Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector: Profiting from the Partnership*, which advocated a more rigorous funding approach, where funding was more closely aligned to policy objectives and subject to more regular reviews (Home Office, 1990b; Hilton et al, 2013: 206). The Charities Acts in 1992 and 1993 gave the voluntary sector’s main regulating body, The Charity Commission, more powers, partly to curb the abuses of charitable status and bad governance within the sector. Within this period of greater

scrutiny, the number of registered charities rose from 98,000 in 1991 to 169,000 in 2004 (Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Haugh and Kitson, 2007: 977).

It was not just government interest in the voluntary sector which propelled it forward, the general public's attitude to charity had been changing too. The 1980s had seen the emergence of several high profile charity campaigns, often linked to celebrity, such as Live-Aid and Comic-Relief.²² These were big campaigns, both nationally and internationally, which focussed primarily on raising relatively small donations from a large section of the population. This was seen as the beginning of an 'arm's-length' approach to charity in society, where the public contributed predominantly through donations, leaving it to the 'professionals', those in the voluntary sector, to utilise their money effectively (Prochaska, 2006). The introduction of the National Lottery in 1994, with a proportion of its revenue allotted to 'Good Causes', was also part of this change, making charity and charity professionals more visible in the UK. Between 1994 and 2011, the National Lottery gave 27 billion pounds to 'Good Causes', with the voluntary sector receiving around 32% of this (NCVO, 2012a).

Rochester (2013) suggests that the 'invention' of the voluntary sector was completed by the publication of the 'Deakin Report' (the report of the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector) in 1996 and New Labour's uptake of its analysis when the party came into power in 1997. Deakin and the New Labour Government further promoted the idea of a partnership between the voluntary sector and the state, cementing it with a series of 'Compacts' across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Deakin Commission, 1996; Labour Party, 1997). At a national level, voluntary sector bodies and the VSU became more integrated into central government, and at a local level, local authorities were encouraged to form compacts

²² Live Aid was a benefit concert which took place on 13th July 1985 in two different locations, London and Philadelphia, and was broadcast live via satellite all over the world. The concert, which featured bands and artists such as Bob Dylan, Queen and David Bowie, was organised to raise money for victims of famine in the Horn of Africa (Davis, 2013). Comic Relief was established in 1985 and fundraises through two big campaigns: Red Nose Day and Sports Relief. Comic Relief holds an annual television event featuring popular entertainers, actors and musicians. Its primary aims are around tackling poverty and social injustice in the UK and the rest of the world (Comic Relief, 2014).

with voluntary-sector organisations in their area (Rochester, 2013: 48-9) Through this, the voluntary sector was effectively mainstreamed and aligned with the governmental policy agenda (Kendall, 2003). Government spending on the voluntary sector continued to increase under New Labour; between 1997 and 2009 spending doubled to £11 billion per year (Davies, 2011: 643). This had a direct impact on the size of the voluntary sector's paid workforce, which increased by 40% between 2001 and 2010 (NCVO, 2012b). During New Labour's time in office the notion of a 'mixed economy of welfare' was both preserved and nurtured, and voluntary sector growth received almost unequivocal support.

The interviewees who had been involved in the voluntary sector since its 'invention' largely focused on the impact of the increased funding and how it changed the organisations they worked for. Kathleen, who first started in the voluntary sector in the 1970s in a women's refuge and had continued working in voluntary organisations until her retirement (and after, through volunteering), was the clearest about how the sector had developed:

In the nineties, that's when the voluntary sector. . . they just poured money into the voluntary sector, because of the state of the country, wasn't it? Like, the [organisation] got a couple of National Lottery awards, there was government contracts, and it went from being. . . I think there were only about a dozen staff when I first started there in 88? I left in about 2004, and there were over a hundred staff, so it just mushroomed, and all that happened in the nineties. So it was like the cutting edge in the seventies, just broadly speaking, a centre of learning, a real learning experience in the eighties, and then it all sort of came together in the nineties. . . only for it to crumble away with the 21st century!

This transition of a sector from the 'cutting edge' in the 1970s, to a centre of learning and adjustment in the 1980s, to a place of abundance in the 1990s, corresponds to the picture of voluntary sector development painted in the literature quoted above. Suzie also pinpointed the late 1990s as a turning point for the sector, 'when everybody got so excited when we got a bit of funding for something'. Kathleen contrasts her organisation's 'very hand-to-mouth existence' in the 1980s and early 1990s when she and other workers 'took cuts in our salaries just to keep the place going' to the 'richer' late 1990s where, for the first time, she could think about contributing to a

pension scheme. These accounts offer some insight into how the proliferation of the voluntary sector was experienced by its workforce.

The women I interviewed mostly worked in medium-sized organisations which tend to attract more government income than small or micro organisations (NCVO, 2014g). Similarly, government spending on voluntary organisations over the last three decades has largely been focussed on the areas in which my interviewees worked: social services, health, employment, housing and education (NCVO, 2014g). As a result, the type and size of the organisations I have focused on were likely to have been more affected by increased government spending and benefitted from new streams of funding such as the National Lottery²³ and European Union. It is also important to consider the location of my research when examining voluntary sector expansion. Clark et al. (2009: 30) found that statutory funding represents more than half of the sector's income in Yorkshire and the Humber (and the East Midlands and Wales), whereas nationally contracts and grants from government bodies generate around a third of the sector's income (NCVO, 2014h). This varied reliance on government money could be the result of regional differences in deprivation levels. Several participants discussed that being located in Bradford specifically could be beneficial for organisations in terms of attracting grants and contracts. For example, Shirley suggested that in the past she could always get government grants if she 'jumped high enough' because 'we're in the right area'.

Bradford, with its myriad of social and economic problems including industrial decline, high unemployment and low health outcomes, has been regarded as an area in need of 'regeneration', and since the 1990s it has been the location of several large-scale regeneration initiatives, which some of the women I interviewed had been directly involved with. Shirley discussed applying for and obtaining the City Challenge Fund, describing it as 'one of the first lots of [government] money that came in'. The City Challenge Fund was introduced in 1991 by Michael Heseltine, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, and was envisaged as a more 'integrated

²³ In reality, National Lottery sources only make up 1.3% of the sector's overall income (NCVO, 2012a).

approach to social and economic problems', giving more control to local authorities to decide how the fund was spent (Oatley and May, 1999: 199). The fund then evolved into the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) in 1994, which Christine received in order to set up her arts-based charity in the late 1990s. Christine's SRB funding was then matched by the European Regional Development Fund, which was first established in 1975 and which works to revive 'areas lagging behind in their development' such as Bradford (Bovis, 2010: 91). Christine's organisation could not have emerged when and how it did without this injection of cash:

One of the things that's really interesting, I think, about this work is, organisations a) evolve out of a need, and that is historic, so it was you know, there were a certain set of conditions present in Bradford, and then there was a historic opportunity which was the emergence of the Single Regeneration Budget and the European structural funds and so you align needs to funds available, and then you can get some activity.

Bradford's diverse population adds another dimension, and the riots of 1995 and 2001 in particular sparked questions about how to tackle racial tensions through community projects (Ouseley, 2001; McGhee, 2003; Trueman et al., 2008). Natalie summarised some of the factors which had made voluntary organisations in Bradford a focus for funding:

I think it does have some of the poorest wards outside of London. It does still have stigma attached to it in terms of the riots, but people remember. . . and especially if you talk about the multi faith work, that's still up there, you know, anything to do with that. And also in terms of population, Bradford has got, for me, an unusual mix of transient populations. . . that makes it easy to fundraise for because you've got lots of areas to target and saying that you're looking at community cohesion, you're looking at. . . lots of things that the government are. . . not necessarily doing anything about, but talking lots about, the 'big society', the getting everybody involved. . . mixing the genders, mixing the ages, mixing the ethnicities. . . we've got all that on our doorstep. We are right there, right in the centre of it. So yeah, I think that's one of the reasons why Bradford attracts the funding, still. I think the further away we get from the riots, the less that will happen, but we're still. . . ten years on and it's still happening.

Kathleen suggested that this increased capacity to attract funding had some negative implications, and some voluntary organisations in Bradford had become too concerned with attracting funding:

Towards the end, it became *so* concerned with getting money in, and getting contracts in from the government, the government were just flooding. . . you

know, the first real height of youth unemployment etc., and it was after the riots as well, of course.

The 2001 Bradford riots took place just before the September 11th attacks in New York, which raised fears about Muslim extremism, and, following the 2005 London bombings, home-grown terrorism. Bradford has a high proportion of Muslims within its population and as a result, it became a target for many of the subsequent counter-terrorism measures, most significantly the ‘Prevent’ agenda²⁴. Part of the ‘Prevent’ agenda was to commission public and voluntary organisations to promote community cohesion and work specifically with young Muslim men to prevent extremism (Thomas, 2009). This involved sizeable amounts of funding. Natalie noted that in 2008, her organisation secured a contract from the Home Office for work around the Prevent agenda which pushed it from a ‘small to medium charity to a charity with a turnover of over a million pounds’. This demonstrates the transformative effect new streams of government money could have on local voluntary organisations if their activities were thought to be in line with current policy and they were able to interact with the ‘right’ groups. The voluntary sector’s expansion occurred at a national level, but it undoubtedly had a greater impact in some areas than in others. Bradford, with its complex set of issues, was, and is, one of these areas. The effects of voluntary sector growth over the past twenty years, have, as a consequence, been more pronounced.

Within the context of voluntary sector expansion there was also an important shift in the way governments funded organisations. This was the move from grant-aid to contracting/commissioning which began in the early 1990s, initiating a ‘contract culture’ whereby ‘the state, acting on behalf of both taxpayers and service users, would design, organise and purchase services based on detailed service specifications’ (Macmillan, 2010: 5). Russell and Scott (1997: 2) suggest that the rise of the ‘contract culture’ fundamentally changed the nature of the sector, pushing its

²⁴ Prevent is part of CONTEST, the UK government’s counter-terrorism strategy launched in 2003, and is largely focused on preventing Muslim extremism in the UK and abroad. Since 2006 (after the July 2005 bombings in London) the Prevent agenda was further developed and responsibility for its implementation was given to the Department for Local Government and Communities, who funded local and regional projects around community cohesion (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2010).

workers into a 'narrower service-oriented roles and a managerial environment'. This change was, on the whole, regarded by the interviewees as damaging to the purpose and work of voluntary organisations, creating an atmosphere of competition and insecurity. Angela described the shift from her perspective of a chief executive at a youth charity in the 1990s/early 2000s:

But all them years that I was. . . you were constantly putting bids into Bradford Council, and there were a lot of time where grants to voluntary organisations from Bradford Council. . . if you didn't do anything wrong, you just knew it would be there year on year. Then they started doing much more stringent performance indicators and stuff like that, then cutting back. . . we witnessed it happening and therefore. . . there was a time when if you were good for your job you knew your job was there, because funding would always be there. . . then when the shift came. . . it doesn't matter how good you are at your job.

Leat (1995: 169) has argued that this kind of financial insecurity is 'built into the contracting process via the emphasis on competition and flexibility for purchasers' and both small and large voluntary organisations could feel its effects. Small organisations that live on a shoestring budget may not be able to survive the uncertainty, whereas larger organisations have more at stake and may be unable to plan ahead (Leat, 1995: 169). Rose, a trustee on several management boards, described the move away from grants as the most crucial development in the way voluntary-sector organisations are run:

I mean, the biggest change is that we used to get a grant, and a grant was, 'here we are, here's a grant, we may want you to do X, Y and Z' and so on. It's now. . . most of the voluntary sector stuff is commissioned so the commissioners say 'here's this pot of money, we would like you to deliver X, Y and Z'.

She explained how some commissioners (local government, NHS) were becoming more and more specific in their requirements, instructing organisations on how to run services and becoming involved in pay structures etc. Rose suggested that this change was partly driven by National Lottery and EU funding, which are very strictly monitored and controlled. One of the organisations she worked with had decided not to reapply for some EU money because it was costing them 'more to show and account for every pound spent than it is to do it' and they just could not

afford it. Rebecca discussed what she felt were some of the inherent problems with moving from grants to contracts:

We can't make money out of public services, the mainstream ones [. . .] what's wrong with grants? [laughs] I know money is tight but there's a whole backlash against being grant funded, like 'oh, you're grant-funded, you're not self-sustaining', there's a lot of snobbery but the move was that we don't want to see groups grant-funded.

Rebecca also discussed the rise of social enterprises in the early 2000s, which many organisations gravitated towards as a way of attracting new funding/contracts:

It works for some, don't get me wrong, you know, there's a place for it certainly, but it became the answer to everything, and erm. . . it wasn't. [. . .] We were set up as a social enterprise at that time because there was the drive to do it, and we knew that grants would be cut. However, they then went down the path of commissioning, so you can see the area, the whole ind. . . the backroom industry, if you're a support worker for women suffering domestic violence, this kind of thing isn't going the float your boat. . . you know, 'we need to be commissioned', 'well as long I can still give the service that women need, that's where I need to be'. So this thing about how you're structured, are you grant-reliant, are you not, just created a whole new level of stuff that organisations needed to have and get their head round. In some instances, depending on the size of the organisation it took frontline workers away from the frontline. . . or you had to create the post to do it.

Many of my interviewees, including Angela, Rose and Rebecca, indicated that the replacement of grants with contracts made work in the voluntary sector harder and more bureaucratic and organisations less autonomous. They also suggested that the 'backroom industry' that had emerged as a result, where organisations had to be more focused on how to obtain funding, had caused what Rebecca referred to as 'mission drift', a change in the purpose of organisations, which I will discuss in more detail below.

Professionalisation/Bureaucracy/Accountability

The growth of the sector and the pressure to attract funding from government and other sources led to an inevitable drive towards professionalism, accountability and sustainability in voluntary organisations (Taylor et al., 1995; Deakin, 1995; Russell and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Harris et al., 2001; Kendall, 2003). As early as the late 1960s, the Seebohm (Department of Health and Social Security, 1968) and Aves

(1969) reports suggested that voluntary agencies would need to become more professional if they wanted to play a significant role in the provision of services. They advocated better management and staff training. These suggestions were later echoed by the Wolfenden Report in 1978. Voluntary organisations have a reputation for being makeshift and disorganised, partly because they are often set up by enthusiastic individuals who may not have the ‘required’ experience in the field, and the sector itself is often referred to as ‘a loose and baggy monster’ (Kendall and Knapp, 1995: 91). This has been seen as a positive attribute; Ralph Dahrendorf (1997: 7-8) for example declared that the ‘creative chaos of [voluntary] associations is what a thriving, throbbing civil society is about’. Yet the interviewees said that they were often met with an attitude of ‘snobbery’ (Amanda) and derision, particularly by those in the public sector, who they thought viewed the voluntary sector as their ‘poor cousin’ or shabby neighbour (Coyle, 1999: 68). Kathleen, recalling the interaction between workers of a women’s refuge and social services in the early 1980s, perfectly captures the relationship between the voluntary sector and the public sector at this time and why she believed professionalisation was necessary:

People have learnt the ropes. I remember going into Social Services on behalf of a woman and having a right slanging match with the then head of Dewsbury Social Services. I mean you just would not do it today, you’d have. . . cos we’ve learnt how to talk to people, that we must compromise if we’re going to get. . . you know, we need these people’s help, otherwise they are always going to be putting women and children in dangerous situations. We didn’t know then. . . and one of my worst enemies in Dewsbury was a psychiatrist, he said to me once, cos I never forgot it, ‘you do not do sufficient research, where are your notes?’ And, you know, I never went to a meeting after that without my notes. I thought ‘oh yes’ and I looked round and all these smartly dressed people. . . and we always dressed down, you know, it was like ‘we don’t care’ [laughs] it was like children playing really, if you think about it, gosh. So we always dressed down and the others always dressed very smartly, in suits etc. We deliberately didn’t. . . but as I looked round that meeting, and they were all sitting there, with their briefcases, and their notepads, and they were able to refer back to months previous. . . and I suddenly realised that I wasn’t being professional, as I would have been in a class room, I would never have behaved unprofessionally, I hope, with my students. But to these people, I was behaving like a child. So we had to learn how to become professional, yeah. And some people went over to the other side, of course. But we all eventually wore trouser suits and had briefcases and. . . [laughs] it was just learning. . . it’s learning the ropes isn’t it?

