'I wanted to meet the needs of the people': Exploring volunteers' accounts of their participation

Hannah Rose Blake

MA by Research

University of York

Sociology

December 2014

Abstract

This thesis explores the personal accounts of volunteers within a range of volunteer organisations in Yorkshire. An attempt to understand the influences and behaviour of volunteers has been studied for decades by researchers from the fields of psychology, economics and sociology. The purpose for undertaking this research was based on the knowledge that whilst there is a significant amount of literature focusing on volunteers and volunteering, there appeared to be a gap of empirical qualitative research focussing on the personal accounts of volunteers. This research consisted of semi-structured interviews with fourteen formal volunteers. The sample for the study was chosen based on a purposive sampling technique, allowing for specific characteristics of individuals to be chosen. The findings from the interviews highlighted that religion is constructed play an important factor in why people volunteer. Religion played an important role in the lives of many of the participants in the research and they all linked their religion to their voluntary work. Whilst religion emerged from the findings as being an important influence to volunteers so did age and family and it was these factors that also distinguished between the choices of volunteer organisations.

Contents Page

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this thesis is a result of the help from a range of individuals. Firstly, I would like to thank all the volunteers who were willing to take time out of their lives to participate in this research, without them this piece of research would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr Nathan Manning. I am sincerely grateful for the overwhelming support and encouragement which has been provided by my family and friends throughout this whole process, they have kept me going through the difficult stages.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and it has been generated by my own research for the purpose of the degree Masters by Research in Sociology. This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in my name, in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis explores the accounts of volunteer's participation amongst a group of volunteers in Yorkshire. The experience of volunteers is an area that deserves investigation, not only because of recent political interest in the field, but also because of the increasing importance of volunteering in today's society. In an age of austerity and with constant government cutbacks it comes as no surprise that the reliance upon volunteers in the United Kingdom is now more important than ever. Reyes (2014) argues that over recent years volunteers have come to "act as a sticking plaster over the gaping wounds inflicted by government cuts". This quote by Reyes is extremely poignant to the voluntary sector which has seen the need to step up and care for their communities more than ever. With the increasing role of volunteers it is important to explore how they account for their participation in the volunteering roles they undertake.

My interest in the voluntary sector has stemmed from being a volunteer myself for the past three years at a local community advice centre. The time that I have spent at the Centre has given me invaluable insight into the world of voluntary organisations and their appreciation for volunteers, without whom they would not be able to function. I have seen the Centre where I volunteer fear for closure due to lack of funding, yet I have also seen them turn away volunteers due to already being overstaffed. As a result of this I became interested in what influences volunteers and how they account for their voluntary behaviour.

Through internet and library searches I found a vast amount of literature relating to the work of volunteers mainly focusing on motivation of volunteers, however, the literature which first came to my attention was that on prosocial behaviour, which can be defined as "voluntary behaviour designed to benefit another" (Hinde and Groebel, 1991, p.54). This literature was

based in America and carried out by psychological researchers; it was not until after further investigation that more relevant and recent sociological research emerged. A reoccurring theme within the psychological literature was that of prosocial behaviour and how it is performed in everyday life such as through the "bystander effect" and not specifically with regards to volunteers. Literature by psychologists such as Dovidio *et al.* (2006) and Simpson and Willer (2008) link volunteering to prosocial behaviour, altruism (helping without reward) and egoism (selfish helping). A concern with the psychological literature however, is that whilst it does address the motivations of volunteers the research is individualistic and does not consider the wider societal implications. In comparison, a sociological approach acknowledges individual motivations but is more interested in the reasoning behind their behaviour and what influences how they choose to behave such as family, religion and employment (Rochester *et al,* 2012; Ellis Paine *et al.,* 2013).

Much of the research undertaken in the United Kingdom has been carried out by organisations linked to the voluntary sector, often known as Third Sector Organisations and these include the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations and the Northern Rock Foundation. One issue with the UK research however, was its tendency to be based on either theoretical or quantitative research which does not produce the in-depth findings that this new current research aims to do through qualitative interpretative research leading to findings in the form of an in depth analysis. It is here where my research into the personal accounts of volunteers will bridge the gap in research into voluntary behaviour in the United Kingdom and will provide more contemporary findings. The research questions for this study were established to help address the limitations of research already undertaken and to help explore volunteers' accounts of their participation. This led to the following three questions;

- How do volunteers understand their volunteering?
- What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice of volunteer organisations?

- What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer?

The research identified interesting accounts of volunteer's participation. By gaining a perspective of the volunteers' understandings of their volunteering it became apparent that volunteering was not just a hobby, but for many of them it formed an important role in their lives and was likened by some as a form of employment. The social institution of religion emerged as a major influence in many of the volunteer's motives for volunteering. Whether the volunteer was deeply religious or their religion was used as a form of socialisation, it was understood to play a significant role in these individual's lives. The benefits that were attributed to volunteering by the participants in the research were constructed on the age of the respondents. Older volunteers linked the benefits of their participation to "keeping fit", "staying young" and "remaining relevant", whereas younger volunteers link their benefits to employment, "transferable skills" and "career progression". The reasons given by the participants in the research for their decision for choosing a specific organisation were more varied and included family, religion and age.

This research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the available literature on volunteering with some consideration of psychological research but focusing mainly on current sociological literature on volunteering. The section highlights the gaps in the literature and explains how this current research will seek to address these gaps. Following this, the methodology will explain and demonstrate how an empirical qualitative interpretivist approach will be taken to enable already existing research to be developed and expanded. Subsequently, there will be a section on the findings and analysis of the research where interviews will be analysed and used to understand how the participants in this research account for their volunteering behaviour, linking back to current literature and my research questions. Finally, the conclusion will summarise and draw together the findings of this research into volunteers' accounts of their participations and will provide suggestions for improvements and future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This current piece of research explores the personal accounts of volunteers belonging to volunteer organisations in Yorkshire. Research that has been published on the role of volunteers is extensive and has been carried out by researchers internationally (Low *et al.,* 2007; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Boyce, 2015). This chapter will consider and examine some of the relevant, recent literature concerning volunteerism, participation and the third sector. By reviewing the literature it will enable an understanding of what research has already been carried out whilst also highlighting any issues with the research and identifying gaps in the literature that need addressing. By identifying gaps in the existing literature on volunteering it will enable this current piece of research to develop and expand upon what has already been published. This chapter first explores the concept of volunteering and volunteers before acknowledging the psychological literature on the topic and its limitations. The chapter will then explore the sociological literature which is available regarding those who volunteer, and their motives for volunteering.

For the purpose of this research and before any further discussion, it is important to understand the term 'volunteering'. Handy *et al.* (2000) emphasise the need to acknowledge the different variations of the term 'volunteering' as this could lead to ambiguities when discussing the topic of volunteering. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) defines volunteering as;

> "any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives" (ncvo.org.uk, 2014).

The NCVO, state that there has been a move towards the replacement of the term volunteering with that of participation which they consider addresses the work volunteers do in a more comprehensive way. Jackson (2015) has recently questioned the definition of volunteering following Volunteering Australia's decision to review the traditional definition in

order to replace it with something which "reflects the extent of volunteering today" (Boyce, 2015). In March 2015 Volunteering Australia (volunteeringaustralia.org) announced a survey asking people what they define by the term volunteering (the results have yet to be announced). These definitions range from employee volunteering, where businesses support their employees to undertake volunteering work in the community to reciprocal volunteering, which relates to volunteering for mutual benefit (Volunteering Australia, 2015). It is important to recognise the implications of this piece of literature as the possible change in definition highlights the changing role of volunteering in today's society.

The topic of volunteerism and charitable behaviour is something that has been widely discussed in a range of academic fields. Wang and Graddy (2008) explain how;

> "individual charitable behaviour has been of interest to scholars in the fields of economics, sociology and psychology, and they have used different lenses to explain the behaviour" (2008, p.25).

Perhaps the most predominant amount of research on volunteer behaviour can be found in the psychological field of study where it is often referred to as 'prosocial behaviour' and is defined by Bierhoff (2002) as an;

> "action that is intended to improve the situation of the help-recipient, the actor is not motivated by the fulfilment of professional obligations, and the recipient is a person not an organisation" (2002, p.9).

Under the umbrella of prosocial behaviour is the use of the conceptual terms 'altruism' and 'egoism' as a means to explain the motivation of volunteers. Altruism refers to those volunteering where "the benefactor provides aid to another without the anticipation of rewards from external sources for providing assistance" (Dovido *et al.*, 2006, p.25). Egoism on the other hand is used by psychologists to explain the type of volunteering that is carried out as a means to benefit oneself, a selfish form of participation (Dovidio *et al.,* 2006).

The terms "indirect reciprocity" or "restitution" are key terms used by psychologists such as Simpson and Willer (2008) and Dovidio *et al.* (2006). Reciprocity relates to how individuals voluntarily carry out prosocial acts with the understanding that they

themselves will benefit from their "good deed" in the future. Simpson and Willer's (2008) work links to that of Dovidio *et al.* (2006) who argue that prosocial behaviour can be motivated by egoistic tendencies if the main reason behind the action is based on feelings of "distress, upset, guilt and sadness" at the situation presented to them (2006, p.325). It is suggested by Dovidio *et al.* (2006) that by performing prosocial actions in order to eliminate "the negative mood" egoistic motivations are taking place, because in return they themselves are feeling better about the situation (2006, p.325).

Whilst egoism can be considered to play a part in the motivation of volunteers, some literature argues that an individual can only be truly altruistic when working in a voluntary role. Heal (cited in Hinde and Groebel, 1991) suggests that a simple reason to explain the motivational factors behind altruistic behaviour is that of pleasure. Whilst it can be argued that gaining pleasure is egoistic as the giver is benefitting from their actions, Heal specifically refers to what is understood as 'disinterested' pleasure which she defines as being "pleasure simply in the fact that another human being is flourishing" (cited in Hinde and Groebel, 1991, p.162).

This brief history and background of the psychological literature relating to volunteering highlights the limitations that are associated with the psychological approach. The psychological interpretation of volunteering has devoted little attention to the way prosocial dispositions are intertwined with social conditions (Bekkers, 2004). The narrow focus that the psychological literature has demonstrates how an individualistic stance is taken to establish an understanding of the motivations of volunteers. This limits the research to understanding external factors of voluntary behaviour when other important social factors need to be considered, for example, social ties, organisational activity, community and social resources (Wilson, 2000). The following section will review literature from a sociological perspective highlighting the importance of external factors on voluntary behaviour.

The past 40 years has seen a significant increase in the amount of sociological research published on the topic of volunteering with particular emphasis on who volunteers and the motivation of volunteers. This increased interest in the work that is carried out within the third sector and by volunteer organisations has meant that sociologists, researchers and policy makers have been able to better understand how volunteerism affects individuals and society. For the purpose of this literature review the next section has been divided into the following themes based on those which emerged from the literature; religion, age, employment, gender, ethnicity, family and politics.

Religion

Religion is perhaps the most dominant concept that is discussed alongside the research and literature on volunteering. Sociological literature which addresses volunteering views religion as one of the biggest influencing factors with regards to how it influences and affects individual accounts of voluntary work. Previous research has explored different types of religion and participation, denominations and volunteerism, religion and voluntary groups (Guo *et al.,* 2013; Musick and Wilson, 2008), however, due to the scale of this current research it is not possible to cover all aspects of how volunteering and religion work together.

Research carried out by Low *et al.* (2007) on behalf of the Office of the Third Sector is based on the *National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving.* For the purpose of the survey a multi staged stratified random sample was adopted leading to the recruitment of 2,700 adults in England participating in the research. The interviews were performed in the field and asked questions such as who volunteers, routes into volunteering and limitations of volunteering. The extensive experience that the authors of the report hold between them and the adequate sample size make this piece of research credible. Low *et al.* (2007) state how their research focused on formal volunteering within community and youth groups. Formal volunteering is described by Low *et al.* (2007, p.7) as being "help given through groups and

organisations" rather than informal help such as helping out at a bake sale or caring for family (2007, p.7). They also found that generally those individuals who saw themselves as religious volunteered more often than those who were not religious.

Low *et al* (2007) further explain that whilst those who considered themselves religious generally volunteer more, their research also showed that individuals who actively practised their religion were more likely to volunteer than those who did not. The research by Low *et al.* (2007) provides useful information and vital statistics in the field of volunteering. A limitation of their research, however, is that due to the research being presented in quantitative form it does not allow for an understanding of why religion is a motivating factor for volunteering. For example, it is impossible to know if volunteering was a result of volunteer's religious beliefs or whether it was the influence of religious peer groups. It is this lack of in-depth qualitative research that is missing from the current literature on the topic of volunteering, and by undertaking this new piece of interpretivist qualitative research it will allow for a deeper understanding into how volunteers account for their volunteering.

Park and Smith's (2000) research based on the 1996 American *Religious Identity and Influence Survey* took a sample of 1,738 churchgoing Protestants and examined their religion and its relationship to volunteerism. Park and Smith (2000) demonstrate the many ways in which religion can influence an individual's lifestyle and in turn how it can increase not only their religious capital but also their cultural capital. In their research Park and Smith (2000, p.273) suggest four ways in which religious capital is influential:

• Religiosity	one's behaviours and attitudes towards religion
• Religious Socialization	the exposure to religious values and behaviours
• Religious Identity	the sense of belonging to a particular religious tradition or movement
• Religious Social Networks	the degree of access to other religious adherents.

Whilst it was not surprising that Park and Smith (2000) found a positive relationship between religion and voluntary participation, it is interesting that they found that high levels of church activity actually increased the participation in non-church related volunteering. This is an interesting point as it highlights a relationship with positive externalities where individuals venture outside of their immediate social and cultural surroundings to help others (Osborne and Bell, 2010).

One weakness with Park and Smith's (2000) research is that it is based on data from nearly twenty years ago and so it is unclear whether this data still reflects the views of contemporary society. A further concern is that their research only focuses on one religious group, Protestants in America. This is an issue as whilst what they found can be attributed to those who are Protestant, it cannot be said to be characteristic of all religious groups in different countries and therefore further research would be necessary to be able to determine the exact pattern of religion and volunteering.

One of the key texts for the current research is that by Rochester *et al.* (2012), which not only approaches volunteering in a way that is suitable for researchers but it also presents their work on the voluntary sector in a way that can be used by policy-makers. Rochester *et al.* (2012) support claims made by Park and Smith (2000) and suggest that an individual's propensity to volunteer can be highly influenced by their religion. It is argued by Rochester *et al.* (2012) that "volunteering is underpinned by a key set of values" which they state are:

- The principle of *altruism* or *beneficence* is based on the moral imperative of compassion or care for other people;
- The idea of *solidarity* expressed as a feeling of identification with a group or society and a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the group and its other members;
- *Reciprocity* is the understanding that helping others may lead in some way and sometimes to being helped in turn when we are in need and
- The values of *equity* and *social justice* are based on the belief that inequality and injustice are morally and socially wrong and should be addressed or eliminated.
(Rochester *et al.,* 2012, p.16)

Rochester *et al.* (2012) continue to explain that these values are strengthened in many cultures by the social institution that is religion, and that religion can make a difference to the role of volunteering. Although Rochester *et al.* (2012) do provide an understanding of how religion is closely linked to volunteering their work does not attempt to explain or analyse in depth how the two topics link together. For example, they acknowledge that religion plays a vital part in the explanation of how volunteers account for their behaviour, but their research fails to provide an explanation as to how and why religion influences an individual's volunteering behaviour.

