

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE BIRMINGHAM VOLUNTARY ACTION FIELD  
1965 – 2010**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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November 2022**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Conceptualising the voluntary sector as a strategic action field, this study focuses on the values, identities, resources and relationships that bind together local voluntary organisations in the City of Birmingham, and how these change over time. There is an extensive body of literature examining voluntary action, historically and conceptually, that looks from either a national field-wide perspective, or from that of single organisations. There is less that considers the local field of voluntary action. This study draws focus to change and continuity in the voluntary action field at a local level, in an urban setting, across the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using theoretically-informed historical sources and methods, it brings together two disciplines in a way that allows for a focus on detail and historical contingency, through a lens of broader meaning-making processes and activities. The source material, taken from the archives of philanthropic funder the Barrow Cadbury Trust, demonstrates the opportunities for understanding communities and voluntary action through charity archives, including the experiences of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities and movements.

The study will address three themes that follow a narrative from theoretical issues of how the identity of the local voluntary action field is constructed, what the field values, and finally how we can see these issues play out in the field's engagement with practical policy initiatives. It looks first at concepts of identity within the Birmingham voluntary action field, and evident within the BCT archives. It explores how the values of the field are laid claimed to and, to different degrees, enacted by field actors. This introduces issues to do with legitimacy and its sources for organisations in the

Birmingham voluntary action field. In particular it explores these issues for Black-, South Asian- and other minority ethnic-led organisations. Finally the study will explore these concepts in the policy context of the Inner City Partnership Programme, a government funding programme that provided grants for voluntary organisations and others from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. It will consider the experience of organisations within the Birmingham voluntary action field of navigating this government programme, from trying to influence the programme at its inception, to identifying related support needs to help organisations take part, to the series of cuts that left a number of organisations in a precarious position.

Reflecting on the findings of this inter-disciplinary study, the thesis argues that organisations exist across multiple fields at once, and so face decisions about what sources and forms of legitimacy to pursue, according to which field they most wish to improve their position in and which forms of legitimacy are of most symbolic value within that field. This might mean choosing between pursuing strategies of pragmatic legitimation through adopting 'professional' structures and approaches, and engaging in voluntary action fora and partnerships, versus maintaining close ties to community, prioritising Black ownership and independence, and protecting an independent, critical voice. Additionally, while the values attached to the voluntary action field endured, their meaning and their consequences were not static. Historical study of material relating to voluntary action can help us interrogate these seemingly shared values in historical and ideological context.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). ESRC also funded my Master's degree and a visiting scholarship to Rutgers University Camden (New Jersey), which were formative to this work and my broader career.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor John Mohan and Dr Chris Moores, for their guidance, advice and solidarity throughout. I would also like to thank numerous voluntary sector researchers who have helped me develop my thinking in different ways, including but not limited to Dr Rob Macmillan, Dr Angela Ellis-Paine, Angus McCabe, Dr Zachary Wood, Dr George Campbell Gosling, Dr Peter Grant and Dr Jon Dean. I should also acknowledge Professor Mark Freeman, who first introduced me to voluntary action history, and Professor Neil Rollings who helped me develop my very first research ideas at undergraduate level at the University of Glasgow.

Many thanks to all archivists, librarians and other staff at the Library of Birmingham for their help and good humour. Thank you to the Barrow Cadbury Trust for depositing their records in the first place, in what Chief Executive Sara Llewellyn described to me as an expression of the Quaker spirit of good record keeping. Thanks to Birmingham equality charity brap, which helped me explore issues of whiteness in the Academy through its excellent training.<sup>1</sup> Thanks are also due to all the activists, organisers and professionals who appear in the archives, who have worked over many years in the interests of the people of Birmingham. Finally, thank you to Office 726 residents past and present for the friendship and shared struggle.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brap.org.uk/>

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEVO	Association for Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
ACSHO	Afro Caribbean Self Help Organisation
AFFOR	All Faiths For One Race
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ARC	Asian Resource Centre
BCAB	Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau
BCSN	Black Community Strategic Network
BCC	Birmingham City Council
BCRC	Birmingham Community Relations Council
BCT	Barrow Cadbury Trust
BHA	Balsall Heath Association
BVSC	Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
BWAIC	Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CRC	Community Relations Council
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
GLC	Greater London Council
HSHAG	Handsworth Single Homeless Action Group
ICPP	Inner City Partnership Programme
IGU	Internal Governance Unit
IWA	Indian Workers Association
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCCI	National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants
NCSS	National Council of Social Services
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OWAAD	Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
SAF	Strategic Action Field
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise
VSU	Voluntary Services Unit
WMCC	West Midlands County Council
WRVS	Women's Royal Voluntary Service

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines voluntary action in Birmingham between 1965 and 2010, through a lens of strategic action field (SAF) theory.<sup>1</sup> It contributes to expanding our knowledge of the local, urban experience of voluntary organisations in the context of changing social policy, and our awareness of the strengths and challenges of taking an interdisciplinary approach to historical inquiry using a social theoretical framework. It also addresses an additional gap in voluntary action historiography by raising issues of 'race' and the racialisation of voluntary organisations within the voluntary sector. Finally, for historians of Birmingham and the West Midlands, it fills a significant gap in scholarship on voluntary action and charity history in the city, as an expression of changing communities and their experiences.

The central research question for this project is: *how does a local voluntary action strategic action field (SAF) change over time, and to what extent does this reflect established narratives of national voluntary sector development?* I explore this through archival research, using the records of philanthropic funder the Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT) in the UK city of Birmingham. I argue that SAF theory can help us understand the group of organisations that make up a voluntary action field, and that empirical historical research can bring important insights to social theory in turn. There are three central themes that run throughout this thesis: an exploration of local dimensions of voluntary action, the role of social theory in the study, and the importance of centring discussions of 'race' in voluntary action research.

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, *A Theory of Fields* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

## 1.1 Exploring the local dimensions of voluntary action history

The research project focused on the City of Birmingham, in order to explore a local urban dimension of voluntary action history. This adds to a growing body of literature that looks outside of London to other UK cities, to understand the twentieth century urban experience.<sup>2</sup> Birmingham experienced periods of post-war decline, deindustrialisation, high levels of unemployment and a poor supply of quality housing. Conversely, this meant it was the recipient of considerable government funds for regeneration, some of which flowed to voluntary organisations looking to contribute to the literal and metaphorical rebuilding of the 'Second City'. It was also a site of considerable in-migration from Commonwealth and other countries, with growing African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and other minority ethnic populations, relatively larger than those in the UK as a whole. This migration also prompted new organisations and groups to meet the needs of and provide connection to the culture of diasporic communities.

These factors were not unique to Birmingham, of course, and further studies of voluntary action in UK cities would provide useful comparators. It is also not the intention of this thesis to demonstrate any degree of 'uniqueness' associated with the Birmingham voluntary action field, other than the fact that most of the organisations discussed did not exist beyond this city. Rather this is one example where we can explore the nature of local voluntary action, relationships between local voluntary

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<sup>2</sup> Of particular relevance to this study: Kieran Connell, *Black Handsworth* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019); Phil Child, "Race, homelessness and inner-city policy in 1980s Britain," *Urban History* (2021).

organisations and local and national governments, and the degree to which specific local contexts and contingencies affect a field operating at a local level. These are organisations often operating at quite different scales of geography and resources to some of the large national organisations that feature in the largely national-level historiography. This focus is likely, in part, due to the availability of archival material for larger organisations, as well as a focus on national policy history. Due to the local nature of its funding programme in the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, with a focus on Birmingham and the West Midlands, the BCT archives provide a valuable opportunity to look beyond these large national organisations to smaller, younger groups working to meet locally-specific needs.

A focus on the local does not negate all attention to the national. Indeed, I argue that the wider UK voluntary action field, dominated by some of these powerful national-level organisations, as well as the proximate state field (the term used by Fligstein and McAdam to describe government bodies, acting alongside the strategic action field), have a profound effect on the local field, and its shared understandings of normative values and behaviours that matter for voluntary organisations.<sup>3</sup> These values and related behaviours include concepts of independence, being innovative and being grass roots. Archival material shows these values matter to the Birmingham voluntary action field, but that their meanings and implications change over time as normative understandings of the purpose of voluntary action change, in part driven by national-level political ideologies and policy programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

## 1.2 The value of social theory

A social theoretical approach to historical studies brings a focus on the discourses, values, ideas and interactions that shape and reshape fields, and how their taken-for-granted truths come to be embedded.<sup>4</sup> Doing so within a historical context stresses elements of change, development and the importance of temporal context – understanding values and processes in the context of their time, rather than applying normative understandings from today. Throughout the thesis, I apply a social theoretical reading to the historiography of voluntary action and to empirical study of the BCT archives to help us interrogate and understand meanings and ideas, and their historically contingent nature, within the strategic action field.

A belief in the value of an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together sociological theories and tools with historical inquiry, underpins this whole thesis. SAF theory, the theory of choice for this study, is appealing in part because it encourages historically informed understandings of fields, generated through historical inquiry.<sup>5</sup> The theory is not applied uncritically, however. Indeed, the thesis sets out to test *whether* it is compatible with historical study, and to probe some of the critical questions about elements of the theory raised by myself and others. The theory poses challenges for empirical research in terms of being able to identify different actors and different processes. For instance, discussion of the theory highlights the difficulty of identifying

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<sup>4</sup> Billie Sandberg, Angela M. Eikenberry, and Roseanne M. Mirabella, "Critical Perspectives on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organization Management: Introduction to the Textbook," in *Reframing Nonprofit Organisations*, ed. Angela M. Eikenberry, Roseanne M. Mirabella, and Billie Sandberg (Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*; Richard Lang and David Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society: A Theoretical Framework and Its Application to Community-Led Housing Organisations in England," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2020).

the roles different organisations play within a field, and whether they might exist across multiple fields, where different things matter, at once. I propose some new features of field dynamics in order to meet these challenges.

### **1.3 Foregrounding race and the racialisation of organisations**

As noted, there is a gap in the voluntary action historiography in relation to the experience of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic organisations within the voluntary action field. This also reflects a wider gap in the historiography of Black communities, experiences and activism, although in some of these areas increasing attention and a growing scholarship is looking to fill that gap. There is growing scholarship, for instance, on Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic-led groups and the British communities of which they are a part in the context of anti-racism studies, urban history, migration history and more.<sup>6</sup> There are fewer studies of Black-led organisations through the lens of voluntary action history or voluntary sector studies, although again there is some scholarship that looks specifically at a Black voluntary sector as a sub-sector or niche within the wider field.<sup>7</sup>

Led by content available in the archives and the identified gap in historiography, issues relating to the Birmingham voluntary action field are explored in terms of the racialisation of organisations. Organisations racialised as white have access to the

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<sup>6</sup> Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Connell, *Black Handsworth*; Rob Waters, *Thinking Black*, Berkeley series in british studies, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019); Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2020) David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Picador, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Tilki et al., "The BME third sector: marginalised and exploited," *Voluntary Sector Review* 6, no. 1 (2015); Gary Craig, "Forward to the past: can the UK black and minority ethnic third sector survive?," *Voluntary Sector Review* 2, no. 3 (2011); Asif Afridi and Joy Warmington, *The Pied Piper: The BME third sector and UK race relations policy* (Birmingham: brap, 2009).

symbolic, and sometimes material, resources in a way that is perceived to be more difficult for organisations racialised as Black, South Asian or another minoritised ethnicity. This is reflected in the archives from both a Black and white organisational perspective. This thesis argues that, at least in part because they are denied the privilege associated with whiteness, Black- and Asian-led organisations exist within a distinct minority ethnic action field *as well as* within the ‘mainstream’ white-dominated Birmingham voluntary action field, and that they thus have to navigate the issues of trading off different values that matter to different fields.

In this thesis, I assess the experiences of organisations through the lens of field theory, to understand their experience of trying to navigate and shape the field. Organisations face choices between which different sets of values to lay claim to. Adherence, or the appearance of adherence, to one value might require sacrificing the legitimacy generated from adhering to another. Where organisations exist in multiple fields, as this thesis argues they do, this might equate to a choice between one field’s value set and another’s. For instance, organisations that exist both in the ‘mainstream’ voluntary action field and in a sub-field of Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic group-led organisations are faced with choices about whether to pursue legitimacy in one field over another. This might mean balancing efforts to adopt managerial practices and to look professional, with efforts to be perceived as grass roots, user-led and connected to specific communities. Other organisations in the ‘mainstream’ field that are racialised as white are perceived to benefit from their whiteness through easier access to symbolic resources such as political relationships and reputation. Archival material



includes the experience of both groups, although there are also some notable gaps and absent voices, upon which this thesis reflects.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis will begin by introducing SAF theory. Chapter 2 explains some of the key mechanisms involved in SAF theory, as well as raising some critical questions about the theory itself, and some of the challenges studies of this kind may encounter in its application. Strategic action fields are ‘fundamental units of collective action in society’, spaces where actors come together over shared understandings of normative values, behaviours and understandings of the nature and purpose of their activity.<sup>8</sup> Fields are hierarchically organised, and subject to constant contention and ‘jockeying’ for position between powerful actors known as incumbents, and those that seek new arrangements and settlements, called challengers. This framework helps us interrogate and understand the history of Birmingham’s voluntary action field.

Chapter 3 presents a historiography of voluntary action. This historiography, broadly speaking, presents change, continuity and contention across three loosely bounded periods. The chapter presents these periods and the literature that characterises them, but also highlights the ways in which each boundary is porous, and how some of the ideas involved span across the whole period (and beyond). The period between 1965 – 79 was defined by the so-called ‘rediscovery’ of poverty. The politics of ‘new social movements’ provided the backdrop for the formation of new voluntary organisations and shifts in practice for older groups, although some authors such as Chris Moores

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<sup>8</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

have highlighted that there is a greater degree of complexity, heterogeneity and longevity to some of these movements.<sup>9</sup> The period 1979 – 1997 was characterised by the rise of ‘new public management’ thinking and mechanisms. Government policy and writing suggested an ‘instrumental’ view toward voluntary action and the contribution it could make toward meeting different social policy challenges. After this, 1997 – 2010 saw an expansion of partnership rhetoric, a continuation of processes begun in the previous period, and a range of (real or perceived) challenges to voluntary sector independence. However, other authors have presented research that complicates this chronological framing, especially with regards to the degree each period represented a definitive or straightforward shift.

Chapter 4 turns to the challenges of bringing a local and social theoretical dimension to this historiography. In introducing this study’s methods, the chapter argues that bringing together historical and social sciences disciplines in this way can help to ensure theoretical accounts are historically situated. Historical contingency is vital to understanding the field, but historical inquiry should be alive to the value of social theory in offering insights into meaning-making processes. The site of this study is the local, urban experience of the city of Birmingham, and the chapter highlights the importance of studying at the local level, where the majority of voluntary organisations operate. While there is a considerable number of studies of individual organisations, often in communities, neighbourhoods or estates, there are fewer studies of local voluntary action as a collective *sector*, here conceptualised as a field. The chapter will also introduce the central material for this thesis: the records of philanthropic funder

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<sup>9</sup> Chris Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). P.106

the Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT). BCT had an extensive funding portfolio in Birmingham and the West Midlands during the period of study, which provides the opportunity for valuable insight into the local experience of a range of local, national and global events and initiatives. The archive includes some of the records and experiences of the organisations they fund, and in many cases these are those of smaller less well-resourced groups. While these records are mediated through the views of and choices made by the funder when keeping records, compiling files and submitting documents to the archive, this nevertheless provides a certain level of access to the records of organisations that might not otherwise be present, or prominent, in official records. In this way, this thesis contributes to a growing focus and body of literature on the value and importance of voluntary action archives.<sup>10</sup>

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of the study. These address three themes: the identity of the Birmingham voluntary action field, what the field values, and finally how we can see these issues play out in the field's engagement with practical policy initiatives. Chapter 5 first looks at concepts of identity within the Birmingham voluntary action field, and evident within the BCT archives, as well as the normatively held values of the field, to which organisations are committed, and which they seek to enact. It argues that the meanings and uses of values like that of 'being grass roots' are changeable according to what the user wants to strategically communicate with them. It also argues that some organisations can benefit from the values associated with a

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<sup>10</sup> See Matthew McMurray, *Charity Archives in the 21st Century* (Cardiff: Royal Voluntary Service, 2014); University of Kent, "UK Philanthropy Archives," 2019, accessed 25/03/2022, <https://www.kent.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/philanthropy/index.html>; Georgina Brewis, "Using archives and objects in voluntary action research," in *Researching Voluntary Action: Innovations and Challenges*, ed. Jon Dean and Eddy Hogg (Bristol: Policy Press, 2022).

field just by being in it, regardless necessarily of the degree to which they enact them. This chapter uses a case study of the Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC) to explore how it viewed its own identity, and how it dealt with conflicts raised by on the one hand wishing to hold onto the value of being grass roots, and on the other to gain pragmatic legitimacy through the adoption of bureaucratic processes.

Chapter 6 extends the discussion of legitimacy and its sources for organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field. In particular, it explores these issues for Black-, South Asian- and other minority ethnic-led organisations. These organisations have a strong presence in the BCT archives, and in the City of Birmingham itself. They also faced particular challenges existing in a voluntary action field that is predominantly racialised as white, and interacting with white state and societal structures. This chapter argues that these (and other) organisations exist across multiple fields at once, and so face decisions about what sources and forms of legitimacy to pursue, according to which field they most wish to improve their position in, and which forms of legitimacy are of most symbolic value within that field. This might mean choosing between pursuing strategies of pragmatic legitimation through adopting 'professional' structures and approaches, versus maintaining close ties to community, prioritising Black ownership and independence and protecting an independent, critical voice. These were not mutually exclusive approaches, by any means. However, they can be difficult choices to make for organisations who may wish to hold onto one set of values, but see potential growth or survival attached to another. This chapter includes a case study of Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau, a majority-white organisation occupying a position of relative power within the field, in comparison to some competing Black- and

South Asian-led organisations. This case study demonstrates the importance of acknowledging and interrogating the racialisation of organisations in the field.

Chapter 7 will look at how issues of field identity and values are enacted in the policy context of the Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP), a government funding programme that provided grants for voluntary organisations and others from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. It will consider the experience of organisations within the Birmingham voluntary action field in navigating this government programme, from trying to influence the programme at its inception, to identifying related support needs to help organisations take part, to the series of cuts that left a number of organisations in a precarious position. It explores the role of the proximate state field – a particularly powerful neighbouring field exerting influence upon other fields, including that of voluntary action. Later developments such as the extension of competitive contracting, may be more obvious ‘turning points’ for the voluntary sector. However, this thesis argues that activity such as engagement with ICPP did key groundwork to begin reshaping a new settlement for the field in terms of extending interactions with the state, and normalising certain technical processes of applying for, monitoring and managing state finance. As part of engaging in these processes, voluntary organisations make use of and reflect on the kinds of values and symbolic capital we discuss in the two preceding chapters, and we can see, in some cases, the meanings and implications of certain values begin to change in rhetoric and practice.

Finally, the concluding chapter reintroduces some of the questions raised in the theoretical chapter, and reflects on whether, in applying SAF theory using historical

enquiry, we are able to answer them. It will propose some novel adaptations to the theory that can be used to strengthen it, and to better account for what we find when we look empirically at the field. It will also reflect on the degree of success and the nature of the challenges involved in taking an interdisciplinary approach to this study. The chapter also discusses the history of change and continuity in ideas and meanings attached to voluntary action that the archives reveal. In doing so, it argues that change and continuity across the three periods identified in the historiography involves more processes of contestation than much of the scholarship allows for. It argues that the racialisation of organisations within the voluntary sector matters, and that organisations faced, and continue to face, different drivers for their actions according to what form of legitimacy mattered to them most.

The discussion presented here holds interest for different audiences. The novel use of philanthropy archives to look across a voluntary action field at a local level will be of interest to historians of voluntary action. This includes the value of archives in uncovering the experience of Black, Asian, other minority ethnic and other underrepresented voices in historical study. Empirical findings are also highly relevant to this audience. For instance, while the values and identity attached to voluntary action remained relatively constant over this time period (and arguably stretching further back and forward), the meanings and implications of these values changed according to changing social policy and understandings of the purpose of voluntary action. Urban historians and those studying urban social policy will find interest in the local organisational expression of changing communities in a large city, and how these organisations responded to immigration, poverty, decline and regeneration over time.

The specific case of the Birmingham ICPP in the late 1970s and 1980s is one such point of interest, examined through the views of the voluntary organisations with which it came into contact. For those with an interest in voluntary action and the voluntary sector in Birmingham and beyond, the evidence presented here stresses the importance of the role of voluntary organisations in shaping, challenging or endorsing discourses regarding the role of charities in social policy, and the importance – and strength - of critical reflection on this role. Voluntary organisations in the BCT archives had clear agency in relation to the policy changes happening around them, and strong critical views of their own role in these changes. It also fills a gap in Birmingham and West Midlands historical study; the history of voluntary action and the voluntary sector is notably absent from scholarship on the city and region, beyond case studies of individual organisations, and writing on the Cadbury family's philanthropy. Voluntary action is often an expression of people's needs, experiences and creativity, and this is certainly the case in Birmingham. This study captures some of the energy involved in organising around the lives of changing communities in the city, and reflects on the implications for our understanding of voluntary action as a field of activity.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework used to shape the methods and analysis for understanding the Birmingham voluntary action field. It evaluates three common theoretical framings of the voluntary sector, their strengths and some of their shortcomings for understanding voluntary action. It proposes that strategic action field (SAF) theory, developed by neo-institutional theorists Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, goes some way to answering the outstanding questions raised.<sup>1</sup>

As noted, strategic action fields are 'fundamental units of collective action in society', bound together by shared understandings of normative values, behaviours and understandings of the nature and purpose of their activity.<sup>2</sup> SAF theory can bring to the fore issues of agency, power, dissent and diversity within the sector as an institution, creating an understanding based on structure and inter-organisational relations, both within the field in question and between proximate, linked fields. For instance, in the case of the Birmingham voluntary action field, it draws attention to the ways in which different values that matter to the field, such as being grass roots, independence, innovation and more, are negotiated and deployed strategically in ways that might help organisations improve their position in the field. There are, however, questions remaining, which this project will explore through practical application of the theory in post-war Birmingham. For example, empirical work on the Birmingham field demonstrates how organisations can exist across multiple fields at once, and how this

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Fligstein, "Understanding stability and change in fields," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 33 (2013); Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*; Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields," *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.



creates pressure on them to conform to different, sometimes conflicting sets of values and ideas agreed by each field.

The project seeks, in part, to test how well SAF theory can be used to extend our understanding of voluntary action, and to develop an application of SAF theory in a historical context. I start from the position that historical study can benefit from being theoretically informed, and that theory must take into account the historical context of institutions. Historians can benefit from a focus on pressures, relationships and institutional logics that shape their object of study but exist around or beyond it, and theorists can better ground their models in their historical contingency. I will discuss this in more detail as part of Chapter 4's description of methodology. Discussion of SAF theory here is done with this test and starting position in mind. To this end the section will also raise some critical questions about SAF theory itself. This includes the difficulty involved in establishing the hierarchy of the field, and whether there should be an additional role for organisations that aren't straightforwardly part of the field, but that have a profound effect on its nature and operations. In the Birmingham field, for instance, there is a need for a different sort of role description for the philanthropic funder BCT. These questions have also shaped the project's analysis and focus. We will return to them, and to consider the issues of viability, in the concluding chapter.

## **2.2 Theories and frames in the existing voluntary sector literature**

Voluntary action literature uses a range of theoretical frameworks – ways of interpreting and understanding regularities and patterns in the social world - to understand processes, behaviours and beliefs among voluntary organisations. Three

frames which are commonly deployed to understand voluntary action and the voluntary sector include: strategic unity, hybridity and isomorphism. These are explored in more detail below.

### *2.2.1 Common frames: Strategic Unity*

The 'voluntary sector' is a contested term, and a contested idea. A 'sector' implies a collective political unit and unity, and as a term may disguise a heterogeneity of forms and understandings. Indeed, the range of terms used to define similar, but often subtly and deliberately different, entities pays testament to this. Voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE), third sector, civil society and social sector are all deployed at different points by different actors for different purposes.<sup>3</sup> Macmillan argues that these processes of labelling and, thus, defining, are political activities done with strategic interests in mind, as well as practical ones.<sup>4</sup> Defining a sector also defines who is 'inside' and 'outside', who has access to funds, decision-making, roles and activities, and can act to create a unit or strategic unity across organisations, which can in turn wield power and influence.<sup>5</sup>

Many existing analyses consider ideas of unity, and the way ideas and identities might be constructed, agreed and shared across a field over time. Numerous authors discuss and analyse ideas of agreed or contested meaning, 'strategic unity' and ideological concepts enacted through behaviour and policy that result in constructed

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Office for Civil Society, *Civil Society Strategy Engagement Exercise*, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (London, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Rob Macmillan, *Working Paper 89: "Distinction" in the third sector*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Pete Alcock, "A strategic unity: defining the third sector in the UK," *Voluntary Sector Review* 1, no. 1 (2010).

understandings of the 'sector'.<sup>6</sup> Carmel and Harlock relate processes of sector invention to those of governance, and the idea that socially constructed meanings are used to create a 'governable terrain', with organisations engineered by external political forces to be more ready for market environments than pursuing an altruistic mission.<sup>7</sup> Both Milbourne and Cushman and Mason et al. cover similar ground, regarding voluntary organisations and social enterprises – a sub-sector of a broadly defined 'third sector' - respectively.<sup>8</sup> In the former case, Milbourne and Cushman suggest that the sector is complicit with state-imposed ideas of what voluntary action should be.

This thesis overall explores issues of strategic meaning making by the voluntary action field, so there is some cross-over with analysis in this area. Tensions in interpretations of these meaning-making processes are highlighted in particular detail by two papers; one by 6 and Leat, and a second by Coule and Bennett.<sup>9</sup> 6 and Leat argue that the sector in England was created 'by committee', through discursive processes beginning

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<sup>6</sup> J. Hearn, "Taking liberties - Contesting visions of the civil society project," *Critique of Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2001). Jeremy Kendall, *Working Paper 13: Losing political innocence? Finding a place for ideology in understanding the development of recent English third sector policy*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2009); Pete Alcock and Jeremy Kendall, *Working Paper 42: Constituting the third sector: processes of decontestation and contention under the UK Labour governments in England*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2010); Dr Jane Parry, Peter Alcock, and Jeremy Kendall, "Opportunity and influence: the third sector and the 2010 general election," *Third Sector Research Centre: Working Paper 44* (2010); Macmillan, "Distinction" in the third sector.

<sup>7</sup> Emma Carmel and Jenny Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain: partnership, procurement and performance in the UK," *Policy & Politics* 36, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>8</sup> Linda Milbourne and Mike Cushman, "Complying, Transforming or Resisting in the New Austerity? Realigning Social Welfare and Independent Action among English Voluntary Organisations," *Journal of Social Policy* 44, no. 3 (2015); Chris Mason, James Kirkbride, and David Bryde, "From stakeholders to institutions: the changing face of social enterprise governance theory," *Management Decision* 45, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Perri 6 and Diana Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin," *Non-Profit Studies* 1, no. 2 (1997); Tracey M. Coule and Ellen Bennett, "State-voluntary relations in contemporary welfare systems: New politics or voluntary action as usual?," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2018).

with the 1978 Wolfenden Committee report on the future of voluntary organisations, and coming to a point of consensus opinion expressed in the 1996 Deakin Commission report on the future of the voluntary sector.<sup>10</sup> Coule and Bennett also examine the Wolfenden and Deakin Commission reports, but find there are parallel discourses of stability and appeals to history and historically-held values of voluntary action, alongside narratives of change. They argue that rather than creating new shared understandings of the nature and purpose of voluntary action, instead these narratives formed 'a collage of past relations or assemblage of different aspects of past realities to create a seemingly new era'.<sup>11</sup> The key point here is that, rather than the sector coalescing into a political unit over this time, it in fact already existed. These rhetorical interventions were important in re-asserting the role the field perceived for itself, and to some extent that which government perceived for it, but they did not invent the field, or the values it defined itself by, by themselves.

While useful in setting out high-level discursive processes that help to form a strategic unity, or the appearance of one, some of these accounts lack description of how this process is then played out in practice. They also suggest a uniformity of ideas and experiences. In fact, the accounts presented by the authors discussed above tend to privilege the ideas and experiences of large, national-level and powerful organisations, over those that might take an alternative view, offer resistance, or even decline to participate in these environment-shaping discourses. It is important to remember that the voluntary action field is made up of a wide variety of organisations, and not all of

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<sup>10</sup> 6 and Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin." These reports will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Coule and Bennett, "State-voluntary relations in contemporary welfare systems: New politics or voluntary action as usual?." P.154

them will have agreed with visions put forward by the commissions and inquiries often cited. This thesis explores in more detail the ideas and experiences of local-level organisations, operating in contexts that were clearly shaped by these discursive interventions but also by other circumstances and factors. In some cases organisations themselves put forward alternative ideas, or challenged dominant ones. In other cases their practical experience sheds further light on the effect of discourse in practice. This will bring more depth of understanding to a field that might be flattened by a focus on strategic unity.

### *2.2.2 Common frames: Hybridity*

Hybridity allows a consideration of how the boundaries between those sectors might be blurred as changes to policy and funding environments affect the shape, nature and our understanding of the voluntary sector.<sup>12</sup> Hybridity is conceptualised in relation to voluntary organisations in different ways by different analysts. David Billis' version is rooted in the idea that organisations that sit at the core of separate sectors (public, private and the 'third' or voluntary), far from each sector's boundary, exhibit inherent, distinct characteristics, enabling them to act and react in different ways.<sup>13</sup> At the boundary, we can see organisations that operate in 'hybrid' ways, mixing ideal-type

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. Andrea Westall, *Working Paper 26 Business or third sector? What are the dimensions and implications of researching and conceptualising the overlap between business and third sector?*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2009); Heather Buckingham, "Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector: what can we learn from homelessness organisations in the UK?," *Voluntary Sector Review* 2, no. 2 (2011); Reverend Malcolm Torry, "Is there a faith sector?," *Voluntary Sector Review* 3, no. 1 (2012); Lesley Hustinx, Els De Waele, and Chloe Delcour, "Hybridisation in a corporatist third sector regime: paradoxes of 'responsibilised autonomy'," *Voluntary Sector Review* 6, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>13</sup> D. Billis and H. Glennerster, "Human services and the voluntary sector: Towards a theory of comparative advantage," *Journal of social policy* 27 (1998).

characteristics from each sector and moving further from the 'pure' conception at the core.

Billis outlines 'ideal' models for public, private and voluntary organisations, covering features of ownership, governance, operation, staffing and resources unique to each sector.<sup>14</sup> He then uses what he terms a 'prime sector approach'; organisations have roots in one sector, and adhere in the first instance to its principles.<sup>15</sup> Areas of hybridity exist in the cross-overs between sectors. Voluntary organisations might experience hybridity as a result of policy drivers, taking on paid staff and board members from business and government, or because of a need to secure their own survival in harsh economic times, but will also face contradictory pressures to maintain their distinction and independence.<sup>16</sup> Hybridity can be organic or enacted, and might be shallow, gradual and evident through new activities or taking on paid staff for the first time. Alternatively, it might be entrenched. At a governance level, according to Billis, this might look like accepting permanent government or private sector representation, gaining a level of prestige or endorsement, or a set of business skills in return. At an operational level, it might mean receiving private or public sector grants, contracts or sales, or the point where paid staff become dominant in delivery. Billis writes that this comes along with an inherent risk of mission drift, but that it is not inevitable.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> David Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations," in *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector*, ed. David Billis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations." P.56

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Harris, "Third sector organizations in a contradictory policy environment," in *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector*, ed. David Billis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations."

There is a risk here, however, of attributing these processes of hybridity with too much power; simply having a local government official on an organisation's board does not necessarily mean it is pushed toward adopting public sector logics. Indeed, in the Birmingham voluntary action field, an experimental community organisation and advice centre in Handsworth, called the Action Centre, had local councillors and officials from the Social Services department on its project boards in the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>18</sup> This did confer a certain form of legitimacy or endorsement for its work, but did not necessarily see it adopting public sector logics.

Further problems can be raised with Billis' conception of hybridity, and the 'pure' or ideal-type model of the voluntary association.<sup>19</sup> Its definition relies on the nuts and bolts of operation and governance of voluntary organisations – how (or whether) staff are paid, who is responsible for decision-making and what the product or profit is. This denies the role of shared meaning-making, internal relations and existential issues of self-definition. The theory does not connect with how the sector identifies and constructs itself, although many of the elements within it are part of that construction. Neither does it say anything about relational aspects of the institution, of dynamic action or change; while it may be descriptive of a 'sector' to a greater or lesser degree, it does not move much beyond a description of its governance.

Macmillan also suggests there is an implication in the theory's application that increasing hybridisation is problematic, and consequently distinction is something that

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<sup>18</sup> Records, *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83* MS 1579/2/7/1/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>19</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations."

should be preserved.<sup>20</sup> Indeed Billis describes his theory as one that can help underpin the strengths of the association, highlight points of susceptibility to hybridity and avoid mission drift.<sup>21</sup> Rather than an ideal-type model, this seems to set up a normative vision of what an organisation *should* look like. This should not be accepted uncritically, particularly if the starting point for measurement is one that provides a limited account.

Other models of hybridity, and hybridity's relationship to voluntary organisations, have been advanced. Heather Buckingham builds on earlier work by Adalbert Evers on tension fields and welfare pyramids, extending the theory to a 'third' sector.<sup>22</sup> Evers regards the third sector as an 'intermediate area' between domains of the state, market and informal household, drawing resources and rationales from each of these to form a hybrid area. The emergence of hybrid organisations is driven by changes in the historical configuration of markets, welfare states and civil society.<sup>23</sup> Buckingham, conversely, argues that the third sector *is* a further domain in its own right, and that all domains, including but also beyond the third sector, exhibit hybridity. She also extends Billis' work by including the informal sphere as a further interface at which hybridity can occur, and arguing that, rather than necessarily being negative, hybridity can allow organisations to fulfil specific functions or roles. She allows for recognition of different stages and degrees of hybridity, which in turn allows for greater nuance and change over time than Billis' classification.

