Volunteerism in the Inner City:
An Anthropology of Giving

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I, Tomoko Hayakawa, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic account of British volunteering. While volunteering has been researched from multiple disciplinary perspectives, few studies are concerned with the in-depth analysis of the experience of volunteering. This thesis deploys anthropological theory and methods to seek such an analysis.

Amongst volunteers, organisations and policy-makers the idiom of the gift and gift exchange is commonly employed to define volunteering and the social benefits it is said to create such as social capital, community, and civil society. Yet gift exchange theory, which has developed largely in anthropological studies of non-western societies, posits that a gift demands a reciprocal gift to fulfil its social roles. By examining volunteering as a social act of ‘giving’, the thesis seeks to problematise volunteering in contemporary western society from such a non-western point of view. The research explores the ambiguities and contradictions that inhere in ‘giving without a return’, in a modern urban setting where most of the social relations established through volunteering could be equally well provided through paid workers and social services.

Following reviews of the gift and British Social Policy, I explore volunteering under five themes; volunteering motivations, volunteering relationships, the perception and function of money and professionalism, and volunteering’s significance for social solidarity.

The in-depth analysis reveals that volunteering does not fit into a traditional model of gift exchange. It exists in an ambiguous zone between exchange and the gift, commercial market and one-sided giving, public and private: it conflates spheres which are conventionally conceived of as being in opposition. Within a complex organisational context, there is a constant process of negotiation of meaning. The idea of volunteering is
as mystified as that of the perfect gift or of money, and the study of volunteering needs to explore the processes through which it is appropriated, culturally and in practice.
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Preface: ‘Friday is the day when loneliness starts’

Helen was in her late fifties. She had volunteered for old people on a weekly basis for two years by the time I met her. She was one of few volunteers I managed to conduct an interview with. The interview was carried out at her place at her request. Helen lived on her own with a large old dog in a ground floor flat of a council estate building in a poor neighbourhood. She was unemployed and lived on state benefit. At my arrival, she opened the door and led me through a narrow corridor to a living room. The place was dark, musty, full of the smell of the dog, and cluttered with paper, clothes, and hundreds of small things pushed aside covered with thick dust which indicated years of neglect. I sat down on a sofa as she suggested and waited for her to put a thick iron chain on the dog and take him into a corridor where it kept barking loudly. I looked around and noticed tens of large photos on the wall. ‘That’s me…and my daughter’, said Helen. ‘Most of them are from my twenties. I was beautiful and so slim, you see? I was a model…’. She told me how extravagant her life was as a model and later as a businesswoman: ‘there’s nothing comparable to now’. ‘But it all went wrong’.

The very beginning of her volunteering was three years ago. A man from a local church visited her and left a brochure. It was a part of their neighbourhood project. Helen was under depression after she lost her only daughter to cancer. She would have been my age if she had lived. Soon after, an American woman from the church started visiting her every week.

It was no pill, no medicine. She was just being there for me. I lost my husband twenty years ago for a car accident. And then my daughter. She was everything to me. Ellie (the volunteer) came every week and we
talked...She never gave up on me...In this country, different hospitals treat people differently. There is a lack of support, and you are left alone...And if you are alone, you get afraid of Friday because you feel lonelier after Friday...everything is closed, and people are spending time with their family. It’s so quiet...you really feel you have nobody for you.

After Ellie left the country, her friends took over her role and they kept in contact by mail. Helen then started volunteering to do something for other people as she felt ‘we all need some hope’. Her relation to service users was however, ‘never a friendship’. Helen said she learnt it by experience. When she volunteered for a 93 year old woman, Betty, she talked to her on the phone every Wednesday. Betty was partially sighted, and had no children. Helen became very close to Betty and she started to feel that ‘we were there for each other’. The feeling was, however, ‘betrayed’ after a while.

I called her one day as usual. Nobody answered. I called her so many times. For three days, there was no answer. I was hysterical. She was apparently at the hospital, but nobody bothered to phone me. I was so upset, felt like nobody. I deserved better than that.

Helen stopped volunteering for Betty and started volunteering for another 86 year old man. This time, she had a ‘proper connection’. Even though Helen felt that he was becoming emotionally dependent on her, she was ‘just a friend over the phone’.

We never met. He suggested (to meet), but I said no. There is no intimacy. There is a border you have to keep. Intimate thing doesn’t help you if you are a volunteer...I want to do it as long as I can but I had to have some lessons.
When I left her flat, she gave me a candy at the door and told me to come back at anytime. I thanked her for her cooperation and warm welcome. ‘It’s funny that we never met before (at the organisation). Maybe, next time’. A few months later, I once saw Helen volunteering as a receptionist at an event. We recognised each other at a distance but didn’t talk as a visitor approached her for an enquiry.
Chapter 1  Introduction

This thesis is about volunteers. It is about individuals who supported others through an organisation. The story of Helen reflects many aspects of volunteering I will discuss throughout my thesis. Like Helen, volunteers had a story to tell and these stories were not just about themselves. They were also about others whom they cared for, whom they worked with, their friends, families and neighbours.

Why do people volunteer? What does it mean to be involved in volunteering? What is the difference between supporting strangers through an organisation and helping friends and family? What does it mean to be a stranger in a city? These are the questions I kept wondering during my fieldwork. I wanted to learn about these individuals and the environment they were in.

By listening to and working with volunteers, I tried to understand how people lived in various circumstances in an urban environment. I also learnt that volunteering did not stand by itself. Its experience was constructed in context: there were a number of elements which affected both the form and meaning of volunteering. Helen's story is an illustration of socio-cultural constructs of volunteering as well as her personal experience. The way she started volunteering, the feeling she had for the service users, and the 'lesson' she had to have in order for her to keep on going, all shed light on characteristics of volunteering that made me consider broader issues of its context.

The title of this study, 'volunteerism in the inner city: an Anthropology of giving' stands for the scope of my research which aims at exploring an experience of volunteering and the prevailing socio-cultural factors which influence the social understanding of this particular act of giving.
Volunteering and formally organised voluntary action have a long history in Britain (Kendall and Knapp 1996). Currently, there are a number of different definitions of the ‘voluntary sector’ and ‘volunteering’ and nearly 190,000 organisations have legally registered in England and Wales (Lewis 2005). The area of activity is also very diverse and covers social and health service, criminal justice, education, employment, cultural and leisure activities, development and environmental activities (Active Community Unit 2000).

In the British context, ‘volunteering’ generally refers to any activity based on either ‘non-profit’ or ‘free-will’, and it includes wide varieties from a formal volunteering through an institution to an informal volunteering in a self-help community (Davis-Smith 1992, Rochester 1992).

As a socially distinct phenomenon, volunteering has been a study subject of various academic disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, psychology, economics and social policy. However, few studies are concerned with the in-depth analysis of the experience of volunteering, and little has been explored in anthropology (cf. Lewis D. 1999). This study deploys anthropological theory and methods to seek such analysis.

Volunteering is indeed, a highly cultural activity. Titmuss (1970), in his comparative study of blood donation in Britain and America, claims the morality of giving is crucial to the patterns of giving, the quality of donated blood, and social policy of each country. Such a perspective is also shared by a more recent work by Wright (2002) which illustrates how the words ‘charity’ and ‘philanthropy’ are perceived differently and hence practiced differently in the two countries. These studies indicate the need of more holistic approach for a better understanding of volunteering. Following such an objective, I have tried to explore the totality of volunteering practice through ethnographic fieldwork.
The fieldwork was carried out in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London. As I will describe the details in the following section (4.2), the Borough is characterised by its active involvement in voluntary work and community projects. It also distinguishes itself from other London Boroughs such as those in East London which have been well studied, regarding its ethnic composition, the density of its population, the residents' income levels, crime and deprivation levels and social needs. Unlike a prevailing image of wealth that is attached to this borough, it contains several wards which are recognised as the most deprived in the country. There are also increasing number of ethnic minorities and migrants. The sharp contrasts between the poorest and the wealthiest, long-time British residents and newly arrived residents of various nationalities, and an increasing population of the elderly and young professionals and students, are remarkable.

Voluntary organisations are considered to play a pivotal role in such environment by the local authority and the stake holders.

Inevitably, this study involves multi-level analysis of volunteering: theoretical pursuit of giving of which rich literature we find in anthropological theory of gift exchange (Chapter 2), politico-ideological construction of volunteering that reflects on the discourse of social policy (Chapter 3), and the practice of volunteering on the ground level through which I also explore the previous two levels of analysis (Chapter 5-10). The data I present are based on the case study which is context specific. This research, therefore, may not reflect all types of volunteering in Britain. Nevertheless, by applying the in-depth analysis of these cases to examine the theories of the gift and gift exchange, this thesis contributes to the more general discussion/understanding of giving and receiving in volunteering.
This study is especially concerned with volunteers as the main actor of voluntary activity, yet it also looks at paid workers and service users in the volunteers’ perspective.

The contexts of volunteering I have paid particular attention to are the organisational and inner city environment. As for the former, the intervention of the government affects not only the financial and political situation of voluntary organisations, but also the actual voluntary activities. My MSc. dissertation (Hayakawa 2001), for which I carried out interviews with volunteers, has revealed some aspects of the influence of a voluntary organisation on volunteers: the meaning and form of giving appear greatly affected by the organisational policy. As I will illustrate in the case studies in the following chapters, organisational management is not merely about arranging meetings, making financial reports and recruiting volunteers but also about setting norms, training people and establishing consensus amongst paid workers, volunteers and service users. These practices establish a peculiar way of understanding and practicing volunteering activities within the organisational context. In this respect, I am seeking to understand voluntary organisation as a culturally specific phenomenon (cf. Wright 1994a.b.). The study looks at the process of the ‘institutionalisation’ of volunteering.

The inner city environment, on the other hand, is concerned with a larger issue of community (Chapter 2). Community, especially as ‘declining community’, has attracted much interest of scholars of contemporary society as well as those of policy makers. Voluntary organisations in this context are expected to play an essential role in order to offer a working environment to volunteers, and encourage them to engage in various activities for collective goods.

Unlike in a prototypical rural area, where people are involved in a local community by means of a face-to-face daily communication with people of firmly
established social ties, the sense of community and that of social participation in an urban setting inevitably takes a different form. Volunteering in this context also requires a different type of social commitment on the part of volunteers. In order to look at such aspect, I have chosen a community based volunteering.

Coming from Japan where volunteering has a different form and meaning, I have found volunteering in Britain as a social phenomenon fascinating as a subject of study. The cultural difference gave me an opportunity to realise my non-Western eyes to look at Western culture. This has become the basis of my analytical framework which reflects on the research questions I have explored. In this regard, this research contains an element of comparative study. My Japanese background also helped me to have a fresh look at the theory of gift exchange. Not only is the theory of the gift and gift exchange one of the most significant fields which have played a key part in the history of anthropology, but also it largely represents the viewpoint of many Western scholars looking at exotic others of non-Western culture. Most studies of the gift I refer to in this thesis are in fact, written by a Western scholar.

My challenge was therefore examining whether or not the theory helps me to understand a contemporary and Western example of giving from my non-Western point of view. While reading their work, I mulled over how my findings differed from those of Western scholars regarding both the data and analytical schemes. The result of this multi-layered task which I will present below is, I believe, an ethnographically as well as theoretically interesting case study of giving.

In Chapter 2, I will explore volunteerism in the light of the theory of gift exchange. The idea of the gift and gift exchange is often used by practitioners of volunteering. It is also one of the research areas to which Anthropology has largely contributed over decades. Nevertheless, applying this theory to the study of volunteering is never
straightforward. The lengthy discussion of various theories of gift exchange is inevitable in order to cultivate a theoretical foundation of an anthropology of giving. By looking at the position of ‘giving without receiving’ in the theory of gift exchange, I will present the theoretical basis and analytical foci of this study. In the second half of the chapter, the idea of community adds another dimension to this study. Not only does it closely relate to the theory of gift exchange, it also plays an important role in the discourse the current British social policy regarding volunteering which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 3. I will then introduce my field and the two organisations I have looked at in Chapter 4.

From Chapter 5 to Chapter 9 are dedicated to ethnographic descriptions of volunteering based on my field work. I will discuss various aspects of volunteering according to 5 themes; volunteering motivation, social relationships, money and the influence of commercial exchange, professionalism, and the perception of community and solidarity. Each chapter discusses volunteering from a different angle and illustrates the characteristics of its experience.

In Chapter 10, I will go back to my original questions of the gift and gift exchange and present an answer and an implication of the research.
Chapter 2 No Free Gift? : theories of gift exchange

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look at the theories of gift exchange which are the main analytical framework of this study.

Gift exchange is one of the biggest areas in anthropology which has attracted a number of scholars trying to reveal its meaning and practice. Gifts and giving are fascinating because they are ubiquitous and there are a number of variations in different cultures. More importantly, 'the gift' is seen as a significant social phenomenon which reflects the way society is constructed. Without constant giving and receiving, a society cannot exist.

Whether or not we talk about various customs as non-Western or Western, or those of tradition or modern, the question of the gift is conceived of essentially as a moral, ethical and political issue which everyone in society is involved in. Schrift claims, 'the question of the gift is a political question, a question of the polis, which addresses fundamental issues of intersubjective interaction' (1997: 18). It is because giving is a social act. It is about how we treat each other. As a social act, giving is formed by society. The gift and a number of issues around it cannot be understood by itself. To study it we have to look at its context.

The theory of gift exchange, however, does not give us a clear answer to all the questions of giving and receiving. It especially has a trouble with one-sided giving without a return gift, which is the central theme of this thesis. Why is it so difficult to talk about giving without receiving? It is because a gift without a
return gift doesn’t generate and regenerate a social interaction? Giving without an
expectation of return benefit also seems to be against the fundamental law of
human behaviour as expressed in the influential rational choice theory.

The idea of reciprocity in gift giving has somehow taken an overwhelming
importance in this area of study. If the gift which happens between two people is a
social construct, ‘the very conception of the “social” implies reciprocity’ (Callari
2002: 250)

As Douglas says in the title of her foreword to Mauss’s The Gift, there is ‘no
free gift’ in our society (1990: vii). At least, that’s what we think. Every act of
giving has its own purpose. What is given always has to be reciprocated, even if
not immediately. Receiving without reciprocating brings nothing but a social
stigma. Precisely for these reasons, in gift exchange theories, such a gift has been
either treated as an exceptional case or put into one of the existing categories of
giving as a peculiar variation.

In this chapter, I will look at the position of ‘giving without receiving’ in the
theory of gift exchange, and some fundamental issues which shed light on the
themes I will look at in my ethnography.

2.2 Gift exchange in archaic society

2.2.1 The gift that brings people together

Marcel Mauss’s The Gift (1990) is the most renowned work on gift giving
and exchange. While there is also another much respected anthropologist,
Malinowski (1922), who published the first systematic analysis on gift exchange
some decades ago, Mauss is still considered as the pioneer of the study. In his
cross-cultural study, Mauss argues that gift exchange is a 'system of total services'. It is a 'total social phenomenon' which reflects economic, religious, juridical, moral and aesthetic rules of society at once. Unlike Malinowski (1922), who distinguishes a highly calculated giving for a practical purpose from a 'perfect gift' which is spontaneous and disinterested, Mauss denies such a concept of the pure gift. It is precisely this point which makes Mauss's work the most influential. His political-economic and functional analysis of the gift claims that all gifts are constrained and interested however unconstraining and disinterested they appear.

The gift is not the same as market exchange, and perhaps more interesting because as Mauss reveals, it has a more visible 'mechanism by which individual interests combine to make a social system, without engaging in market exchange' (Douglas 1990: xiv).

In the Maussian model, the gift presents two functions: one aimed at alliance and another driven by rivalry and political struggles. The former is concerned with the creation of solidarity and the sense of community. The actor's sense of respect and caring towards the other social members expressed through gift exchange generates peace in the community and strong ties amongst its members. On the other hand, the gift can be used as an expression of power and hierarchy. It is about competition, antagonism and rivalry. As in the North American 'potlatch', giving has a symbolic form of power. By giving without taking, one can show his generosity, wealth and superiority, and show the inferiority of the taker. Generosity is a political strategy which justifies the wealth of the giver and imposes the giver's power upon the receiver (cf. Bataille 1988, Bourdieu 1990, Sahlins 1972). Only by giving back can the receiver show his
competence. Receiving without reciprocating creates debts and ultimate dependency on the giver.

The underlying framework which produces and maintains these exchange systems, and which makes Mauss claim giving is a reproductive ‘total service’ is a shared sense of ‘reciprocity’ which is constructed with three types of obligation: to give, to receive and to reciprocate.

Reciprocity is indeed not only the essence of gift exchange but also contains other important issues which define what giving and receiving mean in a different context. There are also several features which are fundamental to reciprocity such as power, morality, intention, social relations, and the inalienability of the gift.

After Mauss, there have been various scholars trying to examine the principle of reciprocity, and several have presented a typology of reciprocity. Lévi-Strauss (1969) for instance, applies structuralist analysis and examines gift exchange as a reflection of the social structure which determines the actors’ patterned way of thinking and cognition. He also differentiates two types of exchange regarding the size of the involved parties: ‘restricted exchange’ refers to exchange between two parties whereas ‘generalised exchange’ refers to that of a larger and more complex structure. Sahlins (1972) on the other hand, looks at the link between the time deferral of the return gift and the degree of social distance. Sahlins first distinguishes the concept of ‘reciprocity’ from that of ‘re-distribution’. While ‘reciprocity’ indicates the relationship between the two participants, ‘redistribution’ presupposes a centralised community and is particularly important for social integration. He also emphasises the notion of ‘reciprocity’ rather than that of ‘exchange’, and presents three forms of ‘reciprocity’: namely, ‘generalised reciprocity’, ‘balanced reciprocity’, and ‘negative reciprocity’. The model
describes how the expectation of reciprocity becomes weaker as the social and psychological distance increases. In most cases, social interaction falls into the realm of balanced reciprocity.

These structuralists' models not only describe the patterns of gift exchange and reciprocity, but also treat individuals as a reflection of the social structure they are in. It has in fact thrown up a further question regarding the relation between society and individuals, and ultimately a question of where reciprocity comes from, how it works, and why it exists.

2.2.2 Gift exchange and rational choice

A more individualistic model such as a transactionalists' approach presents self-interest as an essential driving force of exchange. This perspective is associated with many theories of 'social exchange' in sociology and social psychology, which discuss not only gift transaction but also social behaviour itself as exchange (Blau 1964, Emerson 1976, Homans 1958). In anthropology, this approach showed significant development in the 1950's. Barth (1966) describes how 'rational' individuals affect social systems by making strategic choice according to their self interest with his 'transactional model' which attracted many anthropologists (Kapferer 1976). Barth (1966) criticises structural-functionalism for its inability to deal with social change satisfactorily. Instead, he tries to explain how various social and cultural forms are generated by individual actors, and thus treats social behaviour as a 'process'. The focus on agency assumes that individuals are 'rational' beings who 'voluntarily' pursue 'self-interest' and 'maximize profit'. Exchange in this model is analysed as a transaction in respect
to the rules of strategy, game theory, and other economic models. The means and ends of an exchange is interpreted in terms of its costs and rewards to the actors.

With regard to one-sided giving, the logic of transaction looks at the medium of a 'pure gift' as both cost and reward. The transactional part of exchange is in its symbolic function. Parkin looks at 'altruistic' giving as an 'expression' of 'institutionalised morality' which can eventually secure the actor's 'nonaltruistic interest' (Parkin 1976: 170). By giving without taking, a giver can receive approval from society, which positively values altruistic and egalitarian giving. The 'pure' gift is either a cost, an investment, or a reward. The point here is that the two seemingly contradictory ideologies, the ideology of altruism and the ideology of negotiation, can coexist. Transactionalism looks at both types of giving as rational and complementary. 'An altruistic ideology, including the notion of the "pure" gift, achieves conceptual and semantic distinctiveness only by standing in an opposed relationship to a negotiable/exploitative ideology' (Parkin 1976: 187).

Symbolic exchange also has a conditional aspect. While a rational individual is actively using a gift as an ideological sign, the actor is classified by the means of transaction, the sign, itself. Similarly, a choice of the means, goals and rewards are not only based on the interest of individuals but more importantly they are culturally structured. In this respect, the consequence of transactional exchange is conditional, and the study of transactional activity requires in-depth analysis of its condition which itself determines the degree of change in symbolic meaning of exchange and the relationship between the actor and the object of transaction (Kapferer 1976, Parkin 1976).
While economic logic has been a major analytical tool of gift giving in theory, its premise of rational choice has a limitation. Referring to Sen (1996), Osteen argues, 'so-called “rational choice” theory, however, limits explanations to individual decisions, as if human beings don’t also care about other human beings, and as if every scintilla of value and pleasure in such choices can be quantified (Osteen 2002a: 32).

Moreover, the strong emphasis on rational individuals implies some questions in terms of its applicability to an analysis of cultural diversities and the symbolic meaning of human behaviour (Kapferer 1976, Bourdieu 1990). Looking at gift exchange as a cultural framework of symbolic exchange which projects a socio-political structure of society, Bourdieu (1990) argues that a narrow sense of economism misses the real mechanism of gift exchange that is more complicated than a simple question of interestedness and disinterestedness.

2.2.3 Inalienability of things

Another account of the obligatory sense of giving which Mauss looks at is embedded in the gift itself. It is ‘the spirit of things’ which is illustrated in the notion of ‘hau’ in Maori giving (Mauss 1990: 11-12). While his understanding of ‘hau’ is challenged by a number of scholars, it has opened our eyes to another important aspect of the gift, the inalienability of the gift (Davis 1992, Gouldner 1960, Firth 1929, Lévi-Strauss 1987, Parry 1986, Sahlins 1972).

In The Gift, Mauss actually does not discuss the topic much. However, ‘inalienability’ is the essence of what makes an object a gift. The point of the discussion is the nature of the association between people and objects.
'Everything speaks', Mauss says (Mauss 1990: 44). An object represents its owner, and therefore giving and receiving are not merely a matter of social norms. It is also because ‘by giving one is giving oneself, and if one gives oneself, it is because one “owes” oneself- one’s person and one’s goods- to others’ (Mauss 1990: 46 emphasis in original). Looking at the fact that certain things never become an object of exchange, Mauss observes that there are different types of inalienability and different types of possession.

Such a characteristic of the gift is later examined by several scholars. Weiner’s (1992) study of the inalienability of objects offers two fundamental aspects of the gift. Her question is set in the fact that exchange is not just about giving but about ‘how to keep-while-giving’. Weiner argues that giving is a strategy coming from ‘the desire to keep something back from the pressures of give and take’ (1992: 43). Not only have these insights revealed the dual nature of the gift: disinterestedness and interestedness which co-exist, but also showed that there are two different forms of inalienability. First an object is inalienable because it carries the identity of the original owner. The association between the object and people leaves a mark on the object and the object carries a history of the possessors who are involved in an exchange. These objects are handed to different individuals however, they are never given away completely. Secondly, there are objects which represent the identity of a family, or community which never become an object of exchange. The logic of ‘keeping-while-giving’ also suggests that inalienability of an object is a relative value. The exchange system remains in the condition of preservation of non-exchange items. Therefore, the norm of exchange is not reciprocity but the ‘principle of difference’, the
difference in power and prestige which are represented in objects (Weiner 1992: 40).

The inalienability of the gift represents the social relationship between the giver and receiver, as well as the giver’s identity attached to an object. At the same time, the relation between people’s identity and their objects is highly cultural. By describing the Melanesian construction of social identity, Strathern’s (1988) argument also illuminates the Western ideology of the self which emphasises the giver’s autonomous agency. She argues that an idea of self as an autonomous social entity is not a universal but a very Western ideology. In Melanesia, a person is not a complete social entity: it is a ‘dividual’ as is opposed to the ‘individual’ self in Western culture. An identity of a person is perceived in relation to other people in a unit. The contrast between gift exchange and commercial exchange manifests this difference. While commercial exchange is conceived as a transaction between autonomous individuals, gift exchange is about an interaction between ‘dividuals’ in a group which is a social unit, and through which an identity of a person is regenerated. This is where the inalienability of the gift comes in: the gift carries the identity of both ‘dividuals’, and the larger society which is constructed with a number of ‘dividuals’ who are involved in the circle.

Such an insight expands the scope of gift exchange: what we can learn from gift exchange is not only about objects, people, and norms and forms of social interaction, but also the very idea of selfhood in society.

The issue of selfhood and the inalienability of the gift has been also discussed in its relation to the sacred. Godelier (1999) argues that the inalienability of the gift has its origin in myth and religion. The precious objects
of exchange are ‘substitutes twice over: substitutes for sacred objects and substitutes for human beings’ (Godelier 1999: 72).

Here, we go back to Mauss’s analysis of obligations, and look at the fourth obligation; the obligation to give gifts to gods and the spirits of the dead. In contemporary writings on the gift of the Western world, this is a much forgotten area of study because religion and myths have less and less importance in our lives. The inalienability of the gift, according to Godelier, has its significance because of its connection to a group identity which derives from mythical and religious narratives. Inalienability is not only about an association between an object and its owner but also about a narrative which parallels the link between the gods and their creation: ‘all gifts are but shadows of the original gift from the gods-the gift of our very existence’ (Osteen 2002b: 241). This is why the gift gives power to the owner over the others in society. As mythical and religious narratives are also creations of human beings, there is no contradiction between the imaginary and the real embedded in the gift. Therefore, the double nature of the gift allows it to be both sacred and secular.

2.2.4 The modern gift

The issue of inalienability has indeed much importance in the discussion of more contemporary giving, and in the distinction between the gift and commodity.

The gift and commodity are in theory treated in a dichotomous opposition of two systems. These two systems are considered to be ‘fundamentally opposed’ (Appadurai 1986: 11). Looking at the distinction between gift and commodity exchange, Gregory (1982) presents an essential feature of two ‘economies’. In gift
economy, inalienable possessions are exchanged between individuals in mutually dependent relationships whereas commodity exchange is concerned with alienable possessions which are transacted between individuals in mutually independent relationships. The gift and commodities are thus in a different sphere of one’s life: the latter is in the public whereas the former is in the private. This ‘personal’ aspect is particularly important in gift exchange.

The inalienability of the modern gift has a strong association with the giver’s personal sentiment towards the receiver. Giving, receiving and reciprocating a gift are considered not as a mere mechanical and functional social interaction, but as an emotional interaction between individuals. The gift is about ‘emotional management’ (Hochschild 1979). That is why accepting and refusing a gift is often taken as accepting and refusing the giver. Un-reciprocating a gift is similar to its refusal as it is a sign of neglect. Inalienability impels the return gift (Godelier 1999). Therefore it regenerates social relations: ‘if friends make gifts, gifts make friends’ (Sahlins 1972: 186).

The gift also reflects the giver’s understanding of the receiver. I think it is important to recognise that there are different types of inalienability attached by the giver to the gift offered. I would like to distinguish an inalienability of the receiver which is an image of personhood the giver holds for the receiver from an inalienability which is concerned with the giver’s identity. The idea of a ‘wrong gift’ illustrates the receiver’s disagreement to an inalienability perceived in an object (Caplow 1984, Cheal 1988).

Another difference between the gift and commodities is in the opposition of quantity and quality: while gifts are qualitatively perceived, commodities are a matter of quantity (Gregory 1982, Carrier 1995). Commercial exchange is
concerned with reproduction of objects whereas gift exchange is about reproduction of social ties (Carrier 1995). 'With the gift, it is the intention that counts...with the market, it is the opposite: "it's the result that counts". That is why the gift has no price...the value of an object's ties has no monetary equivalent' (Godbout 1998:179).

Furthermore, there is a difference in the form of obligation (Carrier 1995). In gift exchange, obligation is attached to social relations and social relations are reaffirmed by giving. It is a cyclic system. Fulfilling the obligation does not actually complete the system but on the contrary, it regenerates the same circle. On the other hand, in commodity exchange, obligation is within a transaction. Once it is fulfilled, it is paid off.

These differences between the gift and commodities are concerned with the inalienability of an object of exchange. The distinction is generally understood to be made by the introduction of money. Mauss takes a unique position at this point. Looking at the mechanism of exchange in archaic society, he disagrees with a belief that the introduction of money is the cause of prevailing market ethics and mentality. Instead, he proposes that the logic of market is always there as a 'human phenomenon' before the invention of money. Mauss sees in archaic exchange how the market functions before money and the discovery of forms of contract and sale which we see as modern, and the way the morality and the organisation that operate in transactions (Mauss 1990: 4). Money doesn't have an agency and is merely a tool which manifests a type of transaction which has always existed.

In a contemporary industrialised society, however, money represents what is not the gift: the gift and money are perceived in dichotomous oppositions
associated with the contrast between commercial market exchange and non-commercial exchange. Money is the very representation of the impersonal and it is not adequate for personal relationships (Simmel 1990). It is because once money is involved, any personal, qualitative value becomes de-personalised and quantified, and thus loses its connection to individuals.

What we need to recognise is that these distinctions are fairly conceptual arguments, and may not characterise all the actual practice of the gift and monetary transaction.

Bloch and Parry (1989) argue that the distinction between money and gifts is neither inherent nor absolute. The meaning of money and its sphere of exchange are culturally constructed, which should be explored by studying the 'morality' of exchange in the whole context of the exchange system (Bloch and Parry 1989, Zelizer 1994). Similarly, the distinctions between the gift and commodities are also highly questionable. It is rather a matter of degree, and certainly depends on the context (Davis 1992, Miller 1995, 1998). There are in fact 'very few objects, transactions or relations that conform to the pure descriptions of gift and commodity' in the real world (Carrier 1995: 19).

Studies of the modern gift look at the way people negotiate between the boundaries of gift and commodity exchange (Caplow 1984, Carrier 1995). Carrier (1995) for instance, illustrates what he calls the 'appropriation' of the gift, the process through which people manipulate various strategies in order to appropriate commodities in the gift context. Strategies such as wrapping, taking off a price tag, and even the giver's choice of commodity make a difference in a degree of the alienability and inalienability of an object.
2.2.5 The search for perfect gifts

2.2.5.1 The ideology of perfect gifts

I have so far described various understandings of the gift and gift exchange in existing literature. Now, I would like to come back to my original question on giving without receiving through the idea of the perfect gift. One point which we should keep in our mind is that the notion of the perfect gift tends to reflect a very Western perspective, and not something universal (Parry 1986). In fact, although there are a number of studies looking at different types of gifts in different cultural contexts, the idea of the perfect gift discussed in the existing literature is predominantly that of the West. This contrast is quite interesting. In this regard, the question of whether or not a gift is a perfect gift is, actually a question over the Western ideology of the perfect gift; whether or not the Western ideal of the perfect gift ever exists anywhere in the world. Very few scholars seem to believe that there is such a thing as the perfect gift (cf. Laidlaw 2002).

Probably for this reason, issues concerning the definition of the perfect gift have been mainly left to philosophers and literary critics. There are also a fairly limited number of examples which are recurrently referred to as a representation of the perfect gift (cf. Bourdieu 1990, Emerson 1997, Derrida 1993, Noonan 1984). While there are some variants, the idea of the perfect gift has common features. Firstly, the value of the perfect gift is fundamentally immaterial (Noonan 1984, Carrier 1995). The material element of the object is at most a means by which its immaterial value is presented. In this regard, the gift exists in opposition to commodities. Secondly, the immaterial value is concerned with a positive sentiment of the giver towards the receiver. Typically, it is an expression of love,
and such a sentiment can be expressed only by giving. In its strongest form, the perfect gift requires a sacrifice on the part of the giver, in which we see a trace of Christian tradition in the modern gift (Godelier 1999). As is illustrated in the O. Henry's famous story of the Christmas gift for which givers sacrifice what is the most valuable for themselves, the essence of the perfect gift involves the risk of loss: 'the only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me' (Emerson 1997:26, Henry 1917). Thirdly, the perfect gift is unconditional. It is free from constraints and obligations attached to social ties. The sense of freedom from constraints and obligations has further implications. Freedom is concerned with the giver's 'disinterested-ness' of a return gift (Godbout 1998, Osteen 2002a). The giver has no expectation of benefit of equal value. That is not the intention of the gift. Instead, the freedom from obligation and expectation of a return gift implies that the perfect gift is a pleasure by itself (Belk 1996). Finally, the lack of calculation also suggests spontaneity (Godbout 1998, Osteen 2002a). The perfect gift is almost an accidental surprise (Belk 1996, Bourdieu 1990).

2.2.5.2 The problem of the perfect gift

While these features of the perfect gift offer a fairly clear picture of what is valued in the gift, the idea of the perfect gift is largely considered as a myth (Cheal 1988, Carrier 1995, Godbout 1998).

The denial of the perfect gift has several reasons. As I have mentioned, the concepts of disinterested-ness and pleasure are at odds with the prevailing logic of rationality which has to do with market exchange. Market logic interprets disinterested-ness as a matter of exploitation. Godbout (1998) however, argues that applying market logic to the gift is the real problem.
The loss is not perceived as loss...in the gift, because the loss is compensated on another level...the gift is a transcendence of the experience of loss...we might begin to solve the paradox of disinterestedness by saying that the gift is disinterested not in the sense that there is no return...but in the sense that what circulates does not conform with the rules of mercantile equivalence. To characterise the gift as disinterested in a mercantile context automatically has negative implications: it is a 'bad deal' or a sacrifice; one is being duped.

(Godbout 1998: 183).

On the other hand, some of the more contemporary scholars question the definition of the gift. Although the essence of the gift is fundamentally social, this social aspect of the gift distracts us from the meaning of the gift at the same time. It is because the gift as a driving force of social interaction negates the meaning of an original gift.

Derrida (1993) argues that the gift is 'the impossible' by definition. It is because the idea of the perfect gift contradicts what is thought to be the nature of the gift. He claims that the very idea of a pure gift as voluntary and disinterested is paradoxical and causes an ontological problem in itself. A pure gift is free from calculation, reciprocity, and an obligation to give. Therefore, the gift should not be recognised by the receiver. As soon as it is recognised as a gift, it is no longer a gift. Derrida explains this paradox referring to the symbolic meanings imbedded in the gift.

If he recognises it as gift, if the gift appears to him as such, if the present is present to him as present, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because it gives back, in the place, let us say, of
the thing itself, a symbolic equivalent...The symbolic opens and constitutes the order of exchange and of debt, the law or the order of circulation in which the gift gets annulled. It suffices therefore for the other to perceive the gift...to perceive its nature of gift, the meaning or intention, the intentional meaning of the gift, in order for this simple recognition of the gift as gift, as such, to annul the gift as gift even before recognition becomes gratitude. The simple identification of the gift seems to destroy it...At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor. It cannot be gift as gift except by not being present as gift...There is no more gift as soon as the other receives—and even if she refuses the gift that she has perceived or recognised as gift. As soon as she keeps for the gift the signification of gift, she loses it, there is no more gift. Consequently, if there is no gift, there is no gift, but if there is gift held or beheld as gift by the other, once again there is no gift; in any case the gift does not exist and does not present itself. If it presents itself, it no longer presents itself.

(Derrida in Schrift, 1997: 129-130, italics original).

In Derrida’s terms, as in Mauss’s, the gift in practice is stigmatised by obligations. The idea of a pure gift which is unconstraining, voluntary by definition, entirely contradicts with what he takes as the true nature of the gift. Such a gift, therefore, cannot exist. If it exists, it’s an accident and not intended. The time deferral of the return gift is also crucial in this perspective as the sequence of gifts needs to be forgotten in order to sustain the essence of the gift.

Somehow similar to this notion of forgetfulness is Bourdieu’s idea of ‘misrecognition’. While sharing a similar view with Derrida, Bourdieu’s argument (1990, 1997) offers a different and probably more comprehensive picture of the gift.
Bourdieu (1990) claims that the impossibility of the gift is a sociological fact in which we need to see the actor’s true intention. The time deferral is important in order to forget about obligations attached to the gift. The function of the gift presupposes individual and collective misrecognition of the ‘objective mechanism’ of the exchange which is calculating and obligatory. The misrecognition allows the gift to be an expression of generosity and altruism, and only in this way, economic capital is transformed into symbolic capital. The gift is a product of collective deception.

Bourdieu argues that the characteristic of the gift is in its ‘dual truth’, the ‘ambiguity’ which allows two opposing phenomena to coexist. On the one hand, the gift refuses self interest and egoistic calculation, and represents the generosity of the giver. On the other hand, the same act of giving does not deny the logic of exchange, its risks and constraining character (1997: 231). Precisely because of the ambiguity of the gift, the time deferral is also an important matter of agency. ‘The interval that makes it possible to experience the objective exchange as a discontinuous series of free and generous acts is what makes gift exchange viable and acceptable by facilitating and favouring self-deception, a lie told to oneself, as the condition of the coexistence of recognition and misrecognition of the logic of the exchange’ (1997: 232). In this regard, the issue of the gift and the problem of perfect gift are not merely about social obligations and rational choice, but also about an assumed idea of selfhood in the West which values autonomous and independent individuals (Carrier 1995, Osteen 2002a).

Such a complex nature of gift exchange cannot be fully explained by a simple logic of calculation.
In fact, Mauss himself acknowledged the complexity of the gift in his cross-cultural study. The gift takes different forms and norms in different cultures. The features of the gift, such as interestedness, disinterested-ness, constraints, freedom, and the obligation of reciprocity appear in various combinations, and that they are not necessarily bound by a strict opposition which we find in the characteristics of the pure gift and non-gift.

2.2.5.3 Strangers: do they allow a free gift?

I have so far discussed the position of one-sided giving in existing gift exchange theories. While there are a number of different understandings of the gift and gift exchange, one-sided giving without a return gift is given little room to insist its significance in this logic.

Nevertheless, gift exchange theory has not completely closed its door to this peculiar type of giving. Here, I would like to look at the ‘stranger situation’ which offers an interesting case to consider one-sided giving. The stranger situation not only allows us a different possibility of giving from other gift exchange situations, but also is an important aspect of giving which bridges anthropological analysis of giving and volunteering which I will examine in the following ethnographic chapters.

The stranger situation has several characteristics. Unlike other exchange situations, it does not fit into any model of social relations as there is no social relation prior to giving. In other words, both the giver and receiver are free from social ties, and hence the sense of obligation and constraints. Berking (1999) discusses the implication of strangers especially that of Germanic cultures from a perspective of the host/guest situation which he calls ‘the complete miniature of
the anthropology of giving’ (Berking 1999: 82). Looking at the historical and religious background, Berking argues that the essence of the gift derives from the rituals of sacrifice and food distribution. Giving in the guest situation is a peculiar type of one-sided giving of which social interaction and distribution do not fit into Mauss’s account of alliance and potlatch. The basis of the guest situation is mutual respect, sympathy and affection. The guest situation is also characterised by its limitation in time and space, and that specificity makes it more ritualistic. Being a stranger, the guest does not have an identification which allows a symbolic order of social relations and reciprocity. Therefore, treating a guest with unconditional hospitality is an inclusion of the excluded. The ‘role indeterminacy’ also allows sacralisation of the stranger: the stranger takes a position of demigod. By receiving unconditional hospitality, the stranger contributes to the giver’s acquisition of honour. The role indeterminacy also brings a necessity of redefining and re-symbolising the membership and temporal integration in the host society. With the existence of an outsider, a host society presents an ideal state of community.

While Berking looks at mythical, historical and religious aspect of the stranger situation, others examine a more contemporary socio-cultural dimension, especially the impact of market economy on the concept of stranger. In the Western context, strangers are given a status of ‘authentically indifferent co-citizens’ (Silver 1990: 1482). Carrier looks at the idea of stranger as an invocation of ‘the disinterested stranger’, which is based on the idea of ‘the self not enmeshed in a web of prior relationships’ (Carrier 1999: 26). Such an idea of strangers is, according to Carrier, highly affected by the logic of the market economy which enhances impersonal relations between individuals.
Godbout argues that the gift to strangers is 'quintessentially modern' in the sense that it is not circumscribed by primary obligations of kinships and friendship (Godbout 1998: 77). It is modern because unlike what the 'negative reciprocity' of Sahlins' model suggests, donations and charitable giving are not aimed at a return gift exceeding the value of what has been given. The modern strangers derive from a feudal system, and are different from the archaic strangers. While archaic society in which mercantile exchange is largely to do with inter-group exchange, modern society is characterised by 'the market's infiltration of the relationships between members of the same society' (Godbout 1998: 150). However, what the market has done is freeing people not from the primary social obligations, but from constraints from the others in the feudal system. The gift giving in modern society is a means of communal bonding within society and not that of generating a new bond with a complete outsider. Although the market frees people from general social ties and social obligations, these social constraints and obligations do not disappear but are partly taken over by the state and integrated into a matter of redistribution. The state and market provide services which transform some social relationships. Some of the responsibilities which have previously been assumed to derive from the obligations of primary relationships and direct social ties become professionalized and bureaucratized by state intervention. Individuals are then indirectly connected by means of taxes and social welfare in the name of equality. Godbout sees this as a transformation of 'democracy into quasi-mercantile mechanism' (Godbout 1998: 158). Moreover, the freedom from obligations eventually changes our perception of social relations:
Modern culture, instead of concerning itself primarily with what binds us to each other, aims to free us from others, to emancipate us from social ties, which it views as unacceptable constraints. The end result of this process is that any social ties must become voluntary. This great gift of modernity is the exit, universalised: our personal relationships are freely chosen, and assumed by them.

(Godbout 1998: 162)

2.2.6 Questions of the gift

I have looked at an understanding of the gift and gift exchange in existing theory. The significance of the gift is seen in its social function. The gift is considered as a social glue, and the very idea of the social derives from the sense of reciprocity.

A gift without a return gift in this logic is dysfunctional. If it exists, it is a matter of exploitation, mystification, or a mere accident.

The denial of pure gift, however, involves a number of interesting issues. While the idea of pure gift contradicts a prevailing understanding of the gift which is reciprocal and reproduces a series of exchanges, the concept of perfect gift still doesn’t disappear. It seems to play some role in gift giving. Yet, the conceptual binary opposition causes a difficulty.

First of all, there is an overpowering emphasis on reciprocity in gift exchange theory. By focusing on reciprocity, we might misunderstand some types of giving which are not directly concerned with the obligation of reciprocity. As several authors already have suggested, it ignores the fairly likely possibility that the gift has a dual nature.
The whole idea of reciprocity itself is also not out of trouble: it has a tautological nature. Reciprocity as a golden rule integrates all giving and receiving into a sequence. It is at the end, a chain reaction. There is no room for the first gift at all. Such logic not only makes everything merely a matter of time deferral, but also oversimplifies the interactions between people. Giving and receiving may have a different meaning in a different context even if it happens between the same individuals. By treating reciprocity as a principle of giving, we might miss other aspects of giving and receiving which are equally important for the understanding of giving. In order to have a better insight into giving, we need to go beyond reciprocity and also question whether or not utilitarian logic is the only rationale of human behaviour.

Another issue behind the denial of giving without receiving is its dissociation from reciprocity and solidarity. The lack of constraints and expectation of a return gift does not automatically claim a complete isolation from the society. In this regard, the real problem is probably not in the idea of pure gift itself, but the premises we make that one-sided giving never makes people give back, and hence it has little social impact.

Finally, a point which hasn't been discussed openly is the diversity of the gift exchange which derives from its context. The scope of the analysis regarding the gift and gift exchange has been rather narrowly focused around the issue of reciprocity, rational choice and inalienability of the gift. The gift may take a different form in a different context. As Simmel (Wolf 1950) claims, the same form of human behaviour may carry a different meaning according to its context. While cultural context is considered as crucial to the study of gift exchange, few scholars have made serious efforts to explore how an actual practice of giving is
affected by its context. By looking at a number of elements which many scholars have suggested, we may wonder ‘how does the idea of selfhood affect gift giving?’ or ‘what is the idea of equality in exchange relationships’?

In the following ethnographic chapters, I will explore these issues by looking at volunteering as an example of giving in contemporary society.

Volunteering in fact offers an excellent opportunity of a case study to examine giving without receiving. While the idea of volunteering is considered as free and unconstraining giving without receiving, it is certainly not an accident. Many people choose to commit themselves to volunteering. My aim is to explore various aspects of giving in the light of the issues presented by the theory of the gift. My first question is therefore if volunteering proves to be a form of one-sided giving or not, and whether the existing theory of gift exchange could offer a sound analysis of this social phenomenon. This question involves several related themes of the gift. First, there is a question of motives. If one-sided giving to a stranger is free from obligation, why do people give? Freedom from obligation also brings an issue of reciprocity and social relationships which are thought to be the source of an obligatory sense of giving. Is volunteering free from social ties? What kind of relationship do volunteers have in their experience of volunteering? The question of the modern gift also adds another issue concerning its relation to commercial exchange. Although both volunteering and commercial exchange happen between strangers, the former is considered to be in the sphere of the gift and the latter to be in that of market exchange. What is the difference? What is given in volunteering? Are volunteering and commercial exchanges in opposition? By examining an experience of volunteering, I will look into these questions and discuss emerging issues of giving in volunteering.
2.3 Declining community

In the previous section, I have described that the significance of the gift exchange is its social function that regenerates social ties. Now, I will touch upon the idea of community and that of social capital which play an important role in current British social policy. These ideas are, in fact, largely an extension of the gift exchange: community is an ultimate consequence of enhanced social ties as well as its context. The idea of social capital, on the other hand, looks at a part of the exchange system which helps solidarity.