In comparison to Rochester *et al.* (2012), Musick and Wilson (2008) provide an in-depth and comprehensive explanation of the extent to which religion influences the work of volunteers in the United States and Canada. Musick and Wilson's (2008) empirical research provides a variety of qualitative and quantitative analysis based on existing research in the field of volunteering carried out by themselves and other researchers. Musick and Wilson's (2008) research addresses and assesses religion on several levels including religiosity and religious affiliation. Their work argues that "helping others has become one of the most important ways that Americans demonstrate that they are religious" (2008, p.8). This suggests that, for those volunteers who have a religious affiliation, volunteering is a way of showing to the rest of society their passion for their beliefs. This is perhaps an example of changing times in society where attending church or a place of worship is simply not enough to express one's religion. Due to the nature of the work carried out by Musick and Wilson (2008) and the fact that it is based on volunteering on a different continent it means that caution needs to be exercised if applying their work to the UK.

A point that Musick and Wilson (2008) highlight which is reflected in volunteering in the UK is what churches teach their congregation. Musick and Wilson (2008, p.77) explain how "churches preach the virtue of compassion" and this is something which is not

specific to country, rather it relates to religions in themselves. It is suggested by Musick and Wilson (2008) that churches are more likely to encourage volunteering for altruistic reasons, such as helping the community and disadvantaged people and are "less likely to emphasize the more instrumental reasons" for volunteering (2008, p.77). Like Rochester *et al.* (2012), Musick and Wilson (2008) also note the importance of values toward volunteering by explaining how "civic values" and making "the world a better place" were amongst the top priorities of volunteers in America (2008, p.97).

Research by Guo *et al.* (2013) focuses solely on the concepts of religion and volunteering with particular attention paid to the differences between volunteering for social change and volunteering for charity. Guo *et al.*'s (2013) quantitative research used the Center on Philanthropic Panel Study (COPPS) to supply the data for their research as well as their sample of 7,674 heads of household in the United States of America. Guo *et al.* (2013) like Low *et al.* (2007) and Rochester *et al.* (2012), suggest that there is a "positive and significant relationship between religious attendance and social change volunteering" (2013, p.34). They argue that involvement in church activities helps create social capital "in the form of dense social networks, norms of generalised reciprocity and generalised trust" (Guo *et al.*, 2013, p.39). Social capital is a concept coined by Pierre Bourdieu who suggests that social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). It is these networks which Guo *et al.* (2013) refer to which in turn helps create an interest in public and civic affairs, particularly in their community, and in turn aids in the creation of participation within "social change organisations". Guo *et al.*'s (2013) research therefore demonstrates that religious engagement leads to community involvement.

Throughout a review of the literature relating to religion and volunteering the key points that have been highlighted are that the sense of community and belonging encourages people to

volunteer and not necessarily religion itself. The findings by both Low *et al.* (2007) and Musick and Wilson (2008) support Durkheim's theory of a Collective Conscious which proposed that through a shared set of values and beliefs in society, individuals are united together (Durkheim *et al,* 2014). Low *et al.* (2007) highlighted the how people who saw themselves as religious volunteered more and those who actively practiced religion were more likely to volunteer than those that did not. This was supported by Musick and Wilson's (2008) suggestion that churches are likely to promote volunteering amongst the congregation. These findings in the literature highlight the need to gain a deeper understanding into how volunteers connect their religion to their reasons for volunteering.

Age

Literature suggests that age, like religion, is an influencing factor in voluntary activity. Low *et al.*'s (2007) research was able to provide details of the breakdown of age and volunteer status. They found that volunteers were dominant in the 35–44 and 55–64 age brackets compared to those 65+ or under 34 years old. This is supported by a more recent report carried out by the NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac (2012/13) which shows volunteering to be more popular within the 35-49 and 50-64 age groups. What is interesting to note in the Almanac's (2012/13) findings show there to be a significant decline in volunteer activity between those in the 35-49 age range and those aged 75 and over. Due to the quantitative nature of findings in the Almanac (2012/13) it does not allow an interrogation of the accounts of volunteers and therefore the reasons for the variation in voluntary activity cannot be determined; it is here where this current research aims to address the limitations of previous research.

Literature discussing volunteering highlights the fact that there are key differences in the voluntary behaviour of younger and older generations. Research carried out in the United Kingdom by Cox (2011) for the independent think tank ResPublica states that one of the

motivations for volunteering, particularly with older people, is based on the desire to care for their local community. Cox (2011) explained how a YouGov (no date) poll found that;

> 'older people were more aware of and felt more able to respond to matters that pertained to their local community that those who were younger' (YouGov, no date cited in Cox, 2011, p.27).

Whilst there is the suggestion that older individuals volunteer for the sake of their community, Cox (2011) refers to the Ageing and Social Policy (ASP) Report (2006) which states that older volunteers are "motivated by wanting to feel they are useful members of society" and that rather than having society's interest at heart, they volunteered for personal gain (2011, p.28). As well as the typical motivations such as "meeting new people" and "personal growth", the ASP report indicates that there is a need by older volunteers to "fill the void left by retirement" (Ageing and Social Policy Report, cited in Cox, 2011, p.28).

The suggestion that older individuals volunteer as a means to avoid a feeling of loss or as a desire to fill a void is argued by Chambré (1984) who states that volunteering "serves as a way of dealing with role loss in old age" (1984, p.292). Chambré (1984) refers to work by Swartz (1978) who suggests that

> "with retirement from work, loss of peer relationships, death of parents and/or spouse, departure of grown children, or loss of feelings of self-worth and dignity – the opportunity to share and to give service is poignantly valuable".
> (1978, p.87 cited in Chambré, 1984, p.292)

This perspective held by both Chambré (1984) and Swartz (1978) mirrors the work carried out by Cox (2011). Although Chambré (1984) and Swartz's (1978) work assesses voluntary work and the elderly, it fails to clearly define whether older volunteers are found to volunteer within particular organisations, and furthermore there is no comparison to younger volunteers, it is here where this current research will address these omissions in Chambré (1984) and Swartz's (1978) work. The work by Chambré (1984) and Swartz (1978) is dated and in the past thirty-six years society and attitudes have altered, however, having said this due to its similarities in findings to Cox's (2011) more recent work the literature can be supported.

More recent work which further supports that of Cox (2011), Chambré (1984) and Swartz (1978) is that of Flores (2013). Flores' (2013) work consisted of performing semi-structured interviews with 58 charity shop workers including 52 shop volunteers, five paid shop managers, and one unpaid shop manager in the cities of Bath, Canterbury, Edinburgh, Folkestone and Oxford. Flores (2013) found that a few of the many reasons why individuals started to volunteer was due to "social dislocation" and events which they were powerless to control which he lists as "loss of spouse, ill health, unemployment, retirement, children leaving home and moving habitual location" (2013, p.388). Flores (2013) argued that these personal social events lead to an anomic state defined by "normlessness, meaninglessness and isolation" (Mitchell, 1988, p.42 cited in Flores, 2013, p.389). It is suggested by Flores (2013) that individuals volunteering for these reasons are gaining what he describes as "ontological security" where they achieve a "stable mental state derived from a sense of continuity in regards to events in one's life" (2013, p.392). This also links to Hustinx's (2010) notion of "reflexive volunteering" where "present day volunteering is entrenched in the active (re-)design of individualized biographies, identities and lifestyles" (2010, p.426).

The volunteers in Flores' (2013) research described volunteering as;

> "a pleasurable and purposive activity, as an important source of human contact
> and socialisation, and as a way to 'give something back" (2013, p.6).

These attitudes portrayed by volunteers can be explained by a series of societal influences and can be supported by Chapman *et al.* (2010) who describe a motivation to become involved as "a mixture of an interest in the work of the organisation and associated social activity" (2010, p.67). Furthermore, in Flores' (2013) research he explains how his volunteers used their own personal despair and suffering to help others who may be feeling the same way, and as a result these bonding experiences have resulted in the forging of relationships within local and small communities. Flores' (2013) work is significant in the field of volunteering as his research has produced qualitative data which is lacking in other research

on volunteers and volunteering. As a result it will enable comparisons to be drawn between his research and the research carried out for the purpose of this thesis.

Whilst older volunteers play an important role in the voluntary sector, the voluntary work of young people cannot be overlooked. Musick and Wilson (2008) state that in the United States "in adolescence, the volunteer rate is actually higher than it is in early adulthood", they attribute this to the encouragement by institutions such as schools and churches to volunteer (2008, p.222). It is argued by Musick and Wilson (2008) that the reason why volunteering declines in early adulthood is due to the increasing commitments that young people face and their multiple leisure time pursuits. This could explain why in Gora and Nemerowicz's (1985) research they found that when young people do volunteer they are "more likely...to take on high adrenalin work, such as search and rescue and emergency squad services" (1985, p.26).

Statistics produced by the Third Sector show how between 2005 and 2011 there was a downward trend in volunteering amongst young people (Pudelek, 2013). Hustinx *et al.* (2010), prominent figures in the research of non-profit and volunteering, link the decline in volunteering by young people to "the cultural phenomenon known as 'individualisation' which is widely considered as the most dangerous threat to volunteering" (2010, p.57). Individualisation is described by Vandenberge (1999) as a process where, as a result of modernisation, individuals are freed from

> "cultural constraints, such as religion, tradition, conventional morality and the unconditional belief in the validity of science, and structural constraints, such as class, status, nation, gender and the nuclear family" (1999, p.28).

As a result of these social changes, activities such as volunteering have become a set of personal choices rather than the norm that they perhaps once were. Consequently, individualisation is leading to young people in particular becoming more selfish and narrow minded when it comes to volunteering and helping others.

Hustinx *et al.* (2010) explain how there is an increasing number of volunteers who do not want to be tied into long-term committed volunteering. They explain how these new younger volunteers want;

> "to use volunteering for building their resume and developing certain competences but quit when their expectations were not fully met" (2010, p.248).

The research found that whilst these new volunteers were still happy to engage in voluntary work, they were reluctant to be involved and committed towards one organisation for years, instead they preferred to be able to change or leave at their own time and will. Hustinx *et al.*'s (2010) research is extremely useful for the purposes of the current research as youth volunteering is a relatively under-researched subject and it has provided an insight into youth voluntary behaviour in a way that other literature has not been able to do. This work by Hustinx *et al.* (2010) demonstrates the impact of social change on young people's volunteering and how their patterns and understandings of volunteering may be changing.

Cordon and Ellis Paine's (2004) article published in the Poverty and Social Justice Journal investigates the link between volunteering and employability and explains how volunteer work has become an activity carried out as a way to enhance résumés, generally by younger generations. The traditional principle behind volunteering is based on community cohesion aimed at creating a more inclusive society. However, in more recent years there has been an increase in competition for jobs and as a result young people and students have turned to volunteering in order to boost their curriculum vitae (CV) (Ellis Paine *et al.*, 2013). Cordon and Ellis Paine (2004) explain how individuals are using voluntary work experience to "develop skills and gain experience of workplace settings" (2004, p.113). This current research will aim to discover how volunteers explain their choice of voluntary organisation and whether they understand their volunteering as a means of personal gain as suggested by Hustinx *et al.* (2010).

Further research into youth volunteering was carried out by Kay and Bradbury (2009, p.123), whose paper published in the Journal of Sport, Education and Society, argued that a key aspect to young people's volunteering is social capital, and how creating bonds and social solidarity help young people build their social capital. Kay and Bradbury's (2009) research was based upon existing survey data and qualitative interviews gathered by the University of Loughborough. Their paper investigated two initiatives set up to encourage and support young volunteers. Both '*Millennium Volunteers*' and '*V Inspired*' were established in 1999 and 2006 respectively as a means to promote volunteering amongst young adults and create volunteering opportunities for millions of young people. Kay and Bradbury (2009) suggest that through increased participation in voluntary work by young people it enables them to develop social participation skills which "underpin social capital" (2009, p.125).

The literature reviewed has identified that age plays an important role in the life course of a volunteer. Literature has suggested that older volunteers participate in volunteering as a means of social integration for reasons such as ontological security (Flores, 2013). By doing this the older volunteers are provided with a "meaning and purpose in life" often after retirement. In comparison, literature suggested that younger volunteers were found to volunteer for more instrumental reasons for example that it would increase their employability. Furthermore, younger volunteers were also found to participate in more high risk volunteer activity such as search and rescue groups (Gora and Nemerowicz's, 1985).

Employment

As individuals age their roles in life also change and this in turn affects volunteer patterns. Existing literature on volunteering and employment discusses how the act of volunteering affects an individual's employability. As a result of this, much of the literature that has been produced either focuses on younger volunteers or the unemployed.

Kamerāde and Ellis Paine's (2014) article reviews the existing policy literature and research focusing on how employment influences volunteering behaviour. They explain how the topic of volunteering and employability is constantly discussed within policy and government funded employment programmes (Kamerāde and Ellis Paine, 2014). Volunteering has generally been thought of as a gateway to increased employment opportunities particularly for young individuals starting off in their career. In 2005 the Volunteer Compact Code of Good Practice published by the Home Office (2005) stated that volunteering can help individuals "improve their skills and employability" (section 5.3). Kamerāde and Ellis Paine (2014) however, state that "evidence on the extent to which these individual employability gains translate into paid employment is weak" (2014, p.264).

Whilst Kamerāde and Ellis Paine (2014) state that volunteering does not improve employability they do acknowledge that volunteering no doubt increases an individual's skills and networks. McCulloch *et al.* (2011) argue that "voluntary associations can be networks which provide resources such as advice and mutual support to their members" (2011, p.1132). It is these networks mentioned by McCulloch *et al.* (2011) that contribute towards building and enhancing an individual's social capital. McCulloch *et al.* (2011) do, however, state that too much social capital within a voluntary group can lead to exclusions within the community, particularly within areas of social deprivation.

Flores' (2013) research touches upon employment status and volunteering amongst older individuals rather than young volunteers looking for employment. In his research Flores (2013) found that displacement and personal changes, such an unemployment and retirement, are important factors for the volunteers in his research. It can be suggested that it is a result of these changes in circumstance that provokes individuals to start volunteering as a means to fill the gap left by the changes in their lives. This current research will explore the involvement of older volunteers and identify how older volunteers understand their volunteering participation.

<u>Gender</u>

Research carried out by Low *et al.* (2007) and by Musick and Wilson (2008) suggests that women follow the typical "compassionate and nurturing" roles and therefore volunteer more often than men (2008, p.172). In their 2008/9 UK research the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) found that there was a higher rate of female volunteers, 42 per cent compared to the 38 per cent of males. Whilst neither publications attempt to explain this number a possible explanation could be linked to gender and employment. Einolf (2010: 1) however, attempts to explain the gender difference with the reasoning that "men have more resources and more social capital than women, which compensates for their lower level of motivation" and therefore men do not feel the need to volunteer as much as women do (2010, p.1).