Kathleen's realisation that she and her colleagues were, inadvertently, having a detrimental impact on the women they were representing, pushed her to 'learn the ropes' and act more professionally. Kathleen also recognised that becoming more professional could be beneficial for workers too. When I asked Kathleen what she meant by 'the other side', she discussed why people might prefer to work in a statutory environment, and the difficulties and personal safety issues she encountered as a volunteer:

I think they got tired. If you're always walking near the edge, it keeps quite a lot of energy to stop you getting vertigo, [laughs] you know what I mean? So you have to have quite a lot of creative energy. . . and it is shorter hours [in the statutory sector] etc. When we were all volunteers in [women's refuge], even the paid workers, we were on call, like, twenty-four hours a day, you know. And the dangers we underwent. . . I was three times, yeah three times assaulted by a man [. . .] Now you see, you wouldn't ever. . . [my daughter] manages a whole host of people who will go into people's home and things like that, but they have a twenty-four hour emergency alarm and they have to write precisely, in the computer diary, where they are going, how long they are going to be etc., etc. They monitor them all the time. We used to get a call from the refuge about two o'clock in the morning and you'd just go. . . and anybody could have been in those grounds, and on a couple of occasions there were. It wasn't just our refuge, it was every refuge in the country. So there's a lot more. . . and so there should be, I'm sure a lot of people were quite badly hurt. But yeah, we were like children playing in the dark with the grown-ups next door [laughs].

For Kathleen, the voluntary sector was the 'child', learning from the 'grown-up' public sector. Another example of this came from Louise, who, during the 1990s, was surprised to find that the voluntary organisation she worked for was still allowing employees and services users to smoke in the offices:

People were still smoking in the offices, and all the children from the houses would be there, and they'd be that fagging it [laughs], and I was like 'I can't believe you're still doing this', and so I had to raise it in the staff meeting, and I was not flavour of the month at all [laughs]. And that's one of your differences between your voluntary sector and the statutory sectors, is that, well in that particular organisation they were still doing things which you wouldn't have been able to do in other organisations years before.

Louise, who at this time was just coming into the voluntary sector from the public sector, felt obliged to assume the role of the 'grown-up' in order to tackle this health and safety issue.

By the time of the interviews in 2012, it was generally agreed that the ‘professionalisation’ of the sector had now taken place, and the interviewees considered themselves to be no less ‘professional’ than their public-sector counterparts. Voluntary sector organisations had been driven to ‘grow up’ and in many cases, imitate statutory services, partly because they had begun to work more closely with one another. As the voluntary sector began to play a more prominent role in welfare delivery, its workers had to do more than just act and dress more professionally. They had to have the right management skills and training, comply with health and safety regulations, and generally become more accountable. Whilst Kathleen and her peers were able to disregard their own safety in the 1980s, the organisation her daughter worked for in 2012 had to ensure worker safety through a system of continuous monitoring.

For the women I interviewed professionalisation was necessary in order for their organisations to survive within an increasingly competitive environment:

I think it’s probably to do with funding and the way that funding is commissioned out. It’s now commissioned out a lot, so the commissioners are asking for different things, whereas in the past it was grants, and now it’s commissioned. So, that’s changed, so I think that’s made the voluntary sector step up a bit and get more professional, so that’s really what’s brought it about. And I think that’s a good thing. Because I think it’s good to record what you’ve done, and measure your impact and all this kind of stuff, because then you can use that evidence in a funding application as well. So it helps all-round (Louise).

Whilst professionalisation was usually discussed in positive terms, Rebecca mentioned that some people within the sector had misgivings about its impact on the working environment and were nostalgic about the way the sector used to be:

Yeah. . . everybody says it’s more professional and it probably is. Erm, and there’s a lot of kind of wistfulness around ‘aw, it used to be better, it used to be nicer’, you know. But there was an awful lot of waste.

This association Rebecca’s colleagues make between ‘less professional’ and ‘nice’ is interesting. The voluntary sector is often feminised not just by the make-up of its workforce but by the nature of its work and its associations with caring. Care and other forms of ‘feminine’ labour have a lower cultural status and are not regarded as ‘professional’ or as career-making (Bondi, 2011). In contrast, professionalisation is

often constructed as masculine, or as valuing ‘masculine’ attributes such as efficiency, rationalism, being ‘business like’ and less emotional, and ‘professional’ jobs are more likely be viewed as skilled and be better remunerated (Osgood, 2006: 191; Bondi, 2011). The women I interviewed were, on the whole, keen to distance their work from care work (and its inherent ‘niceness’) and had embraced professionalisation. In a context where a masculinised professionalism has more cachet, the voluntary sector’s transition into this work model is perhaps viewed as positive because of the increased status it offers its workers.

Whilst greater professionalism was generally perceived as a step in the right direction for the voluntary sector, the increased bureaucratisation that often accompanied it was frequently viewed as the thing that could hold it back. The interviewees thought that whilst the voluntary organisations might need to emulate the public sector in order to remain competitive and work in partnership, they should not have to adopt the ‘excessive’ paper-work, form-filling and ‘red-tape’ which this could entail (Nasreen, Fahmida). Throughout the interviews, there was the implication that the public sector had gone too far with its bureaucracy, and although the voluntary sector was in danger of following it, it was able to strike a better balance:

The important things are done, rather than all your red tape and your tick boxes, and all this other stuff, you know, you just get on and do the job, and you don’t spend loads of time trying to get permission and fill in this health and safety thing. . . well, you do have to do things like that (Louise).

Some interviewees disagreed, and the perils of bureaucracy were often directly linked to the now ubiquitous ‘contract culture’. Kathleen was able to contrast the situation she faced in the 1980s with her daughter’s, who was spending all her time writing bids, and had just written three separate bids in order to apply for a single contract:

That is bureaucracy gone mad, and we didn’t have that, there was no bureaucracy when I started off in the eighties, that crept slowly upon us. And one of my fears, what might happen is. . . is that there will be a stranglehold on the voluntary sector, and people will conform, and will send in. . . I mean, why three bids, why! For one simple pot of money, it’s ridiculous, that is simple bureaucracy, the people are being made to toe the line now. And if

they lost that, a lot of the cutting edge, then that would be a great shame.
(Kathleen)

Too much bureaucracy might have put the sector's 'edge' and distinctive identity in jeopardy. Leat (1995: 173) suggested that greater bureaucracy might not only increase costs, but could 'change the composition, management style and ethos' of an organisation, eroding the 'high degree of personal autonomy valued by staff and volunteers'.

Increased bureaucracy and governance did not just affect the paid workers of the voluntary sector. Grace, who had been volunteering for the same organisation for 15 years, noticed that regulation had become tighter, and volunteers were expected to follow more rules (in this case around food safety and manual handling):

Things have got very, very stringent. I mean whether people actually follow to the letter is up to them. . . I would say that in general things have tightened up a bit, and you've got to become a little bit more professional. Which again, I don't have a problem with it, it's no big deal, but it could put some people off, I don't know.

Grace suggested that some volunteers could be put off by stricter adherence to regulations; this was echoed by a number of the participants. Natalie discussed how the requirement that all volunteers undergo a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB, now Disclosure and Barring Service, DBS) check could make organisations like hers lose volunteers 'because they just don't want to wait for eight weeks, twelve weeks sometimes, before they get started, because they want to come and volunteer'. This did actually happen to Jessica, who had tried to volunteer at a number of organisations, but found the process too long and bureaucratic, particularly the compulsory CRB checks. Similarly, Angela argued that the personal and financial liabilities individuals on management committees could be burdened with, as a result of recent legislative changes, might prevent people from applying for these roles:

I think the role of governors, governance roles have changed with all the legislation that puts so much responsibility onto you. You know, unless people took out liability insurance you were at risk, even on a management committee, of losing your own home, and everything you've built up. . . why would people do that? Come on, why are you going to put yourself in that position, and I honestly know of organisations that have refused to take insurance out. It was expensive, and going back to what we used to pay for it,

but to me it was my duty to protect those people that gave their time, but that wouldn't have been a universal expectation. So I think that legislation really did change the face of part of the voluntary sector, whereas before you would have thought 'oh go on', then it was like 'oh hang on here, what's the legislation, what's the risks'.

Angela was presumably referring to the Trustee Act 2000, which made the rules surrounding trustees' 'duty of care' more explicit (HM Government, 2000).

According to the Charity Commission, charity trustees 'may find themselves held liable for the defaults of employees' and 'if they are liable, they will have to meet whatever sum the court awards in compensation'. However it is rare that an individual will have to face legal action if they have not been personally at fault, although the Commission still states that it is necessary for charities to have 'suitable insurance' (Charity Commission, 2014, n.p.). Insurance is expensive, and Angela's experience of having to convince a relatively large organisation in Bradford to take out trustee insurance (which she recounted in further detail) demonstrates how difficult this might be for smaller charities.

Carrying out administrative and legal processes such as CRB checks can also be a huge financial drain on organisations. The organisation Natalie was employed by had a turnover of £1 million but 'couldn't just find that sort of money, for forty employees to be on that register' and, she argued, smaller grassroots organisations like the one she volunteered for (which relied on very small donations from its users) just could not afford it. Natalie also discussed how stricter financial legislation around money laundering might act as a deterrent to people who want to set up their own charities:

I think that's really affecting small grassroots organisations and I think it would make some people think twice, what they're saying about the money laundering is that it's now much harder to open a bank account, so if you want to open a charity bank account or even just a small group bank account, you need to come up with the most phenomenal amounts of paper work for anybody who ever wants to go anywhere near it, and again, that's going to put people off.

Service users can also be affected by increased bureaucracy and in particular, the requirement of organisations to record their activities for funders. Jessica discussed

some of the problems she faced whilst volunteering for an Asian women's centre teaching English classes:

[E]verything needed to be paid for or justified to somebody, and then everything had to be paperwork based, that was the other thing, it just kept creeping. . . and they were just like 'Jessica, everybody who comes to your English class, fill in a form every time they come' and I was like 'what, no, they don't know how to write, these are women many of whom have never been to a day of school in any language, in any country at all, who cannot write, at all, have never picked up a pen besides just to make a mark. No they cannot fill in a form, I'm going to spend half the class going around filling in forms for these women, what is the point of this?' because afterwards they had to go, I had to schedule it so that they could pick up their kids and stuff. So, [exasperated noise], it was just became this bureaucratic thing that we had to have documentary evidence of everything and it was just, yeah, really hard.

Jessica's frustration was palpable, and in a lot of the interviews there was the suggestion that the recent bureaucratisation, including this type of performance monitoring, was incompatible with the voluntary sector's purpose and ethos.

Much of the bureaucracy was the direct result of the changes since the 1990s; expansion meant the voluntary sector had to be better regulated, especially if it was to have a larger stake in the provision of services. The change in funding structures and the shift from grants to contracts intensified this situation as organisations were required to provide more and more evidence of their work to their funders. Most of the women I interviewed saw the necessity of becoming accountable:

In a way, the whole accountability stuff is right. The fact that it is public money, public money is a scarce. . . always was a scarce resource, but we never thought that, we never stopped to think about that actually, like we do these days. The whole thing about it being public money means that you do, and should, and it is right, to report back on how you've spent it, and what difference you've made. It's just how you do that sometimes becomes an industry rather than a. . . so it's easy to understand for people. So. . . is that good, bad or just. . . it's probably just a fact of life. . . (Rebecca)

Rebecca juxtaposed the apparent disregard for accountability within the sector when she first started work in the late 1980s with what it was like now. It had become normalised although she again mentioned the 'industry' around it which she implied could be distracting.

The move towards accountability can be regarded as a way that the voluntary sector has become more like the public sector. Louise, who had worked both for the council and several voluntary organisations, was able to see this more clearly:

There isn't so many constraints within the voluntary sector. However, that is changing now, and we've got to do more recording, and it's all about outcomes, and about what difference your project or your involvement in that community had made, so it's about recording and having evidence of what you've done. Because I think in the past, you know, they let you get on and do stuff all the time, but they're not always that good at recording what they're doing. So there has been a shift, but it's not been massive, and it's been a gradual shift.

Christine agreed that it was 'incredibly important to be accountable for the money that you secure' but she also saw some problems with accountability:

As the accountability thing became a little bit of an obsession with the Labour party and it just got. . . it just made people really, really, paranoid. And it just started to really piss me off that we couldn't. . . what happened was that the creativity that we had become successful for was being drained out, which was tragic in my eyes [. . .] My fundamental problem with the whole thing was that the accountability and getting better [at securing funding] became the reasons why we were doing it, and that's not why most people are in the voluntary sector.

Rebecca, Louise and Christine all suggested that there had been a cultural and political shift around the spending of public money, and what was acceptable in the past was no longer so. This is a universal shift across all sectors. Everyone has to be accountable, including funders themselves. Leat (1990: 151) referred to this as the 'chains of accountability'. Christine lamented this to a certain extent, referring to accountability as an 'obsession' which had changed the purpose of the voluntary sector, something which Rebecca also hinted at.

The need to be accountable and the auditing, monitoring and target-setting that this involves, inevitably influenced the way that voluntary organisations conduct their activities. In the interviews it was often suggested that the voluntary sector had to become more 'business-like' in order to meet these new demands. This discourse has been around in the voluntary sector for a number of years and is partly a consequence of being located within the 'mixed economy of welfare' environment and 'contract

culture', whereby voluntary organisations are pushed to compete not only with each other but with for-profit organisations as well (Cunningham, 2008: 2012). Rochester (2013) argues that the 'casting of voluntary agencies in the role of government's partners in delivering welfare services has been accompanied by an assumption that they will need to behave not just in a business-like manner but as if they were businesses'. It is no longer enough for voluntary organisations to emulate their partners in the public sector, they need to go one step further and become more like small businesses. For the interviewees, this involved becoming more efficient, more streamlined and more competitive, qualities, they thought the public sector lacked.

Rokeya, who worked for an advice organisation located in a local community centre, discussed the contradictions and issues of providing a much needed service whilst trying to perform like a business for their funders:

Running as a business we are audited for quality, so voluntary organisations on the one hand are trying to meet the community needs, on the other hand we have to have all those standards in place in our organisations, that is expensive, that is expensive [. . .] This is the thing, it's becoming a paperwork kind of environment where business takes over, if we don't have the quality mark we will not get the funding, if we don't have the funding we can't provide the service, the organisation is closed.

For Rokeya, following a 'business' model meant that there was the sense that an organisation which could not meet the demands of this model and could not demonstrate its 'quality', would not survive. In contrast, there was, within the interviews, a general assumption that public-sector organisations do not have to meet these criteria, and are often 'too big to fail'. Voluntary organisations, in terms of size and to some extent structure, have more in common with small businesses, and are similarly vulnerable in times of economic hardship. The interviewees recognised this vulnerability and suggested that voluntary organisations must become more 'business-like' and competitive in order to survive:

I think we've got to behave in this professional, business-like way, because if we don't we won't survive. And I think that's probably an issue for a lot of charities and voluntary groups, you've got to offer something different and you've got to offer it well, and at the right price, and it's got to be of quality, because if we don't, we'll just be eaten up (Jane).

Jane highlights the increased competition voluntary-sector organisations face from private enterprises, which can undercut them in terms of price and quality. To Jane, being ‘business-like’ equated with being more resilient. Organisations which are more ‘business-like’ are often regarded as more modern and able to compete within a ‘survival of the fittest’ environment (Hussey and Perrin, 2003: 269). Jane had set up her own social enterprise or Community Interest Company (CIC), an organisation which was run as a business but put all its profits back into developing the organisation and doing ‘good work’. The rise of social enterprises, ‘businesses trading for social purposes’, over the last decade, and the unilateral government support they have received, is symptomatic of the increasing blurring between for-profit and non-profit organisations (Nicholls, 2012: 237).

Some interviewees had actively encouraged a ‘business’ approach within their voluntary organisations. Christine, who described herself as a ‘business woman’, suggested that she had always wanted to take a more business-like approach to the running of her charity and had welcomed the funding changes which had promoted this:

[T]he structural funding was depleting, we had to do more entrepreneurial activity, which is much more. . . I was much more interested in that anyway because basically I’m a business woman. So I’m much more of a social entrepreneur than I am of anything else. So I was far more interested in diverting our income streams from non-structural sources than I was from anything else. And in order to do that, you need to ensure that your profitability is right at the front end and you’re keeping the core costs of the organisation down to a minimum.

As the chief executive of a charity for ten years, Christine had often felt frustrated with her ‘old-fashioned’ management committee and revealed that she was not ‘convinced that the charitable structure is the right structure for today’s organisation to meet social needs’.

Other interviewees were less enamoured with attempts to emulate the private sector. Jessica, from her perspective as a volunteer at a community centre, saw how the stricter regulation of funding had unsettled the centre’s trustees, making them feel ‘helpless’. On top of the requirement to record the centre’s activities, they had

introduced new policies, what Jessica referred to as the ‘sorts of things that businesses do’, such as registering each person that came into the centre. Jessica felt that the trustees were

trying to copy what a successful ‘real’ business or ‘real’ organisation does, instead of being informal, because they felt like that formality was maybe why people were successful, whereas I thought the success of the centre was because it was informal [. . .] I don’t know, it was really awkward, that stuff, that kind of came up around funding, but it was happening everywhere.