The recent changes in British social welfare are concerned with not only pragmatics in political discourses but also the way an ideological stance is reflected in the practical strategies of social welfare. Social policy, which was once merely a matter of bureaucracy, is now trying to approach closer to 'civil-society', at least within its discourse, which is based on active memberships and social network (cf. Deakin 2001b). Community-building in this logic is crucial to an improvement of social welfare.

I will introduce some of the key issues in these areas of study, and argue the requirement of micro-level analysis of volunteering which has been rather neglected in this area of study.

2.3.1 Classic thoughts on community

The development of community studies in the last century was led by a perception of declining community. Since industrialisation in the nineteenth century, the decline of community has been associated with the massive expansion of urban organisation.
The concept of community, however, involves a number of definitions: there were 94 definitions recognised already by the mid 1950s (Hillery 1955). In the United States especially, the image of community is represented by that of de Tocqueville (1998) who illustrates American democracy as based on active associations and equal and free participation of individuals. It is this rather romantic view of community which is often perceived as its ideal state up until now by both policy makers and academics such as the current Third Way policy and Putnam's idea of social capital.

A similar image is also seen in some classic work on community presented by Toennies (1957). Toennies presents two models of community construct, namely, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* which illustrate the contrast between communal and associative life. *Gemeinschaft* is typically characterised by informal ties, collective relationships and regular interactions through which individuals develop trust, sense of security and belonging. *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, refers to more contractual relationships as in business relationships which are based on less frequent interactions, fragmented and temporary relationships, negotiations of power and distrust. Toennies talks of these two models not only as a typology of social constructs, but in terms of their evolutionary transformation over time, suggesting that *gemeinschaft*-type societies turn into more *gesellschaft*-like as society develops, which corresponds to a dichotomous model of traditional-modern divide (Toennies 1957). While such application involves some questions, the contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is often used as a mirror image of urban and rural differences (Wireman 1984).
Toennies' idea of community also has an emphasis on its fraternalism and mutual support which are thought to enhance emotional ties and sense of security amongst community members. Community in this regard, is perceived as essentially virtuous (Brint 2001: 14).

Durkheim (1984), on the other hand, offers an alternative view. While he also discusses social norms and support system, he looks more deeply into various attributes of social types. His idea of mechanical and organic solidarities illustrates how moral and cultural variables change between rural and urban environment: mechanical solidarity, typically found in rural life is characterised by its repressive law and strong collective ties and values in which conscience collective homogenises individuals in the society. Organic solidarity in industrialised urban life is constructed with more developed division of labour, and consequently more interdependent and individualised members. A society of this type is based on a restitutive law which aims at protection of individual rights rather than punishment. It is essentially a mechanism of contractual culture. His notion of 'conscience collective' however, does not disappear with the emergence of individualism since the value of individualism itself is a conscience collective which encourages individuals to pursue self interest.

These classic works not only present the symmetrical contrast between different types of social construct, the traditional-modern and rural-urban divide, but also imply a linear model of social evolution, how a traditional form of collective community is replaced by a more individualised urban system.

Urbanism is largely considered as an antithesis of community. The urban system is also a market place where people's lives are dependent on market exchange (Weber 1958).
Simmel's essay on the Metropolis offers an interesting insight into the association between living circumstance of city and urban dwellers' behaviour and mentality (Wolff 1950). The density of the population and overload of social stimuli make people withdraw from the environment, and social interaction becomes increasingly impersonal and calculating as in that of economic exchange since they cannot otherwise handle the excessive stimuli and uncertainties (Wolff 1950, Wirth 1938).

Such a view has been supported by a number of sociological works. In the 1980s, Bellah and his associates describe how individualism transformed civic and religious traditions of American community (Bellah, et al. 1985). Utilitarian individualism is seen not only as a threat to the traditional sense of community, mutual responsibility and solidarity, but also a cause of people's withdrawal from the public sphere, and thus of the increasing decline in political participation and community activity. Individualism and market economy increase the disparity between the winners and losers, and recognise it only as an individual responsibility. Furthermore, emphasis on self-reliance and self-responsibility makes social welfare less of an option. The crisis of civic membership threatens the social identity of individuals and causes loneliness. Civic participation and commitment to community work no longer come from religious altruism and the pursuit of public good. The sense of citizenship is based on self-fulfilment (Bellah, et al. 1985). The decline of community is therefore, almost seen as a loss of humanity.

Urbanites are, however, not completely detached from personal relationships. Milgram (1970) claims that the level of interaction does not change between friends and families. The significance of their attitude is towards
strangers. People balance out their limited time and energy, and the excessive demands of an urban environment, by prioritising friendships and kinships.

While people in the city are indifferent to strangers, they construct a group tie with other like-minded people and support each other (Fischer, 1982). Granovetter’s (1982) idea of the ‘strength of weak ties’ also suggests a set of various social ties in wider circumstance offers a greater amount of accessibilities to various resources than close-knit ties of friends and families.

Counter-intuitively, the low level interaction between individuals is in fact, proved to be not associated with low level attachment to neighbourhood (Slovak 1986). Community sentiment is also more targeted at narrowly defined ‘urban villages’ than to the more general and wider sense of community (Guest and Lee 1983, Slovak 1986, Whyte 1993). Gans’ (1962) illustration of ‘urban villages’ describe how the level of socialisation doesn’t change in a city in a practical sense. What is significant in the urban environment is that it is the poor who suffer from excessive levels of alienation and social isolation.

Nevertheless, community is not always perceived positively by everybody. Urbanisation also does not necessarily mean total distraction of community. On the one hand, such a question depends on how community is defined. On the other hand, we also need to look at a number of variables which allow transformation of social system and question the urban-rural dichotomy and whether changes of community really mean its loss.

Using survey data from a national sample of Britain, several studies suggest that residential stability is a key to enhanced social ties regardless of urbanization, which is mainly concerned with increased size and density of population, and other socio-demographic controls (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974, Sampson 1991).
These studies also indicate length of residence as a significant factor which affects people’s attitudes to the community. These factors develop friendship and acquaintanceship in the local area, and ultimately increase the locals’ attachment to community.

2.3.2 Social capital

2.3.2.1 Theoretical constructs of social capital

In the context of social policy, these issues have shifted the policy makers’ perspective onto community construction and its eventual assumed positive social consequence.

The current upsurge of the interest in social capital is largely influenced by Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000), however, the concept itself existed long before him (Paxton 1999: 92).

The origin of the concept is unclear but the most influential works in this field emerge after the 1970s. Although in a relatively narrow focus on economic theory, Loury (1977) uses the term social capital to claim the impact of social position on one’s access to resources which affect the development of life. The current debate on social capital theory is however, due to the work of Bourdieu (1985) and that of Coleman (1988): respectively a neo-Marxist approach which looks at the issue of power and unequal access to resources, and a neo-Liberalist approach which applies rational choice theory and argues in terms of the function of social capital.

Bourdieu’s (1985) idea of social capital is a part of his argument on three capitals: the economic, cultural and social. Looking at the context of education
and scholastic achievement, he claims that understanding of the structural and functional mechanism of society requires consideration of all forms of capital and not merely the one which economic theory discusses. While exchanges in social and cultural capital do not necessarily make an immediate profit, they often have indirect effects on economic capital, or vice-versa. The three forms of capital are therefore interconnected. Social capital in his theory, which is constructed with social relationships and networks, can be fully understood only in its relation to other capitals. Social capital is defined as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relations of mutual acquaintance or recognition (1985: 249). As the theory attempts to explore the production and re-production of social classes and class divisions, Bourdieu examines social capital regarding various levels of social networks and power embedded in social relationships (Fine 2001). What distinguishes Bourdieu from other theorists of social capital is this insight into the issue of power in social relationships which ultimately reproduce social class divisions which are inherently exclusive.

Coleman (1988), on the other hand, takes a functional approach. His definition is however rather fuzzy (Portes 1998). Social capital is "not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors...within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the other achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. Like physical and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even
harmful for others. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors…’ (Coleman 1988: S98). As he opens up the conception to wider scope which includes its mechanism, consequences and context, it is considered as a major development (Portes 1998). The difficulty of his definition, however, is that it could be nothing, in the sense that it can hardly be specified, and everything that he suggests, at the same time.

Social capital for Coleman is also value free: it is morally and normatively neither positive nor negative. It is merely what contains resources to allow individuals to take actions.

While Coleman made much of the basis of social capital theory in social sciences, it was Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) who redefined the concept and connected it to social policy issues. At the initial stage of his argument, Putnam defines social capital as ‘features of organisation, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefits’ (Putnam 1993: 35). He is concerned about the decline of social capital and critical of American individuals who ‘focus on themselves in the presence of others’ (Wuthnow 1994: 3). Putnam is largely affected by a Tocquevillian notion of community and democracy (de Tocqueville 1998) and his theory of social capital is inclined to its construction of civil society: ‘social capital refers to connections among individual–social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense, social capital is closely concerned with what some have called “civic virtue”’ (Putnam 2000: 19). A characteristic of social capital is that it calls attention to the view that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many ‘virtuous but isolated individuals are not necessarily rich in
social capital’ (Putnam 2000: 19). While Putnam’s idea of social capital is constructed with general concepts such as ‘public trust’, ‘reciprocity’, ‘associated membership’, and ‘voluntarism’, social capital has ‘forceful, even quantifiable effects on many different aspects of our lives’ (Putnam 2000: 23). It is at this point that social capital is quantitatively measurable. Based on statistical data, Putnam tries to show the weakening social capital in the last half-century and its consequence in American community. It follows the same line of argument on declining community and increasing individualism which Bellah et al. (1985) illustrate a decade before him. Putnam argues that the decline of social interaction and social participation is not just a political or an economic issue of individuals but also a predictor of their educational level, crime rates and the quality of life of neighbourhoods. Putnam argues that a recurrent social interaction helps integrating people regardless of their social and economic backgrounds, and ultimately generates public goods. More interactions enhance mutual trust and social responsibility which bring long-term investments in public projects and can even help with economic opportunities.

As one example of social participation, Putnam looks at the trend of volunteering and public giving. According to Putnam, the decline of giving is not much to do with financial factors. Rather, it indicates the deterioration of social networks which, when they work, encourage individuals to pay attention to others and fosters the norms of reciprocity. Those who are actively involved in social networks are more likely to volunteer and to stick with it. Moreover, since an interaction amongst individuals is associated with mutual help, people of more sociability have a stronger sense of reciprocity and social responsibility: a wider social network can help personal recruitment of volunteers.
Such a view of social capital is widely accepted as the most influential in policy circles. However, it has caused a number of disputes over methodological and theoretical issues.

First of all, Putnam’s theory does not consider the issue of power in social relationships and the downside of social capital (Massey 1994, Portes 1998, Portes and Landolt 1996). In his later work, he admits his negligence of the negative aspect of social capital, but he leaves it to an issue of ‘different forms of capital’ and remains focused on the benefits of social capital (Putnam 2000: 22). Culture and context are another area which is missed out in his theory. Etzioni (2001) for instance, in his comment on the way Putnam argues the link between his concept of social capital and community building, claims that looking at the degree of social participation is not enough, and criticises Putnam for ignoring the mechanisms of ‘shared moral values’ which are fundamental to community construction. Looking at cultural aspects of social capital leads one to more questions: how social capital produces mutual trust and co-operation is not clear (Anheier and Kendall 2002). The weak correlation between volunteering and pro-social behaviour could be caused by an inadequate measurement of participation: it requires a consideration of a wider scope of analysis such as the previous history of participation of respondents (Hooghe 2003). Other studies also suggest how forms of social capital vary cross-nationally and cross-culturally (Robinson 1997, Rubio 1997, Widner and Mundt 1998).

In addition to this, his association between social capital and economic prosperity is also challenged (Knack and Keefer 1997). Logically speaking, Putnam’s argument contradicts capitalist systems where the success of individuals is the result of getting ahead of others in a series of competitions. If social capital
helps somebody's economic prosperity in capitalist society as he claims, it only applies to some selected individuals within a network and not everybody in a society.

For social capital to make sense as a concept in a market economy, then networks, formal or informal, must operate in the competitive realm of market relations... To have any value as a term, social capital must retain a connection to economic capital, and it must therefore be premised on the ability of certain people to realise it at the expense of others. While economics is not a zero-sum game, it is also not simply a set of win-win relationships.

(DeFilippis 2001: 793).

Moreover, unlike Bourdieu and Coleman who look at social capital as an attribute of various social relations, Putnam treats it as a possession of individuals and groups (Portes 1998, DeFilippis 2001). Such a view with his metaphorical understanding of capital exposes his theory to the more generally perceived risk of constructing a 'false' analogy of social capital that is able to be 'accumulated, saved, inherited and exchanged regardless of its particular form because there is a universal equivalent for it-money' (Harriss 2002: 41). The idea of social capital is however, far more complicated as it involves a number of concepts such as trust, reciprocity, obligation, and various forms of information. These constituents of social capital are highly conceptual and relative to each other and it is hard to think they can be treated as a single currency.

In fact, there is still a lack of consensus on what social capital actually means: the definition of social capital involves different objectives and emphases depending on the theoretical direction and political leanings of each researcher. It
is not merely a theoretical concern. Moreover, there are further issues regarding the way it is understood and analysed, and its wider policy context where it's applied.

The fuzziness of the concept results in problems with its measurement and disputes over whether or not social capital is in decline. Paxton (1999) points out two reasons for the disagreement in the assessment of social capital: there has been a large gap between the theoretical definition and its measurement, and the evidence provided has relied on an oversimplified indicator to assess social capital which is constructed with general concepts. Moreover, much data used to measure social capital is based on secondary statistical sources (Sixsmith et al. 2001). The adequacy of data and ultimately, its indication of social capital are potentially questionable. The main problem with the measurement of social capital, however, seems to be in the fact that it is using the outcomes of social capital (public good) as indicators of social capital, which is a tautology (Portes 1998, Stone 2001). An assessment of social capital is also criticised for its rather exclusive focus on social problems. Reflecting the situation that social capital is mainly discussed in the social policy context as a solution to various social problems, empirical research which applies the concept of social capital tends to emphasise what deprived neighbourhoods may lack rather than what affluent neighbourhoods may possess. Such a tendency not only generates a partial view of social capital, but also misses examining the importance of available resources which facilitate social capital in better-off neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns, 2000).

In addition to these criticisms on the concept of social capital, especially that of Putnam, I would like to discuss further a few issues which are problematic especially regarding its application in a social policy context. First of all, it should
be noted that much of the content of social capital is not new: it has been discussed by many sociologists and anthropologists, especially those who study social networks. In the light of social network analysis, the concept of social capital is about a particular type of social relationships purposely chosen for a particular aim. The aim of social capital, is however, terribly ambiguous when it ceases to have consensus amongst researchers. Moreover, defining social capital in terms of its consequences is not merely about its theoretical characteristic, but causes both analytical and theoretical confusion. A number of elements which Putnam and his followers suggest are hardly proven to have a causal relationship with what they present as an outcome of social capital, namely, social and economic success. At the best, what it suggests is an association between these variables. Lastly, the obscurity and relatively narrow focus of what social capital is and does, involves a risk of misunderstanding various functions and meanings which each social network contains as a whole, many of which are contextually embedded. In contrast with the narrowness of its theoretical focus, the scope of social capital is overwhelmingly vast, which makes it difficult to analyse systematically.

Its application to the practice of social policy therefore requires careful consideration of these issues. The concept of social capital, the variables which are crucial to its assessment, and its outcomes are still unclear and involve a number of questions to be answered.

2.3.2.2 Social capital in Britain

Compared to the enormous volume of literature on social capital in the United States, research on the British example of social capital is still limited (Li,
Y., Savage, M., and Pickles, A. 2003: 498). Regarding the current situation of British social capital, the growing interest of the government is reflected in the establishment of a research group within the government and other practice-oriented interest groups and institutions: the Social Exclusion Unit, the Home Office, the Office for National Statistics, the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills are all carrying out research to measure the British situation of social capital and find a way to apply the concept to solve various social issues. There is also a large ESRC funded programmes.

These researchers within the state funded institutions are aware of the fact that social capital is a complex concept which involves many theoretical and analytical issues to apply to practice. Nevertheless, their work is remarkably focused on the work of Putnam and his followers which emphasise the positive side of social capital. Other works which argue the negative aspects of social capital, especially that of Bourdieu, are rarely discussed. The Office for National Statistics, for instance, states:

There are many possible approaches to defining social capital much to the exasperation of anyone trying to research it. However, there is some consensus within the social sciences towards a definition that emphasises the role of networks and civic norms (Healy 2001). Social capital is generally perceived to be a private and public good (Putnam 2000) because, through its creation as a by-product of social relations, it benefits both the creator and bystander. It is a classic public good because of its non-exclusivity—its benefits cannot be restricted and hence are available to all members of a community indiscriminately (Woolcock 2001).

(Office for National Statistics 2001: 5).
While this must give rise to some questions on the accuracy of their reading, it undeniably reflects what they expect from the theory of social capital. The research and literature reviews are a part of projects on civic regeneration, enhancing self-help groups, and promoting volunteering. The policy responses are seen in a number of projects such as Time Bank, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and Local Strategic Partnerships.

As regards the measurement of social capital, Hall's work (1999) is considered as the touchstone of the study of British social capital. It was published at the very time the notion of social capital and civil society started attracting much interest amongst academics and policy makers. In this article, Hall examines the level of social trust and formal engagement with voluntary associations in three forms: as members of associations, as volunteers, and as donors.

Hall, following Putnam, presents Britain as a counter-example to Putnam's study of declining social capital in the United States. He claims that social capital in Britain during the post-war years is, on the whole, strongly supported by high levels of social and political participation, which he argues is due to three factors: expanded access to higher education, a relatively fluid social class structure and social policy which supported community involvement. On the other hand, there is a considerable decline of social trust. Hall suggests a change in the social norms and morality, which have become more individualistic, as a considerable factor. Overall, social class plays a significant role in distributional patterns of social capital in Britain: the higher the social class, the more active membership they have. He states a concern that the working class might become increasingly marginalised: the British nation is 'divided between a well-connected and highly-
active group of citizens with generally prosperous lives and another set of citizens whose associational life and involvement in politics are very limited' (Hall 1999: 455).

Hall’s analysis is later supported with additional data (Li, Y., Savage, M., and Pickles, A. 2003). In their analysis, the authors investigate how civic participation was linked to social exclusion in England and Wales over three decades. They examine the effect of socio-cultural factors on civic participation and on different types of associational membership. The results show significance in social, cultural and gender variables. Social class is especially prominent of all. While middle class participation is relatively stable, working class access to social capital shows a rapid decline. Using Goldthorpe’s classification of social class, the authors argue that the relative stability of ‘service-class’ membership is linked to the 'constant fluidity' of the ‘service-class’ participation in British society.

There are also counter arguments to Hall’s analysis. In the latest follow-up study, Grenier and Wright (2003) in their updated analysis of social capital in Britain, offer a less optimistic picture, and argue that distributional issues are critical to the study of social capital in Britain. There is a constant and growing split between different social classes regarding their levels of both social and political participation, and social trust. In this respect, Hall’s positive assessment is not sufficient on several points: social capital of a country may look positive, while in fact it is mostly based on a particular social group leaving the rest with constant deprivation, which eventually explains Hall’s paradox of relatively robust social capital and declining social trust. Grenier and Wright (2003) continue to argue that an increasing gap between the rich and the poor may be relative to the changing nature of associational life and the rise in income inequality during the
1980's. They also argue that changing media of communication help to sustain social networks: workplace and new communication technologies are new arenas to be examined for the future development of social networks and trust in Britain. The research findings remind us that both social capital and social networks change over time and so do their variables.

In reference to the issue of social class and its relation to the characteristics of social participation in Britain, the observation that people of higher social class are more socially active implies more than an increasing social inequality and social divide since the Second World War. Despite the fact that social capital emphasises relative equality amongst participants, social participation in Britain is predominantly class based. Partly, it reflects the British tradition of philanthropy which looks at formal social participation as *noblesse oblige* (Beveridge 1942, 1948, Deakin 2001b, Wright 2002). In this sense, a part of British giving is based on social inequality. On the other hand, the working class tradition of mutual support and trades unions are rapidly declining. De-industrialisation in the post-war era and increasing immigration expanded the proportion of middle class in the population while there is a new category of underclass and social divides between different races as well as classes.

On the other hand, concerning the measurement of social capital, Hall’s study is also criticised for its relative lack of concern with cultural variables. In his study, membership in voluntary associations is considered as a way of enhancing the face-to-face interaction in a common endeavour. Grenier and Wright (2003), suggest two problems of such measurement: firstly, it is based on an assumption that individuals with more memberships generate more social capital. Secondly, an assumption as such excludes people with no membership.
This point is probably more significant with ethnic minorities, young people, and women who are understood to have less contribution to social capital. More accurate reflection of membership levels need to be presented for a better understanding. Lowndes (2000), for instance, discusses how gender relates to social capital. She questions the legitimacy of Hall’s assessment of social capital by exploring the role of gender dynamics which is one of the important but neglected aspects of social capital. While Hall is aware of the role of women in sociability and community involvement, he does not analyse gender dynamics. One of the reasons of this neglect could be male-dominance of the political scene. More importantly, Lowndes claims the categorical split of the public and the private as a crucial problem. Several studies suggest that women are engaged in developing their social network in a more informal sphere. For instance, women who are engaged in child-care develop their network through a range of family activities which involves mutuality and reciprocity amongst members. The outcome of these activities in fact, fits features of social capital. It is therefore inappropriate to exclude them from the scope of the study. We need to reconsider the gender dynamics in social participation, and a preconception that women do not have any political role in society. Overcoming the public/private divide in political science is inevitable. The article cuts through different layers of social participation and the formation of social capital. 'In order to investigate the links between social capital, political engagement and “good government”, phenomena such as friendship, caring and neighbourliness all have to be recast as legitimate objects of political enquiry’ (Lowndes 2000: 537).

There is also a change in a form of social participation, and giving. The overall increase of giving 'time' may be a result of an expanded category of
volunteering. Furthermore, volunteering is becoming more and more commercialised in a sense that it emphasises professionalism and pursuing individual benefits and specific benefits for the voluntary organisations in order to encourage participation, rather than a collective good (Grenier and Wright 2003). It is therefore questionable whether or not volunteering can be considered as having the same significance to the state of social capital over time.

2.3.3 Community, social capital and volunteering: further questions

Despite both theoretical and methodological disputes over Putnam's study of social capital, it still wields much influence in both the American and British social policy context. The situation is hardly surprising for several reasons. The win-win situation of economic growth and social prosperity which Putnam insists is itself highly attractive to policy makers. Although one may wonder if things would work really so easily, and then why no one realised it before, Putnam's social position as a professor of public policy at Harvard University, a former dean of the JFK School of Government and a public advocate for social change, has enough power to convince policy makers. In a sense, Putnam himself is a precise example of his own theory of social capital: his possession of social capital gives him an opportunity to pursue socio-economic success and ultimately to promote civil society. Furthermore, the main data his theory is based on, while their legitimacy is questionable, are national and regional surveys. It is also convenient in the policy context as it shares the framework of policy making.

As I have discussed above, not only is Putnam's theory of social capital challenged for a number of reasons, but more generally, the notion of social
capital is extremely complex. In its application to social policy context, the link between the third way logic and Putnam's idea of social capital contains a paradox. One aspect is about the issue of social exclusion. While the third way policy has a specific emphasis on the issues of social exclusion, unemployment and civil society, and applies Putnam's idea of social capital as a solution, his theory actually does not have a link with social exclusion. Social exclusion is, on the contrary, a part of the negative consequences of social capital which is discussed by other theorists and not Putnam.

Another related issue is the narrowly focused association between social capital and formal social participation. Looking at only formal participations certainly has convenience in measurement, however, it neglects the fact that formal participation is only one type of social participation, and there are other forms of social participation which may well have similar effects as social capital claims.

In the case of social capital in Britain, existing research indicates the significance of cultural variables such as ethnicity, gender and social class. What is particularly interesting is social class. Compared to ethnicity and gender, social class is somehow taken for granted: for its historical significance in social structure, and its influence on social participation, it is considered as one of the most characteristic indicators of British cultural construction of social capital. On the other hand, how social class relates to a degree of social participation remains merely to support its association with a traditional image of formal volunteering: people of higher social class participate more. It offers little insight into the actual way social class influences social participation. The notion of social class in Britain is however, a highly complex issue which transforms over time. There are
a number of studies on modern British social class some of which are referred to, but not analysed, in the research on social capital (Beer 1969, Goldthorpe 1987, Krieger 1999).

The use of the term ‘social class’ in research context is also misleading. Official designations of social class are mostly based on occupational types (Grenier and Wright 2003, Hall 1999, Acheson 1998). This classification has some practical benefits: a simple indicator is ideal for statistical data. Nevertheless, looking at social class merely as a classification of occupational type causes a problem. First and foremost, the notion of social class in Britain can hardly be reduced to an occupational category. There are a number of other elements relative to the idea of social class such as educational background, income, ownership of property, and even more broadly family background, mannerism and life style. How these elements affect one’s social network and possibly one’s social capital is an extremely complex issue. In this regard, focusing on occupational type may not tell us much about how social class relates to social capital in Britain. Moreover, the gap between what social class means empirically and in a research context may not only lead to misunderstanding but ultimately generate a false impact on social policy. A clear distinction between the notion of social class and that of occupational type is required for a better understanding of research objectives.

In this chapter, I have reviewed existing studies on community and social capital in order to understand the context of the research into volunteering. Both theories are important not only for their impact on current British social policy in general, but also because they shed light on a number of aspects of volunteering as a significant example of social participation.
The study of volunteering, however, requires more ground-level analysis because the existing research into volunteering, especially that of social capital, is predominantly dependent on survey data. In the following chapters, I will look at how volunteering works on the ground.
Chapter 3  The Third Way and voluntary organisations in the UK

In this chapter, I will discuss the perception of volunteering and voluntary organisations in British Social Policy. This constructs a wider context of volunteering which especially affects its organisational practice.

The recent change in the climate of British Social Policy has transformed the position of voluntary organisations in social welfare and has led to their active involvement in partnership with Government. The modernisation programme of the New Labour government offered an ostensibly innovative change in its relationship with the voluntary sector as an independent body, with an expectation of increasing the efficiency of the service provision.

In the following sections, I will look at these changes in the policy context and the emerging issues over the reforms.

3.1 Policy entrepreneurs, social enterprise and civil society.

While Britain has a long history of volunteering, the notion of the ‘voluntary sector’ is relatively new in public policy. Until the policy change in the Thatcher government in the 1970s, various concepts such as volunteering, philanthropy, mutuality and charity were used for different purposes and there was no recognised catch-all term which included all of them (Kendall 2000: 6). The notion first appeared in studies in the late 1970s, as represented by the Wolfenden report (1978). The voluntary sector was however, seen as a ‘cost-effective provider, innovator and advocate
operating as a "partner" to the state', and failed to establish its own position in the
discourse which was predominantly either public or private (Kendall 2000: 6). During these years, the role of voluntary organisations expanded dramatically,
but there was also an increasing fear amongst both the public and the stakeholders that
the voluntary sector was becoming a useful instrument of the state (Billis and Harris

It is also an unsurprising characteristic that the British third sector policy is largely
affected by that of the U.S.A. The governments of both countries have similar interests
in their relations with the voluntary sector. There have been a number of cases which
directly relate to US examples in UK public policy (Kendall 2005: 34). The ideas of the
'third way', of Social Capital, and New Deal schemes all started in the UK after their
implementation in America by the Clinton government. It is however questionable
whether or not it is appropriate to apply these strategies directly to the different context
of the UK.

In the late 1990s, there were drastic changes in British social policy: the launch of
a Compact in 1998, the charity tax review, and the reformed and enlarged Active
Community Unit in 1999. It was a remarkable move towards the establishment of the
third sector as an independent body which was neither public nor private, and its
partnership with the government in exploring common objectives. Kendall (2000)
argues that this unprecedented radical change was inevitable given its wider political
context including policies, recognised problems and the political streams, which I will
explore further below.

The absence of any significant development in the 1980s and the early 1990s
reflects the then Conservative government's relative disinterest and unwillingness to
invest in the sector. The government's ideological stance, the dichotomous model of the
market and the state, restricted the role of the voluntary sector. The Labour party as an opposition challenged this approach in the 1980s. After the party was reformed as New Labour, it changed its view and began to claim a pro-market, yet less pro-state position (Deakin 2001a). It was also distinctively communitarian, which was both ‘moralistic’ and ‘authoritarian’ (Kendall 2000: 17). At the same time, in the 1990s, individual giving to charities showed a constant decline, and some research data on the third sector became available. Think-tanks and some individuals also played a role of ‘policy entrepreneurs’ who would adjust their policy agenda to the political climate (Kendall 2000: 20, 2005). In 1996, the Deakin Report was published which suggested a ‘concordat’ between the government and the third sector (Independent Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector in England: 1996). While the recommendation was not heard by the then Conservative government, a Labour MP, Alun Michael, took it as a potential alternative for the reform of policy strategy. A series of meetings between the two prior to publication was deliberately made to construct more tangible recommendations (Kendall 2000: 21-22, Plowden 2003: 418-419). It was in these contexts that the discourse of civil society, the third sector, and social capital came to be recognised explicitly as a useful tool of post-Thatcherite propaganda (Kendall 2000).

The idea of the Third Way comes originally from Giddens (1998) who suggests a renewal of democracy and cooperative relationship between the state and civil society. Volunteering is discussed in terms of its role in fostering civil society. Volunteering in his theory is a tool to enhance democracy. Equality is associated with social inclusion and inequality with social exclusion. From this perspective, volunteering and civic participation are valued for their own sake as they are crucial to ‘involvement’. Similarly, the ‘partnership’ he suggests between the government and voluntary organisations is valued for its ultimate social involvement of citizens since ‘the process
of involvement forces a greater engagement of the people with the work of government’ (Titter et al. 2003: 433).

There are no permanent boundaries between government and civil society. Depending on the context, government needs sometimes to be drawn further into the civil arena, sometimes to retreat. Where government withdraws from direct involvement, its resources might still be necessary to support activities that local groups take over to introduce-above all in poorer areas. (Giddens 1998: 80)

Following this logic, the Home Office and the Treasury set up an agreement on the targets of the third sector. This is characterised by its ‘increasing willingness and ability to quantify objectives’ and ‘a shift from a vague orientation towards voluntarism and volunteering towards an increasingly hard-edged concern with public service involvement’ (Kendall 2005: 27).

However, on the level of practice, the way the Third Way has been applied by the government, has entailed some problems of inconsistency within governmental bodies and the relationship between the voluntary organisations and the state.

The launch of Compact in 1998 was a symbolic change with the New Labour Government’s ‘modernisation’ of their approach to the voluntary sector which initiated its partnership between the state and the sector. However there were several implications in terms of what the partnership meant to both sectors. The programme was aimed at collaboration between the state and the voluntary sector and sharing a public service ethos. The notion of partnership differentiated the scheme from the contract culture of the Conservative government and emphasised the independence of the voluntary sector from the state, and a deeper consideration of the sector’s need for more effective funding, consultation and accountability of service provision. There are
however, some questions yet to be considered: for instance, the existing multilayered system in which various institutional bodies work separately creates logistic obstacles to communication. Moreover, Compact is a scheme of an agreement between the government and voluntary organisations and not a legal document. It does not, therefore have any legal force to regulate the practice (Plowden 2003). Without having any legal constraints, its effectiveness remains questionable.

Compact was also a precursor of a number of other partnership arrangements such as New Deal for the unemployed, Education Action Zones, Health Action Zones, New Deal for Communities, New Commitment to Regeneration, Sure Start and childcare, all of which carried a further aim of tackling ‘social exclusion’ and promoting the ‘active welfare state’ (Lewis 2005: 124). Orientation to community building and tackling unemployment and social exclusion were especially prominent in these projects. They reflect ideologies of the third way and social capital which claim economic as well as social effects of community and the implementation of voluntary organisations.

In the 2000s, the idea of active partnership developed more explicitly on a number of occasions. Partnership was to involve voluntary organisations in the government’s projects to regenerate community at the local level, share the objective of public service and promote the public sector ethos. Gordon Brown expressed his view on the decentralisation of the state and how the state could benefit from working together with the voluntary sector by sharing common values and ethos (Brown 2000). Similar vision was also noted in policy documents (Strategy Unit 2002, HM Treasury 2002).

There are however, a number of criticisms over the practice of partnership for its disparity from what it claims. Lewis (2005) argues that the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector is far from equal as the Government claims. In terms of the Government, partnership emphasises collaboration rather than competition.
Nevertheless, the contractual nature of partnership and limited funding on offer in reality give more constraints to voluntary organisations than initiatives: voluntary organisations are forced to adjust their goals to that of the government. The characteristic difference between the public and the private sectors becomes blurred. Growing expectation of professionalism and an increasing number of paid staff within the voluntary sector eventually raise questions over using the voluntary sector to meet the Government's goals, and its appropriateness in enhancing bottom-up participation in the community (Burckhardt et al. 1999). These arguments suggest that no matter how it is presented, the nature of contract has the effect of standardising the work of voluntary organisations in the government's favour, which is potentially fatal to the identity of voluntary organisations. Moreover, the fact that many voluntary organisations are facing financial difficulties, and most funding schemes are short-term and inconsistent inevitably creates severe competition amongst organisations over funding (Harris 2001). This reality implies further issues: first, voluntary organisations put themselves into a weaker position with respect to the Government and are forced to give up their initiatives. It also makes the field of funding exclusively based on funding requirements and generates a greater disparity between voluntary organisations which are on the side of the government and those which are not. It has also been reported that smaller and community organisations and many ethnic minority groups do not perceive Compact as an opportunity (Taylor 2003). The lack of trust especially at the local level is an enormous obstacle to the involvement of small organisations (Fenton, Hems and Passey 1999).

Furthermore, there is substantial incoherence within government bodies: their objectives regarding governance, unemployment and social exclusion, are interpreted and worked on in slightly different ways in the Home Office and the Treasury (Kendall
2005: 27). Similar incoherence in attitudes towards Compact is also recognised at the local level (Taylor 2003). Elsewhere, regarding user-involvement, there is significant disagreement over the definition of service user amongst different statutory organisations. This is especially prominent in the area of health and community care (Tritter et al. 2003). While partnership promotes user-involvement in the process of service provision, voluntary organisations’ reaction to such schemes also varies depending on their capacity for change and values. User-involvement is also concerned with power relationships between providers of various positions and service users, which themselves are complex. The reality of user-involvement is therefore, highly limited and requires both institutional and environmental changes (Locke, Robson and Howlett, 2001). In Giddens’s writing, such diversity in voluntary organisations is neglected and the voluntary sector is treated as a homogenous unit (Tritter et al. 2003).

The issue of user-involvement also illustrates how the third way logic affects the position of service users and ultimately the role of the state in social welfare. First of all, user-involvement claims to empower service users and give them more initiatives. Le Grand (1997, 2003) looks at it from a perspective of agency and motivations. He argues that the New Right and later to some extent the Third Way have transformed the ‘knights’, championing the paternalistic and altruistic role of the state, into ‘knaves’ who are instrumental and self-seeking. Under the protection of knights, service users in the previous system were perceived as helpless and dependent ‘pawns’. Empowering service users is therefore, an attempt to make them less dependent and active. Such a metaphor illustrates how the social welfare ethic is giving way to an entrepreneurial market ethic. The relationship between the government and service users is therefore, based on the deal of rights and responsibilities. The adoption of a market strategy in public policy treating service users as customers comfortably fits into this logic. Service
users are perceived as individuals who have a choice and whose voice is reflected in the service they receive. Applying the logic of market and labelling service users as customers is however, potentially highly misleading. Service users of the public sector are distinguished from the customer in the private sector regarding collective values, the legal obligation of participation, and the limit on services they can receive and their impact on service provision. It is argued that a customer focus strategy devalues citizenship and distorts the relationship between the state and citizens (Alford 2002).

This shift from a passive welfare of dependency culture to an active welfare one is also argued in a wider cultural context which indicates a changing perception of social responsibility. Rodger (2003), for instance, argues one of such changes in social perception under the name of ‘post-emotionalism’ and observes ‘the tendency for feelings to be intellectualised rather than sincerely felt; the tendency for social interaction in contemporary western societies to be lubricated by a false display of “niceness”; and by the manipulation of “emotions” in the creation of synthetic tradition for political objectives’ (Rodger 2003: 414-415). He claims that the popular discourse of the age of consumerism and utilitarian individualism in contemporary Western societies transforms altruism to mutual insurance of self-interested individuals (Rodger 2000, 2003). Rodger suggests that supporting welfare is not the same as caring about the poor. Social welfare is understood as an investment rather than supporting those who are in need. He argues that post-emotional attitudes in welfare are a by-product of the Government’s steering towards amoral familism in social policy; the way the Government talks of how poverty and social needs should be perceived draws a guideline of how we should feel about social issues. Amoral familism, originally introduced by Banfield (1958), refers to an attitude based on ‘the dictum that the individual should maximise the material and short-run advantage of their nuclear family
and assume that everyone else in the community would behave similarly’ (Banfield in Rodger 2003: 415-416). The problem of amoral familism is seen as that it is the antithesis of solidarity in community and the pursuit of common good. Rodger argues that at best, the prevailing amoral familism accommodates to welfare issues by regarding welfare as a mutual insurance based on personal interests in resources for securing individuals and their immediate family. Such understanding corresponds to the discourse of the Third Way which is not so much about meeting the needs but managing risks and applies market logic to social policy. ‘The attitudes, lifestyle choices and, crucially, the economic relationships structured by the new welfare paradigm contribute to a society less concerned with solidarity and more concerned with self and family’ (Rodger 2003: 416).

By incorporating Le Grand’s model and Rodger’s discussion, Dean (2003) further examines the empirical data on public service providers and popular discourses and claims that popular discourse acknowledges the necessity of human interdependency to support social welfare while the public service ethos and the sense of responsibility remains significant in public service provider ethos. They both on the other hand, tend to share an individualistic idea of human responsibility which is more moralistic than ethical. Overall, the idea of rights and responsibility, unlike prevailing understanding against dependency culture, suggests that some level of dependency is inevitable, for which people are entitled to claim. The data shows that the concept of responsibility is understood more in terms of human nature than post-emotionalism claims: ‘people’s sense of agency may be increasingly detached from any solidaristic ethos, but this does not mean that either citizens or welfare providers have entirely ceased to be capable of knightly feelings...people do by and large espouse an implicit theory of social justice’ (Dean 2003: 705). The Third Way discourse however, claims a more narrowly
individualistic sense of responsibility and denies dependency. It is this distorted ethic of responsibility, which the author claims, may be a future problem of social welfare.

Finally, in addition to these debates, the Third Way is also challenged for its overemphasis on formal volunteering. In 2005, there were 188,000 charities registered with the Charity Commissions in Britain, and it is estimated that there are two or three times this number of non-registered voluntary and community organisations (Lewis 2005). This phenomenon is especially prominent amongst small ethnic minority organisations, a great number of which are not even aware of the policy context (Plowen 2003). Williams (2003a, 2003b) argues that the Third Way’s overemphasis on formal volunteering through an organisation ultimately causes an exclusion of the informal volunteering which is often found in deprived neighbourhoods. While both formal and informal volunteering are recognised in UK policy, there is a hierarchy which treats formal volunteering as a more mature and evolved form of volunteering. Looking at the results of four nationwide surveys, Williams (2003b) describes how informal volunteering which is still undervalued in the Third Way logic, plays a significant role in deprived neighbourhoods. In such context, what is required is an alternative policy, what Williams discusses as the Fourth Way approach, which can facilitate the existing culture of support system rather than imposing the Third Way policy which promotes only the formal volunteering that is unfamiliar in those neighbourhoods.

3.2 Discussion: the Third Way policy and volunteering

In this section, I have described the recent changes in the climate of British social policy and its impact on practice. These changes are not only a reform of social welfare but also a political event which happened in a particular context and which was
The reform is characterised by a few themes: the Third Way, Partnership, Compact, and Social Capital, all of which argue that volunteering and voluntary organisations are crucial to the modernisation of social welfare. Volunteering is essential because it is a form of social participation for common good. It promotes social solidarity and helps sustain the sense of community. The more volunteering people do, a better community they have, and eventually it may solve other social problems such as social exclusion and unemployment. However, such picture cannot be drawn so easily.

On the one hand, a relatively narrow focus on particular academic debates on the Third Way and Social Capital seems to have generated an overoptimistic view as to what volunteering and voluntary organisation could offer to improve social problems, and neglected the complexity of the issue. On the other hand, the implementation of the newly established policy has raised debates over the identity of voluntary organisations and their relationship with the state. Despite the government’s emphasis on its equal relationship with voluntary organisations and on giving them initiatives in the course of service provision, many voluntary organisations are facing a dilemma as the conditions of partnership are, in reality, forcing them to trade off their initiatives for resources. While studies of social welfare and public policies discuss these aspects from various perspectives, their objectives are predominantly focused on macro-level issues which directly reflect the policy context. These studies give us an insight into the political context of social policy. However, as a consequence, micro-level analysis is at the best concerned with the management of voluntary organisations, and local administration of social policy. Such a discrepancy between the macro- and micro- level issues also corresponds to the disparity between political-ideological discourse and how it’s applied in practice. Volunteering in this regard offers an interesting example. On the one hand,
political discourse emphasises the social significance of volunteering. On the other hand, volunteering is a taken-for-granted concept whose complexity is hardly talked about in the policy context: the definition and diversity of volunteering has been out of the realm of discussion. Moreover, volunteers who are the major workforce of many organisations are entirely ignored, and left as an issue of volunteer management.

It is at this point that we start seeing a part of the potential reason why policy implementation fails to achieve its objective of effective partnership between the state and voluntary organisations. In the following ethnographic case study, I will explore what role volunteering and voluntary organisations are expected to take and whether they do so.
Chapter 4  Towards an anthropology of volunteering

In the previous chapters I have looked at theoretical issues and policy context of volunteering. In the rest of the thesis, I will explore these issues ethnographically. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to introduce the field site and research strategies I applied in the process of data collection.

4.1 Field site and research strategies

The following data is based on twenty months fieldwork which took place in the period from September 2002 till June 2004. I applied several research strategies according to the aim of my fieldwork, the availability of information, and the appropriateness of a strategy in the field.

In order to explore how volunteering was practiced on the ground level, I chose participant observation as the main research strategy: I stayed in two voluntary organisations as a volunteer and learnt how people volunteered by working with other volunteers, paid workers and service users, and observing them. I also collected data from people who lived in the neighbourhood of the organisations by having informal communication with them. Not all of these individuals were volunteers but I met them through the volunteers. These contacts helped me to look at the wider social context of the voluntary organisations. Other information regarding quantitative data of the Borough and other registered organisations in the Borough was obtained from the Town Hall, the internet website of the local authority and local libraries, which gave me more general understanding of the voluntary organisations in the Borough. In addition, I had three semi-structured interviews with volunteers.
The semi-structured interview was also one of the main research strategies at the initial stage of my fieldwork. However, it turned out to be not effective in the field which inevitably changed my research strategy. Despite my expectation that being a volunteer would allow me to see many other volunteers, after a few months of volunteering, I came to a conclusion that being a volunteer did not guarantee that I could meet a lot of other volunteers. This was because most people were volunteering individually or as a replacement for other volunteers. The situation was however, slightly different in the two organisations. As I will describe in the following chapters, all volunteering activities took place within the organisational space in one organisation whereas in the other organisation activities were mostly located outside. As a consequence, I had more opportunities to see volunteers by staying in the building of the former organisation, but had to join various activities more actively in the latter. I also asked paid workers to give me an opportunity to meet other volunteers, but that did not bring about a significant improvement.

Having had difficulties with meeting volunteers, I asked a paid worker to enclose a letter with a newsletter to volunteers to arrange an interview for my research. In the letter, I explained my research and my wish to find interviewees. A paid worker sent it out to fifty volunteers from whom I had only three positive responses. This surprisingly negative result proved this strategy to be inappropriate. On the other hand, interviewing volunteers with whom I developed a personal relation had a different result. After getting to know each other personally, most people expressed awkwardness in having an interview with any formality: they stated that they would be happy to talk about their stories but not in an interview setting. Even when I managed to have an interview with the three volunteers, two of them refused to be recorded.
This difficulty came as a great surprise as I had no such problem when I had an interview with volunteers through the same organisation a year earlier. The difference seemed to be due to the fact that on the previous occasion, it was the organisation who chose the interviewees. Even though my research purpose was the same, I was not an insider but an outsider to the organisation. Looking back, I was rather treated as a guest in a sense that people cared for what I was doing and they made an extra effort accordingly. This does not mean that the interviews I had before had no credibility however, it indicates that different research strategies could result in different data.