More recent research has contradicted the idea that women volunteer more than men and in fact shows that in 2014, for the first time in a decade, men had overtaken women in volunteer participation (Saxton *et al.,* 2015). Saxton *et al.*'s (2015) report, carried out on behalf of non-for-profit research consultancy group nfpSynergy, was based on a UK survey by the group's Charity Awareness Monitor which regularly surveys a representative sample of 1000 16+ year olds throughout mainland Britain. Saxton *et al.* (2015) explain how the results for the survey found that whilst the proportion of males in the UK are only narrowly ahead of women with regards to volunteering (27 per cent compared to 26 per cent respectively), since 2005 there has been a marked decrease in the gender gap in volunteer work where there was once a 10 per cent difference between males and females. Whilst the report by Saxton *et al.* (2015) is significant it does not provide a narrative for the statistics presented.

It must be acknowledged however that whilst there is only a narrow gender gap for volunteering, there is evidence to show that men and women participate in different

voluntary activities. Low *et al.*'s (2007) research suggested that women were more likely to volunteer in organisations concerned with health, education and welfare compared to men who were often found to volunteer in sports and exercise organisations. Henslin's (1999, p.76) study on gender socialisation explains how "an important part of socialization is the learning of culturally defined gender roles" and this explanation could be linked to how individuals come to volunteer in certain voluntary roles.

Ethnicity

Research carried out by Low *et al.* (2007) found that the levels of formal volunteering did not vary significantly according to ethnicity. An interesting finding in both Low *et al.* (2007) and Rochester *et al.*'s (2012) research is that whilst individuals from Black, White and Mixed Race backgrounds all volunteer at similar levels, those who are from Asian or Chinese backgrounds are less likely to volunteer. Whilst neither Low *et al.* (2007) nor Rochester *et al. (2012)* provide explanations for their findings it is suggested by Low *et al.* (2007) that participation is lower among people born outside the UK.

Research carried out by the UK Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) (2004) explored the link between volunteering and social exclusion, paying particular focus to three groups, one of which being people from a Black, Minority and Ethnic background (BME) the others being disabled and offenders. The research aimed to uncover how social exclusion can be reduced in the UK and amongst disadvantaged groups through voluntary work. The research used a mixed methods approach and included a literature review, interviews, questionnaires, a case study and a focus group. Through using this approach the research was able to carry out a wide range of research on a variety of individuals and organisations.

In a review of literature it was found that BME volunteering tends to be carried out within an informal setting which is possibly a reason why they are underrepresented in surveys of formal volunteering such as that by the IVR. One point that was raised from their research is

that the root cause of social exclusion is inequality and as a result of this those from an ethnic minority background are less likely to volunteer. Respondents to the research listed a lack of confidence as a reason for not volunteering, mainly because they feel that they would not fit into the groups due to their ethnic background. A further issue raised which was found to restrict people from BME backgrounds to volunteer was the cost to the individual through expenses such as fuel cost. This is supported by Foster-Bey (2008) who suggests that it is a result of economic disadvantage, as a result of citizenship and immigration status, which explains why ethnic groups, and more specifically Asians, are less likely to be civically engaged. This suggests that those of an ethnic minority background are more concerned with ensuring they have an income rather than being concerned about volunteer participation.

Family

A central theme which emerged from the sociological literature on volunteering was family and its influence with regards to voluntary participation. Nesbit's (2012) research on the influence of the life cycle on volunteering suggests that "as an institution, the household provides strong support for volunteering" (2012, p.16). Her work on familial influence on volunteering found that;

> "within households, individuals learn how to interact with others and with the larger community, partly by receiving instruction about methods of civic and political involvement" (Nesbit, 2012, p.1).

This links to the idea of the family and household acting as the agents of primary socialisation. Horne *et al.* (1999) explain that it is through this process of primary socialisation that a "child gains his or her conception of self or personal identity" and that it is where they develop their ideas and attitudes about society (1999, p.123). Musick and Wilson however, suggest that volunteering amongst family members does not necessarily mean that the individual is "willing". They suggest that in fact "many people volunteer grudgingly out of a sense of duty or obligation to others they would prefer to avoid" (2008: 25).

Work by Wilson (2000) suggests that perhaps the most influential factor when discussing family and volunteering is parental influence. Wilson (2000) suggests that;

> "one reason why teenagers are more likely to volunteer if their parents volunteer is that their parents have taught them in a positive way to think about volunteer work" (2000, p.218).

Theoretical research by Searle-Chatterjee (1999) on *Occupation, biography and new social movements* furthered this claim and argued that the inclination to volunteer is developed at a young age and "emerges from the intersection of socialisation within the family and personal life experience" (1999, p.258). Musick and Wilson (2008) corroborate this by suggesting that if individuals are socialised into the role of volunteers by their parents they are much more likely to volunteer. This social behaviour links to the Role Modelling Theory as proposed by Bandura (1977) which states that children learn from observation, imitation and modelling. Musick and Wilson (2008) suggest that "parents who volunteer are more likely to have children who volunteer" (2008, p.229). Whilst Musick and Wilson's (2008) work is based on American research and therefore it could be argued that it does not directly relate to UK volunteers it is supported by the UK based work of Bussell and Forbes (2002).

Bussell and Forbes' (2002) review on the volunteer market was based on current and relevant UK research and explored who and why people volunteer. They stated that "volunteers are more likely to volunteer if they have a friend or family member in the organisation" (Bussell and Forbes, 2002, p.250). Bussell and Forbes (2002) explain how Johnson-Coffey's (1997) research on family links and volunteering found that volunteering with other family members strengthened their relationship and as a result created "family togetherness" (2002, p.249).

Another way in which family can influence voluntary participation is through what Rotolo and Wilson (2006) describe as the spousal effect. Rotolo and Wilson (2006) suggested how previous work discussing volunteering and the family had often failed to discuss spousal influence due to the lack of data on the marital dyad. It was not until 2002, when the *Current*

Population Survey and Volunteer Supplement was published which held the information of 60,000 American households and all of the household members, that meant research on the spousal effect and volunteering could be explored. Rotolo and Wilson (2006) explain two spousal effect theories; substitution and complementary. Substitution theory is the belief that volunteer work by one spouse "has a negative effect on the behaviour of the other", for example one spouse will sacrifice volunteer participation so that the other can volunteer themselves (2006, p.306). Complementary theory on the other hand suggests that spouses who volunteer complement each other in their behaviour, either neither of them volunteer, or both volunteer (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). Rotolo and Wilson (2006) suggested that complementary theory is persuasive in that it can be linked to social cohesion whereby individuals generally share the behaviour of people they are close and intimate with.

The work carried out by Rotolo and Wilson (2006) is significant to this current research as it provides a more informative account of spousal volunteering which has not been extensively researched. Whilst Rotolo and Wilson's (2006) work provides data based on an extremely large sample it does not provide the in-depth accounts of behaviour providing the information on why spouses act in certain ways and it is here where this current piece of research will help address the limitations in current research. Similarly Rochester *et al.*'s (2012) literature on spousal volunteering is based in the UK as opposed to America. Their research showed that married people, particularly in Scotland, are more likely to volunteer than any others. Rochester *et al.*'s (2012) research does not explain the reason behind the increased voluntary behaviour amongst married couples. Consequently it is difficult to understand whether spousal volunteering is a result of mutual encouragement, broadening one's horizons or a range of other social factors including religion, age and family. By asking volunteers in this current research the influences on their volunteering it will enable an understanding of the extent to which and how family influences volunteering.

The literature has demonstrated how the family plays an important role in encouraging voluntary behaviour through parental and household influence. As a result of primary socialisation the literature has suggested that younger family members demonstrate a willingness to participate in voluntary activities. A further way that the household unit proves influential in volunteering behaviour is between husband and wife or partners through what is known as spousal complementary theory (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006).

Politics

The relationship between politics and volunteering has become closer in the past few years whether it is through volunteering for a political party or simply volunteering because of political issues. In 2010 the Conservative Party launched the idea of 'The Big Society' as part of their General Election manifesto. The drive of this particular policy was "to put more power and opportunity into people's hands" (Cabinet Office, 2010) with the aim of not only improving their communities but Britain as a whole. The Cabinet Office (2010) gave five policies which they say are needed for The Big Society to flourish;

1. Give communities more powers
2. Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
3. Transfer power from central to local government
4. Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises
5. Publish government data
   (2010, pp.1-3).

It is this concept of The Big Society which has led to recent interest and publicity with regards to volunteering and the voluntary sector. The Civil Exchange's (2012) *The Big Audit* assessed the government's policy as to whether it is succeeding in the policy's aim to encourage individuals to engage in their communities and participate as volunteers to improve and help those around them. The Audit's plan was to "take a comprehensive look at what is happening" in the voluntary sector and within government and from this they hope to inform and engage those individuals who are interested in improving their communities (Civil Exchange, 2012, p.4).

The Audit (2012) suggested that it is a decline in active participation particularly with regards to politics which is spurring the government to act. Whilst engagement with politics is on the decline, "public trust and levels of engagement with civil society are very high" (Civil Exchange, 2012, p.6). As well as an interest in donating financially to charities, there is a high interest in local community involvement, with 50 per cent of people believing that by getting involved they can change their local area (Civil Exchange, 2012, p.7). The Audit supports The Big Society's aim to increase social capital to help build communities. Statistics demonstrate how the urban/rural social capital gap is significant and that the high levels of social activism and involvement is concentrated within areas of retirement amongst people from higher socio economic groups.

The Audit's criticism of The Big Society is significant with regards to small, community organisations. The Audit suggests that whilst the larger charities have the power and ability to support themselves and be self-sufficient, due to unreliable government funding, the local charities find it impossible to speak and be heard. The Audit argues that it is these charities which desperately need the help which The Big Society aims to give, however, the Civil Exchange (2012) states that David Cameron has so far failed to successfully implement the new policies set out to help voluntary communities. For example, The Audit explains how;

> "'a significant portion [of voluntary and community organisations] are experiencing financial difficulty due to rising demand and falling income" (Civil Exchange, 2012, p.7).

The Civil Exchange (2012) also states that the government has underestimated the cost in funding to the voluntary sector, which is resulting in an estimated £3.3 billion in cuts for the sector.

Harflett (2011) explains how figures given by the UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) show that 74.7 per cent of all voluntary organisations are classed as either micro or small organisations. These organisations therefore are not seen to benefit from government initiatives such as 'The Big Society' because they are so small that they

are either not recognised or not known to the funding organisations. However, acknowledging the aims of 'The Big Society' as well as the NCVO statistics will enable the current research to explore whether government policy affects an individual's reason for volunteering formally.

An exploration of the available literature on the topic of volunteers and volunteering has revealed a wide range of research from government funded research to both sociological and psychological literature, although as previously stated the psychological literature would not be used for the purposes of this research as its research focus was too narrow. A review of the existing literature on volunteering has provided useful statistics as well as an understanding of the demographics of volunteers in the United Kingdom. Research by Low *et al.* (2007), the NCVO (2012/13) and the DCLG (2008/9) has supplied data on the demographics of volunteers enabling an understanding of who volunteers based on age, ethnicity, religion and gender.

Whilst the literature discussed in this review has given an insight into the existing research on the voluntary sector it must be acknowledged that it also has its limitations and there are gaps in the research. One issue with much of the current literature is that it is based on a quantitative methodology which lacks the in-depth analysis and understanding that can be gathered by carrying out qualitative research. As well as this, whilst several pieces of literature do undertake a qualitative methodology their research is either based in America (Musick and Wilson, 2008; Rotolo and Wilson, 2006) or carried out within one area of interest for example sports or charity shops (Flores, 2013). The current research was carried out in order to address existing gaps in research on third sector organisations and by carrying out a piece of qualitative research in a formal setting it will enable a deeper understanding of volunteers' accounts of their behaviour. By undertaking this literature review three areas of further research have been highlighted which have led to the following research questions being established; i) How do volunteers understand their volunteering?;

ii) What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice of volunteer organisations?; iii) What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer?

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter explains in detail the methods used within this research to explore accounts of volunteering which in turn answer my research questions, i) How do volunteers understand their participation?; ii) What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice of voluntary organisations?; iii) What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer?

This chapter will discuss and justify the methods carried out for the purpose of this research which focuses on understanding the accounts of formal volunteers in Yorkshire. To carry out a successful piece of research into a small set of voluntary organisations it is necessary to adopt an appropriate research methodology. This chapter will begin with an understanding of the ontological and epistemological considerations before justifying the choice of methodology based on the research questions. Following this, the research design will be discussed and the appropriateness of the research will be considered; strengths and limitations of carrying out the research in such a way will be explained. Finally, the administration and implementation of the study, together with the approach taken in analysing the data are explained.

Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Ontology is a concept often described within the field of social sciences as being vague and confusing (Thomas, 2013; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe ontology as "the study of being", raising questions about what exists and what is reality; whereas epistemology refers to how knowledge is acquired and constructed. Shermon (2004) explains how as a "theory of knowledge", epistemology considers;

> "whether knowledge is something that can be acquired on the one hand or
> something which has to be personally experienced on the other" (2004, p.423).

By having an understanding of the ontological and epistemological considerations for this methodology of research it enables a deeper understanding of the research methods chosen.

Research Methodology

The choice to carry out purely qualitative research for the purpose of this study was based on the desire to gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding regarding individuals and their motives for volunteering. Bryman (1988) explains how qualitative research is "concerned with, and best suited to, the investigation of the micro level of social life" (1988, p.147). To enable this current research to successfully answer its research questions it was deemed that a qualitative research methodology would be most appropriate. By adopting an interpretive paradigm for this research it acknowledges that the social world is complex and as Markula and Silk (2011) suggest;

> "people, including researchers and their research participants, define their own meanings within their respective social, political and cultural settings" (2011, p.31)

By using qualitative data gathering techniques the aim was to gain a perspective into the voluntary sector which was not based solely on a positivist methodology producing hard data and statistics. By adopting an interpretativist stance it enabled an understanding of how the participants' experiences were influenced by their personal biographies, motivations and beliefs (Gilbert, 2001). The literature review revealed that rich insights from volunteers themselves tend to be lacking in the existing literature, and by taking an interpretative approach for this research allowed an understanding of how volunteers themselves account for their volunteering.

There is much debate amongst social scientists as to which research methodology provides the most valid and reliable data, with arguments for and against qualitative research as well as quantitative and mixed methods approaches. By adopting a qualitative approach to research it allowed textual data in the form of "transcripts from interviews, text from

documents or notes from observations" to be gathered (Wellington, 1996, p.49). For the purpose of this research it was inappropriate to use a quantitative methodology as it would not have enabled in-depth personal accounts on volunteering to be heard and it would not have allowed for the research questions to be answered to a satisfactory degree. O'leary (2012) states that;

> "statistics rely on the reduction of meaning to numbers. And when meanings are intricate and complex, reduction can be incredibly difficult" (2012, p.256).