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<sup>20</sup> Macmillan, "*Distinction*" in the third sector.

<sup>21</sup> David Billis, "Hybrid Associations and Blurred Sector Boundaries," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Volunteering, Civic Participation, and Nonprofit Associations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Buckingham, "Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector.," Adalbert Evers, "Part of the welfare mix: the third sector as an intermediate area," *Voluntas* 6, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>23</sup> Adalbert Evers, "Mixed Welfare Systems and Hybrid Organizations: Changes in the Governance and Provision of Social Services," *Intl Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 9-10 (2005); Buckingham, "Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector."



Brandsen et al. describe hybridity as a series of 'heterogenous arrangements', characterised by ideal-typical features and arrangements that are at lesser or greater distance from that ideal. 'Pure' domains, with ideal-typical arrangements, exist as bureaucracies, enterprises and families or clans, while the 'third sector' is a hybrid domain between these.<sup>24</sup> Skelcher and Rathgeb Smith look to fill a gap in hybridity theory around *how* hybrids arise, and the role of organisational agency within that. They suggest alternative forms of hybridity to Billis, which describe the different degrees to which organisations adopt new logics. This could look like, for instance, a not-for-profit organisation starting a profit-making arm as a blend of voluntary and private sector logics, or adopting performance management language to gain legitimacy with a statutory funder, through assimilation of the practices and symbols of public sector logics.<sup>25</sup> Kyle et. al. are critical of boundary-drawing exercises that focus on the existence of a commonly-identified three sector model (public, private and voluntary), and use hybridity to argue for greater attention on organisations at the edges or on the outside. They argue that the fuzziness at the edge of boundaries that results from cross-overs in practices, processes and ideas, should actually be the object of study, emphasising and embracing the boundary.<sup>26</sup> This is also argued by Brandsen et al., who suggest that hybridity might be an 'inevitable and permanent characteristic' of voluntary organisations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Taco Brandsen, Wim Van de Donk, and Kim Putters, "Griffins or Chameleons? Hybridity as a Permanent and Inevitable Characteristic of the Third Sector," *International Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 9-10 (2005).

<sup>25</sup> Chris Skelcher and Steven Rathgeb Smith, "Theorizing Hybridity: Institutional Logics, Complex Organizations, And Actor Identities: The Case Of Nonprofits," *Public Administration* 93, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>26</sup> Richard G. Kyle, Robin Kearns, and Christine Milligan, "Beyond 'the paradox of our own complicity': the place of activism and identity in 'voluntary sector' stories from Manchester and Auckland," *Social & Cultural Geography* 16, no. 3 (2015). p.318

<sup>27</sup> Brandsen, Van de Donk, and Putters, "Griffins or Chameleons?."

If the theory is correct, more and more organisations will be operating in the boundary space, and change can be more easily regarded as a permanent feature in itself. However, while this is a conceptual shift it doesn't address the central problem of fixed sectoral definitions, merely adding another 'sector' to it. As Brandsen et al. themselves note, it also changes the meaning of hybridity to something quite awkward to pin down; they ask whether the 'fuzziness' of the boundary is in fact not fuzziness at all, but 'the very thing we have been trying to discern'.<sup>28</sup> This leads us to question whether the theory is still useful in this form, if it is so hard to understand exactly what it is trying to describe.

These latter theorisations, of Buckingham, Rathgeb Smith and Skelcher, and Brandsen et al., allow a greater focus on the nuances and processes of organisational change than Billis'. This includes allowing for organisational agency. The theory still seems to lack something in terms of *collective* action and agreements, that might explain how a field of organisations, or a sector, might coalesce around shared understandings and norms of behaviour. Filling this gap to some extent, theories of hybridity *do* encourage consideration of common or shared sets of institutional logics – material practices and symbolic constructions that motivate and organise social arenas such as the family, religion, state, private sector and community. The application of institutional logics from one domain – say, the market – can drive conflict and change in another, such as the state.<sup>29</sup> Chris Cornforth, for instance, writes about governance and the risk of mission drift in social enterprises, which he defines as a hybrid form of organisation employing

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<sup>28</sup> Brandsen, Van de Donk, and Putters, "Griffins or Chameleons?."

<sup>29</sup> William Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organisations* (London: SAGE Publications, 2013)

a mix of commercial and charitable logic, as does Paweł Mikołajczak in a Polish context.<sup>30</sup> These studies, still focused on hybridity tend to present as accepted fact the logics associated with one or other sphere of activity, rather than interrogating how, why and when these came to be accepted, if indeed they wholly are.

Tracey Coule and Beth Patmore develop this element of theory further in their discussion of how institutional logics associated with three chronological time periods of welfare services, rather than sets or domains of organisations, are used strategically by non-profit actors to influence continuity and change in organisations and fields.<sup>31</sup> This moves away from the idea of set sectors, and encourages an analysis that is informed by its historical contingency. Conceptualised this way, the concept of institutional logics is clearly compatible with SAF theory, which also relies upon shared material and symbolic practices and understandings that bind a field together.

### 2.2.3 Common frames: Isomorphism

The theory of isomorphism describes a set of processes of change and the pressures that might lead to them, which takes us closer to a conceptualisation that includes collective action and shared agreements within a field of activity.

DiMaggio and Powell revisit Weber's idea of increasing bureaucracy, driven by competition, control and demands for equality before the law, and resulting in, in

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<sup>30</sup> Chris Cornforth, "The governance of hybrid organisations", in David Billis and Colin Rochester (eds.), *Handbook of Hybrid Organisations* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2020); Paweł Mikołajczak, "Social Enterprises' Hybridity in the Concept of Institutional Logics: Evidence from Polish NGOs", *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2020), pp.472 - 483

<sup>31</sup> Tracey Coule and Beth Patmore, "Institutional Logics, Institutional Work, And Public Service Innovation in Non-Profit Organizations", *Public Administration* 91, no.4 (2013)

Weber's words, 'the concentration of the material means of management in the hands of the master'.<sup>32</sup> DiMaggio and Powell suggest that the causes of bureaucratisation have changed; efficiency is no longer the primary driver. Instead, uncertainty and constraint within structured organisational fields – recognised areas of institutional life - drive a move towards increased homogeneity.<sup>33</sup> The structuration of the field acts to reduce diversity, as organisations respond to an environment where certain forms and behaviours are normatively sanctioned. Organisations may adopt these forms and behaviours even when it is not rationally productive for them to do so. Once a field is settled, the authors argue, there is an inexorable push towards homogenisation. This process of homogenisation is isomorphism.

There are three mechanisms for institutional isomorphism. *Coercive isomorphism* is a result of external pressure or influence, and relates to the need for legitimacy; organisations adopt behaviours because of the weight of cultural expectations, legal requirements or forms of dependency on other organisations. For voluntary organisations this might mean adopting new standardised behaviours to meet the requirements of funders, or rejecting behaviours or directions that might make them less palatable when forming relationships with powerful actors. *Mimetic isomorphism* is a response to uncertainty, in the form of ambiguous goals, unclear solutions or poorly understood technologies. New organisations entering a field will model themselves on established, successful ones, drawing on limited pools of 'best practice', or seek to

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<sup>32</sup> Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983); Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978). P.980

<sup>33</sup> DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited." P.148

adopt practices from other fields, such as business, to increase their perceived legitimacy with that field. Finally, *normative isomorphism* is associated with processes of professionalization, including licensing, regulation, kite marks, and the development of professional networks.

Researchers have used these processes to explain practical aspects of the behaviour, form and governance of voluntary organisations.<sup>34</sup> There are potential links to the concept of hybridisation here, as this theory can provide a more developed articulation of the practical mechanisms that might lead to hybridisation. Borzaga and Fazzi, for instance, argue that evidence from the emerging and changing Italian voluntary sector does show the pressure and impact of coercive isomorphism, with organisations adopting more standard practices, but they are also able to negotiate in various areas, following alternative paths, and producing ‘hybrid’ results, with new classes of organisations and activities.<sup>35</sup> However DiMaggio and Powell themselves situate the theory in a field setting, which more usefully allows for an examination of field formation, development, dynamics and change, rather than a more static three-sector approach. Jeffrey Leiter, for instance, uses this field setting to interrogate the idea of an Australian nonprofit sector as a ‘social construction with real consequences’, and in fact finds isomorphic pressures exerted upon organisations both in relation to their

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<sup>34</sup> E.g. Mason, Kirkbride, and Bryde, "From stakeholders to institutions: the changing face of social enterprise governance theory."; Ying-Ying Liao, Ebrahim Soltani, and Pamela Yeow, "What sparks quality-driven change programmes in not-for-profit service sector? Some evidence from the voluntary sector," *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence* 25, no. 11-12 (2014); Milbourne and Cushman, "Complying, Transforming or Resisting in the New Austerity? Realigning Social Welfare and Independent Action among English Voluntary Organisations."; Russell Glennon, Claire Hannibal, and Joanne Meehan, "The impact of a changing financial climate on a UK local charitable sector: voices from the front line," *Public Money & Management* 37, no. 3 (2017).

<sup>35</sup> Carlo Borzaga and Luca Fazzi, "Processes of Institutionalization and Differentiation in the Italian Third Sector," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 22 (2011).

legal form (i.e. if they are a nonprofit organisation or a business) and to their industry (e.g. healthcare).<sup>36</sup> This introduces the idea of organisations existing across multiple fields at once, and reacting to different pressures and drivers for legitimacy, a theme to which we will return throughout this thesis.

It could be suggested that the theory lacks a sense of agency. Individuals and organisations in fields mimic behaviours and structures automatically and potentially against their own mission or best interests, because they are pressured to by the existing rules of the game. These are set, although it is unclear as to how, when the field is formed; after that there is merely the endless drive towards homogeneity. Fligstein argues that under this system actors become beings 'that do not learn, have interests, or engage in the conscious reproduction of their world'.<sup>37</sup> It implies that isomorphism is simply an inevitable drive, rather than a more complicated picture whereby organisations choose, or choose not to, adopt similar approaches to one another. It also ignores those organisations that actively reject common forms, or develop alternatives, but remain within the field in other ways, as challengers to accepted norms. Organisations are not passive recipients of directives, but actively shape their structures, behaviours and the fields in which they are embedded.

Other scholars, however, have countered the claim of a lack of agency. Tony Bovaird and James Downe include the explicit proposition that deviations in trajectory towards isomorphism might result from differences in the local external environment and/or

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<sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Leiter, "An Industry Fields Approach to Isomorphism Involving Australian Nonprofit Organizations," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 24 (2013).

<sup>37</sup> Fligstein, "Understanding stability and change in fields." P.48

from organisational resistance to particular approaches.<sup>38</sup> Broader neo-institutional theory is fundamentally concerned with issues of agency, structure and how the two interact.<sup>39</sup> Resource dependency theory, too, positions organisations as unavoidable dependent upon other organisations and actors in their field or environment to provide resources to allow them to operate, which can lead to conflict, choice and the need to balance survival with independence. This can include isomorphic pressures. Cornforth brings together institutional theory and resource dependency theory to try and better account for variety of approaches in fields such as social enterprise, while Chao Guo and Muhittin Acar bring in a network theory perspective to examine the likelihood of collaboration among nonprofits.<sup>40</sup> SAF theory builds on many of these ideas, ensuring that actor agency is foregrounded.

### **2.3 Proposed theory: Strategic Action Fields**

The previous sections have highlighted some of the features, strengths and shortcomings of common theories applied to voluntary action. However, successful navigation of the historical and theoretical requires framings that allow for the agency of actors in both establishing and challenging norms of behaviour and beliefs, and which take into account processes of formation and change. These processes might include rhetorical interventions by voluntary organisations and related public and private bodies, government policy, the establishment of normative, expected everyday

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<sup>38</sup> Tony Bovaird and James Downe, "N Generations of Reform in UK Local Government: Compliance and Resistance to Institutional Pressures", *International Public Management Journal* 9, 4 (2006)

<sup>39</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organisations*; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Cornforth, "Understanding and combating mission drift in social enterprises", *Social Enterprise Journal* 10, 1 (2014); Chao Guo and Muhittin Acar, "Understanding collaboration among nonprofit organisations: combining resource dependency, institutional and network perspectives", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34, 3 (2005).

behaviours, and more. SAF theory provides a framework that helps explore these issues in depth. This thesis tests whether it can be applied empirically to the voluntary sector's operation in Birmingham.

### *2.3.1 The roots of strategic action fields*

Strategic Action Field (SAF) theory is explicitly rooted in the work of Weber, Bourdieu and Giddens.<sup>41</sup> Weber, for instance, provides a theory of social action which Fligstein and McAdam seek to adopt and adapt. Social action is that which is central to the social world; 'its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course'.<sup>42</sup> Meanings can be agreed by mutual consent, implying an agreed set of behaviours towards each other and other parties.<sup>43</sup> According to Giddens, resources - 'structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction' – also act alongside rules, or 'methodical procedures' of social interaction to produce structure.<sup>44</sup> This is then 'recursively implicated' in social systems, comprising the 'situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space'.<sup>45</sup> Systems are produced and reproduced depending on how situated actors draw upon the rules and resources of structures in a given context.

Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and fields are highly relevant here. These interrelated concepts are underpinned by the idea of 'distinction'. Distinction in this

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<sup>41</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. P.24

<sup>42</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1.p.4

<sup>43</sup> Ian Craib, *Modern Social Theory*, (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*. loc.817

<sup>45</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*. loc.968



context means ‘*difference*, a gap, a distinctive feature, in short, a *relational* property existing only in and through its relation with other properties’ (original emphasis).<sup>46</sup>

Distinction in a voluntary action field might appear as particular unique governance structures or perceived unique values and norms, but critically these can be very much constructions within the field, as well as (or rather than) identifiable, measurable traits.

Society is comprised of a set of social positions, each one bound by a set of shared activities or goods, characterised relationally. The relative hierarchical position of groups is determined by their characteristic properties, aspects of their lifestyles relating to their capital.<sup>47</sup> ‘Habitus’ is a set of differentiated and differentiating ‘principles of distinct and distinctive practices’,<sup>48</sup> which is both structured and structuring.<sup>49</sup> This is characterised by Fligstein and McAdam as a ‘cognitive framework with which to interpret the actions of others’.<sup>50</sup> However, as Maton highlights, this is not a matter of pre-programming, and the habitus does not act alone.<sup>51</sup> Habitus and capital act together to demarcate the social space of the ‘field’. The field itself ‘may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions’.<sup>52</sup> It has a set of ‘regularities’, which are tacitly agreed to by merely existing within the field. The value of different types of capital can change over time, and can be changed by conscious effort to discredit certain forms in favour of others. The field itself is thus likewise subject to change and contestation; it is a ‘*field of struggles*’ where actors behave in

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<sup>46</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason* (Cambridge [u.a.]: Polity Press, 1998). P.6

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Oxon: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*. P.8

<sup>49</sup> Karl Maton, "Habitus," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael Grenfell (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. P.25

<sup>51</sup> Maton, "Habitus."

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, Ill: Polity Press, 1992). p.97

ways, individually or collectively, to 'safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchization most favourable to their own products'.<sup>53</sup>

These concepts flow throughout *A Theory of Fields*.<sup>54</sup> The collective strategic action at the heart of a strategic action field is rooted in Weber's conception of shared meanings, used to 'justify [a given society's] actions in all social circumstances'.<sup>55</sup> Mutual orientation, or a shared understanding or perception of why it matters that the field should exist, is key to the formation and continuation of a field. Common language can be a part of this mutual orientation and can be employed effectively to delineate boundaries of a field from within, controlling entry to that given field. Actors have agency, but are also contextually situated within an agreed framework, interpretive frame and understanding of why it matters that the field exists in the way and the form that it does. Their position is dependent on their relative resources, although perhaps not to the same extent, and in a way less clearly conceptualised, as Bourdieu's actors are positioned by the volume and structure of their capital. The authors also build a model more centrally based around collective, rather than individual, action, which means co-operation, consensus and coalition can play a part, rather than adopting Bourdieu's strictly hierarchical conception.

### *2.3.2 Key elements of a field: field positions*

Strategic action fields (SAFs) are the 'fundamental units of collective action in society'. It is described as a 'meso-level social order'.<sup>56</sup> This means that it is a defined social

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<sup>53</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. p.101

<sup>54</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

<sup>55</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.40

<sup>56</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields." P.3

arena or space where actors – who might be individuals or organisations – take one another into account when acting, and where actors are bound together under a set of shared understandings.<sup>57</sup> In this study, the Birmingham voluntary action field is the social arena in question, and the organisations within it are defined as the actors.<sup>58</sup> Actors inhabit different roles within the field; they can be incumbents, challengers or internal governance units.

Fligstein characterises incumbent actors as ‘generally the largest groups that predominantly define the situation and get most of the valued objects in the SAF’, and challengers as ‘the smaller groups, who may not totally accept their place in the SAF but are unable to contest it’.<sup>59</sup> Incumbents are favoured by the conditions and nature of the field which they inhabit, and their actions will reproduce the existing field dynamics in an effort to preserve or strengthen their position. Challengers are disadvantaged relative to incumbents. However, this neither means that there is constant conflict nor insurmountable oppression in a field. By existing within a field, and being a part of its formation in the first place, challengers tacitly accept certain shared meanings and understandings about the terrain of the field, rules of engagement and level of hierarchy. They then work to exploit ‘cracks’ in the system in an effort to better their position, in a process of constant adjustment to changing

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<sup>57</sup> This is distinct from micro-level social processes, which are about individual actors’ motivations and idiosyncrasies, or macro-level processes that encapsulate structural social processes and systems, such as class or racialisation, which underpin actors’ behaviour. Daniel Klutznick and Neil Fligstein, "Varieties of Field Theory," in *Handbook of Contemporary Sociology*, ed. Seth Abrutyn (New York, NY: Springer Publishing, 2016).

<sup>58</sup> There is certainly room for further field studies that defines key *people* rather than organisations within the Birmingham voluntary action field, or any other. This is an area where oral historical methods could helpfully extend our understanding.

<sup>59</sup> Fligstein, "Understanding stability and change in fields." p.42

internal and external conditions.<sup>60</sup> This happens both while the field is stable and during times of crisis or contention. Arguably, 'larger' and 'smaller' are unhelpful distinctions for these groups in reality; it is the nature as well as the volume of resources, and how they are deployed, that matter. Indeed, Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis will explore the issue of which resources matter to organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, including issues of symbolic resources such as legitimacy, and the relevance of how organisations are racialised in a white-majority field. Nevertheless, material resources will certainly be a consideration in determining the relative power of an actor within the voluntary action field.

Within these challenger and incumbent organisations, there are skilled social actors.<sup>61</sup> They are key both at points of field formation, and in reproducing or contesting hierarchies in fields. Fligstein and McAdam concede that social skill may not count for much where a field is stable, but under other circumstances social skill can have a meaningful impact on reproducing or destabilising rules and norms within a field. A skilled social actor can make the most of periods of field instability to try and improve their position by proposing and gaining support for (or consensus around) a new set of behaviours and understandings.

Internal Governance Units (IGUs) exist in most fields alongside incumbents and challengers. They are responsible for 'overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning of the system'.<sup>62</sup> The authors stress

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<sup>60</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. pp.96–97

<sup>61</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.178

<sup>62</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields."

that IGUs are not neutral organisations; rather they work in the interests of incumbents by freeing them from field management and leadership, by legitimising and normalising meanings, rules and understandings, and through liaison roles with external fields, building allies ready to act in times of crisis. For the voluntary action field, these could be voluntary sector infrastructure organisations or similar bodies, or sector-led regulatory bodies like the Fundraising Regulator. Lang and Mullins identify distinct periods in the development of IGUs themselves as actors within an emergent Community-Led Housing field. These, according to the authors, played a key role in beginning to draw together shared goals and identify common support needs, promote shared understandings and languages, and navigating emerging state and regulatory bodies.<sup>63</sup>

However, IGUs are difficult to identify in some fields, and indeed this raises a first critical question for SAF theory; how are the roles that different actors hold to be identified? In the case of IGUs, there is an empirical question about the potential for organisations or actors to hold multiple roles, especially where an incumbent actor might also be an IGU. There might also be multiple organisations providing an IGU function, and potentially underpinned by different conceptions or ideas of which rules should be enforced. There certainly seems to be more potential for ambiguity here than Fligstein and McAdam allow.

### *2.3.3 Proximate, distal and nested fields*

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<sup>63</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society."

Fields do not exist in isolation. They are 'embedded in complex webs of other fields', which can be characterised as distant or proximate.<sup>64</sup> Links between fields can be shaped by resource dependence, reciprocal interactions, power sharing, information flows, and concepts of legitimacy.<sup>65</sup> Fields, and the challengers and incumbents within them, can find themselves at risk where they are highly dependent upon a proximate field; any contention or destabilisation will have a knock-on effect on them.<sup>66</sup>

Of particular importance are proximate state fields. They have a unique ability to set and enforce rules affecting non-state fields. They can also be central to precipitating non-state field crises in a unique way, where elections or governmental collapses precipitate significant change. They have a cyclical relationship with non-state fields, whereby the creation of new non-state fields can necessitate new state arrangements as new governance requirements emerge. New social spaces ripe for organisation by non-state actors can likewise be created by the expansion of state bureaucracy into new areas. Reforms to charity law over centuries can be seen as the state renegotiating its relationship with the voluntary action field as it changed and grew, for instance. The proximate state field's changing role in the delivery of health and welfare services, likewise across centuries, can be seen as having a profound impact on the voluntary action field, which had to decide how to react and reshape itself in response. It also provided opportunities for challenger organisations to propose alternative ways of working or 'rules of the game', in order to improve their position within the field, while incumbents sought to maintain their own position through periods of change.

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<sup>64</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields." p.8

<sup>65</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

<sup>66</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. P.62

Dominant ideologies of governing parties, and in particular ideas about who or what should be responsible for the welfare of people, are thus extremely important to the shape and nature of the voluntary action field. These are themes that will be explored in more detail in coming chapters, particularly with regard to how changing government ideologies have an impact on the meaning and implications of values identified as important to the voluntary action field; the value of 'innovation', for instance, as Chapter 7 will discuss, is one held constant to the field, but the applications and implications of being innovative change as they are reshaped by policy and political ideology.

#### *2.3.4 Dynamics of a strategic action field*

Fields are examined in three states in *A Theory of Fields*; at formation, when stable and at times of crisis. The authors identify four central dynamics at play which shape initial field formation. A process of 'emergent mobilisation', borrowed from social movement theory,<sup>67</sup> involves building links between groups around the realisation of group interests, with the aim of initiating and sustaining 'innovative collective action'.<sup>68</sup> This results in the formation of 'new social relations, new identities, new normative understandings, and the like'.<sup>69</sup> From this point a 'settlement' will be created, with shared understandings of the rules governing activity towards common aims. The 'settlement' will provide shared meaning and a collective identity that binds field actors, even when in competition. However, it will not be static, as the field will always have to adjust to internal and external change. There are clear links to DiMaggio and Powell's

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<sup>67</sup> E.g. William Richard Scott, *Organizations*, 5th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.91

<sup>69</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.92

isomorphic theory here,<sup>70</sup> but with a greater sense of continuing agency. In some cases the state will facilitate field formation through funding, introducing registration processes, and other kinds of complementary policy and legislation. This is not necessary, but can act as a powerfully legitimating endorsement for the dominant players and ideas in the field. Likewise, IGUs can play an important role in stabilising an emerging field, making sure the settlement is implemented and the rules adhered to. Then it becomes a matter of reproducing the settlement in the interests of preserving the status quo.

There are four elements of shared understanding within a stable field that incumbents and their allies will seek to reproduce and reinforce:

- A shared understanding, or overall account, of what is going on in the field (in Fligstein and McAdam's words, 'what is at stake'<sup>71</sup>) – the reason for coalescing as a field in the first place;
- A shared understanding of what the rules of engagement are;
- A relatively fixed set of actors with a shared (if not fixed) understanding of roles and power;
- And broad, shared interpretive frames to make sense of what other actors in the field are doing.

The boundary of the field is defined by these four agreements or 'institutions'.<sup>72</sup> An actor is within the field if they acquiesce to the settlement – essentially they are within the field if they are complicitly in the field. This seems somewhat circular, and raises

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<sup>70</sup> DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

<sup>71</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. P.10

<sup>72</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.



questions of how we identify and define the boundaries of a field, but does align with the self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating nature of the field posited elsewhere in theoretical material. Monika Krause illustrates how the field of practice – in her case, that of humanitarian relief – mediates between these ideas, values and problems on the ground, and outside interests. Shared practices are practices of production, transforming materials and labour into a new product, in the case of her study humanitarian projects.<sup>73</sup> We will see in Chapter 5 that shared understandings and values in the Birmingham voluntary action field included an understanding of the importance of independence, being innovative, and being ‘grass roots’. However, we will also see that some of the meanings and implications of these values were contested and changeable.

Indeed, the existence of shared practices does not imply a sense of stability according to Fligstein and McAdam, or a ‘taken for granted’ reality. Rather, fields are subject to ‘constant jockeying’ for position, always adapting and reacting to external pressures, and renegotiating these institutions in order for actors to improve their position, even at times of general stability.<sup>74</sup> Krause, again, points to field-internal debates and differences in understandings about ‘what it means to be humanitarian’, differences which are themselves a product of the shared space of the field.<sup>75</sup> This also raises the importance of the boundary itself; constant activity at the edges can work to expand or contract it, and can affect the norms of practice and values within it. One interesting exploration of this comes from a study of an emerging women’s rights movement in

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<sup>73</sup> Monika Krause, *The Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Pp.22 - 23

<sup>74</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

<sup>75</sup> Krause, *The Good Project*. P.168

post-Gadaffi Libya by Nada Basir et al., where actors made decisions regarding these institutions over time, and in response to a changing context, that actively opened up or tightened up field boundaries, and definitions of which types of organisations were 'in' or 'out'.<sup>76</sup> This process involved different sets of normative values coming into conflict with one another – for instance, professionalism and contact with elites versus legitimacy from local communities. This is something we will explore with regards to the Birmingham voluntary action field in Chapter 5. The archives show that some Birmingham organisations had to balance the value of being, or being seen to be, grass roots, with pressures to adopt managerial practices. Both values generated forms of legitimacy for organisations, but sometimes at the expense of one another, so organisations faced a choice as to which symbolic resource to pursue.

Crises in the field most often occur because of significant exogenous shocks: macro-events such as political regime change, financial crisis, major change in proximate fields, or 'invasion' of the field in question by 'outsiders'. They can also occur where routine field dynamics and processes of constant contention reach a tipping point, resulting in endogenously-driven change. At these times there is an opportunity for challenger groups to improve their position and create a new settlement with more favourable conditions to them. However, they must overcome the efforts of incumbents who will be seeking to maintain their own position through either maintenance of the status quo, or the fashioning of a new settlement themselves.<sup>77</sup> For instance, Lang and Mullins highlight the importance of opportunities in the broader field environment in

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<sup>76</sup> Nada Basir, Trish Ruebottom, and Ellen Auster, "Collective Identity Development Amid Institutional Chaos: Boundary Evolution in a Women's Rights Movement in Post Gaddafi Libya," *Organization Studies* (2021).

<sup>77</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

their study of the emergent Community-Led Housing field, and the role of external shocks in creating paradigm shifts. These are often, according to the authors, prompted by the state through the introduction of new legislation or resources, which can in turn cause an expansion of field boundaries.<sup>78</sup>

There appears to be a fine line between what is crisis and what is routine field contention, however. 'Crisis' can be used as a signal for big change, or a convenient point of focus, but in fact that change may have a long tail. The 'tipping point' may be difficult to identify, and if it can only be ascribed retrospectively, difficult for actors to take advantage of. Change might, in fact, be the result of much longer-term processes, whereby new norms are established and widely adopted over time because they are necessary, because of long-fought reframing efforts, or because they are seen as beneficial. This will be a challenge for empirical research, not least because the strength of the incumbents is such that a crisis resulting in significant demonstrable change seems rare, and thus what might be an actual crisis may be heavily masked. In Chapter 7 of this thesis, we will explore the Birmingham action field's experience of the Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP), a government funding scheme that was widely used by local organisations. While the introduction of this scheme would likely not represent a 'crisis' in the form of an exogenous shock, put in its historical context it could well be seen as part of a slow movement towards more significant changes in the relationship between this field and the proximate state field, laying the groundwork for greater involvement between the two, and for greater levels of bureaucracy and fiscal accountability. This speaks well to the issue of how to identify the building blocks

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<sup>78</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society."

for endogenously-driven crises, the importance of considering the historical contingency of such developments, and whether in fact that is the most appropriate conceptualisation for such change.

## 2.4 Critical questions about A Theory of Fields

SAF theory offers a more dynamic, fluid and actor-centred unit of analysis than more static understandings of a sector.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, the description above has already hinted at some critical questions that need to be addressed. One provocatively titled review of *A Theory of Fields* by Stephan Fuchs, claims that the book sets out 'How Not To Do (Field) Theory'.<sup>80</sup> Some of Fuchs' criticisms are not well-substantiated – Fligstein and McAdam *do* engage with the work of Bourdieu at different points throughout the text, for instance,<sup>81</sup> despite Fuch's assertion to the contrary, and likewise they do discuss to some degree how particular meanings become dominant.<sup>82</sup> Other criticisms from Fuchs *do* deserve considerable attention, and some are also raised by this thesis. He highlights a sense of ambiguity about how, empirically, to identify different actors and their roles within the field, and questions the assertion by Fligstein and McAdam that fields are generally independent of each other.<sup>83</sup> As already indicated, these are both questions that this thesis raises and seeks to address. Nevertheless, despite Fuchs' overarching assertion, I agree with Lang and Mullins that SAF theory holds

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<sup>79</sup> Melissa Wooten and Andrew John Hoffman, *Organizational Fields Past, Present and Future*, Ross School of Business (Michigan, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> Stephan Fuchs, "How Not To Do (Field) Theory," *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 43, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>81</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

<sup>82</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*; Fligstein, "Understanding stability and change in fields."

<sup>83</sup> Fuchs, "How Not To Do (Field) Theory."

relevance and strength in its 'analytical elements that deal with strategic agency, coalition building and shared meaning among actors'.<sup>84</sup>

Wooten and Hoffman raise the question of why one field emerges and stabilises where another possible field does not. They ask what it is in the first place that cause organisations to come together, and what 'processes drive some organisations to interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with other organisations', thus forming the boundaries of a field.<sup>85</sup> Fligstein and McAdam address this to some extent, encouraging analysts to consider, using the building blocks described above, what courses of action are possible and impossible for a forming field.<sup>86</sup> The answer is likely to hang on the nature and distribution of resources, returning to Bourdieu, and on external influences such as state and policy drivers. However where resources, including skill, are more evenly distributed and several possibilities for field settlement and direction exist, it may be a challenge both to identify the unsuccessful possibilities, and to say exactly why they were unsuccessful. This is a difficult challenge for any theoretical framework to overcome. Likewise, it may be hard to identify crises which fail to unsettle the existing power dynamics. Major shifts in field settlements, conversely, may be underplayed in analyses because the strength and speed of action of incumbents results in relative continuity at least in power dynamics, if not in practice, not least because a rhetorical message of continuity can be a powerful stabiliser.

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<sup>84</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society."

<sup>85</sup> Wooten and Hoffman, *Organizational Fields Past, Present and Future*. p.13

<sup>86</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.175

In addition there is the question of how we can robustly assess a field's boundary. Part of this is about counting who is 'inside' or 'outside'; Karolina Luczewska's study of women's NGOs in Tajikistan and the previously cited study by Basir et al. are useful on this point, even though they are not framed in terms of SAF theory.<sup>87</sup> Fligstein and McAdam define a field according to the awareness of actors that they are working complicitly, to a greater or lesser degree, towards the field's settlement. To some extent this is appealing, as it is based on dynamic shared action and purpose rather than just holding similar characteristics. However, it makes the field seem somewhat like an insider's 'club', falling prey to criticisms cited earlier that these theories are centrally about containment and control.<sup>88</sup> It is perhaps better strategy to acknowledge and accept that any boundary is fuzzy and porous, and that in fact, as Brandsen et al. argue, this is worthy of study itself.<sup>89</sup>

There remain problems with understanding the role of actors within the field: what of those organisations whose operational context is fundamentally shaped by the forces at work in the field, but who may not be active participants in reproducing or subverting field dynamics? Must all actors be engaged in incumbent or challenger roles to be considered part of the field, or might some just, for want of a better phrase, get on with it? Taylor, Rees and Damm highlight this issue in their study of the voluntary sector's involvement in the Work Programme, as a subfield of the employment support field.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Karolina Kluczewska, "Donor-Funded Women's Empowerment in Tajikistan: Trajectories of Women's NGOs and Changing Attitudes to the International Agenda," *Studies in Comparative International Development* (2021); Basir, Ruebottom, and Auster, "Collective Identity Development Amid Institutional Chaos."

<sup>88</sup> Kyle, Kearns, and Milligan, "Beyond 'the paradox of our own complicity'."

<sup>89</sup> Brandsen, Van de Donk, and Putters, "Griffins or Chameleons?."

<sup>90</sup> Rebecca Taylor, James Rees, and Christopher Damm, "UK employment services: understanding provider strategies in a dynamic strategic action field," *Policy and Politics* 44, no. 2 (2016).

They identified organisations that were active challengers, but also those that settled for a lower position in the hierarchy than incumbents, in the hope of maximising chances of further contracts. These do not really fit the 'challenger' mould, suggesting that a third more neutral label is necessary for those that accept the settlement, play by the rules, but are not a part of actively challenging incumbents.