Jessica’s example demonstrates the perceived difficulties of trying to apply business models to a voluntary sector organisation. A more formal, ‘business-like’ environment has the potential to alienate service users, changing the original purpose and function of organisations.

The majority of the women I interviewed felt that although the voluntary sector had something to learn from the private sector, the aims and values of voluntary organisations should remain fundamentally different from businesses whose dominant concern was profit. Kerry discussed the differences between voluntary and private organisations and the inherent issues with becoming more ‘business-like’:

The organisation that I was working for wasn’t. . . when I started it was fantastic but then they had a huge restructure and it became more business-like than charitable, and I think when you run it as a charity, you’re running it for the right reasons, and you are running it for people at the centre of your actions, everything you do is for the benefit of those people. When you change your objectives of what you’re doing, and it becomes more about profit, then people get lost along the way, and I think the way you improve as well gets lost, you’re looking at having campaigns. . . not campaigns for the betterment of people out there, it’s more, kind of, ‘how can we raise money’ and. . . obviously they need money to keep things going but sometimes it can be to keep that organisation going, and that structure has been built around the organisation [laughs]. It takes it away from what we’re here for I think. The sector is seeing a lot of changes, they are losing some really good people along the way, because there are people that have got the heart for the sector, but aren’t necessarily feeling fulfilled in the job they were in, with the changes. There is a difference between the business sector and the charitable sector, and I think to just merge the two. . . it’s not possible.

Kerry suggested that some workers were leaving her organisation because they did not like the direction it was taking. As I explored in the last two chapters, a major advantage of working in the voluntary sector was the sense of purpose workers had,

the satisfaction of knowing that they were doing something ‘good’ and ‘worthwhile’. The competition for resources and the resulting demands on voluntary organisations to become more ‘business-like’ could disrupt organisations’ objectives and distance their workers from this feeling of purpose.

Who Works in the Voluntary Sector and Why?

When discussing change in the voluntary sector, those interviewees who had worked in the sector the longest often indicated that it was the makeup of workforce itself that had altered the most. This is unsurprising given that the workforce of the sector has expanded exponentially since 1978, and there are now many more opportunities to forge a career in the voluntary sector. Shirley discussed her experience of this change and the factors that she thought had been influential:

The big change I saw was just before I got involved, whereas it used to be middle-class do-gooders raising money for scout groups, that kind of thing, when the government starting putting money. . . it then became much more professional because you had to jump to the targets [. . .] Now it demands a different skill from the kind of voluntary work that was done in the seventies and sixties. So. . . that’s the big change I see, then the government is now trying to say ‘oh, we’re giving the power back to the community, just like Mrs Thatcher did’, did she heck give power to the community. What she did was put money in for professionals to be paid to become maybe community development workers, but on the whole what happened was that they were paid to do the job, I think that’s the big change.

As I discussed above, the voluntary sector’s expansion, the increased government interest and the larger share it had in the provision of services meant that it had to become more professionalised and ultimately, this meant that more people began to get paid for their ‘voluntary’ work. Similarly, Kathleen discussed how and why voluntary work had become more mainstream and ‘respectable’:

The voluntary sector has become respectable (laughs). Never in my lifetime . . . well it has, yeah. Yeah, because if you said you were going to work. . . leave university and take your degree. . . VSO [Voluntary Service Overseas] were okay, but that was different again, because it was a bit like missionary work, that’s how people thought of it. But if you had a degree, to. . . to do anything but going into teaching, or the law or something. . . it was completely. . . my father never understood, until the end of his days, why I worked in the voluntary sector. ‘I don’t know why you didn’t get a job in a school like everybody else’ he used to say to me, ‘you’d have a right nice

pension'. Right, and yet all his life he'd done voluntary work, but he'd never seen it as that. . . so even for people who all their lives they'd done voluntary work, as many of that generation did, erm. . . even if it's like the Scout Mastering or something, it's all voluntary work, it's all voluntary work, isn't it? They didn't see it like that, because to them it was a way of life. . . but to turn down a respectable job with a pension, and status, that was it, there was no status to be in the voluntary sector at that time. Well there is now, isn't there?

When Kathleen first started working, the voluntary sector was more limited and could not provide a viable career path, yet by the time she retired, working for a voluntary organisation was an ordinary thing to do. The increasing acceptability of the voluntary sector, the move towards professionalism, and its new ability to offer 'proper' careers, with more defined job roles, has perhaps made it more attractive to men. Kathleen examined why, traditionally, volunteering was seen as women's domain, something to do 'while men were busy at work, doing man's things' but admitted that the greater career opportunities had made voluntary work for men 'acceptable now'. As already suggested, it could be argued that the increased focus on competition and efficiency drives have made the sector more of a 'masculine' work environment and even the discourse around funding demonstrates a distancing from associations with 'feminine' care to things with more 'masculine' connotations such as 'enterprise' and 'regeneration'. For example, Rebecca wondered whether the regeneration and business aspect of her organisation had made its workforce more male than was usual:

But here it's men, not only men, but. . . and I don't know if that's the business angle, if by labelling it 'regeneration', I don't know if regeneration is more male [. . .] health seems to be women, regeneration seems to be men, from my limited experience.

The increased value placed on typically 'masculine' attributes in the sector could also impact on women's place within the hierarchy of organisations. Good management is often equated with masculinity, as many of the 'behaviours, skills and competencies deemed to be essential to those in leadership positions, such as authority, control, autonomy, assertiveness' are linked to notions of masculinity (Leonard, 1998: 75). As a result, men might find it easier than women to obtain more senior roles within voluntary organisations, contributing to a more pronounced vertical segregation within the sector.

The growth in the sector workforce and a greater variety in the kinds of people who are involved in voluntary work might mean that people's motives for working in the sector are different from before. Several interviewees had entered into the sector through politics including Claire, Kathleen, Laura and Suzie. However, even those who appeared not to be so politically-minded brought up the innovatory role that the voluntary sector could play or talked about its grassroots origins, describing organisations as an 'access path' (Ayesha) able to respond more quickly to the needs of the communities (Natalie). Claire discussed how this made voluntary organisation distinct from the public sector:

My perception is that voluntary sector groups have been able to hold onto political values and political activism really, in a way that. . . big public sector organisation don't. . . they don't do it. So I think it's easier for the individuals working there to do that, which is why I say I'm looking forward to being able to get back to it.

The political side of the voluntary sector is something that appeals to some workers. Kathleen pointed to the power of the voluntary sector to bring about political change and lamented some of the recent changes:

Well people who have got fresh and bold ideas, and who can cut through the swathes of bureaucracy are people to be feared, aren't they? And I think he'd [David Cameron] like a return to the WRVS, the sort of gentler side. . . which is something that nice, middle-class, respectable people did. Whereas in the seventies, it was some nice, respectable middle-class people of course, but a lot of it were angry young women like myself, who were certainly not gentle [laughs], nor terribly respectable really! And it's dangerous, isn't it? People can see that they can change things. . . they can, and they'll have power. . . well, the establishment won't want that.

Kathleen was quite exceptional in her anxieties about the depoliticisation of the sector, but many of the women I interviewed were concerned by how recent changes had changed the role and aim of voluntary organisations. As an example, Rebecca discussed how in the 1980s it was seen as 'controversial' when her organisation wanted to employ a fundraiser, as this person would not be involved in helping service users, whereas today this is regarded as the norm and would not be contentious. Several participants worried that their organisations had become too focused on 'chasing the funding' (Rebecca). Diane suggested that 'if you weren't careful, you were just chasing the funding, so actually what you'd started out

delivering wasn't what you were delivering anymore'. Some interviewees also noted that the push by governments for people to volunteer (through welfare-to-work schemes for example) and the way voluntary work has become as a path to employment, had significantly changed people's motivations for volunteering:

I was in a meeting the other day and somebody was saying that we've never had so many volunteers come forward, which on the surface of it is great but actually. . . how many of them are actually volunteers willingly (laughs), and how many of them feel that they're squeezed in a corner, and therefore have to volunteer, and would have made that choice if they had not have been pressured by the authorities (Rebecca).

Rebecca was able to encapsulate the general tone of a lot of the interviewees, who, on the whole understood why changes had occurred but were not entirely at ease with what it meant for voluntary organisations:

So I'm still getting my head around. . . and I get the theory, absolutely, I understand why it is so, the whole thing about being self-sustaining before we can think of, you know, addressing a need, erm. . . that's something that I'm still trying to get comfortable with, you know.

The development of the voluntary sector and its increased role in providing welfare services has made voluntary work more open to all. Yet the moves towards professionalism, bureaucracy and accountability and the changes in the way organisations are funded have no doubt altered what many regard as the purpose of the voluntary sector. Some of the changes were considered by the women I interviewed as necessary to the sector's survival within this 'mixed economy and welfare', but many regarded the sector's increased marketisation as having the potential to erode their sense of job satisfaction.

I would also argue that the narrative of voluntary sector development that the interviewees presented is a prime example of how work becomes socialised and formalised, and as a result, more appealing to men. In the 1970s, the voluntary sector was in its infancy and the work it offered was more spontaneous and casual. As it has grown and undergone the somewhat inevitable processes of professionalisation, the work has become more defined, more recognised, and this has changed the make-up of its workforce. This process is still taking place, and the participants' accounts demonstrate the tension between the desire to maintain the 'nice' aspects of the

voluntary sector and the aspiration to become more legitimate, through the adoption of more professional and accountable working practices. How this will affect the gender balance of the voluntary-sector workforce long-term remains to be seen, but I would predict that women will continue to predominate in the less formalised areas of voluntary work (e.g. frontline work) and more men will be drawn into the managerial, professional aspects of the sector.

Voluntary Sector Changes 2008-2012

In 2008, the UK economy experienced its worst recession since the Second World War. The UK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell 7.1 % between 2008 and 2009, and contracted again in 2011/ 2012, leading to a 'double-dip' recession (ONS, 2012b: n.p.). In 2014, the recovery is in progress and GDP reached pre-2008 levels in July 2014, although GDP per capita remains well below its previous peak and is not expected to exceed it before 2017 (National Institute for Economic and Social Research, 2014: n.p.). As with most recessions, employment has fallen, although not as much as first predicted (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2010). In 2007, the unemployment rate was 5.2% and this rose to a high of 8.4% in 2011, before falling to 7.8% in 2013 (Bell and Blanchflower, 2013: F8). However, the recession period has also seen a rise in the number of people, particularly young people, who are 'underemployed'. These people want more work than is available to them and have been pushed, reluctantly, to accept part-time and temporary employment (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011; 2013). In addition, 'real wages' (which take inflation into account) have been falling consistently since 2010, the longest such period since at least 1964, and although they are forecast to grow, they are not expected to return to their 2009 peak until 2018 (ONS, 2013b: n.p.; National Institute for Economic and Social Research, 2014: n.p.).

The 2010 General Election took place within this recession and was fought largely on economic grounds. In their manifesto the Conservative Party stated that they wanted to 'fix' the Labour government's mistakes, namely their 'irresponsible public spending', which they believed to have been a significant factor in the UK's present

debt crisis (Conservative Party, 2010: 3). The discourse of austerity and ‘financial responsibility’ continued to be used after the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government was formed in May 2010, attempting to invoke a wartime spirit of ‘we are all in this together’, declaring that public spending cuts would be tough, but necessary (Conservative Party, 2010; MacLeavy, 2011). Similar measures were taken all across Europe, as the governments of Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Ireland etc. attempted to reduce their budget deficits by scaling back public spending (Bieling, 2012).

It is estimated that in 2011/2012, the UK government cut net public expenditure by £8 billion (Bhati and Haywood, 2013). Government income to the voluntary sector fell by 8.8%, £1.3 billion in real terms, between 2010/2011 and 2011/2012, with voluntary organisations which focus on social services and employment/training losing the most income (NCVO, 2014i: n.p.). There is also some evidence to suggest that the voluntary sector has been disproportionately affected by local government cuts, as local councils undergo up to 40% cuts from central government by 2015/16 (Bhati and Haywood, 2013; Local Government Association, 2014: n.p.). It is not just direct cuts which impact on the voluntary sector. New legislation and policy developments such as the Open Public Services White Paper (2011) and the Localism Act (2011) have further enabled private and voluntary organisations to take over from the public sector in the provision of services and allowed community groups to bid to deliver public services, changing how voluntary organisations are commissioned (Bhati and Haywood, 2013). The restructuring of the local NHS, the move from Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) which commissioned and funded a lot of voluntary sector activities, to GP-led Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) has also been a significant change, causing much uncertainty. At the time of the interviews in 2012, many of my interviewees were unsure of their organisations’ futures after the PCT’s transformation, which was due to go ahead in April 2013. For this reason and others, the women I interviewed, already having witnessed changes within their organisations, were expecting more to come.

Within the context of the economic recession and political change, there has been discussion about whether or not recent austerity measures have disproportionately affected women. Women dominate the public and voluntary-sector workforces and are the main users of public services, and are therefore more likely to feel the impact of public spending cuts than men (UK Women's Budget Group, 2010). However, it was men's employment which fell more significantly than women's during the recession, by 3.6% between 2007/2008 and 2009/10, compared to 1.1% for women in the same period (Harkness, 2013). This is largely because male-dominated industries such as construction and manufacturing are generally more vulnerable to economic downturns, whereas low-paid service sector employment, where women dominate, is usually more stable (Harkness, 2013). Yet whilst the recession has seen the growth of 'low-quality' (low-paid, temporary, part-time) employment where women are concentrated, 'good' (well-paid, good conditions, permanent) jobs for women are not being created (UK Women's Budget Group, 2010; Harkness, 2013). Employment figures can also hide women's underemployment. In 2013, 755,000 women worked part-time because they were unable to find full-time jobs and another 855,000 were in temporary jobs, up by 38,000 since 2012 (UK Women's Budget Group, 2010). Underemployment amongst lone mothers doubled during the recession, suggesting that single-parent families in particular are under more financial pressure, perhaps a result of the government's new welfare reforms, including benefit caps and changes to child tax credits (Harkness, 2013).

The ways in which the economic and political climate since 2008 has impacted on the voluntary sector and women's work within it are difficult to assess, not least because changes are still ongoing. In the final section of this chapter I will analyse how voluntary organisations have been affected so far. I will particularly focus on how the new financial constraints, after a period of sustained growth, could threaten some of the qualities which make work in the voluntary sector more accessible and amenable to women.

Political Change

The 2010 General Election and the formation of a Conservative-led coalition government, after thirteen years of New Labour, brought to the fore questions about the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state. These questions were often discussed alongside the Conservative Party's flagship policy idea, the 'Big Society' (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010). In 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron outlined his vision of the 'Big Society' in *The Observer*:

[T]he whole approach of building a bigger, stronger, more active society involves something of a revolt against the top-down, statist approach of recent years. And neither is it about just one thing. Rather, it combines three clear methods to bring people together to improve their lives and the lives of others: devolving power to the lowest level so neighbourhoods take control of their destiny; opening up our public services, putting trust in professionals and power in the hands of the people they serve; and encouraging volunteering and social action so people contribute more to their community (Cameron, 2011: n.p.).

The 'Big Society' initiative, as Cameron envisaged it, would focus on devolving power away from government to communities, instilling people with a sense of civic responsibility and encouraging voluntary action. Inevitably, those who worked in voluntary organisations were interested in what the 'Big Society' agenda would mean for the voluntary sector, and it became a hot topic for those engaged in voluntary-sector research (Alcock, 2010b; Kisby, 2010, Evans, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Scott, 2011; Thane, 2011). There was much discussion about whether or not the 'Big Society' would mean a greater recognition of the voluntary sector's activities, leading to more investment, or, as many suspected, it was simply a distraction, a way of masking cuts to public services (Alcock, 2010b, Taylor, 2011). David Cameron appeared to address these concerns head on in a 2011 article in *The Observer*:

Finally, some people say that the big society can't happen because our voluntary bodies are being starved of state money. No area can be immune from cuts, but I'd ask people to look beyond the headlines and see a much bigger structural change in how the voluntary sector can work in future. We are in the process of opening up billions of pounds' worth of government contracts so charities and social enterprises can compete for the first time. The scale of this opportunity dwarfs anything they've ever had before (Cameron, 2011: n.p.).