The argument here is that if research relies on statistics and quantitative data then there is a loss of richness that occurs when qualitative research is not carried out. As Gorard and Taylor (2004) point out;

> "qualitative work in isolation... appears to set out to provide new ways of looking at things or to create plausible new theories and explanations of observed phenomena" (2004, p.39).

This explanation by Gorard and Taylor (2004) supports the reasons for this current research with a qualitative methodology as it has developed new explanations and further understanding of the volunteering world.

Research Design

This research was carried out with the aim of answering the three research questions in order to gain an understanding of how volunteers in Yorkshire account for their behaviour. The research was undertaken in this geographical area for ease and convenience due to tight time constraints and the added cost of travelling to each organisation, both of which would have been affected had the geographical area been extended.

During the research design process both probability and purposive sampling methods were considered. Babbie (2010) describes how probability sampling enables data to be generalised as the sample is random and carried out on larger populations. This sampling technique is often associated with a quantitative methodology with a focus on large scale surveys or content analysis (Babbie, 2010). Probability sampling would have provided the

research with a random representative sample of individuals; however this method of sampling is often associated with research that aims to prove or test a hypothesis, something that this current research is not doing. It was therefore decided that purposive sampling would be the appropriate sampling method for research into the accounts of volunteers. McNeill (1994) explains how purposive sampling;

> "occurs when a researcher chooses a particular group or place to study because it is known to be of the type that is wanted" (1994, p.39).

By choosing a purposive sample it allowed the research to focus on the types of organisation and people that I wished to study, taking into consideration where I thought I the ideal sample would be found.

By limiting the sample it meant that the three research questions would be answered by a range of people focussing on their particular characteristics including the type of volunteering undertaken, age and gender. Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested four points which are stated as a rationale for the choice of certain people as participants in the research. They argue that;

> "the ideal site is where (1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a rich mix of many of the processes, people, programs, interaction, and/or structures that may be a part of the research question will be present; (3) the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity of presence for as long as necessary; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured by avoiding poor sampling decisions" (1989, p.54).

Whilst Marshall and Rossman (1989) do acknowledge that this ideal cannot always be followed, for the purposes of this research the ideal was followed as closely as possible. For example, the groups that were used in this piece of research were all welcoming with regards to entry into the organisations and access to their volunteers.

The main reason for carrying out purposive sampling was that it allowed me to select participants according to the project's goals (Gilbert, 2001). For the purpose of the research it was necessary to gather a sample whose accounts of volunteering would enable the three research questions to be answered. It was therefore important that the sample consisted of

volunteers who varied in age, gender, beliefs and ethnicity, as well as belonging to a variety of voluntary organisations. My prior knowledge of the type of individuals who volunteer gave me confidence that I would be able to secure a range of individuals from the chosen voluntary organisations who would be willing to participate in my research. My interest in third sector organisations and the work they carry out played a vital role when contacting each of the organisations I wished to research as I was able to demonstrate my understanding of the importance of the work they undertake. I believe that this interest helped establish contacts within each organisation which ultimately led to individuals within them being willing to participate in the research.

The following table provides an overview of the interviewees including their age, the amount of time they volunteer each week and the organisation where they volunteer. Both the participants and organisations involved in the research have been anonymised as much as possible to avoid identification. Whilst the names of organisations have been altered they still reflect the work that they carry out. Any further changes to names, ages or organisations would compromise the integrity of the research (Wiles *et al,* 2006).

Volunteer	Age	Organisation	Time volunteered per week with named organisation
Tony	67	Local Food Bank	Around 5 hours
Margaret	70s	Local Food Bank	4 hours
Linda	77	Local Food Bank	6 hours
Roy	66	Local Food Bank	4 hours
Peter	30s	Local Food Bank	4 hours
Dominic	21	Night Helpers	10 hours
John	39	Night Helpers	20 hours
Kate	36	Night Helpers	5 hours
Janet	52	Young Person's Activity Group	Varies
Barry	52	Young Person's Activity Group	8 hours
James	23	Emergency Services	8 hours
Eddy	26	Emergency Services	Varies
Mark	27	Emergency Services	6 hours
Aaron	24	Youth Charity	Varies

(Table 1 – Volunteer Information)

The organisations used in this new piece of research were chosen with the aim of ensuring the sample consisted of a range of volunteers within a variety of volunteer based organisations (Appendix A).

As well as organisations being contacted because of location and range of sample, I was also attracted to some organisations which were relevant to current issues within society and government, one of these organisations was the local food bank. According to the Trussell Trust website there are 423 Food banks around the United Kingdom and this is growing by two every week (Trussell Trust, 2014). In addition to this, in the year 2013-2014 the Trussell Trust gave out 913,138 bags containing three days worth of food, this is compared to the much smaller number of 61,468 in the year 2010-2011, an increase of a staggering 1386 per cent (Trussell Trust, 2014). With such an increase in demand due to issues such as underemployment and rising food and fuel prices there is also an increased demand in volunteers. As a result it was decided that it was important to understand where food bank volunteers came from and why they do their voluntary work.

The other organisation which I chose to study because of its relevance to society's current climate is the Night Helpers. Prior to my research I was already aware of the Night Helpers as they are a relatively new organisation but operate throughout hundreds of towns and cities in the UK. The organisation was established after it became apparent that people were in need of assistance during nights out and as a result the organisation has gradually grown. Due to social changes it can be demonstrated that there is a need for volunteers to help in situations such as this and not just the typical charity shop.

For this research it was necessary to limit both the number of organisations and the number of participants in the study, as a result the number of organisations contacted was limited to eight. When contacting the organisations for individuals willing to participate in the research study that there was a possibility that there would be a lack of response from some

organisations and this was factored into the equation. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) explain how non-responses can be split into two main components; contact rate and cooperation rate. By Remler and Van Ryzin's (2011, p149) equation, *response rate = contact rate x cooperation rate,* the response rate was 83 per cent as only one organisation, a school's governing body, failed to respond to the attempt at contact, however all those who did respond were 100 per cent cooperative. This, however, does not take into account the regional Youth Charity manager's attempt to get people to contact me for this research. For example, the manager, who also acted as the gatekeeper, was happy to help with the research, although for ethical reasons he contacted the individuals in the organisation himself. I was informed by the manager that he had sent 25 emails to a range of volunteers within the Youth Charity; however, of these 25 individuals only one reply was received.

The decision to target the organisations involved in the current research was based on the very different types of work the organisations and their volunteers carry out. For the purpose of the research it was necessary to ensure that there was a range of organisations from which participants were recruited based on voluntary activities and different institutional affiliations; for example, religious or secular beliefs and perhaps most importantly the age range of volunteers. As a result there was also a conscious decision not to approach certain voluntary organisations such as charity shops. This decision was made because there is already prior research regarding charity shops and their volunteers such as the work by Flores (2013) which looked at the motivation of volunteers in charity shops. This research set out with the aim to have a diverse sample which reflected the variety of volunteering in contemporary society.

One decision which had to be made early on in the research process was the decision to only focus on volunteers over the age of 18. It would have been of interest to investigate the accounts of younger volunteers, as their views would have brought an alternative perspective to older volunteers. However, the logistics of working with under 18s would

have extended the time frame of the research project and would have encountered additional ethical considerations. Morrow and Richards (1996, p.90) describe children as being "vulnerable, incompetent, and relatively powerless" and as a result of this, parental consent would have been needed prior to access to children. As a result of the omission of child volunteers I ensured that my sample included a range of ages and this enabled an understanding of whether accounts of volunteering and ways into the voluntary sector changes over the life course.

Once organisations had been chosen emails were sent and contacts were made with the relevant people. When contacting individuals within the local food bank, Youth Charity and Night Helpers it was necessary to follow formal procedures and contact the correct people via publically available email addresses. In the emails I explained who I was and what I was doing with reference to my background, my degree and this piece of research. I then asked if they were willing to being part of this research and if they could contact me so further details could be discussed. These emails then led to access to the organisations through a gatekeeper who liaised with me prior to and during research (Gilbert, 2001). This gatekeeper was either the manager or supervisor within the organisation who was also the individual who put me in contact with the volunteers participating in this research. Following this a convenient date was arranged with the gatekeepers as to when the research could be carried out. With the remaining organisations I had existing contacts within the groups which meant that I was able to contact them directly. Although I did this I also made sure they were provided with the same details and information as all other organisations in the research.

Once all contact had been established with the organisations and volunteers a date was agreed upon where we would meet to carry out the research. The food bank and Night Helpers meetings took place at their base, both of which were in a church meeting room. The research with both of the Young Person's Activity Group volunteers was carried out in their home as they are a busy husband and wife team working with the same Young

Person's Activity Group. The interviews with the Emergency Services volunteers were all carried out in their workplace. The final individual interviewed was the young Youth Charity volunteer and was completed over the telephone as he lived a considerable distance away.

It is in the nature of qualitative research that the sample size of any research carried out will be limited (O'leary, 2010). However, O'leary (2010) argues that researchers who collect qualitative data are "not looking for representativeness", but are instead more interested in gathering in-depth, rich understandings (2010, p.165). Therefore for this piece of qualitative research a total of 14 individuals were sampled from seven very different volunteer organisations. At the outset I decided that a sample size of between 14-20 individuals would be ideal, and after the response to emails and the time needed to carry out the interviews, it was decided that it would only be possible to interview 14 volunteers. A larger number of interviews would have meant time and financial costs would have been incurred as well as the fact that it would have consumed more time when transcribing the interviews (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011). However, by interviewing a smaller number of people there was a possibility that the research would have lacked reliability and substance. To ensure variation the sample was handpicked ensuring that there was a range of demographics and in particular age as far as possible.

<u>Ethical Considerations</u>

Ethical consideration is an important part of any research project which involves participants. Bulmer (cited in Gilbert, 2001, p.45) describes ethics as being a "matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others", something which must be acknowledged with research involving other persons. Once the research methodology and design had been chosen it was important to gain ethical clearance from the University of York's Department of Sociology. This was important as the piece of research to be carried out would include potentially sensitive information including names of individuals and organisations participating in the research. To keep within the ethical guidelines it was imperative that the participants were

aware of what was being carried out and their involvement in the research (O'Leary, 2012).

"The central feature of social science research ethics" Oliver (2010) states;

"is the principle that participants should be fully informed about a research project before they assent to taking part" (2010, p.28).

To ensure that these ethical procedures were followed, prior to any research taking place, all participants were handed an information sheet informing them of the research which was going to be carried out, as well as a separate consent form to be completed prior to the research commencing (see Appendix B and C).

As a result of this, on both the information letter and consent form participants in the research were guaranteed that their personal information would be kept strictly private and confidential, and by signing and dating the consent form they were agreeing to participate in the research. The participants were also assured that if at any point they changed their mind about being included in the research they could withdraw their consent. This is referred to by Thomas (2013) as 'opting-in' consent where participants in the study make an active choice about being included in the research, this aims to reassure the participant about any issues they may have. The participants of the research were also guaranteed that both their own and their organisation's identity would be anonymised (as far as possible without compromising the data), as a result all organisations and individuals featuring in this piece of research have had their names changed accordingly.

<u>Interviews</u>

The use of interviews was deemed appropriate for this type of research not only due to the lack of existing qualitative research on volunteers but also because interview data would allow me to gain direct quotations from people regarding their experiences, feelings, and knowledge of volunteering. Bell (1991) explains how once the decision has been made to

carry out interviews, the next step is to decide what type of interview to carry out. She states that;

> "at one extreme is the completely formalized interview where the interviewer behaves as much like a machine as possible. At the other end is the completely informal interview in which the shape is determined by the individual respondents" (1991, p.71).

As a result of this, the semi-structured interview technique was chosen as the most appropriate method as it allowed in-depth information to be gathered without direction being too limited or at the same time too flexible. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) describe how a semi-structured interview is;

> "a set of open-ended questions, sometimes accompanied by probes, that help guide or structure the discussion" (2011, p.64)

These questions are able to act as triggers encouraging the participants to talk (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011).

By having a set of guide questions for the respondent it enabled key questions to be asked whilst enabling the participant to expand and develop their answers, Gilbert (2001) describes these as pre-coded and open-ended questions (Interview Guide – See Appendix D). Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) explain how an interview guide is;

> "a set of open-ended questions, sometimes accompanied with probes, that help guide or structure the discussion" (2011, p.64)

They argue that by creating an interview guide it enables the interviewer to keep track of the questions they wish to ask during the process but allows them to be flexible as different respondents will answer the questions differently. This technique is also noted by Gilbert (2001) who suggests that an interview guide is used for;

> "a focused interview and will list areas to be covered while leaving the exact wording and order of the questions to the interviewer" (2001, p.88).

For the purposes of the interviews that were carried out the interview guide consisted of questions which were asked to each participant such as 'how long have you been volunteering?', 'how much longer do you see yourself volunteering?' and 'what do you get out of volunteering?' The guide that was used for the interviews (Appendix C) also had

prompt questions which were asked if individuals did not give a fully explained answer or did not quite understand the question. Gilbert (2001) explains how probes "are instructions to look at particular sub-topics, reminders to the interviewer to be sure to check on each" (2001, p.133). Gilbert (2001) continues by stating that the probes "don't have to be put into the exact words which you will ask", rather they are there to be used if the conversation needs to change direction or if more precise information in needed (2001, p.133).

The decision for carrying out semi-structured interviews rather than a focus group was made because it was considered that interviews would allow individuals to express their views and opinions more freely. Gilbert (2001) explains how a focus group;

> "consists of a small group of individuals usually numbering between six and ten people, who meet together to express their views about a particular topic defined by the researcher" (2001, p.165).

A focus group would have been possible amongst some of the organisations interviewed such as the Night Helpers, food bank and Young Person's Activity Group as it would have enabled and developed discussion, however, Gilbert (2001) suggests that there are weaknesses in focus groups that could affect the results gathered. Gilbert (2001) argues that focus groups restrict the flow of conversation found in interviews, and that it is hard to distinguish between voices when it comes to transcribing the recording. There is also a concern that some participants may refrain from expressing their views in fear of the reaction from others in the group.

In addition to this, Thomas (2013) suggests that an individual's behaviour can change when faced with a group situation, and people may end up talking less or someone may take the lead and talk above everyone else. An example of this can be attributed to the two Young Person's Activity Group volunteers. The two volunteers who I interviewed were a husband and wife team who volunteered in the same group. When approaching them for interview I debated as to whether to interview them as a husband and wife team or whether to carry out the interviews separately. One of the reasons I chose to carry them out individually was that

although it could have led to an interesting discussion, I felt that it was better to interview them separately as it would enable them both to express their accounts of volunteering equally and it would give them both a chance to fully describe their influences in volunteering.