In the case of paid workers, the difficulty was their lack of time. They were mostly preoccupied by a constant flow of visitors, enquiries and their individual job on a daily basis, and many were often out of the office. In both organisations, the lack of time was such a serious issue that they had to communicate with each other by email, phone and leaving notes at the desk. In this situation, arranging an interview with paid workers was extremely difficult. Although some paid workers reacted positively to my idea of arranging an interview with them, the plan was postponed several times and never happened in the end.

As a consequence, I relied on note taking as a means of data collection and preservation mostly out of my informants' sight.

4.2 Choosing and settling in the field

The first few months of my fieldwork were spent in finding my field site.

I chose the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, out of twelve boroughs and the City of London in Inner London, because of a few factors which seemed more suitable for the purpose of my research: its active involvement in voluntary work and community projects which covered a wide range of activities, its large database of
voluntary organisations accessible to the public, and the sharp contrast between
different social groups and the density of population which reflected some of the
characteristics of the urban environment in London. The active involvement of the
borough in voluntary work was also reflected in its policy implementation: it was one of
the first local authorities which responded to the new schemes of national policies such
as Compact in 2001.

The Borough is located in the central part of London and known for major
universities, museums, embassies and a number of most exclusive residential areas. It is
the most densely populated local authority in the United Kingdom. In 2001, its resident
population was over 158,919 (Office for National Statistics 2001). Its ethnic
composition is: 79% white, 7% Afro-Caribbean, 4.9% South Asian, 1.6% Chinese and
7.5% others. As for religion, 62% of the residents considered themselves Christian,
8.4% Muslim, 2.2% Jewish, 12.4% believers of other religions, and 15% with no
religion (ibid.). While the Borough had the largest number of high-earners; whose
income was over £60,000 per year, it also had some of the most deprived areas in the
country which were concentrated in the north. According to the Index of Multiple
Deprivation 2004, much of the north of the Borough was within the top 20% of the most
deprived areas of England, some of which was within the highest 10%. The main issues
of these areas were low incomes, unemployment, high crime levels and poor health
(The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2005). The contrast between the rich
and the poor was also associated with an ethnic divide: the white population tended to
live in the south of the Borough which was affluent whereas black and mixed race
population tended to live in the north.

I looked for a voluntary organisation with a few key features: first of all, I was
interested in an organisation through which people volunteered regularly in their daily
lives. Secondly, I looked at an organisation which was secular and not a politically oriented or faith-based organisation. Since volunteering motivations was part of my research questions, I wanted to find a place where I could meet volunteers with various backgrounds and interests, rather than those who were driven by a strong belief shared amongst the majority of membership. Thirdly, I chose an organisation which was locally-based: it was about my interest in the relation between volunteering and community and the significance of neighbourhoods in volunteering.

I searched for the list of voluntary organisations registered in Kensington and Chelsea on the internet website of the Borough. The list included 368 organisations located all over the Borough. As I was still unfamiliar to the area, I decided to walk around and visit the voluntary organisations on the list one by one. At the beginning, I sent a letter to the organisations asking for an interview to get general information about their activity. It was not only time consuming but also inefficient since almost no organisation replied to the letter. I asked my department to write a letter of reference for my fieldwork and started visiting them without an appointment. Although I always carried my university ID when I visited these organisations, carrying an official letter was more effective and helped my communication with paid workers: I had a more serious and co-operative reception when I showed a letter, and more easily managed to talk to those who were responsible at each organisation.

As I went through the list, I found out that quite a few organisations were closed, had moved out or opened irregularly due to a shortage of funding and staff. There were also organisations which were focused on fundraising or administrative work, and not directly providing services. Many organisations which were in a residential building were particularly difficult to find. There were organisations which did not have any sign outside, and those which had its name only on the buzzer at the entrance. The relative
quietness of the area and the suspicious look of these organisations seemed not to attract many visitors. In some cases, even the residents of the same building had no idea of the existence of an organisation.

As I walked around in the Borough visiting various organisations, I noticed that there were a few areas which attracted many voluntary organisations. These areas were likely to have a large NHS hospital, churches, and council estate buildings. They were also more likely to be on the boundary areas between the rich and the poor.

In the northern part of the Borough which was known for its high crime rate and ethnic minority groups, there was a voluntary bureau and the local authority was renting out a large space to a number of voluntary organisations for a cheap rate. The southern part of the Borough was significantly wealthier, nevertheless, there were a few spots with poorer neighbourhoods. These places were typically characterised by council estate buildings, rather than private housing, mostly built in the 1950s and 60s.

Wealthy areas and poor areas were in many cases next to each other but clearly separated by a single road: it was common to see that one side of a street was inhabited by wealthy residents and the other side was poor. Local residents were fairly aware of a boundary between the two. A boundary could be recognised from the outside by looking at the maintenance of the building, the type of cars parked outside, the amount of rubbish on the street, graffiti and hostels.

In some cases, it was difficult to guess, especially for the non-locals, since much social housing used to be private property in the past, and some public housing had become private under ‘Right to Buy’.
4.3 Two organisations

The two organisations I chose were also located in the areas which signified a geographical boundary between the affluent and deprived neighbourhoods.

I came across the first organisation through a contact in a neighbourhood association; which I will also talk about in Chapter 9. While I was visiting the registered organisations on the list from the borough and I met a woman, Elizabeth, who was a chair secretary of the neighbourhood association. I visited the contact address of the association and found out that it was the private flat where Elizabeth lived.

As I knocked on the door, her husband answered and told me that she was working in a voluntary organisation nearby and gave me the address. I met her at the organisation and made an appointment for the following day to have an interview at her place.

Elizabeth was in her mid-sixties living with her husband who was retired. She was a third generation local resident. She was the chair secretary of a neighbourhood association and used to be also a chairman of the organisation, called Response. The neighbourhood association was set up in the 1970s because a number of residents felt the ‘external pressure’ of their living environment which drastically changed after the Second World War. Elizabeth claimed that the area was wealthy until the affluent residents all left their houses and moved out to the countryside during the war. Many of these abandoned buildings were taken over by the local authority and housing association and made into social housing. Other buildings were bought by individuals and renovated into hostels.

Cheap accommodations attracted young poor workers, navvies, and homeless people from within and outside the country. There were a number of development projects organised by the council. The local residents felt threatened by the declining
property prices of the area and its changing atmosphere. According to Elizabeth, approximately 25% of people lived on state benefits half of whom were in special needs and over 30% of residents had below the national average income level. Elizabeth and a couple of others persuaded their neighbours to set up the association in order to 'protect' the area. After thirty years in 2003, the association was one of few active neighbourhood associations in the Borough. They had a meeting every six weeks, a barbeque party, auctions to raise money and sometimes sent a newsletter depending on the person who was in charge.

Elizabeth was also taking a major part in the nearby voluntary organisation called Response. Response was established around the same period as she set up the neighbourhood association by a few young locals whom she knew, reacting against some of the development projects and increasing population who were in need. It was a registered charity and located on the main street next to its sister organisation, a legal advice centre.

The organisation was funded both by public and private bodies; national and local grants, service agreement, fundraising and private donations. It was run by a management committee which was constructed by its trustees who were elected annually by its members.

In a brochure the organisation described their aim as to 'empower' those who were 'marginalised' by providing 'services, training and activities that would otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible to them'. The organisation expanded their services over the years as their funding situation improved. At the time of my fieldwork, they were offering free computer facilities, a low cost photocopying machine, a low cost fax machine, free English courses, computer courses, a homework club for local children, leisure activities, and meeting rooms for the local community meetings. Tea and coffee
was provided for thirty pence to all visitors at the reception in which there was free access to computers and an information service on welfare matters and local events. Wheelchair access was built in 2000 which was the only disabled access in public facilities in the area. In summer, there was an annual festival which started in 1994. It was the biggest project of the organization and the major local event. In 2003, a local newspaper was re-established after several periods of absence since it was launched initially in 1975. Unlike the other organisation, Sixty Plus, the service users involved a wide range of individuals. As a ‘community centre’, the organisation welcomed all visitors and did not have any measure for the eligibility of their service users. While they did not know the exact number of service users, they said there were approximately 400 visitors of various backgrounds every week.

The organisation had seven rooms: on the ground floor, there was a reception with a glass wall which was facing the main road. The glass wall was used as a notice board in order to attract attention from passers-by. Behind the reception was a large meeting room which was used for various purposes: meetings, language courses, and social events. Next to the meeting room was a computer room and a small office. In the basement, was the main office for the paid workers, another computer room with older computers and an office which was used by small support groups with low levels of funding for the Somali and the Albanian-Kosovoan population.

Since they frequently had thefts, each room had a security lock which could be opened only by those who shared the key code.

There were three full-time workers; a male director, a female administrator and a male junior officer, and four part-time female workers who were in charge of different projects. While senior staff; the director, administrator and a couple of part-time
workers, had worked for the organisation for years, others (especially younger workers) did not stay more than a year.

There were from twenty to thirty volunteers helping the organisation mainly in the reception, homework club, and the newspaper group. The organisation was open from 9 am to 5 pm during weekdays and from 11 am to 5 pm on Saturdays. The office hours were however, kept only for the reception area and were expanded on a daily basis due to the large demand for various services. A full-time worker could easily stay in the organisation up to twelve hours or over per day.

As for the volunteers, volunteering for *Response* did not require any formal procedure. Usually, those who were interested in volunteering popped in or were introduced by other locals who knew about the organisation.

I was introduced through Elizabeth, who had worked for the organisation for a long time, according to the administrator. We sat down at the reception where visitors and service users were having tea, talking or using computer facilities. She asked my availability and contact details and we agreed that I would start volunteering on the following day. She also told me that the expense could be reimbursed up to £3.50. The whole procedure took ten minutes. Instead of having an induction and a handbook, volunteers usually learnt the basics of volunteering activity through experience and communication with paid workers and other volunteers for advice.

For the volunteering at reception, paid workers usually contacted a volunteer by phone and arranged a timetable. For other activities, once there was an agreement between a volunteer and a paid worker, the volunteer turned up at the time of each activity without making any appointment each time. This was partly due to the fact that there was a paid worker in charge of these activities and the absence of one volunteer
did not create many problems whereas the reception was entirely dependent on the volunteers.

The paid workers were willing to have their own volunteer policy but did not know exactly how. On some occasions, I was asked if I knew any useful contact for them to learn about volunteer policy. Their plan however, remained as a plan due to the lack of time and resources.

The other organisation, *Sixty Plus* was in the building under a motorway which was located at the beginning of the poorest neighbourhood in the north of the Borough. The building contained a number of offices rented out to various voluntary organisations at a cheaper rate. It was set up in 1994 and run by the local authority.

*Sixty Plus* aimed at ‘supporting the independence and well-being’ of the elderly aged over sixty who lived in the Borough and ‘providing volunteering opportunities’ to those who were interested. It was a registered charity and had a management committee of trustees elected by its member organisations: local organisations supporting the organisation at the annual general meeting. Like Response, the organisation was also funded by both public and private bodies; grants, fund raising, service agreements, and donations. While paid workers complained about the constant need to apply for small amounts of funding, the organisation was in a more secure position than other organisations because of their good reputation in the Borough: their social contribution was recognised by winning awards on various occasions, and their stable partnership with social workers which helped them minimise their financial instability.

There were seven full-time female workers and one part-time male worker. The director, administrator, volunteer co-ordinator, and the part-time worker were senior staff who worked for the organisation for a long period whereas the others were younger – in their early 20s – and whose positions were constantly replaced every year or two.
The organisation offered a wide range of support services including home visiting, practical help such as repair and replacement of a bulb, escorted group shopping, gardening, health programmes and advice, sending birthday and Christmas cards, home visiting and befriending by telephone. They also arranged social and leisure activities. Providing information was another scheme: the organisation published a guide book which contained information concerning social services, housing, financial support, leisure and transport. A newsletter was sent four times a year to all service users and volunteers who had volunteered in the last twelve months. The organisation was open on weekdays from 9am to 6pm. Unlike Response, Sixty Plus kept to their office hours and 1 hour lunch break. Even though there were some occasions such as before major events when they had to work over their official working hours, they usually tried to keep to their office hours as much as possible.

The organisation had a large database both of volunteers and service users which was shared by the paid workers.

There were over 1500 service users registered with the organisation. They were called 'members', and around half of them were receiving direct support from the organisation. Many of them got in touch with the organisation through a social worker and others through a personal contact or other organisations.

Most services were provided by volunteers. At the time of my fieldwork, over 120 volunteers were active. These volunteers had diverse backgrounds in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. According to the organisation, approximately, 70% of volunteers including ‘intergenerational all-girls school volunteers’ were female and 30% were male. As for the age distribution, 20% were under 20 years old, 30% ranged from 25 to 49 years old and 50% were aged 50 and over, up to 82. With regard to ethnicity, 40% were White British, 10% were Asian and South East Asian, 15% were Black Caribbean and
African, 25% were White European. Some of the volunteers were both givers and receivers of volunteering.

Volunteer recruitment involved a fairly formal procedure which was similar to that of paid employment. A volunteer candidate had to apply by filling in a volunteer application form which included the contact details of the applicant, applicant's motivations to volunteer, preference in the type of volunteering activity as well as previous experience of both paid and paid work, and the skills the applicant could offer to the organisation. Despite this contrast in the volunteer recruitment procedure, in both organisations, there was a shortage of volunteers throughout the fieldwork period. Paid workers therefore, made a strenuous effort to welcome new volunteers rather than imposing rigid measures against those who showed their will to volunteer as it happens in paid work recruitment.

The organisation also had an Equal Opportunities policy, which claimed the value of individual differences as reflected by socio-economic background, race and ethnic origin, religion and cultural diversity, disability and sexuality. A volunteer applicant was asked to read the Equal Opportunity Statement and complete a monitoring form which was to be enclosed with the application form.

The application required two passport size photographs and two references from non-family members who had known the applicant for more than two years. In the case of people from abroad, who were not able to have the references, the organisation offered specific volunteering tasks such as group activities. The organisation introduced a declaration of criminal record in 1999 reflecting 'the change of social context'. However, a criminal record did not lead to an automatic disqualification from volunteering: depending on the type of record, the organisation offered a limited number of activities under the supervision of the volunteer co-ordinator.
A few weeks after the application, an interview took place for up to forty-five minutes at the organisation. In this interview, the applicant and the volunteer co-ordinator discussed the applicant's interests, availability and related issues based on the application form. They also discussed volunteer policies and procedures, and what volunteering opportunities could benefit both the applicant and the service users. All information provided in this procedure was confidential and kept in the organisation's data base which was shared by the paid workers for the future management of the volunteer.

Once this procedure was completed, the volunteer co-ordinator arranged an activity for a volunteer. Volunteers were given a volunteers' handbook which described their volunteer policy; rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the organisation. These documents were used to clarify volunteers' tasks and parameters in order to prevent potential troubles; how to deal with the recipients' request for excessive work, how to handle recipients' money and the sudden injury or illness of either volunteers or recipients. They also asked volunteers to carry an identification card with a photograph every time they volunteered.

With regard to the support and training of volunteers, all volunteers received an induction into the organisation. The volunteer expenses were reimbursed to volunteers in return of a volunteer's submission of a receipt. Training programme was not a part of a course but organised occasionally when the paid worker found its need. While they offered a training opportunity to all volunteers, there was usually very few who turned up. The main support the organisation provided to volunteers was a regular supervision through a personal contact by phone. A volunteer co-ordinator was responsible for this job and she asked volunteers' level of satisfaction and potential problem which they could work on together. The information exchanged between volunteers and the
Volunteer co-ordinator was then kept in the data base of the organisation and used for the future. Moreover, all volunteers were covered by the organisation's insurance policy concerning any activities authorised by the organisation.

As a whole, I had access to 103 volunteers during my fieldwork, 42 volunteers through Response and 61 volunteers through Sixty Plus. Amongst these, I had a regular daily or weekly contact with 27 volunteers of Response and 24 of Sixty Plus including three volunteers with whom I also had a semi-structured interview.

Volunteers of Response were engaged in taking care of the reception (7 volunteers), homework club for school children (4 volunteers), language course (2 volunteers), computer course (2 volunteers), and newspaper editorial group (12 volunteers). Volunteers of Sixty Plus took part in shopping trips (7 volunteers), home visits (2 volunteers), telephone link (5 volunteers), gardening (4 volunteers), escorting (3 volunteers), and office work (3 volunteers).

With regard to the demographic composition of the volunteers of Response, 13 (48%) were female and 14 (52%) were male. As for the age distribution, 4 (15%) volunteers were under 30 years old, 8 (29.5%) were in their 30s, 2 (7%) were in their 40s, 5 (19%) were in their 50s and 8 (29.5%) were aged over 60. There were 12 (44%) volunteers who were unemployed, 8 (30%) employed for part-time, and 7 (26%) were employed for full-time. Their national origin is: 15 (55.5%) were white British, 2 (7.5%) were British of other origin, 4 (15%) were European, 3 (11%) were Asian and 3 (11%) were from various other parts of the world. As for religious backgrounds, 10 (37%) volunteers considered themselves as Christian, 2 (7%) as Muslim, another 2(7%) volunteers identified themselves with other religion and 13 (49%) with no religion. During my fieldwork, 9 (33%) people stopped volunteering at different time.
At Sixty Plus, 14 (58%) volunteers were female and 10 (42%) were male. Regarding their age, 4 (16.5%) volunteers were under 30 years old, 6 (25%) were in their 30s, 5 (20%) were in their 40s, another 5 (20%) were in their 50s, and 4 (16.5%) were above 60 years old. There were 11 (46%) volunteers who were unemployed, 8 (33%) employed for part-time, and 5 (21%) volunteers who were employed for full-time. As for their national origin, 11 (46%) were white British, 3 (12.5%) were British of other origin, 2 (8%) were European, 3 (12.5%) were Asian and 5 (21%) were from various other parts of the world. With regard to their religious background, 12 (50%) volunteers considered themselves as Christian, 2 (8%) volunteers as Muslim, 3 (13%) volunteers identified themselves with other religion and 7 (29%) with no religion. Amongst these, 8 (33%) people stopped volunteering during my fieldwork. The following charts illustrate the data described above.
Towards an anthropology of volunteering

**National Origin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Sixty Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other British</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Religious Belief**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Sixty Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Turnover**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Sixty Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers remained</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers left</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following chapters, I will discuss various aspects of volunteering experience and its context based on the ethnographic data from my fieldwork in these organisations.
Chapter 5  Selfish giving? : volunteering motivation

5.1 Introduction

Why do people volunteer? Is volunteering for volunteers or somebody else? These are not only fundamental questions of volunteering but also those which lead us to the questions of the gift. Is volunteering a gift or an exchange? The aim of this chapter is investigating the very starting point of these questions through volunteering motivation.

I have previously mentioned that research on volunteering is predominantly in the area of social policy. Volunteers in this context are treated as a group, put into a single category of work force, and mainly discussed as an issue of human resource management as in paid work. Regarding volunteering motivation, there are different approaches in different fields. A National Survey for instance, recognises a few motivational factors as the most common amongst volunteers such as ‘wanting to help others’, ‘being asked in person’, ‘having time’, and ‘association with other organisations’ (Davis-Smith 1998). The findings offer an interesting overview of volunteer motivation, but survey research also carries a risk of limiting its scope by giving a ready made multiple-choice questionnaire. Questionnaires also tend to miss circumstantial elements and life histories which play a role in volunteer motivation (Sherrott 1983). The need to look at a wider context is also found in studies of related areas. Hooghe (2003) for instance, in his study of social capital claims an association between pro-social attitudes and participation history of respondents.

Similarly, Taylor (2005) discusses volunteering as unpaid work in relation to paid work and describes how personal history affects one’s choice of doing or not doing
voluntary work. Taylor (2005) examines volunteers’ motivation and their relation to voluntary work from the perspective of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1990). What voluntary work means to individuals, she argues, is a reflection of one’s values and way of thinking which are framed by one’s upbringing and family circumstances.

The relation between volunteering and paid work is also examined by Wilson and Musik (1997). By looking at the link between volunteers’ occupational types and volunteering activity they engage with, Wilson and Musik claim the affect of occupational type on volunteering. The authors treat paid work and volunteering as different types of work but somehow along the same lines, and argue a ‘spillover’: participation in volunteering develops from one’s relation to paid work.

On the other hand, volunteering can be also looked at not as unpaid work but as a kind of leisure activity. Stebbins (1982) compares volunteering with amateurism and hobbyist pursuits. The significance of volunteering in this perspective is its emphasis on ‘helping’. While helping could take a part in volunteering and sacrifice can be made, it is only a secondary purpose. In volunteering, these values reverse: helping becomes a primary goal, and hence, it is a ‘serious leisure’. ‘Amateurs and hobbyists struggle through the difficult requirements of their leisure because they are expected to be devotees and because hard work engenders feelings of accomplishment. When volunteers labour, they do so with the conviction that they are needed and that to weaken in the face of adversity is to let down others, disappoint them, or leave serious personal or social problems unresolved’ (Stebbins 1982: 265-66).

The significance of altruism or others’ benefit in volunteering has been somehow uncomfortably set in the discourse of volunteering. While a traditional image of volunteering, which typically comes from the Victorian era, carries altruism as the main part of volunteers’ motivation, altruism almost loses its significance in today’s studies of
volunteering. Scholars are usually suspicious of altruistic motives for volunteering and that the fact that many people choose 'wanting to help others' in survey research is considered as a potential fault caused by a sentiment of having to give the right answer (Davis-Smith 1998, Smith 1983). Altruism is, in a sense, a mask to camouflage self-interests, which corresponds to Berking's argument on the ideology of self-interest as a moral code of practice (Berking 1999). These authors argue that there are personal reasons for volunteering behind altruism (Brooks 2002). Looking at various helping behaviours discussed in the recent sociological studies of altruism Piliavin and Chamg also have come to a conclusion 'it's usually not possible to demonstrate that altruism is truly a cause of voluntarism' (Piliavin and Chamg 1990: 55).

A more socio-psychological analysis still considers altruism as a part of human nature (Hoffman 1981, Schwartz 1977). Batson et al. present empathy as a strong element which leads an altruistic behaviour (Batson et al. 1983). In another study, Batson and Shaw (1991) also suggest that helping others cannot be fully explained by a simple notion of self-interest. Instead, they propose a pluralism of motives which allows altruism and self-interest to co-exist. This corresponds to some empirical studies of volunteers (Chacón and Vecina 2000).

In the following case studies, I will examine motivational factors and discuss some emerging issues in the light of these approaches.

5.2 Case studies: getting involved in volunteering

5.2.1 Two types of motivation, two types of commitment

Unlike a traditional image of volunteers as middle-class, middle-aged housewives, volunteers of both organisations had diverse backgrounds in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic circumstances. Although there were slight tendencies of
finding more women of older age in care-oriented activities, paid workers said its significance was not certain considering the gender proportion in the population and also the change in generation. Paid workers of both organisations also claimed the diversity of volunteers regarding their socio-cultural background.

As volunteers had wide varieties of background, their reasons to volunteer were also diverse. It varied from an obscure explanation such as ‘being asked’, ‘having time’, ‘meeting people’, to a more specific one referring to an activity of their choice such as an interest in the service users’ group and the activity itself. On the other hand, not all volunteers were clear about their motivation. Some volunteers had to spend some time to think before giving me an answer, or expressed their uncertainty. While there is a prevailing understanding that ‘being asked in person’ is a very common and often the most effective strategy to recruit volunteers, volunteers in my field whose motivational elements were either not clear or external such as being asked, showed less commitment to their activity (Davis-Smith 1997, Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). For instance, an organisation sometimes received a complaint from service users that students who volunteered as a part of their school programme sometimes showed relative disinterest or cancelled their appointments without notice: it was common for young teenage students who were encouraged by the school to volunteer to show their reluctance by action. Even though it was not compulsory, volunteers whose participation was not entirely voluntary often ended up in a negative result. The finding supports what Clary and Snyder (1999) argue in their analysis of the use of volunteering opportunity to enhance pro-social behaviour, and negative consequence of involuntary participation.

Overall, many volunteers had more than one reason for volunteering which they thought as influential to their volunteering participation. Multiplicity of volunteering motivation was a remarkable feature.
In the following section, I will discuss volunteering motivation regarding its relation to commitment. What I have found in volunteering motivation and commitment is that there are two types of motivation and two types of commitment. By suggesting two types of motivation, I argue that volunteering motivation changes over time. The multiplicity of volunteering motivation suggests that the initial motivation could actually be anything. In fact, one may not need a clear motivation if it is one-off. The second type of motivation is the one which is relevant to volunteers' long-term engagement. Although a volunteer could have a very clear motivation from the very beginning and maintain it for a long term, in many cases their motivation is renegotiated from time to time. It is because there are a number of factors which affect volunteers' lives and eventually volunteers' motivation to remain as a volunteer.

It is however, important to distinguish motivations from commitments although they were closely linked to each other. While motivation is a driving force to lead individuals into an action, commitment is more to do with the degree of engagement in the action which could be enhanced by a stronger and more persistent motivation. Like motivation, one's commitment to volunteering also changes over time. Furthermore, an important feature of commitment to volunteering has two types: commitment to an activity when they are engaged and commitment to volunteering for a longer time span.

The detailed case studies below illustrate motivational factors which I found recurrently amongst volunteers. Most of these volunteers were also more committed. As regards commitment, these cases are particularly concerned with that of continuity: volunteers in these cases made a constant effort to engage in their daily or weekly activity longer than the three months which was the average time span volunteers stayed in these organisations.
5.2.2 Motivational factors

5.2.2.1 Work experience

There were remarkably larger numbers of people who volunteered for work experience in an activity-oriented volunteering such as a local newspaper group than in care-oriented volunteering. They were mostly in their twenties and early thirties, studying or looking for a job. Not only did they show a particular enthusiasm and have a clear objective in their volunteering participation, they were more likely to apply their work ethic to the volunteering activity they were engaged with. These included time management, group cooperation, and equal participation of individual volunteers as the most important, all of which ultimately affected the efficiency and quality of work. These criteria were constantly applied to assess volunteering activities, and sometimes the work of other volunteers. While these volunteers were appreciated by paid workers for their commitment and enthusiasm, a potential problem of such a work-oriented approach was that they could be easily disappointed with their activity for not being able to reach their standard of work. Moreover, in a group activity, volunteers did not always share the same idealism: some people volunteered to enjoy an activity and some others did not want to make much commitment.

In the case of Paul, his expectation caused him frustration. Paul was one of the regular members of the newspaper editorial group. He was in his early thirties and had a degree in politics and mass media. While he had work experience in a few different fields, at the time of my fieldwork, he was unemployed for a year. Paul had a strong interest in journalism: he was influenced by his father who was a journalist and passed away a few years prior to when we met.

For Paul, volunteering for the local newspaper was not just an entertainment but an equivalent to work. At several occasions, he mentioned his willingness to make the
newspaper 'as good as national ones'. He always came to the meetings, made a number of suggestions and engaged in the whole process of publication. He wrote a few articles in every issue, walked around to make a contract with local shops for advertising, actively attended public meetings, and learnt computer software for editing. Many people who volunteered for work experience, in fact, had a similar level of seriousness in their attitude. Their strong emphasis on efficiency, however, made them critical of other people who were not as enthusiastic as they were and who disagreed with their attitude. Paul was not pleased when other volunteers did not write an article by an expected date. He was not satisfied with the quality of articles which were 'poorly written' and that he had to edit. When the editorial group started making much improvement and receiving letters of appraisal from the readers, he was one of the most proud in the group. On the other hand, his understanding of volunteering grew increasingly negative. Paul commented that it was 'unfair' that the paid workers were paid as much as they were since 'they do nothing'.

I know I agreed to do this for free. But sometimes I feel it's incredibly unfair that we get nothing for so much work...and they (paid workers) can't even give us what we need. We ask them a few things, remind them a lot of times, and we end up getting nothing or very little. We had to learn a lot for that. Now we are much better. Better organised and a lot more efficient, it seems...ah, don't call me a volunteer! I don't want to be called a volunteer, and I'm not. It's degrading. We are more professional.

For Paul, working for the newspaper became an unpaid job. Volunteering was degrading because it was not satisfactory in comparison with an equivalent of paid work. When he saw his work was more 'professional' regarding its quality, he no longer considered himself as a volunteer. It was more appropriate to be called 'unpaid labour'.
5.2.2.2 ‘Because it’s rewarding’: work dissatisfaction

Although there were not many, some volunteers had full-time or part-time paid jobs. These individuals volunteered after work or during weekends. Despite their constraints of time, they showed no less commitment than volunteers who were unemployed. In its relation to paid work, volunteers tended to be either strongly committed while having paid work or they volunteered only when they were unemployed.

George was in his mid twenties, and was doing shopping escort for the elderly. He lived and worked in a rough part of the neighbourhood near the organisation. George had full-time work as a postman. He was talkative and friendly to everyone in the shopping group. On the day we met for the first time, he asked me if I was a ‘regular’ or not. I told him that I was new to the group and explained my research. ‘That’s cool’, he said and asked me if I wanted to hear his story.

His interest in volunteering had ‘several reasons’. He had been volunteering for roughly six months, but he was thinking of volunteering long before. One of the reasons was his work shift. It was because he was free and available.

I have time. Everyday, I finish my shift by noon. I start early but what do you do after? My girlfriend has got work until five. I’m on my own. This volunteering stuff is once or twice a week. It’s good...you know, to fill in some time (laugh).

Another reason was his dissatisfaction with paid work.

It’s pretty impersonal. There is no communication. Do you think it’s strange? I thought so too! (laugh) yeah, it’s not like “having a chat while
delivering”. I don’t get to talk to people at work, but you come here and it’s all different. The ladies are nice and they want to talk, right? I like that.

His volunteering, however, started after his travel to India where his family was originally from. Having seen a ‘different world’, he felt he wanted to do something.

It was just different...things are better here, better there, it depends...but when I came back, I thought old people were treated badly here...it’s not right. I searched on the internet and found the Voluntary Bureau. They sent me here. It’s good, it’s rewarding. I feel better.

The reason that volunteering for the elderly was ‘rewarding’ for George and made him feel ‘better’ in fact had at least two aspects. One was about his dissatisfaction with his paid work, and free time he did not fully enjoy. Another was to do with his concern about the elderly in Britain. His engagement in volunteering somehow solved all his concerns on work, organisation of his private time, and social issues.

5.2.2.3 Practicing English, gardening and those who cannot afford

For those who were from abroad, volunteering could be a good opportunity to practice their English and meet new people. Laurence was one of them. She was in her mid thirties, originally from France. She and her husband had lived in London for a few years. Her husband was a banker and travelled for his work very often. Although she could sometimes accompany him, she was often on her own. She used to work for a journal as a writer before coming to London, however, she didn’t feel her English was good enough to find a similar job in London. She also volunteered at a museum where
she was hoping to get a paid work in the future, but her lack of confidence in language remained. She explained that it was mainly because she didn’t have enough opportunity to talk to English speakers. People she met in London were mostly French speakers who were from her husband’s work contacts and she only spoke French both at home and outside. By visiting the locals who were mostly English elderly people as a volunteer gardener, she found it easier to improve her English.

It’s fun. Most of them are very friendly. At the beginning, I sometimes couldn’t understand what they were saying. I had to ask them to speak slowly. But now, I’m mostly fine...I don’t have a garden of my own, so it’s very enjoyable. The only thing is that I don’t get much chance to do “gardening” because most gardens I visit are not looked after for years and years. So I always end up “cleaning” and “clearing” rubbish. They (service users) usually expect a man to do this “job” (laughter). So some of them look at me a little bit suspiciously at the beginning. It’s like ‘what can you do in this garden?’ But as soon as they see what I do and they are happy, I think. I wish I could do a little more gardening, then I can use my lovely little “tool kit”, not this big scythe from Sixty Plus!

Although Laurence enjoyed her weekly gardening, she said she would only do it for the service users.

Once I told somebody about my volunteering, and they said, ‘oh, you can come and do my garden, if you like’. I would never do that! I said no. Why should I volunteer for them? They can hire a gardener. I volunteer for these people (service users) because they cannot afford a gardener, and they can’t do it by themselves. I wouldn’t otherwise do it for free.
Laurence was also active in talking to the paid workers to improve the services they were offering. She asked them to purchase some gardening equipments which other volunteers may also use, and tried to learn about the organisation as she found that many service users didn’t know what other services they could receive from the organisation. Paid workers listened and appreciated such ideas and suggestions from volunteers and incorporated them into their projects.

Despite the commitment to volunteering she showed, Laurence insisted that she was rather reluctant to make any commitment. As she was always hoping to get a job either in museum or a publishing company, volunteering was not more than an activity she considered doing when she was free.

It’s not that I don’t like it. I do enjoy gardening. But I don’t want to feel any pressure to do it. If I make a commitment, I would feel pressure, and probably feel guilty when I find a job and cannot do it anymore…that’s not what I want.

In fact, her volunteering was reduced when she finally found a temporary job in a museum for which she had also been volunteering. After a few weeks, she told a paid worker about her wish to take a break and said she may come back to the organisation in the future.

5.2.2.4 Carers: familiarity, experience and self-identity

In some cases, people volunteer in order to rebuild self-identity. Some volunteers who were engaged in care-oriented activities had a previous experience of being a carer before becoming a volunteer. For people who had been a carer, volunteering was not only a good opportunity to use the knowledge and skills they learnt from their
experience without any pressure, but also a way to handle bereavement and rehabilitate themselves by doing what they were familiar with. The amount of time people took from bereavement until they started volunteering varied depending on individual circumstances. Some spent years and others took a few months.

In the case of Laura, it was six months. Laura was in her early thirties, lived in a council estate near the organisation she volunteered for. After she finished school, she stayed at home taking care of her mother for a long time. When her mother died of illness, somebody she knew recommended volunteering. A social worker had a good contact with the organisation and it was easy to start volunteering. I met Laura at a shopping trip for the elderly. It was her first volunteering. She was very shy and quietly said that she lived nearby. Laura was in fact born and brought up in the Borough, and she it knew very well, which later enlivened her conversation with other people during volunteering activity. Her experience as a carer often appeared in the way she supported and communicated with service users: she was quicker at picking up subtle signs of individual service user’s health condition and personal needs than other volunteers. When I mentioned it to her, she rather looked surprised and said,

I don’t think I’m particularly good at anything…but maybe. I just know that they cannot walk as fast as we do. You have to look at the bumps because they may not see it. You don’t have to be scared about anything. They know what they can do, so all you need is to wait and see…I never thought it’s anything special. I guess it’s because I’ve done it for long enough…but I like it. The ladies (service users) are all very nice. I enjoy it.

After volunteering regularly for a couple of months trying a few activities, Laura started to take a computer course. It was a preparation for her future career. As she became more engaged in her coursework, her volunteering gradually reduced.
In many cases, carers showed a particularly strong commitment. They volunteered regularly, spent longer hours and were more likely to do extra volunteering, often by request of the organisation. At the same time, their strong commitment sometimes led them into exhaustion. Therefore, taking an occasional break from volunteering was considered necessary in the long run by both paid workers and volunteers.

5.2.2.5 Transition in life

For some individuals, it was the organisation rather than a volunteering activity and service users which played a great part in their motivation.

Sean was in his early sixties. He was one of few volunteers who were a part of the editorial group of the local newspaper from the very beginning. At the initial meeting when the newspaper group was set up, Sean was with his son. He was always well dressed, friendly and talkative. On the newspaper, he had his column in which he wrote a number of historical anecdotes of the Borough and some of his daily thoughts often over a traditional English lifestyle in a reminiscent tone. It was a few months after the newspaper group was set up when I talked to Sean and a paid worker that I learnt he grew up in poverty. Sean said he grew up working at a night club. 'I was so young that girls took care of me, and I had a respect for them' he said proudly. He became successful and came to own a night club in the West End. He then married and had two sons whom he sent to a boarding school.

A few years prior to the time we met, Sean was in trouble with his accountant who caused him a bankruptcy. His marriage finished in the same period. His elder son who lived in Spain after dropping out of school came back with his daughter. His son was alcoholic. Sean loved his granddaughter, 'she is sweet. I love her very much. I'm always amazed how positive this little girl is'. Sean said it was through his elder son who came
to the organisation for a weekly meeting as a part of his rehabilitation program that he got to know the place. The younger son went to an art school. One day, he told Sean that he was homosexual, 'and you know, I’m homophobic. I’m alright with most stuff. And how on earth your son turns out gay?'

These stories which I learnt little by little at various occasions, often over a drink with other editorial members after a meeting, were not all. Sean had more to tell. In the Christmas issue of the newspaper, he wrote an article to introduce the thirtieth anniversary of the legal advice centre run by volunteers. It was a sister organisation of Response next door. The article was written in a slightly different style from his usual articles which carried almost stereotypical images of English middle class life. In the article, he explained that it was his younger son who was engaged in 'some kind of charitable work' who found Sean sleeping rough in despair. He was at the end of his ‘tether, being homeless, penniless and feeling utterly dejected’. It was the organisation which gave him advice and supported him to get back his life.

It sometimes isn’t pleasant to have to admit to ourselves that we need help and advice, but a decision has to be made one way or another, either by you or for you. Since speaking to the Nucleus adviser and following his advice, life has become better for me. I can speak for them as I have had first-hand experience. I was able to turn my life around with the very able assistance of the Nucleus Centre and long may they go on celebrating their successes and anniversaries. (from his article on the newspaper)

It was these experiences Sean went through which led him to engage in volunteering. In some ways, it was not only the volunteering activity which he enjoyed, but also more importantly, the connection he felt with the organisation which helped his commitment to volunteering, and empathy to those who were going through hardships in their life.
5.2.2.6 Being asked

In both organisations, paid workers considered ‘asking in person’ as the most effective device of volunteer recruitment. It was however, uncertain whether they learnt it by experience or through their network with the local authority and other organisations. In fact, recruitment devices which were available to these small voluntary organisations usually were fairly limited: asking in person, leaving brochures and posters at public places, and getting in touch with the local volunteer bureau which was a ‘clearing house’ mediating volunteers and voluntary organisations. In both organisations, paid workers claimed that the lack of funding didn’t allow them to do much for recruitment.

Asking in person was, in a sense, almost the only device they could directly work on. It was also effective because the otherwise voluntary basis of participation could easily be unrecognised by many people. A paid worker said:

It’s just about this idea of ‘free’ participation...if it’s voluntary, people usually don’t pay much attention, don’t think about it...maybe, they do, but not enough to actually make it happen. There are also just too many (voluntary) organisations...especially in London, people are rather annoyed by those fundraisers on the street. Most people don’t bother...it’s (voluntary organisations) everywhere, really...Asking in person is good, not just because people find it difficult to say no...I hope (laugh)...but I think it gives an opportunity to think about it to people who otherwise wouldn’t volunteer even if they are interested.

This observation proved to be fairly accurate during my fieldwork. At an early stage, I wrote a letter to volunteers in order to arrange an interview to hear their experience of volunteering. I enclosed a signed letter in an envelope which an
organisation sent out regularly for their monthly newsletter to those who were connected to the organisation. There were only three responses out of fifty letters. After long waiting and several trials, paid workers and I reached an agreement that asking in person was also about asking for an immediate response and not leaving it to a respondent.

Asking in person was even more effective when the person was familiar with or working in the same field.

Dave was one of the most regular volunteers at Response. He was in his mid forties. He wore a few pierced earrings and tattoos on his arm and his short brown hair was partially coloured. He was talkative and proud to be a ‘working class local’. He lived most of his life in the Borough and knew well about ‘the other part of the local history’ which often entertained people who came to the organisation.

Dave usually volunteered at reception taking enquiries and giving advice to people. He kept an eye on facilities, and occasionally did other work when he was asked. Although he wasn’t always available, paid workers considered him more reliable than other people as he worked at a shelter for young male rough sleepers just around the corner from the organisation. This physical closeness and his understanding about working for a voluntary organisation made him more supportive to the paid workers.

While Dave was happy to volunteer for the organisation, he refused to take a role on a formal occasion. Once he was asked by a paid worker to be at a ceremony for a volunteer held at the Town Hall. He raised his eyebrows and immediately refused.

No. It’s not my thing. Ask somebody else. You’ve got tens of volunteers, right? I can sit here and do what they want but not a “ceremony” (laugh).
Although it was a compliment from the paid workers to his dedication to the organisation, participating in any of what he called ‘charity stuff’ did not attract him. Attending a ceremony was not only making him ‘uncomfortable’ but also nothing to do with what and how he was. What he valued was ‘being practical and directly useful’ to those who needed help. A preference in practical activity was also seen amongst volunteers who actively chose care-oriented activity, regardless of their social-economic backgrounds.

As in the case of Dave, many volunteers had a preference for a type of activity. While paid workers could ask them to volunteer when there was a shortage of volunteers for a particular activity, both organisations regarded it much better to meet volunteers’ preferences in the volunteering opportunities they offered. Sixty Plus was particularly concerned about this point and kept a record of individual volunteers regarding their choice of activities. Asking in person, however, also had a negative effect. Although people usually had a positive response when they were asked, some volunteers found it unfavourable as it made them feel pressurised.

There was a time that I just didn’t feel like volunteering…it happens, but they (paid workers) kept ringing. I told them I wasn’t available. Well, in fact, I simply wasn’t in the mood. They rang me again, I made another excuse…then another call after two weeks. Maybe they thought I would be ready to come back by then…actually, I was, nearly…but that phone call put me off. I was getting annoyed by these constant phone calls. I’m happy to volunteer, but please leave me alone

(a volunteer, 38 years old, single, female)
5.2.2.7 Beliefs, friends and families

Although religious beliefs are still recognised as an important motivational factor in some studies, I came across very few volunteers who talked about their beliefs (cf. Davis-Smith 1997). When I asked volunteers if they had any belief, their answer was remarkably negative. Most volunteers denied the influence of religion or political beliefs on their motivation.

There were also differences in their attitude in terms of their age: older generations in their fifties and over talked more about their concerns on religious and political grounds. The younger they were the less they showed an interest in beliefs.

Amongst volunteers who mentioned beliefs were roughly two types: those who described themselves as an active believer who practiced their religious and political ideas, and those who talked about religion or political issues as one of the circumstantial factors which led them to volunteering. Many of those whom I identified as the latter usually claimed to be atheist or apolitical. It was when they talked about their personal histories and anecdotes in their memories that they started recognising some connections between their interest in volunteering and beliefs, typically those who had a close relationship with the volunteers.

Michael was in his early sixties. He was from Manchester but had been in London over thirty years. His family belonged to the Church of England, but his mother was Irish from a Catholic family. He was however, never interested in religion. Instead, he considered himself more interested in politics. He was especially engaged in education and child care issues, and worked for several organisations both as a volunteer and a paid worker. After his retirement from NSPCC, he took a few years of break and started an occasionally volunteering for children.
I guess it’s in my nature. Religion never occurred to me (as a motivational factor), but looking back, I remember things which my mother used to say, what she was doing for the neighbours and that probably made me think about various things, problems of this society...I was sometimes political, but really, I wasn’t religious. I never went to church. My kids neither…but, if you ask me, I cannot totally deny…I don’t know actually…It’s more about what you hear and what you see and that probably goes over generations. I still don’t want to be called religious, because I’m not. It’s upbringing. It’s as simple as that.

As in this example, volunteers sometimes separated religion as a belief and religion as a part of a moral construct. An interesting aspect of such an attitude is that religion as a moral construct was perceived as secular. Being religious, on the other hand, was associated with a religious practice such as reading the Bible and going to church. In his understanding, Michael was not religious as he neither believed nor practiced religion. Nevertheless, he was affected by its values, attitudes, and a way of thinking through his family who were religious. In the latter regard, religion was no longer considered as religion in a traditional sense.

Such explanation illustrates a complex perception of religion. At the same time, it implies an indirect influence of religion which may be highly likely to be ignored in survey studies and questionnaires.

Another similar issue is decreasing significance of the influence from family members and friends on their choice of volunteering. Apart from several exceptions who talked about their familiarity with volunteering and its connection to their kin members and close friends who were engaged in volunteering, most volunteers rather denied any such connection. Instead, they emphasised that it was their ‘personal’ choice. When I asked further about volunteering experience and its influence on other people around volunteers, many insisted that they did not even talk about their volunteering
experience to their friends and family members. The tendency was more remarkable among younger people; older volunteers were more likely to talk about their volunteering 'as much as you talk about other stuff'. Regarding the reason for not talking about volunteering to their friends and families, a student volunteer in his early twenties said,

I don't see any point. Why should I go on (talking) about my volunteering? Nobody is really interested. They don’t ask me either...and I don’t have that much to say...I guess I have other things to talk about.

For another volunteer in her late twenties, talking about volunteering to others was not only needless but patronising.

It sounds like I'm doing something. I do it for old people, but I enjoy it. I don't feel that I'm doing charity, do you know what I mean?...it's like “oh, you, such a poor thing. I feel so sorry for you. Let me help”, that kind of thing. I think it's really patronising

These volunteers considered actively talking about volunteering to others unfavourable or even distasteful as they regarded it as an expression of self-praise.