It is clear that Cameron wanted to reduce the voluntary sector's reliance on government money, and initiate what Macmillan (2013a) referred to as the 'decoupling the state and the third sector'. Since 2010, the government has introduced new legislation and schemes closely related to the 'Big Society' such as the Localism Act (2011) and Big Society Capital (2012).²⁵ Yet the 'Big Society' as a concept has very quickly fallen out of government favour and is rarely mentioned in 2014, perhaps due to the overwhelmingly negative commentary it inspired and confusion about what it meant in terms of policy (Macmillan, 2013b). Nonetheless, the term was mentioned frequently in my interviews, suggesting that it had made an impact within the sector. The participants did not fundamentally disagree with the 'Big Society' ethos; in fact, they felt that it was something that the voluntary sector had been engaged with for years, but found the phrase to be quite meaningless in terms of real change for the voluntary sector. These views were common amongst volunteers and paid workers alike, such as Grace and Natalie:

I don't see why it's any different from what people have been doing forever [. . .] So what the Big Society can do that's different from what people are doing at the moment, I really don't know. It will be very interesting if you find there's anything extra. I think most people in the voluntary sector just kind of laughed, and said 'it's what we're already doing, actually' [laughs].

I think we've been doing it for years, and I think it's just a ridiculous title for what the voluntary sector has been doing, incredibly successfully for a lot of years, and it frustrates me, because all of a sudden it's a brand new concept. So yeah, round of applause for that thank you very much. So I think it's quite patronising, that is my opinion on the Big Society, and I won't rant for the next hour on that! [laughs] (Natalie).

Here the 'Big Society' was regarded as a political gimmick, a hollow idea that those in Westminster formulated without understanding the huge amount of work already done by organisations and individuals. It was obvious that most of the women I interviewed were keen to distance themselves from the concept and communicate that it had little to do with the reality of voluntary work. Macmillan (2013b: 8) too found that those within the sector understood the 'Big Society' to be 'something

²⁵ Big Society Capital was set up by government as an independent financial institution which invests in social sector organisations, aiming to 'develop and shape a sustainable social investment market in the UK, giving organisations tackling major social issues access to new sources of finance to help them thrive and grow' (Big Society Capital, 2014).

politicians, policy officials and media commentators talk about, rather than being an embedded talking point of everyday life in the third sector'. Kerry, who was slightly more positive about the 'Big Society' than most, said that the term had become almost a 'swear word' in the voluntary sector.

Rather than being linked to the new (financial or otherwise) opportunities that Cameron described in 2011, the 'Big Society' was almost always talked about in relation to public spending cuts. The interviewees were suspicious of the political motives behind the concept, seeing it as an attempt to save money rather than to champion the voluntary sector. Moreover, many of the women I interviewed largely agreed that cutting public spending, reducing the voluntary sector's income, would cost the government more long-term:

As well, that this Big Society thing. . . it's a great idea, but in the long run, does it work? Because it's a cheap and easy way of getting people to do something for nothing. . . erm. . . with cuts and all this money that they're trying to save, but. . . it's, in the long run, people are going to lose out and that will cost them, a lot, lot more in the future (Fahmida).

Fahmida, like many of the women I interviewed, saw much of what the voluntary sector did as preventative work, work which took some of the burden off the state. The interviewees were also wary that the Big Society's aim of encouraging more people to volunteer did not take into account the time and money needed to coordinate and organise volunteers:

I think, 'let's put our own name on something that's been going on forever and take all the money out of it' [laughs], would be my personal opinion, a bit sceptical. But, you know, it's what people already do, in my opinion, and it's then kind of going 'hey look, Big Society's great, we're going to say that you don't need to work and you can give up your time for free', and actually anybody who works in the voluntary sector knows that volunteers aren't free, you've got to coordinate them, you've got to have the expenses, you've got to. . . actually have somewhere, a venue for them to come to, to be paid for and things. So yeah, I think it's an interesting concept (Amanda).

Fahmida also mentioned the costs of running a voluntary organisation, including maintenance and salaries, a factor which she said was often 'overlooked' as people think 'yeah voluntary sector, volunteers, they can manage' (Fahmida). Fiona discussed the importance of having an infrastructure to support organisations and

volunteers, and argued that the 'Big Society' could not work without these essential tools:

I think the government are using it [the Big Society] as a cop-out, I think they're wanting to reduce all the services and expect people to just take up the slack for nothing. But you can't just expect your local community to run your local centre, because they still need the skills and the knowledge, and, like I said earlier, a lot of the infrastructure to enable you to do that. And if you don't have your voluntary organisations in place, like your CABs [Citizen's Advice Bureau] and your CVSs [Council for Voluntary Services], then who is there to support the volunteers to run the services, whether it's your library, your local community centre, whatever it may be. Because you still have to have policies in place, health and safety, confidentiality, this is all the stuff you've got to have in place, but you can't just expect. . . because I look at it thinking if that was my mum and dad now, thinking 'right, I want to be a volunteer, I want to get involved in my local community centre', my mum and dad wouldn't know where to start about how to run a local centre, to put on women's groups and things, they'd still need some infrastructure and some support to do that, but all the support organisations have gone, so you're like. . . it doesn't make sense. I think it's a bit of a cop out really as well, from the government, this Big Society. Saying you want to. . . saying 'yeah we want people to take more control and have more input in your community', that's fine, take some ownership, I have no problem with that, but give us the tools to do it with and all you're doing is slashing everything (Fiona).

Fiona indicates that the voluntary sector cannot be viewed as a low-cost option in the provision of services. Voluntary sector organisations, even if they are grass-roots and community based, still have to be accountable to their service users, staff and funders and this does incur base-line costs. Volunteers too cost organisations money and cannot be regarded as free or even cheap labour.

The interviewees seemed particularly aware that the sector was expected to have a more prominent role in the provision of welfare, but were not always sure how voluntary organisations could do this within the current economic environment:

We [the voluntary sector] need to be seen as major players and we should be used and not just be a cheap alternative to something else. And I know that there's going to be a lot more expectations on the sector, especially because of the cuts, because there's going to be a lot more leaning on the sector for certain things, plugging the gaps for where the statutory services are disappearing (Kerry).

This idea that the voluntary sector has to 'plug the gaps' left behind by cuts to statutory services, without the funding to do so, was a common thread throughout the interviews. This is a genuine concern, particularly in an area like Bradford, where third sector organisations are more reliant on government funding compared to more affluent areas (Clifford et al., 2012). Furthermore, welfare cuts in general, including the caps on Household Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, and changes to the Disability Living Allowance, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credits, inevitably hit poorer people and poorer local authorities the hardest (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013). As a result, voluntary organisations in more deprived places like Bradford are likely to have seen an increase in demand but a decrease in funds. Surveys carried out by voluntary councils in Yorkshire and Humberside, Newcastle and London found that voluntary and community organisations are now having to 'do far more with much less', and this has been referred to as the 'Big Squeeze' (LVSC, 2012; Involve Yorkshire and Humber, 2013; Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, 2013).

Another change from government has been the introduction of 'Personalisation' in social care, which started in the late 1990s but has come into greater use in recent years. Personalisation aims to give people more choice over the social services they use, offering those in need of social care a personal budget to choose and pay for the services they require (Cunningham and Nickson, 2010). This can have the effect of pushing voluntary organisations to act even more like service providers and compete to attract service users (Cunningham and Nickson, 2010). Similarly, voluntary organisations can now bid to be involved in the Work Programme, the government's welfare to work initiative, as a way of funding activities. One of the problems with this is that smaller voluntary organisations, which do not have the infrastructure or financial security, are unable to engage in this 'payment by results' scheme (CAB, 2013; Rees et al., 2013). Many organisations are also poised for the introduction of Universal Credit, which aims to simplify the benefit system, but will be disruptive, at least in the short-term, for those claiming benefits and services which help people in this field, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB, 2013). On top of this, the restructuring of local government, due to financial constraints, and the change from PCTs to CCGs in April 2013, means that many who work in the voluntary sector are

unsure of the future of their organisations and feel vulnerable to more ‘top-down’ political and economic decisions:

I’m going to be honest with you, I’ve not really paid much attention to it, to be honest, because they keep changing it so many times that you don’t know whether you’re coming or going! But yeah, like some of the stuff I said about benefits and people having to earn them and pushing on the voluntary sector, he [Cameron] even talks about privatisation and the diminishing of public sector organisations, so that’s all there. But like I said, it just keeps changing, nothing’s concrete. The welfare reform is going to come into force and some of the change is already happening and then the big change will happen October and March next year, but it’s just going to make suffering worse and cause more problems, I feel it’s going to cause more problems. I really feel that we’re not even out of the worst, that it to come; I feel that is to come. Then, whoever comes into power after that, can you imagine the backlog of all the mess they’ll have to clean up? If Labour comes into power, I don’t know (Nasreen).

The ‘Big Society’, in the context of major welfare reform and financial insecurity was ultimately quite insignificant. Yet for the women I interviewed, the concept of the ‘Big Society’ was inextricably linked to the cuts in public spending and to some extent the recent welfare reforms, which had affected their organisations negatively in ways that I will discuss in detail below. For them, the ‘Big Society’ was representative of the government’s attitude towards the voluntary sector, which although it appeared to be supportive, was actually creating a lot uncertainty.

Impact on Organisations

My interviewees were able to discuss how the political and economic changes since 2008 had affected their organisations so far. Predictably, they described a voluntary-sector working with more financial restrictions, as not only was there less money going around, there had also been significant changes to the way services were commissioned. In most cases, it was not that voluntary organisations were being slashed completely, but the services within them were being depleted and cutback. Ayesha discussed a project within her organisation which had lost 35% funding, causing them to lose their transport which according to Ayesha made the whole service almost ineffective. In the case of another organisation, the Prevent money

which had been so crucial to the expansion of Natalie's organisation had disappeared due to government indecision about the whole agenda:

The Prevent money has stopped, because of the change of government. We were due to have another year's funding, but the government. . . the change in government stopped our Prevent money going out, well it wasn't just us, it was nationally, people lost out on that, which was a shame, because it was a very good project. It will start up again I have no doubt about that, but the coalition have got to decide what they're doing with the Prevent agenda before they start releasing money to it again. But I don't think the concept behind it has gone away so I think that that will come back, in terms of reinserting the money because at some point it's going to have to come back, so our project. . . it's in a good place, it was a model of good practice, it's a good project (Natalie).

Natalie's example illustrates how top-down decisions made by central and local government can impact on voluntary organisations. This topic was also explored by Fiona when she described some of the changes the voluntary sector in Bradford had experienced since 2008:

Lots of cuts have taken place, lots of organisations have gone, and I think as a voluntary sector we have to realise that we can't just rely on the big statutory organisations funding us, like the PCT and Social Services, and the council, because a lot of their funding from central government has also been cut. So . . . yeah, in the last few years the changes have been. . . quite drastic really, we've lost some really good services, you know. CAB has been cut, some of the women's services have been cut, you see the little organisations, the CVSs have all been either cut completely or just reduced drastically, so. . . which means a lot of the infrastructure goes, the support mechanism for organisations goes as well. So yeah. . . and I think it makes. . . it rocks the boat even more when you don't feel you have the infrastructure to support you, so you apply for more funding. . . it's like you're caught between a rock and a hard place.

Fiona highlighted the vulnerability of voluntary organisations, particular those heavily reliant on government grants and contracts. She suggested that the recent financial difficulties would prompt those in the voluntary sector to try to be more independent from the state. She also suggested that infrastructure organisations like local CVSs were particularly affected by the cuts. Within a tough economic climate organisations which do not directly provide services or interact with service users find it difficult to attract money. Yet these bodies give vital support to voluntary-sector organisations, and as Fiona points out, this is especially needed in a time of instability and when their partners within the public sector are also undergoing

significant changes. Amanda, who had worked for one of these infrastructure organisations since 2009/10, had seen the project she worked on take a significant cut in funding, causing her and her colleagues to reduce their hours from five days a week to four, whilst the organisation as a whole faced an 8 per cent cut in 2011/12. At the same time, there was an increased demand for the services that the organisation provided. Amanda described her surprise when a recent training course that she had organised, which covered the basics of commissioning, had become quickly over-subscribed, indicating that there was a lot of anxiety about how voluntary organisations would survive and develop within this new commissioning landscape.

Rather than voluntary organisations becoming more independent from government, as Fiona suggested, the interviewees implied that their organisations were now looking to promote their work to the new commissioners, and to find out how to fit in with these new agendas. Amanda discussed the speculation that had surrounded the move from PCTs to CCGs (which are run by GPs), and how the voluntary sector groups her organisation supported had begun to recognise the ‘need to get in with them’. Fiona hinted that her mental health organisation was doing something similar:

I think some voluntary organisations have had to rethink how they go about things and maybe reformat and become more business-minded, if that makes sense. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're not professional but I think you maybe just rethink how the organisation is run and how you sell yourself, really, to the people who will have the money, who will possibly be the commissioners in the future and for mental health it looks like it's going to be the GPs.

Fiona indicated that the new commissioning environment meant that organisations had to become even more professional and ‘business-minded’. This was partly because, as private-sector companies gain an increasingly larger share of the welfare ‘market’, voluntary organisations have to compete with large businesses to win bids. Kerry commented on this relatively recent trend:

Larger organisations do need to diversify and become more professional, and be seen as professional providers because that's the way the commissioning is going and they need to be the players, because there's big international organisations just waiting to take those contracts if they're not.

One of these big international organisations is Serco, which only entered into welfare services in 2008, but has already become quite infamous within the voluntary sector. This is partly because organisations like Serco, backed by larger infrastructures and greater access to resources, can better meet the ever-increasing, stringent demands of government contracts and deliver services at lower costs, pricing local voluntary organisations out (Third Sector, 2012). Fran discussed how the recession and the change in government in 2010 had made commissioners even more demanding and target driven:

I think it is a really big change for us as an organisation is the economic climate at the moment, and the government change that's come with it. It's meant that it's much more targeted work, much more outcomes driven, and very evidence, very hard evidence as opposed to getting somebody to come and do a performance about how they succeeded in something, or what they've learnt. Commissioners aren't really so worried about that anymore, they don't want to be invited along to see your group of young people saying how happy they are, they want to see a sheet of paper that says that somebody went from depression score two to depression score nought, or whatever, that's what they want. They want case studies here and there, but it's very targeted, the way things have gone, across all the projects.

Voluntary organisations have also become more competitive with each other, and this has been exacerbated by social care and welfare reforms such as 'Personalisation'. Although 'Personalisation' is largely regarded as a positive change, offering individuals more choice over the services they use through a personal budget, it can mean that voluntary organisations are competing with one another to attract and keep the same service users, creating a more hostile environment between organisations. Ayesha discussed this in some depth and indicated that although 'Personalisation' had been around for a while, it had only become an issue for the sector more recently (this was confirmed by Amanda as well):

It's become more competitive, because places, the voluntary sector, has become. . . it's turned into a little bit of a business where they'll offer activities at a price and then once they have you, they want to hold on to you, because that income is coming every. . . and we've also noticed that as well, that people are a bit less willing to share now in terms of their people, in terms of their expertise, not expertise but. . . service users we've realised. Because they've got them for twelve weeks at ten pound a week, twenty

pound a week, whatever it is, and they want to secure that funding. It's for their survival as well, so that's a slightly different side of things, I've seen trends of that in the last year.

Ayesha's example illustrates the very small margins voluntary organisations are working with compared to some of their rivals in the private sector. Jane, who had a more 'business-like' outlook, running her own social enterprise, still recognised some of the problems of the competitive environment voluntary organisations now find themselves in:

I think it all comes down to money. . . at the moment, unfortunately. I'm just filling in a tender form now and I have to be really conscious of price, because perhaps at one stage, when we were working together, in 2008, if you've gone for a tender. . . and perhaps you might be slightly more expensive but you were offering something else. . . you might have a chance, but now. . . you've got no chance. It's all about the lowest price. Which is sad really, isn't it?

For Jane, like others, this competition to offer services at the lowest price was a relatively recent development and could be linked back to the recession, cuts to the public sector and changes to commissioning, as well as private-sector growth in this area. It seemed that voluntary organisations which had taken a more 'business-like' approach and had self-generated income streams were no safer than those more reliant on government grants, as Nasreen highlighted:

We're a sustainable organisation, we generate money through income, conferencing, training rooms and the tenancy, but like I said, it's breaking even, and our yield is low.

The place Nasreen worked for was a previously thriving community hub hosting public, voluntary, and private sector organisations and enterprises, many of which were now unable or unwilling to spend money. Within this climate, Nasreen's organisation had to offer its space at very low rates in order to keep competitive:

We're having to. . . because there's too much competition out there, we're having to reduce our rent in order to support the tenants to stay here, otherwise other people are giving them attractive packages and they're like 'we'll go there', so we have to lower our prices. I'd rather have somebody in at a low cost than an empty unit not doing anything, so sometimes there's no choice, you've just got to do what you can.

It is clear that despite many organisations' claims of sustainability, most are still very reliant on government income, directly or indirectly, and find it difficult to survive

within a stagnant economy. Whilst some interviewees appeared to relish the opportunity to be creative and meet increasing demands within this competitive environment, such as Rokeya, most of women I interviewed were concerned with what this might mean for their organisations and the sector in general, and felt very much at the mercy of commissioners.