To enable this research to take place two types of interviews were carried out, face-to-face and telephone. The aim at the beginning of the research project was to carry out all interviews in person; however, due to logistical and geographical constraints one interview took place over the telephone. Neuman (2005) states how it must be acknowledged that there are both advantages and disadvantages to carrying out the aforementioned types of interviews. He argues that by carrying out face-to-face interviews they result in the highest response rates and it enables the observation of the surroundings and the interviewee's body language. This can be corroborated in this research as there were no issues with the response rate and I was able to interview all the individuals that were targeted. Whilst Neuman (2005) states that when travelling to interviews it impacts on the researcher both in time and financially and that telephone interviews keep costs down, however, it was in the best interest of this piece of research to be able to travel and meet with different volunteers. Had I not have travelled to interview participants this piece of research would not have been possible and the research questions would not have been answered effectively. Added to this, telephone interviews would have been impersonal given the topic of question and it does not allow body language to be taken into consideration when interviewing. Having said this, I do not think that the interview conducted over the telephone influenced the response significantly as his answers were still in depth and I was still able to gather a good understanding of the participant's volunteering experiences.

There are advantages and disadvantages with any research method but it is necessary that regardless of its disadvantages a method of research is chosen based on its appropriateness to the research in question. Whilst it can be argued that interviews do not

always represent real situations and that there is "no guarantee that people are giving a truthful, accurate account" (McNeill, 1994, p.47), they will be giving an account of their interpretation of what they consider to be their reality. By using interviews for this piece of research enabled a deeper epistemological understanding of the influences that volunteers have experienced in the UK. Oakley's (1979) theory of the 'interviewer effect', where it is suggested that the interviewer's tone and body language can affect the answers given by the interviewee, was acknowledged prior to research commencing, to combat all interviewees were made comfortable and relaxed in their surroundings. It was important to ensure that the location was private so that conversations were not overheard or disrupted. I found it particularly important to build a rapport with the interviewees prior to interview as I thought this would help the interviews flow more smoothly.

Despite the disadvantages of carrying out semi-structured interviews, I decided to stand by the decision to use this method of research as conducting unstructured interviews would have led to lengthy conversations which may not have answered the necessary questions for this piece of research. Furthermore, carrying out structured interviews would be akin to asking the participants to complete a questionnaire, and would have led to a series of similar answers with a lack of explanation or personalisation and it would have become a piece of research with a quantitative methodology. A great advantage to carrying out my research in the way that I have done is that it enabled me as a researcher to be very flexible not only with carrying out my research but also with individuals involved in my study. Boeiji (2010) explains how;

> "when a study has an explorative nature...you need methods with a maximum explorative power. Qualitative methods do live up to this because of their flexible approach" (2010, p.32).

He adds that the data collection process can also be adapted to the 'emerging fields' (Boeiji, 2010). This relates to this current research as it was possible to adapt to the needs and lives of the participants in my research, as well as being able to adjust the data collection

techniques to suit the organisations involved. An example of this can be seen with the use of the mixture of face-to-face interviews as well as telephone interviews.

Two sets of interviews which varied from the rest were with individuals at the food bank and Night Helpers. This was because the interviews were carried out in the setting where the voluntary activity took place, the reason for this was that the organisations were unable to spare time where its volunteers could take time out of their schedule for a 'sit-down interview'. This alternative method of research demonstrates my flexibility as a researcher as I was able to adapt to changing situations. By being flexible it meant that I did not disrupt the work that the participants were carrying out and it also meant that all the individuals were able to be interviewed in one place during a single trip to their volunteering base.

By interviewing individuals of the food bank and the Night Helpers I was able to witness firsthand the work the two organisations carry out within their community. Similarly, when meeting with the Night Helpers, I went on night patrol with the volunteers. With the Helpers I was able to take aside a couple of individuals for recorded interviews before going out onto the streets of the city to patrol the streets and help those who needed assistance. I felt that meeting the Night Helpers within their natural environment was particularly important as I would not have been able to sense and understand the work they carry out without being able to witness it firsthand. As well as this, whilst participating with the group I was able to talk to other members of the organisation who I had not interviewed but who were willing to share their volunteering experiences with me.

To accurately record the interviews the decision was made to use a recording device. During the interviews the device was placed between me and the interviewee to ensure that both sides of the conversation were recorded. The reason behind the choice to record the conversation was that by doing this it enabled the interview to flow and I was able to fully concentrate on the conversation rather than balancing both conversation and note taking.

This method is supported by Wellington (1996, p.36) who explains how voice recording interviews "preserves actual natural language" whilst allowing the interviewer to contribute properly to the conversation. However, it is suggested by Wellington (1996) that the presence of a digital recording device, especially if it is placed in sight of the interviewee, can put off the interviewee and could possibly affect their answers. When deciding to record the interviews I acknowledged that a considerable amount of time would be taken up when transcribing the data. Wellington (1996) notes how transcribing as opposed to note taking during interviews can mean a significant amount of data has to be altered into written word which can be extremely time consuming.

Whilst Wellington's (1996) points were extremely valid; I believe that by recording and transcribing the interviews it enabled me to better understand my data, it also meant that the whole conversation was recorded and nothing was left out or disregarded which could have happened if I had only taken notes. To avoid the participants being put off by the recording device I ensured that it was not visible, although still able to pick up voices clearly, by placing the device on a surface out of eye-sight. Whilst the participant was still aware that they were being recorded they became more relaxed once the device was out of sight. Added to this, recording the interviews avoided interviewer bias as it was not possible to pick and choose what was relevant to the study and what was recorded.

A conscious choice was made in the data collection process not to use computer programmes such as Dragon Dictation and Nvivo to transcribe the interviews. From previous experience with the programmes I was aware that the programmes take time to 'learn' the voice of the user and so in this case the recordings were transcribed by hand. Whilst this approach was more time consuming than a computer program, it ensured that the transcriptions were accurate. As well as this, I had a familiarity with the recordings and the interviews were fresh in my mind enabling me to remember and recall what had been said if there was any disturbances in recordings. This therefore can be argued to make the

transcripts more reliable as there is no chance of mistakes made through computerised transcription.

<u>Analysis and Implementation</u>

For the purpose of data analysis it was decided that a coding approach would be adopted. Adams *et al* (2007) argues that;

> "the analysis of qualitative research notes begins in the field, at the time of observation, interviewing" (2007, p.325).

The process of understanding the interview data is not a discrete process and begins with an interpretation of the data in the field, during the interviews, after the interviews as well as during transcription. Once the interviews were completed they were transcribed and read thoroughly. By doing this, as well as enabling me to re-live the conversations with each participant, I was able to make notes alongside important statements which were made, this in turn made it possible for me to suggest ways of coding the data (Adams *et al,* 2007). By allowing the data to be "disassembled into elements and components", I was able to examine the transcripts "for patterns and relationships" (Boeije, 2010, p.94-5). By disassembling the data it enabled themes to emerge within the research which were then linked back to current research on the topic of volunteering. By undertaking a qualitative research methodology based on an interpretivist perspective it has allowed this current piece of research to garner a deeper understanding of the personal accounts of volunteers which is lacking in the third sector research field.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this research was to investigate how volunteers in Yorkshire account for their volunteering actions. To achieve the overall research aim three research questions were adopted in order to guide the study; i) What meanings do volunteers make of their volunteering?; ii) What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice of volunteer organisation iii) What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer? The findings of this research are based on an in-depth qualitative study of 14 formal volunteers within seven organisations which vary in the work they carry out for the community. Throughout the research several themes became apparent with respect to why people volunteer, these were; religion, family, and age and employment.

Religion

Rochester *et al.*'s (2012) argument that "religion makes a difference to volunteering" is evident in the findings amongst several participants included in the current research on volunteers in Yorkshire (2012: 45). When analysing the interviews which were carried out religion emerged as a prominent theme, and more specifically, how an individual's religious beliefs influenced their reasons for volunteering and their choice of volunteer organisation. The findings of this current research show direct links to the findings of Park and Smith (2000) in that for some actively religious volunteers, religiosity, religious socialisation, religious identity and religious social networks provided an explanation for religious influences towards volunteering.

Whilst religiosity was not directly measured for the purpose of this current research, by carrying out the interviews I found that there were nine actively religious participants in the research and from here I was able to develop an understanding of individual's religious feelings towards their commitment. For most participants, I found that it was the social

aspects of religious practice rather than the strength of religious feeling that was important to people's accounts of volunteering.

Tony, a 67 year old retired gentleman and food bank volunteer, is one of only two individuals interviewed for this research that supports the suggestion of Park and Smith (2000) and Rochester *et al.* (2012) that religiosity affects voluntary activity. Tony explained;

> "I became a volunteer for the food bank through church. I'm a member of other church groups and became aware of the work the food bank does through reading an advertisement for helpers in the church magazine".

Tony's reasons for volunteering and his explanation of his route into volunteering at the food bank were based solely upon his religious beliefs and less about the social aspects of religion. Tony described how his desire to help others was "a belief related to my religion that it is something that should be done". In addition to this, Tony explained how his involvement in voluntary organisations, particularly the local food bank, was a result of government cutbacks. Tony explained how the cutting of previously government led schemes to help with issues such as poverty has led to "the government stepping back so we (communities) step in" and take the lead with regards to helping others.

Tony's explanation links to the Conservative Party's Big Society initiative which was aimed at putting "more power and opportunity into people's hands" (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.1). Consequently, Tony explained "it's resulted in people stepping in to help, not necessarily out of want, but out of the need for the people". This view expressed by Tony has clear links to Musick and Wilson's (2008) explanation that in the 1980s, the then Conservative Government believed that social welfare should be supported predominantly by the voluntary movement, and that the statutory services should only be used as a means to "fill the gaps" (2008: 4). In today's society voluntary organisations are taking on more responsibility from local government and consequently have to scale up their provision of services as a means of support for the local authorities.

Tony explained that whilst he acknowledges his volunteering helps the disadvantaged, he often questions why he volunteers. He stated how although there are several positives to volunteering such as;

> "the feeling that you are doing good and that you are using your time to help others who need it"

and that he;

> "enjoys the community that is made by not only the people who volunteer but also those who need help from the charity".

Tony also stated that there is one significant challenge in his voluntary work. This challenge was also a reoccurring theme throughout the research, and is the commitment towards the organisation for who they volunteer. Tony explained that although he only volunteers at the food bank for about five hours a week it feels like a lot more work. When asked to explain how his commitment towards the food bank affects him Tony stated "I feel like I'm always needed and that I always need to make myself available". Tony noted this as his only dislike about the volunteer work that he participates in and that it is because of his role within this organisation that he finds it hard to step back and take a break from his work.

John, a deeply religious 39 year old volunteer of the Night Helpers, also linked his routes into volunteering and his voluntary role to his religiosity and religious socialisation. John understood his religious beliefs and religious socialisation have been evolving since the age of 14 and they are the foundation of his voluntary career, this supports Rochester *et al.*'s (2012) literature which suggests that the propensity to volunteer is highly influenced by religion. He explained how the influence of the church on his life when he was young ultimately provoked his voluntary work ethic. When John was asked about his volunteering background he explained;

> "Well it all started around 25 years ago, when I was 14 and first started attending church. That age was a turning point in my life and has led me to where I am today. Being part of the church gets you involved in all sorts of volunteering which I suppose is how it all began. The church and community groups were kind of a base on which I started and now I'm here with the Night Helpers".

John's account of volunteering has shown how his voluntary work as a child within the church has continued to influence his life, including the work he carries out with the Night Helpers. Throughout his interview John was not shy about his religious beliefs and was in fact the sole actively religious participant within this research who made direct religious references during the interview. Musick and Wilson (2008) explain that "churches preach the virtue of compassion" and this was supported by John in his interview (2008, p.77). During his interview John stated how today's society was influential in choice of organisation that he volunteers for and he explained;

> "I wanted to meet the needs of the people of [the town] because of all the drink and drug related issues that the town was having at the time".

John highlighted his religiosity by stating that "God wants to do amazing things", and his way of following this belief was by helping those individuals on a Friday or Saturday night on the streets who need help. John also explained how the underlying aim of the Night Helpers is to "put the gospel into action" by addressing underlying moral problems in society caused by a "binge culture" resulting from "a lack of parenting".

Other actively religious volunteers explained that their reasons for carrying out voluntary work were not based upon a religious consciousness and are instead based on their religious social networks which Park and Smith (2000: 273) described as "the degree of access to other religious adherents". This not only helps to recognise how volunteers understand their volunteering, but also what influences an individual's choice of voluntary organisation. Margaret, a food bank volunteer who previously worked in a social welfare role, explained how she;

> "heard about the food bank through church, so I came to the initial meeting about bringing it to the area and I've been here since the onset, so about three years now".

This account is shared by Linda, a 77 year old serial volunteer, who volunteered with Margaret at the food bank. She further explained that although she attends a different church to Margaret she was made aware of the food bank thanks to social events such as local

church meetings. These accounts by Margaret and Linda support claims by Chapman *et al.* (2010) who suggest that "the motivation to become involved [in volunteering] was a mixture of an interest in the work of the organisation and associated social activities" (2010, p.67).

Husband and Wife team Barry and Janet demonstrated how family can actively encourage volunteer behaviour. Rotolo and Wilson (2006) refer to a theory of volunteering called Complement Theory where it is suggested that "spouses' volunteer work is positively linked" (2006, p.305). Barry and Janet's joint voluntary work with the Young Person's Activity Group started ultimately as a result of other people not volunteering. Whilst the couple are both active church goers their influences for volunteering in the Young Person's Activity Group are not as a result of their social networks linked to their religion, unlike volunteers Margaret, Linda and Dominic. Barry explained that in the past his voluntary work had been linked to his religious beliefs and he stated that;

> "many years ago before we had the kids and when I lived elsewhere I helped run
> a Bible study group on a Sunday evening for young people".

Whilst his voluntary work at an earlier stage in his life was a direct result of him being actively religious, Barry explained that the reason why he currently volunteers is not based on religious attitudes. When Barry was asked in his interview whether his religious beliefs influence his current voluntary work he stated;

> "Funnily enough I wouldn't. Obviously it did with the study group but I don't think
> it does with the Young Person's Activity Group, it's just something I enjoy and
> always have done".

Barry's account of enjoyment from his volunteering experiences is a demonstration of the benefits that can be gained from the social activity. Barry explained that he joined the Young Person's Activity Group 13 years ago as;

> "the village's [group] was going to close, mainly due to lack of adults wanting to
> help so I volunteered myself".

Similarly, Janet, Barry's wife explained that she was influenced to volunteer at the Young Person's Activity Group for the same reasons as Barry although several years later;

> "I got into it because of Barry mainly, but when the [group] first started to let girls join I thought it would be beneficial for them and the group if there was a female helper".

What is interesting to note is that whilst Barry and Janet are actively religious, they understand their volunteering is based on the need of the organisation and not their religiosity.

Another participant in this current research was Dominic a 21 year old volunteer for the Night Helpers. Dominic explained that he had been volunteering for six years in total, however only the last two years have been with the Night Helpers which he heard about through his church. Similarly to Tony, John and Barry, Dominic stated that he saw a need for help which is why he started to volunteer; he explained "I saw help was needed for [the city's] nightlife...so decided to give it a go". Although he is one of the youngest members of the Night Helpers team, Dominic explained that due to his experience in the group he often took on more responsibility during their night patrol. The group's manager and himself, Dominic explained;

> "organise the guys into groups on the night and sort out communication between everyone and the police and just generally make sure the team is safe whilst they're on the streets".