5.2.3 Choice of volunteering activity and social class

As is seen in the stereotype, being a volunteer is associated with a middle-aged, middle-class housewife and social class has been an important feature of volunteers' recruitment especially in Britain. However, I did not find such an association between social class and being a volunteer particularly significant in my field, which was also
confirmed by paid workers in the organisations. Volunteers had diverse backgrounds regarding a number of class related features such as educational background, financial level, and occupational type, as well as gender and ethnicity.

There were however, some tendencies amongst volunteers as well as paid workers regarding their choice of activities which seemed to be relevant to their perception of social class. In both organisations, an individual choice of volunteering activity often reflected the way they perceived their own social class. There were also class related images which were attached to certain types of volunteering activities. For instance, manual work, physical work, and practical help were often associated with the working class whereas office work, creative and skilled work, leisure activities, and generally more formal activities were considered to be for the middle class. It was in fact, one of the main reasons for Dave whom I described above, that he refused an offer to be at a ceremony. 'It's just too middle class, and I don't feel comfortable', he said. It was a matter of social identity for those who considered social class in their choice of volunteering activity.

The same perception also generated a class based division of labour within the voluntary organisations: the middle class doing paid work, either managerial or administrative work, and volunteering of similar kinds, and the working class being engaged in physical and more practical activity. Interestingly, comments on class issues were made often with a slight sense of awkwardness, and the association between social class and a type of work was acknowledged and reacted to more often by the British volunteers than by the non-British.

While the association between social class and people's preference seems to offer a perfect example of Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus, I need to acknowledge one point: volunteers' perception of their own social class did not necessarily correspond to
their choice of volunteering activity, and their perception of their social class did not always reflect their social background as in the case of Sean who considered himself working class but his choice of volunteering activity and his manner of behaviour were that of the middle class. Their choice of volunteering activity was not the result of their unconscious mind which derived from their habitual behaviour that had been nurtured since their childhood as Taylor (2005) suggests. What was fixed was this association between a type of volunteering activity and an image of social class, which was reaffirmed by some individuals' perception and choice. Nevertheless, the way people identified the social class of individuals was a different issue: it was not merely about one's occupational type or income level as it is treated in survey research and statistics, but also about other elements such as educational level, family history, and accent. The perception of one's social class was in many cases too complex an issue to pin down its mechanism.

5.3 Discussion and conclusion: what keeps people volunteering

5.3.1 Multi-functionality and resources of volunteering

These cases describe how volunteers pursued different interests through volunteering. Volunteering involves a wide range of activities and each activity allows individuals to find multi-faced functions. The versatility and multi-functional nature of volunteering make it difficult to discuss volunteering in general as Wilson (2000) claims, and pinpoint what volunteers are looking for out of their activity.

As in these examples, most volunteers I met had more than one reason to volunteer. These motivational elements usually had a different weight at different times as volunteers changed their perception of volunteering through their experience and varied life circumstances. Multiplicity of volunteering motivation also helps resistance
to certain changes which may affect volunteering participation: a loss of one motivational factor does not necessarily mean an end of volunteering as it can be handled by other motivations.

It is also important to note that the function of volunteering varies in different activities. Each volunteering involves different types of activities and offers different experiences which ultimately connect to volunteers' motivations. Moreover, different individuals find a different value in the same volunteering activity. The function of volunteering in terms of volunteering motivation is therefore difficult to generalise. In this regard I argue that it is probably more helpful for the study of volunteering to look at the fluidity of volunteering and how volunteers pursue their multi-faced interests than treating the functions of volunteering in general terms as they are fixed.

On the other hand, there are also a number of external elements which affect one's engagement in volunteering such as time, money, paid work, family responsibilities and other commitments in life. In volunteering management studies, these elements have been put into a single issue of personal circumstance: while a change in personal circumstance has been treated as one of the main factors for dropping-out, its mechanism has not attracted much interest from either practitioners or researchers on volunteering (Hooghe 2003). These elements are in fact, resources of volunteering which fuel or burn out volunteering motivation, and are important for the continuation of volunteering as well as motivation.

In a wider context, these are also resources which affect one’s quality of life, and which volunteering may have to compete against. The degree of impact these elements have on volunteers’ motivation depends on individual volunteers’ priority in life regarding their interests and needs. In these contexts, flexibility on the part of the
voluntary organisations plays a pivotal role regarding the maintenance of volunteers (cf. Gaskin 2003).

While each volunteering activity has multiple functions some of which may meet volunteers’ expectations, volunteers’ motivations are diverse and fluid. Its diversity and fluidity also suggest that volunteers may have different aims and expectations at different times. Although the multiplicity of volunteer motivation may help endurance, volunteering is vulnerable to changes. As it is ‘voluntary’, anyone can start and stop volunteering at anytime they like. The freedom has both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, voluntary-ness opens the door to anyone who has an interest in volunteering for any reason. Unlike paid work, volunteering rarely requires qualifications but offers an experience which is similar to that of work. It is also fairly flexible in time. On the other hand, once volunteers lose interest, they are free to leave. It is totally up to individual volunteers whether they stay or leave. Even if they cancel their appointment there is no charge. Unless an incident occurs and touches upon the law and an organisation’s policy, it is left to a matter of common sense and individual morality. The freedom also means a lack of control on the part of voluntary organisations, which troubles paid workers with the unreliability of volunteers. For the same reason, ‘asking in person’ which is considered as the most effective recruitment strategy in the field is in fact not always the best strategy (cf. Britton 1999, Davis-Smith 1998). Asking in person is also a factor which could put people off: some volunteers take it as an un-welcomed pressure. Voluntary-ness of volunteering needs to make volunteers feel that their act derives from their own willingness.

The impact of these elements on volunteering is greater than that on paid work. Paid work in this regard, appears to be more resistant to the changes of life circumstance. There are a few reasons behind this. First of all, paid work has a compulsory force for
its contractual nature. It is not a matter of choice in everyday life. Paid work is also a foundation of life which controls other resources such as time, social network, self-esteem, and money. Amongst these, money has a greater impact as it affects other resources. And it is part of the reason why motivations relevant to paid work—volunteering as a stepping stone to paid work—are more resistant to obstacles of volunteering than other motivational elements.

5.3.2 Work and volunteering: more than an unpaid work

What volunteering offers in its relation to paid work is becoming an increasingly important area (Gay 1998). First of all, volunteering offers a work experience. As the job market claims work experience as a crucial requirement, volunteering is a great opportunity to gain some knowledge and skills. In fact, volunteering is generally accepted as a work experience in the job market, which adds re-assuring value to volunteering that is important, especially for many young job seekers who wouldn’t otherwise have any job opportunity.

Another work related motivation factor of volunteering is its connection to previous work experience. For instance, for those who are retired, a volunteering activity can be something through which they could use their skills and knowledge learnt in their previous experiences of paid work. Using their skills and experiences, volunteers may feel more comfortable with what they do. Familiarity is one of the criteria of volunteers’ preference in their choice of activity. These connections to paid work support what spillover theory claims (Wilson and Musik 1997).

Work is in fact, not only about being paid (Wallman 1979, Parry et al. 2005). It has various other functions some of which can be pursued in volunteering. Work offers a framework to arrange time, a ‘rhythm of life’ which helps people organise a life cycle.
Work also generates a sense of achievement and being useful. The feelings of being useful and making a contribution to society are particularly prominent in formal volunteering through an organisation. Unlike informal volunteering, working through an organisation carries social recognition. The presence of an institution plays a role in certifying their participation and acknowledging social significance of their work. These functions attract many people who are out of the job market for various reasons such as age, physical and mental disorders, and other commitments and responsibilities in life. In this regard volunteering can be a substitute to paid work.

A work-related perspective however, has a potential risk of treating volunteering as unpaid work. The risk is not only about looking at volunteering simply in terms of its lack of economic benefit, but giving volunteering a subordinate value as a consequence. Those who consider volunteering as a stepping stone to paid work especially share this view. Volunteering is a tool to find better work whose value is socially proved in the form of payment. Volunteering as unpaid work is, at this point, not merely a matter of the lack of payment but is work which is not good enough to have a social value. Paul's refusal to be called a volunteer is a protest against a subordinate value to his work.

The question is, whether these work related elements of volunteering make it merely unpaid work. I will come back to this issue later in a following chapter.

5.3.3 Selfish giving and self-fulfilment

The motivational factors of volunteering I have described above appear to suggest that volunteering is a self-satisfying activity. Many motivational elements were self-completed and had little to do with what they expect from service users in their explanations.
An increasingly strong connection between volunteering and paid work offers a fairly plausible explanation for people’s attitude to volunteering: volunteering is becoming more and more instrumental in getting paid work or its substitute. It is yet questionable whether we could conclude that volunteering is an individual pursuit of self-fulfilment. Although its relation to paid work is undeniable, not all volunteering activity is equally concerned with paid work, and not all volunteers consider paid work to be relevant to their participation in volunteering.

A few questions still remain to be considered. First of all, what are the other elements which attract volunteers’ interest if volunteering is not all about self-fulfilment? Secondly, if volunteering is largely to do with self-fulfilment, why is it that practitioners promote volunteering as an exchange?

5.3.3.1 Who deserves voluntary services? : identification of strangers

A significant aspect of volunteering which we need to look at in order to explore the issue of self-fulfilment is first and foremost, those who receive volunteering services. Service users are not only a part of volunteering activities but also one of the aims of volunteering which many volunteers consider in the course of their participation.

Amongst various services which volunteers provided, there were activities which involved a direct interaction with service users such as taking care of the elderly and school children, and those which didn’t as in the case of the local newspaper group. When we discussed volunteering motivation, volunteers in the former group mentioned their understanding of service users while those in the latter were focused on the activity itself. The presence of service users seemed to have affected their understanding of the meaning of their activity in several ways including the social need of volunteering and what they thought volunteering meant to service users as well as to themselves.
Volunteers who were engaged in care-oriented activities had a particularly high level of understanding of service users. It was mainly concerned with who they were volunteering for, and volunteers rarely ignored the end point of their support. While there was a significant anonymity in volunteering participants, such an attitude suggests that volunteers are not necessarily working for an abstract general collective. Volunteers choose people of one particular group as a service user, and not the others. It is rather an exclusive choice. Even though volunteers’ relationship to service users was not personal, each volunteering programme was designed for a specific group of people. Anonymity therefore, was only relevant to a given category of service users.

Identification of service users involved a different set of criteria between the voluntary organisation and volunteers. The criteria a voluntary organisation had for service users were mainly demographic such as age, the status of living, and kind of needs, whereas those of volunteers were more concerned with moral values. The difference reflected the interest of both groups: while paid workers’ purpose was to clarify the eligibility of service users in order to set their target of their activity, what volunteers cared about was who deserved the voluntary services in their eyes. These values were typically concerned with the service users’ ability to afford a service they received and what they were entitled to receive: they were perceived as those who lacked resources and as a consequence, had no alternative way to get any equivalent service without a volunteer. Laurence’s comment that she would only volunteer gardening for the registered service users of the organisation and not for her friends, and that of George who claimed the need to change the way old people were treated, reflect their idea of those who deserved their support. At the same time, such understanding was also concerned with the way they perceived the need to be involved as a volunteer. In this regard, volunteers’ selection of service users indicated their perception of social
needs and social responsibility. These volunteers were also likely to value their volunteering activity in terms of their relation to some individuals they interacted with in the course of their participation, and the service users’ reactions and achievements they observed.

For some volunteers, whom they volunteered for was more important than which activity they were engaged in. The significance of volunteering for carers such as Laura, and Sean, who had a strong attachment to an organisation, was defined in terms of their relationship with the receivers of their support. Their act of giving was also much to do with their identity in a sense that volunteering activity formed part of what they valued of themselves.

5.3.3.2 Interestedness and disinterestedness: one-sided giving and exchange

Volunteers’ understanding of service users as those who cannot otherwise afford the type of service volunteers offer, is not only concerned with some prevailing images of service users that paid workers of an organisation promote, but is also relevant to part of the reason why volunteers give without receiving in their relation to service users. In other words, service users’ incapability of taking care of themselves is also about their incapability of reciprocating what they receive. This understanding allows volunteers not to expect reciprocity for what they give, which helps them to avoid a feeling of being used and exploited. For this reason, some volunteers like Laurence, offer a service only to those who are in need and not others including their friends and kin members. Volunteering for people who are in fact capable of doing it by themselves or paying for the same service is allowing them to take an advantage of volunteers. It is a matter of exploitation. The inequality between volunteers and service users is inevitable at this point. Ultimately, volunteers’ choice of service users is what enables volunteering to be
'giving without taking'. That does not however, mean that volunteers are only interested in pursuing their self-interest. On the contrary, volunteers' choice of service users shows that they do care and are interested in the service users. What they are not interested in and not allowed to be interested in by definition of volunteering, is an ultimate reciprocity of help. This is a paradox of interestedness and disinterestedness in volunteering: volunteers are interested in a group of people that allows them to be disinterested in return benefit.

Representation of self-interest has yet a further reason. There is a moral code of equality. Some volunteers associate self-sacrifice and altruism with arrogance: altruistic people are in their eyes patronising and disrespectful to the recipients of their support in a sense that it certifies the receivers' inferiority to the giver. On a number of occasions, volunteers showed no hesitation in talking about others' act of volunteering as 'helping' and approved of its value in the work of the organisation they volunteered for. Nevertheless, the stories of their volunteering motivation were heavily focused on themselves and there was a significant reluctance to talk about altruistic intention in volunteering. Answering my question of whom they volunteered for, many volunteers said that they did it for themselves. These attitudes also corresponded to their reluctance to share their experience with their friends and family members, which I described above. These individuals considered actively sharing their experience with others as showing off their social contributions and thus treated their participation in volunteering as a personal matter. While such an attitude appears an excessively self-conscious presentation of modesty, it is also encouraged in an organisational context.

In fact, equality was an important value which voluntary organisations emphasised. Both organisations I looked at had a clear statement concerning equality amongst all participants. A policy of equal opportunity, negation of hierarchy, calling
each other by first names, and encouragement of equal participation were all part of the organisational principle in volunteering. Equality was a moral code of practice in volunteering which applied to all relationships between volunteers, service users and paid workers.

As Wright (2002) suggests, the discourse of giving involves social and cultural values and morality. While her research indicates that the word ‘charity’ is preferred to ‘philanthropy’ in the British context, what I have found in volunteers’ attitude is a negative connotation attached to the idea of giving itself which needs to be appropriated in certain context. By saying volunteers pursue their self-interests, inequality does not come to a realisation in volunteering. Volunteers and service users both achieve what they want. It is a win-win situation.

Volunteering motivation however, cannot be reduced to a simple matter of self-fulfilment. Neither has the ideology of self-interest entirely separated individuals from a connection to others (cf. Berking 1999). Behind a self-completed discourse of volunteering motivation, there is an interest in others’ benefit in a certain type of volunteering. Unlike a prevailing image of altruism, their interest in others’ benefit is not something which denies self-interest. Two seemingly contradictory elements therefore can co-exist in volunteering, which correspond to what has been claimed as pluralism of motives (Batson and Shaw 1991).

It should be noted that such pluralism involves factors both internal and external to volunteering. Self-interests and interests in others’ benefit are more complementary than antithetical given the complex nature and context of volunteering which involves interestedness and disinterestedness at the same time.
Chapter 6     Drawing a boundary: volunteering relationships and friendships

Vignette: Rose

When I met Rose for the second time on a shopping trip, she asked me to think of her as a friend. She was in her late seventies, spoke with a French accent though rarely talked to others, and walked with a stick. Rose made a formal request to the organisation. Anne, a paid worker, called me and arranged a meeting to accompany Rose for personal shopping. She needed to fix a shower holder. Anne told me that Rose would call a cab for the shopping and gave me her contact number. I phoned Rose and told her that calling a cab was unnecessary as I could take a bus. On hearing her answer that she couldn’t get on a bus, I understood that it was not merely shopping for her but shopping with her.

Rose lived in a council estate building in an extremely wealthy neighbourhood. I arrived at her place at 1:30 and she handed me a glass of orange juice. She sat down on her bed and told me how NHS had made her a ‘cripple’. She put her hand on her knee and said that the surgeon had made a mistake at the operation on her left knee. Staying in hospital was always difficult. Nurses didn’t help her ‘toilette’ and left her ‘bottom dirty’. When she woke up feeling blood on her stomach, a nurse wiped it out with ‘a piece of paper and put on a plaster’. I stayed quiet without knowing if she was expecting me to say something or just listen. She went on, ‘once you are there (hospital), your life suddenly changes’, and picked up a phone to call a cab. She had a long difficult conversation with a cab company asking them to speak up, to speak slowly, and to tell her the name of a driver and the cab number. She raised her voice several times
out of irritation. She took a note and hung up. ‘These people are so rude’, she said and stood up. She wanted to wear make up and change her dress. She asked me if she looked alright. I said that she looked wonderful in the violet jumper. She smiled, satisfied.

A cab came shortly. The driver asked Rose for the taxi card distributed by the Borough which enabled her to have a special rate. He opened the door for her and helped her to get in. Rose asked the driver to go to a department store on Oxford Street. She turned to me and whispered, ‘check the cab number there on the door for me’. I read the number and Rose wrote it down. I asked her why she needed the number. Rose explained that she had had a few bad experiences with taxis which had taken unnecessarily long routes and overcharged. ‘If you have the number, you can make a complaint and get the money back’. The cab stopped in front of the shop. The street was busy with lots of people. I pointed out the entrance of the shop but Rose started walking in the opposite direction. ‘The shop is there Rose’. ‘I need to go to a pharmacy’. I followed her and crossed the road. She asked me to get a few medicines. She complained that she had to take over 15 medicines everyday and their side effects caused her hearing problems and pains elsewhere.

We moved to the department store. Rose was scared of walking in the crowd because of her poor sight and bad knee, and held my arm. We went to find a shower holder. Rose asked for a staff member she met before but the person was on holiday. She took out a piece of paper which had the names of the person’s colleagues. She insisted that she only needed a shower holder to fit the shower head which she already had, and did not want to buy a new set of both. A shop assistant told her that they did not sell it separately. Rose was not convinced and the shop assistant gave me a concerned look. I said to him ‘I’m a volunteer’. He smiled and nodded. Rose suddenly
interrupted, 'not a friend'. She didn't say anything else and we moved to another floor to find her trousers. There was a floor assistant there who had known her as a customer for ten years. Rose introduced me as her friend. She brought Rose a few pairs of trousers of her size and told her that they were a good deal.

Rose’s shopping continued with the exchanging of a pair of slippers which she had bought earlier for some with a rubber sole that were safer to wear on a wet bathroom floor. She also needed to buy a bottle of lotion as a present for an old friend of hers.

On the way back, Rose told me about her only boyfriend whom she had had a long time ago. She leaned onto me and whispered, 'but don’t tell this to anybody at Sixty Plus, okay? It's just between us'. I asked why. She looked at me as if I was asking a stupid question and replied, 'because it’s my private life. We are friends but I don’t want them to know'. She asked me when I could visit her again and my contact number. ‘We don’t need these people any more, do we? We know each other and it takes time if we always have to have them. It’s inconvenient’. I explained to her that I could not give her my contact number and volunteers were not allowed to see service users without the organisation. It was an answer suggested by a paid worker for such a request from a service user.

A few days later, Anne phoned me and asked about my visit to Rose. I told her that the shopping went well and that I stayed with her for 5 hours. ‘You stayed with her for that long? What happened? She said it was only for a shower holder’. I told her that Rose had a lot more to do and I didn’t know when I should have told her that I had to leave. Anne insisted that I should have told Rose the time I would leave when I arrived at her place. ‘No wonder she was so fond of you. It was unfortunate that she took
advantage. She does become manipulative sometimes. But it’s good that you didn’t give her your number. You should feel free to use us as an excuse to say no’.

There was no further request from the organisation for me to visit Rose.

6.1 Introduction

Not only did my experience with Rose later turn out to represent many common issues in the experience of volunteering, it raised a number of questions in the early stage of my fieldwork. I did not understand why Rose was so upset when I said I was a volunteer and why she insisted I was her friend. What did she mean by ‘friend’? What is the difference between being one’s volunteer and one’s friend? Why did she try to avoid the organisation while she met many volunteers through them? Why did the organisation stop asking me to meet Rose even after I told them that I was fine with her? These are in fact, fundamental questions of volunteering relationships.

Although ‘meeting people’ is one of the significant motivational factors of volunteering, the idea of social relations in volunteering has been predominantly concerned with either the way social networks are used as a recruitment strategy in volunteering, or about how ties are enhanced through the contribution of volunteering to social capital which I have discussed in a previous chapter (Marwell & Oliver 1993, Davis-Smith 1998, Smith 1994, Wilson 2000). Consequently, we know very little about the social relations volunteers experience in volunteering. Volunteering however, does involve other people. Giving requires a receiver, and involves an interaction between individuals. In this chapter, I will look at the social relationships volunteers experience within the activity of volunteering. My aim is to explore the features of volunteering
relationships and the contextual mechanism which affects the form of volunteering relationships.

In her sociological study of social networks and urban community, Wireman (1984) presents three types of social relations: primary, secondary and intimate secondary relationships. In Wireman’s classification, social relations in an inner-city neighbourhood community are labelled intimate secondary relationships which contain the attributes of both primary and secondary relationships. The concepts of primary and secondary relationships are associated with those of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: the former is typically found in close relationships such as kinship, friendships and neighbourhood relations in rural villages; whereas the latter is represented by a contractual relationship in business. Intimate secondary relationships develop when individuals work together to perform public tasks which tend to take place in public places. They tend to involve principally a sense of belonging, intimacy and rapport with a mutual knowledge of character, but minimal personal information and minimal socialising.

This classification also corresponds to the general view that situates the voluntary organisation in an ambiguous zone between the bureaucratic world and the informal personal world (Billis 1993). However, these models need to be looked at in context. Not all work relations are impersonal and maintain a minimal level of socialising and not all personal relationships are equally intimate.

People find social relations have various functions at different workplaces. Pettinger (2005) describes how people use existing social networks to find jobs and develop social relations at their workplace to facilitate their quality of life at work. Socialising with work colleagues is therefore an important part of their work. Simmel’s idea of ‘sociability’ takes a more important role to what he originally suggested in work
as well as in informal relationships. This is particularly prominent in service and care oriented work (Benson 1988, Gray 2002, Hochschild 1983, Smith 1992). Hochschild’s (1979, 1983) concept of ‘emotional labour’ illustrates how certain work involves emotional demands.

Informal personal relationships, especially a concept of friendship adds another complicating factor in the investigation of volunteering relationships. In the Western context, the idea of friendship is the most commonly used but also the most problematic category of personal relationship. Friendship is difficult to measure since unlike other types of social relationships, it is not defined by physical or circumstantial features.

The notion of friendship also incorporates many different forms, functions and meanings. There are individual differences as well as those which are based on class, gender and age (Allan 1996, Bernstein 1971, Carrier 1999, Paine 1969, Silver 1990). Some scholars pointed out that many of the features of selfhood and friendship under discussion are mainly concerned with a middle-class ideology: compared with the middle class, the working class has a different concept of friendship which has less significance, is more tightly framed, and more overlapping with kinship and neighbourhood (Bernstein 1971, Franklin 1989, Willmott 1987, Willmott and Young 1960).

As an essential characteristic, friendship is associated with equality, spontaneity, voluntary-ness and an unconstraining sentiment or affection between individuals (Allan 1996, Carrier 1999, Paine 1969, Silver 1990). Shared-ness, equality and absence of hierarchy are fundamental to friendship. Its emphasis on the lack of constraints draws a line separating it from other relationships such as bureaucratic relationships, kinship or patron-client relationships. The great disparity with kinship and other institutional arrangements has led Paine to call friendship ‘an institutionalised non-institution’ (Paine
Some scholars argue that the essence of friendship also reflects the Western idea of selfhood as autonomous and independent (Bell and Coleman 1999, Carrier 1999). An ideal construction of friendship therefore has become that 'which reflects the spontaneous affection that two autonomous, unconstrained people feel towards each other' (Carrier 1999: 25).

The degree of closeness in friendship varies depending on the socio-cultural context and individual expectations and attitudes. Friendship choice which is believed to be due to individual preference is in fact structured by 'associational opportunities and constraints that are imposed contextually' (Huckfeldt 1983: 667). It is a social organisation (Allan 1996).

In the following sections, I will discuss volunteering relationships in the light of these issues. By describing how volunteers communicate with other volunteers, service users and paid workers, I will examine various aspects of volunteering which affect volunteering relationships.

6.2 Case Studies: Volunteering relationships

6.2.1 Volunteers-volunteers relationships

Firstly, volunteers' relationships with other volunteers were largely dependent on the type of volunteering activity with which they were engaged. This was because a type of activity determined the level of opportunity to meet other volunteers: while a group activity offered this opportunity, an individualised activity did not.

Most volunteers I came across during my fieldwork were volunteering individually, and they knew few other volunteers working for the same organisation. It was also likely that those few they knew were merely whom they saw either at the organisation or on a rare occasion such as an annual party or other events for volunteers
when they would have only a brief conversation. They were therefore hardly more than acquaintances, and did not know each other personally as individuals.

According to the volunteers, the reason that, despite a willingness to meet new people, they chose to volunteer individually, was mainly their lack of time: an individualised activity was more suitable for people who had other commitments and those who had difficulty volunteering regularly at a fixed time. For the same reason, although volunteers were always welcomed by paid workers, they tended not to stay or even to come in the organisation itself unless there was a good reason to do so. This efficiency-oriented attitude often prevented them from spending some time to get to know other people.

Volunteers' lack of time made it difficult for voluntary organisations to arrange group activities. In order to keep volunteers, they needed to be able to offer several choices and flexible time slots. Appointments for activities were arranged by phone so that volunteers could spend their time on their activity without having to come to the office. The situation was slightly different in the two organisations. While Sixty Plus had their volunteering activities outside the office, Response's activities took place within the organisation building. Volunteers at Response therefore had more opportunities to see other volunteers. Nevertheless, volunteers' communication with others still remained at a minimum level. Paid workers in both organisations were well aware of the general lack of opportunity for meeting people. An annual party for volunteers, which took place during National Volunteers' Week, was promoted not only to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers but also to give volunteers a rare but precious occasion to meet other volunteers.

However, the lack of opportunities to meet other volunteers was not the only reason for the failure to develop a close relationship with each other. It was also a matter
of choice and the way volunteers perceived each others’ personality. People who volunteered in a group, in fact, did not have a significantly different attitude to that of the other volunteers who volunteered individually. Even though they seemed to be happy working together, their communication usually remained simple and practical, and rarely continued after a volunteering activity.

At a special event or a party, communication amongst volunteers mostly depended on the way the party was organised. People talked more to each other when they were put into a situation which allowed them to do so such as sharing a table or given a role in speaking to the others. Otherwise they ended up having what some volunteers called a ‘superficial conversation’ by talking about food, the weather, and volunteering without touching any personal issues. When they were thrown into a free space, there was often a significant sense of awkwardness about talking to people and a number of people would be standing or sitting on their own without knowing what to do, looking away or merely waiting to talk to a paid worker. The few talkative people therefore played a significant role in introducing other volunteers to each other. When I asked volunteers how they felt about being in a social occasion, a woman in her late fifties replied;

It is nice to be here, just to get to know that there are so many people volunteering. They are all very nice but it takes a lot of courage to talk to somebody I don’t know. I’m not really good at that sort of thing.

Another volunteer in his twenties said;

Well, this is a funny place. I mean, we are all so different, maybe too different. Apart from volunteering for the same organisation, we have almost nothing else to share. It’s nice that they (the paid workers) organised
a party but I don’t think I would meet them (the other volunteers) for a drink.
I have my own friends for that.

People expressed both positive and critical opinions about other volunteers: some volunteers saw others as ‘friendly’ and ‘nice’, and others said they were ‘shy’, ‘probably not sociable’ and ‘not interesting’. The most common conclusion covering these varying views about the other volunteers was, however, ‘we can meet here (and there is no need to meet otherwise)’.

On the other hand, some volunteers considered the time and space for volunteering as somehow occupying the public rather than a more private sphere. This division of the public and the private made it difficult to take their volunteering activity as an opportunity to develop close relationships with other people. Consequently, they treated those whom they met during a volunteering activity or at the organisation more like work colleagues than friends.

However on rare occasions, volunteers would meet outside the organisation to exchange personal opinions about the volunteering activity with which they were engaged. For a time, some members of the newspaper editorial group used to stay for a drink after their meeting. This had been suggested by one of the regular members six months after the editorial group was set up. The post-meeting drink became routine soon after. Five senior male members and two young female volunteers stayed for one hour or two, mostly talking about some issues from the meeting beforehand. Gossip and rumours within the organisation were thrown into the discussion. As they often had disagreements and negotiations with paid workers, a few volunteers considered it more appropriate to be careful with what they said at official meetings at the organisation itself, and discuss delicate issues and personal opinions at the drink afterwards. However, the post-meeting drink didn’t last for long once the organisation’s weekly
meeting was reduced almost to a monthly basis, as a result of a few members commenting that ‘it’s becoming a waste of time’. Although not all members seemed to agree with this view, nobody argued in favour of continuing the meeting either. After the decision was made, one member said,

I think that’s how it should be. It (the meeting) takes just too much time. We’re always talking and discussing a lot. But in the end, we’re not really getting anywhere. It is indeed ‘waste of time’, isn’t it? I’m not like those chaps who have nothing else to do. We’ve got to be more efficient. It’s not a social club.

Volunteers also mentioned that most senior male members who were regular at the meeting were either single or divorced and without a full-time job, and that they enjoyed the social aspect of the volunteering. Nevertheless it was at this point that these members were criticised for using volunteering activities as a ‘social club’ which ultimately degraded the value of their contribution. Socialising was considered as a secondary purpose at best and was not regarded as very important. Therefore, though communication was generally an important part of volunteering, sociability was sometimes taken negatively by some volunteers who associated sociability with a lack of seriousness or amateurism. In this regard, work-oriented volunteering could be more work-like than actual work.

6.2.2 Volunteers’ role and the volunteering relationship

Volunteers’ relationships with service users, on the other hand, was of a slightly different nature. First of all, not all volunteering activity involved service users. Although each activity had an idea of a beneficiary of some kind, an activity such as the
local newspaper group did not involve any particular individuals whom they would recognise as the receiver of their volunteering service.

When volunteers had direct contact with their service users, their interactions were largely affected by the role of volunteers in each activity, as well as by the way an activity was organised in terms of the size of group, location, and the amount of time spent which together framed a communication pattern. For instance, volunteers who were working at reception or on computer courses had the role of 'receptionist' or 'instructor' which was associated with the equivalent paid work, whereas volunteers who were engaged in home-visiting and practical support for the elderly had the role of a 'carer' which carried an image of the way the relationship was constructed. In this regard, the relationship between volunteers and service users was predetermined to a certain extent. The role of volunteering was also not only a matter of a division of labour with respect to other forms of work as Hoad (2002) suggests: namely, how volunteering is different from similar types of paid or informal work; but these other forms of work were also used to define types of work within volunteering.

In some activities however, volunteers developed more personal relationships with service users. These were the activities which involved care.

6.2.2.1 Caring and understanding service users

Volunteers who were engaged in activities of care were likely to know much about the service users they supported. In a previous chapter, I have described how volunteers were concerned about service users. A part of their concern was reflected in a way volunteers made an effort to learn about service users and how they applied this knowledge. The knowledge was often not only practical information relating to the
services provided but also about life circumstances, details of behavioural habits and preferences of individual service users.

Volunteers developed their understanding of service users gradually through their volunteering experience. When I asked how they learnt about the service users, many volunteers described it as a consequence of a ‘natural’ process, something ‘you just get to know if you stay with them for a while’. Often it was a by-product of a constant observation of and communication with service users. The learning process was slow and individual volunteers developed their own style according to their interest and relationships with service users.

Laura was a volunteer for the elderly who participated in the weekly shopping trip. Although she seemed to be happy in a sociable environment, Laura was mostly quiet and did not talk much to either other volunteers or the service users. Nevertheless, she got along with a few service users and started spending some time with them. Betty was one of a few service users Laura spent significantly more time with. On the bus, at a supermarket and cafeteria, Laura got to know other service users in relation to Betty. Once I asked Laura how she found the shopping trip and meeting the service users. Laura replied,

It was a little intimidating at the beginning to be honest. I thought I had to talk to the ladies but it was hard for me. I’m not chatty, you know. So I was just looking at them and overhearing their conversation. But one day, I noticed somebody who was always looking outside the bus. That was Betty. Do you know why she doesn’t talk? Because she is deaf. Well, she is not completely deaf but she cannot join other people’s conversation on the bus. So I sat next to her and started talking. She turned out to be really chatty and funny. It was a surprise. I thought that quiet people didn’t like talking, but that’s not always true. Some of them are just waiting for someone to talk to.
I'm still not like other people (who talked to service users more actively), but I'm all right, I guess.

At group activities such as shopping trips, outings, language courses and homework club, volunteers were more likely to look at service users as a group with respect to their need of support at the initial stage. It then gradually moved to a more personal level according to individual circumstances. While many volunteers described learning and understanding service users as the product of their own actions, there was also inevitability to this process.

On the first day of my participation in the shopping trip for older people, Catherine, one of two volunteers that day told me to be careful with Martha as she had a 'particular' preference of her own. Martha was one of the service users who we were picking up from home. She lived in her own flat by herself in a wealthy area of the Borough. We arrived at her place half an hour late in the schedule. Catherine pushed the buzzer and gave her name and the name of the organisation. While we were waiting, she pointed out the small approach in between the door step and the gate. 'Be careful when you walk here with Martha. It's very wet. And look, moss is growing all over it'. The stone tiles were cracked and bumpy, and the pathway in the middle had a strange slope with water in its cracks. I thanked Catherine for the advice as I hadn't noticed. The door was unlocked and we entered the building. I asked Catherine what Martha was like and how careful I had to be. Catherine whispered, 'don't worry. You just have to wait to see what she does. She is a bit frail but she can walk with a stick. And maybe you need to speak up a bit. You'll see'. Her flat was on the second floor. The corridor was wide, dark, long and covered with an old carpet, the middle part of which was worn out and looked slippery. Martha opened the door. She was in a brown coat, a matching woollen beret and red glasses. Catherine made a compliment on her outfit and introduced me to her.
Martha said she liked my name and she would remember it. I started walking with Martha and Catherine ran back to the bus. Martha said she would be fine with the stairs and told me to follow her. When we arrived at the entrance, Martha asked me to hold her arm and go down the few steps taking each step together with her. I took her arm and tried to support her. Martha shook her head and said no. ‘How would you like it to be?’, I asked. She ignored my question and started walking again. I kept holding her arm without knowing what to do. She obviously needed support but I didn’t understand how she expected it to be. Martha gradually became irritated and eventually refused to take my hand and insisted that she would walk on her own, which made me feel slightly left out. Catherine was waiting for us. She took Martha into the bus and turned to me saying ‘don’t worry. It happened to me as well. She prefers taking a step with you with the same foot. Right, left, right left, you know? You hold her arm and walk together. I should have told you before’.

It was not unusual to see a person like Martha who had a particular style. Many service users had their own way of acting and handling things, and keeping a personal style of life was often tolerated with respect by the paid workers and volunteers as an expression of individuality. On the other hand, there was much expectation that the volunteers would understand the service users in the course of providing services. Volunteering therefore, was not merely about providing a service but also about understanding individual service users as individuals and somehow tailoring the service according to each service user’s needs. Volunteers considered it important to wait for service users and give them the initiative rather than trying to help them without asking first and simply assuming what was needed. Paid workers also mentioned ‘waiting’ to volunteers as a preferable attitude. ‘Waiting’ was an expression of ‘paying respect’ to service users who were ‘independent individuals’. Providing service without ‘waiting’
was considered to be an ‘arrogant’ and ‘patronising’ attitude by many volunteers, service users and paid workers. Volunteering in this respect, was a passive rather than active support, and providing support meant doing things ‘with’ service users and not ‘for’ them.

6.2.2.2 Reflecting the knowledge

On the other hand, some volunteers were more actively changing the way they provided the service according to their understanding of service users and their needs. Margaret was a volunteer in her late fifties who had been volunteering over eight years. She volunteered as a bus driver for shopping trips and occasional outings for the elderly. As she was an experienced carer previously, Margaret was particularly concerned about the needs of the service users, and what she could do for them through volunteering. When she was the driver for a shopping trip, she played her favourite popular music from the 1950’s and 1960’s. She sang along the music and encouraged everybody to join her and clap their hands to the rhythm. As the music was familiar to many service users, they all looked at each other and smiled. They enjoyed listening to it even if they didn’t join Margaret in singing along. The route was always carefully chosen and usually went through some well maintained old residential areas which allowed them both to enjoy the journey and avoid the heavy traffic of the main roads. Slowing down at bumps and curves was also important as it could be dangerous to service users who were especially frail. At the cafeteria which was the meeting point after shopping, many service users invited Margaret to a tea and to speed lottery. Margaret had a friendly and outspoken attitude without formality which she proudly called a ‘good old working-class Londoner’ style, and was perceived as approachable by both volunteers and service users. Having constant communication with service users, Margaret was well
informed about the personal circumstances of individual service users. At one occasion, I asked her why she made so much effort for individual service users. Margaret said,

Well, because you know, in the first place, it's better to have fun. I don't know if you know it... but for many of these people, this weekly shopping is the only opportunity for going out. It means a lot to them. And it's a bit sad if it's "just for shopping". You know what I mean? I want to have fun, but I also want them to have fun.

Her understanding and willingness to work for the elderly was well perceived by many service users, and was often taken as an example to criticise a hired driver, Andy, who claimed to be a local but who was 'just driving' with 'no idea where he was going'.

Volunteers' sense of care and understanding of service users took a slightly different form in different activities. At a homework club for school children, volunteers worked in groups with two part-time workers. Each volunteer took care of five or six children. Although the relationship between volunteers and children varied depending on the individuals, the role of the volunteers was perceived both by the volunteers and the children as that of a carer who was responsible for supervising the children in terms of their school work and also their general social behaviour in the club.

Initially, volunteers got to know the children in their direct care. Then later, step by step, they got to know the other children in a homework club. Their understanding of the children was based on their personal communication with the children, and information and advice they received from the paid workers and two senior volunteers who had worked there for a long time. The children were mostly remarkably lively, did not stay in one place and often moved between tables talking to others. A few children were especially aggressive. They lost their temper easily, started physical and verbal
fights with others and provoked volunteers who were new to the club. It was therefore very difficult but very important to keep the children still and focus on one thing.

The volunteers initially learnt about the children's individual personalities and their academic ability. They found this out through their volunteering activity and the information was crucial in increasing the efficiency of their work. As they became more familiar with the children, their knowledge encompassed the relationships amongst the children, their group dynamics, and the school and family circumstances of individual children. Information as such was considered essential for understanding the potential causes of some children's difficult behaviour: such as being aggressive, having mood swings, or being unable to focus. Many of these were considered as to be relevant to their living circumstances and their relationships with their family and friends. The paid workers were eager to learn about these issues and occasionally talked to their school teachers and families when necessary.

Many volunteers exchanged information face to face with other volunteers and part-time workers during tea breaks or after the homework club. It took place however, not as an explicit exchange of information as such, but more of a by-product of a general conversation between them, and would usually be kept as a personal matter rather than something to be openly shared.

The way volunteers' understanding of the children affected the form of volunteering activity was also different from how it was with volunteering for the elderly: volunteers did not openly volunteer their opinion during a volunteering activity, and their knowledge was used not to show their understanding to the service users but to maintain their role in the activity. It was partly because of the setting namely that everybody was in open space and could hear others' conversations, but also, more importantly, because the volunteers in their role as carers needed to command some sort
of authority in order to prevent the children causing chaos. Christine, a senior part-time worker who was responsible for the homework club, emphasised this point:

I do care about these kids. They are lovely. But they could be nasty to you sometimes. You cannot be just a nice person. You have to tell them what is good and what is bad. If they behave badly, we could report it to the office as an incident and suspend them if necessary. It rarely happens though.

Care in volunteering was therefore, balancing between understanding and leading, rather than waiting and accepting in this context.

6.2.3 Drawing a boundary

6.2.3.1 No. you cannot be a friend.

While caring relationships in volunteering involved learning and understanding service users, volunteers described their relationship with service users as caring relationships with a limitation; a relationship which could be intimate but different from other types of close relationships such as friendships and kinship. What the ‘limitation’ meant to volunteers and why they drew a line in their relationship were explained simply as a consequence of being a volunteer. As a student volunteer Jenny said, ‘you cannot be a friend when you meet somebody as a volunteer’. A more common reasoning, however, was the view that the limitation was a conscious and necessary choice; ‘you cannot keep volunteering if you get too close to them (service users)’. Putting a limitation and drawing a boundary was perceived as a necessary skill to learn.
The issue involved highly psychological and subjective elements, and was often left to the individual volunteers’ choice. Not all volunteers however, found it easy to deal with.

Simon was an active volunteer who participated in a number of activities including gardening, shopping trips, outing events, and home-visiting. There were two elderly men whom he was frequently visiting around the time I met him: Mr. Turner and Mr. Roberts Unlike other cases, both were called by their family name. His home-visiting of Mr. Turner was arranged on the specific request of the organisation. Mr. Turner was severely ill for a long time. Since his illness resulted in his suffering hearing impairment, poor sight and severe immobility, his daily activity was extremely limited and he gradually lost his interest in life. Social workers and paid workers of the organisation tried to encourage and support him, but he was also known as a person who didn’t easily get along with people. Simon was asked by the organisation to visit him because they thought that Mr. Turner might feel comfortable with him. It was not only because Simon was a friendly and very committed volunteer but also because he, like Mr. Turner was homosexual. The organisation took the view that this would help Mr. Turner to open up more. Mr. Turner and Simon got along well with each other and Simon started visiting him on a weekly basis. The paid worker who arranged the meeting was particularly pleased to see much improvement in Mr. Turner’s attitude. Simon was also happy with his volunteering and the results he was achieving. However, visiting Mr. Turner was not easy. As I was meeting Simon in person on weekly basis at that time, we often talked about his visits to Mr. Turner. When I asked him about the difficulty he found with the visits, he explained,

When you enter his flat, the first thing you notice is the darkness and the smell. It feels really stuffy. He cannot be bothered to open the curtain. He
has a massive difficulty in seeing and hearing. So he cannot read, watch telly or listen to radio. There is absolutely nothing he can do but just sit in a chair. Can you imagine? I sit right in front of him, very close as my knees are almost touching his. I have to do it because otherwise he cannot see me. I put my face near his and I have to talk very loudly to him. But the smell...I cannot explain what it's like...it's a smell of death. I sometimes feel like fainting. It's very strong...you can really feel that he is dying and that's what he wants. He doesn't want to live...I cannot blame him because it's not easy. His partner has been dead for a long time. He is completely alone. He doesn't have any family or friends. Being gay in his generation was different from now. We talk about that. I'm happy that he looks forward to seeing me. The lady who works for him told me. She said that he is showing a lot of improvement since I started seeing him, both mentally and physically. So I'm happy and I'm proud of him. I cannot stay there for a long time, but it's ok. I will do what I can.

Although he kept insisting that he was enjoying his visits to Mr. Turner, it became more and more difficult for him to keep volunteering. The difficulty was not only his physical and emotional reaction to Mr. Turner but also about his previous experience of volunteering and his personal life circumstance.

When he was in Australia, he used to volunteer also for the elderly. Although he enjoyed volunteering, he found himself unable to continue after he had to face the death of one of the service users he knew very well. Mr. Turner's situation reminded Simon of his past experience, and also made him concerned about his aged parents whose health was unstable. Seeing Simon talking less and less about Mr. Turner, I asked him how he was feeling about his visits.

It's depressing. I hate seeing him dying. And I hate myself feeling like this. I feel guilty. I don't know how long he's going to survive...I know I'm scared
of his death. One day he will be gone. That’s for sure. I don’t know how I will feel…and Mr. Roberts is waiting for me too. His daughter visits him sometimes but is really nasty to him and he cannot go out by himself. Someone needs to take him out…I had a small chat with Naomi (a volunteer co-ordinator), but not much. What can they do? If I cannot do it, I can’t. But now, I’m still volunteering. They should be happy about that.

Shortly after the conversation, Simon told the organisation that he needed a break from volunteering and stopped visiting both Mr. Turner and Mr. Roberts, and all the other volunteering activities he used to take part. A few months later when I went to the organisation for a volunteering activity, I asked Naomi, the volunteer co-ordinator how Mr. Turner was and what she knew about Simon. Naomi said,

I have heard that you two were meeting each other. It would be nice if you can tell him that he’s done a good job. Ok? He’s done a good job…

Naomi paused for a few seconds and smiled. There was an odd moment of silence and her eyes were staring at mine. I asked her if Mr. Turner had already passed away. Naomi slowly repeated, ‘please just tell him that he was excellent’. I said I would do, and asked her if she or anybody in the organisation had talked to Simon. Naomi said that she had a brief conversation with him, and he sounded very busy with his work. Simon never returned to volunteering after that.