There is a further empirical challenge in identifying the 'real' incumbents and challengers in the field. In the examples given by Fligstein and McAdam, it is definitively stated who are the incumbents and challengers, but it is not explained how these positions were identified<sup>91</sup>. Looking beyond voluntary sector research, McDonnell and King's study of the reaction of field incumbent firms to external challenge from social activists uses reputation, as measured by the *Fortune* 'Most Admired Companies' Index, to establish the field's hierarchy and who holds incumbent positions.<sup>92</sup> It is interesting to note however that this is both an indicator of field hierarchy *and* a reinforcer of it, promoting and reproducing behavioural norms as well as measuring adherence to them. Corbo, Corrado and Ferriani's study of the impact of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack on New York establishes incumbents or 'core' members of the field using firm size, measured by various industry-specific factors.<sup>93</sup> Networks of influence are seemingly presented as both a defining resource affecting field position, and an active mechanism for reproducing or reshaping hierarchies. These

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<sup>91</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.114-163

<sup>92</sup> Mary-Hunter McDonnell and Brayden King, "Keeping up Appearances: Reputational Threat and Impression Management after Social Movement Boycotts," *Administrative science quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2013).

<sup>93</sup> Leonardo Corbo, Raffaele Corrado, and Simone Ferriani, "A New Order of Things: Network Mechanisms of Field Evolution in the Aftermath of an Exogenous Shock," *Organization Studies* 37, no. 3 (2016).

are not incompatible roles, and indeed there is some similarity with the role of *Forbes'* list of firms in both representing and reproducing understandings of reputational status in McDonnell and King's example.<sup>94</sup> It should be acknowledged that the scale of these fields is far greater than that of a voluntary action field, in terms of wealth, power and other resources. Nevertheless, they provide interesting examples of how a hierarchy might be identified; financial size might well structure the hierarchy of the Birmingham voluntary action field, but so too might reputation with partners, government or the public, or other factors specific to a voluntary sector 'industry'.

Where a field is *not* profit-motivated, as with the voluntary action field, the metrics by which relative position is determined might become more complex, although turnover and size by income will undoubtedly play a considerable role. Pettinicchio's study of the rise of disability rights as a policy agenda in the USA does not make an attempt to empirically establish who the incumbents and challengers are, rather describing the activity of the field itself and some policy entrepreneurs involved, identified through legislative records. This may be because it was a highly consensual field, but it may also be interesting to explore in more depth the contention involved in deciding upon a frame of understanding and action, whose policy frame 'won', and why.<sup>95</sup> In Taylor, Rees and Damm's study of the Work Programme, incumbents are defined by share of contracts and financial resources.<sup>96</sup> Anasti's study of a highly fractured sex work and sex trafficking field in Chicago uses policy positions to establish the incumbent and

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<sup>94</sup> McDonnell and King, "Keeping up Appearances."

<sup>95</sup> David Pettinicchio, *Strategic Action Fields and the Context of Political Entrepreneurship: How Disability Rights Became Part of the Policy Agenda* (Rochester, NY, 2013).

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, Rees, and Damm, "UK employment services: understanding provider strategies in a dynamic strategic action field."



challenger actors.<sup>97</sup> The group of organisations advocating for a politically popular ‘abolitionist’ position towards sex work is the incumbent, while the organisation arguing for decriminalisation – a less politically palatable position for the mainstream – is the challenger. Both seek to mobilise the support of service-providing nonprofit organisations which also operate in this field, but in a different role – perhaps more of the ‘passenger’ suggested earlier. While this thesis is not particularly concerned with empirically mapping a hierarchy of organisations within a Birmingham voluntary action field, one area of focus is the kinds of resources, both material and symbolic, that might give certain organisations an advantage over others.

There is an inevitable methodological risk when trying to analyse less well-documented fields of arbitrarily or incorrectly assigning certain groups or actors a status which they do not own, or of assuming that any hierarchy is a permanent one. Likewise any historical analysis can place greater or lesser importance on certain actors depending on its own frame and the subjective viewpoint of the researcher constructing the history. Just as there is a question about organisations not consciously engaged in, but affected by the dynamics of, the field, there is also a question of those consciously acting outwith. If an organisation is working towards the same end as the field, but ultimately rejects the settlement of the field, is it appropriate to class them as being within it as a ‘challenger’? Or do they exist in a separate field, despite being closely related in terms of aim? Additionally, is it possible to ‘choose’ to be outside? How do we characterise groups who consciously define themselves as ‘outside’, but who it is either convenient for the researcher to classify as within, or expedient for an incumbent

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<sup>97</sup> Theresa Anasti, "The Strategic Action Field of Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: A Case Study of a Contentious Field in Chicago," *Voluntas* 31, no. 1 (2020).

in terms of political benefit of associating with or co-opting some characteristic they hold?

This is particularly pertinent for organisations led by people from marginalised communities, which might conform to many elements of voluntary sector identity, but explicitly reject any association with the more established voluntary sector, for political reasons. Todd and Munro, for instance, highlight how contemporary disabled people's organisations actively identify as part of a disabled people's movement field, rejecting membership of the voluntary action field, for historical ideological reasons relating to a rejection of the 'charity model' of disability, whereby disabled people are 'served' in a paternalistic sense by organisations run by non-disabled people.<sup>98</sup> These organisations, nevertheless, are subject to many of the same institutions as those within the voluntary action field, the same regulatory regimes and competition for the same sources of funding. This poses an additional question with ethical dimensions, expanded upon in Chapter 4, about the legitimacy of the researcher in studying such organisations that actively adopt an identity that might be different to that which the researcher may ascribe to them. Convenience brings us into conflict with the idea of the group's own agency. Expediency brings its own ethical issues to which empirical research must be alive.

A related problem arises when considering organisations embedded in multiple fields at once. This is evident in Taylor, Rees and Damm's study: organisations in the private sector field are better able to adapt to new roles, rules and ways of working in the Work

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<sup>98</sup> Zara Todd and Ellie Munro, *Hidden Leaders: disability leadership in civil society*, ACEVO (London, 2021).

Programme sub-field than those in the voluntary action field.<sup>99</sup> This was because voluntary organisations were constrained by shared understandings from the voluntary action field – the not-for-profit principle, acting in the best interests of beneficiaries and so on – that do not exist in the private sector field. Thus, how do individual organisations manage the ‘particular configuration of dynamics and struggles’ to which they are subject if embedded in multiple fields?<sup>100</sup> Macmillan et al. found that ‘the rules of the game differ in different fields’, affecting the way different tactics for securing or improving field position in sub-fields were presented.<sup>101</sup> Lang and Mullins also concluded that, while much had happened to bring a distinct Community-Led Housing Field into being in England, actors remained anchored in their original fields of operation. Actors within the Community Housing Field had their roles and positions structured by the rules and resources of these proximate fields.<sup>102</sup>

It is important to understand in which field an organisation is acting at which time, in order to understand the dynamics under which it is acting. This adds a further level of complexity for analysis, but may be particularly useful in allowing for nuances when looking at larger voluntary organisations that may exist in different policy and operational fields at once. It may be useful to borrow from Billis’ theory of ‘prime sectors’ in this regard;<sup>103</sup> it may be the case that organisations position themselves primarily in one field over another, or that the rules of one are more dominant, whether

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<sup>99</sup> Taylor, Rees, and Damm, "UK employment services: understanding provider strategies in a dynamic strategic action field."

<sup>100</sup> Rob Macmillan et al., *Working Paper 109: The third sector in unsettled times: a field guide*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2013). p.12

<sup>101</sup> Macmillan et al., *Working Paper 109: The third sector in unsettled times: a field guide*.

<sup>102</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society."

<sup>103</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations."

that is a sector field, a geographical one or a policy one. Discourses and framing of organisational stories should shed light on these existential identities. We will explore this in Chapter 6 in particular, where we consider the conflicts and constraints faced by different Black-led and Black-serving voluntary organisations that exist in the Birmingham voluntary action field but also in an overlapping minority ethnic action field.

SAF theory does not provide a straightforward method for empirical researchers to identify which resources and forms of capital are relevant when thinking about a field's likely trajectory. Material and symbolic resources are both of interest. Symbolic resources are those which give economic cultural and social capitals their power, and can be seen in concepts such as prestige, reputation and legitimacy. Symbolic power is reinforced by authority, and reified by other actors. As Dean describes, 'elite 'players' have not only been heavily involved in the design of the games' rules, but also have the ability to define what a winning hand looks like'.<sup>104</sup> In *Practical Reason* Bourdieu outlines his definition of the field of power, which is 'the space of the relations of force between the different kinds of capital', mobilised by those actors in possession of sufficient capital, of a specific and valued type, to dominate the field. One important factor for Bourdieu is the 'exchange rate' between different types of capital – essentially the value it holds, what it 'buys', and how that changes.<sup>105</sup>

When it comes to symbolic forms of capital, in contrast to economic ones, the nature of the exchange and the interests attached to it are not always transparent. Instead,

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<sup>104</sup> Jon Dean, *The Good Glow: Charity and the Symbolic Power of Doing Good* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2020).

<sup>105</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*. P.34, p.42

according to Rob Moore, these forms of capitalism can have their instrumentalism denied or downplayed 'by proclaiming themselves to be disinterested and of *intrinsic* worth' (original emphasis). Denial of their form and relation to economic capitalism is called, by Bourdieu, 'misrecognition', and this is mobilised to create 'hierarchies of discrimination', whereby some things are considered better or more worthy than others. This is arbitrary, instrumental and constitutes a form of 'symbolic violence'.<sup>106</sup>

This is of particular relevance to Chapter 6 of this thesis, when we will discuss whether the racialisation of organisations relates to the symbolic resources they hold. A related criticism can be made of SAF and other field theories that they do not explicitly engage with macro-level social processes of class, 'race' and other constructed supremacies. It is not that they disregard these factors, but rather that the separation of the meso-level from the macro might encourage the impact of these pressures to be forgotten or sidelined. In this study, I have foregrounded the racialisation of organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field because the strength of material in the BCT archives demonstrate that it *does* matter. There is room here, however, for more in-depth theoretical work to explore how these meso-level social orders interact with or are underpinned by macro-level structural processes of oppression and supremacy.

For Giddens, resources are only realised when mobilised.<sup>107</sup> For Bourdieu their value is defined, and can be changed, by the actors who are putting them to use.<sup>108</sup> Fligstein and McAdam's theory is consistent with these ideas. Indeed, just as action within a

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<sup>106</sup> Rob Moore, "Capital," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael Grenfell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>107</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*.

<sup>108</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

field is discursively framed and understood,<sup>109</sup> so too is the value of particular resources. However, there is still a serious empirical challenge in identifying where these processes are happening and objectively assessing 'what matters'. The authors recognise this themselves, although do not come up with a concrete solution. They state that 'human capital, cultural capital and social capital... might all be pivotal to who wins in a field'.<sup>110</sup> Advance and innovation may also reveal new resources to be mobilised, or the value of particular resources may be recast, which some groups may be better placed to exploit than others; the emergence of social media and new forms of fundraising and volunteer mobilisation could be useful examples. This might in turn precipitate a period of destabilisation and resettlement driven by newly empowered actors from within, or outside, the field. Empirical work needs to consider this possibility, and it is worth asking how and why certain groups can make use of and value out of certain resources where others cannot. It is important that this work is historical, in order to see the longitudinal trajectory of meaning making in its historical context.

A final question is whether resource mobilisation is given too much prominence in determining field dynamics. This is a question of motivation; is it always a matter of bettering or securing one's position through mobilising or acquiring resources, or can action be motivated by a genuine desire to 'do better'? For instance, perhaps as a result of employing a different interpretive frame, perhaps for other reasons, a 'challenger' group in a given field may propose a different way of doing things. This

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<sup>109</sup> Rob Macmillan, "Decoupling the state and the third sector? The 'big Society' as a spontaneous order," *Voluntary Sector Review* 4, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>110</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. p.172

could be characterised as them trying to better their position by having more influence over the behaviour and tactics of the field, but does this give too much weight to competition, and too zero-sum a view of power or position? If that is the case, then something other than resources and the ability of skilled actors to make use of them may need to come into play. Kucinkas raises this issue regarding motivation, stating that Fligstein and McAdam's theory '[relies] heavily on contentious politics', and is 'rooted in a zero-sum conceptualisation of conflict', to the neglect of consensus-based tactics.<sup>111</sup> This may go too far; the idea of a continuum of field dynamics does explicitly allow for consensus, co-operation and coalition, alongside hierarchically organised, competition-driven fields. However even here field position is presented in terms of the skill of social actors to successfully 'sell in' a framing of what a field should do or should value – convincing others to accept it - that benefits an incumbent or set of key players. Allowing for actors who essentially 'play the game', either because they choose not to challenge or they do not need to because it is a field of consensus, may help to draw out this diversity of players while also allowing for a motivation base broader than simply improving position.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The four theories presented in this chapter are by no means the only theoretical frameworks used to explain elements of voluntary action. Ideas of strategic unity, hybridity and isomorphism are presented as frameworks that are commonly deployed in voluntary action and nonprofit scholarship. Other researchers and theorists discuss the impact of institutional logics on charity operations, and of resource dependency as

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<sup>111</sup> Jaime Kucinkas, "The Unobtrusive Tactics of Religious Movements," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 4 (2014). p.540

a constraint and enabler, some of which have been briefly noted above.<sup>112</sup> Others also present more ecological accounts that extend thinking around the role of organisations in filling neglected roles or ‘niches’ in eco-systems of groups and services.<sup>113</sup> These also have considerable explanatory potential, perhaps in combination with SAF and other neo-institutional theories, although there is not room here to give them due credit.

SAF theory provides a lens through which to view the local voluntary sector that is historically situated, allows for change and involves field members in the definition of the field itself. This in turn facilitates an analysis that foregrounds the agency of actors within the field, and can focus on the discursive processes involved in field formation, stability, crisis and reformation over time. It has been usefully deployed by other researchers to explore how organisations react to change, and the constraints placed upon them by the values, norms and shared understandings that they are subject to as field members.

There are, nevertheless, theoretical problems and practical challenges associated with this lens. While this thesis cannot do justice to the range of challenges for neo-institutional theory, some key issues identified above will be explored through the analysis and reflected upon in the concluding chapters. Specifically, these include:

- Identifying different players in the field: including establishing which are incumbents, challengers and, if relevant, IGUs

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<sup>112</sup> Cornforth, “The governance of hybrid organisations”; Coule and Patmore, “Institutional Logics, Institutional Work, And Public Service Innovation in Non-Profit Organizations”; Cornforth, “Understanding and combating mission drift in social enterprises”; Guo and Acar, “Understanding collaboration among nonprofit organisations”.

<sup>113</sup> e.g. Mark A Hager, Joseph Galaskiewicz and Jeff A Larson “Structural embeddedness and the liability of newness among nonprofit organisations”, *Public Management Review* 6, no.2 (2004)



- Taking into account multiple levels of constraint acting upon organisations where they are members of multiple fields: adopting a 'prime sector' approach that positions an organisation in one 'parent' field which takes precedence when guiding behaviour within another field may be appropriate
- Discerning between crisis and routine field contention: change as a result of endogenous pressure might happen at a 'tipping point' as the authors describe, but it could also happen over a longer, less-distinct timescale, as organisations, for instance, gradually adopt a new way of working
- Establishing what resources are important within a field (and how this might change)
- Understanding the impact of macro-level social processes of structural oppression and supremacy relate to the meso-level social order of a field.

This theoretical lens allows us to put some parameters around the subject of study; namely, the local voluntary action field. The thesis integrates this frame within a specific and deep historical context, both to establish its use (and limits) as a framework for understanding voluntary action, and to show what it can bring to a historical study; namely, a greater focus on social processes of meaning making and interactions, in their historical context, rather than more micro-level case studies of organisations in their local and historical context. The next section will set out the historiography of the national-level voluntary action field, with this theoretical framing in mind.

## CHAPTER 3: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTARY ACTION

### 3.1 Introduction

This literature review considers how the history of the voluntary action field is written. It argues that, while literature generally suggests the period of study for this thesis can be broken down into three distinct 'eras', the boundaries between them are weak, and processes that shape understandings and ideas in the voluntary action field happen across the full period, as part of constant field contention.

The mostly national-level history provides a framework against which to assess developments in the Birmingham voluntary action field. The historiography and contemporary writing suggest there have been three periods of development for the field from around 1965 up to 2010. These broadly, although not precisely, follow major changes in government:

- 1965 – 1979: the 'rediscovery' of poverty, emergence of new social movements and re-examination of social policy
- 1979 – 1997: 'New Public Management' principles and instrumentalism
- 1997 – 2010: Partnership narratives and the 'third' sector

Inevitably, however, there is both division within these periods, and continuity between them. For instance, while Margaret Thatcher's governments had a relatively low interest in voluntary action, policy changes and shifts in focus that occurred in the Conservative governments of John Major after 1991 had a major impact upon the field. Likewise, there is some practical continuity in policy between the first and second

periods, and between the second and third periods, albeit with different ideological framings. A fourth period - 2010 – 2015 and beyond – takes us closer to present day voluntary action, but given the very limited archival material available for this period, as there has only been a small deposit of material for post-2010, this is not explored at length in this chapter.

Nevertheless, these chronological framings in themselves represent shifts in direction that had an impact on the voluntary action field (or the actors within it), in terms of how it described itself, how it saw its role and how it behaved. While more significant policy changes may have waited until after 1991, much of the groundwork for them was laid in the years prior to that date. These periods do not represent solid breaks or changes, because that is not how change happens, as the theoretical section of this thesis has argued. They do, however, provide a useful framework for analysing and understanding the history of twentieth and early twenty-first century voluntary action, and for organising material pertaining to it.

As such, this chapter sets out the historiographical and contemporary literature for each of these eras, focusing on the key common narratives. While not exhaustive, it will outline the national-level operational and discursive context, in which the local Birmingham voluntary action field developed. The literature explored throughout this chapter tends to focus either on high level policy and societal change, or on specific movements or individual organisations. This is useful work, but there remains a gap: the more everyday, local voluntary action field experience. In the context of this thesis,

'local' means city-level and urban, although the rural experience remains a further gap, and one potentially more difficult to fill.

### **3.2 1965 – 79: the 'rediscovery' of poverty, emergence of new social movements and re-examination of social policy**

Histories of twentieth century voluntary action describe significant changes in the relationship between the state and charity. The introduction of state-based welfare in the form of national insurance, pensions and labour exchanges, among other Liberal Government reforms, saw the state move more firmly into a sphere that had previously been the realm of charitable organisations. This accelerated with the introduction of the National Health Service, which saw voluntary hospitals brought under state ownership, and the idea of a 'consensus' around the state's responsibility to provide a comprehensive welfare safety net. Frank Prochaska has suggested this incursion into the voluntary action field led to a decline in voluntary activity.<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Finlayson's account differed somewhat, stating that while the balance of the 'mixed economy of welfare' did shift from 'active citizen' to 'active state', the idea of an inexorable rise of the state to replace voluntarism denied a sense of agreement that there was still a role for voluntary action, although it still required 'revival' in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent scholarship has robustly countered the idea of voluntary decline, first question its extent and success in the first place, and secondly suggesting instead that while some organisations were displaced, many adapted to new roles, and many others emerged

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Finlayson, "A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911-1949", *Twentieth Century British History* 1, no.2 (1990)

to highlight or fill gaps that remained in the safety net.<sup>3</sup> It has also challenged the idea of a 'golden era' of voluntary action from the late-Victorian era to 1948, and raised questions about the extent and nature of voluntary action in reality during this period. Indeed, Martin Gorsky unpicks what he deems 'revisionist' accounts of friendly societies and sickness insurance predating National Health Insurance and services. While some health economists of the 1980s argued that 'Big Government' crushed a viable and preferable system of voluntary health insurance, according to Gorsky, other historical evaluations questioned the strength and extent of sickness insurance, and the questionable reality of popular working class opinion on the subject of universal welfarism.<sup>4</sup>

The second half of the 1960s was a period of soul searching for governments re-evaluating the role of the state in providing a welfare safety net in the context of population growth, greater affluence and social skill within organisations themselves. Within the existing voluntary sector historiography there are three identifiable discussions relating to national government, which opened up space for voluntary organisations to form and re-form; perceived failures of state methods, gaps in state services and a re-examination of state policy. Alongside these state-focused discussions, there are others about the role of voluntary groups and organisations in creating new movements and shining lights on 'new' problems themselves. A range of

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<sup>3</sup> Pat Thane, "Voluntary Action in Britain Since Beveridge," in *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in Britain and the Wider British World: voluntary action since 1945*, ed. Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); M. Hilton et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945* (London: Palgrave, 2012);

<sup>4</sup> Martin Gorsky, "Voluntarism' in English Health and Welfare: Visions of History", in *Health care, voluntarism and regionalism in Ireland and Britain 1850-1950*, ed. S. Lucey and V. Crossman (London: Institute of Historical Research Conference Series, 2015)

new charities and movements formed to address these problems, while government created changes in policy that would have an impact on the sector in subsequent decades. It remained a period, however, of relative continuity, before the wholesale redesign of services in the 1980s.

### *3.2.1 State 'failure', state support and service re-examination*

Criticisms from charities, activists, researchers and others highlighted perceived failings of the state with regards to welfare provision; services were inflexible, inefficient and failing to reach parts of the population which the post-war welfare settlement had never comprehensively covered.<sup>5</sup> The state was struggling to deal with relatively 'new' problems, such as drug addiction, and had never filled gaps or shortcomings in services for older people, disabled people, children and immigrant populations.<sup>6</sup> Rodney Lowe describes a process of critical reflection in policy at this time, termed the 'rediscovery' of poverty, which came to a head at the end of 1965 with the publication of social researchers Abel-Smith and Townsend's *The Poor and the Poorest*.<sup>7</sup>

Against the backdrop of these critiques, governments and independent bodies engaged in what Deakin refers to as an audit of the social condition in Britain, covering 'virtually the full range of central government machinery and welfare services'.<sup>8</sup> A

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<sup>5</sup> Colin Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). P.37.

<sup>6</sup> Alex Mold and Virginia Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s," in *The Ages of Voluntarism*, ed. Matthew Hilton and James McKay, British Academy Original Paperbacks (Oxford: British Academy, 2011). P.122; Nicholas Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership: The voluntary sector and the state, 1945-1992," in *An introduction to the voluntary sector*, ed. Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester, and Rodney Hedley (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Rodney Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Pat Thane and Ruth Davidson, *The Child Poverty Action Group 1965 to 2015*, Child Poverty Action Group (London, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership." P.49

number of these included reference to voluntary organisations, and were supplemented by independent reports, commissions and accompanying organisations.<sup>9</sup> This included the independent Aves Committee Report on the Voluntary Worker in the Social Services and its government predecessor the Seebohm Committee report on local authority and allied personal social services.<sup>10</sup> The Seebohm Committee report called for the redesign of social services, recognising inadequacies in capacity, range, quality and coordination, making services difficult to access and slow to adapt to different circumstances.<sup>11</sup> The Aves Report in turn examined the increasingly complex relationship between volunteers and a newly professionalised social workforce, positioning volunteers as ‘deployable resources’ for supplementing provision and meeting social needs.<sup>12</sup> Aves advocated for a professionalization of volunteering, and there is evidence of this translating over subsequent years into the adoption of managerial processes through different policy, training, standards and professional bodies.<sup>13</sup>

Alongside these reports were schemes and pools of funding to encourage volunteering and voluntary and community action. The Urban Programme, for instance, targeted areas of ‘severe urban deprivation’, in particular areas of new immigrant settlement,

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<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Deakin and Justin Davis Smith, "Labour, charity and voluntary action," in *The Ages of Voluntarism*, ed. Matthew Hilton and James McKay, British Academy Original Paperbacks (Oxford: British Academy, 2011); Hansard, "Parliamentary Question: Young Volunteer Force Foundation" (1968); Officers National Association of Probation, *The Place of Voluntary Service in After-Care: Edited Comments* (1967).

<sup>10</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic Seebohm, *Report of the committee on local authority and allied personal social services* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968). Pp.29-32

<sup>12</sup> Geraldine M. Aves, *The Voluntary Worker in the Social Services*, vol. 787, National Council of Social Service publication, (London: Bedford Square Press, 1969). Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*. P.56

<sup>13</sup> Steven Howlett, "Developing volunteer management as a profession," *Voluntary Sector Review* 1, no. 3 (2010).

and provided grants, including capital grants, to voluntary and community organisations, via local authorities.<sup>14</sup> Recognising a need to coordinate policy regarding voluntary organisations across government departments, the Conservative government established first a 'coordinating Minister for Voluntary Social Service' and a Voluntary Services Section in 1972, relaunched as the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) in 1973.<sup>15</sup> However, while the government was offering clear support for the sector, it was very much in terms of how the sector could help the state through economic crisis rather than for the value of the sector itself. Kendall adds that the support government did offer only went so far; by his assessment, the VSU was small, low profile, skeletally staffed, and headed by junior civil servants.<sup>16</sup>

The final report of note in this period was the independent Wolfenden Committee report on *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*.<sup>17</sup> This was to be the last large-scale review of the voluntary sector and its role until the 1990 government-led Efficiency Scrutiny. Deakin cites the inquiry's origin as tied to an increasing expansion of voluntary organisations. National organisations reported projected internal growth as their projects and roles in delivering personal social services expanded, and a greater focus on raising standards and increasing professionalization.<sup>18</sup> It may well have been a response to the changing shape of the state and its relationship with voluntary action as well. Kramer, for instance, highlighted in 1981 the belief of some commentators that

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<sup>14</sup> Hansard, *Areas of Special Need: Urban Programme (House of Lords Debate 22 July 1968 vol 295)*, Hansard (London, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Rowe, "The Voluntary Services Unit," in *The Year Book of Social Policy in Britain 1974*, ed. Kathleen Jones (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Kendall, "The mainstreaming of the third sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: whys and wherefores," *Policy & Politics* 28, no. 4 (2000). p.7

<sup>17</sup> John Wolfenden, *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*, Reprint. ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership." P.51



the growth of statutory welfare had peaked, and there would be greater use made of the voluntary sector in future years.<sup>19</sup>

The Wolfenden Report has been presented by researchers as providing the groundwork for establishing the voluntary sector as a site of policy interest.<sup>20</sup> However, Conservative aide Andrew Rowe criticised it at the time as presenting simply a picture of the present state of the sector, and not proposing bold ideas for tackling future problems, including, in his view, the lack of local government funding for the sector.<sup>21</sup> Deakin also states that by the time the Committee reported, it was too late for the solutions it proposed, and those in turn were too little. Disillusionment with the welfare state, Deakin says, had taken hold in earnest.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2.2 *New social movements*

In the context of political crises, generational change, political reformations, popular affluence, new immigration and policy review, new organisations began to emerge, and existing ones refocus. As Chris Moores highlights, the 1960s has been described as a time when politics moved away from institutionalised conflict about material concerns, and towards a new activism that expressed issues of culture, identity, socialisation and human rights.<sup>23</sup> A radical 'New Left' found expression in new social

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph M. Kramer, *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1981). P.53

<sup>20</sup> Pete Alcock, "From Partnership to the Big Society: The Third Sector Policy Regime in the UK," *Nonprofit Policy Forum* 7, no. 2 (2016); Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*; Carmel and Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain."; 6 and Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin."

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Rowe, "Review: The Future of Voluntary Organisations," *Journal of Social Policy* 7, no. 4 (1978).

<sup>22</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership."

<sup>23</sup> Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*. P.106

and counter-cultural movements, alongside older trade union and party-political structures. However, a third set of 'progressive professional' groups inhabited a middle ground between these two, according to Moores, pursuing new radical politics through often well-established channels and methods.<sup>24</sup> Socially conservative groups emerged on the right, too; the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association was launched by Mary Whitehouse and Norah Buckland in 1964. Lawrence Black argues this, as a non-party political, anti-establishment grass roots campaign, using the media, led by a woman and deploying participatory rights-based rhetoric, should be seen as a form of new social movement, albeit one with socially conservative aims. Black links this, and indeed left-leaning movements such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, to a popular affluence, which allowed for the move away from the material and towards a more expressive politics, as noted above.<sup>25</sup>

Examining the changes experienced by organisations at this time in terms of SAF theory, this period can be interpreted as an episode of contention. Fligstein and McAdam define this as a period of 'emergent, sustained contentious interaction between actors utilising new and innovative forms of action' within the field and in relation to one another, with a shared sense of uncertainty or crisis around the rules and power relations governing the field.<sup>26</sup> Some organisations brought innovative and radical ways of working that disrupted a status quo, while others sought to capitalise on opportunities to reshape their role in relation to state provision of services –

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<sup>24</sup> Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*. P.141

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Black, "There Was Something About Mary: The National Viewers' and Listeners' Association and Social Movement Theory," in *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: non-state actors in society and politics since 1945*, ed. Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton, and James McKay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, p.21.

including campaigning for greater state rather than voluntary provision in some cases, and greater partnership between the two in others. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, new organisations emerged in the Birmingham voluntary action field at this time, and 'field shapers' like BCT and some local authority actors sought to encourage more in areas of the city that were neglected by organisers. Other incumbent organisations, and the values they held and promoted, remained relatively constant, however, suggesting a degree of continuity in the face of broader narratives of change.

Harris notes a renewed energy in voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s, what Lowe labels a 'renaissance', although as Moores highlights in some cases this was a re-emergence and reshaping of existing groups.<sup>27</sup> This was in part an expression of the 'new' politics and political participation, as Peter Shapely notes, but there were other motives too.<sup>28</sup> For some organisations at least, there was a move toward specialisation in order to distinguish themselves from statutory services that had taken over in delivery areas that were no longer the preserve of charity. There was an emergence of new pressure groups, mutual aid organisations and co-ordinating groups, and the re-emergence of older ones. Some of these organisations had access to increasing local and central government grant aid funding. In some cases, there were new forms of organising and organisation around political aims and influencing government policy. These included grass roots activist movements around the rights of marginalised

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<sup>27</sup> Harris, "Third sector organizations in a contradictory policy environment." Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*. P.289 Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*. P.108 Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Shapely, "Civil society, class and locality," in *The Ages of Voluntarism*, ed. Matthew Hilton and James McKay, British Academy Original Paperbacks (Oxford: British Academy, 2011).

groups, and poverty and welfare campaigns.<sup>29</sup> However, as Daisy Payling has illustrated in the case of gay rights activism in Sheffield, these movements were not necessarily homogenous, united or left-leaning, with a messy convergence of complex class and sexual politics on the one hand, and a breaking away from labour movements and perceived 'political' agendas on the other.<sup>30</sup> A range of 'patient' and carer self-help groups also began in this period, as did services relating to domestic violence and drug addiction - areas where the government had not developed its own services.<sup>31</sup> Hilton et al. also list some 'significant' charities that started during this period. They highlight that it wasn't simply a matter of radical left-wing activism, with Crisis at Christmas founded by Conservative William Shearman in 1967.<sup>32</sup>

The experience of Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic community-run organisations is largely absent from some of the policy-focused voluntary action history texts. We can find these elsewhere in historical scholarship, however. Elizabeth Cookingham Bailey, for instance, highlights the increase in voluntary action in areas of London such as Bethnal Green, where there had been high levels of in-migration from the 1960s and 1970s onwards.<sup>33</sup> Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones similarly document anti-racist activism in Notting Hill in the aftermath of the 1958 riots, and in the context

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<sup>29</sup> Such as the Gay Liberation Front and the National Women's Liberation Conference, both started in 1970, environmental campaign groups such as Friends of the Earth in 1971 and Greenpeace in 1977, and the Child Poverty Action Group in 1965 and Shelter in 1966.

<sup>30</sup> Daisy Payling, "City limits: sexual politics and the new urban left in 1980s Sheffield," *Contemporary British history* (2017).

<sup>31</sup> Examples of 'patient' groups include the Parkinson's Disease Society (1969), the National Schizophrenia Fellowship (1971) and the Motor Neurone Disease Association (1979). The National Women's Aid Federation was set up in 1974 and drug addiction charity Addaction started in 1967.

<sup>32</sup> Hilton et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain*. P.27.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Cookingham Bailey, "Advocacy and Service Delivery in the Voluntary Sector: Exploring the History of Voluntary Sector Activities for New Minority and Migrant Groups in East London, 1970s–1990s," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 32 (2021).

of community development experiments of the New Left political movement. They describe how discourses and practices of 'community action' underpinned the emergence of a set of effective, but fragile, alliances set up to campaign for safe play, better housing and an end to police harassment.<sup>34</sup> Organisations studied by other scholars were founded in direct opposition to racism and discrimination, sometimes at a national policy level, like the short-lived Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), founded in late 1964,<sup>35</sup> and sometimes in specific practice fields, such as the Organisation for Black Arts Advancement and Learning Activities founded in the mid-1980s.<sup>36</sup> Some were linked to trade unionism, workers' rights and political left movements, such as the Indian Workers Association, initially founded in the 1930s but reformed in 1953,<sup>37</sup> or the *Rock Against Racism* initiative, formed by a group linked to the Socialist Worker's Party in 1976.<sup>38</sup> Others were formed in response to exclusion from other movements; organisations like the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) (1978) and Southall Black Sisters (1979) were, in part, a response to the exclusion from the white-led women's liberation movement.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, In the Birmingham voluntary action field, as we will see in Chapter 6, organisations like the Asian Resource Centre emerged from a lack of advice provision that was not white-

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<sup>34</sup> Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones, "'Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It': Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of "Race" in Britain after 1958," *Journal of British Studies* 58, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin W. Heineman Jr., *The Politics of the Powerless: A Study of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Perry, *London is the Place for Me*.