With this responsibility, not only towards the individuals they are there to help, but also with his colleagues in the Night Helpers, I questioned Dominic as to whether he thought his religious beliefs influenced his volunteering. Dominic explained;

> "I don't really know, to be honest. I suppose it has done but not on a conscious level, I think working in a bar and seeing people there has had more of an influence....seeing people drunk, getting into fights....it made me want to help people be safe, but still have a good time and enjoy themselves".

This account by Dominic demonstrates how although his religion did not influence him to volunteer, it is as a result of Dominic's religious social networks that he volunteers for the Night Helpers. Dominic's explanations can also be linked back to the idea of the 'Big Society' where it was stated by the Cabinet Office (2010, p.3) that the strategy would "encourage people to take an active role in their community".

Roy, a retired civil servant, is involved with the food bank as well as being a member of the same church as Margaret and Tony. Roy, unlike the other actively religious volunteers, did not mention his religion during the interview. As well as this Roy was the only individual who was volunteering in their current organisation as a result of volunteering elsewhere first. Roy explained how his route into volunteering at his local food bank was as a result of two factors;

> "I'm a member of the church which is how I came to hear about the food bank, however I initially came to the food bank as a representative of another group I volunteer for".

Whilst Roy only came to the organisation initially on behalf of his other voluntary group, he explained that his decision to continue to volunteer for the food bank was based on the fact that he;

> "saw the work they do and saw how important it was to the local community that there was somewhere where people in need can get help".

This sense of community engagement links to the theory of collective consciousness as proposed by Durkheim *et al.* (2014). Further to this, Roy explained how one of the benefits to volunteering was the "buzz" that he got when he volunteered. Roy explained that this is not in a "smug selfish" way, but by knowing he is able to help the less fortunate people. Roy's explanation can be linked back to the idea of egoism and that, although he actively participates in volunteer work to help others, he acknowledged that he also gained from his actions (Dovidio *et al,* 2006).

<u>Family</u>

One theme which arose several times in interviews was that of family and familial influence with regards to voluntary work. Nesbit's (2012) research suggests that families are the key to successfully socialising individuals into society. This is evident with Margaret and Linda who explained how their voluntary behaviour is a result of both of their mothers influence in their lives. Linda described how;

> "my mother died when I was 11 but I vividly remember that she was always helping other people, even if it was popping in to check on elderly neighbours, and so when my mother died I felt the need to carry on the tradition and be there for people like my mother was".

Similarly Margaret explained;

> "I think my voluntary work runs in the family. You see my mother worked in social welfare and I worked in the same field so I think being prosocial appears to run in the blood".

The personal experiences of these two food bank volunteers share a likeness to the experience of Eddy, a 26 year old volunteer for the Emergency Services. Eddy has volunteered for the Emergency Services since the age of 17 and understood his voluntary behaviour as a sense of duty as a result of his family upbringing and the experiences and influences he had as a young child. Eddy explained how he was influenced to volunteer for the Emergency Services because;

> "Both me dad and granddad were on the same crew since the station opened in 19XX. I think being brought up with this in my life created a sense of importance that I follow their footsteps, so when I was 17 I joined up and have been there ever since".

Nesbit (2012: 2) explained that families can help encourage volunteering;

> "by providing the skills and resources necessary to support volunteering, to motivate family members, and to provide family members with volunteer opportunities".

It is opportunities such as those experienced by Eddy, Margaret and Linda that demonstrate how an individual's social and cultural capital influences their voluntary participation (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The role of family and friends has played an important role in the lives of these volunteers and has ultimately affected the way they account for their voluntary behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

Whilst no other volunteers participating in this research stated that their parents or family were a direct influence in deciding to volunteer, several individuals did mention their family background and upbringing. Young Person's Activity Group volunteers Janet and Barry explained in their interviews that both sets of their parents were avid church goers and when growing up both Janet and Barry had parental connections to a Young Person's Activity

Group. The couple acknowledged that their volunteerism, and particularly choice of organisation, was influenced by their family and upbringing. Janet explained how "as a little girl I was always going to the Young Person's Activity Group", and Barry described how he was brought up with Young Person's Activity Group in his life and that "my grandparents, they lived and breathed it all their lives, right up until their 80s".

Kate, a 36 year old student was another Night Helpers volunteer who was interviewed for the purpose of this research. One aspect of the interview which stood out with Kate was that when questioned about whether her voluntary activity could be linked to her family and background she explained that;

> "I was in care for most of my time as a kid so didn't really have anyone to influence me like that".

Although Kate did not have the typical family environment to influence her like the other volunteers in this research it is hard to believe that she was not influenced by the fact that she was brought up in care. As Nesbit (2012) explains, interaction and socialisation takes place within the household and although Kate did not experience the typical household environment, within a care environment she would have developed an understanding of how to interact with and help others within her community.

Kate did state that although her university application provoked her to join the Night Helpers, she ultimately wanted to get back into the field of work she had done previously. She explained;

> "I,er, decided I wanted to get back to my roots and what I know with helping people with drug and alcohol problems".

Kate understood that the individuals who the Night Helpers help, whether they were people on nights out or homeless, enabled her to interact with members of the public in which other members of the organisation are not able to, and this was witnessed firsthand whilst carrying out this research. For example, whilst on patrol with the Night Helpers I

witnessed Kate actively approaching homeless individuals in doorways asking about their needs and participating in general conversation with them.

The importance of early socialisation and family has been demonstrated effectively by the accounts of volunteers such as Kate, Barry, Janet and Eddy who linked their voluntary work closely to the influence of their parents and how they were brought up. The work of the family environment and how it socialises those within it has been demonstrated to have a huge effect on some of the volunteers interviewed and as a result has gone towards answering my research questions of what do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and choice of volunteer organisation?

Age and Employment

Age was a determining factor in many aspects of volunteering and perhaps most significantly in how it related to the reasons for doing voluntary work and also the type of work carried out. In this research the age of the volunteers played a vital role in the type of volunteering that was carried, out as well as the reasons why these individuals chose to volunteer. Volunteering is used by both young and old volunteers as a commodity which provides a service to not only their daily lives but to their society and community, the differences lie in how volunteering behaviour and accounts vary across the ageing process.

Another participant in this research was a 24 year old student of African descent who had a strong religious belief. Whilst Aaron is both young and religious, he did not link his participation to his religion. Aaron had been volunteering for the Youth Charity for the past year working with young people to help motivate and inspire them. Whilst Aaron was an anomaly in the fact that he was the only individual who participated in a telephone interview, it was possible to hear the passion in his voice. From discussion with Aaron it was evident that his background was a key influence in his volunteering. Aaron explained how he was influenced to volunteer as he;

"grew up on a council estate and had quite a difficult childhood and upbringing but my number one priority is to give back to the community".

And added to this he stated;

"From my past I have learnt that I can make a little difference in the community and this is something that I wish to continue doing. I want to help people like they've helped me".

These accounts by Aaron link to the work by Guo *et al.* (2013) who suggested that social networks gained in a community environment in turn create an interest in "public and civic affairs" and consequently create more interest in volunteering for social change organisations.

Aaron also linked his ethnic background to his voluntary activity. He explained how when he was at school he also volunteered his time towards helping others. He described how he used to volunteer;

"as a mentor working with refugees and asylum seekers, I thought that being from ethnic minorities background I could help others with similar issues".

From this explanation by Aaron it was obvious to see that his voluntary activity was influenced by his strong connection to his ethnic background. Whilst Musick and Wilson's (2008) work was based in the USA they suggested that Blacks are "more likely to be active on behalf of their community than Whites" and it is the idea of making a difference in the community which Aaron referred to in his interview (2008, p.198). He explained how he "loves helping and giving back to the community" and that he has now acknowledged that he is able to make a difference where his community is concerned.

Aaron was very enthusiastic in his narrative about volunteering. Aaron volunteered 10 hours a week for the Youth Charity as well as playing semi-professional and working however, he explained that "I sometimes feel like I should give more but find it difficult". This quote in itself demonstrated the type of dedication Aaron had for his voluntary activity. He also explained how;

"I wish I started volunteering earlier but I lacked confidence and didn't know who or where to go to for support".

This explanation by Aaron revealed the effect of volunteering on a volunteer's life as well as the lives of those being helped. Aaron's enthusiasm in his account of volunteering was also demonstrated in that unlike others interviewed he saw no negative challenges in volunteering.

Low *et al.'s* (2007) research identified how younger volunteers tend to help organisations which are more active, whereas older individuals tended to volunteer for organisations helping the elderly. Whilst this was not necessarily true for the entire sample in this research, both food bank and Night Helpers which focussed on the welfare of individuals were dominated by individuals in the older age brackets. The findings from the current research have shown that there is a relationship between the age of volunteers and the organisation where they volunteer. The research found that young volunteers were more interested in being active volunteers whereas older volunteers were seen to volunteer in less strenuous roles such as those at the food bank.

Furthermore, this current research positively supports the work carried out by Gora and Nemerowicz's (1985) who stated that;

> '[young people] are more likely than older people to take on high adrenalin work,
> such as search and rescue and emergence squad services' (1985, p.26).

An example of this was seen in the three individuals who volunteered for the Emergency Services. As well as Eddy, James, 23, and Mark, 27, both carried out voluntary roles within sections of the Emergency Services. James explained that he understood his volunteering behaviour was based on the desire to better himself and beat the "plain day to day routine of working". Mark also stated similar reasons for volunteering for the Emergency Services, he explained that;

> "the active type of volunteering appealed to me, I suppose the prospect of getting
> an adrenaline rush and something a bit more exciting than say a charity shop".

Similarly, Eddy explained his volunteering was "a bit of fun in addition to his menial job". Each of the three different emergency organisations could be considered to involve physical

and mental activity as well as an element of risk, which when compared to the voluntary activities by older individuals, demonstrated how volunteering behaviour changes through the life course. The accounts by the younger volunteers enabled answers to be drawn to two research questions; the benefits of volunteering are that it beats the day to day menial work and they are influenced to work in the emergency services in particular because of the physical and mental activity that it involved.

When analysing the interviews which were carried out I was able to establish a clear relationship between older volunteers volunteering with the aim of staying "young" and younger volunteers helping out to gain experience for "adult" life. This demonstrated the different benefits volunteers receive from participating in voluntary activities. Three volunteers from the food bank explained that whilst they became volunteers as a result of their religious social networks, they understood their reasons for volunteering as being based upon predominantly social interests with the aim of "feeling young" and being "full of life again" (Flores, 2013). In the interviews carried out with Margaret, Roy and Linda they all stated that their volunteer work was based on the desire for social stimulation. Margaret and Linda both stated in their interview that they volunteered for "social interaction", particularly because of their age. Linda explained that her voluntary role "makes me feel alive, I don't feel like myself when I'm not volunteering, I feel lost". The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995) suggests that;

> "individuals who are motivated by the need to meet people or to make friends were more likely to become regular volunteers".

Additionally, Luks and Payne (2001, XI) suggested that volunteering is linked with improved well-being and that it leads to a 'helpers' high'. This helps to recognise how volunteers understand their volunteering behaviour and suggests that there is a relationship between age and accounts of volunteer work.

Likewise, Roy explained that he understands his voluntary work as a means of gaining "mental stimulation", which he stated is necessary after taking early retirement. He stated that he;

> "could be lazy and stay at home, walk the dog and do crosswords but I need to get out and keep active, keep the mind active".

Roy explained how;

> "after moving to the area I started volunteering for several groups. I realised that I needed to do something which would get me out of the house and enable me to meet new people as my wife and I had come to the area without knowing anyone".

This personal account can be linked not only to Flores' (2013) research which stated that people often take up voluntary work after moving habitual location as a means to "ontological security", but also to Durkheim's (1893) theory of anomie as the voluntary work could be described as being carried out in order to avoid the anomic feeling of loss and loneliness.

Barry, the Young Person's Activity Group leader, explained how he came into his current voluntary role because;

> "The village's first [group] was going to close, mainly due to lack of adults wanting to be leaders, so I volunteered myself, now I see why they didn't want to volunteer!! I suppose in a way it was quite selfish why I started volunteering as I wanted my son to be part of the [group] the only way this would happen is if someone like myself volunteered to be the leader of the group".

Barry's experience of working with the Young Person's Activity Group demonstrates two reasons for his volunteer work. He understands his volunteering as both a sense of duty to the group and also as a means of "staying young and fit". It is answers such as this which could potentially provide an insight into getting more people to volunteer in the United Kingdom.

These views are contrasted by the accounts of the younger volunteers who as well as differing in the type of volunteering carried out, they describe their purpose for volunteering as part of the "growing up" process. The younger members of the research sample such as James and Mark highlighted very instrumental explanations for their volunteering which were

based on future career prospects. Paine *et al.*'s (2013) research into the relationship between volunteering and employability however, argued that there is a lack of evidence to suggest that there is a direct link between volunteering and higher chances of employment. They stated that although;

> "a desire to learn new skills and to help get on in a career have both been recognised as important motivations for volunteering" (Paine *et al.*, 2013, p.5)

there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that volunteering enhances CVs or employability. However, Paine *et al.* (2013) stated that research does suggest that volunteering is only considered truly important by employers if it directly relates to the job role that is being applied for.

Mark, one of the Emergency Service volunteers explained how he understands volunteering as

> "a gateway to a future career and volunteering has given me advancement through the organisation and transferable skills".

This supports the work by Paine *et al.* (2013) who argued that;

> "volunteering is seen to offer participants the chance to develop new skills, extend networks, build CVs, try new vocations and gain experience" (2013, p.3)

This is furthered by James who has only recently started volunteering and explained that he decided to start volunteering as;

> "I'm considering a career in the police so thought that this would be a good way in and I've learnt new and transferable skills which I can take with me into new jobs".

It is these understandings of volunteering that demonstrate how young people are using their voluntary role for the purposes of their career progression and entry into the labour market. Although it was suggested by the younger participants in this research that their volunteer work is used to enhance the CV, research by the Third Sector Research Centre (2013) argued that in fact there is;

> "no positive effect of volunteering on young people's (16-25 year olds) employment, no matter how much they did... and among 26-44 year olds, volunteering had very little effect – either positive or negative – on the chances of moving into employment" (2013, p.11).

What is interesting to understand here is that whilst volunteering may enhance employability skills it does not in itself help an individual to become more employable.

Paine *et al.* (2013) also found that there was no evidence to suggest that volunteering helps people progress in their current career and that in fact with regards to increased wages it can often have a negative effect, although there is no explanation for this. This current research has been unable to support the link between volunteering and employability due to the demographics of my research sample. Whilst four individuals in the sample noted that they were using their voluntary work to improve their employment opportunities, at the time of this research no one had benefitted employment wise through volunteering.

At this stage what is noteworthy is the fact that all the younger individuals who took part in this piece of research were male. There was a particular struggle with finding young females within the organisations that were approached and were willing to participate in the research, although it is unclear whether this was because of the types of voluntary organisations which were targeted. Through informal discussion with Night Helpers several reasons were suggested why younger female volunteers could not be found, these included family commitment, social life and the nature of volunteer organisation. Low *et al's* (2008) research shows that generally females volunteer in an educational setting and due to my sampling strategy this is perhaps a reason I did not encounter any young females in my research.