Despite the paid workers’ encouragement to share any difficulties in volunteering activity, volunteers often kept some of their issues until they decided to quit volunteering having found themselves not being able to handle a certain situation any longer. When I asked volunteers the reason for not talking to paid workers about the difficulties they had, volunteers said because it was a ‘small’ matter and ‘not worth
telling’. This type of statement was, however, based on their uncertainty about identifying an issue and their hesitation about ‘bothering’ paid workers who were ‘always busy’. In the reality, many of those ‘small’ issues built up over a longer time period.

As in the case of Simon, when a perceived difficulty involved some personal matters, uncertainty and the feeling of guilt, their issues were almost never revealed to paid workers. In many cases, there was a sense of shame and embarrassment in having difficulties facing service users’ overwhelming circumstances, or in other cases, it was about handling service users’ excessive demands.

On the other hand, it was also not easy for paid workers to handle such situations. Not only did volunteers often not tell paid workers about their difficulties but also there was often no other way of learning how individual volunteers were getting on since many volunteering activities were carried out without the presence of paid workers. While the absence of paid workers usually did not bother volunteers, it created a blind spot regarding problems which could have been prevented if they had known about them and reacted promptly.

Leaning the skill of how to draw a line was therefore crucial for individual volunteers in order for them to continue volunteering. As in the case of Simon, many service users were highly demanding, and volunteers easily got into situations in which they were asked more than they were supposed to give. However awkward and even embarrassing it may have felt, without the skill of saying no to service users, volunteers could not survive.

It was also in these situations that volunteers felt safer in working through an organisation: even though not all volunteers relied on paid workers’ support, having the
organisation as a mediator made volunteers find it easier to handle some of those difficulties inherent in the volunteering experience.

6.2.3.2  The dilemma of being ‘charitable’.

While drawing a line was a difficult but important skill to learn so that volunteers could keep their own limits and secure personal space, it involved a different kind of difficulty on the part of voluntary organisations.

Both organisations I looked at had a number of thefts within the office space. All sorts of items including bags, petty cash in a drawer, stationery, mugs and cutlery kept disappearing. Although they both kept their offices accessible to everyone, they always advised people not to leave any personal belongings anywhere. At Sixty Plus, the office was at the deep end of a corridor on the first floor and was an open-plan, without any hidden space. There were always some paid workers in the office. Since those who visited the organisation were all somehow connected to the organisation, such incidents were terribly embarrassing. Answering my question as to if they ever tried to find out the identity of the thief, one paid worker said,

No we couldn’t. It was too embarrassing to ask people whom we knew if they took anything from the office. And anyway, the person wouldn’t say yes. It couldn’t be (caused by) a misunderstanding. It was a theft. But we know them. They are all lovely people and we trust them. The best thing you can do is just not leave things anywhere.

The situation was slightly different at Response. The spatial structure created a different environment. The glass walls facing the main road exposed computers located on the ground floor which attracted three burglaries within three months. The
organisation had its entrance door and the reception room where they provided services on the ground floor and it was easy for anybody to just pop in from the street. There were always strangers coming in seeking for some information or checking what was available in the organisation. Although there was usually somebody at the reception, both paid workers and volunteers had to move around for different enquiries and did not always stay in one place. Paid workers tried to make sure that there was at least one person, either a volunteer or a paid worker who stayed at the reception, however, it was still extremely difficult for them to keep a record of who and how many people they had within the organisation building. Therefore, whenever there was any theft in the office the organisation had to face the impossibility of investigating the case, in addition to the awkwardness of being suspicious of their service users and volunteers.

Moreover, some problems were not easy to handle even when they knew what and whom they were dealing with. Hector, who volunteered as a receptionist at Response, once told me that he was threatened with a knife by a person who popped in the organisation building.

When he came in, I had a bit of bad feeling, to be honest. But as you see, it's a voluntary organisation, not a bank. You cannot say, 'Excuse me sir. May I have a word?' (laughter). Then he approached me and said something I didn’t quite understand. I guess he was a druggy. And he had a knife. He left after all, and I didn’t get hurt but was not a nice experience.

Didn’t you think of quitting volunteering?

Not really. Probably because I knew that I was doing it temporarily. I’m helping them (the organisation) only for three months. So I’m happy to do whatever I can. And then I will start a new job. If this is my permanent job,
of course I would have to do something about it. You’re basically risking your life!

After the incident, the organisation decided to set an alarm under the reception desk which was connected to the paid workers’ office in the basement. However, not all volunteers found it useful as a similar type of incident kept happening while they were not at the desk, and so they could not easily access the alarm. Some volunteers suggested that it would be much better if they had an alarm which would make a noise in the reception to alert a person they suspected. This was because paid workers were not always in the basement and often were not able to come to the reception. Kelly, a college student who volunteered weekly as a receptionist claimed a ‘threat of some sort’ was an everyday thing. Threat did not have to involve a knife. It could be having someone shouting, staring, or just staying without saying a word. It was a matter of a ‘feeling you get’.

Once I had this young black guy and a white girl, looked like an Eastern European. They wanted to use a computer but it was almost closing time. I had to tell them to come back later. The guy approached me keeping his hands in his pockets and said very slowly, ‘my girl wants to use a computer, you know?’ Obviously he was trying to intimidate me. I knew he didn’t have anything in his pockets but he stood so close to me. A few people sitting at a computer started leaving. I understood that they didn’t want to get involved and so they pretended not to notice anything. I had to pretend that there was somebody behind the door! After all, nothing serious happened, but I never get used to it.

In those cases, it was not only about the seriousness of the consequences of an event, but it was also about the negative feelings volunteers experienced. Volunteers talked
about a wide range of experiences they perceived as threatening with a language of ‘annoyance’, ‘rudeness’, ‘lack of consideration’, and ‘distraction’. Despite the obvious negativity of these incidents and frustrations stated by volunteers, the situation did not show much improvement as they were not able to reject anybody who came in unless there was an obvious problem. It was a ‘fate of charitable organisation’ that they could not resolve the problem as raised by a volunteer;

Why can we not say no to somebody who looks so dodgy? Isn’t it stupid that we have to wait until something serious happens?

In fact, voluntary organisations were often facing a dilemma: on the one hand, as a voluntary organisation, they felt the need to present themselves as inclusive and indiscriminately welcoming to everybody who came to the organisation. On the other hand, they were responsible for securing their working environment of the volunteers. The problem was even more prominent in care-oriented volunteering. It was the emphasis on care which enhanced service users’ expectation of an inclusive and welcoming attitude from volunteers and paid workers in the voluntary organisation. Service users who were facing a number of difficulties not only had a high demand for support but also were more sensitive to rejections. They could be easily offended and expressed their disappointment in receiving a negative response to their request for help.
6.3 Discussion and conclusion

6.3.1 The logic of empowerment and supporting independence

While both organisations faced similar difficulties, the two organisations took slightly different measures to improve the situation. These differences were based on both their circumstances and each organisation’s style in volunteer management.

In the case of Response, it was mainly the paid workers’ job to solve problems that volunteers were facing. Since the reception and the main activity area faced the main road, the organisation was vulnerable to problems from people who popped in from the street. In principle, paid workers were around and accessible and they preferred volunteers to ask them for help rather than to act individually on their own initiative. It was also a way to avoid confusion which occurred in situations where volunteers spoke on behalf of paid workers, since the volunteers’ role in the organisation was complementary and they did not have a thorough understanding of the services the organisation was offering. In this way, paid workers found there was little need to train and set guidelines for volunteers. Instead, they gave advice to volunteers from time to time as and when it was necessary.

Sixty Plus, on the other hand, actively worked both with service users and volunteers in order to prevent potential problems as well as to handle problems when they occurred. Unlike Response, their service users were all registered as members of the organisation and the organisation kept a record of their needs, physical and financial circumstances and behavioural habits. As a result, paid workers were able to have information about service users to help maintain a good relationship between volunteers and service users. The strategy was based on regular communications with service users and on seeking a clear understanding of the services available from the organisation. By explaining the details of services they were offering, the organisation tried to help
service users make the best out of the support offered, but more importantly, clarify the limit of the services offered, which was essential to prevent potential problems between volunteers and service users who were highly demanding. When there was a problem between volunteers and service users, paid workers also worked as mediators. It was not however, an easy task and often required patient and constant negotiation to gain an agreement from usually, service users.

It's more difficult with the ladies (service users)...volunteers are fine. They understand the situation and if they are not happy about it, we have other options (activities) to offer. But members (service users) are different. We always tell them for example, they cannot shop for more than two bags but they keep buying more. We know a lot of them try to buy as much as possible, and we do understand their reason...it's their only shopping opportunity and they cannot carry these things. But we still have to tell them because we have such limited space in a car. We just can't do...

As I have described in a previous section, paid workers advised volunteers to give initiative to service users, but also at the same time they suggested to keep the limit of their support within the framework presented by the organisation and not to go beyond it. ‘Waiting’ for service users was important, but learning the skill to say ‘no’ to service users was equally important both to respect their autonomy and independence, and to maintain a ‘healthy’ relationship between service users and their ‘supporters’. As a paid worker at Response said to a volunteer,

We have to ask you to say no if anyone asks you to do anything you’re not supposed to do. It’s not about being rude or unhelpful to people. Ok? You shouldn’t be too polite to say no. You’ve got to be firm. Otherwise, unfortunately, some people think it’s ok to ask anything they want. But it’s
not good for you. It’s not good for them and other volunteers either...you do
t heir favour once and next time they expect it will be fine again...and it
becomes harder to explain why you can’t...

These strategies were to prevent service users from becoming dependent on volunteers
and paid workers of an organisation. Their approach was well reflected on the
expressions, ‘empowerment’ and ‘supporting independence’ which both organisations
used officially to present their work to the public. By using these words, organisations
stated that volunteering was to ‘support’ service users to be independent individuals and
able to take care of themselves, and not to ‘help’ those who were passively waiting for
services. Although paid workers rarely used these terms in their daily communication
with volunteers and service users, they were all familiar with the ideas and took these
concepts to be what the organisation was aiming towards. While the level of agreement
about these ideas amongst paid workers, volunteers and service users was unclear
however, their importance was in the fact that they were the official line on what the
aims of volunteering should be.

6.3.2 Volunteering relationships and the voluntary organisation

In this chapter, I have discussed social relationships and volunteers’ experience.
While many volunteers start volunteering expecting to expand their social network, very
few individuals in reality develop a close relationship with other volunteers or service
users.

While it does not mean that volunteering relationships never develop, their
significant denial of friendship has revealed several features of volunteering. First of all,
a concept of friendship which expects equality and reciprocity between individuals is
challenged by the apparent inequality between service users and volunteers. In a previous chapter, I have described how the 'political correctness' of equality tries to deny this inequality, it does seem to affect volunteers' feelings about their relationships with service users. Furthermore, the issue of inequality is a more serious issue when service users with multiple deprivations are highly demanding, as it implies potential exploitation of volunteers. Although it is not always the case, an association with work is also an obstacle to the development of volunteering relationships. Unlike the reported positive aspect of sociability at workplaces, work-oriented volunteers sometimes consider sociability as a lack of seriousness and amateurism.

The role of voluntary organisation as a mediator between volunteers and service users has been shown to be important in this context. As a mediator, the voluntary organisation plays the role of gate keeper which protects both service users and volunteers from problems which derive from their interaction. The presence of the institution means that they can more easily solve or prevent problems which could otherwise become difficult to handle, as in the case of informal volunteering and interactions between neighbours, friends and family members (Hoad 2002, Hochschild 1983).

The institutional aspect of volunteering however, is also a factor which discourages people from developing friendship as it contradicts an idea of friendship as spontaneous and informal. Volunteering relationships are therefore, as has been suggested, in an ambiguous zone between friendship and business relationship. Nevertheless, within this ambiguity, these relationships are highly affected by both institutional and circumstantial elements, and a cultural understanding of social relationships (Hoad 2002, Wireman 1984).
Lastly, the issue of security also has revealed the organisational attitude to both volunteers and service users. Although they were aware that security issues affected both volunteers and service users, paid workers in both organisations treated the two groups in a slightly different way. Paid workers trusted volunteers more than service users in some aspects. While volunteers were given an access to petty cash, contact details of service users and other volunteers, and allowed to visit service users without paid workers accompanying them, such access was not given to service users. Usually, it was volunteers who were in a position to be protected. The organisations' use of terms such as 'empowerment' and 'supporting independence' not only reflected their strategies based on a functional reason in these contexts but also corresponded to the public service ethos which shifted from a passive welfare of dependency to an active welfare. The meaning of empowerment in this context was similar to that of the 'development discourse' (Singh and Titi 1995). As it has been argued, the ideology of empowerment is a highly ambiguous buzzword of which usage, practice and consequence involve multi-layered complexity (Cheater 1999, James 1999, Schofield 2002). Empowerment in volunteering is also not an exception. In the volunteering context I have described, empowerment presents at least two facets. On the one hand, empowerment reflected an ideal of selfhood which was imposed on service users: service users were expected to be autonomous and independent selves. The idea of equality corresponded to this logic. On the other hand, this perspective also had a more practical basis from the perspective of the voluntary organisation: the limited capacity of the organisation to deal with highly demanding service users, and their responsibility to protect volunteers from exploitation.

Rose's refusal to accept my statement that I was a volunteer, her insistence on friendship, and her dislike of relating to the voluntary organisation, are all relevant to
these issues above. Volunteering relationships are friendly and caring, but both
d Friendliness and care are only possible with the intervention of the voluntary
organisation. The irony is that, for precisely the same reason, volunteering relationships
cannot offer the ideal friendship people are seeking.
Chapter 7  Volunteering and Money

7.1 Introduction

Volunteering and its relation to the money economy involve various issues of contemporary society. On the one hand, volunteering as an act for non-benefit rejects an involvement of money and is distinguished from paid work. On the other, the significance of volunteering in contemporary monetary society is often evaluated in terms of the potential monetary value of its productivity in comparison with other labour forces in market economy. It is partly due to the dependence of voluntary organisations on donation and the state funding which constantly requires voluntary organisation to prove the value of their work in its contractual relationship and puts constraints on the whole system of voluntary organisation.

Regarding its relationships to volunteers, many voluntary organisations nowadays offer to cover the basic expenses of volunteers, such as the cost of transportations and meals. Nevertheless, whether or not volunteering should involve money leads to a debate over the fundamental definition of volunteering. Even if volunteering excludes money in theory, the management and maintenance of voluntary services can hardly escape an involvement of money for it requires a sustainable work force; paid workers and the cost of material equipments, which are part of the money economy.

This section will discuss these issues based on existing theories of money. While there has been much discussion regarding money and market economy, little has been discussed in relation to the impact of money on what is virtually non-monetary. In this respect, volunteering offers a number of interesting issues to explore. We will discuss
money's role and how it is perceived in volunteering by looking at the following case studies.

7.2 Social theories of Money

A number of anthropologists and sociologists have discussed various aspects of money. Money is examined not merely as a material, but a social phenomenon in the whole context of interaction between people in which money operates (Cheal 1988, Douglas 1966, Smelt 1980, Zelizer 1994).

On the one hand, many anthropologists look at the function and meaning of money in non-Western societies. On the other hand, sociologists focus on those aspects of money in Western societies. What is common in both approaches is that money is regarded as a cultural invention which not only functions as a medium of exchange, but in many ways symbolises the Western social system especially regarding social relationships amongst transactors.

The way money is used and constructs its meaning, however, is highly cultural, as Bloch and Parry (1989) claim;

The meanings with which money is invested are quite as much a product of the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated as of the economic functions it performs as a means of exchange, unit of account, store of value and so on. It is therefore impossible to predict its symbolic meanings from these functions alone

(Bloch and Parry 1989: 21).

As I will discuss in the following section, social theories of money in the West argue two main aspects of money; its function and symbolic meaning. While money
works as a medium of exchange which objectifies subjective value of exchange objects, money's impersonal character affects not only the nature of transaction but also individuals who deal with money. The question arises over whether it is a 'necessary evil' or a 'means of freedom'. Although there is not a simple answer to this question, these conceptions play a key role to the morality of the use of money. In this section, I will particularly look at Marx and Simmel. Although there are other scholars who have studied the social and cultural significance of money and monetary economy, Marx and Simmel still remain as the ground theorists whose perspectives have been the most influential in this study. I will discuss how their views help us understand the meaning and function of money in volunteering.

7.2.1 Marx, money, alienation and domination of power

Marx's theory of money is expressed in the series of writings on capitalism. Amongst those, three works, namely, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1974), *The Grundrisse* (1973), and *Capital* (1976) are especially important. In Marx's theory, money is not discussed as itself but in terms of its economic function in a wider context of capitalist society where it is used not only as a medium of exchange but also as a tool of domination. Money for Marx is a reification of modern capitalist society where alienated individuals are forced to face exploitation of labour and power struggle as a consequence of the contradiction of industrialised society and capitalist mode of production. Money, therefore, is an obstruction of traditional values, morality and social system.

Marx's ideas on the capitalist mode of production are based on his theory of value. There are two types of values of an object: use value and exchange value, both of which are considered as directly related with labour power of production. Use value is the
value which comes from the properties of an object realised in the process of consumption, whereas exchange value refers to the value which is offered for the purpose of exchange with other objects. Production is for exchange and an object can have value only when it involves human labour power. However, the amount of labour power spent for the production of each product varies so that it is only considered in an abstract term which is measured according to the average amount of time required for the production process, namely, 'socially necessary' labour time (Marx 1976). Abstract labour power, the productivity of labour, is the essence of the value of an exchange object. Moreover, it determines the value of labour power itself. In Marx's theory, labour power is an object of economy which is evaluated, sold and bought as other commodities in the market. Therefore, workers are drawn into competition with other workers to sell themselves in the market.

One of Marx's main concerns is that capitalist economy not only makes labour power a commodity but also it alienates workers from their products and the production process. It is about the loss of control. Once labour power becomes an object of exchange and a part of a contractual relationship, it has no control beyond its contract. As the division of labour develops, the realm of control of each worker reduces. The loss of control also makes a worker dependent on others: individuality and autonomous self disappear in the capitalist mode of production and an individual worker becomes merely a part of a system which is anonymous. This is, for Marx, a loss of humanity since he believes that the human being is a creative being by nature which distinguishes it from other animals (Marx 1974). Without individual freedom, work becomes nothing but a burden and merely a means to get wages for consumption.

The introduction of money makes this whole system visible and concrete. Money is the ultimate good which can be exchanged with all other goods in market. It is a
medium of exchange and a measure of value. Money is a ‘radical leveller’ which enables every object in the market economy to be valued quantitatively (Marx 1976: 229).

Not only is the value of an object expressed in an abstract form, social relations in capitalist society are also abstracted by means of monetary transaction for its impersonal nature as opposed to that of pre-capitalist society. Marx’s highly idealised concept of capitalist society is clearly distinguished from that of pre-capitalist society (cf. Bloch and Parry 1989, Frankel 1985). While capitalism is based on production for exchange and sales in the monetary economy, pre-capitalist society is characterised by its production for direct use and exchange based on more personal ties and social trust of community members. Individuals in a capitalist economy are only connected through objects and money, which drives them into what he recognised as commodity fetishism (Marx 1976).

Marx, however, does not look at money as a cause of alienated individuals. It is capitalism which is to be blamed for the destruction of traditional culture and the tragedy of human life. Money is a reification of capitalist cosmology which is ‘increasingly detached from the social relations that paradoxically have initially given rise to the formation of those relationships’ (Deflem 2003: 75).

On the other hand, money also gives power to certain individuals. The wage-labour relationship takes control away from workers but gives a power of domination and exploitation of wage labour for surplus value to employers in the form of money. Money as a quantitative form of value is also a tool to accumulate wealth.
7.2.2 Simmel and the Philosophy of Money

Another perspective of money and its social significance is presented by Simmel (1990).

Simmel’s interest does not remain merely money in the market economy (cf. Frankel 1985). For him, money is not only a standard of value and a tool of exchange, but also it is a reflection of the whole social system. He claims that man is the ‘exchanging animal’ and at the same time, the ‘objective animal’ (emphasis original, Simmel 1990: 291). His investigation of money is an exploration of the nature of human beings.

Simmel tries to look at social relationships and society in terms of the function and meaning of money, and these issues he argues, cannot be explained only in an economic sense. The reason for this unique approach is based on his understanding of exchange. Exchange is a ‘form of life’ (ibid: 82). Simmel argues that most relationships between people can be interpreted as a form of exchange. Human interaction is an exchange of information, services and objects. Regardless of the differences in the form of each interaction, the essence of a human act for Simmel, is sacrifice; the logic of gain and loss. An introduction of money has established a particular form to human interaction, and the dominance of market economy in society has affected people’s attitudes towards social relationships. Thus, the investigation of money requires a much wider perspective; an examination of its preconditions, its influence on human relationships, psychology, lifestyle, and culture.

7.2.2.1 Exchange as a process of objectification of value

Simmel looks at exchange as a primary form of social interaction. It is also a process of objectification of subjective value. The value of an object is not something
inherent to its materialistic character. ‘Value is an addition to the completely determined objective qualities, like light and shade, which are not inherent in it but come from a different source’ which is the valuing subject (1990:60). The subjectivity of value is, however, not separated from objectivity. If the value of an object is entirely subjective, an object has potentially a different value depending on an individual subject. Simmel’s interest is not in this subjectivity which is based on a “personal relationship” with an object, and he separates it from the scope of his discussion. What he looks at is the subjectivity of value which is fundamentally social. His point is that ‘value is never attributed to an object from arbitrary reasons, and the subjectivity of value is only our copying of an objective determination’ (Altmann 1903: 49). Objectivity of value, on the other hand, is gained through an exchange. ‘The value of an object becomes objectified by exchanging it for another object’ (Simmel 1990:81). When an object is exchanged, what is valuable to one person becomes also valuable to another.

7.2.2.2 Money as a super-objective tool of exchange

The implication of the statement that the value of an object is recognised through an exchange is that only through an exchange does an object acquire its value: value is a relative term. In the case of a direct exchange of objects, an exchange between two people occurs only if they agree about the equality of the value of the objects. The introduction of money to transactions has made more objects exchangeable. Unlike other objects of exchange, money is perceived as the only substance which is free from quality. Money is value-free. This total objectivity makes a perfect tool to measure value and quality of other objects. Money enables objectification of subjective value and quantification of quality. The essence of money is its interchangeability and
abstractness. Money, however, doesn’t stand for anything: it is an end in itself. Simmel claims;

If the economic value of objects is constituted by their mutual relationship of exchangeability, then money is the autonomous expression of this relationship. Money is the representative of abstract value.

(Simmel 1990: 120)

The consequence of money as a general medium of exchange is not only that it has expanded the realm of exchange but that the value of an object has become nothing but its price. What is qualitative and more personal about an object has disappeared and only what is calculable remains.

7.2.2.3 Monetary exchange and social relationships

The impersonality of monetary exchange is extremely influential in social relationships since exchange is a primal form of human interaction. Simmel describes how impersonalisation of exchange occurs on a different level.

First of all, the relationship between subject and object becomes impersonal once they are mediated by money. An object of exchange which used to have its own personality such as the spirit of *hau* for the Maori as described by Mauss, is now entirely impersonal (Mauss 1950/1990).

At the same time, the impersonalisation of an object of exchange implies impersonification of an exchange relationship. As an object becomes alienated from its subject, the relationship between subjects of an exchange also becomes impersonal by being mediated with money. The subject of an exchange is no longer important as long
as an object is transacted. Money makes a human relationship completely impersonal when the relationship is based on the interest of exchange.

Moreover, Simmel claims that the object of the monetary economy is not only materials but also human beings, which is described in the concepts of labour and wage. As the product of labour is valued with money, the labour is valued with money for its productivity. On the other hand, the very personality of the labour is cut off from the product. What is implied in this process is that a person is freed from personal elements of transaction by gaining payment. In the case of barter economy, the supply of services involves the sense of obligation based on social relationships: and the person who receives the service becomes obliged to give a service in return. In the monetary economy, a person is connected to his/her employer only in the relation to the wage based on the calculated productivity of labour.

Now, there are three possibilities of alienation of a person: first of all, a person is alienated from his/her own product. Secondly, a person is alienated from his/her employer. Thirdly, a person is alienated from other people as a purchaser of his/her labour product. Whether it takes a form of ‘wage’ or ‘payment’, money is the essence of all three cases whose relationships become impersonalised in the process of quantification of qualitative value.

7.2.2.4 The consequences of money

The most significant part of Simmel’s theory for our purposes is his concern for the relationship between the mature monetary economy and culture. Simmel argues that modern life is distinguished by its increasingly disconnected character.

On the positive side, money allows more freedom to individuals: individuals are freed from personal obligations of labour. Individuals also have more choice in
purchases because of the exchangeability of money. An exchange is now completed with a movement of ownership, so that individuals are freed from exchange partners and objects, both of which are restricted in barter economy. As a result, individuals gain more freedom and autonomy in their decision making and become increasingly individualised. The freedom which each individual acquires is, in fact, bound up with increasing dependency on other individuals in society since freedom of choice potentially involves connections with more products and indirect connections with the labour behind the products. The interdependency of individuals becomes accelerated by the development of the division of labour, and constructs more complicated structures of numerous relationships which are all impersonal.

Furthermore, money as a flexible tool of exchange and the abstract value of life becomes a strong motivational factor of consumption in order to acquire more freedom. The more people are driven into consumption, the larger the monetary economy grows and becomes dominant in the society. Simmel describes how the quality of life is transformed into a mere calculation of quantity by the growing domination of the monetary economy. Money not only enables commoditisation of exchange objects but also transforms the mode of social interaction, which he describes in his analysis of a form of marriage by purchase, prostitution and legal punishment by fine.

The issue here is that the freedom of self-expression applies only in the realm of an objective culture where money operates. ‘The individual’s expression is reduced and channelled into monetary terms and money then carries each such expression into the stream of economic events, translating it into a common and objective language’ (Smelt 1980:211). It is precisely the impersonal character of money which causes the tragedy of the modern economic world which Simmel is concerned with. ‘For Simmel, the unique capacity of money to empower its holder has been the main source of the
fragmentation of subjective life' (Todd 1994:49). As freedom by itself is without content and brings merely fragmentations of subjective life, it gives us dissatisfaction.

What happens after this ever-growing differentiation of personality from social interaction? Is this the end of humanity?

Simmel argues that the consequence of this almost overwhelmingly powerful influence of money is not necessarily an entire domination of monetary value in all human life. Since money is merely a tool and it is the human being who uses money, the degree of this domination is culturally determined. Freedom, in fact, could give us an opportunity for 'the most favourable situation for bringing about inner independence, the feeling of individual self-sufficiency' (Simmel 1990: 454). Thus, fragmentation of the will and destruction of individuality are entirely in the hands of the human being. Simmel's view of freedom is not a rejection of it but a warning of the potential consequence.

In the case of modern European society, Simmel (1990: 369-370) suggests a separation of quality and quantity as a consequence.

On the one hand, it gives money an importance that, as it were, makes it the world soul of the universe of practical interests and which, in continuing its motion beyond its proper limits, stifles personal value as well. On the other hand, however, modern culture distances money from these personal values, makes its significance less and less compatible with all that is really personal, and suppresses the assertion of personal values rather than accept such an inadequate equivalent.

What he observes in modern European society is a total separation of objective culture under the influence of the monetary economy, and subjective culture on which purely personal value is based. On the one hand, he admits the growth of the monetary
economy expands its realm and gradually takes more things from the personal realm into objective culture. On the other hand, precisely for its impersonality and indifference to all the qualitative matter which is about the 'soul' of human being, money also becomes the 'gatekeeper of the most intimate sphere, which can then develop within its own limits' (ibid: 470).

The more recent studies of the gift and commodity have developed these perspectives and described how people deal with the boundary between the two separate spheres; impersonal money economy and more personal social relationships. Douglas and Isherwood illustrate how cash is not acceptable as a personal gift (1979: 58-9). Money can be given as a gift only when it's not presented in the form of money, or it is for a particular occasion such as weddings (Cheal 1988: 133, Zelizer 1994: 105). 'All gifts of money, if they are successful, involve a socially constructed element of illiquidity' (Fennell 2002: 93).

Similarly, in order for a commodity to be a gift, it needs to be appropriated. People make much effort in this process by taking a price tag off, wrapping a good, and attaching a message on a card (Carrier 1995: 174, Caplow 1984: 1310). These examples illustrate that money in modern Western society is still perceived to be in the impersonal realm of social interaction, and people apply various strategies when they deal with money outside monetary transactions.

7.2.3 Further questions

Both Marx and Simmel see money as a reification of a modern social system which is distinguished from non-monetary economy. The connection between money's impersonal character, which transforms quality into quantity, and increasingly de-personalised and diverse social relationships is critically analysed by both authors.
Nevertheless, their perspectives take a different path. The position of money in each theory is different in relation to the initial interest of their studies. Marx’s is a political economic analysis which focuses on the capitalist mode of production and its influence on society. The strength of Marx’s labour theory of value and monetary exchange is in the way he looks at certain aspects of the mechanism and process of the manner in which money is perceived and used. Nevertheless, his understanding of money is narrowly focused on its relation to capitalism and the mechanism of production, and he pays little attention to other cultural aspects of the issue, such as the symbolic meaning of money.

In contrast, Simmel considers that exchange is an essential form of human communication, and that monetary exchange is merely one type of exchange amongst various others (Frankel 1985: 60). This understanding enables Simmel’s uniquely diverse perspective, which aims to give the wider context of how money and monetary economy as a creation of human beings could affect our life not only in an economic sense but also regarding our way of thinking, social relationships and culture. However, his argument on monetary economy treats the separation between objective culture and subjective culture merely as a reaction against the growing power of the monetary economy, and doesn’t offer an in-depth analysis of the boundary and especially the content of subjective culture. In this regard, more contemporary studies of gifts and commodities help us examine how the boundary is constructed and what he means by a ‘purely personal realm’.

As regards volunteering and its relation to money and the monetary economy, these studies offer an interesting insight into various aspects of volunteering. The image of volunteering for non-profit appears to be entirely antithetical to money whereas the practice of volunteering hardly escapes the monetary economy. How can we understand
this contradiction? What does 'non-profit' actually mean in volunteering? How do people perceive money in volunteering? In the following sections, I will explore these issues through case studies.

7.3 Case Study: the function and meaning of money in volunteering

While volunteering is generally perceived as an act without financial benefit and clearly distinguished from paid work, formally, volunteering through a voluntary organisation is inevitably affected by the monetary economy particularly in relation to funding and expenses. Whether or not volunteering should involve money brings up several questions, including those relating to the fundamental meaning of volunteering. The social meaning and function of money discussed above gives a useful basis to discuss the issue.

This section will look at several cases regarding volunteer expenses. Reimbursing expenses is not a requirement to be fulfilled by all registered organisations. However, it is regarded as an important source of support, especially for volunteers who cannot afford such expenses. According to the guideline of the National Centre of Volunteering, a voluntary organisation is expected to cover the cost of a number of things which are essential to volunteering activities. These include travel expenses, meals consumed while volunteering, stationery used, postage costs, the cost of phone calls, the cost of childcare or care of other dependants, and essential equipment. The guideline also suggests that reimbursement of these costs should be paid in cash on the day of each voluntary activity, in order to make it more helpful to volunteers who need the support (Bowgett, Dickie, and Restall 2002: 108-109). Nevertheless, there is no standardisation by the Charity Commission on the way money is provided and it is left to each organisation’s discretion.
The National Centre of Volunteering offers advice to voluntary organisations because giving money to volunteers has potential problems, for various reasons. Firstly, although volunteering is not subject to employment law, providing money to volunteers could touch on issues under the law by involving some form of ‘contract’. The National Minimum Wage Act 1998, established in April 1999, considers as a ‘contract’ of employment, any form of agreement to carry out a task in return for something, and does not require a formally arranged written document. Thus, when a person receives anything of economic value in return of volunteering, there is a ‘contract’. Similarly, if a volunteer starts expecting to receive the consideration in return for their volunteering, it can be seen that a ‘contract’ is set up. Once a ‘contract’ is recognised, a volunteer becomes an employee and an organisation has to follow employment law. Secondly, giving money is especially problematic to volunteers who are on benefits. If benefits officers find out that beneficiaries are receiving ‘payment’, it affects their beneficiary status.

In order to avoid these potential problems, the National Centre of Volunteering suggests that it is very important to make sure that paying expenses are considered ‘reimbursement’ and not ‘payment’, by giving the exact amount of money spent for volunteering rather than paying a flat rate to all volunteers, even though the latter is easier in administrative terms. They also recommend organisations set an upper limit on reimbursement and ask volunteers for receipts to keep as a record (Bowgett, Dickie, and Restall 2002: 108-109).

In the actual practice of volunteering, however, covering expenses is not a straightforward issue. By looking at the following case studies, I will illustrate how difficult it is to handle money in volunteering.
7.3.1 Case 1: volunteer expenses

Most voluntary organisations I visited during my fieldwork offered to cover their volunteers' 'basic expenses'. 'Basic expenses' usually involved the money spent on transportation and/or a snack. The amount of money provided often had an upper limit and was paid at a flat rate in cash or was given in return for a receipt. Volunteers were usually asked to sign a form as a receipt for the money, which the organisations kept for their financial report. Many paid workers were aware of the potential risks of providing money to volunteers. Nevertheless, they only considered it as a potential risk and did not take any measures unless it put the volunteers at risk, such as when they were on benefits.

The two organisations I worked for also offered support to volunteers. At Sixty Plus, travel expenses were fully covered and lunch was covered up to £3, both of which required a submission of a receipt. Response, on the other hand, provided £3.50, for volunteers who worked for half a day and £5 for volunteers who worked for a whole day, both of which were flat rates. A receipt was required when the money spent was over those limits. In both cases, the money was given in cash and the volunteer was asked to sign a form kept by the organisations.

Although it was a common form of support provided by many organisations to all volunteers, volunteers’ attitudes varied regarding 'claiming' and 'receiving' this support. In contrast to other supports offered to volunteers, such as emotional support and being invited to a meal or tea, receiving money was perceived as the most awkward form of support by many volunteers. Gender, age and educational background seemed not to be significant factors in their attitude. However, the financial state and social class of volunteers appeared to play a role: those who were without financial difficulty and who
considered themselves from a higher social class showed more hesitation towards receiving money than the others.

On the one hand, the reason for ‘not receiving money’ was very often expressed by the volunteer as an ethical issue: ‘I’m not doing this for money’. On the other hand, volunteers who received money understood it as something they cannot give from their own pocket: ‘I don’t mind volunteering but I cannot afford to spend money for this’. For them, money was a necessary tool of volunteering.

Many paid workers were aware of the fact that there were volunteers who were facing financial difficulties: typically unemployed people who found it hard to ask for money. For those who hesitated to ask, paid workers often encouraged volunteers to claim the expenses. Nevertheless, if a volunteer clearly declined the offer, they would accept the refusal gracefully rather than continuing to press the volunteer to accept financial support.

7.3.2 Case 2: taking advantage

Steven was a volunteer for a newspaper editorial group. He was in his late fifties and used to work in the fashion industry. Since he had had an accident, he was in a wheelchair, and lived on state support. He joined the group, initially having been invited by one of the editorial members when they published an article on disabled people living in the area. Every week, he came to the editorial group by taxi and *Response* covered the expense. He was always welcomed and treated equally at the meeting. However, a few volunteers showed a critical view of him for ‘taking advantage’ of the organisation by coming to the meeting in a cab:
You know, he is disabled and he has little opportunity to go out because of that. He seems interested in the newspaper, and everybody has a right to receive the money. That's fair enough. But the amount of money he's taking is just too much! I asked Ben (the director of the organisation) how much they are paying...of course he didn't say a thing. He never tells us things of this sort. Maybe he thinks Steve is a poor old chap in a wheelchair whom he has to help. But Steve is obviously alcoholic, you know. He always smells of alcohol and he comes to the meeting because he wants to go for a drink later, and he can take a taxi for that! I don't think it's fair.

Although these comments were expressed in a private conversation outside the organisation and not explicitly in public, a similar sort of suspicion about the provided support was expressed by many volunteers. Some paid workers were also aware of the volunteers' criticism. However, they did not stop providing the same support to Steve.

7.3.3 Case 3: payment and honorarium

The editorial group of a local newspaper, run by volunteers, had a discussion about whether or not they should give £200 each to two volunteers who had spent, on average, ten hours per day for over two weeks intensively working on the layout of the newspaper. Both of them were a part of the editorial group. The offer was originally from paid workers of the organisation. They claimed that; the time and effort of the two should be recognised and valued; £100 per week is not much for their work considering the standard payment of a job of the same kind; therefore, it is more appropriate to offer it as an 'honorarium'. The editorial group asked the two volunteers to leave the group and the rest of the editorial members and a paid worker remained for the discussion. The group was divided into three; those who agreed, disagreed and those who were not sure. The main points of the argument were the following.
a) The significance of their work was not as clear as the paid workers claimed. Those who disagreed said, ‘there were so many of us (the newspaper group members) worked outside the office getting clients for advertising. Many people tried their best to contribute to the newspaper. Some found it difficult to make time and volunteers’ effort shouldn’t be valued in terms of the amount of time they spend. They used their personal contacts, spent many hours to visit people and negotiate with them. Giving money to only these two is not fair to those who worked behind the scenes’.

b) Giving money simply ‘degrades’ the value of volunteering. It was claimed that volunteers shouldn’t be paid for any reason. It also affects the significance of the newspaper which has entirely relied on volunteers.

c) It was pointed out that these two volunteers were unemployed (like other volunteers). One of them was having a serious housing and financial issue which paid workers of the organisation were trying to help out with.

d) Offering money makes volunteering a job, which would attract people for the ‘wrong’ reason.

e) It was claimed that one volunteer was less skilled than the other so that the editorial group should give money to the latter and give the other an opportunity to take a course in layout, in which way, the money would become an investment for everybody.

f) The suggestion above was soon declined as other people claimed that it’s not fair to others who were also keen on the course.

g) For the reason above, the group agreed that they would treat the two equally.
Following the discussion, the group decided to vote. There were three votes for the original suggestion of giving £200, one against, and two abstentions.

7.3.4 Case 4: paid work and volunteering

On a number of occasions, volunteers expressed their critical views about paid workers in both the organisations I studied. It was usually because of what they saw as the ‘disorganisation’ and the ‘inefficiency’ of the work they perceived. These criticisms and expectations toward paid workers also tended to reflect their idea of the responsibility of paid work. A volunteer said;

It is just ridiculous that they even missed the funding application. I mentioned this to them so many times! I mean, why should we (volunteers) tell them what to do? It’s their job! They are paid for that. I sometimes feel it’s not really fair that they are paid for our work. Basically, we are exploited. And do you know how much they are paid? It’s outrageous! I didn’t know that they were paid so much. There is something wrong with that.

On other occasions, the inefficiency of the paid workers was often commented on by outsiders as something inherent to voluntary organisations in general.

James was a driver who was hired for a shopping trip by Sixty Plus from a local public transport service centre, Community Transport. When I arrived, he told me that he had had to wait outside for a few hours as he hadn’t been informed of the change of schedule on that day.

I came here at eleven o’clock as usual but nobody turned up. So I went to the office, and they said that it starts at two today. What am I supposed to do
for three hours? They should have told me in advance...well, they were all very nice but...you know, all charity people. But this is my job. I can't just waste my time like this...to be honest, I don't like this job. Why can't they just shop for them? It takes a bloody long time and I have to drive the busiest road at the busiest time!

Shortly after that day, *Sixty Plus* stopped using the service and James was replaced by a volunteer. When I asked what the reason was, a paid worker in the organisation explained;

Hiring somebody is expensive in the first place. We can save money if we have a volunteer. A volunteer like Margaret (who had been volunteering as a driver for a long time) knows our service users so well and they like her. She is very nice and she knows the nitty-gritty of our shopping trip, us, and all the ladies (service users), and everyone is happy. It's different.

7.4 Discussion and conclusion

7.4.1 Ambivalence between volunteering and money.

These cases above illustrate that the issue of money in volunteering does not just come down to a general perception of its absence, i.e., volunteering as not-for-profit. Rather, the notion of money often provokes quite negative reactions, precisely because it is seen as a type of 'profit' that is inappropriate in volunteering.

I have described how different types of money were used in a different context of volunteering. Amongst these, 'expenses' was one of the most prominent of such category of money in volunteering.
Why do voluntary organisations offer money to cover 'expenses'? What is the 'appropriate' amount of money for 'expenses'? What is 'expenses' in the first place? What makes a difference in volunteers' attitude towards receiving the offer? An underlying theme of these questions is volunteering as 'giving time' as opposed to 'giving money'.

On the part of a voluntary organisation, covering expenses was not a requirement of a registered charity so that it was more 'etiquette' designed to make the situation easier for volunteers. What exactly 'expenses' meant in the context of volunteering and 'how much' should be covered were not clearly defined, and this suggests that the decision was left to the individual organisation. Nevertheless, the amount of money provided was usually standardised and stayed within a limited range. While it was under the regulation of employment law, the standard of financial support was decided as a result of a perceived common sense, constructed in the course of networking amongst voluntary organisations in the area.

Although the National Centre of Volunteering emphasised the importance of the 'reimbursement' of expenses, many organisations provided money at a flat rate which was easier to manage in practice. It was however, not necessarily a matter of reimbursement or payment but rather the idea of giving and accepting money which raised questions in volunteering.

While volunteering was talked about in the language of 'activities' rather than 'work', its discourse always involved paid work as a reference. In other words, many aspects of volunteering were perceived within the same frame as paid work. For instance, the social significance of volunteering was assessed by the stakeholders in terms of its potential monetary value as a labour force. Following Marx's account of the labour theory of value, we see that 'expense' was something which was necessary to
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maintain the production process whereas payment was about profit which was based on surplus value. The expense of volunteering in this context meant that it was a 'socially necessary' resource to keep volunteers.

What was involved in 'socially necessary' support regarding volunteering was the money spent on transportation and food, which was assessed at around £3. Taking the cost of transportation in London then into account, this meant that volunteers were presumed to live within the Borough or nearby. If the money was spent on food, this would have made possible a snack such as a sandwich or a pastry with a drink, but did not allow any luxury. The point here is that the amount of money provided was settled regardless of the circumstance of each volunteer and was based on a shared understanding of what was necessary for each individual at a minimal level to enable a person to volunteer.

The fact that the amount of money provided could vary depending not on a type of activity but on the amount of time spent on volunteering suggests that the concept of 'time' was more important than the type of volunteering. In fact, volunteering was often considered as 'giving time' in contrast to donation as 'giving money', even though what was actually 'given' by volunteers was not clearly defined. The amount of time spent for volunteering was a measurement that valued each activity, which paid workers and stakeholders interpreted and transformed into monetary form. The focus on time significantly parallels the concept of paid work. It is partly due to the position of voluntary organisations in a society which takes money as the most common and reliable language of communication. The voluntary organisation is, in theory, neither in the public sector nor in the private sector, but is closely linked to both through their contractual relationships which involves mutual supports and collaborations. The
connection inevitably takes the voluntary sector into the discourse of market exchange although it is originally understood to be out of the realm, by definition.

The concept of ‘time’, on the other hand, could also be seen as almost synonymous to that of ‘money’. In the labour theory of money, it is considered to play an important role in the commoditisation of labour-power.

The translation of labour into labour-power, and products into commodified goods, creates a decisive shift in patterns of socio-economic organisation. The ‘working-day’ comes to replace the more fluid and continuous mode of labour associated with pre-capitalist production. The ideas that time is money, and that capitalism involves an ‘economy of time’, are more subtle and interesting than they first appear. Units of time become what labour is in respect of the contract which employer and worker enter into with one another. There is a direct tie between the formation of abstract labour-power, thus defined, and the character of money itself. The value of money, according to Marx, is ultimately to be explained in terms of the creation and quantification of value through units of abstract labour.

(Giddens 1987: 150)

What enables the understanding of ‘time is money’ is that both ‘time’ and ‘money’ are perceived in an abstract form which emphasises quantity rather than quality; or its quality is calculated in quantity. In this regard, they compliment each other. This idea of ‘time’ also suggests that the concept of volunteering as ‘giving time’ indicates more than its connection to market exchange. Firstly, the concept of ‘time’ represents ‘labour’ in the volunteering context. What is given is not an abstract object—‘time’ as such—but a kind of labour which is distinguished from others that do not involve any payment. Emphasis on ‘time’, on the other hand, creates a better image than cheap or free labour since the latter is associated with an image of exploitation. Moreover, the concept of
'time' makes a similar contrast with that of 'money': while money is often considered to be unequally distributed, time is given equally to everybody. Although the value of both money and time can vary depending on individual circumstances, 'time' is in fact not 'money'. A fundamental difference between the two is that 'time' cannot be exchanged with any other objects in the way money can: 'time' cannot buy things. Thus it does not have the same power as money, and gives a more neutral concept which is not distracted by the image of market exchange.

Furthermore, the idea of 'giving time' as giving labour has another implication in terms of motivations for volunteering. In the wage-labour relationship, money becomes the purpose of labour, since labour itself loses its meaning: labour is for money. When labour is not given for money, labour acquires its meaning. This is why the involvement of money provokes a negative reaction in volunteering. It is not a denial of 'giving money' but is about what money means in its relation to labour.