<sup>36</sup> Lynda Rosenior-Patten and June Reid, "The Story of Nzinga Soundz and the Women's Voice in Sound System Culture," in *Narratives from Beyond the UK Reggae Bassline*, ed. William 'Lez' Henry and Matthew Worley (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Studies in the History of Subcultures and Popular Music, 2021). P.134

<sup>37</sup> Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013). P.11

<sup>38</sup> Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002). P.156

<sup>39</sup> Hazel V. Carby, "White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood," in *The Empire Strikes Back*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Oxford: Routledge, 2005); Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, ethnicity and the women's movement in England, 1968-1993* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); S. B. S. Collective, *Against the Grain: Southall Black Sisters 1979 - 1989* (Middlesex: Southall Black Sisters, 1990).

run and white-centric. Asian Youth Movement groups (from around 1978) in Bradford, Southall and elsewhere were in part a response against other South Asian groups like the IWA which were seen as unresponsive to a new generation's needs.<sup>40</sup>

Berridge and Mold highlight additional types of organisation operating in the field at this time, existing in the gap between the state and perceived 'pure' voluntarism, which had a significant effect on policy.<sup>41</sup> Their principle examples are Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and the Community Drugs Project (CDP). ASH is classed as a 'New Social Movement' organisation by the authors, while CDP was a community-based service-providing organisation. Both positioned themselves between the state and a 'pure' form of voluntarism, working closely with the state but also making it clear to external audiences that they were separate to it. Both used their identities of distinction to the state to boost their appeal, generating legitimacy, while the state benefited from the expertise of these voluntary organisations and their ability to offer and test new solutions to difficult social problems.<sup>42</sup>

These and other 'bottom up' community movements are described by Schofield and Jones as coming from a base of pre-existing pressure groups, new social movements and the extra-parliamentary New Left.<sup>43</sup> These organisations made the most of the radical campaigning style and media awareness, and benefitted from the positive, radical attributes associated with these organisations in the public mind. However, they

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<sup>40</sup> Ramamurthy, *Black Star*.

<sup>41</sup> Mold and Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s."

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Schofield and Jones, "'Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It': Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of "Race" in Britain after 1958."

were also closely linked with government, working jointly towards shared goals.<sup>44</sup> This is similar to the 'progressive professionals' groups in the 1960s highlighted by Moores.<sup>45</sup> These examples illustrate how the operating reality for organisations can be more complicated than their 'insider' or 'outsider' campaigning identities might indicate, as they sought to balance the reputational benefit of being apart from government with the pragmatic benefit of a close relationship in these 'in-between spaces'.<sup>46</sup> It also suggests some conflict between the need to maintain legitimacy with a user base of supporters and campaigners, and with more political – and more powerful – actors. This highlights processes of negotiation and renegotiation that happen within a strategic action field. These complexities, and in particular the need to balance different forms and sources of legitimacy, arise in relation to the Birmingham voluntary action field, and are discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

Organisations did not necessarily remain in the form that they began, and indeed this is one way in which dividing this historiography into these distinct periods is problematic, as it curtails histories of organisational development. Adam Lent, for instance, identifies a trend among social movement activists to forge closer links with the Labour Party and with local authorities by the beginning of the 1980s. In the latter case, this included accepting grants from local authorities such as the Greater London Council (GLC).<sup>47</sup> Lent describes this as having the effect of rapidly curtailing the more

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<sup>44</sup> Mold and Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s." p.119.

<sup>45</sup> Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Payling points out, however, that other municipal councils did not fund groups to the same degree that the GLC did, so this should not be taken as a uniform experience. Payling, "City limits: sexual politics and the new urban left in 1980s Sheffield."

radical political content of work undertaken by organisations which accepted funding, as they were forced to introduce more managerial structures and to maintain their competitive edge to maintain funding, losing their close links with supporters in the community in return.<sup>48</sup> This echoes Billis' conception of 'entrenched hybridity' highlighted in the previous chapter.<sup>49</sup>

Material in the BCT archives shows some evidence of a decline of more radical groups and narratives in the Birmingham voluntary action field, but also evidence of continuation and survival. Lent's account, like Billis' theory, over-simplifies this history, and also downplays the agency of the organisations in receipt of funding. However, it *does* illustrate how change processes could raise questions of legitimacy for groups and campaigns.<sup>50</sup> Sheila M. Cannon explores this process further in her study of an Irish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) movement organisation founded in 1979.<sup>51</sup> At its formation stage she describes it as 'illegitimate', because it lacked the characteristics that formed either pragmatic legitimacy (operational factors such as receiving grants and donations, having board members, mailing lists, charitable status, etc.), or moral and cognitive legitimacy (subject to positive or accepting attitudes and opinions of the general public towards the organisation and its members). By the end of the period of study, the organisation had gained pragmatic legitimacy through

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<sup>48</sup> Adam Lent, "The Labour left, local authorities and new social movements in Britain in the eighties," *Contemporary Politics* 7, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>49</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations."

<sup>50</sup> For further discussions of balancing community legitimacy with state legitimacy in global historical contexts see Connie Musolino et al., "Global health activists' lessons on building social movements for Health for All," *International Journal for Equity in Health* 19, no. 116 (2020); Erin Beck, "Countering Convergence: Agency and Diversity Among Guatemalan NGOs," *Latin American Politics and Society* 56, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>51</sup> Sheila M. Cannon, "Legitimacy as Property and Process: The Case of an Irish LGBT Organization," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2020).



processes of formalisation and professionalisation over time, which improved its effectiveness but had an impact on its ties to the community it was representing.<sup>52</sup> A lack of legitimacy in the eyes of partner organisations and key communities is also cited by Heineman Jr. and by Hammond Perry as a factor in the swift downfall of CARD as it sought to pursue more 'insider' strategies of lobbying government and the press.<sup>53</sup> The issues these articles raise will be central to the discussion in Birmingham, with regards to 'grass roots' identities and conflicting drives towards voluntary action field norms, and those of different community fields.

Despite the energy expressed through activism and organisations in response to changing social conditions, Harris notes that the majority of commentators still saw the sector at this time as supplementing and extending the state, trialling services that would eventually be absorbed by government – something which is evident in the Birmingham field.<sup>54</sup> Deakin and Davis-Smith too stress the Labour governments between 1964 and 1979 (interrupted by the Conservative Party in 1970-1974) presided over a period of 'consolidation and expansion' of welfare state apparatus.<sup>55</sup> Alongside the heterogenous new forms of organisation and social movements described above, existing voluntary organisations and volunteers doubtless continued the work they had already been doing. Nevertheless, they will likely have been affected by discourses and practices of voluntary action that were beginning to unsettle and re-form. The next period saw these processes develop further, as new systems of welfare were

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<sup>52</sup> Cannon, "Legitimacy as Property and Process." P.49

<sup>53</sup> Heineman Jr., *The Politics of the Powerless*; Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me*.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard Harris, "Voluntary action and the state in historical perspective," *Voluntary Sector Review* 1, no. 1 (2010). p.35

<sup>55</sup> Deakin and Smith, "Labour, charity and voluntary action." P.87.

advanced, and voluntary action field actors were faced with choices about the extent to which this might reshape field norms.

### **3.3 1979 – 1997: New Public Management and instrumentalism**

Harris describes the state coming under increasing pressure in terms of being able to deliver, and fund, public services in the second half of the 1970s and into the 1980s.<sup>56</sup>

The new Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher looked to make the most of the voluntary sector's potential for diverting pressure from public services. It was from this point too that Rochester believes real change began to take hold of the voluntary sector.<sup>57</sup> For Alcock this era was one of 'incremental consolidation' of the sector, creating it as a site for policy interest.<sup>58</sup> For Lewis this was a third period in voluntary action history, whereby massive state reform and the introduction of 'new public management' in the second half of the period involved a conscious promotion of the voluntary sector as an alternative to state provision.<sup>59</sup> While these historians do not put it in field terms, such shifts could be characterised as a reshaping of the proximate state field, which precipitated a reshaping of the voluntary action field, through rhetoric, policy and practice. Key players in the voluntary sector and peripheral fields were part of influencing this process too.

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<sup>56</sup> Harris, "Voluntary action and the state in historical perspective."

<sup>57</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*.

<sup>58</sup> Pete Alcock, "Voluntary action, New Labour and the "third sector"," in *The Ages of Voluntarism*, British Academy Original Paperbacks (Oxford: British Academy, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Jane Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 10, no. 3 (1999). p.261

### *3.3.1 Reshaping the state, recasting the sector: legislation, rhetoric and practice in the state field*

The new Conservative government looked to rhetorically and practically reshape the welfare state, and continue the programme of spending cuts begun in the 1970s. Pickvance highlights the rhetorical shift in the 'New Right model of society', whereby personal responsibility and the private sector as 'locus of wealth creation' took centre stage.<sup>60</sup> This was expressed through the promotion of privatisation and centralisation, of 'Victorian values' of hard work, self-reliance and philanthropy, and through the twin aims of reducing spending and ending 'dependency culture'.<sup>61</sup> The voluntary sector was cast in a service agent role, or a supplier of last resort for those in desperate straits.<sup>62</sup> This was, according to Alcock, the creation of a 'new universe', that of 'contract culture' underpinned by the principles of New Public Management.<sup>63</sup>

Ware and Todd note, however, that progress was slow in the first half of this period.<sup>64</sup> Alcock suggests that there was no *policy* engagement from government with the sector in the 1980s; rather organisations were seen purely as providers, and as part of a wider pool of non-state bodies.<sup>65</sup> Deakin notes a reforming zeal that took hold from 1988,

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<sup>60</sup> Christopher G. Pickvance, "Central Government, Local Government, Voluntary Associations and the Welfare State: Some Reflections on Opposition to Recent Public Spending Cuts in Britain," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 16, no. 1-2 (1987). P.84

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Jones, "Band Aid revisited: humanitarianism, consumption and philanthropy in the 1980s," *Contemporary British History* 31, no. 2 (2017); N. J. Crowson, "Introduction: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain," *Contemporary British History* 25, no. 4 (2011); Patricia Ware and Malcolm J. Todd, "British Statutory Sector Partnerships with the Voluntary Sector," *The Social Policy Journal* 1, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>62</sup> Helen Haugh and Michael Kitson, "The Third Way and the third sector: New Labour's economic policy and the social economy," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 31, no. 6 (2007). p.982

<sup>63</sup> Alcock, "Voluntary action, New Labour and the "third sector"™."

<sup>64</sup> Pickvance, "Central Government, Local Government, Voluntary Associations and the Welfare State."; Crowson, "Introduction: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain." Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*.

<sup>65</sup> Alcock, "Voluntary action, New Labour and the "third sector".

following the Conservative Party's successful re-election for its third term the previous year, targeting the neglected areas of welfare, with several common themes. These included the 'hiving off' of public services to the private sector, or service delivery through 'quasi-markets', with the state as purchaser and other bodies outside of the public sector as provider.<sup>66</sup> What these authors don't, generally, explore is the local impact of this 'new universe'; what organisations at a local level thought about the changes, how they responded to them, and whether they resisted them. There is documentary material to this end however; 1988 was also the year that Birmingham Settlement drafted its report on *The possibility of voluntary sector bidding for contracted-out authority services*, for instance, which was published the following year.<sup>67</sup> While the national level policy analysis is important, understanding of the field's experience in practice, and in historical context, is a gap that this thesis fills.

### 3.3.2 *The state and the voluntary sector*

There is some contention about the position of the voluntary action field at this time, and the extent to which it was, indeed, a consolidated field. Crowson describes the period as 'a 'social policy revolution' that placed the voluntary sector at the heart of a 'mixed economy of welfare'.<sup>68</sup> Rochester, looking post-1990, sees voluntary organisations as reshaped, complicitly, by the revolution around them.<sup>69</sup> This flattens the experience of voluntary organisations, however. Certainly, in the Birmingham voluntary action field, established incumbent organisations like the Birmingham

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<sup>66</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership." P.62

<sup>67</sup> Draft report: 'The possibility of voluntary sector bidding for contracted-out authority services', 1988, *Birmingham Settlement, voluntary sector bidding*, File B/21 MS 1579/2/10/4/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>68</sup> Crowson, "Introduction: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain."

<sup>69</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*.

Settlement engaged in research and policy work exploring the opportunities (and challenges) that might lie in public service contracting, for voluntary organisations ready to take advantage.<sup>70</sup> Others, however, questioned the government's approach and presented critiques of funding programmes that were perceived to shift responsibility for services from the state to charity.

Other authors present the sector field as relatively peripheral, particularly compared to the private sector, and especially in the early days of the Conservative administrations. For instance, towards the beginning of this period, Kramer stated that while the concept of 'partnership' might imply parity, or interdependence, the reality was that voluntary agencies were 'at best a junior and usually silent partner'.<sup>71</sup> By the end of the period, the Deakin Commission report characterised the funding relationship between government and voluntary organisations as 'increasingly determined by political and value for money considerations', with funding 'directed to socially useful purposes judged important by government'.<sup>72</sup> As noted earlier, this will have been more noticeable and relevant to some organisations – namely, larger service providers – than others, and it is likely a reflection of the Deakin Commission's origin as an investigation instigated by a national umbrella body for which these organisations formed the bulk of membership. Nevertheless, the language and discourse at this time will have had an important shaping function on the voluntary action field, as incumbents will have had to adapt to new emerging norms, and challengers had the opportunity to

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<sup>70</sup> Christian Kunz, Rowan Jones, and Ken Spencer, *Bidding for Change? Voluntary Organisations and Competitive Tendering for Local Authority Services*, Birmingham Settlement (Birmingham, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> Kramer, *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State*. P.53

<sup>72</sup> Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change: voluntary action into the 21st century* (London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 1996).

make the most of the change to improve their position. The Commission itself argued that the narrative here was in contrast to the previous period when government had regarded voluntary action as 'desirable virtually by definition'.<sup>73</sup>

For Kendall, the 1980s represented a period where discourse about how to attend to social problems was overwhelmingly framed in terms of 'public' versus 'private', with little or no awareness among voluntary organisations as being part of a coherent 'sector'.<sup>74</sup> The Conservative administration embedded market principles in public services across the 1980s and 1990s, and embedded the voluntary sector as a provider, an instrumental means to an end, at the same time. The sector may have become more active and more prominent during this period, but it was yet to become viewed or characterised as a partner. The growth in grants from government to voluntary organisations, evident in the previous period, continued, but there was also change in the form of funding.<sup>75</sup> Fees began to take over from grants, and by 1994/95, fees made up nearly three quarters of social services expenditure on voluntary organisations.<sup>76</sup> The Deakin Commission also noted the impact of increasing funding through contracts rather than grants. The Commission described a 'resource gap' emerging and increasing between large and small organisations, and pressures on the former to professionalise, while the latter drew more on volunteer help.<sup>77</sup> According to Knight, those in receipt of it had to go to greater and greater lengths to meet criteria of

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<sup>73</sup> Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*.

<sup>74</sup> Kendall, "The mainstreaming of the third sector." P.6

<sup>75</sup> Crowson, "Introduction: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain."; Barry Knight, *Voluntary Action*, 2nd ed. (London: Centris, 1993).

<sup>76</sup> Duncan W. Scott and Lynne Russell, "Contracting: The Experience of Service Delivery Agencies," in *Voluntary Organisations and Social Policy in Britain*, ed. Margaret Harris and Colin Rochester (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>77</sup> Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*. P.36-37

economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Knight contended that contracts themselves were nothing new, but that the 'commercialisation of inherently uncommercial activities' was.<sup>78</sup>

We will see in Chapter 7 that many organisations were still able to secure core funding throughout the 1980s through funding programmes such as the ICPP. This became a significant means for many voluntary organisations of drawing down central government funding to local areas, with local authorities providing supplementary funding, often for large capital projects in areas of high deprivation. Indeed, this and other Urban Programme funds are highlighted by Phil Child as a 'voluminous pot' for voluntary organisations to apply to, although it was later criticised as a 'handout lottery' by an inquiry into the 1985 unrest in Handsworth, Birmingham.<sup>79</sup> However, as various funding programmes began to be phased out towards the end of the 1980s, organisations that had become increasingly reliant on those programmes faced a difficult transition, a destabilising experience and one which Scott and Russell highlight as the backdrop to the emergence of so-called 'contract culture'.<sup>80</sup>

The sector was present in mainstream policy terms as well, albeit still in limited, instrumental ways. Evandrou, Falkingham and Glennerster describe the government giving 'increasing encouragement to the non-statutory sector'. They quote the government's view expressed in the DHSS report *Growing Older*, published in 1981,

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<sup>78</sup> Knight, *Voluntary Action*. P.283

<sup>79</sup> Phil Child, "Race, homelessness and inner-city policy in 1980s Britain," *Urban History* (2021).

<sup>80</sup> Scott and Russell, "Contracting: The Experience of Service Delivery Agencies."

that 'Care in the community must increasingly mean care by the community'.<sup>81</sup> This appealed to much older ideas of self-help, organised and coordinated through voluntary groups which could foster such community action, and thus remove perceived burdens from the state. It can also be seen as a clear example of the 'old' narrative, noted above and described by the Deakin Commission, of voluntary action being virtuous 'virtually by definition'.<sup>82</sup> The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is cited as one of the most significant changes of the period by Scott and Russell.<sup>83</sup> It included a shift from institutional to community care, an emphasis on demand-led, rather than supply-led, services, decentralisation of strategic responsibility and the development of a mixed economy. The Act had a much longer-term impact on services, with a move to providing services only to those with the highest level of need, replacing volunteers with paid staff, generalist with specialist, a rise in managerialism, and as highlighted by Georgina Brewis et al., the marketisation of older people's residential care.<sup>84</sup>

The phrase 'supporting self-help', above, highlights an example of one of the central contradictions explored by this thesis. As noted, the *Growing Older* report quoted by Evandrou, Falkingham and Glennerster can be seen to be appealing to old ideas of self-help, and yet Rochester suggests organisations were moving away from this form of service.<sup>85</sup> This underlines the ways in which concepts like 'self-help' can take on

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<sup>81</sup> Maria Evandrou, Jane Falkingham, and Howard Glennerster, "The Personal Social Services: 'Everyone's Poor Relation but Nobody's Baby'," in *The State of Welfare*, ed. John Hills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). P.212

<sup>82</sup> Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*.

<sup>83</sup> Scott and Russell, "Contracting: The Experience of Service Delivery Agencies."

<sup>84</sup> Georgina Brewis et al., *Transformational Moments in Social Welfare: What Role for Voluntary Action?* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2021). P.19

<sup>85</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*.



different meanings when underpinned by different ideologies, and how policymakers can use such concepts strategically. It is thus crucially important to understand both what an actor or author means by 'self-help', or similar phrases, and why they are making such an appeal to their chosen meaning. We will return to this issue of different meanings and changing implications of the values to which the voluntary action field lays claim throughout the three findings chapters.

One final example that is illustrative of the state's view of the voluntary action field at this time is the Efficiency Scrutiny of Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector, set up in 1989 by the Home Office and producing its first report in 1990. It was cited by Lewis as heralding a 'dramatic shift' for the voluntary sector, although hardly the first in its history.<sup>86</sup> The Efficiency Scrutiny report was the first from government after a long period of relative neglect, and tied into a wider agenda of maximising 'efficiency' in government spending. The report is generally noted as a rhetorical expression of the government's instrumental conception of the sector.<sup>87</sup> This in fact sits in contrast to earlier descriptions of the voluntary sector as inherently 'good' by definition, and supports the idea of a change from the 'old' narrative to a new one, as described by the Deakin Commission around ten years later. The sub-title of the Efficiency Scrutiny report – *profiting from partnership* – certainly indicates a high degree of instrumentality, although perhaps understandably from a government initiative reviewing its own spending. One of its ambitions was to improve the voluntary sector's ability to act as a

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<sup>86</sup> Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s." p.257

<sup>87</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*; Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s." Home Office, *Efficiency Scrutiny of Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector: Profiting from Partnership*, HM Stationery Office (London, 1990).

'service agent'.<sup>88</sup> It recommended achieving this, in part, through professionalisation of the sector, to enable it to deliver public services. Lewis notes that while 'voluntary organisations were on the whole enthusiastic about playing a larger role in service provision... there were real fears that as a result voluntary sector providers would come to look rather like the state providers they were replacing'.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.3.1 *The self-defining sector*

In the same year that Thatcher came to power, the National Council for Social Service's (NCSS) Policy Planning Unit published *Voluntary Action in a Changing World*. Deakin argued this had a substantial impact, in part due to its content, and in part its provenance, as a publication by the recognised co-ordinating body for the sector.<sup>90</sup> As Stewart noted in her review of the report, this coincided with the new government's first Public Expenditure White Paper, which included a seven per cent cut in social services spend, with efforts to encourage individuals to 'help themselves and others' and to promote 'collaboration with the voluntary sector'.<sup>91</sup> She described *Voluntary Action in a Changing World* as presenting an unchallenged view of a 'cohesive, qualitatively superior voluntary sector', engaging in the 'fashionable' debunking of state welfare provision, and providing evidence of the voluntary sector lobby's 'shared membership of a dominant ideology and class'.<sup>92</sup> Deakin, in contrast, describes its proposals more

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen P. Osborne and Kate McLaughlin, "The Cross-Cutting Review of the Voluntary Sector: Where Next for Local Government- Voluntary Sector Relationships?," *Regional Studies* 38, no. 5 (2004). p.575

<sup>89</sup> Jane Lewis, "New Labour's Approach to the Voluntary Sector: Independence and the Meaning of Partnership," *Social Policy and Society* 4, no. 2 (2005). p.123

<sup>90</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership."

<sup>91</sup> Gillian Stewart, "Review: Gladstone Francis J., *Voluntary Action in a Changing World*, National Council of Social Service Policy Planning Unit, Bedford Square Press, London, 1979. 137 £3.95," *Journal of Social Policy* 10, no. 1 (1981).

<sup>92</sup> Stewart, "Voluntary Action in a Changing World."

positively; radical welfare pluralism and localised initiative, with a focus on mutual aid that draws directly on Beveridge's own 1948 report, *Voluntary Action*.<sup>93</sup> In their own writing shortly after in 1981, researchers Roger Hadley and Stephen Hatch expressed the view the time had come for a serious re-examination of welfare services. They argued for plurality of provision: 'A greater proportion of all forms of social service would be provided by voluntary organisations... instead of expanding the statutory services, there would grow up alongside them a variety of community based initiatives'.<sup>94</sup> They advocated for 'contractual rather than hierarchical accountability'; local and national government should 'exercise a stronger monitoring and inspection role', resulting in a stronger emphasis on accountability through contractual agreements'.<sup>95</sup>

These examples, from organisations like NCSS alongside researchers and other commentators, suggest organisations and social actors were working hard to create a place for the voluntary sector within a quickly reshaping political, policy and operational landscape and developing mainstream narratives, driven by the proximate state field. What it does not comment upon is the local experience of this changing context – whether organisations working in cities, towns and communities experienced or reacted to change in the same way. Material from the Birmingham voluntary action field shows an awareness and engagement in this change, through programmes such as the Birmingham ICPP, although there is only limited critical engagement with the impact of changes, beyond the immediate impact on individual organisations' income.

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<sup>93</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership."

<sup>94</sup> Roger Hadley and Stephen Hatch, *Social welfare and the failure of the state* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981). P.166

<sup>95</sup> Hadley and Hatch, *Social welfare and the failure of the state*. P.166

Two further influential reports from this era are Centris' *Voluntary Action*, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) *Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector*.<sup>96</sup> The former was commissioned by the VSU in the Home Office. Once published, however, the government Unit quickly sought to distance itself from the report.<sup>97</sup> The latter was considered variously by commentators as either contributing to the dominant narrative discussed, rhetorically inventing the notion of a single unified sector, or as the starting point for a 'strategic unity', as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2.<sup>98</sup>

Centris' *Voluntary Action*, written by Barry Knight, opened by highlighting the 'confusion in the minds of leading players in the voluntary sector', created by government initiatives and the 'contracts economy' blurring 'traditional demarcation lines so that it was difficult to disentangle the public, private and voluntary sectors'.<sup>99</sup> According to Knight, voluntary action was increasingly defined in relation to other sectors. The relationship came in the form of a jointly agreed contract, with the state as senior partner and the voluntary body as junior, or even subsumed private enterprise. It had also increasingly absorbed managerialism as part of its practice. Knight claimed that 'new funding regimes appear to be forcing voluntary organisations to choose their futures in one of two ways: to become an agent of the state or not.'

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<sup>96</sup> Knight, *Voluntary Action*. Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*.

<sup>97</sup> Alcock, "Voluntary action, New Labour and the "third sector"." Kendall, "The mainstreaming of the third sector."

<sup>98</sup> Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action*. 6 and Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin." Alcock, "A strategic unity: defining the third sector in the UK." Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s." Kendall, "The mainstreaming of the third sector."

<sup>99</sup> Knight, *Voluntary Action*. P.X

Organisations were thus either part of a 'third force', behind government and business, or an independent 'first force' of 'true' or 'authentic' voluntary action. The fate of those in the first group would be institutionalisation, suffering a 'hardening of the bureaucratic arteries', recalling the concept of coercive isomorphism described in the previous chapter.<sup>100</sup> In contrast, the second group could 'remain unfettered to be 'democracy seekers' in ways of their own choosing'.<sup>101</sup> He suggested these categories should be split apart, no longer grouped under the banner of 'voluntary sector'. Then, the latter group of 'authentic voluntary bodies' and their associated volunteers could be free to pursue their independent social goals.

The distinction between first and third force organisations was a fundamentally flawed one, especially given the insistence that organisations could not both take on contracts and maintain a campaigning voice.<sup>102</sup> As with DiMaggio and Powell's institutional theory, it also downplays the agency of organisations engaging with state structures. However, Knight's classification does speak to the kinds of divides that can appear between incumbents and challengers in strategic action fields. The 'third force' group, while branded less 'authentic', would likely be the more powerful group within the strategic action field because of its close ties to the proximate state field. The 'independent' group would inhabit the 'challenger' role, insofar as they operated differently to the incumbent organisations, but did not have the same kind of power.

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<sup>100</sup> DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

<sup>101</sup> Knight, *Voluntary Action*. P.297 -298

<sup>102</sup> Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s."

This thesis does still group these organisations under the same banner, in the same strategic voluntary action field. The shared understandings of what, broadly, is going on in the field and of normative behaviours are what bring the field together, and these were not convincingly different even by Knight's assessment. The second group may not have agreed to all of the norms established by the incumbent group, indeed would be highly likely to challenge them, in the interests of improving their own position. That is not enough, however, to remove them from the field entirely, which is the position for which Knight argued. The proximate state field was indeed powerful, and its decisions and relationships with field incumbents will have shaped field norms, but it was also not all-powerful: both incumbents and challengers were capable of offering opposition and divergent views. Nevertheless, his analysis is indicative of a period of serious rupture; as the state reshaped the operating field for voluntary organisations, they had to decide how to position themselves within it.

6 and Leat cite the Deakin Commission report as the second book-end in a period, starting with the Wolfenden Committee report, that saw the rhetorical invention and agreement of 'rules of the game', practice and positioning of the 'voluntary sector' as a political body.<sup>103</sup> They argue, the Deakin Commission instituted the voluntary sector as a 'field of public policy', demanding recognition and consideration in the policy-making process. It argued firmly against the instrumental view of the sector put forward by the 1990 Efficiency Scrutiny, tried to offer a socio-political case for the sector and provided something of a call to action for government.<sup>104</sup> Thus, voluntary action was

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<sup>103</sup> 6 and Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin."

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, "Reviewing the Relationship Between the Voluntary Sector and the State in Britain in the 1990s."

framed as ‘wholly distinct from market exchanges’, the ‘backbone of civil society’, the ‘essential precondition for the health of democracy’ and ‘marching to the sounds of an infinite number of different drummers’.<sup>105</sup>

Later on, the Commission’s ‘rules of engagement’ refer to a need to establish what activities belong within the public sector, which are better delivered by the market, and ensure relevant parties stick to these boundaries.<sup>106</sup> In reality, this seems like it would be difficult to accomplish, given the changing and permeable boundaries between these different fields and the strategic interests that boundary-crossing will have held for some. Indeed, while the report specifically stated that the voluntary sector did not simply do what other sectors don’t, it did, by this account, exist in the in-between space between state, market and the population, acting as broker between them. Unlike in Knight’s account, the sector could at once house diversity and unity of purpose, independence, and partnership rather than splitting in two. Stressing both aspects however makes evident the tension between the two, without resolving or even acknowledging it. The voluntary sector must be seen as an equal partner, the Commission said. It must also be respected for its independence and diversity, and be free to campaign. But then it must also adopt the management techniques celebrated by technocrats of the time to improve efficiency, contributing to the narrative of professionalisation and in fact restricting organisations’ independence of action.

These contradictions point to some of the complexities of the field, relating to both to things that are of symbolic and material value, but that do not always coexist well

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<sup>105</sup> Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*. P.15

<sup>106</sup> Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, *Meeting the Challenge of Change*. P.121

together. This is a central issue for this thesis, and these tensions will be further explored throughout the findings chapters.

### **3.4 1997 – 2010: Partnership and independence - the tensions of the ‘third’ sector**

After a landslide victory in 1997, Tony Blair’s Labour government began its own programme of service reform. This was still underpinned by the principles of New Public Management, modernisation and managerialism, but framed as the ‘third way’.<sup>107</sup> Haugh and Kitson characterise this as combining ‘neoliberalism with renewal of civil society’, viewing the state as an enabler, promoting civic activism and endorsing engagement with the voluntary and community sector to address society’s needs.<sup>108</sup> Whereas the 1980s had seen the ‘first wave’ of service reform through the introduction of the commissioning model, characterised by the comprehensive introduction of compulsory competitive tendering and the ‘purchaser-provider split’, the ‘second wave’ during this period saw a shift to ‘strategic commissioning’.<sup>109</sup> The language and associated practices of strategic commissioning spread across Whitehall, underpinned by the concept of the ‘enabling state’, rather than one responsible for direct provision of welfare. While this did not necessarily privilege voluntary organisations, given qualified for-profit businesses could compete against them for contracts, the voluntary sector was positioned rhetorically as a key partner for service delivery. Reforms were partnered with a rise of pluralism discourse relating to the role of voluntary organisations in achieving the aims of service reform, and the need to improve the

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<sup>107</sup> Lewis, "New Labour's Approach to the Voluntary Sector." P.123

<sup>108</sup> Haugh and Kitson, "The Third Way and the third sector." p.983

<sup>109</sup> James Rees, "Public sector commissioning and the third sector: Old wine in new bottles?," *Public Policy and Administration* 29, no. 1 (2014). p.49



economic performance of charities.<sup>110</sup> Authors suggest this resulted in a 'mainstreaming' of the voluntary sector across government departments, a decontestation of the political space in which organisations sat and a new 'governable terrain', rebranded and reshaped as the 'third' sector after 2005.<sup>111</sup> This thesis suggests this represented a consolidation and extension of understandings and norms that had begun to be accepted by the field during the previous period.

#### *3.4.1 Hyperactive mainstreaming, strategic unity and governable terrain*

Authors consistently cite this as a period during which a voluntary 'sector' became truly embedded across different policy fields, although as Brewis et al. note it was a period more of continuity with the previous Conservative government, than one of any significant break or change.<sup>112</sup> As with previous eras, the state field and its intention for the shape and nature of the sector was key to influencing its parameters. *Unlike* previous eras, there was more of a sense of partnership among organisations and between sectors in order to achieve reforming goals.

The period was also one of considerable growth for the sector; as Alcock notes, a combination of increased attention and funding from the public sector, plus new resources like the Big Lottery Fund, resulted in a 'step change in horizontal support for voluntary action in the new century'.<sup>113</sup> Charities, representing one part of the so called 'third sector' saw their income increase from £24.2 billion to £33.3 billion between 2000

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<sup>110</sup> Rees, "Public sector commissioning and the third sector."; Haugh and Kitson, "The Third Way and the third sector." P.986

<sup>111</sup> Carmel and Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain."; Kendall, *Losing political innocence?*

<sup>112</sup> Brewis et al., *Transformational Moments in Social Welfare*.

<sup>113</sup> Alcock, "Voluntary action, New Labour and the "third sector".

and 2007, with 31% coming from statutory sources.<sup>114</sup> All of this increase in state funding came from contracts. Grants, in fact, declined slightly. This had an impact on the relationship with the state field, but also on behaviours and skills deemed necessary to be a 'successful' voluntary organisation.<sup>115</sup>

At the same time, the state was separately promoting the sector's role in supporting civil and neighbourhood renewal. Lewis highlights 'building stronger communities' and 'developing community cohesion' as central policy goals, alongside but separate from service delivery goals, involving the voluntary sector in building civic renewal from the ground up – echoing social capital theorists such as Robert Putnam, who was influential in developing the New Labour agenda.<sup>116</sup> This split focus, it is suggested, threatened a bifurcation of the sector, but also represented a deliberate divide in the discourse, promoting voluntary sector values like independence at the same time as encouraging their role in achieving state goals.<sup>117</sup> As with previous periods of change, there were opportunities here for both incumbents and challengers within the voluntary action field to cement or improve their position, taking advantage of new policy initiatives and new ideas. However, the complexity of the policy environment, and the split foci noted, posed a potential challenge for actors trying to decide how to respond.

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<sup>114</sup> Pete Alcock, *Partnership and mainstreaming: voluntary action under New Labour*, Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham, 2010). P.11

<sup>115</sup> Alcock, *Partnership and mainstreaming*. P.12

<sup>116</sup> Lewis, "New Labour's Approach to the Voluntary Sector." Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community* (New York ; London: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>117</sup> Osborne and McLaughlin, "The Cross-Cutting Review of the Voluntary Sector." Alcock, *Partnership and mainstreaming*.