The situation was not completely bleak however; some of the interviewees commented on some positive changes which had come into effect over the last few years. One of these was greater collaboration with the public sector. Partnerships between the public sector and voluntary sector have been actively encouraged by the UK government since the Labour's 'Compact' in 1998, although many commentators agreed that this was an unequal partnership which never really worked in practice (Scott and Russell, 2001; Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Lewis, 2005; Prochaska, 2005; Poole, 2007). Fran discussed some of the reasons why it was often unsuccessful:

I mean there was lots of change when I was in the youth work post, lots of different things in the Labour government time around multi-agency work and around trying to integrate work with different organisations, and that was an interesting. . . and kind of difficult on some levels because trying to get the voluntary sector and statutory sector to integrate was not always successful, a great idea on some levels, but really I didn't think it worked because I don't think a lot of the statutory sector understand the voluntary sector, or respects them in a lot of situations.

As I have discussed previously, this perception that the voluntary sector was not respected by the statutory sector was common. Amanda commented on how it sometimes felt like coming up against 'brick walls' to try and establish working partnerships with those in the public sector. However, she had noticed that since the recent economic crisis and the political changes that followed, public sector organisations had become more willing to work with their voluntary sector counterparts:

I think things are definitely changing, Bradford is actually really good because we've got a really strong, really thriving voluntary sector, there are over 6,000 organisations in the district. So it's. . . it's recently, I think certainly in the two and half years I've been doing my job, it's gone from 'oh yeah you're fluffy but on the edge' to actual things. . . like they're currently moving into integrated care which is different services moving together [. . .]

there's a real acceptance with that, higher up within the council, that there's going to be a need to work more with the voluntary sector, which is fantastic (Amanda).

Amanda recognised that building stronger relationships would be key to the success of these partnerships, as voluntary organisations need supporters within statutory services to advocate for them and highlight the important role they play, and the money they could save. She also discussed the move towards 'integrated care', which was a framework incorporated into the Health and Social Care Act 2012. 'Integrated care' focuses on offering individuals 'person-centred' care, encouraging greater communication and partnership between organisations, bringing community and voluntary sector groups further into the fold, often using them as best practice examples (National Collaboration for Integrated Care and Support, 2013). Kerry also discussed how this approach had led to greater cooperation between the two sectors:

I think the impact's happening, there's a lot of changes within the NHS, the PCTs and things like that, and with that there's a recognition that the voluntary sector are expected to be part of those integrated teams, it won't just be your council, it won't just be the NHS, because we need people that are going to tailor-make their services to the individual, rather than. . . and be responsive to what they need, which is not what the public sector services can do.

Since 2010, welfare reforms have attempted to put more emphasis on the needs of the service user and encouraged organisations to take a more personal approach, something which the voluntary sector is seen as doing well. Voluntary organisations may benefit from this greater recognition and the impetus to include them more within the delivery of welfare services.

There were other signs that the public and voluntary sectors were working more closely together. Kerry discussed an initiative Bradford Council had set up called the Community Empowerment Network which aimed to create links between different voluntary organisations and the statutory sector:

There was a collective over-arching assembly that was basically an umbrella of all the voluntary sector. And that created a lot of opportunities for getting people around the table and discussing what they were doing, and that's actually become really invaluable at the moment, with all the changes with the council and the NHS, because there are these opportunities that are opening up, where the voluntary sector is now geared up to be able to. . .

work as kind of collective, and say ‘well, we’ll do that, we’ll do this in this part of the district if you can do it in that part’. We’re forming partnerships, which is obviously a benefit to the district, but it’s also a benefit to their organisations, because they can see the benefit of it themselves, so it’s coming along quite nice (laughs).

Although this was first set up in 2001, Kerry indicated that this network had been utilised more in recent years and was now needed more than ever, due to public-sector restructuring and financial constraints across the board (Bradford CNet, 2014). Kerry and Amanda were quite optimistic about the relationship between the voluntary and public sector at the time of the interview, but there was some question about how permanent these partnerships were. Rebecca described a time in the early 2000s when she felt the voluntary sector had a more prominent profile and felt more ‘significant’, when organisations such as hers were involved in ‘Bradford Vision’, a local strategic partnership between the public and voluntary sector which made decisions about welfare services in the district. Rebecca felt that since ‘Bradford Vision’ had lost momentum and had been absorbed back into Bradford Council, the profile that the voluntary sector had built-up was quickly lost. Of course, now both the public sector and voluntary sector are facing similar challenges: their shared financial hardship and the need to integrate the new welfare reforms. This may strengthen the links between them and make those in the public sector more willing to listen. Yet the partnership is still inherently unequal, and, as we have seen, local voluntary organisations like the ones I have studied expect to remain heavily reliant on the government in order to survive.

Despite evidence suggesting that the voluntary sector has been disproportionately affected by local government cuts, and that its income is set to reduce significantly over the next five years, the interviewees largely felt that they had been luckier than their counterparts in the public sector (Bhati and Haywood, 2013; Local Government Association, 2014). This was almost always based on the assumption that prior to the recent economic crisis, public-sector organisations had always been more stable and that a statutory career had been a ‘job for life’. Amanda described a definite change in the working environment within the public-sector organisations that she had worked closely with:

The atmosphere has been very different since all these changes have been made in the PCT, there is a real tension when you go in there, because people don't know whether they have a job tomorrow and it was very much people getting called in and they were gone, kind of thing. So every time someone's name was mentioned, 'you've got a meeting this afternoon', they'd be like 'oh god, am I going to have a job tomorrow?' Which is not a nice way to work, but it's just a victim of the climate.

This sympathetic approach towards public-sector workers was shared by a number of interviewees, but there was often the implication that the public sector was merely experiencing the same level of insecurity that the voluntary sector had faced for years. When discussing job insecurity in the voluntary sector, Louise said:

I suppose that could be said as one of the downsides, is that your contracts are only for every couple of years at time, and that's got steadily worse. But prior to this new political climate, people in the council and the department. . . seemed to be really secure in their jobs, whereas we in the voluntary sector have not been secure at all, and you might not know until the month before whether you've got a new pot of funding or a new contract. But now there's been a big change. So people are competing for jobs and taking pay cuts. So I think the voluntary sector has actually done better.

Louise suggested that compared to the public sector, the voluntary sector had been more resilient within the current climate, and this was partly because voluntary organisations and their workers were more accustomed to insecurity, and could be more flexible. I found that the way the women I interviewed discussed their organisations' survival was very similar to how they discussed their own job security. There was always an expectation that funding would turn up, something or someone would intervene, and that the organisation would continue to exist. For example, Ayesha was assured that her chief executive knew 'what was happening, where there was funding' and would be able to secure it and Grace believed that the council would not want to see the organisation she volunteered for disappear. This could be seen as arrogance or naivety, but it was more faith that their organisations' work would be acknowledged. Rokeya declared that:

I'm quite confident because for me, the organisation I work for is one of the key organisations in the neighbourhood so I'm confident that we'll be able to raise money because there's so much need for the work we do.

Whilst they were mostly confident, the interviewees also admitted that they felt that their organisations had been 'lucky so far'. Fiona said of her organisation 'luckily

here at [name of organisation], we're quite large and you know, I think we've had quite a positive impact on psychiatric services across the district'.

As well as trusting that her organisation's contributions in the area would be recognised, Fiona pointed to the size of her organisation as significant, and this was echoed a few times during the interviews. Ayesha too suggested that although her organisation had had to make cutbacks, the fact that it was a larger voluntary organisation had helped:

I think we still can function pretty well, we're still able to do what we do and I think because we're part of a bigger charity, we do have a cushion, where they can support us.

Natalie also argued that her youth charity would survive because 'we don't have all our eggs in one basket, we have funding streams that come from lots of different areas', and this was because they were a large organisation, able to deliver a diverse range of services. She indicated that their size would make them more resilient within the post-2008 commissioning environment, as commissioners were now more inclined to give out greater sums of money to consortia and larger organisations, which would have the necessary infrastructure to manage them. Natalie envisaged that for the smaller organisations it was 'going to be a real problem, it'll be much harder'. Fiona agreed that it was the smaller organisations which were bearing the brunt of the local public-sector cuts:

You still need some infrastructure and a lot of the local voluntary organisations have also had a lot of their funding cut, so some of the organisations no longer exist [. . .] the PCT had to look at their money, so not only do they lose their own workers, they also cut some of the commissioning to some of the smaller local voluntary organisations.

Interestingly, the women I spoke to who worked in smaller organisations did not mention this additional element of insecurity. This was perhaps because the interview participants were from a self-selected group, all from organisations which had survived up to this point in 2012, and as far as I am aware, still do in 2014. It seems that, to some extent, the interviewees were right to be confident about their organisations' resilience.

The interviewees felt that the voluntary sector had overall fared better than the public sector partly because they had been expecting the cuts to be deeper than they had been, and to have hit their organisations faster. Amanda indicated that voluntary organisations like hers had been preparing for the worst and had been pleasantly surprised:

I think I'll get in trouble a little bit for saying this but erm. . . I feel like we've been really lucky in the same way, I know that's really. . . But the cuts have been proportional in Bradford, so it's not that they've. . . there were fears that actually they'd go 'the voluntary sector, that's not needed, let's cut it by 50 per cent', and actually they didn't, they did a proportional cut in line with other things, so it was 8 per cent last year, which is huge, don't get me wrong but it's. . . a lot of groups have been preparing for actually maybe we're not going to be around, I'm not going to have a job.

Within an environment where everyone was facing similar challenges, those in the voluntary sector appeared to be quite laid back and accepting of their organisations' futures:

I know we went through a bad time, think 'oh, how would we be affected', but we came out, you know, okay [. . .] but who knows what's round the corner for anybody? It doesn't matter whether it's statutory. . . even statutory services, things that you think like. . . well the police, or education or the health service; those are all affected, aren't they? Those are supposedly the safe places where those services have to continue, you can't do without the police, you can't do without the fire, or the ambulance or the doctors. . . but even those are restricted so. . . I suppose we're philosophical really, we can't do much about it, we just have to accept it that. . . and we feel luckier than most. So it's. . . it's quite a positive place isn't it really? (Anna)

Yet despite this positivity, there were anxieties about what was still to come. Many interviewees discussed March/April 2013 as a turning point, the end of the financial year when funding was due to end, and when PCTs would cease to exist. Amanda, whilst happy that her organisation had only had to make 8 per cent cuts in the previous year, acknowledged that this was not sustainable: 'we can't take 8 per cent this year and next year and the year after, because there's a limit to what you can do'. Louise discussed how 'there have been some cuts, but they haven't been as bad as what we thought originally' added that 'I know that next year that might change as well'. Whilst the attitude of resilience prevailed there also seemed to be an awareness that things might get worse before they got better, and that they had not felt the full impact of the cuts yet. As Fiona lamented, 'it's always been insecure, but there's

even less security now because it's like everybody's vying for an even smaller piece of the cake now'.

I did speak to a small minority who argued that a financially restricted voluntary sector would be beneficial in the long run, having the effect of streamlining organisations and purging the ones which were not working. It was Diane who felt this most strongly, employing a 'survival of the fittest' terminology:

So I think probably the funding changes will affect them and if you're talking to people in the voluntary sector they'll be screaming and saying 'it's terrible, it's terrible. . . our clients are suffering' but probably in another two years' time, some of those people will be saying 'actually, we streamlined because of that and became more efficient'. It's a bit of a Darwinian response, isn't it?

Others could not believe their services would end up better and more efficient as a result of severe funding cuts. Ayesha described the voluntary sector as a 'lifeline' for disadvantaged groups, and argued that increased financial pressure and staff losses meant that not only services were being lost, but the values of the sector were in jeopardy as well:

I think particularly now in the last two years a lot of people have been lost, a lot of the groups I used to go to, I keep hearing not so nice things about how the focus of the charity is changing, it's become more work orientated now, they're trying to get people back into employment.

Ayesha illustrated how the change in the emphasis from governments, e.g. by putting money into services which are targeted towards getting people get back into employment, could change the nature of the work they do, and sever the connections and trust organisations had fostered with their local communities. Louise discussed the cyclical nature of economic crises and how that impacted on the voluntary sector:

I've noticed this myself, is that things just go in big cycles and unless you keep the funding going all the time, unless you keep that flow, things are never going to improve, and they only improve slightly anyway. But if you stop that flow, if there's cuts and people pull out, then those communities go back to how they used to be, and you've got to start from scratch again.

Louise suggested that disruptions to a voluntary organisation's funding could have a detrimental impact on the areas they work in. She indicated that this was partly because organisations in this situation would be unable to retain the staff, the people who had knowledge of the areas and the communities they worked with. Diane

referred to this loss of 'legacy' when describing one project she was involved with that had suddenly had its funding withdrawn:

So you might get your core funding for that particular thing, but it might take you twelve months to get it, and it's what happens in the meantime, isn't it? And the danger I think is if those services go then the skills go as well, and all the people's contacts go, because as workers go then they take all that with them, and you've got to start again from scratch. And then you get breaks in funding, that can be a bit counterproductive, that happened with my project [. . .] there was a gap and the application had been made but had not all been approved so they didn't reappoint, but actually one of the coaches left erm. . . and then the new programme started from October this year, so actually, [name of organisation] I think stepped in with some funding, as did the council and things so we retained some people on part-time hours, and we were really fortunate that some people left and then came back, so we didn't lose all of that expertise, but actually we had spent two years making contacts in an area and developing a programme, it just goes like that overnight. More is lost I think, it doesn't leave a legacy.

Diane here discussed the importance of investing in staff and retaining them, and the problems which can arise when funding is discontinued, or even temporarily halted. The impact of the cuts and public-sector restructuring might be more long-term and less visible than the interviewees expected. Organisations might well survive, but the strong connections they had with communities they work with may suffer as their overall output decreases and services are cut back. Furthermore, if staff numbers reduce, organisations lose vital expertise and skills, prolonging their recovery time.

Since the economic crisis, subsequent recession and change in government, voluntary organisations have faced a host of new challenges. They have not only found themselves in a tougher financial climate, but have been directly affected by top-down restructuring of public-sector institutions, new welfare reforms and changes to commissioning. These shifts appear to have pushed organisations into acting even more like service providers, making the whole sector more marketised and competitive. This has inevitably altered the objectives of organisations as they become less value-led and more focused on chasing the funding, and ultimately just surviving. There were some positives though, such as an increased partnership with the public sector, which might, because of the situation the public sector finds itself in, be more permanent than previous attempts at collaboration. There was also a

general optimism about the resilience of voluntary organisations, although this was mixed with some foreboding and uncertainty about what was to come.

Impact on the Voluntary Sector Workforce

I have discussed how post-2008 economic and political conditions have impacted on organisations and in this final section I will take a closer look at how they impacted on the voluntary sector's female-dominated workforce specifically. The restricted finances of most organisations had inevitably led to job losses, as Haleema, who worked for a youth charity, commented:

We've lost loads of staff here. . . so yeah it has affected us, we've had to get rid of, not get rid of, but make people redundant, end contracts that were coming to an end, and we don't have as much scope, the new government have really changed things, and as much as we are trying to move forward, it just doesn't seem that we are moving forward. Because this is a very tough financial year for us, and then you can't ask people to pay for services because they don't have the money to pay for services, so we're in a catch 22 situation. But you know, we still plod along, we still try to work with the small amounts we've got, try to make it stretch as far as possible, and great partnership is the key element to that, in order to make that small amount of money that we've got, go further. So that's it really, it has affected us heavily, we've lost six, seven members of staff, but what can you do?

Voluntary organisations, particularly those heavily reliant on government grants and contracts, were already working with extremely tight budgets before the financial crash in 2008. They were unable to hold on to staff in times of crisis. In 2011, after a 'decade of continuous growth' it was reported that voluntary-sector organisations lost twice the amount of staff as public-sector organisations (Wilding, 2012, n.p.).

Haleema's experience was the most extreme account of job losses I encountered within the interviews. It was more often the case that jobs losses/redundancies had become a greater possibility. Rose, who worked as a trustee at a CVS type organisation, discussed the insecurity of jobs within her organisation and the measures the management committee had taken:

For the last two years, in January, we've had to put all staff on their initial redundancy notice, and we've had to do that to fulfil legal requirements about redundancy, because we don't have the decision about what funding we are

going to have from the first of April. So it's that daft situation, what does that actually say to people who work for you? If you turn round and say, sorry, you're on a redundancy notice?

The threat of redundancy will inevitably affect how valued staff feel and can have a damaging impact on the working environment in an organisation.