The function of money also reveals a significant characteristic of volunteering. As we have seen, the main argument concerning money's function is quantification of quality, and objectification of subjective value. This leads us to another contrast between paid work and volunteering. Simmel's point of view suggests that once money is involved, all objects are evaluated by number. The value of work is about its productivity and has nothing to do with the qualitative value of each individual. Money does not count such personal and subjective value. In the case of volunteering, the involvement of money means indifference to the individual volunteers. Work makes individuals anonymous. If it is a matter of work and its productivity, volunteering is calculable and replaceable. As long as the service is provided, it doesn't matter who volunteers. Once it is exchanged with money, individuals are 'paid off'. It doesn't
require a personal commitment: money takes that part. The will of the individual volunteer has no importance to the value of volunteering. Volunteers become labour.

Quantification of value also makes different types of work comparable. Presenting the social significance of volunteering in monetary form, therefore, not only makes volunteering comparable to other work in the market economy but also makes volunteering activities comparable to each other. Once the value of volunteering becomes measurable, there emerges good volunteering, bad volunteering, and important and unimportant volunteering. Each work inevitably becomes evaluated in terms of its productivity and efficiency, and so does each worker. The involvement of money also puts pressure on workers. This is also illustrated in a way paid workers were perceived in Case 4: people criticised paid workers for having failed to do what they were ‘paid for’.

What the rejection of money suggests is precisely concerned with these issues. Volunteers reject money because the importance of their work is their will to volunteer itself rather than the quality of work, and by rejecting money, volunteers can secure the value of their work which is not measurable.

Case 1 and Case 2 show a further complication of these issues. Case 1 describes how volunteers perceived receiving money either as a ‘profit’ or as a ‘necessity’ depending on their financial and social circumstances. It is also a matter of ‘sacrifice’. For those who had a stable financial background, paying travel expenses and lunch did not involve sacrifice. It was not an extra payment for volunteering but rather understood as a part of volunteering activity which they offered to give so that receiving money was perceived as a profit made out of volunteering. In contrast, for those who had financial difficulties, paying expenses was a sacrifice they could not afford. Only by receiving money could they volunteer, and, from their perspective, it was a matter of having a
right to receive the support. The way people perceived the acceptance of money varied also according to the amount of money offered. Whether or not people received the money, the amount of money offered was always perceived as small. Those who refused the money saw it as too small to accept so that it was better not to accept at all while those who did receive it considered it too little to make a profit so that it did not make them feel guilty. In both cases, money as 'profit' was clearly denied by volunteers.

In Case 2, on the other hand, a volunteer was accused of receiving support which he had a legitimate reason to accept, his physical disability. The question is why it was perceived as inappropriate, when the money was a clear reimbursement, whereas in other cases where volunteers did not spend all the money provided at a flat rate for an expected purpose, this was not considered a problem. First of all, it is partly about the amount of money provided: when the money was a small amount, it was less of an issue. In the case of Steven, the amount of money spent on his travelling was more than double the amount of money usually offered. Considering the fact that many people living on benefit could not afford to take a taxi even if they had a concession, it was understood as a luxury he was receiving. Furthermore, it was accompanied with a suspicion of his motivation. At the beginning, his motivation for volunteering was not a concern of anybody's in the editorial group. Neither his contribution to the editorial group nor his alcoholism was discussed by anybody. It was after people found out that Steven's travel expense was covered by the organisation that they started mentioning his motivation for volunteering, and that the money provided was considered as an incentive. The case suggests that the issue was not about money as a support for volunteering but rather about money as an incentive for work and an associated idea of 'profit' which was in contradiction with an understanding of volunteering.
Case 3 describes another picture of various elements described above in a dynamic situation. In this case, an unusual amount of money was offered in the name of an ‘honorarium’, which caused a clearer reaction from people than other cases. By calling it ‘honorarium’ it was emphasised by paid workers that the offered money was not a payment for their work. It was a gift in acknowledgement of the dedication and contribution of the two volunteers to the newspaper. The denial of ‘payment’ was clearly stated by pointing out that the amount of money was incomparable to the estimated payment for a job of the same kind. These statements were, however, not much of a concern to volunteers. The argument was about whether or not a volunteer should be given any money and why. Points (a) and (b) reveal that volunteering was understood as something entirely different from paid work in the sense that the value of every volunteering work was the same regardless of its perceivable contribution, and that it should not have been evaluated either for its productivity or for the amount of time and effort spent on each activity. Giving money to a volunteer contradicts these ideas, as money in capitalist society is always given in exchange for labour, assessed by its expected quality. The expression ‘degrading’ shows a clear denial of applying the same criteria of paid work to look at the value of volunteering. It was however, difficult to draw a line between paid work and volunteering once it involved money. Point (d) suggests that money was understood as a strong incentive to work and that the involvement of money excluded other motivational factors and transformed work into a ‘job’ which was regarded largely for money. Money as an incentive was thus a ‘wrong’ reason to volunteer and entirely alien to volunteering in general. The consideration of the financial situation of the two volunteers suggests that the offered money could mean much more to them than to people who were without financial difficulties and that it was understood as potentially even a stronger incentive for work, which was why giving
money caused a definite rejection from other people. For the same reason, while the amount of money offered was justified by paid workers regarding the expectancy of market economy, it was perceived by volunteers entirely in a different way when £200 was offered as a honorarium. And this was because the financial difficulties of the volunteers led to a sense of unfairness and competition amongst volunteers. The 'unfairness' mentioned by volunteers was not just about the general attitude opposing the involvement of money in volunteering, but was also a reflection of the personal interests in monetary rewards of the individual volunteers.

On the other hand, as is illustrated in point (e) and (f), when an 'honorarium' was offered in a form other than money, it also caused the same negative reaction from volunteers. As in case 2, case 3 also suggests that the issue was not merely the meaning of money which is impersonal and contractual, but the concept of 'profit' contradicts an understanding of volunteering. It is about the idea of 'taking' which diminishes the essential part of the meaning of volunteering that is about 'giving'. It does not necessarily mean that a volunteer cannot receive anything out of volunteering; in fact, volunteering also offers something to volunteers, which ultimately gives many people a motivation to volunteer. The idea that paid work is based on a mutual agreement of giving and taking, and volunteering is based on a mutual agreement of one-sided giving is mainly concerned with material benefits. In other words, the 'profit' which is unacceptable to volunteering is the one which is offered and taken in any form of economic value as it is applied to the concept of contract in employment policy. It is profit in an economic sense which distinguishes volunteering from paid work. This is the point where the difference between paid work and volunteering comes in.

Nevertheless, an emphasis on money confuses the essence of volunteering by neglecting other elements which also characterise volunteering and distinguish it from
paid work. It looks as though money draws a clear line between paid work and volunteering. However, in practice, it relates to both but in a different way. What causes this confusion is the liquidity of money and the contradiction between the understanding of volunteering and its practice.

7.4.2 Appropriation of money in volunteering

The practice of volunteering requires money and involvement in the market economy. On the part of voluntary organisations, money is a crucial resource for the management and maintenance of volunteering activity. Paid workers, material equipment, and even having volunteers require money. A contractual relationship with funding sources forces the voluntary organisations to prove the value of their work. In order to receive monetary support, they have to show that their work is worth the money they receive. For this reason, money also functions as a measure of the significance of voluntary organisations and their work in the society. Money is value neutral so that it makes qualitatively different objects comparable. Its lack of character defines its character. Hence, the boundary of money and monetary economy is not clearly defined in volunteering.

While money is value free in its function, it is not so in its social meaning. While the practice of volunteering cannot avoid money as a tool, the social understanding and image of volunteering and those of money are mutually exclusive. In a society where the monetary market has dominant power, volunteering can only maintain its meaning by rejecting money.

Money also affects relationships. Monetary relationships are contractual, impersonal, rational and utilitarian. This image of money makes jobs about productivity and efficiency. Work becomes existent for money and thus workers lose their control
under its contract. Volunteering as 'unpaid work' is, however, misleading, as it immediately makes volunteers an object of exploitation. Volunteering is not for profit and therefore, not for money, but that is not the essence of the meaning of volunteering. The social significance of volunteering lies in the collective purpose of its activity and the motivation of volunteers, both of which are subjective, personal and abstract, and, moreover, is hard to specify, which is probably why it is defined in a negative term such as 'not-for-profit' rather than clarifying what exactly it is for.

The ambiguity of the concept of volunteering and its somehow contradictory involvement in the market economy causes confusion and tension amongst participants when handling money. This ambivalence draws a slightly different picture from what Simmel suggested as the clear separation of the personal and monetary spheres (Simmel 1990). It is important to look at the issue from the perspective of both voluntary organisations and volunteers. As for the former, although money as a resource is necessary to their work, money as profit and associated ideas about monetary economy are potentially problematic to the legal status of a voluntary organisation. Offering monetary support to volunteers can not only harm the legal status of volunteers who are on benefits but also put voluntary organisations into trouble regarding employment law. Volunteers, on the other hand, are more prone to react about the ethical issues of volunteering and how volunteering should be (cf. 5.3.3.1.). Volunteering as an act of giving which is not for profit is perceived to be entirely indifferent to money. Even if it's inevitable, presenting the significance of volunteering in a monetary form and comparing it with other labour forces, is morally against its meaning. It is because money is for waged employment, and taking money even replaces volunteers' motivation with money as an incentive.
Hence, handling money needs a strategy. The cases above remind us of the importance of some studies on appropriation of commodities in gift giving, in which goods and money move from impersonal sphere to personal sphere (Cheal 1988, Carrier 1995, Caplow 1984, Zelizer 1994). What is significant in volunteering is that volunteering occurs in fact largely in an ambiguous zone between the personal and impersonal spheres, in which the boundary between the two spheres sometimes becomes blurred. On the other hand, when the boundary becomes clear, money requires to be appropriated.

I have illustrated how paid workers and volunteers apply various strategies in order to deal with perceived contradiction between the image of money and monetary economy and volunteering. I have also described how money acquires different names in order to distinguish volunteering from paid employment. Money as payment and profit is immoral but money is welcomed if it is for ‘reimbursement’ and can be given to volunteers as an honorarium. The amount of money is also an important element to secure the thin line between volunteering and the market economy. In order not to make money for profit, it has to be kept to the minimum level of use and ensured that it is always necessary. All these efforts can however, still end in vain as the value and meaning of money vary depending on individual volunteers’ perception of volunteering and their living circumstances. As we have seen, the perceived financial situations of volunteers affect the meaning of the offered money.

These case studies suggest that the study of money in volunteering needs to look not only at the perception and social meaning of money as Marx, Simmel and their followers have discussed but also at the liquidity of money, and the process and context of the way people handle money by applying different strategies to appropriate money in different situations.
Chapter 8 The professionalisation of volunteering

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look at the idea of professionalism in volunteering. I have discussed, in the previous chapter, the perception of money and how it affects volunteering practice. Professionalism is another issue which is equally concerned with the ambiguous boundary between volunteering and paid work.

Due to increasing competition amongst voluntary organisations for funding, and the current climate of funding system which is strictly contractual and in a short term that expects an immediate return from the financial investment, voluntary organisations are now under a heavier pressure of professionalism. The idea of ‘professionalism’ in the current British context is no longer restricted to particular occupations such as lawyers and medical doctors, but more generally refers to what is expected in paid work: an attitude of taking responsibilities in expected productivity and efficiency of work.

Applying the concept of professionalism to voluntary organisation is, however, a complex issue for a number of reasons. First of all, the outcome of the work of voluntary organisations as they are often defined as not-for-profit, is not always easily evaluated as that of for-profit organisations. Moreover, involving volunteers as their work force implies a limit of control over their working system and their productivity. It is not only because unlike in paid work, volunteers are free from the control of the requirement of work contract, but also because an understanding of volunteering and
how volunteering is expected to cause some awkwardness with the idea of ‘professionalism’.

In this chapter I will discuss these issues through various case studies. Although professionalisation of volunteering is considered to be essential for the future development of volunteering, the scope of existing studies on this issue remains within the area of volunteer management. However, whether or not it is merely a matter of ‘management’ is highly questionable. By looking at the case studies, I will discuss different aspects of the way the idea of professionalism affects volunteering. I will especially look at the contrasting views on the professionalisation of volunteering between paid workers and volunteers, and how it affects volunteering practice.

8.2 Issues of professionalism in volunteering and volunteer management

Research on volunteer management suggests that management style has wide varieties from highly bureaucratic to a more informal approach depending on the type of volunteering activity and its context (Rochester 1999, Zimmeck 1998). Although there is a significant awareness of the recent movement towards formalisation amongst voluntary organisations, applying a work place model to the study of volunteering has not been always considered adequate (Davis-Smith 1996, Meijis and Hoogstad 2001). The way volunteer management is discussed in these studies also reflects how volunteering is perceived in its reference to paid work. Billis (1993, 1996) for instance, characterises voluntary organisations regarding their position in the ‘ambiguous zone’ between bureaucratic world as in paid work and private world. Hedley (1992) also claims that volunteer management is different and more complex than paid work management, and argues that volunteer management requires a balancing between an organisation’s needs and volunteers’ needs. On the part of the voluntary organisations,
they have their own tasks to complete and meet the requirements of contracts with funding sources. On the other hand, volunteers have a different set of expectations to be met in order to continue working for free. Referring to management theory, Hedley looks at the ‘hierarchy of needs’ at work amongst which payment is considered as the most basic. When minimum physiological need is satisfied, people look to meet the higher needs which are optional and vary depending on individual circumstances. Volunteers who are not paid, therefore, have more demands on higher needs which ultimately require more personalised care for individual volunteers. Hedley (1992) suggests two approaches to volunteer management: the supervisor approach and the personnel manager approach. The former is task oriented and requires some strategies to get the job done as is expected while the latter is concerned with volunteers’ satisfaction with their work. Successful volunteer management in this view is considered as a result of the balanced combination between these two approaches (Hedley 1992).

The idea of professionalism in volunteering management is also perceived and practised in various ways. Reflecting the changing climate of social policy and the increasing pressure of funding requirements on voluntary organisations, the notion of professionalism came into the discussion of volunteering management mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of these studies explore the typology of professionalism and illustrate its varying perceptions from the viewpoint of volunteer managers and volunteers.

Goodall observes two contrasting approaches to look at professionalism in volunteering. The first approach treats volunteering management similar to paid work management, and professionalism as a means to improve the quality of work. The other approach tries to distinguish volunteering management from paid work management, and emphasises the requirement of separating strategies for volunteers and paid workers.
Based on his research on charity shops, Goodall (2000) claims that there is a danger in a belief that the meaning and usage of the term 'professionalism' and its derivatives are fixed, and argues that 'professionalism' can be used and practiced differently for various meanings depending on circumstantial elements such as the size and type of a working environment which affect people's perception of the balance between commercialism and voluntarism. Being 'professional' can mean: 1) paid, as opposed to unpaid or voluntary amateur, 2) a member of a specific expert work community, as opposed to a non-professional, 3) broadly competent and business-like, as opposed to 'unprofessional', incompetent and not business-like (Goodall 2000: 47). Amongst these, the third meaning is the most common. Business-like attitude, however, could affect volunteering in various ways (Dart 2004).

Goodall (2000) identifies three types of professionalism in the study: strident commercialism, limited professionalism, and vibrant professionalism. Strident commercialism sees professionalism as a positive and necessary progress and actively takes a more market-oriented approach, such as involving more paid workers and training of volunteers. People with more knowledge and skills are likely to have power and leadership over others. Limited professionalism considers professionalism as a necessary change only to a certain degree. It appreciates an improvement of the quality of work and being competent but rejects a business-like attitude. Power relationships amongst paid workers and volunteers are negatively perceived and a more friendly and supportive working environment is preferred. On the other hand, vibrant professional voluntarism considers professionalism and voluntarism are complementary to each other rather than mutually exclusive. In this approach, the focus of professionalism is not on commercialism but on their idealism of volunteering. In practice, it emphasises democracy, inclusiveness and stress on the significance of volunteers.
Such typology not only illustrates the versatility of the concept of professionalism, but also describes the perception of professionalism in its relation to voluntarism. It is the relationship between professionalism and volunteerism which defines each approach. Professionalism and volunteerism can be both complementary and antithetical to each other, depending on the circumstance.

Existing studies also claim that the notion of professionalism is perceived differently by individuals depending on their position in a voluntary organisation. These studies mainly look at paid workers and volunteers. Parsons (2004), for instance, illustrates how charity shop managers of a different level express different, sometimes contrasting understandings of professionalism. Such differences are also found between volunteers and paid workers and discussed as an element which could create tensions amongst different interest groups (Whithear 1999). One of the main findings in these studies is a difficulty in balancing between contradictory understandings of professionalism and volunteerism.

Gay's research on the professionalisation of volunteer management describes how ambivalent the position of volunteer manager is in such context (Gay 2000). According to Gay, volunteer manager as an occupation in the U.K. emerged in the early 1960s which then had a title of ‘volunteer organiser’. The job title changed over time to ‘voluntary services co-ordinator’ and to ‘volunteer manager’, but ‘voluntary services co-ordinator’ is still preferred to be used (Gay 2000). The job was created and developed in the need of better performance with improved efficiency and effectiveness of voluntary activity on the part of organisations responding to an increasing expectation of accountability from public funding. The main function of volunteer managers is understood as: personnel work, training and supporting volunteers, administration, and providing an entrepreneurial and development function (Gay 2000:
Regarding professionalism, the research claims that volunteer managers usually use the term ‘professionalisation’ as an equivalent of ‘formalisation’. Professionalisation of volunteer management is considered to have both advantages and disadvantages. It is advantageous in a sense that it helps in gaining trust from funding sources as well as organisations to offer better services to both service users and volunteers, and in gaining recognition for their own job status. Although volunteer managers see few disadvantages, professionalisation and excessive formalisation are perceived as a potential risk. Gay argues that by imposing professionalisation and bureaucratisation of work and by asking for formal qualifications from workers they are at risk of excluding people with good skills but without enough experience and qualifications. She also argues that the biggest concern of volunteer managers should be the best practice for volunteers and they have to be at ‘arm’s length from the volunteers’ (Gay 2000: 48). For those reasons, many critics feel that full professionalisation is a negative move. The development of professionalisation of volunteer management is, however, facing a number of difficulties: volunteer management does not have any standard and system of monitoring, it does not have a recognised identity and social respect as a job, and it has no corporate voice of its own.

Volunteer management and professionalism, however, may have a different picture from a volunteers’ point of view. Gaskin (2003) argues that the recent changes in the context of volunteer management emphasise the need of more volunteer-oriented management rather than applying the dominant workplace model. Volunteers are seen as an important work force but who need ‘freedom’. Anything which disturbs their freedom could harm their commitment to volunteering. In order to attract and maintain volunteers, understanding volunteers’ perspective and needs is crucial. Looking at different stages of volunteer commitment, the research describes how the demands of
volunteers change in a different circumstance. For instance, volunteers who have just started volunteering may need detailed information and induction to volunteering to feel equipped and confident to start volunteering while more experienced volunteers may have higher demands of regular consultations, training and recognition of their contribution to an organisation to feel that they are respected and needed as a part of an organisation but at the same time not pressured. Gaskin claims that a good volunteering management requires a flexible approach to satisfy individual volunteers of various demands and to offer the right ‘blend’ of ‘informality and efficiency, personal and professional support’ (Gaskin 2003: 28).

As these studies suggest, the notion of professionalism has different functions and meaning, and is practiced differently in different circumstances. Professionalism has become an increasingly important concept for the voluntary organisations in order to improve the services they provide. At the same time, the application of professionalism to the actual practice of volunteering involves difficulties. Professionalism as being bureaucratic and business-like is at odds with an understanding of volunteering.

These studies however, do not go further in discussing the issue, and a question such as how and why professionalism contradicts volunteerism is not explained. Moreover, existing research on professionalism in volunteering and volunteer management focuses on either paid workers or volunteers, and little has been looked at regarding the influence of these concepts and how they are applied in practice in volunteering. Although the ideas of professionalism and volunteer management receive significant recognition from voluntary organisations, these terms are still ambiguous and there is no standardised measure shared by researchers or voluntary organisations. While many studies offer suggestions such as the need for a more volunteers-oriented approach and taking a balance between professionalism and volunteerism, they do not
discuss many of the potential difficulties voluntary organisations may face in practice. What is missing in existing studies is a detailed account of the process and mechanism of volunteer management and people’s attitudes towards professionalism where the interactions between paid workers and volunteers reveal various aspects of these issues. In the following case studies I will look at these issues especially through the conflicts between paid workers and volunteers, and the way conflicts are handled by the individuals in the voluntary organisations. These examples illustrate how people pursued their interests through a series of interactions with each other. Conflicts are in fact an excellent example of the formation of intra-group solidarity (Simmel 1904, 1971). Group solidarity however, does not always occur in all conflicts: the association is conditional (Coser 1956, Stein 1976). It is therefore, important to look at the process of conflicts and negotiations between different interest groups in order to understand the mechanism. By examining the process of conflicts, I will explore the context; situational and conditional elements of group solidarity.

8.3 Case studies

In the case studies I will illustrate how volunteer management and the idea of professionalism were perceived and practiced in the voluntary organisations. In both organisations, the expression of ‘being professional’ referred to being able to meet the expected level of work efficiency and productivity which is closer to what Goodall (2000) suggests, than ‘formalisation’ (Gay 2000). The idea of being professional was also more concerned with the paid workers than volunteers. In practice, many issues of professionalism came out in the process of interaction between the paid workers and volunteers regarding what they expected from the work of the other.
The cases below describe a number of elements which affected the way the two groups communicated with each other and created distinct group dynamics. In this respect, communication was not only a matter of people's attitude towards others but also about the setting, the interests of individuals and social relations between different interest groups. In many ways, the two organisations showed a clear difference from each other.

At *Sixty Plus*, volunteers were the major work force in every activity they organised: none of the services they offered could be provided without volunteers. The office was used for paid workers and most volunteering activity was carried out outside the organisation. The role of paid workers was arranging activities and making appointments for the service users and volunteers. Once it was arranged by a paid worker, the services they provided took place outside the organisation and were left to individual volunteers.

Paid workers joined a few activities when there was a shortage of volunteers. In this circumstance, volunteers hardly ever came to the office and had little understanding about what paid workers were actually doing in the office. Volunteers' understanding of paid workers' work was entirely based on individual experience with one or two paid workers who they kept in touch with by phone if they needed any information on an activity, something which happened quite rarely. Despite the clear division of labour between volunteers and paid workers, on a rare occasion, some volunteers were asked to cover paid workers' job temporarily in the absence of a paid worker. These volunteers were considered as the most committed and capable, and received the status of a colleague at the organisation for their reliability. The atmosphere of the office was friendly and informal. Paid workers were dressed casually and visitors were always offered a drink at their arrival. Everyone including volunteers and service users would
call each other by their first names regardless of their age or position. Indeed, the informality was an important part of the public images the paid workers in both organisations cared for as it was strongly associated with their understanding of community (cf. Cohen 1986, Cullen 1994).

Since most activities involved on one-to-one communication between a service user and a volunteer, paid workers’ regular contact with service users and volunteers was a crucial part of volunteer management. At the initial induction, volunteers were encouraged to talk to paid workers about any difficulty or doubts about the volunteering experience and not to make any action based on a personal decision. The organisation had a volunteer co-ordinator who was responsible for both volunteers and service users as a personnel officer and administrator. She was especially concerned with ‘making sure of the safety and satisfaction of individuals’. The volunteer co-ordinator regularly contacted individual volunteers by phone and asked how they felt about their volunteering experience, and organised group meetings to give them an opportunity to share different experiences and opinions of volunteering. When I asked her about her work, she emphasised the importance of personalised support for individual volunteers.

You’ve got to ensure exactly what their expectation is, understand their personal needs of volunteering, and make them feel valued. If we find it difficult to find the right thing for them, we refer them to other organisations. It’s not always easy to arrange...the other day, we had a volunteer who was available only Monday mornings and she wanted to do escorting. We couldn’t arrange anything for a few weeks. It’s too narrow...we had to tell her to give us more options...Some people have transitions from one project to another. It’s fine as far as they can carry on...You’ve just got to be flexible to respond their needs.
Despite their considerations of volunteers and willingness to support volunteers, the communication between volunteers and paid workers usually took place when a new appointment was arranged over the phone.

The implication of this system is that it raised awareness on the part of volunteers regarding the responsibilities they were taking for themselves, service users and the organisation. At the same time, the communication with paid workers gave volunteers a feeling of having someone to turn to for any difficulty of volunteering and created a sense of security. The fact that paid workers themselves had an experience of volunteering in the past, and their friendly and informal attitude to volunteers, also enabled a more sympathetic approach to volunteers.

In this system, it is significant that there was a clear division of labour between paid workers and volunteers: volunteers were the main work force and paid workers were there for volunteers to prepare other things in order not to give volunteers any task except their volunteering activity itself. This extremely individualistic nature of the working style of their activity and little opportunity to meet other volunteers also allowed volunteers to share their experience and feelings about their experience mainly with the paid workers rather than with other volunteers. Consequently, it made volunteers somehow dependent on paid workers: the relationship between paid workers and volunteers became that of supervisors and supervisees. On the other hand, the absence of paid workers at volunteering activities made volunteers a significant information source of service users for the organisation. Paid workers acknowledged that volunteers often had a better understanding about individual service users than some paid workers. Regular communication with volunteers was a benefit for the organisation not only to provide a better support to volunteers but also to service users.
Nevertheless, the system was not suitable for all volunteers. The fact that there was much less conflict between paid workers and volunteers in this organisation did not mean that every individual was satisfied. The down side of the system was that the absence of the staff of the organisation at volunteering activity and its individualisation could potentially hide any issue which occurs between volunteers and service users unless either of them reports to the organisation. The volunteer co-ordinator was well aware of the difficulty of understanding individual volunteers and providing the right support for them:

Not all volunteers are talkative and not everybody tells you everything. Some don’t feel comfortable with talking on the phone and some people don’t even know if there’s any problem... I started taking notes on individuals. Now it’s like a book but it really helps. Small things I keep on record help me understand what’s going on and what support they need.

Furthermore, having little communication with other volunteers could discourage volunteers whose motivation was meeting people. As not all volunteers felt comfortable with talking to paid workers, having little opportunity to share their experience and feeling of volunteering and how they felt about the organisation with other volunteers made it difficult for some volunteers to even continue volunteering. In those circumstances, it was more likely that volunteers left the organisation.

In the case of Response, there were wider varieties of issues. The organisation was more service-oriented than volunteers-oriented, and not all services they provided involved volunteers. Unlike Sixty Plus, the role of volunteers was mainly supporting the paid workers following their instruction rather than being the major work force. Most services they provided were led by part-time workers particularly hired for each service.
The only exceptions for which volunteers played a major role were working at the reception and a newspaper editorial group.

All activities took place at the organisation so that volunteers always saw paid workers while they volunteered. The paid workers' office was at the basement and was often locked for a security reason. There were however, a number of visitors everyday in the office such as volunteers, people from other organisations, from local authorities and from the street. Paid workers were usually running up and down between their office and the reception on the ground floor for different enquiries. As in the case of Sixty Plus, paid workers were all dressed casually and kept a friendly and welcoming attitude to everyone coming to the organisation. Although paid workers often worked together with volunteers, the reverse situation: volunteers covering paid workers' work, never happened. The constant interruptions and a shortage of staff often caused chaos which eventually led to frequent miscommunication and disorganisation in their work. For instance, information left to one paid worker often didn't get through others because of miscommunication between paid workers. Since the paid workers often covered each other's work, it caused another complication to their working situation. The organisation also had a volunteer co-ordinator but the role was not as distinct as it was in Sixty Plus, and volunteers chose a different paid worker to talk to depending on the availability of paid workers rather than on their official role.

At the reception, only one volunteer was responsible for the work of each shift and several people worked in a rota system. In theory, as full-time paid workers often came to the reception, volunteers could ask them for help when they needed. However, full-time paid workers were mostly too busy to stay at the reception so that the opening-hour of the reception was dependent on the availability of a volunteer.
The relationship between the paid workers and volunteers was different in the
newspaper group. Although the group was originally set up by the paid workers, its
leadership shifted to volunteers as there were more regular members in the editorial
group. The role of paid workers then became supporting volunteers. The process was
gradual and it was also due to the fact that full-time workers had to engage in other
projects and could not place the same person particularly for its regular meeting. The
change of leadership also affected other working responsibilities and most of all,
volunteers’ understanding of paid workers’ responsibility to the newspaper. For instance,
at the beginning, it was a paid worker who chaired a meeting and took minutes unless
they asked a volunteer to do it. As paid workers’ role gradually decreased, volunteers
took these roles in a rota system which was based on the expectation of equal
participation and contribution to the group of the individuals. The idea was also
reflected in the decision making process of the newspaper group. Whenever there was
an issue to be discussed at a meeting, all volunteers were expected to express their
opinions and the decision was made often by votes. A frequent absence of a paid worker
at a meeting, on the other hand, made volunteers be more aware of the paid worker’s
role. Although volunteers were not critical of having no paid worker at a meeting, they
still expected paid workers to be responsible to the whole organisation of the newspaper.
They were disappointed and blamed paid workers for their disorganisation whenever
any inconvenience occurred. While paid workers were grateful to volunteers’ active
contribution to the newspaper, the transition of leadership sometimes caused them a
feeling of exclusion.
8.3.1 Case 1: unwanted giving

Even though volunteers' will of giving was usually positively received, not all giving was appreciated by a voluntary organisation. While I was volunteering at the reception of one organisation, there were many people living in the area who brought their personal belongings as a donation. Since the organisation was selling second-hand books at the reception, a number of books were brought in by the locals. There were also occasionally an old refrigerator, a stove, book shelves, and all kinds of household utensils which were otherwise to be thrown away. The paid workers, however, did not always appreciate these donations. They also asked volunteers to let them know about any donation before accepting. When I asked for advice, a paid worker told me to refuse a donated item.

We have too many books already and we don't even know where to store them. You know, most books they bring are not sellable. Nobody really buys those boring books. A fridge? We are not rubbish collectors...can you tell them we cannot accept any electronic products? ...it is a problem; people think we accept anything.

Although donors usually agreed to take their donations back, they often showed a difficulty in understanding the situation. One donor said,

We just bought a new one, so we don't need this. But it's still working. It's such a waste if we had to throw it away. You know these asylum seekers and the homeless...I thought they would make use of it. Do you know where I can bring it?
It was not only a material donation which a voluntary organisation could not accept, but also sometimes a volunteer who offered to give their skills and time. In the case of the latter, a difficulty occurred when offered skills and time schedule of a volunteer didn’t meet the needs of an organisation. While time schedule could be fixed relatively easily and a volunteer could be still appreciated, it led an extremely difficult situation when skills and attitudes of volunteers did not meet the organisation’s demands.

A volunteer who was involved in a newspaper group complained to me once that she felt being left out since she found nothing she could do for the group. She was taking a course in graphic design and introduced to the group by a paid worker. She was willing to work for the newspaper and expecting to gain some experience in graphic design. However, it turned out that her skill was not good enough to contribute to the newspaper. She was also not fluent in English so that she didn’t find writing an article a good option. A paid worker and a few volunteers offered to help her but nobody was actually available to give her practical help. After attending a few meetings, she stopped coming to the editorial group. Although both the volunteer and organisation were willing to work together, the disagreement between the organisation’s need and the volunteers offer didn’t make it happen.

In a previous chapter, I have argued that the essence of volunteering was in the volunteers’ will of giving which distinguishes itself from wage-labour (cf. 7.4.1.). This case however, suggests that the voluntary organisations cannot accept all the giving from the donors that they expected. In order for a voluntary organisation to function as an organisation, they need to maintain a certain standard of work and prove their competence to the public and funding sources. It was a part of the idea of professionalism the paid workers shared for their work.
8.3.2 Case 2: censorship

Daniela was an active member of a newspaper group. She regularly wrote an article on local issues. For one issue, she interviewed a local resident who used to run a shop in the area and described how the locals perceived some changes in the area over time. When the article was published, it was revealed that her article was edited by a paid worker without permission from her or the editorial group. The paid worker explained that there were some expressions which could be offensive to some residences in the community that they needed to be changed, and he didn’t have any chance to discuss it with her. Daniela disagreed:

That’s ridiculous. I simply quoted what the person told me. All right, it was a little negative comment on the historical changes of the area and she wasn’t entirely happy about all these foreigners coming into her area, but it’s not like she was accusing them. It was just a sort of nostalgic comment on the past and tradition... Why is it offensive? To whom? ...I’m not English either in a sense. I think they are too sensitive...It’s so badly edited...there is a grammatical mistake and a sentence is not finished...but under my name! He must have not even read the whole thing...on that day, we took the paper to the office before sending it to the printer, but we were still there for a while. We were there in the following morning, too. There was a plenty of time to discuss. It’s censorship! And we don’t want this.

The issue was taken into the editorial meeting. At the meeting, members found out that it was not only Daniela’s article but also another volunteer, Phil’s article was partly changed. Phil’s article was about a mews where residents felt threatened by the noise and rubbish brought by male prostitutes living in the same building and their clients. Although the content of the article remained the same as the original, the change was made on the title and the word ‘rent boys’ was replaced with ‘sex workers’. Paid
workers thought the article was 'biased' and the expression should have been legitimised. An editorial member who talked to one of the paid workers also claimed that the paid workers feared that it would 'upset another organisation' which supported gay and lesbian people 'in the community'. Phil objected that the changes didn't make a change as the paid worker intended. He also commented:

I mean, if they are so concerned about other organisations, what about the residents? They think rent boys are victims. But in a way, the residents are victims, too!

Daniela, on the other hand, declared that she might leave the newspaper as she found the paid worker’s behaviour unfair. A few volunteers claimed that Daniela’s contribution was crucial to the newspaper and they could not lose her. It was then suggested that the group should request the paid worker make a formal apology to Daniela in a form of a letter. Elizabeth who was a regular member of the editorial group and also a committee member of the organisation offered to talk to the paid worker. The group agreed and the letter was produced by the paid worker shortly after.

8.3.3 Case 3: funding requirements and networking

A paid worker suggested to a member of the newspaper group that a youth club in the area which had a close connection with the organisation was interested in contributing to the newspaper. The idea was warmly received by some members, and they informally discussed that somebody from the youth club may be welcomed to attend an editorial meeting to see what it was like. A few weeks later, a paid worker told the editorial members at a meeting that a paid worker from the youth club was
organising a writing course in journalism and wanted to come to explain their project, and they received a draft of their course syllabus. The editorial group agreed to meet the person. At a meeting in the following week, one of the members brought some copies of the syllabus and discovered that it suggested the best coursework would be published on the newspaper. It then became clear that the involvement of the youth club meant more than having a new volunteer in the group. The statement on the syllabus was strongly rejected by the editorial members. They argued that giving a space to another party meant the loss of control on the part of the editorial group, which could automatically damage the significance of the group. Since the editorial group had already agreed to meet the person from the youth club, members decided to keep the appointment but explained that their articles would be published only after going through the usual editorial process as other articles did. When the person from the youth club arrived, there was a significant tension in the atmosphere reflecting the editorial members' bitterness and anger against the situation. Nobody spoke for a while. He introduced himself, Andy and looked around. Without having a clue of the reason behind the tension he showed a slight sense of embarrassment on his face for a while but soon started explaining his course and mentioned that he had an experience in journalism, which received cynical grins from some members exchanging eye contacts with each other. After the presentation, the editorial group explained their views on their course and the publication of their work. During the conversation, it turned out that it was one of the paid workers from *Response* who first approached the youth club and suggested that they should write an article for the newspaper. One editorial member said that the editorial group didn’t know about this. After Andy left the meeting, the editorial members discussed what had to be done with the situation. Many showed anger towards the paid worker who caused the problem. One member said:
I'm getting tired of this! This is ridiculous. One after another, they 'recruit' (emphasis original) all those people, the disabled, the homosexuals, immigrants...ok, they told us that it's important to be 'inclusive' for the funding requirements, and we 'have to' write about these people...Who wants to read about the same people every issue? If we really do that, it will become a boring paper...they always end up causing some problems. We already have varieties of people here, don't we? And we joined the group not because we felt 'excluded' by the community...I think they are marginalising these people by inviting them here. That's so ironic, isn't it?

Another member said:

What I don't understand is why they (paid workers) don't tell us the truth. The poor chap (the person from the youth club), he was looking so intimidated. Of course it wasn't his fault and it's not our fault either. We just didn't know...I feel sorry for him. Do they think we are stupid? We are not going to clear their mess. They've got to do something about it.

The group agreed to request the paid worker who originally approached the youth club to write a formal letter to apologise for the situation. The whole issue was however, later left to the paid workers.

8.3.4 Case 4: autonomy of volunteers and constitution

After having difficulties in communicating with paid workers, some editorial members came up with an idea that they should better have a constitution of their own and become an independent body from the organisation. Although the idea didn't attract much interest from other members at the beginning, it gained more support after a series of miscommunications with paid workers regarding a financial report of the newspaper.
A financial report was made by the director of the organisation for the newspaper group which was presented at an editorial meeting. The report described the financial income from a funding source and advertising which was gained by the volunteers, and how the money was spent for what purpose. As volunteers studied the report, they found out that there was £500 on the spending lists which was not clearly explained. Since the paid worker was not at the meeting, the members decided to ask him to come and give them an explanation. The paid worker told a member that he was too busy to leave his office so that he would do it at some other time. After several appointments were missed for different reasons, volunteers gradually started showing their suspicion about the report itself. One volunteer then learnt from another source that the money was spent not for the newspaper but for another project which was also organised by the organisation. Despite a persistent request of the editorial group, the paid worker never came to the meeting, which convinced the members of the story they had learnt.

Around the time the idea of constitution developed amongst editorial members, a new volunteer was introduced to the editorial group who later turned out to be the chairperson of the committee of the organisation. Having a full-time job in the city, the person's attendance to a meeting was irregular and she did not speak much but rather observed others at the meeting. Since Elizabeth, one of the most active volunteers was also one of committee members, the chairperson's presence did not attract much attention from other volunteers. As her attendance at meetings became more and more irregular, Elizabeth revealed to another volunteer that the chairperson was very concerned about the relationship between the editorial group and paid workers and wanted to learn more about the situation. She also did not approve of the editorial group's independence from the organisation. One day after a meeting, six volunteers who were all dedicated members, decided to have a drink near the organisation. Since I
had been away for a few weeks prior to the meeting, the main topic was about the recent change they perceived at a meeting. One volunteer said,

You must have heard from Daniela, you’ve got on well with each other, but we’ve got a ‘spy’... (grins from other volunteers)...well, the thing is, we don’t like this woman. Obviously, she was sent by those chaps from downstairs (the paid workers). Elizabeth says the ‘chairperson’ is trying to help all of us, but she is kind of in the middle, you know, she is also a committee member and she is a part of us, too. Now we have to be careful with saying anything there. We don’t know how it would affect our position.

Another volunteer said:

I don’t mean that she is a bad person or anything. It’s just that we don’t feel comfortable with being watched, and knowing that she could do something doesn’t help. We don’t know why she came and we don’t know what she is going to do. But we know Ben (the director) is not happy about us. The other day, Elizabeth told him he doesn’t need to be at the meeting except we need him. He apparently said to someone it’s patronising! (laughter).

After the meeting, Daniela asked me if I was interested in visiting Elizabeth at home with her. It was to discuss the plan to have a constitution for the newspaper group. ‘We can probably talk about some secrets about them (paid workers), too’. I agreed to join her and one afternoon, we visited Elizabeth’s flat near the organisation. We asked her to tell us about the committee and how she perceived the situation of the newspaper group. Elizabeth explained that it was the committee which was entirely responsible for the management of the organisation including hiring and directing the staff. She also added that the paid workers, therefore, did not have any control over any management
issue of the organisation. Committee members were all elected by the members of the organisation, and discuss the issues of the time at a committee meeting held every six weeks.

I know that people don’t know about these things, but paid workers don’t have any power to make any decision. It is actually better for the editorial group to approach the committee rather than the paid workers…but maybe it’s a different matter…They are just hired people. Any money over £200 has to be discussed by the committee before it’s spent. We are actually thinking of involving more people in the committee, but it’s not easy. It takes a lot of commitment and people are quite busy nowadays…we are quite concerned about Ben. He has not been in good shape. As you know, he missed applying for funding for the newspaper. It is not looking good. We have the money for only one more issue. The advertising may help but it’s not good enough…The committee has been very pleased about how the paper has been…it’s been so successful. Katerina (the chairperson) was very sympathetic to the group so she came to the meeting…But unfortunately, she concluded that the editorial members were not so much interested as she heard before.

Elizabeth also expressed her concern about Ben for his health condition and his miscommunication with other people.

On the way back from Elizabeth’s flat, Daniela said that it was a good meeting in a sense that:

We learnt that these people (paid workers) are nothing! It was actually the waste of time that we were so bothered about them. We should rather concentrate on the committee.
The idea of having a constitution was discussed from time to time amongst editorial members for a few months, however, it never came to the real term. The chairperson also stopped coming to the meeting, and there was no further communication between the committee and the editorial group.

8.3.5 Case 5: volunteers as a threat to paid work

Another aspect of professionalism is concerned with the idea of volunteering as a stepping stone to paid work. Volunteering in this sense is a good opportunity to gain work experience. At the same time, the volunteers whose motivation is to have work experience tend to have a stronger awareness of professionalism: they care about the quality of work in volunteering in the same way they see paid work.

In some cases, volunteering could actually lead a volunteer to paid work straight away. In fact, many paid workers I met had an experience of volunteering either at the organisation they were working for or elsewhere prior to the paid work. On the part of the voluntary organisation, having a person as a volunteer gave them an opportunity to see if the person could offer the skills and qualities they were looking for. Hiring a person who already had known a lot about an organisation was also convenient for the organisation since it could save some time and energy in training the person and getting to know each other. Moreover, those who actually found paid work after working as a volunteer were more likely to have little work experience. On the part of the voluntary organisation, it made sense since it was cheaper than hiring a more skilled worker with much experience. Precisely for these reasons, a volunteer was potentially a threat to paid workers: volunteers could be a good candidate for a future job in the organisation they were volunteering for. Volunteers, however, hardly ever saw the possibility that they could be a threat to paid workers.
Another factor was the insecurity of paid work. Although the paid workers in the voluntary organisations were not badly paid, the stability of their work entirely relied on the funding situation of each organisation. As many funding programs are in the short term and not easy to renew, many paid workers inevitably had to face a potential loss of their work. This aspect of organisational character was usually kept entirely away from volunteers. It was partly because paid workers themselves didn’t talk about their thoughts and situation of their work in the office, but also because there was a consensus amongst paid workers that outsiders including volunteers and service users didn’t need to know these issues. For instance, when a paid worker in one organisation left for another job, it was announced to all service users and volunteers in a newsletter that it was her personal choice. A year later, I learnt from her previous colleague that her leaving was in fact, due to the lack of funding of the organisation.

While not all paid workers were equally affected by the possibility of losing their job, some part-time workers were more aware of the potential.

An English language course was running weekly for free at a backdoor room in an organisation. When I attended a class, the teacher was a qualified Swedish woman, Inge who was aiming to take a course to have a further qualification as a language teacher. Inge was a part-time worker at the organisation. There were around ten people attending the course. Each class took two hours in the evening, and was based on various exercises and small group discussions. I introduced myself to the class and told them that I was a volunteer and also interested in the course for my research. I was warmly welcomed by the group and we all sat in a circle, facing the teacher. As some people thought that I had more knowledge in English than others, soon after we started some exercises, I was put into the situation that I was more of an assistant of the teacher rather than a student in a class. Although Inge didn’t make any comment, it was clear on her
face that she was increasingly irritated by my presence. During a tea break, I had a brief conversation with Inge and she asked me if I was interested in working there. I replied that I was there purely for my academic interest. She said:

But you said you had some background in linguistics. I thought you came here to see if you wanted to work here...I know that this organisation doesn’t have much money. If you are a volunteer, they are maybe happier.

I said to Inge that it was not the case and I was in fact not qualified as a language teacher. I asked her if she was still happy about having me in the class and she said it was fine.

8.4 Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at various aspects of professionalisation of volunteering and how it affects volunteering practice. As in the case of money, the issue of professionalism also sheds light on the differences and similarities between volunteering and paid work.

What I find in my case studies is that professionalism is largely a matter of a work ethic that reflects what people expect from volunteering regarding the quality of work as well as the workers’ attitude to work. As it has been reported by existing studies, ‘being professional’ generally referred to being competent to meet an expected level of work (Dart 2004, Goodall 2000, Parsons 2004). However, what it meant to be professional in volunteering varied amongst different interest groups. The conflicts between the paid workers and volunteers revealed how their interests clashed with each other, and somehow explained why the issue of professionalism is a matter of volunteer management.
On the part of the voluntary organisations, professionalism involved two aspects. One was to do with the quality of work they provided to the public as an organisation. Another was concerned with the support the paid workers provided to the volunteers.