Kendall characterises this period as one that saw the sector move to a mainstream concern.<sup>118</sup> Under New Labour a 'critical mass of political will' emerged that enabled the sector to develop from a 'vertical' conception and minority interest to part of a 'horizontal', cross-cutting framework of legal and service delivery structures. Using Kingdon's theoretical framework of policy change, Kendall demonstrates how the sector, or aspects of it, became problematised (or brought its own problems to the table), how policies were developed, and how this fitted into political developments. Under the previous Conservative governments, he argues, the sector had low visibility, low profile, a small intermediary or infrastructure community and an under-resourced government unit, meaning voluntary sector issues, or even a mainstream conception of the sector, did not come to the fore. In opposition, however, the Labour Party began to distance itself from a statist approach, expressing a new vision for services through papers like *Building the Future Together* which took forward the new public management philosophy and opened up policy fields to the voluntary sector.<sup>119</sup>

Kendall's account arguably draws too clear a line between this period and earlier ones, when in fact, as we have seen before, the change processes involved were gradual and composite. Kendall argues the distinction between the two periods lies in the positioning of the voluntary sector by the state. During this period voluntary organisations became embedded as part of general overarching philosophies and

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<sup>118</sup> Kendall, "The mainstreaming of the third sector."; Jeremy Kendall, *The Voluntary Sector: Comparative Perspectives in the UK* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>119</sup> The Labour Party, *Building the future together: Labour's policies for partnership between government and the voluntary sector* (London: The Labour Party, 1997).

policy packages, rather than niche or specialist engagements.<sup>120</sup> The voluntary sector moved from a fringe concern to the mainstream, according to this analysis.

The process of change for voluntary organisations was rhetorically and practically shaped by the proximate state field. Carmel and Harlock argue that rhetoric across government policy was part of a process of instituting a 'governable terrain'; creating a 'third sector' as a single entity, imposing an institutional and normative order onto an otherwise privately organised field.<sup>121</sup> This began discursively in 1998, with central aspects of voluntary organisations articulated through policy reports and mechanisms such as the Compact and reviews of charities' role in service delivery. An appeal to the accepted role of the sector in welfare provision at this time disguised a process of normalisation and naturalisation of the sector's position in partnership governance, whereby the sector and state became conflated as generic service providers. The authors state that although this was often presented by government as apolitical, as normatively 'what [voluntary and community organisations] do', it in fact sought to engage them in the political project of public service reform.<sup>122</sup> Pauline McGovern argues that these processes were hastened in 2001 with the establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships, which were in part a mechanism to allow government to better manage risk, and to introduce or extend markets for public services in new arenas.<sup>123</sup> However, Milbourne and Cushman argue that the imposition of 'managerial cultures',

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<sup>120</sup> Kendall, *The Voluntary Sector: Comparative Perspectives in the UK*.

<sup>121</sup> Carmel and Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain."

<sup>122</sup> Carmel and Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain." P.161

<sup>123</sup> Pauline McGovern, *Small Voluntary Organisations in the 'Age of Austerity'* (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2017).

including competition, regulatory frameworks and performance management systems, risked eroding trust in voluntary sector organisations.<sup>124</sup>

Again, these accounts do not allow much room for agency, contention and negotiation by voluntary organisations themselves. Indeed, not everyone subscribed to the government's vision. Clive Martin, in 2007 the Chief Executive of Clinks, a specialist infrastructure organisation for criminal justice charities, questioned the extent to which this was a mutually beneficial relationship.<sup>125</sup> He voiced concerns that 'the voluntary sector is being pushed into becoming the cheap and equally mundane alternative to statutory provision.'<sup>126</sup>

The Black and minority ethnic sector in particular, he claimed, was 'shockingly underfunded', despite being referred to explicitly in numerous policy reports, suggesting they had only a small role in the commissioning environment, and were thus viewed with less importance. This was a narrative also put forward in academic literature regarding the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary sector in later years.<sup>127</sup> While there is a lack of published quantitative studies to demonstrate a systemic underfunding of Black voluntary organisations, and it is not the intention of this thesis to 'prove' this either

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<sup>124</sup> Linda Milbourne and Mike Cushman, "From the third sector to the big society: how changing UK Government policies have eroded third sector trust," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 24, no. 2 (2013). P.488

<sup>125</sup> Clive Martin, "The voluntary sector and New Labour: how civil is the partnership?," *Criminal Justice Matters* 67, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>126</sup> H. M. Treasury, *Exploring the Role of the Third Sector in Public Service Delivery and Reform: A Discussion Document*, HM Treasury (London, 2004); H. M. Treasury, *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review*, HM Treasury (London, 2002). Compact Commission for the, *Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations Compact Code of Good Practice*, Commission for the Compact (Birmingham, 2008).

<sup>127</sup> Tilki et al., "The BME third sector: marginalised and exploited,"; Craig, "Forward to the past: can the UK black and minority ethnic third sector survive?"

way, the narrative itself is important for understanding a perception of both scarcity and precarity among Black organisations trying to navigate white-majority systems. Afridi and Warmington's 2009 report on 'the BME third sector' also highlighted problems with public purchasers' attitudes towards Black and minority ethnic organisations, with too great a focus on cost over value (also an issue for other voluntary organisations, but one where larger generic organisations might be better able to compete successfully for), perceptions of organisations being too 'niche', or seeing them in 'deficit' terms, regarding their confidence, aspiration and professionalism.<sup>128</sup> In fact, as we shall see in Birmingham, rhetoric and practical policy encouraging greater 'professionalism' incentivised some self-defined 'grass roots' groups to adopt bureaucratic practices that in fact took them further away from some of the perceived behaviours associated with the 'grass roots'.

In the closing years of the New Labour governments, a range of papers putting forward critiques and 'visions' for the sector were also put forward. Conservative party papers and Conservative-led think tanks sought to reframe the role of the sector in relation to the state, setting down many of the principles that would drive policy in future years. Conservative think tank the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) published a programme of work culminating in *Breakdown Britain* and *Breakthrough Britain*.<sup>129</sup> The reports expressed concern that the voluntary sector was under-used, under-supported and

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<sup>128</sup> Afridi and Warmington, *The BME third sector*. P.68

<sup>129</sup> Social Justice Policy Group, *Denying the vulnerable a second chance: Undervaluing Britain's third sector in the fight against poverty*, Centre for Social Justice (London, 2006); Group Social Justice Policy, *Breakdown Britain: Interim report on the state of the nation*, Centre for Social Justice (London, 2006); Justice The Centre for Social, "The Five Pathways to Poverty," in *The Centre for Social Justice* (The Centre for Social Justice, 2018)..

potentially even manipulated into the form of a 'mini-public sector.'<sup>130</sup> CSJ positioned the sector as valuable in terms of the cost savings it could deliver to the state and its ability to reach 'hard to reach' groups. It accused the incumbent government of forgetting 'the attributes that attracted it to the third sector in the first place' - its 'independence, enthusiasm, innovation, commitment and diversity'.<sup>131</sup> We will see these values referenced consistently by organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field across the whole period of study too.

The Conservative Party's *A Stronger Society* similarly appealed to an old heroic narrative of the power of voluntarism 'throughout history' to tackle pressing social problems and pioneer new solutions.<sup>132</sup> The sector could offer 'thousands of pieces of help', harnessing 'inspiration, innovation and effort'. This perhaps alluded to the '1000 points of light' imagery used by former American president George H.W. Bush Snr in his 1989 inaugural address to describe American voluntary associations.<sup>133</sup> The Conservative Party paper situated this effort in a 'post-bureaucratic age', where 'the people to identify new problems and discover the best ways to solve them won't be ministers holed-up in Whitehall, but the legions of committed individuals, voluntary organisations, social enterprises, commercial companies and communities'.<sup>134</sup> The vision was one of small government, but also of a continued mixed economy of private

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<sup>130</sup> Social Justice Policy Group, *Denying the vulnerable a second chance*.

<sup>131</sup> Social Justice Policy Group, *Denying the vulnerable a second chance*. P.12

<sup>132</sup> The Conservative Party, *A Stronger Society: Voluntary Action in the 21st Century*, Conservative Party (London, 2008), P.6

<sup>133</sup> Points of Light, "History: Points Of Light," 2022, accessed 01/05/2022, <https://www.pointsoflight.org/history/>.

<sup>134</sup> The Conservative Party, *A Stronger Society*.

and voluntary sector alternatives, alongside more informal community and individual responsibility and action.

Rhetorically, reports by CSJ and the Conservative Party set the tone for the relationship with the sector under the next government. Ideas around scalability, small government and simplification – or de-bureaucratisation – of systems, and rhetoric around independence and freedom from government control persisted. Written with a clear intention to distance itself from New Labour's approach, the reports emphasised voluntary sector autonomy and the traditional heroic conception of voluntary action as innovator, extender and alternative provider. These interventions established a vision for reshaping the government's relationship with the voluntary action field, which in turn would require – or at least ask – actors in the field to develop and agree new norms and shared understandings yet again. This process developed beyond 2010, and continues to the present day.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Rhetoric, practical policy and wider events in each of the eras examined here tell us much about the operating context, and how it changed, across the full period of study. The history of voluntary action, as an expression of people's interests and needs, sheds light on these changes in society. During the first period (1965 – 1979), new and re-formed voluntary organisations and campaign groups reflected changes in affluence, ethnicity, age and other demographics in England. The combination of unemployment, recession and spending restrictions curtailed any hoped-for expansion



of the welfare state.<sup>135</sup> This had a significant impact on the operating environment for voluntary organisations. It extended to the minority of voluntary organisations that were directly funded by and involved with government bodies, and the much larger group of organisations that had little to no interaction with state bodies, but nevertheless were working in an environment and context shaped by them.

In its evidence to a Home Office consultation at the very beginning of the second period (1979 – 1997), The National Council of Social Service (NCSS) summed up the nature of the sector in terms that would have been familiar to organisations at the time: the sector supplemented state services, and filled gaps and niches to which the state did not extend.<sup>136</sup> By contrast, writing shortly before the end of this period, Deakin noted the sector's performance in relation to the 'management revolution of the 1980s'. He described most large voluntary organisations as having 'kitted themselves out with all the paraphernalia of the enterprise culture'. Some, he stated, had resisted, but had eventually 'recognised that survival has meant being able to play the game according to the new rules'.<sup>137</sup> Others found themselves deliberately excluded as a result of continuing to work as pressure groups, asserting their independence but at the potential cost of their position in the field. Small groups without connections to the proximate state field or incumbent voluntary action field actors will likely have continued to operate in communities unaware of changing rules of the game, affected indirectly by changes in narratives and discourses. We will see examples of these

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<sup>135</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership.", p.55. Justin Davis Smith, *100 years of NCVO and voluntary action* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Pickvance, "Central Government, Local Government, Voluntary Associations and the Welfare State."

<sup>136</sup> National Council for Social Service, *Response to Home Office Consultation 'Government and the Voluntary Sector'*, London Metropolitan Archives (London, 1980). p.14

<sup>137</sup> Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership." p.62

various narratives playing out with organisations like the Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC) and the Asian Resource Centre in the Birmingham voluntary action field.

Unwittingly, perhaps, Deakin's description in the previous paragraph encapsulates the kinds of reactions different types of players would have in a voluntary action field undergoing a significant exogenous shock; from the reactive incumbents and skilled challengers able to adopt new strategies, to those either cut out due to lack of ability to react, or determination to maintain a challenger position. It also underlines the strength of impact the proximate state field has, as new ideology and policy radically reshaped its neighbouring field to its own ends over time. In SAF theory, the proximate state field holds a particularly powerful place in relation to other fields, as it can shape them through policy, regulation and reification of normative values and behaviours through conferring material and symbolic resources. The field in question can choose whether to accept or reject a new imposed settlement, but the stakes are extremely high. The processes can also be subtle, and this underlines the strength and importance of historical enquiry in understanding such processes in their long-term context.

In this thesis, we see these processes in organisations' interactions with the Birmingham ICPP; while not a wholesale switch to marketized commissioning processes, it did begin to shift understandings of what the voluntary sector was for, and what kinds of behaviours it was expected to undertake. Ware and Todd write about the possibility of voluntary organisations being subject to 'coercive isomorphism', either

through complicitly engaging in 'contract culture' for competitive gain, or because of pressure exerted by standards set by authorities increasingly providing funding in restricted ways.<sup>138</sup> The account in this thesis differs slightly, crediting organisations with greater agency in the process, but agrees that this period exerted considerable pressure to change.

We can see field dynamics, shared understandings and behaviours change over time through this literature review. As expected, the processes of change are gradual, and blur temporal boundaries, rather than falling neatly into segmented 'eras'. Through examining government policy, rhetorical interventions by different parties, and norms of practice in historical perspective, we can start to piece together a history of the voluntary action field, and to some degree how specific actors responded to change. The gap remains, however, in understanding the experience at a local, urban level, across a field of incumbent and challenger organisations. A focus on relatively privileged, and predominantly white, actors in the voluntary action historiography is an additional consequence of the focus on national policy and large organisations and movements. That is not to say histories of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic organisations and movements do not exist, and clearly they do given the material cited above, but rather that they do not, with some exceptions, focus on the voluntary sector and voluntary action as an institution or entity.<sup>139</sup> This will be a central focus in the findings chapters, due both to their heavy presence in the archives, and to address this gap.

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<sup>138</sup> Ware and Todd, "British Statutory Sector Partnerships with the Voluntary Sector." P.13

<sup>139</sup> Craig, "Forward to the past: can the UK black and minority ethnic third sector survive?." Tilki et al., "The BME third sector: marginalised and exploited." Afridi and Warmington, *The BME third sector*.

The following findings chapters set out to explore dimensions of SAF theory, applied to a Birmingham voluntary action field, and driven by material in the BCT archives. Together, these tell a story of how a field constructs itself, how certain actors may benefit or lose out based on the field's shared understandings of which values matter, how this is then enacted in practical terms, and how it interacts with other fields, in particular the powerful proximate state field. The conclusion of these chapters draws the three strands of inquiry together, along with consideration of BCT as an influence upon them, and the theoretical questions regarding SAF theory raised in Chapter 2. It reflects on what the archival material from BCT records can tell us about these three dimensions, and the ways in which they interrelate.

The role and views of BCT itself is reflected upon throughout these three sections. The concluding chapter will propose an additional role within SAF theory for organisations like BCT, which sits apart from the rest of the field, as a funder rather than a delivery organisation, but has a fundamental role in shaping it. It does not fit the description of an IGU, as while it may impose certain behavioural and value-based norms upon the organisations it funds, these are unlikely to make up the majority of the field. Is it an organisation from a separate proximate field, although it certainly *also* exists within proximate fields. It does not have the power of the proximate state field, nor necessarily the same agenda, and can even be at odds with it. Nevertheless what it does and, crucially, does not fund can have a fundamental impact on the shape and nature of the field.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 About this study

This project uses historical research methods and archival data sources; specifically, the records of Birmingham (and national) philanthropic funder BCT. It set out to explore the development of voluntary action in Birmingham between 1965 and 2015. The meaning of ‘voluntary action’, like other phrases used to denote charity, the voluntary sector and so on, is contested. Here it is taken to mean activity towards a shared mission or goal, undertaken by groups of individuals who might be paid or unpaid, without a profit motive and not directly governed by the state. It is conceptualised as a field of strategic action, whereby these organisations are bound together by shared understandings of what it means to engage in this kind of action, what the (formal and informal) rules governing such activity are, and what values are associated with it.<sup>1</sup> The phrase ‘voluntary action field’ is used in preference to ‘voluntary sector’ or ‘voluntary sector field’ in an effort not to presuppose the existence of a voluntary sector as a political body at any given time, a concept which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is the subject of some debate. This is not to deny the existence of a voluntary sector, but rather to recognise that this is in itself a strategically-deployed label with particular meanings associated, with which not all organisations may identify.

The study has been guided by the following research questions:

- How does a local voluntary action strategic action field (SAF) change over time, and to what extent does this reflect established narratives of national voluntary sector development?

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<sup>1</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

- What does the Birmingham voluntary action field look like, what are the key issues of concern, and how does it change over time?
- How can SAF theory help us to understand this group of organisations?
- How can archival research, and specifically voluntary action history, help us to assess the usefulness of SAF theory?

SAF theory draws focus to the interactions and relations between different groups within the field, their relative strength and access to resources, and the impact of internal shocks, external events and the proximate state field on the development of normative ideas and behaviours. This is precisely what this study sets out to evaluate, in the case of the voluntary action field in a discrete historical setting.

One value of SAF theory is that it encourages examination of opposing, or ‘challenger’, ideas about what the norms of a field should be, bringing focus to alternative ways of working and dissenting opinions. As Priyamvada Gopal notes in the introduction to her archival work on imperial dissidents, dissent is not in and of itself marginal, but emerges as ‘marginalised discourse that must articulate itself against the grain of the dominant’.<sup>2</sup> SAF theory, if applied with this in mind, can bring such dissenting views from the side lines, and avoid them being consigned to the status of ‘insignificant’ by dint of being marginalised, as Gopal cautions against. This is important to the methodology of this study because it explicitly seeks to uncover voices of voluntary action that are not often heard, and that may have had opposing views. It emphasises

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<sup>2</sup> Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2020).

the agency of organisations that elsewhere in historical research are assumed to have gone along with major policy changes, without contributing to the discourse surrounding them.

I draw attention to smaller charities and voluntary organisations working in a specific locality for two reasons. Firstly, the majority of organisations in what we variously call the voluntary sector, civil society sector or 'third' sector, is small; in 2017/18 81 per cent of charities were operating with budgets under £100,000, and 47 per cent with budgets less than £10,000. 77 per cent of 'small' charities (with income between £10,000 and £100,000) operate at a local level, and 78 per cent of 'micro' organisations (income below £10,000) do the same.<sup>3</sup> These statistics exclude an additional population of so-called 'below the radar' organisations that fall below the threshold for registration with the Charity Commission.<sup>4</sup> Many, although not all, of these also operate at a 'local' level. Secondly, histories of voluntary action or the voluntary sector (rather than histories of single organisations or movements), tend to focus on the national level, discussing key policy developments that shaped the field, without necessarily exploring how these developments, and the ideas that informed them, were experienced at a local level.<sup>5</sup> This oversimplifies the history of voluntary action, and downplays the range of organisational voices that contributed to ideas and understandings of the changing purpose of the voluntary sector over time.

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<sup>3</sup> "UK Civil Society Almanac 2019," 2019, accessed 25/03/2022, <https://data.ncvo.org.uk>.

<sup>4</sup> Angus McCabe, Jenny Phillimore, and Lucy Mayblin, "Below the radar' activities and organisations in the third sector: a summary review of the literature," *Third Sector Research Centre Working Paper 29* (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Hilton et al., *The Politics of Expertise: how NGOs shaped Modern Britain* (2013).

This project contributes to filling this gap. More than that, it also provides an intervention to prompt further voluntary action histories that make use of local archives and tell local stories. Not all the organisations examined in this project are small, or remain so, and most *do* become registered or in some other way appear on voluntary sector lists, so could not be deemed 'below the radar'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, they do all work at a local level in Birmingham to a significant degree, rather than at a national level.

The BCT archives offer an unusual opportunity to move the focus from the national to the local. BCT has funded many national and international projects during its lifetime, but of particular interest here is its strong programme of grant funding for Birmingham organisations and community groups during the period of study. The deposit of its records, including correspondence with local and national groups, annual reports of local organisations, mainstream and specialist press coverage and other ephemera provides a rich and accessible source of data spanning a wide range of groups and causes. While the focus of this study is the voluntary action field itself, this is a rich mine of information for scholars studying race relations, community arts, criminal justice, peace studies and more. In relation to voluntary action history, it is an invaluable source of organisational records which may not otherwise be available through archival deposits. Voluntary organisations face numerous challenges of time, space, money and understanding that hamper efforts to maintain organisational records, and to archive these over time.<sup>7</sup> Approaching the history of voluntary

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<sup>6</sup> John Mohan, "Entering the lists: what can we learn about the voluntary sector in England from listings produced by local infrastructure bodies?," *Voluntary Sector Review* 3, no. 2 (2012); McCabe, Phillimore, and Mayblin, "'Below the radar' activities and organisations in the third sector: a summary review of the literature."; Andri Soteri-Proctor and Pete Alcock, "Micro-mapping: what lies beneath the third sector radar?," *Voluntary Sector Review* 3, no. 3 (2012).

<sup>7</sup> McMurray, *Charity Archives in the 21st Century*.



organisations through the records of their funder raises some issues of mediation of records, discussed shortly, but can nevertheless open up these histories where they otherwise might be absent.

This study looks inward to the field, as a set of institutional mechanics, in order to explore the ways in which it coalesced on a local level and the extent to which this was a series of consensus-based or conflictual processes; the impact of the kind of national policy and practice changes highlighted by the historiography, explored in Chapter 3; and which organisational actors benefited from or were held back by their access (or lack thereof) to what kinds of resources within the field. The BCT archives include records of a range of community and neighbourhood development organisations, action centres, intermediary and infrastructure organisations whose business, at least in part, was supporting and developing voluntary action itself. These organisations provide the material for this study, as those most likely to engage in discourse about the nature of voluntary action, and in activity that shaped the field, rather than on issues or causes such as (for instance) immigration, disability or welfare, policy domains beyond the scope of this study.

As well as the convenience of having this well-catalogued and extensive source material to hand, Birmingham is an important object of study in and of itself. As England's 'second city', it merits attention from social historians and contemporary sociologists alike. At the beginning of the period of study, Birmingham was experiencing a delayed period of redevelopment, as programmes halted during and after the Second World War began to come to fruition. This included physical

infrastructure, cultural amenities and rapidly paced housing regeneration. Optimistic biographers of Birmingham grandly proclaimed that 'between 1939 and 1970 Birmingham strengthened its position as Britain's most pleasant and prosperous industrial city'.<sup>8</sup> However, this reputation unfortunately did not take hold in the general consciousness, and a second period of regeneration was triggered by business and civic leaders in the late 1980s. Birmingham was also a victim of economic and manufacturing decline in the 1970s and 1980s, with the unemployment rate reaching close to 20 per cent in 1983. This, according to John B. Smith, reached a low point in 1993, when Birmingham had lost 30 per cent of total jobs and 66 per cent of manufacturing jobs compared to 1971.<sup>9</sup>

Demographics were changing too, in part a result of immigration of people from so-called 'New Commonwealth' countries. As Kieran Connell notes in his study of race in 1980s Handsworth, historiography of race and immigration has tended to focus on London, with its comparatively extensive archival sources and its inevitable centrality – despite its generally accepted status as an atypical case. Birmingham, along with cities like Manchester, Liverpool and, on a smaller scale, Bristol, were centres of twentieth century immigration, and thus of immigration and 'race relations' discourse as inner-city populations became more diverse.<sup>10</sup> Community groups and organisations coalesced around these growing communities, underserved or excluded by the existing majority white voluntary action field. Academic work also drove

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<sup>8</sup> Anthony Sutcliffe and Roger Smith, *Birmingham 1939 - 1970*, vol. III, History of Birmingham, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). p.479

<sup>9</sup> in Matt Cole, "The Transformation of Post-War Birmingham," in *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World*, ed. Carl Chinn and Malcolm Dick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). p.292

<sup>10</sup> Kieran Connell, *Black Handsworth* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019). P.11

community developments; while not a central feature of this study, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and a number of University of Birmingham academics are referenced in archival material in the earlier years of the period of study.

The period of study begins with the so-called 'rediscovery of poverty' as a national policy concern around 1965, after the publication of Abel-Smith and Townsend's 1950 study of poverty in post-war Britain, and the significant increase in organisations and grass roots movements established to fight social injustice.<sup>11</sup> It ends with another turning point for the field, described by Macmillan as an 'unsettlement' after a period of relative bounty in terms of government relations and funding.<sup>12</sup> As we saw in Chapter 3, the historiography tends to break the period as a whole into three distinct periods. In reality, the boundaries of these are highly blurred. Nevertheless, they provide a useful structure for organising the analysis of data, and for testing some assumptions within the historiography about how and when change happened within the field.

## **4.2 Ethical considerations**

As this project works with archival data, there are different ethical concerns than for a project working with and interviewing individuals with lived experience of the issues explored. Concerns relate to which data is collected and reproduced, and dealing with issues of reputational risk for individuals and organisations still in existence.

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<sup>11</sup> Mold and Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s."; Rodney Lowe, "The rediscovery of poverty and the creation of the child poverty action group, 1962–68," *Contemporary Record* 9, no. 3 (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Macmillan, "Decoupling the state and the third sector?."

It was necessary to seek permission from BCT to access these archives, which was granted. Opening up organisational records to the extent that BCT has carries risk, not just for it but for the organisations it worked with; while analysis here is critical, it is also mindful that many of these groups are still operating, and there is potential for reputational harm within archives. There is also potential risk around personal information and details that individuals may not want in the public domain, especially given how recent the period of study is. However much, but not all, of the material here is a matter of public record either through charity reports and registration information, newspaper and other articles and similar material, so the risk is somewhat limited.

In order to comply with conditions of access and copyright requirements from the Library of Birmingham, all names have been removed or changed in this thesis, other than where material was definitively already in the public domain through newspaper articles or records of public figures such as Members of Parliament. There are some examples of organisational dysfunction including human resources disputes included in the archive files; these and similar material was not collected in detail because of its sensitivity and personal relevance to individuals. Material has been reproduced in this thesis and in related public presentations with the permission of Birmingham City Council, on behalf of BCT, and in line with the copyright guidelines of the archives.

Finally, there are ethical considerations that relate to issues of power in archiving and archival research. Archives are often related to state structures (for instance, the BCT collection is housed by and accessed through Birmingham City Council), and as described in the section on limitations in this chapter, require allocation of resources

and will to collect, house, catalogue and make accessible. Not all records will receive such resources. Furthermore, the records in the BCT collection, while often relating to other organisations, including lived experience-led groups, are always mediated by the powerful philanthropic funder, as the driver of the conversation, the record keeper and the decision-maker in terms of what records to keep. This means there is a gap in the record of material that comes directly from often marginalised groups, unmediated by the funder and by the decisions made by those who built the collection. These records are generally less likely to survive and be deposited with a formal archive service. This is not a problem that can be overcome by this thesis, but is important to acknowledge and be alive to it throughout data collection and analysis.<sup>13</sup> It also relates to my own positionality as a researcher, and the power inherent in undertaking such research, described below.

#### *4.2.1 My positionality as a researcher*

This thesis, the research behind it and the way I have interpreted the data are all inevitably influenced by my own experiences both within the UK voluntary sector and in broader environments.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting on my positionality as a researcher has not been a single, isolated action of writing, but rather an ongoing process throughout this project, guiding the initial design, influencing how I read archival sources and how I represent them in my own writing. Here I briefly outline some of the points of reflexivity and my response to them.

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<sup>13</sup> William Gallois, "Ethics and Historical Research," in *Research Methods for History*, ed. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher - Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004). P.36

The research project comes in part from a frustration that generally accepted histories and theories of the voluntary sector as an institution often do not include consideration of how the author(s)' positionality affects how they construct their history or theory, including their views on what voluntary action *should* be and what it should do. My own analysis and writing is also, of course, influenced by almost 20 years volunteering and working for voluntary organisations, groups and campaigns of different types and sizes. This includes small, medium and large national health and disability charities, umbrella or infrastructure bodies, youth work organisations, trade unions and volunteer-run, single issue campaigns, between 2003 and today. Some of these have delivered direct services, with large contracts from national and local government, while others have had to crowd-source printing costs for letter campaigns from volunteers and supporters. I do not have experience of what organisations were like before government outsourcing and contracting reforms that began in the early 1980s and had expanded considerably by the time I started volunteering and working. While I cannot control the subconscious influence of this experience, and lack of experience, on the way I interpret and write about data, I have tried to reflect on this as part of the process of analysis and how I construct a certain social reality and set of meanings through writing.<sup>15</sup> I have been mindful of avoiding value judgements about what is 'good' or 'bad' voluntary sector behaviour, instead focusing on where organisations themselves historically endorse or challenge that behaviour. My experience, however, cannot be separated from research decisions made, including choice of focus in terms of organisational types, and narratives selected and privileged. As such, this does not set out to be an objectively true account of the voluntary sector, itself a highly contested

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<sup>15</sup> Ann L. Cunliffe, "Reflexive Inquiry in Organizational Research: Questions and Possibilities," *Human relations* 56, no. 8 (2003), p.988

concept, but instead sets out to question what I view as some of the taken-for-granted elements of that concept. It does the same with my theoretical framework of choice – drawing together reflections on the ‘usefulness’ and the shortcomings of strategic action field theory both in terms of practical research and shaping meanings and understandings.

My work prioritises the views and voices of people with lived experience of discrimination and oppression as a result of holding atypical identities, and has occasionally drawn on my own. However, the privilege I hold as a result of my whiteness, class status and my ability to ‘mask’ identities that are atypical means I have never been in the position where I have *had* to organise and form groups in order to fight direct oppression in my day-to-day life. A number of the people and organisations included in this study did not hold that privilege and have needed to organise within communities in order to survive within the structures of society that prioritise some lives over others. While there is a growing literature exploring race using the records and experiences of those who organised and worked through these groups, high-level histories of the voluntary sector tend not to incorporate the diversity of experiences of communities fighting oppression, even though these are the very people many organisations set out to serve.

I also recognise the personally beneficial impact of holding middle-class status, and coming from a family with a long history of prominent roles in higher education: no one has ever had to suggest to me that doing a PhD might be an option for me, and I have never questioned whether I *could* complete a doctoral project. I was able to secure

ESRC funding because, in part, I had prior knowledge of my supervisors through making previous professional connections, and because I understood the kind of approach that would be competitive. This is not a given for all doctoral candidates, who may not have pre-existing social and cultural capital that makes it easier to navigate the systems of the Academy, or who may not have ever considered it a system they could, or would want to, navigate themselves. Likewise, PhD funding and a place at the University of Birmingham has made it possible to access the Barrow Cadbury Trust archives, which are generally closed to non-academic researchers. My professional attachment to the Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham, and to Prof. John Mohan, its director, has also aided this access: TSRC has been funded by BCT in the past. Depositing archival records is not without risk for charities and philanthropic funders like BCT. There is potential reputational risk if an organisation opens itself up to detailed external scrutiny in this way, and in the case of funders this risk is also extended to those groups it funds. It is thus perhaps understandable that the records are closed. Nevertheless, it creates a power dynamic between the record subjects, academic researcher, non-academic researcher and the archive service itself. Again, my own positionality and related professional experience has reduced the potential challenges in doing this kind of research, but this is not a given for everyone interested in this kind of work. Reducing access to the records reduces the perspectives available on their content.

Such issues have prompted two responses in my own work. The first, simply, is to actively include, where possible, organisations within the scope of my study that specifically serve or are led by marginalised communities, and to consider what issues



they face. This has not been possible for a full range of marginalised groups (and disabled groups are notably absent), but, led by the material available in the archives and the demographics of Birmingham, has particularly focused on Black-, Asian- and other minority ethnic-led groups.

The second is a conscious assessment and reflection of how I read archival material at different stages of the research process, both when attached to its material context (i.e. on the physical page in the archives reading room), and during analysis when somewhat divorced from it. This includes consideration of what is present and absent in the collection and the decisions by both BCT and the archive cataloguers that have influenced this, how documents were annotated or amended by the original creators, and what supplementary material is included in which files. It is obviously difficult to know what *isn't* present. One straightforward example, however, is records of telephone and in-person conversations; these were often reported in follow-up letters from BCT personnel, and occasionally by other parties, but this only provides a partial record of what actually took place. A set of correspondence reporting on an in-person meeting between one BCT secretary, the chief executive of Birmingham charity All Faiths For One Race (AFFOR) and Handsworth Black-led organisation the Afro-Caribbean Self Help organisation (ACSHO), for instance, is illuminating. The memo reporting the meeting, written by AFFOR, presented a strong representation of 'A.C.S.H.O.'s extreme dissatisfaction and annoyance at the continuing delays' in BCT providing ACSHO a grant.<sup>16</sup> Separate letters to BCT from AFFOR, however,

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<sup>16</sup> The delay was caused by BCT requesting a set of accounts or other annual report from ACSHO, to show how it had spent a previous BCT grant. ACSHO resented this 'interference' in their operations by the funder. Memo: AFFOR to ACSHO 14<sup>th</sup> November 1972, *Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO), including the West Indian Federation (WIF) and Handsworth Debating Forum (HDF), File 3/3*

apologised in much more friendly language both for criticising one of the BCT secretaries, and for their approach in the meeting. The AFFOR chief executive told BCT that they 'expect you appreciate that I had to play a somewhat delicate game, as it is essential for our credibility with this group for us to seem to understand, and in some ways share, their concerns and problems'.<sup>17</sup> This hints at a significant complexity in the interactions between these various organisations, connecting with issues of race, class and social and cultural capital. We do not have a complete record of ACSHO's side of the story, although there is plenty of frank correspondence from them on other matters. The archival material can only provide a snapshot of the complexity involved.

The reflexivity involved in this project also includes critically reflecting on my own reading of the material: am I reading Black voices as disproportionately angry, because they are Black? Am I reading Black organisations as more amateur or less effective than white-led organisations, because they are Black? In essence, how are my readings, interpretations and writings shaped by my own racialisation as white within a society that prioritises whiteness? I am not setting out to tell a story of 'race' or the Black experience in Birmingham from my white perspective, but I do try to interrogate the norms, understandings and 'rules of the game', in field terms, that develop over time within a historically and majority-white voluntary action field. I ask what role racialisation of organisations played, and how people and organisations of colour talked about and interacted with these field dynamics at the time. As such I have

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MS 1579/2/3/1/1 Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>17</sup> Letter: AFFOR to BCT 14<sup>th</sup> November 1972; Letter: AFFOR to BCT 28<sup>th</sup> November 1972, *Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO), including the West Indian Federation (WIF) and Handsworth Debating Forum (HDF)*, File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/1/1 Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

attempted to be alive to my own racialisation as a white researcher, but this approach has limits and the process cannot be unfinished.

### **4.3 Interdisciplinary approach**

This project brings together sociological theory, historical inquiry and social sciences methods and tools to form a cross-disciplinary study. This approach carries a number of strengths, as well as some clear conceptual challenges. Social theory brings a focus on processes of meaning making and relationships between actors across a field, while the attention to detail involved in historical inquiry combats the ‘flattening’ tendency of social theory.