Kate of the Night Helpers is the youngest female to be interviewed at the age of 36. When questioned about her reasons for volunteering Kate stated that she was hoping it would benefit her as she explained;

> "I'm actually in the process of applying to do mental health nursing at uni so thought it would be good to have community experience".

However, whilst she described this instrumental explanation for her volunteering, she also explained that she has previous experience working with individuals who the Night Helpers help. She described how;

> "Well I, er, got made redundant from my job last year so I had a think about what I could do and I, er, decided I wanted to get back to my roots and what I know with helping people with drug and alcohol problems".

Kate, however, similarly to James, had only been volunteering with the Night Helpers for three months and as a result was able to give a fresh perspective on her accounts of volunteering. When Kate was questioned about her new experiences of volunteering she explained;

> "I really enjoy it so would like to keep going as long as possible, but with uni and having kids you never know. But I'd like to think I'll always be doing some sort of volunteering".

Kate explained that she understood her voluntary work with the Night Helpers was primarily for the purposes of enhancing her experiences for the purpose of self development. Whilst Kate stated that she had "plenty of clinic work to my C.V" she did not have any experience in street level environment. Kate's experiences of volunteering stem from a younger age and she explained how at the age of 19 she volunteered in community groups and charity shops which she described were a way "to help others and meet new people". Despite only volunteering for the Night Helpers for a short period of time it had already made a positive impression on her and she explained that the Night Helpers has been "an eye opener".

Peter a food bank volunteer in his 30s explained how he volunteers as he is unable to participate in paid employment due to his severe disabilities. Peter started volunteering in 2013 and heard about his local food bank as "he likes to keep himself in the know and up to date on everything". He explained that he volunteers as he is unable to participate in paid employment and by volunteering he is able to benefit both physically and mentally as he is able to get out and about as he refuses to be "stuck at home doing nothing". This explanation by Peter links to the IVR (2004, p.10) literature which suggests that volunteering is carried out amongst socially excluded groups 'to combat feelings of personal isolation'.

Although Peter's disability does physically restrict what he is able to do, when I interviewed him he had just completed an Open University degree in Politics and from talking to him, it is Peter's political interest which is the reason behind him volunteering. One strong belief of Peter's was that "there should be a government initiative to have everyone volunteering". This viewpoint of Peter's can be linked to the idea of the Big Society which aims to get individuals involved with helping in their local communities. However, Peter did not expand on how he would implement these initiatives so it is impossible to say that Peter's ideas link directly to those of the Big Society.

Challenges of being a volunteer

For the purposes of the analysis for this research I have grouped together the challenges indentified by a majority of volunteers interviewed as they all shared the same opinion

Despite Barry and Janet volunteering different amounts of time and responsibility, both agreed that commitment is a key issue in their voluntary work. Barry, the 52 year old Young Person's Activity Group Leader, described in his interview that his work with the group;

> "Quite often gets in the way of your personal social life with things like parades and camp at weekends. It's also the meetings that I have to attend, sometimes it's not an issue, others, well.....it is a bit of a chore. The only time I don't have to think about what to do with the group is during the school holidays, but even then I am planning for the next term".

This same opinion was held by Barry's wife, Janet. Janet finds volunteering particularly an issue when it is being balanced with a demanding full time job and home life. When asked how often she volunteered she replied "as little as possible" and her explanation for this was;

> "the regular commitment that is expected from you as a volunteer and no financial reward, not that that's what I want, but sometimes you are taken for granted. It's extremely time consuming with the extra activities which are expected from you, and having a full time job, it means I have to use my own personal holiday allowance to take the kids on camp. It's like having a second job but you don't get chuffin' paid".

In a separate conversation after the interview, which they agreed could be used as part of this research, both Janet and Barry explained how they felt like parents were using the

Young Person's Activity Group as "child minders". They explained how parents drop off their children whilst they go to the pub and relax after work, and that the Young Person's Activity Group is no longer seen as a way to improve their child's cultural and social capital.

This explanation of Janet's voluntary behaviour and recent decline in commitment is supported by Rochester *et al.* (2012) who, along with Low *et al.* (2007) talk about how volunteers are complaining about how volunteering is becoming too much like paid work. They explain how the formalisation of volunteering and its development into a business-like structure has resulted in a "'loss of informality, flexibility...and social interaction" (Rochester *et al.*, 2012: 228) amongst volunteers, and as a result there is an increase in volunteers, such as Janet, becoming detached from their voluntary role. Leonard *et al.* (2004, cited in Rochester *et al.*2012: 228) suggest that these changes to the experiences of volunteering are "alienating" volunteers like Janet and Barry, leading them to "question their ongoing involvement".

Whilst Roy expressed his enjoyment in volunteering he also stated that due to his ill health he has had to acknowledge the fact that perhaps he is doing too much work, as he stated "I do too much, more work than when I was employed and getting paid for it!" This supports Janet's view who explained how she sometimes feels like volunteering is like a full time job. Similarly, Margaret expressed in her interview that she was no longer able to commit to her voluntary work as much as she used to as her "health is not brilliant". This is interesting as Peter who volunteers alongside Roy and Margaret is severely disabled and contradicts researchers, such as Musick and Wilson (2008), who suggest that disabled people tend not to volunteer because of their ill health. In contrast, Peter believes that the act of volunteering 'is something that should be done' and that "people should have time or make time to volunteer and help others who need it". This links to the idea by Rochester *et al.* (2012) who discuss the idea of employer-supported volunteers where employers;

> "encourage volunteering by their staff as a part of their approach to corporate social responsibility; as a means of developing the experience and skills of their employees; and as a series of opportunities for team building" (2012, p.32)

This view expressed by Peter is perhaps a significant issue to be addressed if linking voluntary work to public policy.

Eddy also explained that although he thoroughly enjoys the voluntary work that he carries out one of the challenges is that he is often frustrated by the high level of volunteer commitment the emergency services relies upon. He stated that he has to ensure that he is available at all times of the day as he is always on call. Eddy described how "if me and my girlfriend want to go out of town...it relies on there bein' enough crew available". As well as this he also explained how;

> "the other week it was my daughter's second birthday party and I ended up missing half of it 'cos [the crew] got called out".

It is this kind of commitment which calls into question why people, who face issues as described above, still volunteer.

This analysis of the interviews has demonstrated that there are close links between not only religion and volunteering, but age and family as well. Whilst the results have revealed that religion does play a role in why individuals volunteer, they also show how volunteers also understand that their religious socialisation influences their volunteering rather than religious beliefs. The role of the family, particularly parents, and their socio-cultural habitus has also had a significant influence on volunteer's actions and choice of volunteer organisations (Nesbit, 2012).

Chapter Five

Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the points of discussion developed throughout the study address the aim of the thesis and its research questions. The aim of the thesis was to explore volunteers' accounts of their volunteering behaviour. To enable this aim to be successfully achieved there were three fundamental questions that focussed the study;

- How do volunteers understand their volunteering?

- What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice to volunteer organisations?

- What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer?

To answer these research questions a piece of empirical qualitative work was undertaken with a number of formal volunteers in Yorkshire. A purposive sample was implemented to ensure that the volunteers chosen held particular characteristics of the population of interest, which would ultimately enable the research questions to be answered. The research sample included volunteers varying in their age, gender and employment status. As well as this, the organisations where the sample undertook their voluntary activities varied and included social welfare groups, youth groups and emergency services. Overall, 14 interviews took place within seven voluntary led organisations over a period of two months.

The topic of volunteering is something that is becoming increasingly researched by sociologists as a means of understanding the role and work of volunteers. The literature review demonstrated that, despite the interest in the voluntary sector, there has been little attention paid to the undertaking of research with a qualitative methodology which considers volunteers as more than statistics. The qualitative literature that was used in this thesis was generally found to be American with the research based on American volunteers (Musick

and Wilson, 2008; Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). In comparison, a look at the UK research found much of it to be based on a quantitative methodology which did not provide the in-depth analysis needed to understand personal feelings and accounts of volunteering (NCVO, 2014; Low *et al.,* 2007).

By undertaking a qualitative research methodology this current research enables a deeper understanding of the motivations and influences of volunteers to be gathered which is lacking in the third sector research field. The use of an interpretativist epistemological approach in this research yields rich data in the words of volunteers and the meaning they make of their volunteering. This allows an appreciation of the accounts of volunteers as "a social construction rather than one that is objectively determined" (Carson *et al.*, 2001, p.5). However, caution should be exercised in using this approach as findings should not be generalised to the broader field of motivations for volunteering (Bryman, 1988).

‘How do volunteers understand their volunteering?’

The findings of this research reveal how the volunteer's accounts demonstrate how religion is constructed as an important influence in volunteering. Individuals throughout the research were open about their religious beliefs and were happy to acknowledge that their religion played an important role in their decision to volunteer. It was found that volunteers who saw themselves as being religious often understood their voluntary work as being influenced by their religious belief. Reasons such as "god wants us to do amazing things", and "it is something that should be done", were given by volunteers from separate organisations as to reasons for their individual volunteering purposes. Furthermore, several other participants in the research explained how their initial step into a voluntary role was based on their religious upbringing and their activity in the church scene from an early age. These findings confirm the earlier work by Musick and Wilson (2008, p.8) which stated that "helping others" is a way that people can demonstrate their religious beliefs. Other volunteers who did not believe

their volunteering to be linked to religion explained how they understood their volunteering as a sense of duty towards a cause and for personal gains such as career progression.

'What do volunteers think are the influences on their volunteering and their choice of volunteer organisation?'

An interesting finding that emerged when answering the second research question was that answers were generally dependent upon the volunteer's age. The reason for asking this question, as well as it being under researched, was because of its possible importance to the recruitment of volunteers. Several areas were highlighted as being influential in an individual's choice to volunteer and also for volunteering in a particular organisation. The first and possibly biggest influence was once again religion. It is interesting to note however, that religiosity was not necessarily an influence, but rather religious socialisation and religious social networks. Many of the volunteers stated in their interviews that they either heard about or were introduced to their current organisation because of their and its links to the church.

Another influence which came across in the interviews was family and upbringing. Volunteers across the study had either come from families where helping others played a large part in their lives or their parents or grandparents had volunteered before them. For some individuals their mother's jobs in social welfare sparked their interest in helping people who the welfare system was failing, for others they were the third generation of their family to volunteer within that particular organisation. These findings from the interviews corroborate Nesbit's (2012: 16) suggestion that "as an institution, the household provides strong support for volunteering". Through the support of the family and household a sense of identity is established which encourages a sense of community and social responsibility.

A further explanation that was given by volunteers as being both an influence for volunteering and the choice of voluntary organisation was career progression. Four of the younger volunteers in this piece of research described how their voluntary participation was

linked to employment and possible future career progression. The volunteers explained how they were influenced to volunteer in the hope that by having voluntary experience it would enhance their CV. As well as this, their choice in voluntary organisation was based on their preferred career, which in the case of these volunteers was the Emergency Services and social welfare.

'**What do volunteers think are the benefits and challenges of being a volunteer?'**

Older volunteers were found to relate the benefits they get from volunteering to the idea of keeping fit, active and staying young, whereas the younger volunteers on a whole explained how they aim to benefit career wise from their volunteering. Volunteers from the local food bank, Night Helpers and the Young Person's Activity Group gave reasons such as "it makes me feel young", it "keeps the mind active" and "it makes me feel alive" as to the benefits of volunteering whereas the explanations from the younger volunteers were much more instrumental. The young volunteers from the emergency services explained how they hope to benefit from their voluntary work through their career and job progression. "A gateway to a future career", "transferable skills" and "experience" were all listed by the three Emergency Services volunteers as how they benefit through carrying out their volunteer work. Despite the work carried out by Paine *et al.* (2013) demonstrating the weak link between volunteering and increased employability, it is interesting to see that individuals still believe that by giving their free time they will benefit in their later career.

As well as the benefits gained from volunteering this piece of research also found there to be a significant challenge that is faced by many volunteers. This challenge was that of the commitment expected of the volunteers by their organisations. Many volunteers explained how although they generally enjoyed their volunteering experience they found that it impinged on their personal lives more than they wanted it to. Two volunteers explained how their voluntary role resembles a full time job without the financial gain, whilst another explained how he is missing out on important family events as a result of his volunteering.

However, although the volunteers highlighted these challenges it did not stop their volunteering activities.

Limitations

Whilst this research was successful in that it was completed smoothly and answered the three research questions it set out to answer, there are limitations to the study. The project was restricted by the scale on which the research was carried out. By limiting the scale of the research it restricted the amount of organisations that were approached as well as the range of individuals interviewed. Due to ethical considerations the age range of volunteers participating in the research was capped to those over the age of 18, by doing this the research neglected a possibly significant demographic in the field of voluntary research.

Furthermore, despite the sampling method being purposive there was a difficulty in the recruitment of young female volunteers to participate in the research. Another limitation in the research was that it was restricted to organisations within Yorkshire. In restricting the geographical research area it also limited the demographics of the sample, and meant that one issue was that only one participant in the research was of an ethnic minority background. Ideally, the geographical area of the research would have been expanded in the hope that by doing this a more varied sample could have been sought.

Recommendations

Given the accounts of volunteering demonstrated in this current piece of research the evidence has suggested that there needs to be an acknowledgement of the work volunteers carry out on a day to day basis. What was discovered by interviewing volunteers for this research was that whilst the volunteers enjoy the work they do there is also a lot of negativity surrounding the amount of commitment expected when volunteering. This research implies that there needs to be an increased amount of help given to volunteers and that policy should be implemented to work with volunteers ensuring that they feel supported in the role

they carry out. Since this research has been carried out the Conservative Party has announced in their 2015 General Election Manifesto that people working in big businesses and in the Third Sector will be given three days of Volunteer Leave per year, on full pay (BBC, 2015). Whilst this is a step in the right direction it does not benefit many of the volunteers who participated in this research as those in work were either employed part time or by small businesses who would not provide the time off for volunteer work.

Further research in the field of volunteering would allow for the expansion of this current piece of work. It would be interesting to undertake a larger piece of qualitative research which would be carried out throughout the United Kingdom. By doing this it would enable a wider demographic of individuals to be interviewed resulting in other religions, ethnicities and voluntary organisations being involved in the research. To fully understand how volunteering changes over the life course a longitudinal piece of research would need to be carried out over a number of years.

Appendix A

In order to gain an understanding of the voluntary organisations used in this research a list and brief description of each organisation follows.

Local Food Bank

This organisation aims at providing individuals struggling to provide for themselves or their family with food. The group emphasises that they act as a short term solution for those going hungry, usually as a result of benefit changes or delays and unemployment. The organisation relies on donations of food from the public to enable them to give out bag of food to those people in need. The centre I visited was based in a church hall in a small, close-knit town. On my visit to the centre I was given a warm welcome by the volunteers and given a tour of their premises which consisted of a waiting room where individuals can pop in for a coffee and chat, and then two warehouses behind the scenes where all donated food is kept ready to be bagged up and distributed.