As for the former, the voluntary organisations' need for being professional was largely a reaction towards an increasing expectation from the funding sources. This type of professionalism was very similar to that of paid work. In fact, it was often used as a measure to evaluate the work of the paid staff in the organisations. Professionalism was positively perceived as a strategy to improve the quality of their work as it was opposed to amateurism with a lower standard of work which was associated with volunteering.

Professionalism was also concerned with the public image of the organisations which ultimately affected the support from the local residents and the local authority. In the case studies, I have described how the paid workers had to edit some of the newspaper articles for their fear of damaging their public image. They also tried to involve a wider variety of people and other organisations in the newspaper project in order to keep a better social network.

However, some aspects of professionalism such as being business-like and bureaucratic were negatively perceived in both organisations. It was because professionalism as being business-like obstructed a public image of the voluntary organisation being friendly, caring and welcoming. In both organisations, the paid workers made much effort to keep such a public image by dressing casually, offering tea to visitors, and decorating rooms with handmade paper works. Such an attitude was also reflected on their language: they called each other by first names and preferred to use a job title which sounds less business-like such as 'volunteer co-ordinator' rather than a 'volunteer manager'.
On the other hand, volunteers had a different understanding and attitudes to professionalism. For many volunteers, being professional was a matter of choice. Some volunteers such as those who considered their volunteering activity as work experience took professionalism as an important value of their work whereas those who valued volunteering for their will of giving and care of others showed little or no interest in professionalism. Nevertheless, most volunteers expected the paid workers to be professional: they claimed that that paid workers were responsible for the volunteering activity volunteers were engaged with as well as all the other work for the organisation. Volunteering for volunteers was what they offered to do, and the rest of work such as making an appointment, preparing space and equipment, and dealing with the aftermath was left to paid workers as what they were hired for.

Volunteers also expected their action of giving to be always appreciated. Many volunteers and donors found it difficult to understand why their offered giving and donation could not be accepted, and expected the paid workers to be more efficient in making use of their offerings.

Moreover, volunteers objected to feeling that they were under control: their action had to be based on an informed consent. Volunteering is different from paid work firstly because they are not paid and that they are not constrained by the contract, but also because the idea of volunteering suggests the actor's free will (cf. Gaskin 2003). Volunteering has to be what the givers are willing to do.

The difficulty of applying professionalism to volunteering comes in at this point (cf. Davis-Smith 1998, Meijis and Hoogstad 2001). Professionalism as being efficient and productive could be positive as long as volunteers agreed with the idea, but not when it was imposed on volunteers. Professionalism as being bureaucratic and business-like could be negative when volunteers were subjected to it as it was an attribute of paid
work and contradicted an understanding of volunteering as free. In the worst case, volunteers could ignore an appointment they had made without any notice, which could cause much inconvenience to an organisation. A vital task for the organisations in order to pursue their idea of professionalism was therefore to achieve an agreement with volunteers.

These cases above illustrate how important it is to look at its process and context to explore the issue of professionalism. Many difficulties of volunteer management appeared differently in these two organisations. Interestingly, most cases of the conflicts happened in one organisation and not in another. Conflicts revealed not only the group dynamics in the organisations but also how each group expressed or hid their expectations towards the other and applied various strategies to pursue their interests. I have described these issues regarding the differentiation of roles, group interests and patterns of communication.

First of all, the two organisations had a different way of defining the role of volunteers and that of paid workers. While both organisations worked with volunteers, *Sixty Plus* considered volunteers as the main work force whereas *Response* was mainly run by the paid workers. The volunteers' attitude, however, was affected by not only what they defined as a volunteer's role but the way volunteering activities were arranged. One of the main reasons why *Sixty Plus* had less conflict with volunteers was that the paid workers presented their role very clearly as a supporter and supervisor of volunteers. The division of labour was clear in their discourse as well as the way they divided their space. Paid workers informed volunteers only about their volunteering activity and kept the rest as their own business. Most volunteers were also physically away from paid workers and didn't have an opportunity to perceive their work. The lack of communication with other volunteers also did not give volunteers any opportunity to
exchange their opinion on the paid workers. Therefore, the volunteers who were not satisfied with the organisation usually left before confronting the paid workers.

The situation was very different at Response. Volunteers' role was defined as complementary to that of paid workers. As in Sixty Plus, the paid workers tried to keep the division of labour as clear as possible. However, it did not work as they expected since the organisation had a severe shortage of staff and the paid workers often shared the same working space with volunteers, which inevitably exposed their working environment to the volunteers.

In the case of the newspaper group, the miscommunications and disagreements were aggravated as the leadership shifted from the paid workers to volunteers. As volunteers worked in a group they exchanged with other volunteers their opinions and frustrations against the paid workers. Both paid workers and volunteers developed into separate groups. Secrecy and manipulation of information also did not work in this case as it ended up causing mistrust of each other. Secrecy may be a useful strategy when it is not recognised by the other interest group but not when it is revealed as such.

For the paid workers, the newspaper group was a part of the organisation and because of that they took an opportunity to work with other organisations, appropriated an article to deliver their ideas, and used its financial report to balance out a financial matter of other programmes they organised. Volunteers however, did not understand these organisational strategies. Instead, they felt deceived by the paid workers. Without receiving any explanations from the paid workers, their mistrust of the paid workers led volunteers to covertly prepare themselves to have an official independence from the organisation, which in fact did not happen as no volunteer took initiative at the end.

These examples suggest that conflicts are not only a matter of disagreement but led by a number of circumstantial factors such as a working environment, means of
communication, and stability of leadership and organisational structure. Through an example of professionalism, I have described how the communication between the paid workers and volunteers were affected by its context.

Finally, volunteering as a threat to paid work adds another layer to the issue of professionalism. While there is an increasing expectation towards the professionalisation of volunteering, excess professionalisation could threaten paid work.

As in the case study, many voluntary organisations have financial difficulties and instabilities. As a consequence, they tend to hire less qualified workers and often hire those who have stayed with the organisation as a volunteer. While paid workers were already aware of the insecurity of their work situation, an increasing professionalisation of volunteers could in fact increase their sense of insecurity: if volunteers are professionalized and able to offer the same quality of work provided by paid staff, they could take over the paid workers' job, which ultimately cuts the cost of human resources.

Volunteer managers play an essential role in these contexts. In the first place, they ought to recognise that volunteers have different needs and understanding of their work from paid workers. In order to achieve their organisational goals, volunteer managers need to seek different strategies for each group, and provide an environment in which volunteers and paid workers can work together without becoming a threat to each other.

Professionalisation of volunteering is therefore a more complex issue than that of paid work. Professionalism has a different role and form in different circumstances, and its understanding requires an in-depth analysis of circumstantial and organisational mechanisms as well as an individual understanding of professionalism.
Chapter 9  Voluntary organisations and the missing community

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look at the role of voluntary organisations in a wider context of community. I have described in chapters 2 and 3, that volunteering is often discussed in reference to community, especially, in the theories of social capital and the Third Way. Community building has become one of the areas the current British social policy expects the voluntary organisations to contribute to. This chapter will examine from various perspectives whether there really is such an association.

In order to do so, I will first illustrate how the locals perceived the idea of community, and explore a number of issues suggested in their discourse of community. Based on this analysis, I will discuss the voluntary organisations’ relation to the locals who lived in the area.

While the word ‘community’ was a part of everyday language both in and outside the voluntary organisations during my fieldwork, what was meant by ‘community’ was rarely an issue in their dialogue: it was neither discussed nor questioned by anyone who used that word. ‘Community’ was a versatile tool to express opinions on various aspects of life circumstances. It was also significant that community was often used to describe something which was important but had been lost. It was however, not certain whether the missing sense of community reflected their nostalgia for a past which really existed, or merely an idealised and imagined past (cf. Anderson 1991).
The data is based on my experience, and that of the locals as well as of the volunteers in the organisations that I worked with during my research. In this chapter particularly, I will go beyond these voluntary organisations and also look at the neighbourhood association which was related with *Response* in order to take a broader context into consideration. It is also important, in the process of examining the role of the voluntary organisation, to look at whether social participation enhances multifunctional social ties as social capital theories claim.

Not all the locals who appear in this chapter volunteered for the voluntary organisations but were somehow connected to them either as a service user, a neighbour or a friend of a volunteer. I came to know these individuals mainly through volunteers.

In the first part of this chapter, I will talk about the perception of 'community' based on a few key words which recurred in conversation. I will describe the locals' understanding and expectation of community through these key concepts. As it has been pointed out, how people perceive community is an important element which affects the form and function of community (Brint 2001, Hill 1996, Kingston et al. 1999, McMillan 1996, Omoto and Snyder 2002). By looking at how community has been talked about, I will describe how sense of community relates to community participation.

This will be followed by an example of neighbourhood association. While neighbourhood associations were different from the voluntary organisations, many volunteers were also part of an association of their area. It was a different type of volunteering in the sense that it was not for people in need, but for themselves, and was directly related to their own everyday lives. I have chosen this example as it sheds light on various aspects of community participation which not only relate to a style of participation in general but reflect the way individuals perceived their role in their community.
Another point of this discussion is along a question, in what sense the locals missed community. I will explore this question from two perspectives. First, I will look at several factors which prevented the locals from interacting in a community life they longed for. In other words, the obstacles to community building. I will then go back to the voluntary organisations. By describing how the locals searched for their idea of community through the voluntary organisations, I will discuss the role of a voluntary organisation in its social context.

9.2 Case Studies:

9.2.1 Missing community

Although the use of the word ‘community’ had different connotations in different contexts for my informants, it was usually geographically based. When people talked about community, it was a term to describe some aspects of the life of the people living in a limited geographical area. The geographical boundary tended to reflect the area of activity in their daily lives. Therefore, not only were these boundaries different from their official neighbourhood boundaries such as ward divisions and postcodes, but also they varied depending on individuals, and the discourse of community implied much of the lifestyle of each individual.

They also recognised other types of community, such as that of ethnic minorities and gay people, but considered them as a specific example of community for their emphasis on a particular issue. The term ‘community’ was however, usually used in a more abstract sense defined in terms of space rather than social issues.

It was an interesting view as geographically defined community was nonetheless exclusive in the strict sense that it only included those who lived in a specific area. The locals considered the geographic sense of community the most appropriate for their
definition. In this regard, their understanding of community is primarily based on what they experienced in their daily lives rather than imaginary concept of community, which I will further explore below (cf. Anderson 1991).

One of the first things I noticed in my research hearing how people talked about their local area and community, was that not all residents were 'a local'. Moreover, 'being a local' had a slightly different meaning from 'being a part of a community'. While being a local was about one's belongingness to the place they lived in, being a part of a community was more to do with the relationship one had with other people living in the same geographic area. Therefore, merely living in an area did not necessarily make one a 'local' or a 'part of community'. This finding adds a new perspective to an argument that residential stability and length of residence are a key factor of social ties (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974, Sampson 1991). Although they are undeniably important elements of community construct, they alone do not make a person a part of community.

9.2.1.1 Impersonality and disappearance of community

What is it then, that makes a person a local, and what are the attributes of community?

As I mentioned before, when the locals talked about community, it was mostly about its disappearance. They recognised the disappearance of community typically when there was an apparent or visible change in their neighbourhood such as old neighbours moving out and local shops closing down.

The disappearance of old local shops and the emergence of new business were not merely about changing views. It was also about the loss of knowledge and the feeling of
being 'local'. Talking about a recently closed local grocery shop, Sarah, a neighbour of a volunteer who was in her late 30s, said;

It was just a normal grocery shop, you know, one of those rather dull...you only find boring looking veggies and fruits, nothing fancy. I used to go there, not everyday but fairly often. The guy there knew me. He knew me since I was at school...his son was at the same school... We didn't actually know much of each other, but I knew who he was and he knew that I lived nearby...that sort of thing. We were both locals. We said hi to each other if we saw on the street...and I'm kind of sad that he is not there anymore. The new shop is alright, but it's different. There is no character, and people are just like nobody

But you may get to know these people

How? They are not interested. Anyway, none of them stay for long. They're not like us, living for 15 years in the same place...students or foreigners. They don't have to know the locals. They just work for the shop.

The disappearance of shops was often associated with the disappearance of locality and personal attachment to the place they lived in. At the initial stage of my fieldwork while I was walking around intensively to understand the area, many long-term locals told me about how the area used to be. An anecdotal description of lost shops, however, did not necessarily mean that they had a personal attachment with the place as in the case of Sarah. It was also a matter of knowing, and knowledge itself was a part of the feeling of being a local. A student volunteer, Joe, who had been in the area for 6 months said,
I don’t think I’m a local here. I don’t feel I know the area. Of course, I do know the sandwich shops, cafes and restaurants I go to sometimes. I do know where the library is. But I don’t feel that I’m local enough. It’s hard to explain...it’s not just about myself living here for a short time, but I think a local should know a lot more about where you live...

In such a description of ‘knowing’ as a feature of being a local, the emphasis was on knowing some details of the area they lived in, in addition to a practical knowledge they acquired usually out of necessity. The type of knowledge which was rather unnecessary and sometimes even useless, of the area one lives in, was actually considered as very important to feel being a local.

While knowing the area was an important feature to be a local, knowing other locals was another important attribute of a ‘local’. Knowing and not knowing other locals were often mentioned in its relation to the person’s perception of community. When Leila complained about the non-existence of community in the area, she said;

There is no community here. How can you say you have a community when you see only strangers in your neighbourhood...actually, I don’t know if I can call it ‘neighbourhood’. I don’t even know who lives next door! There are some people I recognise by face, but I rarely see them...in point of fact, even if we recognise each other, we only say hi to each other at the best. Nothing more.

It was remarkable that the same experience of ‘greeting’ could be a sign of being a local to a person like Sarah, and could mean nothing to another person like Leila who lived in the same area. Yet, what is common to both is the disappearance of community based on the sense of ‘not-knowing’ each other, and ‘impersonality’ they felt in their experience: while greeting with somebody whom they knew gave them a feeling of shared-ness,
greeting a stranger didn't have the same effect. Furthermore, the recognised impersonality and psychological distance neighbours were, in many cases, aggravated by the lack of communication and a frequent turnover of residents (cf. Kasarda and Janowitz 1974, Wirth 1938).

On the other hand, one could find the presence of community by seeing others experiencing a community life. For example: Jan was a long time local in the area. He was in his fifties and lived in a flat on his own which he had inherited from his parents. He was unemployed at the time of my fieldwork and a regular member of the newspaper editorial group at *Response*, and occasionally joined the others for a drink after a meeting. While some people saw him as a person with many social contacts but with few 'friends' due to his 'reasonably efficient but distanced' attitude to people, he had a rather positive view of his community:

Community is here, why not? I don't like the word (community) though. These days it sounds like propaganda, doesn't it? (a grin) but anyway, if you're talking about a sort of life we had before, it's different now. But the fact that I don't talk to my neighbours doesn't mean there is no community, does it? When I see people at the town hall discussing local issues, I feel there is still a community, at least for those...who are interested. I see people talking to their neighbours with their children or a dog. That's a good sign of community and it's not something politicians can make (laughter).

The perception of community was thus not always about a personal involvement in a community. One could perceive a presence of community even if he does not feel a part of it. Jan's comment on 'community' as a political propaganda and 'community' he perceived in his life also gives a link between various comments on community made by the locals. It is an image of community which is ubiquitous, and based on voluntary
participation of the individuals who live in the same area, that is not something which can be imposed by an external force. Moreover, the image of community was discussed in a more general and impersonal language whereas the characteristics of the main features of community experience described by the individuals was more specific and significantly based on their personal experience. It was an experience of impersonality which was denied as something exclusive to the idea of community.

As has been suggested, psychological sense of community was closely related to pro-social behaviour (Davidson and Cotter 1991, Kingston, et al. 1999). These examples illustrate a type of pro-social and collectivistic attitude the locals picked up, which emphasised informal, personal, and voluntary participation, and was related to their daily lives.

9.2.1.2 Neighbourhood associations

As voluntary organisations were always short of volunteers, involving people in a local association was also a difficult job. Elizabeth, a volunteer who used to take a role in a neighbourhood association for a long time, once told me how hard it was to involve the locals in the group.

It was really the most difficult part of our work. People are really suspicious of others these days. We often had to visit each flat in the area, carrying something to prove who we were. When they didn’t respond, we had to leave a brochure. But it was not successful because anything which was not addressed to individuals was all thrown away by the cleaners of those buildings. We had to talk to at least a resident of each building to let us leave a brochure. Involving people was another thing. Some people showed an interest in some issues...of course, everybody should have been. That’s why we spent so much time on it!...but people rarely were happy to be involved.
We all knew that somebody had to do something if we had a say. But many people expected somebody else to do it, and got only the cream.

Another volunteer Sue, organised a meeting, as she felt the need of 'making an action' about the constant engine noise from buses parking around hotels and the increasing number of drunk people in the area. She was a long time local resident in her late thirties. She firstly talked to a few residents in her building and asked for their opinion on arranging a residential meeting. After receiving some positive responses, she made a colourful and well designed advertisement for the meeting and distributed it in the 'good part of neighbourhood', which ultimately meant more affluent residents in a better maintained building. In her account, it was because she only needed 'people who would care about the noise'. The meeting was held at a local church. Around fifty people turned up. The meeting was well received and it was agreed that there would be another in the future. A local councillor was also invited. After a few meetings, Sue decided to 'withdraw' from the position of meeting organiser. Responding to my question of the reason, she said:

Why should I? I did all the preparation for the meeting, making adverts, making an appointment with the church, talking to the local authority...and they all agree that we do have some issues in this area. They want to continue to work on it. So, if they want to do it, they should. I think I've done enough for my part.

But can you really withdraw? Who is going to take the role of what you've done?

I don't know. Somebody has got to do it. I really feel that if you do too
much, they just assume that you're always there for it. But why should I work for everybody? You've got to show that's not the case!

The stories of the locals' reluctant participation or non-participation in the local association were all very similar. As in these instances, taking part in a local association was tough work. It was often a case that a few individuals who happened to take a role ended up by taking the same role again and again, sometimes for years, eventually deciding to quit after 'getting to the point that it's too much'. While arranging a meeting, taking minutes, negotiating with a local authority, and networking with other bodies, were all considered to require an acceptable amount of work to take on board, doing it for a long time involved much commitment and sacrifice of time and energy. Amongst a number of reasons people mentioned, lack of local commitment, lack of time and social mobility were the most salient. In fact, 'being too busy' and 'not staying for long' (in one place) were also elements which prevented people from regular interaction with other locals, and consequently from developing their social tie amongst them. These recognised obstacles to social relationships amongst locals were, however, not inevitable.

In some cases, the problem of the lack of time was solved by applying a new medium of communication. One residents association worked as a team and made a significant success in setting up a group with a recognised constitution. The success was largely to do with the members’ regular contact by e-mail. Since the main members were all full-time office workers and some had other commitments in life, it was difficult to find the time to communicate when everybody was available. By using e-mail as the main communication medium instead of meeting in person, they managed to interact with each other at their own convenience. The key factor was that the members had a skill and an access to this media: although internet has become a common media
of communication nowadays, it was not suitable to all associations and volunteering groups. Older people especially, often found this communicational tool intimidating for its unfamiliarity. As a consequence, many were still communicating by phone and meeting in person.

The group also claimed that their area had a few issues of their strong interests such as graffiti, street noise, and advertisement of sex business on telephone boxes. Joining the association was an ‘investment’ since ‘a group is stronger than an individual’ to tackle these problems. The idea of ‘investment’ was a strong incentive particularly for owner-occupiers who had a potential of selling their property in the future. Many properties in the Borough were sold for exceptionally high prices, and the historical background and the image of many parts of the Borough added an extra attraction to their values in the market. However, this value could be easily affected by some elements of an area such as those regarding the type of neighbourhoods, accessibility to shops and transport, crime rates, street rubbish, and noise, which ultimately affected conditions of life. Not only were these important features of housing values, but also they were not stable as some residents would have wished as a consequence of social mobility and changes in the investments from public and private bodies. These examples once again indicate the significance of residential stability and length of residence in community participation. At the same time, their participation in community organisation was more instrumental, based on personal interests rather than being aimed at serving the public good. This corresponds to what has been suggested in some studies of modern and urban community (cf. Brint 2001, Crenson 1978, Kasarda and Janowitz 1974, Sampson 1991, Wirth 1938, Wireman 1984).

On the other hand, short-stay residents who were renting showed much less interest in such an ‘investment’. Their sense of ‘being a local’ and their expectation of
'community' were also relatively weak. Although many lived in the area as their choice and expressed some sort of personal attachment to their place of residence, their interest was not in getting involved in a local community. The issues and difficulties they found were not something they needed to act on but a part of the responsibility of landlords, and not theirs as tenants. Having to deal with neighbours and community issues was a potential factor of moving to another place. People who had no prospect of staying for long also felt less need to get to know other locals. They were typically young professionals and students, whose life arrangements were relatively unstable. Most of them were also sharing an accommodation which was less likely to last for a long time.

Ron, a professional in his mid-thirties who had lived in the Borough for three years said;

I'm not saying that I don’t like meeting anybody in my area, but I don’t see any point. I have enough friends, and I kind of like my neighbours not bothering each other. It could be annoying (if they do). It is probably sad that we don’t have any ‘community’ but I don’t think I need it. I’m alright.

Not only was community less of a need for these people, but it was something they would rather get away from as they perceived it as a constraint to personal space. In other words, the lack of community was associated with a sense of freedom, and protection of privacy.
9.2.2 Social boundaries: what keeps people apart

9.2.2.1 Insecurity and fear of crime

When long-time locals talked about how their living area had changed, their feeling of missing the past, and their attachment to what it used to be, were factors often accompanied by a rejection mostly because of its unknowability. The unfamiliar was not only impersonal to them, but was perceived with suspicion, doubts and anxiety. In this regard, there was a parallel between knowing and not knowing a local area, and their sense of security and insecurity. It was at this point that a psychological sense of community drew a boundary between people (cf. Omoto and Snyder 2002).

While such association did not appear in all the local discourse, it was remarkably evident amongst some individuals like Aggie. Aggie was 76 years old and a service user of Sixty Plus. She had lived for most of her life in the Borough, and had moved to a nursing home after her husband passed away. I accompanied her weekly visits to a hairdresser at a community centre where she met other regular visitors and enjoyed lengthy conversations. As she had poor eyesight and difficulty in walking, she usually asked for a cab when she went out. Coming back from the hairdresser once, Aggie invited me for tea at her place. She showed me a picture of her only daughter who lived in South Africa with her husband. Aggie explained that they spoke on the phone occasionally but hadn’t seen each other for a few years. I sat down at a round table by the window. She asked me to open the window and said that she usually kept the window closed when she was on her own.

Why? What do you think? It’s dangerous...This flat is on the ground floor as you see. Not the best place. I don’t mind hearing them (pedestrians) talking…but the kids! This area has gone down really badly these days. So
many foreigners! ...a girl like you cannot walk on your own, and never somebody like me!...some time ago, somebody threw a stone at the window...It's disgusting! I know it's one of those kids. So I decided to keep it closed since then.

A comment of this sort was more often heard from a long time local than a short-term one. Interestingly, those who talked about their fear of crime and the risks they might be exposed to did not necessarily live in a high crime area of the Borough, and not all those who expressed such fears had been victims of crime or had known victims of crime in person. As over twenty percent of the Borough was ranked within the worst twenty percent of deprived areas in the whole of England on the crime index, fear of crime was not, merely a matter of paranoia (Noble et al. 2004). How crime was perceived, however, was another issue. Although there was no statistical data available, during my fieldwork, relating this issue, fear of crime was more likely to be discussed as an everyday issue of the elderly and female residents. This perception did not correspond to the actual experience of the involvement of crime I heard from people: the experience of being a victim of crime was mentioned by a number of people regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity and other elements. It was also often the case that the perception was associated with an understanding of the capability to cope with a situation of crime. The association between a victim of crime and one's ability to cope with it, was more prominent in the discourse of the fear of crime. When people talked about their fear of crime, the issue was more to do with their feeling of insecurity and that of lacking the ability to handle a potential risk. Therefore, those who were less able physically and financially and had less reliable social contacts had more awareness of risk. Fear of crime was, as it has been claimed, a discourse which questions the 'knowable,
decisionable (actionable), and potentially controllable’ (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 265).

For instance, for an elderly person with physical impairments living on their own, the risk of getting hurt or losing something was an everyday issue. A small accident could cause a serious injury, and an accident could happen even without an external element.

In many cases, the fear of crime and accident was a good enough reason for the elderly to limit their daily activity and stay at home. Dolly, in her early seventies, stopped her daily routine of going out for a short walk after she had an eye operation. Although she was not blind, she did not find it easy to walk on her own with her poor eyesight, hearing impairment and stick to support her knee.

It’s not that I fall down on the street every time I go out. But I’m too scared to cross the road. There are too many cars driving fast and too many people on the street. They walk very fast, and they don’t care about someone like me (who walks slowly with a physical impairment). They just get annoyed. I’m scared of bumping into them… I wouldn’t even notice if somebody nicks my wallet, and nobody would help me….after ten days staying at home, I said to myself ‘ok. I have to go out. I don’t want to die in my sofa’…but I couldn’t cross the road. I just walked up and down on the same side of the street. It was enough for me.

Such a comment from one of the locals illustrates that a perceived sense of isolation from a supportive community was often aggravated by the subjective anxiety and fear of crime (cf. Hollway and Jefferson 1997, Walklate 1998).
9.2.2.2 Identifying ‘the others’

On the other hand, the subject of their fear was usually much clearer in their mind than the actual potentiality of crime and other types of troubles. Even though Aggie did not know any of those ‘kids’ or ‘foreigners’ personally in her life, her understanding of them was fairly clear. They were not only outsiders to her but more importantly they were ‘bad’ persons who could cause her trouble. Often, in such a case, the unknowability of someone was taken as a good enough reason to suspect them. As it has been suggested, risk was largely about uncertainties, and identification of ‘strangers’ was greatly concerned with the destructions of social order (Bauman 1991, Douglas 1986).

It was not unusual to hear a negative comment from a local resident on some other residents whom they ‘didn’t see before’. These people were often ‘kids’, young teenagers hanging around in a group, and ‘foreigners’ who were complete strangers to them. Interestingly, these were not used as a general term but referred to rather specific type of people: not all young teenagers were ‘kids’ and not all non-British were ‘foreigners’. ‘Kids’ were typically those who were from a poor background and who hung about causing trouble to anonymous individuals. Similarly, ‘foreigners’ were those who spoke a ‘strange’ language and the local would ‘never know what they are up to’. These were the terms of a category which people used to draw a boundary between themselves and the other.

Interestingly, being British or non-British was not a crucial point of the issue in these cases: other terms of nationality and ethnicity such as ‘African’, ‘Asian’, ‘Australian’, ‘Chinese’, ‘French’, ‘Pakistani’, and ‘Polish’ were also used for the same purpose of picking up other-ness together with ‘English’, ‘Irish’, ‘Welsh’ and ‘Scottish’. Locals suggested that it was a reflection of the cultural diversity of London. Although
the majority of the population of the Borough was still British, considering that one in every three people had a different nationality other than British, and the cultural diversity within those who held a British citizenship, as one informant said, it did not make ‘much sense to make a fuss about just being British’.

It was also in these contexts that a sense of ‘political correctness’ played a strategic role. While the notion of ‘foreigner’ had a strong connotation of outsider in itself, its general anonymity was rather convenient, allowing the person to refer to individuals or groups that were unfamiliar to them, which was better than calling them by their nationality or ethnicity which could be interpreted as a sign of discrimination.

People also used a number of categories to include and exclude others. Nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, economic and educational background, and languages, were not fixed categorical factors of social inclusion and exclusion, but were often more flexible terms selected and applied differently with a different connotation depending on the context. A bias against someone was not a simple matter of racism, ageism or sexism. During my fieldwork, I was struck by the way people recognised a person in or outside of their group. For instance, when I was with North African Muslim women, I was a ‘friend’ although I was ‘not Muslim’ therefore I was not a part of them but I was a ‘Japanese girl’, so I was ‘closer’ to ‘understanding’ them ‘better than white people’. At another occasion, I was invited to a charity party organised by a French society even though I was ‘non-French’, because I was ‘middle-class’ and ‘more European’. These examples illustrate how people applied different categories to define my position according to their criteria, and the way they presented it. A different aspect of the same person was highlighted by a different group of people. On the one hand, it reflects a categorical construction of group identity: the categories they apply to include others were at the same time the categories they applied to define themselves. On the other
hand, categorical elements of social groups were not simple, fixed criteria of their group identity: people chose different elements to identify who they were depending on the context.

When identification of self and others was associated with the lack of knowledge of the others, it aggravated a sense of suspicion and wariness. The perception of crime, for instance, was very often related to social and geographical boundaries in the area.

The image of some types of 'foreigners' was associated with the involvement of crime and lower socio-economic backgrounds. In particular, a few ethnic minorities such as black Africans, the Middle Eastern, and Asians came into these categories. Those images however changed according to the perceived situation of the living environment, and these were often affected by the images provided by mass media.

In one area of the Borough, the locals' attention moved from one group of 'foreigners' to another over a period of time. Especially since the end of the Second World War, the area had seen a wide range of people from abroad. Some lived in the wealthiest block, some started hotel businesses and others stayed in council estate accommodations which were bought by the state during the course of the development projects after the war. There were Afro-Caribbeans, Australians, Arabs, French, and Polish. In recent years, there were increasing number of asylum seekers from Africa and Iraq. Every time a new group of people moved in, the locals kept a wary eye. The arrival of one group usually took up attention that had previously been focused on another.

Locals talked about their speculations on unfamiliar people and how they perceived cultural differences amongst them.

When Arab people were here, they brought lots of servants. They lived in a flat just around the corner. Then we had complaints from the residents of the
same building for water leaks. What happened was they washed themselves on the floor and the water just went down! We had to tell them not to. It sounds funny now, but at that time it didn’t help a kind of dispute...you know what I mean...even now, when those Ethiopian people told me they rarely took a bath, I couldn’t believe it. But they actually don’t smell. They seem to develop a special odour...

While people usually criticised such understanding as a prejudice and sign of ignorance in a public setting, it was these images and ideas which affected their attitude towards the others who were unfamiliar to them. Especially, an opinionated idea of a group of people spread so quickly that it was hard to see where it started.

At the time of my fieldwork, some locals started paying more attention to the Ukrainians and people from Central and Eastern Europe. In some areas of the Borough, there was a rumour that the Ukrainian mafia was operating drug and sex related business and expanding their area. A few locals told me to ask local residents about who lived in a basement flat of a building if I was looking for a flat in the area. It was because ‘a girl with a cat’ might live in there for her business. ‘A girl with a cat’ was not only a metaphor for a prostitute but also a reason prostitutes used when they were looking for a flat. One resident said that he learnt of ‘the matter of business’ from an estate agent;

Obviously, they don’t want to talk about it because it does affect their business. It was just by chance I heard...what happens is that, a girl comes to an agent saying that she is looking for a flat and she needs a basement flat because she has a cat and it needs to come in freely when it wants. And a surprise, surprise! It’s not a cat but her ‘friends’ who visit her who don’t want to be recognised by anybody. Of course, if you’re not living in a basement flat, you have to go through the main door of a building. You have
to wait outside until the friend you’re visiting unlocks the door, and you may more likely to come across other residents of the building!

Even though the lack of communication amongst the locals was considered as a known fact to many people, this rumour spread fairly quickly over the area by word of mouth. Many of those who talked about it did not have personal experience with a ‘Ukrainian mafia’, however, the rumour became ‘evidence’ when a few locals were contacted by the police. Although there was no particular incident officially recognised in the neighbourhood, such a rumour led to a wary attitude of the locals toward Ukrainians, or in some cases, Eastern Europeans more generally.

9.2.2.3 Struggles for inclusion

The issue of 'living apart' was also a serious concern for the churches that were traditionally central to the local community.

While there were churches in every block throughout the Borough, most churches were closed or only open for limited time usually during weekend. These churches used to open for a whole day but gradually came to have ‘opening hours’. In a vicar's terms, it was an ‘inevitable change’ as they were threatened by frequent thieves. One vicar said,

It’s really a shame. We all used to welcome people for a whole day. They could just pop in, and we may have offered a cup of tea. Nowadays it’s not possible. We had several thefts. It was all during the day…I hate to say that we cannot trust people any more, but I cannot stay and keep an eye on everything for a whole day, and we are short of staff anyway. We still open for events and prayers…and we are trying to involve more local people.
Ironically, security issues and the limited opening hours caused churches more difficulty in attracting new people. As a consequence, many relied on existing long-term residents and their personal networks to carry on their daily activities. Churches and the services they offered also defined their relation to the locals. The activities a church organised reflected the needs of each area and the people coming to the church.

Many churches were trying to encourage the locals and new comers to find a connection with each other but in most cases, they drew a boundary between different social groups.

When I visited a church in the neighbourhood which had one of the largest block of council estate buildings in the Borough, a vicar told me that the people coming to the church were mostly people from the estate who lived on state support. The changes in residents of the council buildings therefore also affected the church’s circumstance. The vicar gradually learnt about the residents every time he saw new visitors from the estate. The recent change was brought by asylum seekers from Africa.

They were mostly families with small children. They have priorities...the state sends singles to other places, probably towards the north of London. The estate has a very long waiting list. We arrange a lot of programmes especially for children. We are just in their next door so their parents can also come. It is very important for the community.

While the church’s effort to support those who lived in the estate was appreciated by the residents, it was not welcomed by some wealthier locals who used to come to the church. ‘Traditional middle-class residents’ stopped coming and moved either to an Anglican or Catholic church, one block down in the same area, otherwise they drove to a parish church in the countryside during a weekend. Such withdrawal not only
accelerated the change in memberships of the church, but also caused a shortage of volunteers and financial difficulties. Consequently, their management style also gradually shifted from provision of support to ‘self-help’. At the same time, the church also changed its name during my fieldwork. A local said,

It’s an Anglican church, but now called a “community church”...It sounds odd to me but it’s their choice. You know, it’s because most people living there are Muslims, and they thought “community church” is more welcoming. It’s basically taken over by them...it’s good that somebody needs the church, but it’s odd.

Although the church staff saw this change as inevitable, the locals did not always perceive it as a favourable move. In fact, sometimes, these visible changes in institution accelerated an existing sense of threat and insecurity, as well as tensions towards immigrants and poor people in the Borough. In fact, when Response called for an article for their local newspaper, they received a number of letters against immigrants and ethnic minorities in the area.

9.2.2.4 Lack of sociability and lack of resources

While there was an understanding that changes in lifestyle had meant that people had become too busy as a local newsagent said, ‘they don’t even bother to stop and have a chat’, the lack of social ties and social boundaries were not merely a matter of personal choice. There was also an issue of resources both at individual and societal level, which are crucial to the development and maintenance of social relations. In fact, physical environment is an important element of community construct (Cass et al. 2005, Hallman 1984, Plas & Lewis 1996).
For example, in a more practical sense, there was a considerable lack of space open to the public where people could sit, eat, relax or meet other people. Even if one met other locals or friends on the street, there was no space to stay for a conversation but had to keep standing at where they were. Considering that the many areas of the Borough had notoriously heavy traffic, and the inherently unstable weather in England, staying in a narrow pavement was not a favourable option for most people. During my fieldwork, I was often struggling to find a place to have a lunch I was carrying or to make notes. Most of the time, I ended up at my own place after not finding anywhere to stay or going back to an organisation I knew of.

Considering a number of gardens in the area, the situation seemed paradoxical. After talking to a number of locals, I learnt that there was actually no space open to the public in the area. Most gardens in the Borough were either privately owned or belonged to a limited number of residents around. They were therefore mostly closed and only accessible to those who owned a key or opened for a special occasion. A few small gardens and squares opened to the public were attracting rough sleepers and drug misusers, and so the locals rather ceased to visit. Although some locals made enquiries to the local authority to work on the situation, it did not make a change.

Local churches which used to offer space and occasions for socialising were forced to have ‘opening-hours’ after experiencing a number of thefts. They apologetically explained that limiting their opening hours was the only solution for their security as they could not afford a security guard or facilities to prevent theft.

In such a circumstance, the only option was going to a commercial space such as a cafeteria or a bar in the area. While most areas of the Borough were full of places to visit for socialising, it was not an option for all the locals. For those who were in financial difficulties, most cafeterias, restaurants and bars were too expensive to go on
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daily basis. Public facilities such as local libraries and town halls were not made for socialising; talking, eating and drinking were either prohibited or discouraged.

Furthermore, many people didn’t find it easy to invite and visit others at home either, unless they were already close friends. As a consequence, those who had financial difficulties found much less opportunities to meet and also to develop their connections with other people.

The situation could be worse if a person had a physical disability. Not only were there bumpy pavements or lack of pavements, but also transportation was too expensive for daily use even if they had a special rate.

In the case of the elderly, and those who were with babies and young children, accessibility to a toilet was also a problem. There was rarely a public toilet since it involved a maintenance and security issue which the local authority found difficult to handle, and commercial places were only for their customers. In fact, toilets, a cheaper cafeteria and fewer crowds were the main features that Sixty Plus was looking for when they chose a supermarket for a shopping trip for the elderly. A paid worker said;

It’s very important to find a place with a toilet. We have quite a few people who would feel uneasy without it. Even if they don’t go, it’s better if they knew they could... Cafeterias are another thing. It’s not a physical need, but they need a place to stay after shopping, to have some rest and wait for the others. And it’s nicer if they can have a cup of tea and talk with other people. It’s not just shopping but a social occasion for them.
9.2.3 Changing support system and voluntary organisations

9.2.3.1 Inclusive community

While volunteers, service users and the locals in the area expressed a mixed feeling towards the idea of community, both organisations had a distinctively inclusive idea of community. ‘Community’ was for everyone living in the area, in which people should be treated equally with respect. It was also associated with a sense of mutual support and care. The notion of community here was remarkably positive and had no implication of other potentially negative elements of community such as infringement of privacy, and intra- and inter-community boundaries. In many ways, these understandings of community presented what these organisations were aiming to practice.

Paid workers of both organisations were always dressed casually and never in suit and a tie. They emphasised informality and friendliness in order to enhance their welcoming attitude. Although there was a difference in their job responsibility and income, there was no hierarchy explicitly shown in their attitude amongst paid workers. Volunteers and service users were also treated in a similar way in a sense that the relationship was more equal than supervisor-supervisee and provider-client relationship.

Regarding the services they were providing, both organisations were eager to understand and respond to the demand of potential service users and involve more people to their projects. In practice, it often required an adjustment to or change in their existing strategies in order to organise each project. Although it was more costly and time consuming, efforts were made to arrange brochures written in various languages, offer some courses separately arranged for men and women for people with particular religious customs, and refurbish toilets and corridors to have wheelchair access. Low cost photocopiers, telephone and fax machines, theatre courses and other leisure
activities were also offered for lowered prices. These offers were appreciated by the locals especially those who could not otherwise use such facilities and enjoy such leisure activities.

9.2.3.2 Missing support system

Charlie died on a hot day in the summer of 2003 at the age of 76. Charlie was a committed volunteer of Response for a number of years. When he died at a hospital, there was the name of another long time volunteer, Sheila, under the line of ‘next of kin’ on the paper. Sheila was in her late sixties. She was a committed volunteer and once a member of Response. She was also a dedicated Christian who used to work for a Christian radio station. Charlie did not have any family or relative to contact. The hospital contacted the organisation at his death. Paid workers went to the hospital and took over the official procedures of his death. At the organisation, they announced that they would arrange a reception for his memory with some drinks and snacks, and asked people to bring something to share. As Sheila came to the organisation to use a computer relatively often, I asked her what Charlie was like:

He was...(pause)...nice. Yeah, maybe he was not a sort of person who made friends with everybody. He had his own taste of people, but kind. A bit of a loner but not unhappy probably. I don’t know anything about his family...I cannot say that I know him very well. We knew each other for some years but I was surprised that I was his ‘next of kin’, to be honest.

A small party was organised in one afternoon at the reception room on the ground floor and everybody including those who didn’t know Charlie, was invited. Some people brought some food and drinks, and paid workers decorated the wall with some of
Charlie’s pictures and drawings. Around fifty people came. Although not everyone stayed for the whole afternoon, there were constant visitors throughout.

The paid workers also wrote an obituary in the community newspaper. The obituary was placed on the top of the page along with a few pictures of Charlie. He was described as a committed volunteer and his contribution to the organisation was acknowledged. He was also characterised as a person who was ‘essentially kind and generous’, ‘well loved by many people’, ‘private in many ways’, ‘widely read’, as having had a particular interest in history and politics, and as someone who ‘used to be a member of CND’.

I have described elsewhere how service users of the organisations were facing multiple deprivations. It was in fact, not only service users but also very often volunteers were in a situation where they had to face unemployment, physical and financial difficulties, and lack of primary social contacts. This did not necessarily mean they all needed external support, however, many of these people were either on state benefit or occasionally asking the organisations they volunteered for to get advice or help. In both organisations, paid workers were supportive, tried to give advice and contacts of social services and other organisations they knew of. On other occasions, their effort of supporting those individuals exceeded what they were offering as a voluntary organisation. While paid workers actively learnt of service users’ life circumstances often out of necessity as a part of their work in the course of providing services, their knowledge of that of volunteers depended on individual volunteers and their relationship with the paid workers. Unless volunteers were willing to talk about themselves, it was difficult for anyone to know personal matters unrelated to volunteering.
Amongst a number of difficulties people had who were related to the organisations, unemployment and having few social contacts were seen as the social factors most affecting or causing other difficulties, such as financial and housing issues, depression, feeling of isolation, and lack of support.

Although they appear to be separate factors, in many cases, they were related to each other and generated a vicious circle of multiple difficulties. Lisa, for instance, was a volunteer originally from South Africa who lived in the area for three years. She was in her late thirties and unemployed for six months when I met her in the organisation. Since her parents were separated, she had little contact with her family. Lisa had lived in many countries and was distanced from her friends. After she lost her job, she also lost her place to stay. She did not have any reliable social contact nearby and did not have enough money to travel to South Africa where her family still lived.

In anyway, going there doesn't help much really. They have their life and I know they cannot do much. If I can stay with my friend...maybe for a week or so, but my friends live in different places and...I cannot afford it (to travel)...the people next door (an organisation for legal advice) are very supportive, and here as well. They give me advice...and Vera told me she knew somewhere I could stay for a while...

Unemployment not only caused Lisa financial problems but also blocked her social network. Lack of money was in fact one of the biggest obstacles to socialising, one which prevented people from maintaining their existing networks and finding and developing new networks.

Some of those who lacked social contact and support network also had problems in communication, which made their situation even harder to cope with. Many of these were students from abroad, immigrants and asylum seekers who were not fluent in
English, and came to the organisation both as a volunteer and a service user. Linguistic
difficulty was not only about communicating with other people but also about
explaining and understanding their need and their circumstances. In most cases, their
need was a temporary support such as a language assistant and someone who could
understand their situation. In other cases, their problem was more complex and required
long term support. For instance, refugees and asylum seekers in the area had a difficulty
with finding and contacting their friends and families who were spread over the country
or often over the world, finding a job, and settling down in a different culture. As a way
to support them, Response offered some space and facilities to a group of Somali
immigrants for free. Although the space was not open everyday due to shortage of staff,
a number of people visited for different reasons, and often just to see other Somali
people. Paid workers of the organisation also encouraged them to be a part of a wider
local community and tried to involve them in a number of projects they were organising.
For instance, they wrote an article published in the community newspaper in which they
explained the various hardships Somali people in the area were facing and the support
they were providing at the organisation. Both paid workers and the Somali people
claimed that it was important to seek such an understanding from other locals. As there
was occasional anonymous harassment towards them, they found active involvement in
the community to be necessary in order to avoid what they called the
‘misunderstandings’ which were causing such problems.

On the other hand, taking care of children in need was another matter which the
organisation considered ‘community support’ should be brought in to help. Most
children who came to the homework club were immigrants from Africa or the Middle
East. While they learnt English quickly and adopted a new living environment, their
parents found it difficult to adapt to changes. As a consequence, the children would
often have little assistance from their parents in their schoolwork since these were less fluent in English than them, and sometimes these differences generated conflict in the family mostly regarding their respective views over their culture’s customs and values and those which they adopted in England. The homework club was therefore important for these children, particularly in its opportunities for sharing their issues with other children and sometimes paid workers, and receiving psychological support as well as for being able to do their homework together with others. Paid workers at the homework club tried to understand the situation of each child and communicated with their school teachers and parents if necessary. However, they sometimes found it difficult to ‘make a balance between the privacy of each family and community responsibility’. A paid worker said,

It not easy, especially when we or children disagree with their parents. We do feel responsible to do the best for these kids. But at the same time, there is little we can do about it if their parents say no unless there is some kind of serious ‘social issue’, you know? At the end of the day, it’s their family who are responsible.

9.2.3.3 Vulnerability of individuals and supporting independence

The need for support was not an issue of only those who were from abroad. People who were divorced, unmarried, or whose children were living far away, were also in a similar situation. In an urban environment, people are thought to rely on friends for support and expect less from relatives (Amato 1993). At the same time, instrumental and more subtle social connections play a significant role (Wirth 1938, Granovetter 1982). Despite prevailing beliefs to the contrary, kinship is still claimed to
be an important source of support (Bell 1968, Firth, Hubert and Forge 1970, Finch and Mason 1993, Young and Willmott 1962). In the volunteering context I looked at, these primary social ties of support were a scarce resource for remarkably large proportions of people who were related to the voluntary organisation.