Billie Sandberg introduces her own ‘critical history’ of the nonprofit sector in the United States (US) – published in a firmly social sciences disciplinary text book - by describing an existing ‘traditional historical narrative’. By Sandberg’s account, this scholarship is largely an uncritical, ‘glorious’ history, which does some work in itself to legitimise nonprofits as necessary and inherently good.<sup>18</sup> This can certainly be a risk in celebratory histories of charities and voluntary action. However, Sandberg herself acknowledges that this presents a gross oversimplification of the historical scholarship. Sandberg’s description also does a considerable disservice to the many historians doing robust and critically questioning work on the history of philanthropy and voluntary action in the US. Her account also rather privileges a whiggish form of history that sees ‘events in history... marching toward an ultimate destiny from a categorical origin’, a

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<sup>18</sup> Billie Sandberg, "Critical Perspectives on the History and Development of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States," in *Reframing Nonprofit Organisations*, ed. Angela M. Eikenberry, Roseanne M. Mirabella, and Billie Sandberg (Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh, 2019). P.27

form of historical writing that many contemporary historians would reject.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the – broadly speaking – accepted histories of the charity sector *can* tend to focus on high-level administrative change, or on somewhat romanticised views of voluntary action without much reflexivity on the part of the authors. While this study pushes back on some of Sandberg’s assertions, it agrees that the role of discourse, ideas and ideology as shapers of institutional spaces over time can be downplayed in historical studies, while the homogeneity and normativity of such spaces can be overplayed.

On the other hand, a commitment to historical inquiry and archival research, with its close study of the material in its historical context, avoids some of the pitfalls of more pure social sciences approaches to historicity. Peter Burke describes a view of social theorists as parochial in terms of time, when they ‘generalise about ‘society’ on the basis of contemporary experience alone, or discuss social change without taking long-term process into account’.<sup>20</sup> He stresses that this is crudely stereotypical – the corresponding stereotype to the view of parochial and ‘grand narrative’ historians expressed by Sandberg - and there are a great many historians and social theorists that span boundaries. Nevertheless, social theory has the effect of flattening or simplifying incredibly complex institutions and stories of human experience. We can see this in some studies that use historical institutionalism as their theoretical framework, along with its component parts of path dependency and critical junctures.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sandberg, "Critical Perspectives on the History and Development of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States." P.29

<sup>20</sup> Peter Burke, *History and social theory*, 2. ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). P.2

<sup>21</sup> Adrian Kay, "A Critique of the Use of Path Dependency in Policy Studies," *Public Administration* 83, no. 3 (2005); Andre Sorensen, "Taking path dependency seriously: an historical institutionalist research agenda in planning history," *Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 1 (2016).

The simplification in itself is not a problem, and may be an inevitable consequence of trying to understand and illuminate ordered processes within what seem like chaotic, complex realities. Indeed it can bring welcome focus to studies that aim to understand and explain complex processes. However, detailed historical work is not always compatible with social theoretical approaches. William Sewell, for instance, points to the example of Theda Skocpol's 'scientific' experimental temporality. Although this demonstrates many strengths, seeking to identify the causes of three different historic revolutions in different parts of the world, it does so in a way that treats history as something that can be frozen or 'cut up' into distinct component moments.<sup>22</sup> This ahistorical approach ignores links *between* events, as well as relevant cultural, geographical factors at play. Historical study brings a focus on events, their context and contingencies that might otherwise be absent.

This thesis sets out to test the usefulness and limits of a historical study framed within one particular theory – in this case SAF theory. SAF theory was chosen, as Chapter 2 details, because other scholars have shown it to have strengths in analysing contemporary dynamics within and between organisations.<sup>23</sup> Lang and Mullins, who use SAF theory informed by more strictly Bourdieusian interpretive frameworks, and wider neo-institutional theory, also note the importance of engaging in 'a historically informed analysis to identify both structural and contingent factors in the external environment as triggers for field formation', and in this case field development.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> William Hamilton Sewell Jr, *Logics of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). P.96

<sup>23</sup> Macmillan, "*Distinction*" in the third sector; Anasti, "The Strategic Action Field of Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: A Case Study of a Contentious Field in Chicago."

<sup>24</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society." P.187

Fligstein and McAdam themselves claim that their theory lends itself well to framing historical studies. I seek to test that.

#### **4.4 Records of the Barrow Cadbury Trust**

The utility of philanthropic archives has been underexplored in the UK, especially when compared to the extensive philanthropy archives and accompanying research in the USA. While this thesis focuses on the voluntary sector itself, philanthropy archives can provide diverse and interesting records of voluntary action on a range of subjects, and in many areas of policy and campaigning. Indeed, recent scholarship by Georgina Brewis et al. has highlighted the utility of voluntary sector archives, and of working with the organisations that produced the records in order to preserve and understand them.<sup>25</sup> Philanthropic funders often work across a range of chosen policy priorities, and in different localities. BCT, for instance, as mentioned, had an extensive funding portfolio in Birmingham and the West Midlands, which provides valuable insight into the local experience of a range of local, national and global events and initiatives. They can also provide access to the records and experiences of the organisations they fund, and at least in the case of BCT these can be smaller less well-resourced groups, rather than focusing only on the records of a single, often large well-funded charity working in a particular area. As such, the project provides one example of the utility, and limitations, of philanthropy archives. This is a growing area of interest, signalled by the establishment of the UK Philanthropy Archive at the University of Kent in 2019 and

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<sup>25</sup> Georgina Brewis, Angela Ellis Paine, Irene Hardill, Rose Lindsey and Rob Macmillan “Co-curation: Archival interventions and voluntary sector records”, *Area* 00 (2021)

growing scholarship making use of charity archives, and it is hoped this will encourage more philanthropic funders to deposit their records to publicly available centres.<sup>26</sup>

The Barrow and Geraldine S. Cadbury Trust, later the Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT), was established by its Quaker husband and wife namesakes in 1920, building on many years of their own and their wider families' philanthropy and advocacy for 'good causes'. Barrow Cadbury's uncle George had established the Bournville Village Trust in Birmingham in 1900, close to the Cadbury's chocolate factory, to provide quality housing in healthy environments - and to better serve the business interests of the company. Profits from the business were directed to the Village Trust. This in itself was influenced by both non-Quaker models such as Robert Owen's New Lanark, established a century before, and older Quaker approaches to employment support such as that of ironworks owner Richard Reynolds, who before his retirement in 1783 invested in improving his employees' living conditions, and paid for their children to attend a school which he provided.<sup>27</sup> These examples and others influenced the philanthropy and administration of Barrow and Geraldine Cadbury.<sup>28</sup>

Underpinning this action were the family's Quaker beliefs. Quakers had long been concerned with improving the conditions of 'the poor', through philanthropy, testimony and social and economic policy.<sup>29</sup> There was also a critical awareness that much 'relief

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<sup>26</sup> University of Kent, "UK Philanthropy Archives"; Brewis et al., "Archival interventions and voluntary sector records".

<sup>27</sup> John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers*, 2nd ed. (London: Quaker Books, 2006). P.129

<sup>28</sup> Merlin Waterson and Samantha Wyndham, *Constancy and Change in Quaker Philanthropy: A History of the Barrow Cadbury Trust* (London: Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers*.

dealt with the symptoms rather than causes of poverty, which drove a nineteenth century concern with workers' living conditions, trade co-operatives and criminal justice reform, all of which continued in later Quaker philanthropy.<sup>30</sup> There was also a related philanthropic paternalism;<sup>31</sup> the history of BCT, commissioned by the Trust itself and published in 2013, noted that Barrow Cadbury 'viewed the money he gave away via his charitable trusts as not his, but rather wealth which – through tax relief – had been entrusted to him for the benefit of society.' It further noted that Estate Duty taxation had increased from 15 per cent to 40 per cent between 1914 – 1930, in the duration and aftermath of the First World War. Thus, protecting profits from taxation via charitable trusts provided a means for Quaker families to ensure they were directed 'toward activities that were consistent with their beliefs, such as education, social improvement and temperance, rather than... armaments or imperialist foreign policy'.<sup>32</sup> This suggests motivations of both paternalism and religious moralism.

In 1968 BCT trustees appointed their first paid secretary, Kenneth Nicholson, to administer the fund. After his untimely death, just six months after appointment, Anthony E. Wilson was appointed as secretary.<sup>33</sup> He was joined in 1972 by an assistant secretary, Eric Adams.<sup>34</sup> These two individuals drove much of BCT's work, particularly around community development in Birmingham, as the city continued to be a central

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<sup>30</sup> Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers*. pp.189 - 194

<sup>31</sup> Diana Leat, *Philanthropic Foundations, Public Good and Public Policy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016); Lester M. Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State," *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly* 16, no. 1-2 (1987).

<sup>32</sup> Waterson and Wyndham, *A History of the Barrow Cadbury Trust*. P.37

<sup>33</sup> Although there is not the means or the room to examine it in detail here, Wilson's own professional history, as a former colonial administrator in Malawi, is significant and complicated, especially in relation to his extensive work with Black and Asian-led anti-racist groups in Birmingham.

<sup>34</sup> Waterson and Wyndham, *A History of the Barrow Cadbury Trust*.



recipient of grant funding. BCT staff and trustees formed close relationships with the organisations they funded in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands, offering support beyond grant funding. Wilson even provided character witness and bail for a number of young Black men arrested in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

The 1990s saw further formalisation and professionalisation of the Trust. It also pursued a stronger policy of larger grants but to fewer organisations, which saw grant expenditure rise from £1.5 million in 1993 to £3.2 million in 2001, but recipients fall from 377 at the beginning of the decade to 228 at the end. It moved its office from Birmingham to London in 2003, to better serve its national and international, rather than local, grantees, and in 2003 it adopted a new funding strategy based around three programmes of inclusive communities, criminal justice and global exchange, moving away from a much wider set of policy concerns.<sup>36</sup>

Other trusts sat alongside BCT, either for non-charitable purposes, such as the Barrow Cadbury Fund Ltd., which enabled the funding of organisations other than registered charities; or set up by family members, such as the Paul S. Cadbury Trust (established in 1931). The records of eight such trusts, comprising over 3,000 records, in the form of files or boxes of papers relating to either funded organisations or particular functions of Cadbury funds themselves, were deposited with the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research at the Library of Birmingham, catalogued and made available in 2015.<sup>37</sup> This project focuses on the records of BCT, as most relevant to the research questions,

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<sup>35</sup> Waterson and Wyndham, *A History of the Barrow Cadbury Trust*.

<sup>36</sup> Waterson and Wyndham, *A History of the Barrow Cadbury Trust*.

<sup>37</sup> "Cadbury Trusts archives now available," 2015, accessed 25/03/2022, 2021, <https://barrowcadbury.org.uk/news/cadbury-trusts-archives-now-available/>.

although touches on material from the Barrow Cadbury Fund Ltd. And the Paul S. Cadbury Trust where there were crossovers in the archives.

#### **4.5 Gathering the data**

Given the extent of these archives, some decisions were made during project design to limit the range of files looked at and transcribed, to ensure a manageable dataset. As the focus is on the nature of the local voluntary action field, and thus how voluntary organisations talk about themselves, their neighbour organisations and the policy affecting them, there was a natural focus on voluntary and community organisations that, at least in part, served other organisations. This includes intermediary or infrastructure organisations but in a broader sense than voluntary sector research generally views them, going beyond those such as councils for voluntary service that directly identify as such, to action centres, community centres, community development projects and others that may not see this as a primary function, or even identify it as a role in any formal terms. They were identified in terms of name and the catalogue synopsis in the first instance, and then reviewed for relevance as each folder was accessed in turn. The catalogue itself is usefully arranged according to policy area (peace and international relations, social services, etc.); sections on neighbourhood development and community organising were obviously the most fruitful, but the full catalogue was reviewed for organisations of interest. Those projects operating outside of Birmingham were excluded, as was material from before 1965.

This generated an initial list of 265 folders, which was then narrowed down through viewing the material itself to 110 folders of different sizes and different degrees of

relevance. The folders related to 59 individual organisations and projects, with an additional six folders relating to specific events, areas or policy initiatives, and a further number of BCT annual reports and minute books. In fact, more than 59 organisations were represented in these folders, as material includes mention of and correspondence with other partners and allies to BCT. Not all of these organisations are featured by name in this thesis; details of those that are can be found in Appendix 1. A full list of folders and catalogue reference numbers is available in Appendix 2.

Each folder was read page by page, and relevant sections transcribed, along with any notes about context. Each folder, or set of grouped folders where appropriate, was then summarised in a document that noted its reference number(s), date range, other organisations mentioned, and initial themes identified in the first reading, and through a reading back of the transcribed information. While in the archives, a running 'data diary' was kept to note further emergent themes, connections between different files, leads to follow up and so on. A summary template is presented in Appendix 3.

#### **4.6 Analysing the data**

Niamh Moore et al. refer to Walter Benjamin's processes of assemblage, in archival research; amassing and classifying detail, but also recognising the data that provides it is provisional and incomplete.<sup>38</sup> This project uses tools and methods more commonly, though by no means exclusively, found in social sciences than history disciplines to aid these processes. Specifically, this includes using template analysis to frame and develop a thematic analysis of the text through data analysis software NVivo.

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<sup>38</sup> Niamh Moore et al., "In other archives and beyond," in *The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences*, ed. Niamh Moore et al. (London: Routledge, 2016).

By using NVivo 12 to hold and analyse the archival data, the study makes the most of the benefits of computer assisted analysis with a large and complex dataset, while being alive to the risk of divorcing the data from its context, and, as R.J.Morris points out, the peculiarities of its individual case.<sup>39</sup> Each transcription document, either referring to single folders or groups where appropriate, was uploaded separately to NVivo and assigned a 'case' depending on its historiographical period. Table 1 below shows how many of these documents fall into each case. It reveals a considerable bias towards the middle two eras, and especially to the 1979 – 1997 era (although number of folders does not equate exactly to volume of material, as each folder varies in size considerably). More will be said about this under 'limitations' in this chapter. Some folders spanned multiple eras, and the documents were coded to reflect this. This process allowed relatively quick cross-tabulation of eras with themes, so that, for instance, differences in the prominence of themes at different times could be seen, or material from a particular era on a particular theme could be easily retrieved.

Table 1: number of references falling under each NVivo case (era)

Case (era)	Number of NVivo references classified
1965 - 1979	9
1979 - 1997	70
1997 - 2010	25
2010 - 2015	2

Using notes from the data diary produced while in the archives, and questions raised by the theoretical and historiographical literature reviews (Chapters 2 and 3), and

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<sup>39</sup> R. J. Morris, "Document to Database and Spreadsheet," in *Research Methods for History*, ed. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). P.161.

finally through application to a sample of three organisations' transcripts from each of the first three periods (as the final one, 2010-2015, did not provide sufficient data), an initial template for guiding analysis was constructed. Themes were divided between descriptive ones and interpretive, to draw a divide between data providing technical, factual (insofar as possible) or otherwise material information, and the researcher's own interpretation of the content.<sup>40</sup> This essentially set out themes one might expect to find in the data, based on preliminary research, following the template analysis methodology of Joanna Brooks et al.<sup>41</sup>

The method builds on the principles and flexibility of thematic analysis, as described by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke,<sup>42</sup> but with an initial themes codebook developed *a priori*, as described above, and then developed iteratively as the analysis progresses to provide a rich and detailed hierarchy of themes. This, as Brooks et al. describe, allows for 'a position which acknowledges that a researcher's perspective is inevitably influenced by [their] inability to truly stand outside one's own position in the social world, but nonetheless retains a belief in phenomena that are independent of the researcher and knowable through the research process'.<sup>43</sup> Using this initial template enables the analysis process to actively question and explore issues raised by the existing historiography, as well as incorporating early reflections from the first reading

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<sup>40</sup> Colin Robson and Kieran McCartan, *Real World Research*, 4th ed. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2016). P.472.

<sup>41</sup> Joanna Brooks et al., "The Utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 12, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>42</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>43</sup> Brooks et al., "The Utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research." P.205

of data and initial coding of transcribed material. The first template is available in Appendix 4.

This template was then applied to analysis of each document in turn, allowing for further coding as other issues or items came to the fore. The template was reviewed after a quarter of documents were analysed, and at the half-way stage. In keeping with examples in Brooks et al.'s methodological article, by this latter stage few new codes were being created, although some existing ones were being shown to be of limited relevance, or lacking commonality of experience across the dataset. Appendix 5 shows the revised template incorporating a considerable number of new codes, and some emerging hierarchy where initial themes began to take on more detail during the analysis. The final stage of this process involved reviewing all codes for duplication, clarity and relevance or commonality, and then finalising the hierarchy of themes. The first part of this stage did not mean automatically excluding codes that seemed either similar or had low numbers of references attached, but rather reviewing them to see if they merited inclusion, or if they could be merged or disposed of.

The final hierarchy of themes includes 11 top-level descriptive, interpretive themes and descriptive/interpretive themes, as shown in Table 2. A full breakdown of these themes and the lower-level codes that constitute them is available in Appendix 6, with the exception of the 'Individuals' theme, as this list of names cannot be replicated and is not pertinent to this project.

Table 2: top-level themes in data analysis

<b>Descriptive themes</b>	<b>Interpretive themes</b>	<b>Descriptive/interpretive themes</b>
Events	Field dynamics	Activity/behaviour
Organisations	Race and equality issues	Funding issues
Location	Identity	Government relations
Individuals	Independent voice	

From here, some decisions were necessary about what to include in the thesis. This was driven by the commonality of themes within the material, but also by the questions raised by the historiographical and theoretical literature reviews. Three central issues that draw from material across these top-level themes emerged and form the basis of written analysis:

- Identity and values in the Birmingham voluntary action field
- Symbolic capital, legitimacy and the racialisation of the field
- And the proximate state field, through the Birmingham ICPP.

These will be explored in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

#### **4.7 Limitations**

There are some limitations to be acknowledged both in terms of the data available and the approach taken to completing this study. These include an uneven distribution of data, issues around archival research methodology and the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with the third and fourth year of the project.

As with any archival research the records available tend to be partial, with elements of written or spoken conversations not available to view or hear. The BCT archives are comprehensive, including a range of correspondence both from and to internal staff,

records of telephone conversations and meetings, memos and some annotations. Even so, gaps remain, and what material there is is likely to be a formal presentation of what was said or meant, influenced by the motivations of the actor and the political context within which they are operating. Ann Laura Stoler writes about the 'grammar' and conventions of colonial archives, and how the historian must be alive to the flattening and numbing effect of fixed formats and bureaucratic language.<sup>44</sup> The records of the philanthropic funder, too, have their own grammar and syntax, as do the annual reports, protests and funding applications of voluntary organisations. Sometimes context and interpretation can suggest less than straightforward meanings in the text, and occasionally in the BCT archives there are explicit references to more complex meanings and happenings than what appears in a particular report or letter, but some meanings and detail will inevitably be lost. This issue changes over time; while records up to around the most recent millennium seem comprehensive, and correspondence is detailed, the majority of it in physical letter form, later correspondence via email is more brief, less detailed and it appears less comprehensively recorded. We can tell a lot less from the material as its format changes, within this collection at least. There is also a period where there seems to be less material, as systems transition from physical post and telephone to information and communications technology systems and record keeping took some time to adjust.

In part because of changing funding priorities of BCT, and in part perhaps because of this communications-related data gap, the material is heavily weighted towards earlier periods, and in particular 1979 – 1991. In practice this has meant that analysis post-

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<sup>44</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).



2010 has not been possible using this source. It has also meant that analysis has focused more on transition points, events and views expressed by organisations in that period. Happily, this was a period of significant change for the voluntary action field, and there is still sufficient material to draw comment on the two periods either side.

The potential for divorcing data from its context through use of NVivo has been noted. This is also a risk with the use of thematic and template analysis, which tend to focus across cases, rather than within each case.<sup>45</sup> While this is somewhat inevitable given the research questions addressed by this project, the final thesis also includes a number of case studies exploring individual organisations or particular 'moments' in the Birmingham voluntary action field history to also draw some focus to the within-case context. Template analysis can also encourage researcher bias, as one is looking directly for themes identified from pre-existing literature or one's own experience.<sup>46</sup> This is why the reflexivity described at the start of this chapter is so important. Rather than looking for evidence to confirm previous analysis, the template has been used to test assumptions within it. It has been applied flexibly and with a number of key review periods, to encourage this reflexivity.

Archives are mediated through a range of powerful actors, from those who decide what to keep and what to dispose of, or to construct a record in a certain order or form, to those who decide a collection is worth keeping, worth cataloguing and worth making available to the public. These processes must all be resourced, as must the process of historical research. As such, archival research is not only incomplete because of

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<sup>45</sup> Brooks et al., "The Utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research." P.218

<sup>46</sup> Robson and McCartan, *Real World Research*. P.469

gaps in what *can* be collected and preserved, but on the basis of who has what resources, and what motivation to expend them. The BCT collection is remarkable in terms of its extent, but it is still a collection mediated by these power dynamics, as well as through the lens of the powerful funder itself. As already noted, the memories and records of more marginalised groups and individuals can be excluded from these formal archive spaces, as records can be less likely to be preserved, deposited or accepted, due to lack of resources, will or both.

The access status of the majority of these records is 'closed', meaning researchers can view them with special permission from BCT, but I was not permitted to photograph documents. This had some benefits, in terms of encouraging close reading in the first instance of transcription, and prioritisation of material rather than amassing everything available. It also presented an obvious challenge when the COVID-19 Pandemic and government-mandated lockdowns began, as I was unable to access source material to check details and context. The COVID-19 pandemic curtailed the extent to which I could access the full range of archival records originally intended. While I was fortunate to have completed my survey of BCT's records, I was not able to interact with the archives in the manner I normally would. I could not go back to re-view documents, check understandings, transcriptions and surrounding contexts, or to follow up on any neglected leads.

I was also unable to view local government records due to the initial closure and the later extremely limited opening hours of the reading room during lockdowns. In some cases, such as 1970s Social Services Committee minute books, due to the presence

of sensitive personal data in some of the records, local authority records were also restricted, and the time necessary to seek and be granted approval on top of limited time to view the documents rendered this practically impossible. The original intention had been to use local government records to identify further narratives and government-voluntary action relationships, taking a more genealogical approach to archival assemblage.<sup>47</sup> Archival research includes an element of slow detective work, with many dead ends and misdirection, which requires considerable time. This was not possible, and as such it is not possible to say with certainty whether this element of the project, as originally designed, would have offered up further insight. In place of this archival research, I turned to the collection of Birmingham planning documents held in various sections of the University of Birmingham Library, which included a surprising range of documents from prominent Birmingham voluntary organisations such as Birmingham Settlement and Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC), and on regeneration programmes such as the Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP). These form source material for discussion, alongside BCT archives, in Chapter 7, which focusses on Birmingham ICPP. While material from Birmingham City Council archives may add depth to future projects, and there are some resulting gaps in the narrative here that may (or may not) have been possible to fill, the volume of material from the BCT archives and other contemporary reports still provide ample data for analysis.

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<sup>47</sup> Moore et al., "In other archives and beyond." Pp.16 – 17.

#### **4.8 On terminology**

The language of 'race' and ethnicity changed considerably over the period of study, and is continuing to change. Some organisations use Black as a political term to refer to all communities of colour living in a white supremacist society. Others specifically identify as African Caribbean, "Afro-Caribbean" or Asian. This language is also contested by communities of colour, with different and changing conceptions of power associated with it. This thesis does not engage to any great degree with this debate, as it would not do it justice, but acknowledges it where relevant, and is mindful of the impact on how organisations talk about themselves and others within the archives, at different stages in the period of study. State umbrella terms for communities and people of colour include 'ethnic minorities', 'multicultural' groups, and acronyms like BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic). In some material in the 1960s, some white individuals and academic research used racist language in correspondence and reports. This is indicated where necessary and relevant, but changed in this piece, in recognition of the micro-aggressive impact it could have on unsuspecting readers of colour. I have tried to use precise language to refer to specific, different communities here, guided by the language that Black- and Asian-led groups themselves have used rather than homogenous groups, although sometimes this has been necessary when describing government initiatives. This includes a number of South Asian organisations and commentators who identified as Black, referring to the political and racialised grouping rather than 'race'. In Chapter 6 and throughout, the phrase 'minority ethnic voluntary action field' is used to refer to a specific overlapping strategic action field of organisations run by and for people from Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds. This catch-all phrase is

used for the sake of brevity, and rather than 'Black' alone in recognition that not all groups identified with 'Black' as a political grouping, and that its acceptability and meaning as a political term changed over time. The word 'Black' is capitalised throughout in recognition of its status as a political grouping, rather than its reference to skin colour. The word 'race' is also recognised as a complex and contested one, and this thesis recognises its status as a constructed social institution, enacted by individuals and systems to produce real world effects, rather than a biological reality.<sup>48</sup>

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This section has outlined in brief some of the key underpinning approaches and beliefs for the project, and the practical methods and tools used to bring it to fruition. This includes both a belief in the strengths of an interdisciplinary approach, reflections on my own positionality as a researcher, and the processes of assembling and analysing an extensive body of archival data.

The value of this approach, while complex, is that it encourages us to think about *why* the Birmingham voluntary action field holds the beliefs, understandings and shared values it does, rather than assuming this as a taken-for-granted feature. These ideas were formed over time, and as a result of various internal and external pressures on the field, and as such the study *must* be historically situated. Historical inquiry and archival research, including the detailed focus involved in the act of archival recovery, combats the tendency of institutional theory to flatten and over-simplify the processes

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<sup>48</sup> Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack*; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and Racial Inequality in Contemporary America*, Third ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010). Afridi and Warmington, *The BME third sector*.

of meaning making, opposition and negotiation that shape the field. The focus on a local Birmingham field, rather than a national-level one, also brings attention to how policies were enacted on the ground, and how values were translated into action at the level of the local, where most voluntary action operates. Despite limitations relating to both the nature of archival research and the specific interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study has taken a detailed and systematic approach to examining a sub-section of the BCT archives. There remains much material on different subjects that provides a valuable resource for future research, and demonstrates the value of philanthropic records as a source for understanding people, policy and communities.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS - IDENTITY AND VALUES IN THE BIRMINGHAM VOLUNTARY ACTION FIELD**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The voluntary action field is shaped by a set of values and identities, that actors strategically prioritise, according to which might derive the greatest benefit to their field position. However, actors do not always define values in a consistent way. Rather, meanings are malleable according to organisations' own priorities and beliefs. There are many examples of values to which the field attached importance in the BCT archives, and material from different organisations demonstrates how these changed over time, in response to changing external and internal pressures on the field. The value of 'independence', for instance, was consistently demonstrated to be important to the Birmingham voluntary action field, and BCT used its 'field shaping' power to encourage organisations' political independence in particular. Values weren't necessarily held as important or considered a priority by all field actors, however. While some organisations adapted their practical governance arrangements to ensure this value could be enacted, others, such as the Balsall Heath Association in the 1970s, distanced themselves from any kind of campaigning role.

In the Birmingham voluntary action field, the value of being 'grass roots' was established as a constant across the whole period of study. This was, and continues to be, a value of importance to the voluntary action field beyond Birmingham too. However, archival material also shows how different interpretations of the meaning of 'grass roots' conflicted with one another, and how pressures to conform to other normative values and behaviours had an impact on an organisation's ability to retain

its grass roots credentials. This demonstrates how even values shared by the field, and which persist over time, were repeatedly contested, reworked or renegotiated.

This chapter shows which values and dimensions of identity were selected and promoted as normatively 'good' within the field, and how (or whether) those values and dimensions developed and changed as the field changed. It argues that identifying with these values – or rejecting them – is a strategic choice, as Macmillan has proposed previously, rather than an inherent feature of the voluntary character of organisations.

<sup>1</sup> It also suggests that the values seen as definitional may not, in fact, be fixed. Rather they will change as the field changes, and as it is pushed and pulled in different directions by internal and external pressures.

It also explores contradictions in the understandings and enactments of these values. The chapter critically examines how different groups of different kinds lay claim to the value of being 'grass roots', regardless of the extent to which they conformed to the behaviours and structures associated with such a value. This is illustrated through a case study of the Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC), which, in the early 2000s, struggled with its image of itself as grass roots while also responding to pressures to adopt managerial structures and processes. This particular case helps us to explore some of the contradictions in value claims made (specifically, the value associated with being 'grass roots') versus behaviours adopted. The value claims carry power in terms of lending legitimacy to the organisation, but the contradictory behaviours were in this case necessary to adopt in order to gain access

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<sup>1</sup> Macmillan, *"Distinction" in the third sector*.



to more material resources. This is illustrative of the kind of complex decisions and balances voluntary organisations need to make when considering their survival and position within the field.

## **5.2 Identity and values**

In the Birmingham voluntary action field, we can see organisations emphasising ways in which they are different, or indeed similar, to other organisations in the field, appealing to both shared and opposing values, ideas and practices. The ways in which they do this changes over time as the field changes, and the means of establishing legitimacy does too. Identity is constructed, expressed and strategically deployed by actors in a field, who seek to establish shared understandings of that identity that can help them entrench a favourable field hierarchy. Some conceptions of identity are conflicting, and some are directly constructed as a means for actors to distance themselves from an identity they wish to challenge or disrupt. Krause, describing processes in the international nonprofit humanitarian relief field, characterises claims to authority and legitimacy that result from stronger or weaker adherence to the set of values that matter to the field as constructs of 'purity' and 'pollution'.<sup>2</sup> Organisations lay claim to positions in the field based, in part, on how 'pure' they are and the extent to which they conform to the shared understandings of which values matter.<sup>3</sup> We can see similar processes in the Birmingham voluntary action field, as this chapter will explore.

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<sup>2</sup> Krause, *The Good Project*.

<sup>3</sup> In Krause's field of study organisations may differentiate themselves according to their degrees of independence from state or religious organisations, their method of working and the types of environments or causes with which they will and will not engage. Krause, *The Good Project*.

One of the more straightforward means of establishing identity can be found in how organisations refer to themselves, to others, and to the field they inhabit. As noted, this thesis is not concerned with engaging in debate about which is the ‘right’ term for describing the voluntary action field, but rather interrogating which terms are used over time, and to what end. Across the full period, organisations define themselves and others in practical terms with a range of different labels. Some relate to legal form – charity or charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), for instance – while others identify with names for collections of operational principles, such as co-operative or social enterprise. Within these references there are discussions of whether to register a legal form, some benefits and drawbacks of doing so, and in some cases difficulties in securing registration.

Phrases used to describe and define the field include voluntary sector, community sector, voluntary, development or community agencies, community and voluntary sector or movement, third sector and civil society. As one would expect from the national historiography, ‘charity’ and ‘community organisation’ are used consistently across the three main periods. Community or voluntary ‘agency’ had dropped out of use by 1997. ‘Voluntary sector’ was not found in these archives before 1979, and ‘third sector’ was not identified before 1997, also in keeping with their popularity in national policy, although some of these terms in fact have a longer lineage.<sup>4</sup>

While these labels may change over time, some of the values associated with the organisations that are classified under them remain remarkably constant. However,

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<sup>4</sup> Social Justice Policy Group, *Denying the vulnerable a second chance*. P.24

the meaning and implication of those values may change; they may come to mean different things to organisations and related stakeholders, and thus come to be enacted in different ways. Voluntary organisations have long been associated with developing 'innovative' approaches to social problems, but the implications and enactment of this changed between the first period of this study and during the course of the second. In the 1960s and early 1970s (and, indeed, before), 'innovative' approaches would be used to fill gaps in public services, with an aim of having those approaches incorporated into state-funded and delivered social services. By the early 1990s, voluntary organisations were expected to innovate new solutions, deliver them, be accountable for the results, and find funding for part or all of their continuation once government funding streams ran dry. This is one example of the changing implications and behaviours associated with a value, that might on the face of it seem enduring and static.

### *5.2.1 Shared values and changing meanings*

Values in this context are beliefs or dimensions of identity held to be intrinsic to the nature and operation of organisations in the field. They can have behaviours associated with them, or established ways of enacting or demonstrating them. They can also, in a different sense of the word, carry value in terms of power, reputation or other intangible resources. The values to which organisations lay claim have strategic value within the field. They are ways in which organisations 'sell' themselves, whether to funders, contractors, external influencers or members, gaining legitimacy or more material resources in return. They are important because they indicate what is important to the field as a whole, and they also work to structure it; organisations that

can successfully lay claim to values that matter can secure or improve their place in the field's hierarchy. Values, in this reading, have to be understood both theoretically and historically.

Many of these values are referred to repeatedly over the period these records cover; the values of voluntary action are expressed in many of the same terms in 1965 as in 2010. Some others seem to be stressed more strongly at different points, while some only emerge, or disappear, later on in the timeline. The uneven distribution of records across the three main divided time periods means we cannot draw any firm quantitative conclusions about what organisations did and did not see as intrinsic charitable values over time, but there are still some observations relating both to what is present in an organisation's communications with its funder, and the type of organisation BCT was funding. More importantly for this thesis, we can use the archival material to consider how the *meaning*, or implications, of these terms changed over time, even if the terms themselves were consistently in use.

In communications with BCT, groups promoted themselves with values such as commitment, expertise, being pioneering, respected, trustworthy and unique. A small number talked about the 'voluntary ethos' as a unique and valuable feature. Appeals were made to practical benefits of voluntary organisations, defined as being specialist, responsive, efficient, cost-effective or effective in practice, able to experiment, as having a good track record and being not-for-profit. Faith was also an important facet of identity, carrying shared values. Faith-based work funded included church-based projects, Sikh representative groups, Islamic groups and inter-faith work. These were

often linked to groups or projects representing immigrant populations across different faiths, and projects providing support and advice to those with English as a second language. Churches provided important infrastructure support, in the form of physical premises or links to communities. They also sometimes acted as channels for receiving grants for organisations not registered as charities when awarded BCT support.