Severely restricted finances can also make organisations more cautious, feeling unable to replace employees who leave, or choosing to employ staff on temporary contracts. Laura was one of these employees on a temporary contract which she attributed to the recent funding crisis: 'in the past I'm sure that there would have been funding available for my position to go ahead without this need for self-directed funding. . . my job wouldn't be temporary, if things weren't so tight'. Since the economic downturn, charities have had to cut corners, and this could mean employing fewer staff to do the same amount of work as before. Laura suggested that her role would have been done by two people in more abundant times, and felt sure that the charity she worked for used to employ more people. Nasreen's organisation had reacted to severe budget problems by cutting staff at all levels, even the position of chief exec:

So. . . I don't know what next year's going to bring, but yeah, staff will have to go if it means we're going to have to make cuts. One of the cuts that we face is. . . our chief exec is retiring and we've got a replacement and recruited her, and the replacement that we've got is only a part-time chief exec, so she'll only be working twenty-five hours, so that's the big cut that we've made already in terms of saving costs, so instead of having a full-time. . . hopefully the job will eventually go to full-time, but because of this economy, the climate we're in at the moment, once that passes and the centre is running again, at full capacity, then hopefully that job should become a full-time job again, but it's just this hard times that we're trying to pass.

I did not know whether the chief executive was happy about taking a part-time role, but it is certainly unusual for chief executives to work part-time, given the demanding nature of that role. The decisions made by Nasreen's organisation and Amanda's (who had gone from full-time to part-time work to save her organisation money) indicate that the voluntary sector contributed towards growing underemployment in the UK, as discussed by Bell and Blanchflower (2011, 2013).

Staff cuts could also mean that employees like Laura were working multiple roles and/or doing unpaid overtime to compensate, as Nasreen suggested she had to do:

Staff, I think we have really cut down quite a lot of staff, we can't really cut any further, I mean I'm playing a dual role, because the Centre Manager role was a full-time job, and I was a Community Development Manager just doing the community stuff, so I'm having to do two roles now, so again, it might not be cutting money, but it's more work, cutting time, more work for me, more hours. So I suppose. . . it might not be a salary cut, it might be that the jobs are what two people used to do, a salary for two people is made into one now and that's how they're doing, so there might be cuts in other ways. But in reality I'm doing the job of one and a half people, as it should be, and sometimes I take work home, at weekends I'm typing up minutes you know, what can you do? I think because I've been here such a long time, you just do it, just because I'm a manager and it's just my loyalty towards the organisation, you just do it and get on with it I suppose.

70,000 paid employees were lost in the voluntary sector in 2011, and a disproportionate amount of these were women (56,000), considering that women only make up two-thirds of the workforce (Wilding, 2012). One explanation for this is that women are more likely to be in part-time work, and even within the voluntary sector these roles are less likely to be valued and are usually most at risk when organisations are making cut backs (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003; Walsh, 2007; ONS, 2013a). This suggests that the economic downturn has put women's employment within the sector under threat. On top of this, it appears that the employment conditions within the sector were deteriorating, employees were more overworked, organisations were expecting staff to cut their hours to save costs and the jobs which were on offer were of lower quality (lower paid, more temporary etc.). These issues existed in the voluntary sector before the recession, but within the post-2008 climate they intensified, making the model of women's employment within the voluntary sector appear more untenable.

The political and economic changes since 2008 did not just impact on working conditions but may have fundamentally altered the sector's accessibility and commitment to its workers. The women I interviewed were accustomed to job insecurity and in fact felt that the voluntary sector was more resilient than the public sector as a result. Yet for long-term job insecurity to be workable there has to be a constant movement of workers and money coming in, otherwise the sector becomes

stagnant, and workers fail to progress. This did seem to be happening in the voluntary sector, as Fran remarked:

With the climate being as it is, people are sometimes scared to leave a job because they don't know if they're going to get something else, and if they are wanting to expand their. . . move on, they don't know quite how to do it.

Nasreen was one of those who did want to move on from her current job but felt that her opportunities were limited:

I do, but I feel I want to move now, I do really feel like I need to move, but there's nothing out there to go to. If I want to go, I want to go to something good, I could do with a new environment [. . .] But like I said, there is nothing out there to go to, because of the job market, and because my job is permanent here, if I go somewhere, nothing's guaranteed, everything's a limited time, I can go to another job, it might one year fixed-term time, it might be up to two years fixed-term time, at least I've given thirteen years to [organisation], so if I want to be made redundant I walk out with a nice redundancy package, so I'm looking at what's best for my interests, whereas if I start somewhere else and I've been made redundant, like they say 'last one in, first one out'. So erm. . . I think that is the risk, so do I stay put and see this through, and then when things get better, move then, and if I was to be made redundant, at least I'll have a nice redundancy to come to me. I think for the safety of my interest, it's better to stay put.

Nasreen had accepted the real possibility of being made redundant and had made the pragmatic decision of 'staying put' in her current organisation, where she would receive more compensation. Considering the proportion of lone parents I interviewed, these compromises were all the more important. As Nasreen added: '[I have to] provide for myself because there's no second income, and I need to make sure I safeguard my interests by doing so'.

It was not only lack of fluidity in the voluntary sector market which made its workers more cautious. The reality that employment in the public sector might no longer be an option was an added pressure. Having already taken a reduction in her hours, Fahmida was unsure about how much longer she would be able to continue in her current post, but was also not confident she could return to her old role within the NHS:

You just don't know what the future's going to hold, you just don't know how it's going to pan out and. . . you know, is there going to be more money to keep on doing this job or. . . will I have to go back and do some. . . if

nothing else there's always locum work, if there's no full-time posts. I think that's another thing is. . . even this NHS, the trust are not really employing many people at the moment. . .

Work in the public sector had previously acted as a 'safety net' for Fahmida and others who had switched from the public sector to the voluntary sector. Without this, and as the voluntary sector had stagnated, the inherent insecurity of voluntary work had become more pronounced.

Furthermore, the tools workers need to be able to 'move on' are not being offered due to limited resources. Access to personal development and training, previously prioritised in voluntary organisations, is now restricted due to cuts to training budgets. Fran indicated that her organisation used to do a lot more personal development and training, but had to cut back on this. Similarly, Amanda hinted at recent changes at her organisation, commenting that 'we were really lucky *until this year*, we had a good budget where we could go to conferences and things and bits of training and stuff' (emphasis added). When asked about training for trustees, Rose remarked: 'We do have the opportunity to go on sort of training, but not an awful. . . not anywhere near as much as we used to do. And I think that's cut back a little a bit over recent years'. Kerry had been a real success story of the voluntary sector, making the transition from service user to paid worker, and had benefitted from a generous training budget when she first started out:

I did a two-year course in counselling which was paid for by the organisations [...] they paid for me to do that, and it was fantastic, it was equivalent to two A-levels, so that was probably the most education I've got really! So that was something I wouldn't have been able to access, I probably would have wanted. . . wouldn't have needed to, but got lots and lots from it.

Yet Kerry admitted that the training budgets had diminished recently and that the relatively large organisation she now worked for did not 'have a budget for training, it's a bit of a wish-list really if you want training'. Access to training and personal development is one of the reasons why work in the voluntary sector is advantageous for women. For women like Kerry who had had career breaks due to children or who have fewer formal qualifications, the opportunity to be offered training on the job could be transformative. Once organisations do not prioritise training and personal

development, it raises questions about whether they ever will again. As more money gradually flows back into the sector, which it may do, there will be more movement and more fluidity. But this does not mean that the all aspects which made employment in the voluntary-sector work for women, the aspects which helped counteract the negative elements such as job insecurity, will be recovered, particularly as organisations try to become more streamlined to meet the increasing demands of their commissioners.

Conclusion

The UK voluntary sectors of 1978 and of 2012 are barely comparable. The sector has expanded massively, forging a prominent place for itself within society and emerging as a 'third sector'. Whereas in the 1970s it was at the 'cutting edge' it is now mainstream, employing an estimated 800,000 people in 2012 (NCVO, 2014b: n.p.). Increases in government spending on the voluntary sector has been a major factor in its growth, as voluntary organisations began to be seen as an alternative to the provision of welfare services. This has meant that the sector had to become more professional and accountable and since the 1990s, there has also been a pressure for organisations to become more sustainable, be more 'business-like' in their approaches and generate their own incomes. Some within the voluntary sector have regarded this as a mistake, and see it as something which has fundamentally altered the values and purpose of voluntary organisations. Others see voluntary organisations becoming more 'business-like' as the only way for them to survive and deem it as an opportunity to become more independent from government. However, the recent economic downturn, welfare reforms, public-sector cuts and restructuring have highlighted the fragility of this independence, as voluntary organisations, still largely reliant on government income, have faced severely restricted budgets.

The development of the voluntary sector as described by my interviewees was in many ways a commonplace progression: an initial innovative period, followed by a time of rapid expansion, a peak, a decline and a subsequent plateau. Most sectors and organisations will undergo this cycle, and the process of professionalisation becomes

somewhat inevitable as they expand. What I found particularly interesting within the accounts was the positive acceptance of professionalisation and accountability, and alongside this, the lamentation that the adoption of such practices had a detrimental impact on the ethos of the sector. I have characterised this as a gendered process, as ‘feminised’, caring and apparently boundary-less voluntary work morphed into a ‘masculinised’, ‘business-like’ and more formal sector within the space of forty years. This progression is not yet complete, and this tension remains, exacerbated by the economic climate since 2008 and by successive neoliberal governments which through ‘welfare pluralism’ have created a more competitive, commissioner-led environment.

Many of the women I spoke with were optimistic that their organisations would survive within the current climate, although there was still some uncertainty about their future in the short term. It seemed that it was the voluntary-sector workforce which had borne the brunt of the recent crisis, as there was evidence of staff losses, job stagnation and deteriorating working conditions. The constant movement of employees, the accessibility and focus on personal development which have been some of the key characteristics of the voluntary sector over the last twenty years, and which make work in the sector more amenable to women, are now under threat. The ultimate legacy of the economic crisis on the voluntary sector is hard to assess. The voluntary sector will no doubt survive this time of hardship, but it may lose the specific, and sometimes unique, elements that made work in this sector obtainable, accessible and manageable for women.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I set out to examine women's reported experiences of paid and unpaid work in the UK voluntary sector. My research had three main strands of investigation: 1) how women become involved in voluntary-sector work; 2) how women experience work within the sector; 3) how changes in the voluntary sector have impacted on women's work experiences. As I discussed in my methodology chapter, in 2012 I interviewed twenty-eight women who worked or had worked in the voluntary sector as volunteers, paid employees or both. These interviews centred on their working life histories, with a particular emphasis on when and how they became involved in voluntary-sector work and their progress through the sector. In this conclusion I will first review the key debates which guided this research. I will then discuss my findings and my specific contributions to two fields of study: voluntary sector studies and women and work research. Finally, I will discuss how my research could be expanded in the future.

Key Debates

As the voluntary sector has expanded, so too has the field of voluntary sector studies. Much of this research has focused on defining the sector and the sector's relationship with, and growing dependency on, the state. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the debate centred on the apparent failings of the welfare state and whether or not the voluntary sector could be an alternative provider of welfare (Wolfenden Committee, 1978; Gladstone, 1979; Hadley and Hatch, 1981; Kramer, 1981; Hinton and Hyde, 1982; Brenton, 1985). As the 'opening up' of welfare began and a 'mixed economy of welfare' emerged, discussions in the 1990s and early 2000s concentrated on the rise of the 'contract culture' and increased competition, professionalisation and accountability within the sector (Deakin, 1995; Taylor et al., 1995; Russell and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Harris et al., 2001; Kendall, 2003). Calls for stronger and more equal partnerships between the voluntary and public sector were also a feature (Lewis, 1999; Kendall, 2003). Since 2008, there has been a renewed interest in the

voluntary sector, prompted in part by the political slogan of the 'Big Society', but also as a result of the financial crash, subsequent recession and welfare and public sector cutbacks (Alcock, 2010b; Kisby, 2010, Evans, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Scott, 2011; Thane, 2011). Although there have been specific studies on how workers have responded to certain initiatives, there has been relatively little focus on how voluntary-sector workers view these changes more broadly (Cunningham, 2008; Cunningham and Nickson, 2010). My research has therefore addressed how work has changed within the sector since 1978 and how its female workers report their experience of these changes.

Questions about who volunteers and why are major themes within voluntary sector studies, partly because voluntary organisations want to know how to recruit and retain volunteers. It appears that the demographic make-up of the 'typical' volunteer has remained relatively unchanged since the 1970s. Surveys still report that women are more likely than men to volunteer, yet researchers are often keen to disassociate volunteering from middle-class, middle-aged women (Morris, 1969; Aves Committee, 1969; Wolfenden Committee, 1979; Sherrott, 1983; Sheard, 1995; Wardell et al., 2000; Taylor 2005). Whilst increasing diversity is obviously a commendable goal, these sorts of arguments are indicative of the problematic way both voluntary work and women's work are frequently discussed, as they seem to suggest that if volunteering is something that women do then the work has less value. To address these issues, I chose to explicitly examine the ways in which women's motivations and pathways into voluntary work can be gendered, alongside other influential factors such as socio-economic background, age and culture which impact on orientations towards voluntary work.

As the sector has grown, there has been more examination of paid workers in the voluntary sector (Clark et al., 2011). The paid workforce consists predominantly of women, but I found that research often shies away from exploring why this is the case. There has also been less focus on the motivations of paid workers, although altruism and the compensatory 'warm glow' are considered to be significant (Harris, 1990, Rutherford, 2011). Job satisfaction is reportedly higher in the voluntary sector,

but working conditions, such as pay, prospects and job security, appear to be comparatively poor (O'Donovan and Varley, 1992; Benz, 2005; Donegani et al., 2012; NCVO, 2013a). The benefits of paid work in the voluntary sector, beyond the 'warm glow' factor, have received limited attention. In this thesis I have explored why women in particular may be drawn into this work.

The number of women in paid employment has increased steadily since the 1960s (ONS, 2013a). Successive UK governments and the European Union have made it a key policy objective to encourage women to enter into and remain in the labour market. The pattern of women dropping out of employment to have children is regarded as a 'brain drain', a wastage of potential and resources (European Commission, 2005; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005; Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2013). Policy has been directed at helping employees achieve a certain 'work-life balance'. A recent example of this has been the extension of the right of employees to request flexible working hours (ACAS, 2014). There is continued debate about the effectiveness of 'work-life' balance policies for raising rates of women in employment (e.g. Lewis and Campbell, 2007). The male breadwinner model may no longer be relevant, in part due to the rise in dual-earner families and single-parent families, but the gendered division of labour persists (in public and private) and women are still the primary carers of children and other relatives (Bradley, 1999, Crompton, 1999). Balancing work and life (i.e. family responsibilities), even within a more supportive policy environment, can therefore be very difficult. Hakim (1996, 2000, 2006) is particularly dismissive of such policies, arguing that women are either work-orientated or not. Women's choices and agency is a key aspect of this debate, although it is generally agreed that women's choices in employment are particularly constricted and their horizons limited by structural constraints (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Bradley, 1999; Glover and Kirton, 2006; Woodfield, 2007). My research has examined the choice/constraint debate in the context of voluntary-sector work, and discussed the often elusive 'work-life' balance.

The voluntary sector is a clear example of gender segregation at work. It is dominated by women (horizontal segregation) but there are a disproportionate

number of men in high-level positions (vertical segregation). Gender segregation is directly linked to inequalities in pay, prospects and job protection (Scott, 1994). Low pay and low status are also features of occupations and industries which have undergone a process of ‘feminisation’ (Acker, 1992b). Work in the voluntary sector seems to have been ‘feminised’ by the number of women working in it, and also because it has relatively poor working conditions. The preponderance of women in the sector could contribute to the continuance of its low status. That a significant amount of work within the sector is carried out by unpaid volunteers, and that the proportion of part-time workers is higher than in other sectors, could also be a factor, as work has been traditionally defined as full-time, paid employment (Taylor, 2004). In this research I have sought to unravel some of these complexities, using the interview participants’ narratives to examine the ways in which work in the voluntary sector can be both beneficial and problematic for women. Drawing on voluntary sector studies and research on women and work, I have been able to identify and fill in some crucial gaps in the research, which I will discuss next.

Findings and Contributions to Knowledge

My approach in this thesis breaks away from previous research in that it focuses exclusively on women and their experiences of work in the voluntary sector. In addition to studying only women, my methodological decision to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews was also unusual. The quantitative data obtained from the Citizenship Surveys, Labour Work Surveys and the NCVO on the number of women working in the sector were excellent starting points, but they could not adequately explain why more women than men engaged with work in the sector. It was only by interviewing women that I was able to tease out some more detailed explanations as to how and why voluntary-sector work is gendered.