Although many people were still in touch with their family members, physical distance was a crucial barrier to practical support on daily basis. While they appreciated the development of technology which allowed them to travel and have contact with each other more easily, it was also this same technology which kept them apart as it led them to assume that easier contact would resolve physical distance.

Interestingly, when people talked about their family support, many claimed that spouses were the only unit of interdependent relationship. Unlike a prevailing understanding in the existing literature which considers such attitude to be characteristic to the English middle class as is opposed the working class support system which is kin-based, there wasn't any significant class feature specific to those who were related to the organisations (Young and Willmott 1962). One of the reasons why many old people were living on their own instead of living with their children or other kin members was that they did not consider it appropriate or did not like to be dependent on someone other than their spouses. As Finch and Mason (1993) rightly claim, giving and receiving support between family members was not something which derived automatically from a relationship but was a result of built-up relationship and negotiations over time and of ultimate sense of responsibility. Volunteering, in this context, was a means to resolve a difficult situation for those with unreliable or non-existent family support and keep a balance between dependence and independence in the relationships.
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While this attitude was important for them to maintain their independence and autonomy as an able individual, it was also one of the factors which put them into a vulnerable situation. One service user in her late-seventies said,

Children are someone you take care of. You've been doing it for your whole life and it doesn't change...They have their children to take care of in anyway. I don't want to move to a strange place and I don't want to be dependent. I could be dependent on my husband, but he's dead now...when you lose your husband, you're alone...I want to live here (her own flat) as long as I can. And if I can't I will go to a care home.

For those who shared a similar view living in a nursing home was not favourable but it was 'better than being in the care of their children. Asking kin members for help implied creating a debt which placed them in a weaker position within the family. For the same reason, they said having volunteers as one’s daily support was somehow better than asking their family members for help.

Volunteers, on the other hand, often showed a different perspective in their understanding of service users’ circumstances. While the majority of volunteers said receiving support from family members and friends was often unfavourable as it created a sense of inequality which potentially affected their relationships, others thought that there was greater complexity behind the service users’ explanation. Sam, for instance, claimed that service users’ preference for volunteers over family members around, was not a matter of choice but reflected their lack of support.

I know some of the people I meet are not treated well by their children. They don’t always tell you what problems they are having but it’s not difficult to guess. Once I bumped into a daughter of Maggie (a service user).
She was just coming out. You would expect the daughter was doing something for Maggie...nothing. I only found her cigarettes and dirty mug on the table...and Maggie has bad knees and she can't even move sometimes. How could she leave like that?

In Sam's terms, Maggie preferred volunteers to her daughter for a support because Maggie's daughter was 'not the kind of person who could take care of Maggie', asking her for help would 'put her in an awkward situation', and that having a volunteer 'makes things easier'.

Whether or not having a volunteer for help was their choice of preference or the inevitable, receiving help from kin members was not available in these cases. Phillipson and his associates, in their study of the life of old people in urban areas, mention cases with dispersed or non-existent family networks (Phillipson et al. 1999). The significance of the case of the voluntary organisation is that those people who suffered immense social isolation were not the minority but majority. Volunteers' support in this context was not a mere practical help, but a support for otherwise vulnerable individuals to protect their independence.

9.3 Discussion and conclusion

9.3.1 What are the locals missing?

As I have described in the above examples, the perception of community expressed by a number of locals was mostly based on their perception of what they were missing in their lives. But what were they actually missing?

When locals talked about familiar local shops closing down, and their neighbours’ being 'nobody', it was about their perception of impersonality in these events.
Impersonality, unknowability and lack of shared-ness were elements which were antithetical to community life. In other words, what they expected from community was a personal connection with neighbours, to know who they were, and the sense of shared-ness which constructed a sense of belonging. The distinction made by the locals between being a local and being a part of community also shed light on the idea of community: while being a local was personal, being a part of community was social, based on the relationships with other community members. Although such an idea of community was largely agreed on amongst the locals, these attributes of community were based on purely subjective feelings of individuals; community was always talked in terms of their personal experience of community. The question of whether or not a community with predominantly positive attributes really existed then or in the past was not clear in their discourse. Yet, the idea of community came to be realised or formulated by the locals often at its disappearance, where an idea of community represented a symbolic meaning of what they longed for in their area. In this respect, their understanding of the state of community was negotiated through their ideal type of ‘imagined community’ and their perception of community in everyday lives (cf. Anderson 1991).

While the perception of community was subjective, this subjective feeling affected the locals’ attitudes to their community, and eventually a form of community. As the idea of community was about interacting and sharing with other people of the area in their everyday lives, it was geographically formed according to one’s habitual use of space and was largely affected by the way they felt about the area and people. One’s choice of shop, café and streets was not merely based on a practical reason, but also about how one felt about the atmosphere and people of the place. At the same time, these choices drew a boundary around one’s community. Generally speaking,
community boundaries were often lifestyle and value boundaries. The way a boundary was drawn depended on how people associated themselves with others and places. People interacted with their neighbours not just because of convenience and higher chance of acquaintance, but also because people of similar lifestyle and values were likely to choose to live in a similar type of property. Such like-mindedness was systematically constructed and an important feature for the development of human connection. As Etzioni suggests, social glue is concerned with shared-ness (Etzioni 2001). Here, at this point, we recognise that a factor of a remarkably positive notion of community is partly due to its exclusivity: negative elements were excluded from the realm of community in the first place. Although the idea of community was generally inclusive, in practice, their interaction with others was not random, but carefully chosen according to their social identification.

On the other hand, the cases also illustrate how the process of dissociation and formation of social boundary were affected by elements such as unknowability, fear and distrust. These were not only an obstacle to socialisation preventing people from communicating with ‘strangers’, but also an element that generated a judgement on unknown others based on limited information. This tendency often created a vicious circle in which the lack of information aggravated distrust and deepened social boundaries. In a neighbourhood where socio-cultural diversity was prominent, shared-ness with other locals could not be achieved easily.

Community was also not everyone’s need. Some people showed little interest in developing social networks within neighbourhoods. These individuals were typically young professionals and students, whose social network was wider and less geographically based. They also showed higher social mobility, and lived in the same area for shorter periods. Not only had they little need of community, they considered
having close connection with neighbours as a threat to privacy. Their disinterest in 
community corresponded to their disinterest in locals: living arrangement was about 
space, convenience and security.

The cases also offered an important implication on a methodological issue. In a 
previous section, I have argued for a more holistic approach to the study of community 
as opposed to the existing tendency of separating its content from form and focusing on 
the latter. The data above shows us how the content of community such as community 
identity and the psychological sense of belonging, is closely related to the form of 
community. The content and form are in fact interactive and mutually constitutive. 
Looking at merely one side would miss the dynamic of community construct.

9.3.2 Resources and deprivation: why is community lost?

The perception of a disappearing community can be seen in the light of a number 
of circumstantial factors. While theories of social capital argue for the significance of 
the social network for the prosperity of individuals as well as that of community, the 
data suggests that there are other resources as important as social contact, in some cases 
even crucial to the survival of individuals in everyday lives.

I have illustrated lack of time, social mobility, and lack of interest as factors in the 
locals' withdrawal from social participation. These elements were the resources which 
were crucial to the development and maintenance of social organisation. The 
interconnection between these elements constructs a dynamic system that affects one's 
style of social participation.

As in the case of neighbourhood association, people found the lack of resources to 
be an obstacle to participation, but sustained the group by using a new communication 
system and prioritising practicality. Social participation was becoming increasingly
instrumental. Such phenomenon in fact shows an interesting paradox: on the one hand, people expected from community life highly personal feelings, spontaneous communications and connected-ness with other locals. On the other hand, more organised participation in community life was in some cases becoming remarkably instrumental and less spontaneous, such as in the case of neighbourhood associations. It is important to remember that this alternative was only available to individuals with resources. The instrumentality, nevertheless, had a somehow positive effect. For those who had little time for participation, it was better to keep their communication practical and effective, sometimes applying technology such as email. While their communication did not generate a bonding effect, it helped to maintain the function of association. The paradox somehow lends hope to the idea that a change in the patterns of social participation can eventually lead to a new form of community rather than to its decline (Fukuyama 1999).

Resources are also an important aspect of people's social life. I have described how social deprivation could be caused by a combination of various resource shortages: lack of time, space and money, and high social mobility. Many of these were mainly the attributes of individuals. Other factors were social, cultural and environmental such as lack of public space or the custom of not using one's own house for socialising. These examples illustrate that deprivation is a systematic failure in which various shortages of resources aggravate one another, and which shed light on some issues of social exclusion (Burckhardt et al. 2002, Glennester et al. 1999, Power 1999, Richardson and Le Grand 2002). I have also described that amongst these various resources, financial deprivation had a particularly large impact on people's social lives. This was because money is a resource which could substitute other resources. Therefore, those who had financial difficulties were more likely to face social deprivation. The situation was even
more severe when lack of resources was associated with physical demands as in the case of the elderly, small children and babies.

We should also remind ourselves that the lack of social contact was not merely a matter of communication. Social contact is potentially a resource of support. Having less social contact in this sense means less support from others. Lack of resources and social contacts creates a vicious circle.

9.3.3 Social capital and voluntary organisations

In a previous chapter, I have noted that one of the debatable issues of social capital theory adopted in British social policy is its assumption that social participation enhances trust, mutual support and a sense of responsibility amongst participants, and eventually helps various social problems including socio-economic deprivation. The data described above, however, presents a different picture. First of all, volunteering and social participation did not show much significance in enhancing trust, reciprocity and the sense of responsibility. It doesn’t mean that volunteers did not share these values: a large proportion of volunteers did show pro-social attitudes. The situation was, however, that those who had pro-social attitudes were more likely to be pro-social prior to their volunteering and less likely after: their pro-social attitude was not a consequence of volunteering participation. Considering that volunteering is essentially voluntary and is not always fun-based: I have described elsewhere some difficulties of volunteering, it is more plausible to think that those who volunteer for collective values share these values, and those who don’t agree with them don’t volunteer in the first place. In the example of neighbourhood associations, the issue was about indifference and the lack of reciprocity of the locals, even amongst those who participated, which put the people who took a responsibility into an overwhelming situation. The pro-social attitude of participants
was discouraged when they perceived the lack of balance in the roles participants took. The sense of equal contribution and reciprocity were crucial to the maintenance of voluntary participation.

Regarding trust, it was hard to see towards what extent trust mattered to the people within the local community. However, I would argue that it is more important to look at the negative effect of the lack of trust. The more instrumental community participation becomes, the less social participation enhances trust in the way the theory of social capital expects. Distrust, suspicion and fear, nevertheless still matter because they aggravate social boundaries which obstruct not only community building but also the minimal interactions between people which are crucial to any social network.

The role of a voluntary organisation in this context needs to be examined from a few aspects. First of all, although the organisations were generally inclusive and tried to involve everybody in the local area, those who were related to the organisations were not randomly selected individuals who represented all the locals. A large proportion of people, sometimes including the volunteers of these organisations were in need and lacking resources to help themselves or could not ask for help. One of the roles of the organisations was that of supporting these individuals. The support was however, complementary in many cases, and not a substitute of what might have been provided by kin members or friends. This is because some types of support touched an issue of privacy and others were just out of the hands of voluntary organisations. In this respect, the role of voluntary organisation needs to be discussed in the wider context of the public and private spheres.

Voluntary organisations can also play a role in expanding the realm of community. Voluntary organisations’ inclusive attitude created a space for reconciling social boundaries. This aspect is especially important when a boundary is based on the sense
of unknowability as in the case of some ethnic minorities. The local newspaper group in this sense contributes to inform a large number of people in the area and can bridge them.

Nevertheless, this bridging may not work smoothly as Putnam and his followers expect because of the voluntary basis of participation, which makes it difficult to keep participants, and the constraints of resources which I have described above. Bonding amongst like-minded people does occur, but it is again a selective shared-ness. Bonding also cannot be built in a day. It is a product of a series of interactions over time. My data acknowledges a tendency for bonding amongst the locals: people did selectively communicate with their neighbours based on their mutual recognition of shared-ness. At the same time, the selectiveness excludes others, which forms a social boundary. Moreover, the idea of community with an emphasis on informality and spontaneity may reject an institutional or political promotion of community for it is somehow seen as fake.

An overly inclusive attitude of voluntary organisation which ignores the reality of social boundary, distrust and the sense of dissociation may also face the difficulty of being accepted by the locals.

Another aspect of social capital, the claim that social network which is fostered through social participation enhances socio-economic prosperity of individuals and society, appears unconvincing in the cases illustrated above. I have mentioned before that the acclaimed causal relationship between social capital and socio-economic prosperity has been argued as merely a possible association. It seems more likely that if there is a causal relation, it works the other way around: socio-economic resources enhance social network and possibly social capital. This is because well-connectedness requires resources to sustain it. It is also that social boundaries keep people in separate
groups of similar resource levels, which in fact is an obstacle to socio-economic success for those who are deprived of resources.

Therefore these cases not only show what little significance social capital theory may have in this context, but also offer a different perspective regarding the mechanism of some components of social capital. While a voluntary organisation may help supporting and mediating people, its effectiveness is limited in a number of ways because of the voluntary nature of social participation, the exclusivity of social networks, and the lack of information and other resources available to facilitate social relations.
Chapter 10 Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the experience of volunteering through a ground level analysis. The first two chapters were dedicated to the existing research and facts of volunteering that are relevant to this study area: anthropological theories of gift exchange, community studies and social policy. This has provided a foundation for an anthropology of volunteering, which has had few precursors in the past.

In the ethnographic chapters, I have described my fieldwork experience of volunteering and participant observation in the organisations. I have illustrated how people perceived and practiced volunteering and its context, according to several themes. Now I would like to look at my findings in relation to the questions of 'the gift' and 'the community' I have previously addressed in the theoretical chapters.

10.1 Questions of the gift: mystification of exchange and mystification of the gift.

My question of the gift and gift exchange theory was, first and foremost, whether or not this model could explain the act of giving in volunteering. While the theory of gift exchange is applied to explain various types of giving and social relationships, its emphasis on reciprocity is at odds with giving without receiving any reciprocal gift. Since the significance of the gift in gift exchange theory is its social function; that is, creating and recreating social relations between gift givers and receivers, giving without receiving a reciprocal gift is considered an exception. Such giving is either a means to manipulate power inequality in a social relationship or a mere accident. As a symbolic act, altruistic giving is also considered as an expression of 'institutionalised morality' (Parkin 1976: 170). The idea of the perfect gift, which is unconstraining, unconditional,
spontaneous, and an expression of immaterial and positive sentiment to the receiver, is a mystified form of giving in Western ideology. That is to say that the idea of the perfect gift presents an idealised form of giving which symbolises the historical and moral construct of giving, but in reality, it is hardly thought to exist. Such giving is in fact a fiction. This is because giving is understood predominantly in terms of exchange amongst rational individuals pursuing their self-interests.

My question was whether such an understanding would offer us a plausible explanation of volunteering in a contemporary urban setting. In order to answer this question, I have explored the experience of volunteering.

The in-depth analysis of volunteering experience and its context has revealed not only the complexity of volunteering but also the way the logic of exchange is applied in its cultural understanding and practice.

What I have found in the case studies is that in volunteering, the idea of exchange is mystified as much as the perfect gift is considered to be. Experience of volunteering does not fit into the idea of the perfect gift but neither does it fit into the idea of exchange. Yet, both of these ideas play a part in volunteering.

In other words, both the logic of exchange and that of the perfect gift reveal part of what volunteering is about, but neither of them alone can fully explain the nature of volunteering. The essence of giving in volunteering is this dual nature which is constructed in a specific socio-cultural context.

Mauss's insight of the gift as 'total social phenomena' in which 'all kinds of institutions are given expressions at one and the same time' (1950/1990: 3), helps us to look at society through the act of giving, receiving and reciprocating. My ethnographic account of volunteering offers a similar picture. Volunteering also presents a contemporary example of total social phenomena which reveals its organisational,
moral and material conditions of giving and receiving, and the cultural construction of selfhood.

In Chapter 5 and 6, I have described how giving and receiving are understood and practiced by the volunteers in the organisations.

While policy accounts of volunteering are associated with exchange, volunteering also involves elements of one-sided giving for which the givers do not expect a reciprocal gift from the receivers. The representation of selfish giving is a mystification of exchange which disguises an aspect of giving that is not an exchange. The logic of exchange in this case is rather rhetorical which makes giving appear to be an exchange. However, the exchange component of volunteering does not necessarily come from the interaction between the giver and receiver. On the contrary, as I have described, the exchange is largely a matter of self-fulfilment on the part of volunteers. This is technically not an exchange between the two parties: the receiver is merely a means to achieve the giver’s goal. But this logic helps volunteers to give without expecting reciprocity. Selfish giving is a compensation for the lack of a return gift from the receiver.

My ethnographic account has illustrated the rhetorical function of the logic of exchange. That is, to avoid the inequality of power between the giver and receiver which is inherent in one-sided giving. There is a moral code of practice which claims power equality between individuals and does not allow a patronising act of giving for its ultimate inequality between the giver and receiver. Such awareness was prominent in the organisational environment that I chose to study and allowed me to look into its practice. In both organisations, volunteers and paid workers were highly concerned with the issue of ‘equality’.
In order to meet such moral measures, volunteering is pictured as a form of exchange unlike the traditional practice of charitable giving. Underpinning this logic are notions of the rationality of human behaviour which are at odds with an interest in the good of others, and an ideology of Western selfhood that emphasises autonomous individuals pursuing their self-interest. The sense of virtuous giving and philanthropy violates such ideals, and because it contradicts what is thought to be the essence of human behaviour, it is taken away from the main argument.

In chapter 5, I described the motivational factors of volunteering. The diversity of people's motivation illustrated this multi-functionality of volunteering in the first place. By looking at the multi-functionality, I illustrated how volunteers pursued various interests through their act of giving, as well as showing that this fluidity was crucial to keeping volunteers interested in the activity. Unlike paid employment in which employees are constrained by a contractual relationship, volunteers are free to stop working at any time. Therefore, it was important for the organisations to be able to offer various opportunities to volunteers to fulfil their interests in order to keep volunteers and sustain their work force.

Another significant finding is the way those volunteers presented their motivations: it offers an interesting picture regarding some questions of the gift exchange. Mauss was criticised for including motivation in his study and making it too phenomenological (Lévi-Strauss 1987). However, motivation is indeed an important aspect of volunteering, one which reflects a cultural perception of giving.

The volunteers' stories of their motivation suggested that there were specific reasons behind their commitment to volunteering. The diversity of motivational factors make it difficult to pin down what led people to volunteer but volunteers were at least aware of what they expected, which ultimately was a reward for volunteering: there was
something they achieved from their experience, which satisfies part of exchange model. However, a few questions remain.

For instance, the volunteers’ presentation of motivational factors was significantly focused on themselves, which seemed to suggest that giving was an act of self-fulfilment. An increasing interest in volunteering as a stepping stone to paid employment also corresponded to this idea. The question is, can we call it a form of exchange, and if so, to what extent, is it an exchange? The reason why I believe that it is an important point to discuss is that volunteering in fact involves two parties - givers and receivers: it is not a solitary activity but a social act. If it is an exchange, why should it not happen between them? Why does the giver’s motivation have to be self-satisfaction? Where is reciprocity?

In Chapter 5, I have argued that the discourse of self-fulfilment reflected a mechanism of volunteering in which the giver was not supposed to expect a return gift from the receiver. I have illustrated that self-fulfilment did not mean that volunteers were entirely indifferent to the service users. In certain types of activity which involved service users, volunteers did, in fact, show their concern for and understanding of the service users. Contrary to their indifference to a reciprocal gift from the receiver, they were interested in the end point of their giving. Moreover, volunteers’ fairly deep understanding of service users also suggested that despite the significant anonymity of participants, volunteers did not support general collectives but chose a particular group of people as the recipient of their service. In this regard, the anonymity was only relevant to a given category of service users. This aspect of selectivity has been overlooked mostly because disinterestedness has been given a much larger role in an understanding of giving to a stranger.
As I have described, the volunteers and paid workers of the organisations presented a slightly different view. For instance, I have illustrated how the organisations and volunteers applied different measures to recognise the service users. On the one hand, the volunteers’ choice of service users was ethical: ‘those who deserve’ their services were those who were ‘in need’. It was based on the volunteers’ personal understanding of social needs. On the other hand, the organisations’ criteria were mostly demographic. It was concerned with the eligibility of the service users which they officially presented as an organisational interest as part of their social role to the public. The organisational understanding of their service users indirectly reflects the interests of the state and other funding sources.

The institutional identification of strangers involves a couple of further issues. First of all, it helps volunteers to meet those who wish to receive the service. While helping a stranger on the street involves the risk of misidentifying the stranger as being ‘needy’, the risk can be prevented by volunteering through an organisation. Secondly, the limited anonymity in volunteering relationships helps to blur the inequality between the giver and receiver.

In fact, power inequality is an essential issue of reciprocity. I have argued that the volunteers’ understanding of the service users as being those who were in need ultimately indicated that they were unable to reciprocate what they received. While this attitude was shared by both organisations, it was more prominent in Sixty Plus, which supported the elderly.

This understanding of the ‘needy’ keeps the volunteers indifferent to a reciprocal giving from the service users, and enables them to give without receiving. Reciprocity loses its significance in such unequal social relationships in volunteering. Inequality in this society is, moreover, considered as a social stigma. This aspect is illustrated in the
example that a volunteer once criticised paid workers for labelling certain individuals in their ‘community’ by trying to involve them as a representative of their group. So, for instance, by identifying a person as a potential user of volunteering services, they could negatively label the person as ‘needy’ (5.3.3). In this regard, the anonymity amongst the participants of volunteering helps to prevent stigmatisation from becoming personal: by keeping anonymity, a sense of inequality, debt, and obligation does not develop and affect volunteering relationships as it does in personal relationships such as kinship and friendship, or in market relationships, such as those at work where the sense of inequality, debt and obligation is obvious. Anonymity makes volunteering relationships less poisonous: it makes them free from these constraints inherent in personal or market relationships.

The moral norm of equality between the givers and receivers also plays a great role in this context. It is the denial of altruism. Despite the volunteers’ interest in service users, altruistic giving was negatively perceived as being patronising to the receivers.

In Chapter 6, I have further developed these issues by looking at volunteering relationships and the reasons why friendships hardly ever develop in this environment. While meeting people was one of the most common motivational factors, very few people developed personal relationships. Strangers remained strangers. This is, however, unsurprising once we go beyond the volunteers’ personal choices and look at the wider context and mechanism of volunteering relationships.

First of all, volunteering relationships are influenced by the way the role of volunteers is defined and how the communication between volunteers and service users is arranged: many people volunteered individually and had little opportunity to see other volunteers. Volunteers’ lack of time also prevented them from spending extra time at the organisations. Sociability was perceived critically by some volunteers who had a strong
work ethic and who associated it with a lack of seriousness or amateurism. Moreover, the institutional aspect of meeting people through an organisation meant that volunteering was situated in a rather formal public space, which contradicted the idea of friendship as personal and spontaneous.

The institution also seemed to act as a barrier to the formation of personal relationships between volunteers and service users: friendship did not develop in this case either. Nevertheless, the relationship between them is different from that amongst volunteers in the sense that the former implies a kind of inequality, and inequality is an obstacle to friendship: friendships are based on the sense of equality and reciprocity between individuals (5.3.3).

There was another, more serious issue, in which inequality was involved. When service users had high demands, due to their multiple deprivations, the potential exploitation of volunteers was implied. I have explored this aspect by looking at care-oriented activities. Care-oriented volunteering activity manifested more clearly one of the features of volunteering: that is, why strangers usually remained strangers.

Volunteers’ relationships with service users were initially affected by the way the role of volunteers was perceived in each organisation. The case study (6.2.2) has described how volunteers played a different role in their relationships with school children and the elderly.

Provision of care in volunteering relationships is different from that in personal relationships such as kinship and friendship. Care in the latter is a product of existing ties which people negotiate through a network of responsibility, obligation and debt. Care in volunteering relationships was partially free from these elements. However, it is still considered as less impersonal than provision of practical services in commercial
exchange and social work. This element of personal connection gives a unique value to volunteering.

Care-oriented activities also illustrated that certain types of volunteering involve emotional demands. They require understanding, negotiating, and leading service users, as well as providing practical services to them. During this process, volunteering offers the possibility of developing an emotional connection within a limited framework of time and space.

Both organisations paid particular attention to service users with excessive demands for support due to severe deprivation (cf. 6.2.3). They did so not only because meeting those people was emotionally overwhelming for many volunteers, but also because such situations could lead to the exploitation of volunteers by the service users. It was therefore crucial for the organisations to make sure that volunteers learnt the skill of not allowing service users to be dependent on them. Without knowing the limitation of giving and being able to refuse the excessive requests of service users, it was difficult to keep on volunteering in the long run.

It was also at this point that voluntary organisations played an important role as gatekeepers. Although the institutional aspect was an obstacle to the development of personal relationships, having an organisation as a mediator was advantageous when a problem occurred between volunteers and service users. Volunteers and service users were connected merely through volunteering activities, and such a relationship was possible only because of the voluntary organisations who mediated between volunteers and service users. By remaining in a distanced relationship, they could get away from the sense of obligation, responsibility, and ultimate bitterness which were common in personal relationships, and enjoy the process of giving and receiving based on individual autonomy and freedom. In this way, the logic of exchange and that of the gift,
reflect on volunteering relationships serving personal and material demands. However, such a form of social relationship in volunteering contradicts the development of social ties that social capital and community theories expect from volunteering (cf. 2.3).

I also touched upon some rhetorical strategies the organisations applied in this specific context. The way they use these measures illustrate how the mystification of exchange, that is, a fictional understanding of volunteering as an exchange, is constructed. Giving and receiving in volunteering are understood and practiced according to the moral framework of selfhood. The idea of 'empowerment' for example, was an important strategy for the organisations to prevent the service users from being dependent on them and protect the volunteers from potential exploitation. The logic of empowering and supporting the needy to be independent not only was an organisational ethos, but also had the practical function of prescribing an ideal relationship between the organisation, the volunteers and their service users. In a wider context, it also corresponded to the current ideological climate of social welfare, which encourages individual citizens to be more responsible for themselves and less dependent on the state (cf. 3.1). What is behind the discourse is an ideological construction of selfhood which is autonomous and independent.

These findings illustrate how the contradictory two ideas- the logic of exchange and that of one-sided giving- co-exist in volunteering. The two spheres are however, complementary rather than antithetical: the two ideologies have a different function in a different context. On the one hand, there is an element of one-sided giving between volunteers and service users: giving in volunteering is not based on reciprocity in this relationship. On the other hand, the logic of exchange has several functions in this socio-cultural context: its utilitarian idea of rational choice claims that human behaviour is driven by self-interest in maximising one's profit, which assumes that the givers
always achieve something from their act. This understanding helps to maintain the illusion of equality, and supports an idea that both volunteers and service users benefit from volunteering.

My argument is, however, not a simple presentation of pluralism. We should go beyond a mere recognition of volunteering, involving the elements of both exchange and one-sided giving, and look at the totality of this phenomenon. We need to explore how these two spheres relate to each other in the act of giving in volunteering. I believe that this is a particularly interesting area in the study of volunteerism where anthropology can contribute. In my research, I have paid particular attention to the process of appropriation and illustrated how people negotiated between these two spheres of exchange and one-sided giving by applying various strategies. For example, they tried to picture volunteering as an exchange by claiming that volunteering benefits both volunteers and service users.

10.2 Negotiating the ambivalence: the contradictions between the gift and market exchange in volunteering

Another area where volunteering is required to negotiate between two opposing spheres relates to the gift and commercial exchange.

Chapter 7 and 8 have shed light on the meaning and value of volunteering in relation to paid work. The themes of the two chapters are also concerned with the issue of market exchange and the gift. Chapter 7 explored the value and meaning of volunteering by looking at the perception of money in volunteering. Money is undoubtedly an essential resource for the maintenance of these organisations' work. Management of voluntary organisations costs money as it is needed to maintain material equipments, travel expenses, rent office space, and pay workers. Increasing pressure
from funding sources for accountability also forces voluntary organisations to present the social value of their work in monetary terms in comparison with other labour forces in the market economy.

Despite the important functions money has in volunteering, handling money is often an awkward business. First of all, a shared definition of volunteering as an act for non-profit appears to reject money. This involves both legal and ethical issues. I have described how employment law draws a line between paid work and volunteering in terms of the amount of money to be provided to a worker. This regulation sets an upper limit to the monetary support a voluntary organisation can offer to volunteers.

The social meaning of money, on the other hand, was concerned with two aspects of volunteering: the perception of the givers' motivation and the meaning of volunteering. These aspects pointed to the dichotomy between paid work and volunteering: paid work emphasises its connection to money as a reward, whereas volunteering values the giver's will to give, in other words, the act itself. The rejection of money reflects the fact that volunteering is a type of giving without receiving anything of material value. Its essence is in the actor's psychological state, which cannot be measured quantitatively. Such an association parallels Mauss's argument about 'hau' as an essence of gift exchange (Mauss 1950/1990). While Mauss was criticised that he reified 'hau' (Lévi-Strauss 1987), he succeeded in illustrating the obligatoriness of gift exchange within a social system.

This aspect also relates to the inalienability of volunteering. I have argued that the idea of giving time as being opposed to giving money suggests that what is given in volunteering is labour. But unlike wage-labour, its value is concerned with the personae of individuals, represented by their will of giving rather than the productivity and efficiency of their labour. While the practical service which volunteers provide has its
own value, volunteering is not merely about its exchange value, which is also found in commercial service and social work. Despite the increasing pressure of professionalism, the importance of volunteering still lies in the act of giving. The giver's will is valuable regardless of the quality of the offered gift. The will of giving is social as well as personal. Even though much of what volunteers achieve is increasingly personal, giving is about the receiver as well as the giver. Giving in volunteering involves a sense of care on the part of volunteers. In the given time, the givers' positive sentiment towards the receiver and their understanding of the receiver are expressed through their act of giving. This personal element makes the giving inalienable. Such understanding is probably the basis of the trust the paid workers had for volunteers. Considering the number of security issues they had, I was struck by the potential risk the organisations were taking by involving volunteers to deal with the service users' details, petty cash and other facilities. Although these were practically unavoidable risks to take and I did not witness any particular incident during my fieldwork, it certainly showed how the paid workers trusted individuals merely based on the fact that they were volunteers. Unlike Wireman's (1984) classification of intimate secondary relationships, in which trust is based on the other person's character and ability, this trust in volunteering relationships is an attribute of being a volunteer. Anonymous individuals can be trusted as long as they are volunteers.

The inalienability of giving makes volunteers feel awkward about accepting money because only by rejecting it, could they show what volunteering was about. But this understanding could be affected by the financial circumstances of the individuals. I have described what different attitudes individual volunteers had to receiving monetary support from the organisations: while those who had a stable financial background tended to associate the monetary support with profit, those who were in financial
difficulties considered it necessary for their participation in volunteering. Moreover, the perception that one was in financial difficulty was more likely to lead to an understanding that monetary support could be an incentive to volunteer.

Appropriation of money was also essential to negotiate the boundary. I have looked at the strategies people applied in practice when they had to deal with money. For example, in addition to setting an upper limit to the monetary support, the organisations used various terms to refer to different types of money: money as reimbursement of expenses and honorarium was acceptable, whereas money as payment and profit was inappropriate in volunteering.

In Chapter 6, I have illustrated how volunteering relationships are in an ambiguous zone between informal and formal, and private and public relationships. The issue of money also situated volunteering in between the commercial and non-commercial spheres.

In Chapter 8, I have developed how some of these issues emerged from the contrast between volunteering and paid work by looking at the concept of professionalism. Various examples of conflicts between paid workers, volunteers and service users have revealed how professionalism was interpreted differently by each interest group as well as the group dynamics in the organisational context. On the part of the voluntary organisations, professionalism was largely a response to an increasing expectation from the funding sources concerning the accountability of the productivity and efficiency of work (8.2). Paid workers considered professionalism a matter of work ethic and a strategy to improve the quality of their work which could be otherwise associated with amateurism of a lower standard of work, as it was a prevailing image of volunteering. In order to present a better public image, the organisations made a big effort to keep a friendly atmosphere in the office, involve a wider variety of people in
their projects, and maintain a good relationship with other voluntary organisations in the area. While much of what the organisations considered as professionalism was similar to that of paid work, they found professionalism, in the sense of being business-like and bureaucratic, as unfavourable, as it did not agree with an image of voluntary organisations as friendly and welcoming.

Volunteers, on the other hand, had more mixed reactions to the application of professionalism to volunteering: those who volunteered for work experience considered professionalism an important value, as it was also revealed as a volunteering motivation (Chapter 5), whereas others showed little interest as they valued volunteering for their will of giving rather than the quality of work. Professionalism was a matter of choice. In any case, most volunteers expected paid workers to be professional for the work for which they were paid, taking responsibilities for the services they were offering, as well as those which were provided by the volunteers. The difficulty on the part of the paid workers was how to achieve their objectives while working with volunteers, all of whom were free from these organisational requirements and constraints, and did not necessarily agree with their work ethics.

Moreover, many volunteers, donors and service users found it difficult to accept that the organisations could not always welcome all offerings and visitors due to their regulations and security issues. An image of voluntary organisations as being charitable was contradicted by any refusal of offered giving and requests of support from those who were in need.

The examples of conflicts between paid workers and volunteers demonstrated that such a dilemma for voluntary organisations was inherent in the contradictions between professionalism and volunteerism. On the one hand, professionalism was a practical tool to gain interest and trust from the public and overcome the historically embedded image
of volunteering as amateur. On the other hand, it did not match some of the qualities attached to volunteering such as friendly and informal. While the pressure of professionalism was mostly on the paid workers and not the volunteers, the work of the voluntary organisations involved both parties. Therefore, conflicts and negotiations between the two interest groups were inevitable in this working environment.

Furthermore, my case studies have illustrated that conflicts of different interest groups were also affected by circumstantial elements: I have described this aspect of group dynamics regarding the differentiation of the roles of paid workers and volunteers, group interests, patterns and means of communication, and the stability of leadership and organisational structure.

Ironically, although both organisations emphasised the equality between paid workers and volunteers, conflicts occurred more often when the division of labour between the two was blurred. This indicates that it was a misunderstanding of their roles rather than the equality in their roles which led to the conflicts in the organisational context.

The role of the voluntary organisations in this context is crucial. By volunteering through an organisation, people can have work experience and social recognition, and still not be bound to an imposed sense of obligation and responsibility, as happens with informal care in personal relationships or formal paid work.

10.3 Inclusion, exclusion and solidarity

As discussed in Chapter 3, volunteering is presumed, in social policy and some theory, to contribute to 'community cohesion', 'solidarity' or 'social capital'. But the ethnographic data shows that there is no such simple direct link.
Based on the findings, in Chapter 9, I have explored the role of voluntary organisations in the wider context of community. In this last ethnographic chapter, the issue of community has again touched upon the questions of gift exchange, especially regarding the bonding value of the gift (cf. Godbout 1998): whether or not participation in volunteering enhances solidarity in the community as the gift generates and regenerates social relationships.

First of all, the perception of community was constructed with the subjective feelings of shared-ness with others in the local area which derived from their personal experience in everyday life. The missing sense of community revealed that the locals had an awareness of the lack of this experience: instead, what they shared was an increasing sense of impersonality, unfamiliarity, and distrust of others. The nature of shared-ness, related to similarity in lifestyle, also indicated that people of a similar socio-economic level were more likely to stay together. In such circumstances, the two organisations tried to bridge between the locals of various interests and backgrounds by providing space for community projects (Response) and supporting the elderly who could otherwise be isolated in the community (Sixty Plus).

The negative psychological feelings towards the identified others were not only an obstacle to social solidarity, but also a factor which aggravated social boundaries in the area. I have described how the feeling of unfamiliarity and lack of shared-ness set people apart from each other (cf. 9.2.2.1, 9.2.2.2). In most cases I observed, people decided their boundaries according to highly subjective feelings towards the ‘others’ they perceived and not the actual facts they observed about them. Even though the voluntary organisations and local churches made a strenuous effort to build an inclusive community, individuals often took a different path to pursue their own sense of solidarity. I have argued that the volunteers’ pro-social attitude was not a consequence
of volunteering participation: on the contrary, those who shared the value of the voluntary activity got together.

With regards to sociability, I have also pointed out that its lack was not only a personal choice but also caused by lack of resources such as time, money, and space: socialisation and reciprocity are also a matter of resources. Such a mechanism indicates that deprivation is a systematic failure in which shortages of various resources create a vicious circle (cf. 9.2.2.4).

Within the organisational environment, a large proportion of people involved, sometimes including volunteers, were short of both material and human resources. One of the roles of the organisations in this context was of supporting these individuals. The support was, however, complementary to, rather than a substitute for, what might have been provided by kin or friends since some types of support touched on issues of privacy and others were out of the hands of the voluntary organisations.

The case of the neighbourhood association, on the other hand, highlighted an aspect of volunteering concerning the sense of reciprocity. Unlike the two voluntary organisations I have looked at, participation in the neighbourhood association was closer to a self-help activity in which individuals were both the giver and receiver at the same time. Volunteering was also highly instrumental: it was a form of investment and was concerned with acting for their own interests. In this circumstance, a sense of equality and fairness amongst the members was essential: equal participation and reciprocity were crucial to the maintenance of membership. Those who contributed more than others could easily feel exploited by the group. This example contrasts with the lack of reciprocity in volunteering for those who were ‘in need’. The expectation of reciprocity, in fact, appears in different degrees in volunteering according to an understanding of the nature of their relationships.
Furthermore, the cases indicated an interesting aspect of social participation. As I discussed in a previous section, the decrease of social participation is often associated in existing literature with a growing individualism (2.3.1). What I argue from my data is that the individualistic attitude can be interpreted not as an active individualism but as a reflection of decreasing group pressure, which results from various elements of contemporary life such as social mobility, technological development, and the commercialisation of care provision. For instance, the fact that people didn’t participate in social organisation was not just about their disliking of social strain but also concerned with the lack of external pressure. In other cases, people had other commitments which prevented them from volunteering such as taking care of family members and school children, some of which were resolved collectively in the past through networks of extended families, friends and neighbours. These examples show that the decline of collective living gives individuals more tasks to do by themselves.

These findings add another dimension to an understanding of volunteering.

Previously, I have argued that one-sided giving between individuals of unequal status need not involve reciprocity. Nevertheless, my answer to the question of the gift exchange-whether or not one-sided giving helps social solidarity- is that it is precisely this idea of one-sided giving which encourages people into volunteering. Gift exchange theory claims that the obligation of reciprocity helps the regeneration of social ties. A free and unconstraining gift, on the other hand, does not have such social significance: it does not contribute to expanding or strengthening social ties. Volunteering offers an interesting counter example. In volunteering, the sense of obligation is not only institutionally prevented but also discourages people from giving. Giving has to derive from their will to give and cannot be obligatory.
Moreover, unlike the examples that gift exchange suggests, the non-obligatory nature of giving in volunteering does not actually prevent a return gift either. On the contrary, it is the lack of obligation which encourages people to reciprocate. As in the case of Helen that I introduced in the preface, the feeling of having received an unconstraining gift from anonymous others makes people give to others. In other words, these individuals may not reciprocate what they receive once they recognise any sense of obligation attached to the gift. This is the paradox of giving in volunteering. The lack of obligation has two aspects. On the one hand, it frees individuals from developing a chain of social ties connected through gifts. There is no apparent sense of debt attached to the gift. It is also affirmed by the political illusion of equality. On the other hand, the lack of obligation could paradoxically encourage people to give precisely because it is not imposed upon them. This sense of freedom gives autonomy to individuals and hence adds more meaning to the gift and emphasises the giver's will to give. Voluntary-ness is what keeps people giving.

Another paradox is the bonding value of giving and exclusiveness of social ties (cf. Godbout 1998). This is concerned with both the issue of interestedness and disinterestedness which I have discussed in Chapter 5, and that of the construction of social ties and social boundaries in Chapter 9. My argument is that interpersonal exclusiveness of giving implies that the gift is arranged specifically for the appointed receiver. While an anonymously given gift may suggest the generosity of the giver, a gift offered to the chosen individuals suggests the significance of the receiver's identity plays a part in the giver's decision to give. The receiver is chosen to be cared for amongst other non-receivers by the giver. Such a gift, therefore, needs to be exclusive in order to have extra value. This value is what I see as the essence of bonding value. As I have suggested in my case studies, many volunteers chose their volunteering activity
according to their understanding of the 'needy'. The exclusivity implies the giver's interest in the receiver which makes the receiver cared for. Service users' preference for volunteers as opposed to social workers, commercial service providers and unwilling family members in providing support, is partly a result of the idea that the gift is an expression of care.

Bonding value, therefore, is paradoxically strengthened by the exclusivity of giving. Although some theories of social capital consider social boundaries as an obstacle to the development of solidarity (2.3.3), such observation seems to miss an important aspect of solidarity and its relation to the psychological effect of the exclusiveness of social ties: the exclusive-ness of social ties is in fact an element that strengthens social ties.

10.4 Stranger and context: future research

Simmel's essay on the stranger is often referred to as an example of an anthropologist in his field. A stranger is both spatially and ideologically distanced from the society, which gives her freedom and objectivity to look at the field. The way she feels, thinks and understands is not bound to the culture she studies while her mentality is not completely distanced from it either, which allows her to be sympathetic to the people she sees (Wolf 1950: 402). I believe that this balance between remoteness and nearness is a key to achieve a sound ethnography.

Being a stranger in the field had several implications for my study. Being non-British, with little knowledge and experience not only of British volunteering but more broadly of British culture, I could not take anything for granted. This experience was challenging in many ways but allowed me to have a fresh look at everything I was given an opportunity to see. My Japanese background, on the other hand, helped me to raise
questions especially concerning the way of living and social relationships in Britain by giving me a counter example which I knew of from Japan. When in the field, I often imagined how a situation would have been in Japan: how volunteering is understood in Japan, what kind of support systems people have within and outside closed social networks, and how they behave in various support relations. These thoughts and questions eventually formed the themes of my study.

Another issue concerns the attributes of a 'stranger'. While a stranger is an outsider to the study field, she is also a part of her research context. At this point, I think it is important to remind ourselves that not all strangers are the same. Strangers also have various attributes of individuality, and these attributes together with the characteristics of the study environment frame our research. My attributes such as nationality, gender, age, accent, and being a student, sometimes helped and at other times obstructed my data collection, occasionally making me reconsider my research strategy (cf. 4.1).

That is part of the reason why, I believe, a detailed description needs to also include the researcher of the study in order to share the context with its audience, essential to the general discussion of the data.

The theory of the gift and gift exchange, on the other hand, offered not only a direction to my study as a useful analytical tool, but also an opportunity for me to look at a Western view of giving. It was indeed a complex task to use the theories of Western scholars who looked primarily at non-Western culture in order to explore Western culture, from my non-Western point of view. Nevertheless, this multi-layered lens presented an angle from which I have found an interesting picture of giving in Britain.

A comparison of this case with the case of volunteering in Japan or in other countries, may be an interesting research avenue, moreover, one which would further
unwind the social construction of volunteering, and contribute to the future
development of the study of volunteerism.

There were also several themes which I could not explore much in this study but
certainly showed an interesting link to volunteering. Amongst these, religion (5.2.2.7,
9.2.2.3) and social class (5.2.3) are undoubtedly worthwhile research topics.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, this study is about the individuals as well
as the socio-cultural environment they were in. Unlike a traditional image of a middle-
aged, middle class, 'lady bountiful', the volunteers I met had diverse backgrounds, and
many were suffering from various deprivations and the lack of resources. The contrast
between the rich and the poor was especially prominent in the place I chose for my field.
It was typical in this borough to see a council estate building in the middle of the most
exclusive private properties. It was in this environment that many significant issues of
this study such as diversity, segregations, social morality and a sense of community,
were recognised as important, yet sensitive issues. By listening to and observing these
individuals, I have come to feel that an understanding of the sense of giving and its
practice requires a study of the life experience of these individuals, all of which are
situated and unique.

The voluntary organisations played a significant role in this context. Indeed, the
voluntary organisation is what enables volunteering to be both a form of exchange and a
one-sided giving. The position of volunteering, in the ambiguous zone between
exchange and the gift, the commercial market and one-sided giving, the public and the
private, is maintained through the organisational practices of appropriating volunteering
in the peculiar context. By looking at the differences and similarities between the two
organisations, this study has exposed the complex nature of volunteering practices in
Britain. Most of the findings I have presented are in fact not recognised in survey research although this constitutes the main data of volunteering research.

I believe that exploring volunteerism requires contextualisation of volunteering, which can and should contribute to a better understanding of volunteering generally.

I hope this study has gone some way in pursuing this understanding.
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