Night Helpers

This organisation was established in 2008, however the particular base where I visited was not introduced into the local area until 2012. The organisation is predominantly Christian based and within the group you find it is main made up of individuals with a strong religious attitude, having said this there were non-religious individuals who also formed part of the charity. The aim of the organisation is to patrol the streets of UK towns and cities with the plan of looking after individuals on a night out who may need their help, whether they are giving out plasters, water or waiting with them for a taxi, their aim is to ensure individuals have a safe night out.

Young Person's Activity Group

This charitable group has been well established for many decades now and provides activities and experiences for all individuals aged between 6 and 25 years old whilst also encouraging them to actively help their communities. Within this organisation the young participants can take part in activities ranging from kayaking to survival skills to first aid. The volunteers within this organisation are trained to develop skills in order for them to be able to then teach and educate the young participants.

Emergency Services

Individuals from three differing Emergency Services participated in this research. The three services are based all over the United Kingdom and rely on the help of their many thousands of volunteers. The services that each organisation carries out are all very similar in that their aim is to provide emergency care to, and ensure the safety of, members of the public. The organisations recruit volunteers from a range of backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, age and social class.

Youth Charity

The organisation is a youth charity that aims to help change young people's lives. The charity supports young people aged between 13 and 30 years old who are at disadvantage whether it is due to unemployment, school issues or they are at risk of exclusion. Many individuals who this charity deal with have been at care at some point in their life, have experiences homelessness, have mental health issues or have been in trouble with the law. The aim of the charity is to give these young people the support and encouragement to improve their practical and financial skills which consequently improve their lives as a whole. Since being established in 1976 the charity has helped 750,000 young people.

Appendix B

Dear Volunteer,

I am a Master's student at the University of York where I am undertaking a piece of research which aims to explore and understand individual's accounts of their voluntary work. You are being invited to take part in this research as your views and insight into the voluntary sector is vital for this research. Before deciding whether or not to take part in this study it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information.

The purpose of this piece of research is to gain an understanding into the reasons and motivating factors behind individuals who volunteer their time to voluntary organisations. The study is to be completed by October 2014 with the fieldwork taking place over three months (February – May 2014). As part of the study I will be holding one-on-one interviews with volunteers from different organisations to help me with my research.

Being part of this research is entirely voluntary and there is no pressure on you to agree to be part of the sample for this research. Please take this information sheet if you wish to consider taking part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be free to withdraw you consent at any time without reason during the course of the research.

If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to take part in a short interview with myself at a convenient time and location.

Please be aware that if you do take part in the study your details and all the data collected as part of the research project will be strictly confidential and will only be available to myself, the researcher.

If you wish to take part in the study please complete and sign a consent form attached to this letter.

If you have any questions or queries please feel free to contact me at

Email: hrb507@york.ac.uk

Thank you for taking your time to read this information sheet.

Yours Sincerely

Hannah Blake

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

How do volunteers account for their voluntary behaviour?

Researcher: **Supervisor:**

Hannah Blake   Dr Nathan Manning

Department of Sociology

University of York

Heslington

York

YO10 5DD

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study 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 study.	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) may be used for future research.	☐

Yes   No

I agree to the interview / focus group being audio recorded ☐   ☐

☐   ☐

I agree to taking part in an interview ☐   ☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix D

Interview Guide

- How long have you been volunteering?
- How often do you volunteer? Would you do more if you could?
- What made you start volunteering?
- What do you get out of volunteering? Are there any negatives to volunteering?
- Would you encourage other people to volunteer?
- Do you volunteer for more than one place?
- Have your reasons for volunteering changed since you started?
- Do you think it matters why people volunteer?
- Are you in paid employment as well as volunteering?
- Did the social aspect of volunteering encourage you to start helping others?
- Have any of you ever been on the receiving end of voluntary help?
- Do you give money on a regular basis to charities?

Reference List

Literature

Adams, J; Kahn, H; Raeside, R; White, D (2007) *Research Methods for Graduate Business and Social Science Students.* SAGE. London.

Babbie, E (2010). *The Practice of Social Research.* WADSWORTH CENGAGE Learning. California.

Bandura, A (1977). *Social Learning Theory.* General Learning Press. New York.

Bell, J. (1991). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science.* Open University Press. Bristol.

Bierhoff, H. W. (2002). *Prosocial behaviour.* Psychology Press. East Sussex.

Boeije, H (2010) *Analysis in Qualitative Research.* SAGE. London.

Bourdieu, P and Wacquant, L (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Polity Press.

Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research.* Routledge. London

Carson, D; Gilmore, A; Perry, C; Gronhoug, K. (2001) *Qualitative Marketing Research.* SAGE. London

Cohen, L; Manion, L; Morrison, K. (2011) *Research Methods in Education.* Routledge. Abingdon.

Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (2005) The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. SAGE. California.

Dovidio, J., Piliavin, J., Schroeder, D. and Penner, L. (2006). *The Social Psychology of Prosocial Behaviour.* Psychology Press. Mahwah, New Jersey.

Durkheim, E; Lukes, S; Halls, W.D (2014) *The Division of Labour in Society*. Palgrave Macmillan. London.

Gilbert, N. (2001) *Researching Social Life.* SAGE Publications. London

Gora, J and Nemerowicz, G (1985) *Emergency Squad Volunteers: Professionalism in unpaid work*. Praeger. New York.

Gorard, S. and Taylor, C. (2004). *Combining Methods in Educational Research.* Open University Press. Maidenhead

Handy, F., Cnaan, R,. Brudney, J,. Ascoli, U,. and Mejis, L. (2000). *Public Perception of "Who is a Volunteer": An Examination of the Net-cost Approach from a Cross-Cultural Perspective.* University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons.

Henslin, J. (1999) *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. 10th edn. New York: Free Press.

Hinde, R. and Groebel, J. (1991). *Cooperation and Prosocial Behaviour.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Horne, J., Tomlinson, A. & Whannel, G. (1999). *Understanding Sport: An Introduction to the Sociological and Cultural Analysis of Sport.* Routledge. London.

Institute for Volunteering Research. (2004). *Volunteering for All. Volunteering and Social Exclusion.* Volunteering England.

Luks, A & Payne, P (2001) *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others.* iUniverse. Lincoln, New England.

Markula, P & Silk, M (2011) *Qualitative Research for Physical Culture.* Palgrave MacMillan. Basingstoke.

Marshall, C & Rossman, G (2010) *Designing Qualitative Research.* SAGE. Singapore.

McNeill, P. (1994). *Research Methods.* Routledge. London.

Musick, M. A., and Wilson, J. (2008). *Volunteers a social profile.* Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Neuman, W.L (2005) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* Pearson. Michigan.

Oakley, A (1979) *Becoming a Mother.* Schocken Books. New York.

O'Leary, Z. (2012) *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project.* SAGE. London.

Oliver, P. (2010) *Understanding the Research Process.* SAGE. London.

Osborne, S.P & Ball, A. (2010) *Social Accounting and Public Management: Accountability for the Public Good.* Routledge. New York.

Remler, D.K & Van Ryzin, G.G (2010) *Research Methods in Practice.* SAGE. London.

Rochester, C; Ellis Paine, A; Howlett, S. (2012) *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century.* Palgrave Macmillan. Basingstoke.

Shermon, G (2004). *Competency based HRM: A strategic resource for competency mapping, assessment and development centres.* McGraw Hill Education. New Delhi.

Thomas, G. (2013). *How To Do Your Research Project: A Guide for Students in Education and Applied Social Sciences.* SAGE. London.

Wellington, J.J. (1996). *Methods and Issues in Educational Research.* University of Sheffield Division of Education.

Articles and Journals

Brodie, E; Cowling, E; Nissen, N; Ellis Paine, A; Jochum, V; Warburton, D (2009). *Understanding Participation: A Literature Review*. National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Bussell, H and Forbes, D (2002) *Understanding the volunteer market: The what, where, who and why of volunteering'*. International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 7 (3), pp.244-257.

Chambré, S.M. (1984). *Is Volunteering a Substitute for Role Loss in Old Age? An Empirical Test of Activity Theory.* The Gentrologist. Volume 24, pp. 292-298

Chapman, T; Robinson, F; Brown, J; Crow, R; Bell, V; Bailey, E (2010). *What makes a Third Sector Organisation Tick? Interactions of foresight, enterprise, capability and impact.* Northern Rock Foundation

Cordon, A and Ellis Paine, A. (2004) *Volunteering and employability: exploring the link for incapacity benefits recipients.* The Journal of Poverty and Social Justice. Volume 12, Number 2, pp. 112-118(7)

Cox, A (2011). *Age of Opportunity: Older People, Volunteering and The Big Society, R*esPublica

Department for Communities and Local Government and Ipsos MORI, *Citizenship Survey, 2008-2009.* Colchester, Essex

Einolf, C (2010) *Gender Differences in the Correlates of Volunteering and Charitable Giving.* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. pp.1-21

Ellis Paine, A; McKay, S; Moro D. (2013) *Does Volunteering Improve Employability? Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey.* Third Sector Research Centre.

Flores, R. (2013). *From Personal Troubles to Public Compassion: Charity Shop Volunteering as a Practice of Care.* The Sociological Review. Volume 62, Issue 2, pp.383–399

Foster-Bey, J (2008). *Do Race, Ethnicity, Citizenship and Socio-economic Status Determine Civic-Engagement?* Corporation for National & Community Service

Guo, C; Webb, N; Abzug, R; Peck, L (2013). *Religious Affiliation, Religious Attendance, and Participation in Social Change Organizations.* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 42(I) pp 34-58.

Harflett, N (2011) *The Role of Voluntary Organisations in Implementing Government Volunteering Policy.* Social Policy Association Conference.

Home Office (2005). *'Volunteering: Compact Code of Good Practice'.* London: Home Office

Hustinx, L. (2010*). I Quit, Therefore I Am?: Volunteer Turnover and the Politics of Self-Actualization.* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 39, pp. 236-255.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995) *The Determinants of Volunteering.* Social Policy Research, 95.

Kamerāde, D., Ellis Paine, A. (2014). *Volunteering and employability: implications for policy and practice*. Voluntary Sector Review, 5(2), 259-273

Kay, T & Bradbury, S. (2009) *Youth Sport Volunteering: Developing Social Capital?* Sport, Education and Society. Volume 14, Number 1, February 2009, pp. 121-140

Low, N., Butt, S., Paine, A. E. and Smith, J.D. (2007). *Helping Out – A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving.* Cabinet Office.

McCulloch, A (2014). *Cohort Variations in the Membership of Voluntary Associations in Great Britain, 1991-2007.* Sociology, 0, pp. 1-19

McCulloch, A; Mohan, J; Smith P. (2011) *Patterns of social capital, voluntary activity, and area deprivation in England.* Environment and Planning. Vol 44, pp. 1130-1147.

Morrow, V & Richards, M. (1996) *The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview.* Children and Society. Volume 10, pp. 90-105

Nesbit, R (2012) *The Influence of Family and Household Members on Individual Volunteer Choices.* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, pp. 1-21

Park, J & Smith, C (2000). *"To Whom Much Has Been Given..."Religious Capital and Community Volunteerism Among Churchgoing Protestants.* Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39, pp. 272–286.

Rotolo, T. and Wilson, J. (2006), *Substitute or Complement? Spousal Influence on Volunteering. Journal of Marriage and Family.* Journal of Marriage and Family Journal of Marriage and Family, Volume 68, Issue 2, pp. 305–319.

Saxton, J (2015) *Men overtake women as volunteer numbers return to highest in decade.* NFP Synergy.

Searle-Chatterjee, M (1999). *Occupation, Biography and New Social Movements.* The Sociological Review. Vol 47, 2, pp. 258-279.

Simpson, B. and Willer, R. (2008). *Altruism and Indirect Reciprocity: The Interaction of Person and Situation in Prosocial Behavior.* Social Psychology Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1, pg. 37-52.

The Civil Exchange. (2012). *The Big Society Audit.* The Civil Exchange.

Third Sector Research Centre (2013). *Informing Civil Society: The work of the Third Sector Research Centre 2008-2011.* TSRC

Wang, L and Graddy, E (2008). *Social Capital, Volunteering and Charitable Giving.* Voluntas, 19, pp 23-42.

Wiles, R; Crow, G; Heath, S; Charles, V (2006). *Anonymity and Confidentiality.* University of Southampton. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.

Wilson, J. (2000). *Volunteering.* Annual Review of Sociology, Volume 26, pp 215-240

Websites

BBC (2015) *Election 2015: Conservative Manifesto at a glance.* Available:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2015-32302062 [Accessed: 24 April 2015]

Boyce, N (2015). *Overhaul for Definition of Volunteering in Australia.* Available:
http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2015/03/overhaul-definition-volunteering-
australia# [Accessed: 12 March 2015]

Cabinet Office (2010) *Building The Big Society.* Available:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78979/building
-big-society_0.pdf [Accessed: 12 September 2014]

Institute for Volunteering Research (2008/9) *Volunteering Statistics.* Available:
http://www.ivr.org.uk/ivr-volunteering-stats [Accessed: 22 August 2014]

Jackson, R (2015) *Is our definition of volunteering out of date?* Available:
http://robjackson.thirdsector.co.uk/2015/03/11/is-our-definition-of-volunteering-out-of-date/
[Accessed: 2 April 2015]

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2012/13) *UK Civil Society Almanac.* Available:
http://data.ncvo.org.uk/ [Accessed: 19 March 2015]

Pudelek, J (2013). *Survey shows rise in proportion of people volunteering after six years of
decline.*   Available: http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/survey-shows-rise-proportion-people-
volunteering-six-years-decline/policy-and-politics/article/1170654 [Accessed: 28 April 2015]

Reyes, S. (2014) *Reliance on Unpaid Volunteers is Turning Public Museums into a Middle
Class Commodity.* The New Statesman. Available:
http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/09/reliance-unpaid-volunteers-turning-public-
museums-middle-class-commodity [Accessed: 20 September 2014]

Social Theory Re-Wired (2011) *Habitus.* Routledge. Available:
http://theory.routledgesoc.com/category/profile-tags/habitus [Accessed: 20 September 2014]

The Trussell Trust (2014) Stats. Available: http://www.trusselltrust.org/stats. [4 May 2014]

Your Skipper (2013) *Street Angels - Operational Report 2013.* Available:
http://yourskipper.co.uk/streetangels-new/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Street-Angels-2013-
report.pdf [Accessed: 24 October 2014]

Vandenberghe, F. (1999). *Globalisation and Individualisation in Late Modernity. A
Theoretical Introduction to the Sociology of Youth.* Academia.edu. Available:
https://www.academia.edu/859728/Globalisation_and_Individualisation_in_Late_Modernity._
A_Theoretical_Introduction_to_the_Sociology_of_Youth [Accessed: 27 October 2014]

Volunteering England (2008) *Definitions of Volunteering.* Volunteering England. Available:
http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/definitions-of-volunteering [Accessed: 6 June
2014]