My approach to recruiting and selecting participants was also unconventional and provided new perspectives. Previous studies have tended to focus either on paid employees or unpaid volunteers. Being able to discuss the experiences of both groups has made my analysis richer and I was better equipped to explore the fluidity

between paid and unpaid work within the sector. In addition, the women I interviewed worked in a broad range of roles and were from different levels in the hierarchies of their organisations. Through this, I was able to investigate how changes in the voluntary sector had impacted on a variety of its workers, including its volunteers, front-line staff, managers and trustees. By using a work-history approach in the interviews, I could draw on the participants' experiences of working in the public and private sectors for comparison, which added breadth to the discussion. This research is original because although many studies have focused on how the voluntary sector has changed over the last four decades, very few use workers' personal accounts to do this, and none have discussed how changes have affected its female workers specifically.

In my first analysis chapter, Chapter 3, I examined how and why the women I interviewed became involved with work in the voluntary sector. By analysing the participants' pathways into voluntary work, I argued that constraint rather than choice was more significant in determining women's access to work. I also refuted the assumption that voluntary work is gendered simply because of its link to care work. I argued that the associations between voluntary work, caring and women, although still prevalent within popular discourse, were largely absent within the interviewees' personal accounts. Instead, their orientations to voluntary work were shaped by an early history of volunteering or because they found themselves in circumstances which made voluntary work (paid and unpaid) both possible and desirable. These circumstances were often gendered in that they were linked to the lived experience of being a woman.

I began by discussing the narratives of those who had an early history of voluntary work. Their engagement had often started at school when the participants were teenagers, and these initial experiences had instilled within them a desire to continue voluntary work in later life. Within this discussion, I considered the influence of class and culture. I suggested that Bourdieu's theory of habitus could be used to explain why some people participate in voluntary work and some people do not. I argued that although socio-economic class and cultural expectations did impact on

orientations towards voluntary work, some factors such as attending a Catholic school or participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme were able to cut across class lines and produce a habitus. These were particular conditions and circumstances which have not been previously identified, and give a new slant to the cultural capital debate.

When discussing why voluntary work might be done by some people and not by others, I also considered whether the interviewees had particular dispositions or outlooks which made them more likely to seek this type of work. Religious motivations are rarely discussed in recent literature on volunteering, but religious beliefs did seem to influence a small but significant number of my participants. The three self-identified Muslims and the one Buddhist discussed their faith and how it had impacted on their desire to find work in the voluntary sector. The women I interviewed who identified as Christian or had been raised Christian discussed how being part of church activities in their youth had set in motion their future participation in voluntary work. Their faith and the teachings of their respective churches were not presented as important factors. Religious participation was a medium through which a significant proportion of my interviewees first encountered voluntary work, and was used as an explanation as to why some women felt compelled to do this work. Yet there was always a multitude of other factors within these accounts that suggested that religion and the formation of a religious disposition were only part of the story. Similarly, I found that some of the interviewees' participation in political movements, such as feminism and environmentalism, had led them to work in the sector. This appeared to have added an extra motive to their work, and I argued, building on Lewis' (2008) study, that the voluntary sector allowed them to align their political beliefs more closely with their work, compared to other sectors.

A key objective of this research was to test the assumption that those in the voluntary sector are inherently more altruistic. To do this I examined the interviewees' apparently altruistic motivations, arguing again that these were gendered, but in a more complex way than we would perhaps expect. I discussed how the participants

expressed their desires to do something worthwhile and socially valuable, but how this was ultimately rooted in their own sense of job satisfaction: they wanted to feel good about doing good. Using and expanding on Clark's (1997) and Davey's (2001) research, I argued that within a restrictive environment where women are expected and do accept jobs of 'lower quality' (i.e. in terms of pay, security and conditions), women are more prepared than men to look for jobs which appear to have social value, and find their job satisfaction there.

When discussing how woman entered into the voluntary sector as adults, I argued that there were particular periods in women's lives when they were more likely to engage in voluntary work. For example, in early motherhood when women's choices were limited by childcare and the time they might have had out of work, volunteering was one way to gain more experience of the labour market, and was an opportunity to remain active, socially-engaged and skilled. My sample included a high proportion of single parents, and their choices were particularly constrained in terms of time and money. For them, the voluntary sector was a less formal and alternative way of accessing work, something they could 'fall into', which would suit their lifestyle.

Retirement is often a peak time when people volunteer. I argued that this too had gendered implications. The women I interviewed who had formally retired had had punctuated careers, time out of employment to look after children. Accessing work, often unpaid, in the voluntary sector in their so-called 'retirement', allowed them to assume new professional identities and build status within organisations, which they might have been unable to do within paid work. This offers an updated perspective on the motivations of women volunteers, demonstrating that paths into voluntary work are often gender contingent. I also highlighted the dual burden of childcare responsibilities and work that women face.

Considering paid workers specifically, I discussed two groups of interviewees: career beginners (women in their twenties and thirties who were just starting their careers) and career switchers (women in their forties and fifties who had worked in other sectors before coming into the voluntary sector mid-career). I argued that within all

these narratives, rather than making active choices, chance and circumstance had been particularly influential in determining these women's career trajectories. Women's career planning, because they often face time out of work, is usually more *ad hoc* and dependent on immediate circumstances. The career switchers in particular did not follow a linear career route, corresponding to the way that work is organised in the voluntary sector and the necessity to have a 'portfolio' career. By linking how women construct their careers in general and how voluntary sector careers are often structured and organised, I was able to suggest why work in the sector may be more suited to women. When considering the trajectories of service users such as Kerry and Fahmida, I argued again that gender was a pertinent factor. Not only are women more likely to be service users, making this particular trajectory more possible, they are more likely to feel open to taking opportunities to work in the sector through this channel, without a major stigma being attached in doing so.

Chapter 3 offered new perspectives on women's initial engagements with voluntary-sector work and examined how these can be highly gendered experiences. Women, like men, make choices about work based on their current circumstances, but are constrained in different ways. They may prioritise work rewards differently and whether they become mothers or not, are restricted by cultural expectations and the double burden often placed on them. That work in the voluntary sector can be accessed through relatively informal means suggests that it has not been fully formalised and the roles within it are less defined than in other sectors. Yet because it retains some aspects of a traditional work setting, work within it can still be a stepping stone to full-time employment. I argued that this method of progression is beneficial for women in one way, enabling them to access work, and certainly for some of my interviewees, forge successful careers, but it does raise wider issues. That the voluntary sector is seen as a 'caring sector' no doubt contributes to its gender segregation, even if, as we have seen, women workers themselves do not regard what they do as care work. I argued that gender segregation also persists because the pathways into work in the sector are often specific to women's experiences and are thus gendered.

In Chapter 4 I used Rubery and Grimshaw's (2001) discussion of the factors which determine 'job quality' (employment relations and job protection; time and autonomy; and skills and job prospects) and applied them to voluntary-sector work. I examined what the participants' accounts revealed about what the voluntary sector offers women and why this work might be more suited to women's lifestyles. Although the sample was varied, I was able to find similarities in management style and ethos across the organisations I focused on. I suggested that the women I interviewed valued the things the voluntary sector did well, such as flexible hours, good working relationships and worker autonomy, and that these corresponded to what women look for in work more generally. I argued that the voluntary sector could be seen as a best-practice example for the UK government and EU who are desirous that women's employment should continue to rise, as work in the sector appears to be more accessible and manageable for women, especially those with children. I did suggest however that this comes at a price: the maintenance of gender segregation and the further devaluation of both voluntary-sector work and women's work within it.

The availability of part-time work in the sector was considered by my participants to be a factor in why more women than men choose this work. Part-time work is usually associated with 'bad jobs' (low pay and poor conditions) and part-time workers are more likely to be marginalised within the workplace and their careers downgraded. I argued that within the voluntary sector, part-time work has been normalised to an extent and some of its more negative implications had been eroded. For example, there was more fluidity between part-time work and full-time work, suggesting that those who worked part-time were able to avoid being labelled 'only' as part-time workers. The interviewees' narratives did however indicate that part-time work was often deemed a stopgap and gaining full-time employment was the overall objective. In addition, although part-time work's higher status within the sector was perceptible, it was not enough to mitigate other problems linked to part-time working, such as lower pay, less stability and lower pension contributions.

Being able to work flexible hours was more important to the participants than being able to work part-time. I argued that flexible working was ingrained into the culture of voluntary-sector work, allowing its workers to strike a better work-life balance, which was particularly important to them if they had children. This flexibility was offered on a very casual basis, dependent on the trust and understanding between managers and employees. In some cases, it went an extra step beyond flexitime or home-working, as time off was given to staff when their children were ill or they were able to bring their children into work. This flexibility was approached relatively informally and workers' experiences varied from organisation to organisation and from manager to manager. However, the small size of organisations did appear to be a factor, enabling better communication. The type of work being carried out also seemed to foster a more family-friendly ethos. For some of the participants, being able to work flexibly meant that they were inclined to work over their contracted hours. I argued that blurring the boundaries between 'work' and 'home' can be beneficial for some women but can also lead to work intensification, which in the voluntary sector context rarely reaps higher rewards in terms of status or pay. There have been relatively few studies which discuss flexible working in voluntary organisations; my research has demonstrated that being able to work flexibly was one of the main contributors to women's sense of job satisfaction in this sector.

This analysis of the sector's working conditions brought to the fore its other attributes, discussion of which has been absent in previous studies. Returning to accessibility, I discussed how voluntary organisations appeared to be more open to people who have had disrupted careers (e.g. those who have taken time off to have children) or who have less formal education. I suggested that this could be why the voluntary sector was particularly accessible to women. Building on Rebecca's suggestion, I also argued that the relatively low pay within the sector can make employment in the sector seem more attainable for women, who, in general, have lower expectations of what they can achieve. Another important aspect which I identified was the strong focus on developing and training employees and volunteers. Organisations appear to appreciate that their workers might enter into the sector through more informal routes, and be more willing to offer tailored training and

personal development opportunities as a result. In this way, the voluntary sector is potentially more open to women, who are more likely to have non- traditional, non-linear careers.

In general, voluntary organisations have flatter organisational structures, and there is less wage disparity between top and bottom earners than in other sectors. I argued that this could be particularly appealing to women, as evidence suggests they prefer flatter structures and are more successful within them. My findings indicated that progression in the sector was more sideways rather than upwards, which is a career trajectory more closely associated with women. Progression was initially quick, but due to the small size of many organisations, those in senior roles may have to move to the public sector or take a cut in pay and status if they want change. I argued that the flatter hierarchies of the voluntary sector can create a more communicative and egalitarian work environment, but they also mean that there is usually only one person at the top, which can lead to ‘burnout’. The term ‘burnout’ was initially used to describe the phenomenon of meltdown and extreme exhaustion in health and social care workers, but my argument that the small size of voluntary organisations and their flatter hierarchies were major contributory factors was new, and constitutes an original contribution to knowledge.

The freedom, creativity and autonomy workers report within the voluntary sector has not been addressed in detail elsewhere. These features definitely added to the interviewees’ sense of job satisfaction. Comparisons were made to the public sector where they often felt stifled by bureaucracy and inaction. I argued that the ‘voluntary’ aspect of work in the sector, even when work was paid, promoted an environment of freedom and autonomy. Again, workers appeared to benefit from the lack of role definition within these less socialised workplaces. The interviewees inhabited multiple roles within their organisations, and enjoyed this, but there was evidence that it became problematic to perform multiple roles long-term.

There has been some research on risk in the voluntary sector (see Baines et al., 2012) but my analysis specifically discussed how women workers respond to risk and job

insecurity. I was surprised by the interviewees' acceptance of job insecurity, especially as their organisations were often very dependent on temporary funding streams. I argued that the job insecurity was mitigated by movement and the fluidity of workers between organisations. The women I interviewed could live with the risk if their organisations were perceived to be doing a good job, but this meant that they side-lined their own long-term security, and were less concerned with aspects such as job protection and pensions. These findings were compatible with other research which suggests that women do not prioritise job security, partly because women, due to childcare responsibilities, are more accustomed to periods of unemployment or underemployment. I identified an extra factor within my analysis, arguing that it is more acceptable for women to be dependent on their partners or the state, which enables them to be more 'risky' in their work choices.

Chapter 4 is a key original contribution to knowledge as no previous research has examined working conditions in the sector in order to discuss what it offers women specifically. Throughout the chapter I highlighted the ways in which voluntary work is aligned to women's work prioritisations and lifestyles. My finding on how a work-life balance is achieved in the voluntary sector through an *ad hoc* approach to flexible working based on trust is significant and has policy implications. If the traditional full-time model of employment, with defined roles and occupations, disadvantages women in the labour market, then voluntary-sector work does appear to offer a better solution, as the boundaries between work and home are more blurred, and paid employment can fit more easily into their lives. Yet I have shown that within a wider environment which is still thoroughly entrenched in traditional masculine work culture, the conditions which attract and keep women within the sector both produce and are symptomatic of the continued marginal status of women's work.

In Chapter 5, I examined the history of the voluntary sector from 1978-2012 using the personal accounts of those who worked in it. Workers' narratives are rarely used when exploring the development of the sector and its workforce (for example Rochester, 2013). I analysed how workers responded to significant changes such as

increased professionalism and bureaucracy and the complex feelings they had towards them. My findings did not directly contradict previous research but did add nuance and detail to this history. In particular, I investigated how these changes have explicitly affected its female workforce and the status of women's work within the sector.

Since 1978, the voluntary sector has expanded and developed almost beyond recognition, primarily due to state support. This research discussed the experiences of women who worked in voluntary organisations, the type and size of which had particularly benefitted from increased government funding, and which were situated in a location, Bradford, which since the 1980s has been the focus of several regeneration initiatives. This means that the impact of the voluntary sector's expansion was likely to be very pronounced within my participants' accounts, enabling me to examine the recent evolution of the sector in sharper focus. I argued that this close and dependent relationship with the state was crucial to its development. Drawing on my interviewees' narratives, I described the voluntary sector as a child, who had to 'grow up' and begin to emulate the behaviours of the public sector in order to survive. This included becoming more professional, bureaucratised and accountable, features which grew to be more important as successive governments moved towards 'welfare pluralism' and away from grants to contracts, increasing competition within the sector. Within this environment, the divisions between the voluntary and private sectors also became less distinct, as voluntary organisations were compelled to become more 'business-like', streamlined and efficient. My findings show that workers perceived these changes as necessary to make their organisations more sustainable but were concerned that they had had a detrimental impact on the sector's ethos.

The growth of the voluntary sector has gone hand in hand with an increase in the number of paid employees. In 2012, a career in the voluntary sector was possible, whereas in 1978 it would have been more uncertain. I argued that within the interviews there was a narrative of progression, particularly with regard to professionalisation, which was used to indicate the legitimacy of work in the

voluntary sector. I suggested that this had gendered implications, as the makeshift, caring and more 'feminine' aspects of voluntary-sector work are giving way to a more 'masculine' career style. I also argue that the drive towards becoming more competitive and 'business-like' within the sector has made its work more acceptable for men. For some interviewees, the mainstreaming of the sector meant that it was no longer at the 'cutting edge' and had been depoliticised. Politics in the sector is seldom discussed within voluntary sector studies, but my findings illustrate that politics, and in particular gender politics, is very much entwined with the history of the sector's development.

The second half of Chapter 5 focused on how the voluntary sector had changed since the 2008 financial crash, the 2010 General Election and the austerity measures which followed. There is some emerging research (for example Finnegan, 2014) on the effect of government cuts on voluntary organisations, although these have predominantly focused on the impact on services and service-users rather than the workforce. I began by examining the participants' often ambivalent responses to the idea of the 'Big Society'. I found that they were eager for the voluntary sector to have a higher status, but regarded the 'Big Society' agenda within this current environment as a cheap fix, an attempt to try to do more with less. Other research has discussed what voluntary-sector workers think about the 'Big Society' (for example Macmillan, 2013b), but tends to only capture the views of managers, whereas I was able to incorporate responses from a range of workers, including volunteers.

I argued that welfare cuts, cuts to government spending on the public and voluntary sectors and the top-down reorganisation of the NHS have had a very unsettling effect on my interviewees and the organisations they worked in. According to the women I interviewed, many organisations were facing funding cuts and there was an increased pressure to become more 'business-like' and sustainable, but I found that it was uncertainty about the future which was particularly destructive. The significance of the relationships between a number of voluntary organisations and the local NHS in Bradford was very striking, as the interviewees discussed the challenges their organisations faced within this new commissioning environment. I would argue that

this demonstrates the need to explore voluntary sector changes from a local perspective in order to understand them fully.