In the first period – 1965-79 – ‘effectiveness’ was talked about in only a few instances, and in terms of getting things done (or failing to do so). It was not spoken of in the kind of semi-scientific terms of the later periods, with associated measurements and monitoring, but rather an abstract sense of seeing results over time. BCT’s reflection on the work of the Balsall Heath Association provides one example from the former period: “it can take a long time to show results: it seems to be generally agreed that the Balsall Heath Association is now, 5 years later, beginning to be effective.”<sup>5</sup> There are no references to being *cost-effective* in these earlier files. Moving through to the second period – 1979 – 1997 – we find more references to *cost-effectiveness* and *effectiveness* in other senses, or to other ends. For instance, a 1989 report *Bidding for Change?*, authored by the Birmingham Settlement, a resource-rich incumbent organisation in the local field, founded in 1899, noted the importance of track record for voluntary organisations, and of presence in communities.<sup>6</sup> It described the potential for voluntary organisations to engage in newly introduced models of competitive tendering for public service delivery, and noted that their perceived expertise and track

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<sup>5</sup> Letter: BCT Secretary to Barrow and Geraldine S. Cadbury Trust trustees 10<sup>th</sup> July 1969, *Handsworth Voluntary Organisations* MS 1579/2/3/1/34, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>6</sup> Jon Glasby, *Poverty and Opportunity: 100 Years of the Birmingham Settlement* (Warwickshire: Brewin Books Ltd. , 1999).

record might provide them an edge in tendering. Successful tenders and, crucially, delivery, would in turn enhance their reputation and effectiveness:

*Voluntary organisations have a good chance of success because they have a long history of providing services to people in need and they have accumulated experience in running businesses, either in the community or to support their own charitable work. Competing for the running of local authority services will serve to focus this experience and to show up remaining weaknesses, thus enhancing the work of the organisation overall. Successful fulfilment of public contracts will raise the standing of voluntary organisations with both the public and the private sectors and will open the way to more equal cooperation in future to benefit the interests of the community.<sup>7</sup>*

This was another example of the changing *implications* of a value association, even if the language of the value itself remained relatively constant. Effectiveness did not, by the 1990s, just mean reach, reputation and embedded action in a community, but rather business expertise and effectiveness on top of effective service delivery. The Settlement itself recognised the change in meaning and implication in the same report, and the change in the role of voluntary action. It argued that while practice had changed during the 1980s, the mindset of voluntary organisations had not necessarily kept up; 'In the Sixties and Seventies voluntary agencies were seen as likely to provide services ancillary to those of central or local government, now they are seen as providers or potential providers of those services themselves but the mental atmosphere in which they work has not caught up with the change.'<sup>8</sup>

Others, however, saw changing meanings and roles as an existential and practical threat to the voluntary action field. For instance, an unattributed comment on a 1985

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<sup>7</sup> Kunz, Jones, and Spencer, *Bidding for Change? Voluntary Organisations and Competitive Tendering for Local Authority Services*.

<sup>8</sup> Kunz, Jones, and Spencer, *Bidding for Change? Voluntary Organisations and Competitive Tendering for Local Authority Services*.

report proposing a new community strategy, and Community Development Unit for Birmingham cautioned that:

*institutions are still prone to dominate the scene and reluctant to relinquish their control. This has been true in the field of unemployment where the rapid institutionalization of every initiative has virtually suffocated self-help endeavours. An 'unemployment industry' (of professionals) is already here to match 'the race relations industry'. The same could happen in the field of recreation and community services.<sup>9</sup>*

This presented fears about an over-reaching proximate state field, and about the possible impact of normative isomorphism and the pressure to conform to service standards.

References to expertise, specialisms and ability to experiment throughout the archives reinforce established and accepted views about the values associated with voluntary action, in relation to public services, that are found in contemporary national reports such as the Wolfenden Committee report, published in 1978.<sup>10</sup> Birmingham Settlement, again, summed up many of these values, stating in a 1992 annual report:

*Voluntary organisations are able to innovate, to react quickly to need, and to speak out for disadvantaged clients who are increasingly marginalised from the rich fabric of our society. A truly democratic society is said to include a healthy voluntary sector.<sup>11</sup>*

A newsletter from the Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF) Union of the same year, in the same archival record, reiterated many of these values in an article on the

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<sup>9</sup> Report: 'Towards a Community Strategy for Birmingham', 1985, *Handsworth Riots*, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfenden, *The Future of Voluntary Organisations*.

<sup>11</sup> Report: Chairman Birmingham Settlement, 1992, *Birmingham Settlement*, File 6/3 [1998] MS 1579/2/6/4/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

growth of the voluntary sector and the emergence of contracts for services. It suggested they held a competitive advantage for voluntary sector organisations over others:

*The voluntary sector prides itself on its commitment, innovativeness, and drive – qualities, it must be said, which are essential if the sector is to succeed where others have failed.*<sup>12</sup>

Other organisations appealed to the value of being specialised, for similar reasons. In 1982 the Minorities Resource Centre in Saltley described its work in its annual report as highly specialised; ‘over 85% of MRC’s work... covers issues not normally covered by generalist advice agencies’.<sup>13</sup> Community Forum described, around 1981, Birmingham groups as having ‘[their] own particular experiences and... acquired specialised knowledge and expertise’ through working across a range of different activities. This, it argued, was positive, but that knowledge and expertise was not shared on a systematic basis through a city-wide framework, such as the one it was seeking funding for.<sup>14</sup> Together these examples demonstrate one way in which these values become strategically important: they positioned voluntary groups against competitors from other sectors, working in the same thematic field, but without the competitive advantage of voluntary action field values. However, this is a strategic use that was not so obvious earlier in the preceding period, when ‘succeeding where others

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<sup>12</sup> MSF (Manufacturing, Science, Finance) Voluntary Sector Newsletter – Special Feature: Contracts for Services, n.d., *Birmingham Settlement*, File 6/3 [1998] MS 1579/2/6/4/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>13</sup> Annual Report 1981/82, Minorities Resource Centre, 1982, *Minorities Resource Centre (MRC)*, Saltley, File JM/M/4, MS 1579/2/3/4/34, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>14</sup> Funding application to the Voluntary Services Unit, ‘Consultative Group on the Development on Local Voluntary Action, application for pilot project grant’, Community Forum, n.d., *Community Forum (CF)*, Birmingham, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.



have failed' was still more to do with identifying gaps in local services and seeking to fill them.

The ability to 'experiment' was also cited as an important value in the first two periods of study in this project. At this time, one role of voluntary organisations was seen to be to pilot new services, or services to fill particular gaps, with a view to these being adopted by statutory services if successful. As contracts for service delivery began to replace grants, with more prescriptive service delivery scopes, this role became significantly less prominent, as reflected in the lack of references to experimentation from 1997 onwards. This was, to some extent, predicted by Birmingham Settlement's 1988 *Voluntary Sector Bidding* report, which stated that among other relationship changes between voluntary organisations and local authorities, 'tighter financial controls will result in stricter evaluation of existing services and greater reluctance towards new ventures'.<sup>15</sup> This does not mean, though, that partnership of this kind was completely abandoned with the advent of competitive tendering. A proposal for a new purpose-built centre written by the Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre in 2000 included reference to a discussion with Social Services about the possibility of redirecting council funding 'as a result of the Centre taking over some areas of work which meet the aims of both organisations.'<sup>16</sup>

There were still references to innovation – as distinct from experimentation, but clearly

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<sup>15</sup> Draft report: 'The possibility of voluntary sector bidding for contracted-out authority services', 1988, *Birmingham Settlement, voluntary sector bidding*, File B/21 MS 1579/2/10/4/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>16</sup> Business Plan: Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre, 2000, *Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre (ACRC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/18/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

closely linked – in later periods. In some cases this was in regards to new technologies; the Asian Resource Centre, for instance, discussed the pros and cons of trialling website-based credit card donations systems in 2003.<sup>17</sup> More negatively, BCT also ended its funding of a project working with young Chinese women in Birmingham in 2001 based on its failure to demonstrate ‘innovative approaches to engaging young Chinese women in civic responsibility’.<sup>18</sup> However, ‘innovative’ in these cases did not mean the same as experimental, and the role of piloting new experimental services – a role borne of voluntary groups’ perceived ability to be more flexible and take more risks than their statutory counterparts – definitely fell away as, in fact, organisations of all kinds became more risk averse.

### *5.2.2 Contested priorities: the value of ‘independence’*

The value of ‘independence’ is cited as of fundamental importance across time, and indeed is a recurring theme in other contemporary voluntary sector literature. Voluntary organisations described their role as holding others, usually government, to account, empowering, involving or communicating knowledge from their community (geographical and interest-based), engaging in and affecting policy and politics (as well as being affected by), and fulfilling a democratic function. Tensions were noted too, between different roles, and where government or local council aims appear to take precedence over those of an organisation. In some cases, restrictions – or perceived restrictions – on activity created by charity registration, government funding and other

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<sup>17</sup> Meeting Minutes Asian Resource Centre 16 October 2003, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>18</sup> Meeting minutes Barrow Cadbury Trust 12 June 2001, *BCT/BCF termly meeting minutes 2001-2003* MS 1579/1/9/1/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

formal state structures posed a risk to organisations' sense of identity. This was most commonly expressed, by a number of different organisations, in discussions of an orientation towards service delivery rather than 'politics' or campaigning, which were seen as roles that were potentially in opposition to one another in the earlier periods of this study. It was felt that service roles, such as casework, advice or other social service, were separate from the campaigning and political consciousness work that some organisations engaged with, and that BCT was keen to fund.

In turn, this had implications for the construction of identity within this field, and the ways in which legitimacy was asserted. BCT acted in a 'field shaper' role here. While this may seem like a fairly benevolent, progressive act on the part of *this* funder – although opinions may differ between those of different political persuasions on the acceptability of the types of politics it was funding - the point here is that significant funders of fields regularly have a shaping effect upon them, in the ways in which their funding streams are structured and their priorities chosen. Where a local field is heavily or commonly funded by a specific funder, this could potentially lead to a homogeneity of practice, messaging, campaigning and more, as organisations reshape to become attractive to that funder, and gain legitimacy within the field. This is perhaps an uncontroversial assertion, but it is a role for which SAF theory does not account, while also a role that can fundamentally shape field practice and identity. Other theories including institutional isomorphism *do* provide a better account for this behaviour, and as such there is considerable utility in building these elements into a SAF theoretical framework.

We can see the way in which the value of ‘independence’, and the field legitimacy it carried, came into conflict with the desire for greater pragmatic legitimacy in the Birmingham voluntary action field, through discussions of charity registration. For some organisations, registration with the Charity Commission – a clear legal marker of charitable status and identity, and engagement with the state – posed a problem because it necessitated a division of activities, and potentially threatened organisations’ independence of voice. As well as the Afro Caribbean Self Help Organisation (ACSHO), which chose not to register (in the BCT Secretary’s words in 1977 ‘so that they need feel no inhibitions on the political front’), umbrella body Community Forum was deemed by BCT as a ‘representational and campaigning body whose activities would not meet the Charity Commissioners criteria for charitable status’ in 1980.<sup>19</sup> The issue was mirrored elsewhere in the country and at national level in the same era. Rob Waters, for instance, notes a necessary split between the radicalised Institute of Race Relations and its newspaper and campaign group the Race Today Collective in Brixton, London in 1974 ‘as a means of maintaining the IRR’s charitable status’.<sup>20</sup> Reflecting on his experiences during a witness seminar in 2009, Richard Fries also described a hostility from government towards campaigning in the 1980s. He noted a ‘growing tension about what charity law permitted in relation to political activities’, with restrictive interpretations and a small number of adverse decisions in cases against large charities.<sup>21</sup> He added, however, that the Charity

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<sup>19</sup> BCT Secretary to Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 13 April 1977, *Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO)*, File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/1/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.; BCT Meeting Minutes 7 December 1980, *Community Forum (CF)*, Birmingham, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>20</sup> Rob Waters, *Thinking Black*, Berkeley series in british studies, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> N. J. Crowson et al., "Witness Seminar: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain," *Contemporary British History* 25, no. 4 (2011). p.501

Commission in practice had very little interaction with charities, or powers to take action against them if its 'extraordinarily narrow view of what campaigning was permissible' was breached.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of enforcement, the fear of suppression and reluctance to register from these organisations reflects well the rhetorical power of this state field organisation.

BCT continued to fund organisations regardless of whether they were registered with the Charity Commission across the 1960s, '70s and early '80s. It also explicitly funded more 'political' campaigning, in the form of community organising and anti-racist initiatives. In this way, BCT can be seen as 'shaping' the local field, by actively encouraging such organisations to grow, and to help them to encourage more community action, further expanding the field. It may also have had a knock-on effect on the broader, national voluntary action field, by legitimising such action through providing funding, and promoting organisations' work in other ways. It was actively encouraging the kind of organising energy and community action groups inspired by community development literature and the issues raised by 'new social movements' in the 1960s.<sup>23</sup>

While other concerns about independence of voice arose post-2010, particularly around types of funding or legislation such as the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 (known as the Lobbying Act), this more fundamental definitional issue around registration and eligibility did not arise

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<sup>22</sup> Crowson et al., "Witness Seminar: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain." p.516

<sup>23</sup> Mold and Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s."

after the period 1979 - 1997.<sup>24</sup> This was in part due to the better incorporation of (non-party political) campaigning into official guidance around what constitutes charitable activity, providing it serves the charity's purpose. It may also relate to the introduction of the Compact between the voluntary sector and government in 1998, which affirmed charities' right to campaign, and finally reinforced by the introduction of a statutory definition of charity in 2006.<sup>25</sup> While this barrier may have fallen away, the issue of affiliating with the state through a key regulatory mechanism, and some of the challenges still associated with the paternalistic label 'charity', persisted. It is possible BCT funded fewer and fewer unregistered groups. It is also possible that as organisations engaged more with state funding, including tendering for service delivery contracts, it became more of a challenge to remain off the radar of the regulator and still have access to key funds.

What is evident in the archives is that BCT encouraged organisations to go beyond 'case work' to a more social change-focused activity when funded, in keeping with historical Quaker principles of tackling causes rather than symptoms of social ills.<sup>26</sup> While BCT never suggested that 'self help' work or case work was not legitimate, it actively worked to make campaigning, empowerment and community development work part of the legitimising activity and identity of organisations in the field. Again here we can see it acting as field-shaper.

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<sup>24</sup> Charitable Trusts West Midlands E-Bulletin Feb 2014, *Additional deposits of grant files MS 1579/2/24/1*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>25</sup> Home Office, *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*, Home Office (London, 1998); Debra Morris, "The heads of charity in comparative perspective," in *Research Handbook on Not-For-Profit Law*, ed. Matthew Harding (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers*.

Not all organisations saw their identity as a campaigning one, and some distanced themselves from ‘political’ action. The Assemblies of the First Born Church Community and Day Centre described itself as ‘explicitly non-political’ around 1986,<sup>27</sup> as did the Midland Chinese Association in 1987.<sup>28</sup> The Balsall Heath Association (BHA), first established in 1962 in premises on the now-demolished Varna Road, was strongest on this point. Discussing its approach in a 1970 annual review, BHA stated:

*In so far as Balsall Heath, as a deprived area, reacts in many ways as a delinquent community, conflict frequently arises between community and authority (housing, peace-keeping, etc.). If BHA entered community action it would have to “take sides” on many issues and to that extent lose its role as arbiter.<sup>29</sup>*

The report in which this appears focused on the organisation’s identity, and how it was trying to position itself as ideas of ‘community action’ were becoming more popular and political. It distanced itself, however, stating ‘BHA is committed to social service “good” in the area... this cannot normally be determined by popular vote as in community action.’ It is perhaps unsurprising that BHA’s origins were described as ‘in a good paternalist tradition’, intended as a positive, in this same report, given its reluctance to open up decision-making to local residents. The language of ‘delinquent’ communities in the 1970 report suggested this paternalistic approach, distanced the organisation

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<sup>27</sup> Assemblies of the First Born Church Community and Day Centre funding application to Barrow Cadbury Trust, 1986, *Handsworth/Lozells*, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/4/25, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>28</sup> Newspaper clipping 24 February 1987, *Midland Chinese Association (MCA)*, File JM/M/11 MS 1579/2/3/4/33, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Jenkinson to Barrow Cadbury Trust, report ‘A View of BHA’ 19 January 1970, *Balsall Heath Association (BHA): Mount Pleasant Centre Social Service Group* MS 1579/2/7/8/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

from the people living around it, and indicated that it may have already taken a side, in the minds of its leaders at least.

Even so, there may have been a difference of opinion on this point internally. In a report by BHA's Administrator slightly later in 1970, the view was expressed that the organisation had a role in managing relations with local government, at the very least:

*An Association, to be effective, must not only talk, provide projects and involve local co-operation, but must also be prepared to work on a much higher level in order to get things done. This inevitably means "politics" – not party politics, but the confrontation of officials with facts, plans, suggestions, etc. and being prepared to act as a pressure group when the situation demands.<sup>30</sup>*

BHA was struggling to find its identity, having been through a 'long period of decline and inactivity', and trying to fit itself into a new context. It was notably a white-led organisation working in an extremely diverse area of Birmingham, which included a large South Asian population, experiencing considerable change as slum clearance and rebuilding was undertaken. The uneasiness around campaigning indicated an uncertainty in its identity. It perhaps saw itself more as a 'critical friend' to local authorities, than as a representative mouthpiece for a community that may have, in parts, looked quite different to itself.

This example demonstrates the mix of views that existed within the Birmingham voluntary action field, and the negotiation of meaning and purpose that was a routine part of the field. BHA in some ways had access to the kind of cultural and social capital that afforded it some power and strength as an actor in the field. However, compared

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<sup>30</sup> Administrator's Report to the Annual General Meeting 3 February 1970, *Balsall Heath Association (BHA): Mount Pleasant Centre Social Service Group* MS 1579/2/7/8/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.



to other organisations in the archives, it struggled to adapt to changing values and meanings that the field held as important. It prioritised the symbolic capital brought by its relationship with incumbents and the local authority, over pursuing legitimacy through new', community action-based values. This was not the same interpretation of 'independence' held by other field organisations like ACSHO. The conflicting views *within* BHA, however, demonstrate an additional level of complexity and negotiation on top of this.

### **5.3 The value of a 'grass roots' identity**

The value of being 'grass roots' was important to a range of organisations, in different ways, throughout the archival material. The fact that this was a pervasive narrative is reflective of the kind of funder BCT was at this time, with a focus on Birmingham-based organisations, usually with some kind of campaigning mission, often small, and sometimes operating in areas where there was no other provision. It was, however, used with different meanings by different organisations, and was affected by the historical context in which it was used. In Birmingham, 'grass roots' action took on particular relevance, as a proposed remedy to various problems, in relation to increasing immigration, poverty and unemployment, and the Handsworth disturbances of 1981 and 1985, which feature heavily in the archive. This is important, because it underlines both the importance of studying the diversity of organisations that lay claim to the value of being 'grass roots', which SAF theory helps us to do, and of studying them in their historical context. The nature of agreement or disagreement about what is of value, and who can legitimately lay claim to a particular value, says something about the dynamics between members of the field, and of what mattered at what time.

In this case, it appears that the value of being 'grass roots' was agreed, but that actors' adherence to it – versus the claims they made to it - can be questioned.

Like many of the other terms and values discussed, the definition of 'grass roots' is contested and often blurry or imprecise. David Horton Smith defined grass roots associations, as a distinct group of nonprofit organisations, as 'locally-based, volunteer-run, nonprofit, common interest groups',<sup>31</sup> while Rochester suggests that individuals' participation in grass roots associations can be 'characterised as activism rather than unpaid help',<sup>32</sup> suggesting a further defining political element to the organisation type. Other research has considered the existence, role and survival of so-called 'below the radar' groups – those that do not appear on organisational registers such as local directories or the official charity register.<sup>33</sup> These may or may not be political, and may or may not provide services, but are likely to be fairly small in terms of resources (if not, perhaps, in terms of membership) and local, serving small populations within single estates or neighbourhoods. Grass roots can also act as a by-word for user or community-led, but not necessarily small or local - perhaps serving a national population with a specific political or demographic identity.<sup>34</sup> Being 'grass roots' can be seen as a value or organisational attribute that carries strategic worth.

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<sup>31</sup> David Horton Smith, "The International History of Grass roots Associations," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 38, no. 3–4 (1997): 189–216.

<sup>32</sup> Colin Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). p.179

<sup>33</sup> McCabe, A., & Phillimore, J. (2012). *All change? surviving 'below the radar': Community groups and activities in a big society.* (). Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre.

<sup>34</sup> Wells and Anasti also identify this problem of definition when interviewing a range of neighbourhood-level organisations in the USA providing both frontline services and lobbying activity, which describe themselves as 'grass roots' but without a consistent set of meanings attached. They also noted that in some cases a funder's idea of what 'grass roots' constituted might not align with an organisation's, highlighting issues with organising or campaigning styles in particular. Rachel Wells and Theresa Anasti, "Hybrid Models for Social Change: Legitimacy Among Community-Based Nonprofit Organizations," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2020).

The archival material certainly suggests that it was of worth to the Birmingham voluntary action field.

The blurriness of definitions of 'grass roots' is reflected in the way organisations deployed the term in the BCT archival material. While this may present problems for clarity of concept, it also highlights how flexible these definitions are, and how they can be used for different purposes, leveraging legitimacy in different ways. It also underpins the importance of understanding these values, and their changing uses, in their historical context. The idea of grass roots as a value, along with similar distinctions between 'mainstream' and 'radical' organisations, was commonly used to structure the Birmingham field, as witnessed through these archives. It was thus a value that had strategic, symbolic worth, although there were limits to this.

The difference between grass roots as a value and as a type of organisation is, perhaps, a small distinction, but one that becomes important when considering the focus of study; here we are looking at grass roots as a value claimed by some organisations within a broad voluntary action field, rather than grass roots organisations within a narrower grass roots field. As a value, grass roots can be claimed by organisations that may not be seen by others as part of a grass roots field; in some cases this might relate to certain projects or ways of working, or it may be co-optive – benefiting from positive associations of the value without really embodying it. One report published as part of the National Council for Independent Action's campaign, to critique and change the voluntary sector's approach to the dominant political ideology that had developed under New Labour and Conservative-led

governments between 1997 and 2015, took this further. It suggested there was a discernible 'predatory' pattern to the behaviour of large charities towards smaller grass roots ones, whereby innovative groundwork done by grass roots movements was subsequently taken over and profited from under government competitive tendering processes. This included using smaller organisations as 'bid candy' when charities submitted tenders for local and national service delivery.<sup>35</sup>

This kind of narrative is also apparent in analysis of government contracts for the Work Programme, where large companies used associations with smaller local charities to make their bids more attractive, often to the detriment of those small organisations.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, policy and campaigning literature suggests that smaller, more specialist providers of services such as support for women survivors of domestic violence – those that might identify as 'grass roots', in terms of geography, size and scope of work – have been pushed out of operation by more recent turns to service commissioning, as opposed to grant funding, and an intensification of competitive processes.<sup>37</sup> The example later in the chapter from the Birmingham Women's Association and Information Centre (BWAIC) is one case where this was perceived to play a part in the organisation's demise over time.

### 5.3.1 *Divided approaches*

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<sup>35</sup> Ursula Murray and Linda Milbourne, "The State of the Voluntary Sector: Does Size Matter? Paper 2" (London, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Rees, J. (2014). Public sector commissioning and the third sector: Old wine in new bottles? *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(1), 45-63.

<sup>37</sup> Andy Hirst and Sini Rinne, *The impact of changes in commissioning and funding on women-only services* (Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012). Polly Neate, "Domestic violence: what's easy for councils isn't always right for women," *The Guardian* 2013.

'Grass roots' was used by Birmingham organisations to demonstrate their own strength, and as a means to distance themselves from others, claiming (perceived) inherent superiority by dint of being grass roots. The Ashram Community Project, for instance, made the case for its overall value in a letter to leader of Birmingham City Council, Cllr Sir Albert Bore, in 1989, with reference to its 'uniquely' grass roots form: 'assessment of the Project's contribution has to be within its own right in this context, so that the uniqueness of its grass roots provisions and base can feature.'<sup>38</sup> The Ashram Community House had been established in 1976 in the Sparkbrook area of Birmingham, which it described in 1981 as 'an area of heavy unemployment and cultural alienation'.<sup>39</sup> It became a more formal organisation with an active programme from 1981, and remained an 'open house' for volunteers looking to do good work for some time. It described itself around the start of the 1990s as a 'radical Christian community in the inner city', and put an emphasis on its inter-faith work throughout its records.<sup>40</sup> However, its connection to a grass roots identity did not last, as it responded to pressures brought to bear by its own growth. It noted, around 1990, that the growth of the organisation had required it to introduce formal procedures that took it a little distance away from operations that could be identified as associated with grass roots as a value:

*Until 1988 Ashram Acres was run entirely voluntarily and always took pride in being unfunded. However, it was decided to try out the experience of having a paid worker and to test whether it could help the organisation to move into a*

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<sup>38</sup> Ashram Community Service Project to Cllr Albert Bore 9 April 1989, *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook, File EA/3/14 MS 1579/2/3/4/7*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>39</sup> Report 'Sparkbrook House: Responding to Needs', n.d., *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook, File EA/3/14 MS 1579/2/3/4/7 part 1*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>40</sup> Pamphlet 'Ashram Community House Sparkbrook' n.d., *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook - various papers MS 1579/2/7/3/4*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

*new stage of development. The need for greater structural strength was recognised by members if what had been started was to realise its full potential.*<sup>41</sup>

While still clearly identifying and promoting its worth as an organisation with grass roots values and operations, it had at this point begun to identify the benefit, or necessity, of also adopting other practices and behaviours that would allow it to lay claim to other attributes of value. In many ways it continued down this road in subsequent years, as it transformed into Ashiana, an organisation still at work today.

Other organisations prioritised the benefits and value of being grass roots over other pressures to adopt different practices. ACSHO, for instance, referenced its location and advocacy of community control as part of its identity, features that others would call inherent to grass roots groups; 'We live in our own district – therefore let us develop effective forms of community control.'<sup>42</sup> Community control is unlikely to mean control over the community in this context, but rather control *by* the community of resources that would allow it to flourish, rather than seeing these in the hands of external bodies without community knowledge. While ACSHO didn't use the word 'grass roots' itself, it was labelled as such by BCT.<sup>43</sup> Grass roots in this context could be seen as a euphemism used by more establishment organisations for Black, working class, user- or community-led, or similar. For its own part, it set itself up as distinct from other non-

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<sup>41</sup> Report 'Ashram Acres – into the future', n.d. *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP)*, Sparkbrook, File EA/3/14 MS 1579/2/3/4/7 part 2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>42</sup> Report 'Freedom For Our People – list of demands/programme 1971', *Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO)*, including the West Indian Federation (WIF) and Handsworth Debating Forum (HDF), File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/1/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>43</sup> Meeting minutes BCF Ltd March 11th 1973, *Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO)*, File 3/3 [folder 2] MS 1579/2/3/1/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

user led, 'do gooder' groups, who were 'creating more problems because they do not have a political programme which can solve the problems of black people.' These were not just paternalistic white groups, but those run by 'wishy washy black liberals, who sells us out.'<sup>44</sup> ACSHO was not, of course, the only ones to think this. A newspaper report in the *Asian Times*, written by a Handsworth-based group from the Asian Youth Movement on the Handsworth disturbances of 1985 stated that:

*At the same time, the Tory government's strategy of controlling the rebellious black community through institutionalising black struggle has reaped its benefits. A black middle class has emerged through state-sponsored bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality, Community Relations Councils and various ethnic officers and race advisers. A lot of these people tend to be 'radical' sounding types with affiliations to the Labour Party. However, although all of these claim to speak for black people, in reality they have no connection whatsoever with the community.*<sup>45</sup>

This is in keeping with other accounts of a rejection of or disillusionment with state approaches to addressing racism, including its potential to co-opt anti-racist struggle.<sup>46</sup> The account from ACSHO again drew a dividing line between those organisations that might claim to be associated with the value of being grass roots, and those that view them as divorced from the communities that form those roots. It spoke to issues of so-

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<sup>44</sup> Yearly Report 29th June 1978, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 2, File JM/A/1 MS 1579/2/3/4/3*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>45</sup> Newspaper clipping *Asian Times* Friday 4th October 1985, 'Our Readers Write... Handsworth rebellion: Show your solidarity – from Asian Youth Movement (Birmingham) c/o 101 Villa Road', *Handsworth Riots, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>46</sup> See Connell's description of A Sivanandan's efforts in the mid-1970s to rescue the London-based Institute of Race Relations from being simply 'a tool to "blunt the edge of black struggle"', and Hammond Perry's description of the short-lived but influential Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD). In the latter case, divided views on the relative merits of engaging with political apparatus versus building grass roots support caused one of its founders, Marion Glean, to quit in 1965, not long after its founding. In her view, the work of American grass roots groups, similar to some of the Birmingham groups featured here, 'were in fact "revolts against the old coloured [sic], legalistic bourgeoisie of the [American organisation The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] NAACP", and CARD should seek to emulate them, rather than their reformist cousins. Connell, *Black Handsworth*; Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me*.

called 'insider' versus 'outsider' campaigning, and the trade-offs necessary when trying to engage in multiple fields with different value sets at once.<sup>47</sup> In this case, those multiple fields might be the 'mainstream' voluntary action field, and a closely linked proximate minority ethnic action field. This is an issue we will return to in Chapter 6.

### 5.3.2 *Between the grass roots and the field: intermediary organisations*

A number of other organisations deliberately positioned themselves as an intermediary between the grass roots and decision makers, such as statutory organisations. The sample taken from the archives focuses on intermediary organisations, so this is perhaps unsurprising, but it is nevertheless interesting that the constituency they commonly claimed to represent or mediate for is 'the grass roots'. The South Aston Residents Association, for instance, set out in 1978 to encourage more voluntary action in South Aston, and had some success in mediating these relationships, as this quote from a 1980 progress report shows;

*Although the residents are keen and anxious to achieve results, the success of many of their activities has been largely due to friendly enthusiasm, encouragement and co-operation from a number of City officials and council departments. They have helped to quell the fears of rejection and disinterest between bureaucracy and grass roots organisations.<sup>48</sup>*

Community Forum, when applying for funding for a development worker, also noted the need to have a foot in both grass roots and statutory camps in 1989:

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<sup>47</sup> Mold and Berridge, "Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s."; Derek McGhee, Claire Bennett, and Sarah Walker, "The combination of 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies in VSO-government partnerships: the relationship between Refugee Action and the Home Office in the UK," *Voluntary Sector Review* 7, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>48</sup> Report August 1980 'South Aston Residents Association – Two Years Hence', *South Aston Residents Association/Community Project*, File EA/9/2/20 MS 1579/2/9/2/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.



*It is vital that the group has a strong grass roots base (hence the need for a development worker) but it is also vital that technical skills are on hand to work swiftly and effectively in the hard competitive spheres of development and local politics.*<sup>49</sup>

Ashram, likewise, saw its role around 1990 as providing 'a means of communication between grass roots individuals and organisations and two major bureaucracies.'<sup>50</sup> SAND Castle, a project of the South Aston Church Centre beginning in 1978 as a 'response to the needs of the area', included in its stated aims in a 1983 report; 'To encourage and enable new levels of 'grass roots' co-operation to be initiated in the neighbourhood.'<sup>51</sup> BCT itself also initiated, or involved itself heavily in, projects to generate more community organising in so-called 'twilight areas' of Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath, and considered similar in Handsworth, in 1969.<sup>52</sup> Other initiatives, such as one on the Pineapple Estate in South Birmingham in 1979, Shard End from 1986, and another in Quinton in 1987 were initiated by local council teams, with an aim to generate more grass roots community action.<sup>53</sup> Much later, under the Conservative-led Coalition Government after 2010, a Community Organisers programme sought to do something similar, albeit administered from a central government level rather than

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<sup>49</sup> Funding application 26 October 1989 'Joint application to Cadburys Trust by Birmingham for People and Community Forum', *Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, File EA/7/41* MS 1579/2/7/6/16, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>50</sup> Funding application to Nuffield Foundation major grants, n.d., *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook, File EA/3/14* [part 2] MS 1579/2/3/4/7, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>51</sup> Report 1983, *South Aston Church Centre (SACC)* MS 1579/2/7/3/42, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>52</sup> 'Twilight areas' was a phrase introduced by London County Council Housing Chairman W. Fisk in a 1956 speech to a Town and Country Planning Association summer school. Jim Yelling, "The development of residential urban renewal policies in England: planning for modernization in the 1960s," *Planning Perspectives* 14, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>53</sup> *Handsworth voluntary organisations* MS 1579/2/3/1/34; *Pineapple Estate, Stirchley, File EA/7/45* MS 1579/2/7/2/30; *Shard End Community Project (SECP), File 5/16/3* MS 1579/2/5/5/6; *Quinton/Woodgate Valley North Neighbourhood Project (QWVNNP), File EA/7/94* MS 1579/2/7/3/31, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

a local one, and focused on funding individuals rather than collective action.<sup>54</sup> Some commentators, however, saw this kind of initiative as a cover for cuts to state funding for services.<sup>55</sup> Civil Exchange also highlighted that this and other programmes under the 'Big Society' umbrella worked better in more affluent areas, with existing strong civil society, and not those previously termed 'twilight areas'.<sup>56</sup>

The fact that a Conservative-led government had adopted, or co-opted, the language of organising, underlines the point about the changing meaning or implications of terms used. Previously this had been presented as a progressive radical concept, but here the underlying ideology was that of the conservative conception of 'self help' – itself a contested and changing term. Thus the inherent 'good' associated with these terms needs regular re-evaluation to understand the political motivation of promoting them as 'good'. The experience of the Birmingham voluntary action field shows how important funders and other organisations thought organic community 'grass roots' action was, but also demonstrates an inherent contradiction that lay in organisations' views of the need to prompt or facilitate such action from above.