As organisations were under threat so too were their workforces. The insecurity of work in the voluntary sector, already quite high, appeared to have increased as interviewees described colleagues and friends who had lost their jobs and the ever-present threat of redundancy. I used their accounts to contextualise research which reported that recent job losses in the sector have disproportionately affected women, and argued that women's work was particularly vulnerable within the current climate. The interview data also suggested that there had been a deterioration in working conditions, as organisations were expected to do more with less funding, putting further pressure on their staff. Training budgets had been cut, and there appeared to be a more restricted movement of workers between organisations which was problematic, particularly as finding work in the public sector became less probable. Drawing on my analyses in Chapters 3 and 4, I was able to argue that the very features of the voluntary sector which women valued and which made its work accessible to them were under threat.

In Chapter 5, I traced the transition of the voluntary sector from a loose collection of organisations into a more established and professionalised sector, using workers' narratives. This offered an original and nuanced overview of the sector's development. I demonstrated that workers were highly invested in the relationships between their organisations and the public sector, adding an extra dimension to my discussion about the sector's interaction with the state. Most significantly, I established that within this period of voluntary sector expansion, there existed an ongoing conflict between the need to retain the aims and ethos of the voluntary sector and the need to 'grow up', and become more professional and accountable. I also suggested that within this traditionally feminised labour market, there was the desire to gain legitimacy and status by emulating and adopting the characteristics of 'masculinised' work. Whatever success had been achieved in this regard comes despite the fact that working conditions had not sufficiently improved to match. Furthermore, recent changes threaten to weaken conditions further, leading to

questions about the wisdom of this desire and the long-term viability and status of women's work in the sector.

The main contribution to knowledge I have made in this research has been to produce a better understanding of the complex ways that voluntary-sector work is gendered. I have been able to identify the pathways into voluntary-sector work that are specific to women's experiences. I have also demonstrated how working conditions in voluntary organisations are more compatible with women's lives and more aligned to their work prioritisations. I have taken a historical approach to investigate how changes in the voluntary sector have impacted on its workforce, and women in particular. Throughout this thesis, I have used my research on the voluntary sector to discuss issues that are common to women more generally at work. I have added to the choice/constraint debate, suggesting that women are motivated to a greater degree than men to seek satisfaction from their work and to a lesser degree than men by the need to seek financial reward and hierarchical status. Of paramount importance, though, is that their work choices are limited by the burden of domestic responsibilities such as childcare. I demonstrated that caring for children and, to some extent, other dependent relatives had a long-lasting effect, restricting women's choices throughout their working lives and beyond. I have shown that these are the overriding factors that have pushed women into the voluntary sector. By analysing the structure of the voluntary sector, I have indicated how paid employment outside the sector could be better structured to suit women, to alleviate the phenomenon of those with caring responsibilities dropping out of the labour market, or facing a 'downgrading' and being unable to progress. I have added to the discussion on the feminisation of labour, finding in the sector a discord between the feminised working conditions and the 'masculine' ideals and aspirations of organisations and workers. More than anything, this research highlights the complicated interactions between gender and work and the need to rethink how labour is organised if women are ever to achieve labour equality.

Future Research and Final Remarks

This thesis has filled in essential gaps in the research on the voluntary sector and women's work, but has also opened up new questions and possibilities. The voluntary sector is a 'loose and baggy monster' and although my research has focused on a substantial part of the sector, it would be valuable to broaden the field of study and conduct interviews with those who work in larger organisations at a regional or national level. Such research might investigate how these workers' entry paths differed from the women I interviewed and compare working conditions. I suspect that within these larger and more mainstream organisations some of the features which I identified within my research, such as the service user trajectory or the 'family friendly' working environment, would be less observable. A further expansion could be to interview men who volunteer or do paid work in small-to-medium-sized organisations. This would enable me to compare the accounts of women and men, to see how where their experiences diverged, and what particular factors attracted men into this work.

As with most research projects, this study was necessarily constrained by time. The women I interviewed had all had relatively positive experiences of the voluntary sector, and had been quite successful within their various roles. This was perhaps because those that respond to a call for participants like mine are likely to be a particularly engaged group. If I had had more time and space I think it would have been advantageous to interview women who view voluntary-sector work in a different light and who are perhaps more ambivalent about its benefits. To do this, I would have to take a more ethnographic approach, immersing myself within organisations, forming relationships with workers in order to target certain women for interview. I think this could have added further depth to my analysis, revealing the extent to which voluntary-sector work is congruent with the lives of a more diverse range of women. As a significant portion of this thesis focused on voluntary sector change and I conducted the interviews during a turbulent period, another way I could develop this research further would be to re-interview the participants. Going back and asking the same questions three or five years after the first interviews were

conducted, would allow me to understand more fully the repercussions of the most recent financial crisis, and discuss what has changed in the voluntary sector and what has not.

If full participation of women in the labour market is to be realised then it is essential for employers and policy makers to establish women's specific needs and enact changes to enable them. The voluntary sector holds many key lessons for those willing to learn from it. Far from being a sideshow, it may contain the knowledge and cultural seeds of how to reorganise the future of labour in a more gender equitable way. Both paid and unpaid work in the voluntary sector clearly has many advantages for women, bringing some women closer to achieving the elusive 'work-life balance'. There is a danger that this model could be lost, as the pressure from within and without push the sector into adopting the work patterns of the more 'masculinised' public and private sectors. Should this continue, the benefits and satisfaction that voluntary-sector work offers women may no longer be able to mitigate its drawbacks.

APPENDIX A: E-MAIL USED TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

To whom this may concern,

My name is Bridget Lockyer and I am a first year PhD Student at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. I am researching women's experiences of working and volunteering in the voluntary sector. I am looking to interview women who work or have worked as paid workers or volunteers within a voluntary or community organisation in the Bradford area. I am interviewing women between the ages of twenty and seventy. The interviews will consist of a 'working life' history, will last approximately 1-2 hours, and would take place at a time and place convenient to the participants. I would appreciate it if you could circulate this letter within your organisation. If anyone is interested in being part of this research, or would like some more information, please e-mail me at: bel503@york.ac.uk .

Best wishes,

Bridget Lockyer

Centre for Women's Studies
University of York
York
YO10 5DD

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You have been asked to take part in a research project. This sheet offers some basic information about the research project and what it will entail. Please take some time to read the following information, and feel free to ask any questions.

Project Title: Women in the Voluntary Sector in Bradford.

Summary of the project

I am researching women's experiences of working and volunteering in the charitable sector. My research will examine why women working within this sector have 'chosen' this type of work (paid and unpaid), what they are motivated by and will explore how the culture of charity work may be changing. I am interviewing women who work or have worked as paid workers or volunteers within a voluntary or community organisation in the Bradford area. The interviews will consist of a 'working life' history. These interviews will form the basis for PhD research taking place at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York.

What does the interview involve?

This project requires participants to partake in an interview lasting for approximately one or two hours. This interview will take place at a time and place convenient to the participant. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview you can ask for the interview topic to be changed or be terminated.

Consent

Taking part in this project is completely voluntary. If, after reading this information sheet, you decide that you want to take part, you will sign a consent form. However, you can withdraw your consent at any time, and you will not have to provide a reason for your withdrawal. By signing the consent form, you consent to having (anonymised) material from your interview reproduced in my PhD thesis and any related publications or talks, e.g. journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. A full copy of the thesis will be available for reference to research students at the Centre for Women's Studies and in the University of York library.

Confidentiality

Any information collected about the participant will be kept confidential and private. Full anonymity is ensured, and the participants will be assigned pseudonyms. Data generated by the study must be retained in accordance with the University of York's policy on Academic Integrity. I will store all the interview data (recordings, transcripts etc.) under their pseudonyms, to retain anonymity. The only people who will have access to the interview data will be my supervisor (Professor Gabriele Griffin) and I, and it will be stored safely on our personal accounts within the University of York network.

Contacts for Further Information

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this research project, please contact either myself, Bridget Lockyer at bel503@york.ac.uk or the supervisor for this project Professor Gabriele Griffin, gabriele.griffin@york.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Bridget Lockyer

1st May 2012

E-mail: bel503@york.ac.uk Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Postal Address: Bridget Lockyer, Centre for Women's Studies, Grimston House, University of York, York, YO10 5DD.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Women in the Voluntary Sector in Bradford

Researcher: Bridget Lockyer, PhD Candidate at the Centre for Women's Studies,
University of York.

	Please tick box	
	Yes	No
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.		
I agree to take part in the above project.		
I agree to the interview being audio recorded.		
I agree to the use of anonymised interview quotes in the PhD thesis and other related publications or talks.		
I agree that the data gathered in this study (the audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews) will be stored anonymously and securely on the University of York's network, and can only be accessed by the researcher Bridget Lockyer and her supervisor Professor Gabriele Griffin.		

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Contact Details:

E-mail: bel503@york.ac.uk

Phone Number: XXXXXXXXXX

Postal Address: Bridget Lockyer, Centre for Women's Studies, Grimston House,
University of York, York, YO10 5DD.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Paid workers:

- How did you get into work in the voluntary sector?
 - Working life history/touch on early life, what influences people had
 - Motivations (personal, political, economic, social, religious, moral)
 - Personal circumstances when getting into this work (family obligations, age etc.)
- Experiences of working in the sector
 - Gender equality
 - Pay
 - Career progression
 - Personal benefits
 - What makes the voluntary sector different/unique?
 - Why do you think more women than men work in this sector?
 - How do you think the voluntary sector has changed over the last forty years?
 - How have you negotiated any changes?
 - What are their experiences of working in other voluntary organisations, do you find the ethos and structure of organisations means that are very varied?
- How does work in the voluntary sector compare to other work experiences?
 - Job security
 - Financial rewards
 - Compared to private sector?
 - Compared to public sector?
 - If not had any other experience, why? And how do you view work in other sectors?

Volunteers:

- How did you get into volunteering?
 - Working life history/touch on early life, what influences people had
 - Motivations (personal, political, economic, social, religious, moral)
 - Personal circumstances when starting voluntary work (family obligations, age etc.)
- Experiences of working in the sector
 - Gender equality within the organisation, how do they treat volunteers?
 - Would you want to get paid for your work?
 - Work experience
 - Personal benefits
 - What makes the voluntary sector different/unique?

- Why do you think more women than men work in this sector?
- How do you think the voluntary sector has changed over the last forty years?
- How have you negotiated any changes?
- What are their experiences of working in other voluntary organisations, do you find the ethos and structure of organisations means that are very varied?

- How does work in the voluntary sector compare to other work experiences/life experiences?
 - Compared to work in the private and public sectors?
 - If not had any other experience, why? And how do you view work in other sectors?
 - Compared to other life experiences, offering informal help, community groups, school-related activities (e.g. PTA), hobbies etc.

Ways to frame the questions

- How would you describe...?
- Tell me about...
- Can you give me an example of...?

APPENDIX E. MINI-BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS

(Please note that participants' paid worker/volunteer status was based on their current or most recent role at the time of interview. Paid workers may have been volunteers in the past and vice versa. I have tried to indicate these histories in the biographies)

Paid Workers

Amanda was thirty years old and worked for an organisation which supports other voluntary organisations in the local area. She had previously worked for voluntary organisations which support young offenders, drug and alcohol users and homeless people. She worked part-time (4 days a week) and had no children.

Angela was fifty-two. Her first experience of the voluntary sector was volunteering at a youth and community centre. For twelve years she was the chief executive of a youth charity in the Bradford area. At the time of interview, she worked as a manager for a large housing association in Bradford. She had three grown-up children.

Anna was sixty and had children. Her parents were Polish migrants in Bradford and she speaks fluent Polish. She had worked as a school teacher, been self-employed, and at the time of interview worked full-time at a mental health charity.

Ayesha was thirty-one. She had no children but was a carer for her elderly parents. She worked full-time in a local charity which provides practical support for disabled people and disadvantaged groups. She previously worked for a national charity which focused on older people from BME communities. She identified herself as a Muslim.

Christine was fifty and a grandparent. She brought up her daughter as a lone parent. She runs her own business now, but previously set up and managed her own arts charity for ten years.

Diane was forty-five and had children. She had worked in retail before volunteering for an advice organisation and getting a paid job there. She had also worked for a charity which supports carers. At the time of interview, she was a business coach for a council and EU funded social enterprise.

Ellie was forty-five years old and was the lone parent of three children. She was a landscape architect, and had worked in private practice, a local authority and since 1995, three different charities. She had also volunteered for a charity supporting struggling families, at her children's school and for several conservation projects abroad.

Fran was thirty-two. She had volunteered for a charity phone support service. Her first paid role within the voluntary sector was working as a part-time youth worker

within a health charity. She had had recently moved to senior management position within the same organisation.

Haleema was twenty-nine. She worked full-time for a youth development charity where she manages a small team. She identified herself as Muslim.

Jane was forty-six and had two children. She had worked in the private sector but left when she was pregnant with her first child. After this, she had several part-time jobs, re-training in adult education and working with people with learning disabilities. She then worked for the NHS. She had recently formed her own social enterprise.

Kerry was thirty-seven and had four children. She had been a service user of a charity before finding paid work for an organisation which supports lone parents. She had since attained senior jobs. She was currently on secondment, working for an older person's charity.

Rebecca was forty-six and had children. She had worked and volunteered for several domestic violence, education and health charities. She had also worked in the housing sector for the local authority. At the time of interview, she had recently returned to the voluntary sector after six years working for the local authority.

Volunteers

Claire was fifty-one and had one child. She worked as an NHS manager. She volunteered at a rape support service from 1985/6 until 1993.

Gillian was fifty-six and retired. She was born in the USA, but had lived in the UK since the late 1970s. She had worked as a Christian minister and then in several charities in Bradford, including a women's refuge charity, an interfaith charity, an arts charity and she managed a community centre. At the time of interview, she was active board member of a museums' charity.

Grace was sixty-two and has adult children. She worked as a writer and freelance journalist. She had just finished volunteering for a local organisation which works with elderly people with physical disabilities. She had volunteered as a befriender and as a worker in one of their social centres.

Jessica was thirty-three and was born in the USA. She had come to the UK to do a PhD over five years ago. She did quite a bit of volunteering, primarily in South Asian women's community centres. She identified herself as Buddhist.

Kathleen was sixty-four and retired. She trained as a teacher in the 1960s. She volunteered and worked for a women's refuge in the 1970s and 1980s. She was a paid worker from 1988 until 2004 for a charity in Bradford which focused on education and basic skills training. She volunteered for a homeless charity. She had three children, seven grandchildren and was divorced.

Rose was sixty-seven. She trained and worked as a primary school teacher, giving this up when she had children, although she did return to this for a few years. She was a trustee of several charities and chairs or had chaired the management committees of a number of charities. She had also worked as a non-executive director for the NHS.

Shirley was seventy-four. She had previously worked as a teacher and as an educational advisor for the council. She had been involved in community work since the 1980s, most predominantly setting up a community centre in her local area. She had been involved in various peace projects, church groups and had worked as a school governor. She had six children (as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren). She identified herself as a Christian.

Suzie was sixty-three and had children.. She had done a variety of voluntary work, paid and unpaid, including youth clubs, women's centres, brownies and scouts, HIV/AIDS work, and joined a rape support service as a volunteer when she moved to Bradford in 1998. She has since had paid roles within this service, but now volunteers on their management committee. She had retired from paid work. She identified herself as a lesbian.

Paid Workers and Volunteers

Fahmida was forty-three and she had three children. She was trained as a medical technician and worked in the NHS before having her children. She started volunteering when her children were young and this had led to paid work within community centres. She volunteered as a school governor and for a walking charity.

Fiona was forty-five and had worked at the same mental health charity for nine years. She had previously worked for social services and was a qualified social worker. She volunteers at a local community radio station.

Karen was twenty-four she had two paid posts, both part-time, within the same asylum seekers' charity. She also volunteered one day a week at a day centre for asylum seekers, a local branch of national charity.

Laura was twenty-eight. She worked at a local environment charity. She had had a variety of jobs, all within the environment sector for charities, land trusts, FE colleges and the council. She had volunteered on numerous environment projects.

Louise was forty-four and had children (one young and one adult) and grandchildren. She worked part-time as a community development worker and volunteers for a local park project. She had previously worked for the local council.

Nasreen was thirty-eight. She had worked full-time for twelve years for a social enterprise which owns a community building in Bradford and runs several health projects in the area. She was also a board member of a local community college and

was on a committee which organises community events in Bradford. She identified herself as a Muslim.

Natalie was thirty-seven. She was married and had recently adopted two children. She had volunteered since she was a teenager and throughout university. She had worked in the private sector but for the past eleven years she had worked as a youth worker for a medium-sized voluntary organisation, and now had a senior management position. She still volunteered, running a small youth group. She identified herself as a Christian.

Rokeya was fifty-eight and had four grown-up children. She had worked in Social Services, for a large advice organisation and was now the manager at a community advice centre. She had also been on the board of several management committees.

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