Birmingham Settlement also developed a 'Community Facilitators' programme in the late-1990s, pre-dating the 2010 Coalition Government's Community Organisers but based on a similar model. The incumbent organisation did not make claims to being a grass roots group itself, as a formally registered charity of considerable size and

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<sup>54</sup> Marjorie Mayo, Zoraida Mendiwelson-Bendek, and Carol Packham, "Learning to take part as active citizens: emerging lessons for community organising in Britain," *Voluntary Sector Review* 3, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>55</sup> Caroline Slocock, *The Big Society Audit 2013* (London: Civil Exchange, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Slocock, *The Big Society Audit 2013*.

influence in Birmingham and further afield, but did present its approach and work as grass roots. As stated in its 1999 centenary review, 'This combination of innovative social policy development and effective grass-roots project delivery has been characteristic of the Settlement's role over the years.'<sup>57</sup> In a 2006 review of the organisation, in light of a funding application, we can see this posed a problem for BCT, which alluded to issues mentioned above of more established organisations benefiting from the effort, legitimacy or perceived authenticity of grass roots groups, while performing a more administrative role:

*Birmingham Settlement is a second tier development agency that is well established. In terms of the Community Facilitators programme the Settlement were essentially the lead/co-ordinating body as opposed to the actual delivery agent. The Community Facilitators were actually sourced through smaller more grass roots organisations such as Aston Youth Forum, Young Disciples and Bangladeshi Youth Forum etc. This raises an interesting dilemma for the Trust, whether to inject money into a co-ordinating body to assist in the overall management of a project or provide direct resources to the grass roots groups delivering the work on the ground.*<sup>58</sup>

On the one hand, Birmingham Settlement could be seen as providing a valuable service that enabled grass roots groups to fulfil their purpose, and receive funding for it, without having to meet requirements of project management and other 'professional' functions. On the other, as BCT implied, it could be seen as diverting funds from those groups themselves. Birmingham Settlement could be seen as benefiting from association with the value of grass roots, by working with small community-serving organisations, gaining legitimacy by doing so, and in the case of this specific project gaining state funding as a result. It did not need to demonstrate any grass roots

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<sup>57</sup> Centenary Review 1999, *Birmingham Settlement, part 3, File B/8 MS 1579/2/3/11/3*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>58</sup> BCT Birmingham Settlement Review 26 June 2006, *Birmingham Settlement MS 1579/2/22/1/1*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

credentials in practice itself, and as a large registered charity and company might struggle to describe itself as grass roots. It still gained that legitimacy and financial benefit, however.

The role of the Settlement could well have helped those small, more clearly grass roots organisations to preserve their grass roots status and nature, by taking on the administrative burdens of state funding, allowing them to focus on serving their communities. Thus their position is not automatically a cynical one, or of detriment to those small groups. We do not have the voice of the small groups here to understand their own experience of navigating these situations. The case below, however, of BWAIC, provides a different example of an organisation struggling to hold onto its own grass roots identity in a field of more established, and better funded, actors, and ultimately losing its struggle for survival.

### *5.3.3 Case study: navigating identities in the Birmingham Women's Association and Information Centre*

The Birmingham Women's Association and Information Centre (BWAIC) consistently identified as grass roots, but also engaged in the kinds of activities and behaviours that other local groups may have considered the opposite, such as commissioning and the introduction of internal bureaucratic structures. This example is from later in the overall period – with material covering 1999 to 2009 - and so may reflect changes in what would be considered to fall under the definition of grass roots. It may also present a conflict within this definition. The case study connects to literature discussed in Chapter 3, regarding sources of legitimacy and choices made to trade off legitimacy from one

source in favour of legitimacy from a different source. In this case, as in the case of BHA above, BWAIC had to navigate the conflict between the legitimacy derived from being perceived to be grass roots, and the legitimacy that came from adopting professional, managerial structures and processes.

Figure 1: Case study: the Birmingham Women's Association and Information Centre

In a letter to BCT in 2009, the Birmingham Women's Association and Information Centre (BWAIC) wrote:

*The "Third Sector" is now expected to transform itself into a community of social enterprises and in 06/07 BWAIC generated £9,500 in fees from consultancy and public speaking contracts. But it is unrealistic to suggest that the £80,000 needed to survive 2009/2010 could be raised without effecting the purpose and ethos of this small grass roots agency. We wish to avoid falling into the trap of becoming a salary generating machine rather than a genuine agent for change.<sup>59</sup>*

This expressed the sense of frustration of an organisation working in the Birmingham voluntary action field, as well as the wider national voluntary action field. It was a frustration that reflected the challenges groups faced in balancing their own values and interpretations of activism and being 'grass roots' with different articulations of values and priorities from elsewhere in the field. It highlighted, for instance, the tension between pressures to conform to the value of 'professionalism' and the associated behaviours such as maintaining paid staff positions, and what an organisation might have to sacrifice in terms of other values in order to fund these.

The letter was written shortly before BWAIC was forced to close due to lack of resources. We do not have a full record of the organisation from the BCT archives,

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<sup>59</sup> Letter to BCT 1 March 2009

which only begin in 1999, 16 years after the organisation was founded. The records we do have, which offer detailed commentary by the organisation's Chief Executive, demonstrate the tensions that lay in conflicting understandings of the value of being 'grass roots' in the Birmingham voluntary action field, and of the difficulty of trying to balance this value with others. This case study has been presented partly because of the strength of the archival record, which presents an unusual account of an organisation's closure. It did not survive the pressures it faced and it discussed these pressures frankly with funders and others. It is a good example of an organisation having to navigate contradictions inherent in different values. By adopting formal, managerial structures, it put itself at risk of losing its self-described identity as a 'grass roots' organisation. The case study also presents a perception that other, more powerful organisations were benefiting from the association with the value of 'grass roots', without embodying it. Finally, it is an illustration of the pressures exerted upon an organisation that is a member of multiple fields – the Birmingham voluntary action field, a wider national voluntary action field, and a women's sector-specific field.

BWAIC was established in 1983 'by a group of local women who were concerned about the lack of provision/services for women subjected to domestic violence.'<sup>60</sup> It provided advice, information, training, crisis support, self-help groups and volunteering opportunities, with an estimated 150 women per month accessing its front-line services in 2005. It clearly identified itself as a 'bridge' between the grass roots community of women it served and funders such as BCT. Staff writing the reports that made their

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<sup>60</sup> BWAIC application to BCT Strategic Futures Programme, n.d., *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

way to BCT saw their role as one where they could provide information to women on a level they understood, and inform organisations of issues of importance that women themselves highlighted.

BWAIC positioned itself throughout the records in BCT's archives – which begin in 1999 – as a challenger organisation, distinct from more 'mainstream' national women's organisations and others working in their subfield. It drew legitimacy from this distinction, and specifically its connection to the grass roots. By the organisation's own account, the value it brought was the voice of women themselves:

*Long term commitment to participation has created a sense of shared ownership making BWAIC a trusted voice for "grass roots" women.<sup>61</sup>*

It was a reputation that was also endorsed by BCT in 2004 when assessing their grant application for the funder's limited Strategic Futures core funding programme:

*It is clear from both the information presented and from the report that BWIAC is an organisation that has access to a large number of grass roots working class women who utilise the services on a regular basis. BWIAC have developed good rapport and relations with their service users.<sup>62</sup>*

However, what is presented here in both cases is an organisation that involved and represented its service users effectively, rather than one that was run directly by them (and the curious reference to 'grass roots' women might indicate a strong desire to have this concept embedded as strongly and as often as possible in people's minds). If this was the case, the organisation's grass roots identity was somewhat different to that of organisations such as ACSHO, the local residents associations or, to a lesser

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<sup>61</sup> BWAIC Development and Strategic Business Plan 1999, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/8/4, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>62</sup> BWAIC application to BCT Strategic Futures Programme.

extent, Ashram, described earlier. By user-led we here mean controlled directly by those they sought to represent, so there is no division between the people running the group and the people it serves – they are one and the same. ACSHO fits this model, but BWAIC did not appear to from the material available, nor from its own description from itself. However, as we shall see, it still involved users in its operations (and may have done at a governance level too, it is unclear), and lay claims to being user-led as a result. This demonstrates that the concept of user-led, just as with grass roots, is another disputed and slippery one, and one with strategic worth.

It is important to note that material relating to BWAIC is from a later period than other organisations such as ACSHO, and so describes an organisation that had been through national-level policy shifts towards commissioning service delivery from the voluntary sector. This may well have had a profound impact on what ‘grass roots’ meant and looked like in practice, as well as on the field as a whole. Nevertheless, the difference is quite stark when reading the material.

BWAIC was certainly not an organisation existing ‘below the radar’ of statutory or other voluntary organisations, with direct links to representative forums at a local, regional and national government level. It was political, in its own eyes, although BCT suggested this was more of a side line than a central agenda. In the same 2004 grant application assessment, it compared BWAIC to the Black Women’s Network in Birmingham. BWN did not provide services to women, unlike BWAIC, but did provide ‘a vital and unique resource for agencies working on race and gender issues’. The difference between the organisations, according to BCT, was that ‘one is geared



towards providing frontline services to victims of domestic violence whilst the other is more strategically placed and based on equality practice, mainstreaming and anti-discriminatory service provision.’<sup>63</sup> It is possible that the organisation did not secure the right resources to build up this political clout, as it itself suggests, or that the balance within the organisation’s work increasingly skewed towards service delivery, rather than campaigning for better services. Again, this does not stop it being an organisation with the grass roots values to which it laid claim, but rather suggests a context in which it may have struggled to realise them.

Indeed, parallel to this statement of a grass roots identity, the organisation also engaged explicitly in professionalisation processes and in forms of government contracting that were developing during the New Labour administration. While this does not negate the former claims to legitimacy through the value of grass roots, it does present some conflicts for the organisation. From an external, analytical perspective, it takes it further from a ‘purer’ form of grass roots association - although this may have had the potential to improve its position within the voluntary action field, through engaging with these developing and profitable sector-wide formats and functions. For BWAIC, examples of some of these processes include the development of a ‘Development and Strategic Business Plan’ in 1999, which featured plans to secure continuation funding for two existing paid employees and expand to two more, and ‘phased operational plans’ in subsequent years.<sup>64</sup> As with organisations discussed previously, effective planning is not the point of interest here, but the adoption of

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<sup>63</sup> BWAIC application to BCT Strategic Futures Programme

<sup>64</sup> BWAIC Development and Strategic Business Plan 1999

business language and metrics around effective programme management, indicating a level of developing normative professionalisation suggested to be typical of organisations at this time.<sup>65</sup>

The organisation itself recognised the impact of professionalisation on the field. In a 2002 progress report to BCT, for instance, it acknowledged the pressure that this drive to conform to standards had put upon organisations. It also, however, noted the benefits of conforming:

*The professionalisation of the sector has placed enormous pressure on small organisations like BWAIC but we are now reaping the fruits of our labours. A portfolio of policies is in place complimented [sic] by the skills to use it as a tool to disseminate the user led model that BWAIC is so proud of. Our application for increased funding from the City Council was successful and the grant will continue to increase from £6100 to £23000 by April 2003.*<sup>66</sup>

Again, the reference to being 'user led' here does not refer to the same kind of meaning as ACSHO and similar organisations might ascribe to it, although we do not have the full detail of their model, only references to valuable volunteers. This comment was made specifically in the context of having to secure a Community Legal Services Quality Mark in order to receive future grant funding from Birmingham City Council (BCC), in line with new national legislation on advice services. This in itself provides some indication of the methods and nature of professionalisation in the voluntary action field.

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<sup>65</sup> Colin Rochester, "Regulation: The Impact on Local Voluntary Action," in *Voluntary Organisations and Social Policy in Britain*, ed. Margaret Harris and Colin Rochester (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> BWAIC Review for BCT, 1 October 1999, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

BWAIC commented that ‘administrative responsibilities take workers away from more productive activities. Recent initiatives to “professionalise” the sector by introducing quality systems have exasperated [sic] this situation.’<sup>67</sup> In response, the organisation sought to improve its governance and structure, to better prepare it to meet these field-external demands for system and practice norms. It also specifically noted in 2001 the challenge of meeting quality mark requirements, particularly around consistency of service, as a largely volunteer-run service – evidence of a further tension between maintaining a grass roots identity and practice, and financial pressures to move away from such a model.<sup>68</sup> Later on, in 2007/08, the organisation had a service level agreement with BCC, amounting to about half their total income in 2007.<sup>69</sup> By this time, this would have been a common contract between commissioner (the council) and service provider (BWAIC) and likely came with significant reporting requirements. Indeed, the organisation had already highlighted in 2000 the strain of these requirements, including tracking ‘success rates’, keeping case files and justifying funding as part of an auditing period.<sup>70</sup>

To some extent, the organisation also pushed back against these processes. There was some worry in 2002 about whether this increased funding was entirely a good thing, in terms of independence and dependency. There was a perceived need

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<sup>67</sup> BWAIC Review for BCT, 1 October 1999

<sup>68</sup> BWAIC Minutes, 12 February 2001, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>69</sup> BWAIC Accounts 31 March 2008, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)* MS 1579/2/16/8/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>70</sup> BWAIC Minutes 4 October 2000, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

expressed to secure independent funding so that the advocacy elements of the organisation could continue. This point was made in an application for further continuation funding from BCT, so it is perhaps unsurprising that the organisation was highlighting the elements of work that could not be funded from government sources, but it does demonstrate an understanding and ambition to keep these elements alive. It added, in this application, that without independent funding ‘The organisation would lose its capacity **“to engage in the process of consultation, research with users, policy influence, partnership development, organisation profile and lobbying”**’ (original emphasis). The highlighted section referred directly to research undertaken and published by central government’s Active Communities Unit, suggesting the organisation was trying to highlight the importance government claimed to place on such activities, without providing corresponding funding. This shows how the value of being ‘grass roots’ carried implications for organisations that were contingent on the political and policy context of the time. In this case, organisations were valued for their connection to the community and ‘grass roots’, but were expected to mobilise that connection to help government develop its aims often at their own cost. This was a lot of pressure to put on groups – and communities - that might not have significant resources to dedicate to making politically-defined ‘use’ of this value.

BWAIC also criticised the short-term nature of funding, unsurprisingly given the challenges it had to face itself as grants expire. One such grant from the Community Fund which ended in 2003 precipitated a loss of one full time post, volunteers who

were left without management, and its own physical premises.<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere it highlighted problems with other aspects of the nature of funding, including the technical skills needed to navigate systems:

*Complex strategies, massive budgets, unfamiliar language and lack of experience of the rules and techniques of participation leave grass roots representatives at a distinct disadvantage. BWAIC has spent a long time gaining an understanding of the historical background. We have witnessed “the changing landscape” and have had to keep pace with the times by identifying new networks, platforms and vehicles to articulate the collective needs of women.*<sup>72</sup>

In addition, writing in a 2004 annual report, the organisation claimed that ‘because we have been doing this work for ten years we can hardly call it innovative or new, which makes it extremely hard to secure resources for continuation’. The value of ‘innovation’ was difficult to secure and demonstrate for an organisation also trying to demonstrate continuing need and a track record of grass roots community service. Showing further evidence of critical engagement with these concepts, in a 2005 progress report to BCT it criticised the New Labour government’s Change Up strategy, designed to drive professionalisation standards to improve organisations’ ability to deliver public services, warning it had the potential ‘to drive small agencies into yet more unsatisfactory partnerships in order to survive’.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the organisation instead showed a commitment to more values-based partnership and collaboration, and a rejection of competition, when deciding whether to seek funding in 2008:

*[A]n application to ‘Capacity Builders’ to enable us to assist organisations to make policy development sensitive to the needs of Black Minority Ethnic and Refugee women was abandoned when BWAIC was approached by WAITS*

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<sup>71</sup> Annual Report 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)*, File B/7 MS 1579/2/16/7/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>72</sup> Application for continuation of funding BCT 23 April 2002

<sup>73</sup> Annual Report 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004

*[West-Midlands based organisation Women Acting In Today's Society] to support their application to the same grant maker. Because we did not want to compete with a BME women's organisation for such funding we provided a letter of support to WAITS.<sup>74</sup>*

Taken together, the behaviours BWAIC was being asked to engage with can be seen as additional skills and values necessary to maintain existence and position in the changing, developing, voluntary action field. Its response – for the most part reluctant acceptance – can be seen as indicative of the complex decisions charities such as BWAIC would have to navigate, balancing mission, values and survival.

BWAIC existed within a sub-field of women's organisations, including national organisations, alongside the Birmingham-specific field. This meant it faced pressures from multiple fields to adopt specific behaviours, values and understandings. It had to balance these against one another, and navigate their contradictions. This led to tensions between the Birmingham group and other national-level actors. BWAIC claimed that the large, well-resourced organisations in the national fields were essentially exploiting organisations in local fields, like itself. It argued that 'the social and economic exclusion of women is mirrored within "grass roots" groups'.<sup>75</sup> It repeatedly stressed the strain it felt partnerships put upon it, and the lack of reciprocal support:

*Given recent experiences we would not commit to unequal partnerships. We are a grass roots group who have developed the skills, knowledge and confidence to lobby but cannot secure the resources to use them, which is disheartening. We feel that the national lobbying groups are exploiting the grass roots groups. We have provided the people; the evidence, the labour; the*

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<sup>74</sup> Report to the Barrow Cadbury Trust and BWAIC management February 2008 *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)* MS 1579/2/16/8/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>75</sup> BWAIC Development and Strategic Business Plan 1999.

*expertise; the heat and light etc, which has ultimately justified their existence and left us as poor as our clientele.*<sup>76</sup>

Again, there is an unintended suggestion here that this group's definition of grass roots, and indeed of user led, may differ from that of others; the somewhat paternalistic comparator 'as poor as our clientele', and the suggestion that the organisation's difficulties are of an equal nature or scale to those of its service users do not sit comfortably with other associations with or features of being grass roots. The last two references are from documents written ten years apart (1999 and c.2009) but by the same person, and offering a continuity in the contradictions between descriptions and meanings described above.

Unfortunately, in this case, the organisation ended up with the worst of both worlds; a lack of resources and power associated with being grass roots, and increasingly burdensome bureaucratic requirements of delivering time-limited government contracts. This led to its closure in 2009. The organisation lay part of the blame at the door of their statutory funders:

*Despite government promises of "full cost recovery" for third sector providers, since 2007 we have struggled to provide city-wide "Open Door" front line services to 2000 women for £26,800 per year. And as if to "add insult to injury" in September 2008, the landlord, Birmingham City Council, doubled the rent.*<sup>77</sup>

It is unfortunate that records for the period of the organisation's existence between 1983 and 1999 are not available through archives; this would shed more light on

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<sup>76</sup> Final Progress Report, n.d., *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)* MS 1579/2/16/8/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>77</sup> Letter to BCT 1 March 2009, *Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)* MS 1579/2/16/8/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

whether these two competing identities or behaviour sets – grass roots and professionalism - existed in tandem from the beginning, or developed over time. They are, however, *typical* of their time in terms of sector-wide professionalisation narratives in the first half of their existence, as highlighted in literature elsewhere.<sup>78</sup> This case study is a useful illustration of how narratives associated with these different values developed, the way in which they were renegotiated when they came into conflict, and, for one organisation at least, the practical consequences.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This section has described values of shared importance to the Birmingham voluntary action field. These values were not unique to the Birmingham field; the values highlighted here, such as being ‘grass roots’, independence and innovation, are mirrored in discourses at a national level, as well as in other countries. The tension involved in balancing behaviours associated with the value of being ‘grass roots’, and those of being ‘professional’, is similarly highlighted in work by Myrl Beam on Queer homelessness charities in America. Their study found that the drive to meet field-wide norms of professionalisation could see grass roots elements of work sacrificed to meet necessary conditions for funding.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, one interviewee in Wells and Anasti’s neighbourhood study of grass roots and non-grass roots organisations argued that it was possible to be both grass roots and ‘professional’, and to demonstrate legitimacy

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<sup>78</sup> e.g. Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership."; Ralph M. Kramer, "Change and continuity in British voluntary organisations, 1976 to 1988," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 1, no. 2 (1990); Thane, "Voluntary Action in Britain Since Beveridge."

<sup>79</sup> Myrl Beam, *Gay, Inc: The Nonprofitization of Queer Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).



to stakeholders interested in either or both. However, they also acknowledged that this was 'a constant struggle that can be exhausting'.<sup>80</sup>

The criticism levelled by BWAIC against national organisations perceived to benefit from the association with the value of grass roots, without modelling the associated behaviours, was also highlighted in Wells and Anasti's study. Non-grass roots organisations could use partnerships with those that did hold a perception of grass roots legitimacy to demonstrate their own involvement with the community.<sup>81</sup> Finally, government-initiated voluntary action in the 1980s, such as that highlighted in Quinton, Saltley, Handsworth and other 'twilight areas' of Birmingham, was not limited to the UK: for instance, Susan M. Chambre identified in her 1997 study a set of 'quasi-nongovernmental' HIV/AIDS organisations that had been set up initially by state bodies, but with the form and logics of nonprofits, in areas of New York City that were underserved by organically-formed voluntary organisations.<sup>82</sup>

This chapter has also highlighted the role of BCT as a 'field shaper' in Birmingham. This role is not one that is described in Fligstein and McAdam's theory, but it naturally fits an organisation like BCT.<sup>83</sup> As a philanthropic funder, rather than a service or campaign-focused voluntary organisation, it sits somewhat separately from other field actors. It was, however, heavily invested (literally and metaphorically) in supporting the field, and its agreed settlement. Its actions could be profoundly influential on the field,

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<sup>80</sup> Wells and Anasti, "Hybrid Models for Social Change."

<sup>81</sup> Wells and Anasti, "Hybrid Models for Social Change."

<sup>82</sup> Susan M. Chambre, "Civil Society, Differential Resources, and Organizational Development: HIV/AIDS Organizations in New York City, 1982-1992," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1997).

<sup>83</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

both in terms of what it funded and what it did *not* fund. Thus, it held a shaping role, and the field was shaped by its decisions and strategies.

Looking at the Birmingham field shows different ways in which these values were negotiated, agreed, contested and played out in practice. In SAF theory terms, these add up to a shared understanding of the terrain of the field for the voluntary action field. It also indicates what was of symbolic worth, and in some cases how that can be translated into more material resources. While many of the values are enduring, including independence, being not for profit, having expertise and community links, being effective, and being grass roots, their meanings and implications for practice were not. These are concepts that can be filtered through different ideological lenses, and deployed strategically by both field actors and the proximate state field to different ends. They are also historically contingent; the meanings of grass roots, independence, innovation and other values that persisted across the whole period, were dependent upon the changing context of life in Birmingham at the time they were being enacted. They were mediated through proximate state field policy, but also through local contexts of poverty, demographic change, regeneration, unrest and more.

Tensions between grass roots as a value and as a behaviour have been noted, both from a historical perspective and from the perspective of organisations at the time. This links closely to discussions of independence, and raises questions of the balance between the two values. None of the examples used above negate concerns that grass roots groups in these records and elsewhere were going without the support they

wanted or needed. Neither does it mean that grass roots organisations cannot be funded from government sources. As the treasurer of Birmingham For People wrote to BCT in 1992, a lack of support was seen to carry significant consequences; ‘unless efforts are made to look for new solutions the grass roots of voluntary action will wither and die.’<sup>84</sup> Rather, the examples demonstrate how organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field navigated these tensions over time, from BHA’s adherence to its founding values and resistance to the changing local context it found itself in in the 1960s, to the pressures exerted upon BWAIC to balance the demands of professionalism versus its grass roots identity.

Understanding these in a field context allows us to see them as processes negotiated by different actors across the field, in order to preserve or improve their position within the field, in response to changing, historically-situated conditions.

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<sup>84</sup> Letter from Barry Toon, Treasurer, Birmingham for People to BCT 9 March 1992, *Birmingham for People/West Midland Technical Aid* MS 1579/2/7/6/4, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS - SYMBOLIC CAPITAL, LEGITIMACY AND THE RACIALISATION OF THE FIELD

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the argument that organisations exist across multiple fields, and that this means they have to make strategic choices about which sources of legitimacy to pursue, and which sets of values to align themselves with. The chapter will focus specifically on the racialisation of the Birmingham voluntary action field, and the ways in which it enhanced or restricted actors' power and position within the field. As noted in Chapter 3, the role and experiences of Black-, Asian- and other minority ethnic-led organisations are under-researched in voluntary sector studies in the UK, especially in the context of the sector as a whole. There are valuable studies of individual organisations and movements, of Black-led organisations and their role in wider debates, and some specific studies that position the 'Black voluntary sector' as a specialist or niche group of organisations.<sup>1</sup> These are important studies, but the relationships and interactions between field organisations racialised as white and those racialised as Black, Asian or other ethnic minority are somewhat neglected.

In the local context of Birmingham, race and ethnicity are key issues of perceived policy importance at this time as minority-ethnic populations in the city were growing, and Black- and South Asian-led voluntary organisations became involved in local

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica White, "Child-centred Matriarch or Mother Among Other Things? Race and the Construction of Working-class Motherhood in Late Twentieth-century Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* (2022). Shabna Begum, "A struggle of memory: the history of the Bengali squatters movement," *Runnymede Trust*, 2021, accessed 07/05/2022, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/a-struggle-of-memory-the-history-of-the-bengali-squatters-movement>; Ramamurthy, *Black Star*; Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me*; Waters, *Thinking Black*; Connell, *Black Handsworth*; Tilki et al., "The BME third sector: marginalised and exploited."; Craig, "Forward to the past: can the UK black and minority ethnic third sector survive?."; Afridi and Warmington, *The BME third sector*.

conversations, to varying degrees.<sup>2</sup> The BCT archives contain substantial records for some of Birmingham's organisations, as this was also a concern for BCT across the whole period covered by this study. As such, this provides a valuable opportunity to explore these issues in depth. Discussion here is also reflective of the evidence generated during the study; the study itself was not designed explicitly as a study of the racialisation of voluntary organisations, but this issue emerged as a major concern in the archives, as well as a notable gap in the voluntary action historiography. Field theory is useful for bringing this kind of analysis to the fore, because it considers issues of power, hierarchy, self-interest, resources and social skill as key to understanding field dynamics.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the impact of macro-level social structures on meso-level fields, such as racialisation of people and organisations, is not something SAF theory explicitly explores. This is a gap that this chapter fills.

The chapter argues that the racialisation of organisations matters. It will present material from Black- and South Asian-led organisations that speaks to this point, and highlight where their voices appear to be absent. There are also some instances of BCT trying to counter this absence, although it itself has a changing relationship with Black- and Asian-led organisations and with anti-racist work. It will further consider the

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<sup>2</sup> This was not a situation unique to Birmingham, as shown by Cookingham-Bailey's study of the East London borough of Bethnal Green from the 1970s – 1990s. Cookingham Bailey, "Advocacy and Service Delivery in the Voluntary Sector."

<sup>3</sup> Social Skill is not covered to any great degree by this study because the archives-based methodology does not easily allow for identification and exploration of individuals' own roles in navigating field dynamics from within organisations. Fligstein and McAdam note its particular importance in SAF theory in allowing actors to successfully navigate crises and episodes of contention, and to take advantage of opportunities to improve actors' positions in the field. Fligstein describes social skill as 'the ability to induce cooperation in others', linking this element of theory to resource dependency theory, but taking a view that centres the agent more, and the idea of deficit less. It is a fundamental 'microfoundation', along with pre-existing rules and resources, that combine to form the field itself. Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*; Neil Fligstein, "Social Skill and the Theory of Fields", *Sociological Theory* 19, no.2 (2001).

views and roles of organisations racialised as white acting in this space in relation to 'race'. It will suggest that some Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic organisations could be seen within a separate, overlapping field – one that prioritises a user-led model, and might also be mirrored by further user-led, issue specific fields such as that of disabled people's organisations (DPOs) – but that others actively sought to embed themselves within the Birmingham voluntary action field, and to conform to its behavioural norms. As noted in Chapter 4, this is referred to as a 'minority ethnic voluntary action field'. This is not to suggest homogeneity between organisations run by Black, South Asian, East Asian or any other minority ethnic grouping – as with any field, there is in fact considerable heterogeneity, and their 'minority' racialisation is not a reason for homogeneity in the first place. Rather, there is an observable common purpose (serving and/or campaigning for minority ethnic communities) and shared, but not undisputed, values and behavioural norms that act to coalesce this distinct but closely overlapping field. Organisations which considered a user-led field as their primary field might struggle to gain legitimacy and position within the voluntary action field if the values and principles of the former contradict and are favoured over those of the latter. Those which considered themselves primarily subject to the 'rules of the game' of the voluntary action field could likewise have to sacrifice legitimacy and position in the user-led field, if there was a conflict in values.<sup>4</sup>

Overall these arguments will speak to wider, related issues of theory, and the chapter

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<sup>4</sup> In a different context, this trading off of legitimacy is a challenge highlighted by Kaja Borchgrevink in regard to Islamic charitable organisations, which, as they have grown, have had to seek legitimacy and authority to suit both religious and professional stakeholders, which at times conflicts. This brings a need to balance different sets of norms: the formal legal requirements, forms and behaviours characteristic of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) field, versus the concrete institutions established in Islam for charitable giving and distribution of alms. Kaja Borchgrevink, "NGOization of Islamic Charity: Claiming Legitimacy in Changing Institutional Contexts," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 31 (2020).

will close by proposing an addition to SAF theory that makes explicit the idea of multiple, nested fields, multiple-field membership, and primary fields.

## **6.2 The context for Black-, South Asian- and other minority ethnic-led organisations in Birmingham**

Because the primary focus of this chapter is on 'race' and the racialisation of organisations, it is important to first understand the racialised context in which the Birmingham voluntary action field was operating. As such, it opens with a brief description of the context for Black, South Asian and other ethnic minority-led organisations in Birmingham across the timescale of this study, before turning to the experience of three Black-led or Black community-serving organisations. It will close with an examination of the views and roles of selected organisations racialised as white and interacting with Black-led organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, including BCT itself.

Birmingham is one of the most diverse cities in the UK in terms of ethnicity. Roughly a quarter of all Jamaicans who migrated to Britain post-1948 settled in the West Midlands, with a sharp rise from 1955, driven by economic conditions and immigration restrictions in other countries.<sup>5</sup> African Caribbean and Asian populations were concentrated in areas like Handsworth, where 10 per cent of the population in 1961 had been born in the so-called 'New Commonwealth', mostly from English-speaking Caribbean countries. By the end of the 1960s, 20 per cent came from African Caribbean or Asian countries, and by 1985 almost 60 per cent were of African

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<sup>5</sup> Carl Chinn, "The Peoples of Birmingham," in *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World*, ed. Carl Chinn and Malcolm Dick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

Caribbean or South Asian descent.<sup>6</sup> By 1971, the first census conducted during the period of study for this thesis, Birmingham hosted 4 per cent more residents reportedly born in 'New Commonwealth' countries than England as a whole.<sup>7</sup> According to the latest available census data for around the period of study in this thesis, 53 per cent of the population of Birmingham was white in 2011, compared to around 80 per cent of the English population, and the city had a comparatively high percentage of most other ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup>

*Racism and Reaction*, a profile of Handsworth written by University of Warwick academic Peter Ratcliffe in 1981 and researched between 1974 and 1977, explored questions to do with primarily first-generation immigrants in the North West Birmingham area. It pointed out the demographic changes in Birmingham as a whole, most of which occurred before the 1962 Immigration Act. This curbed numbers overall. After this point, a greater proportion of new entrants represented dependents of existing residents. Fewer than 5,000 residents of Birmingham were classed as Commonwealth citizens in 1951, or 0.44 per cent of the city's population. This had risen to over 68,000 in 1971 or 6.73 per cent of the population – a proportion rise aided by a declining population in Birmingham as a whole. Population settlement had formed a 'horseshoe-shaped belt around the city centre', with 'immigrant areas' visible in wards including Soho, Sparkbrook, Handsworth, Rotton Park and Aston, and comparatively little settlement in outer suburb wards such as Billesley, Weoley,

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<sup>6</sup> Connell, *Black Handsworth*.

<sup>7</sup> UK Census 2021, "Country of birth (Birmingham and England)", UK Data Service InFuse, 2021, accessed 15/02/2022, <http://infuse2011gf.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> Birmingham City Council, "2018 KS201 Ethnic group," 2018, accessed 25/02/2022, [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/9741/2018\\_ks201\\_ethnic\\_group](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/9741/2018_ks201_ethnic_group).



Kingstanding and Oscott.<sup>9</sup> The 1977 final report of the Birmingham Inner Area Study, commissioned by the Department of the Environment as part of a wider 'urban renewal' strategy, reported that 'nearly one quarter of the adult population of [inner city area] Small Heath was born in the New Commonwealth', comprising 46 per cent of all immigration over the previous 10 years.<sup>10</sup>

West Indian migrants filled a 'residential vacuum' left by the white population moving out to new post-war satellite estates. In the context of this vacuum, inner districts, including Handsworth, became regarded as 'twilight zones' by concerned stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> Large Victorian properties were converted into multi-occupied lodging houses, changing the nature of neighbourhoods and generating worries about overcrowding and ghettoisation. While cautious efforts at amelioration were taken by the City Council, the issue of ghettoization was at least in part compounded by BCC's housing allocation policy in the 1960s, which required five years of residency, and thus limited housing options for those who could not buy to private landlords, with their own racist and restrictive 'qualifications' in place. Thus individuals found themselves in some of the most dilapidated and overcrowded properties in the city.<sup>12</sup>

The Birmingham Inner Area Study found that Black people considered the police as 'protectors of the white community' and that young Black people found it particularly difficult to get jobs. White people were most preoccupied by a perceived lack of racial

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Ratcliffe, *Racism and Reaction* (Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). p.52

<sup>10</sup> Llewelyn-Davies et al., *Unequal City: Final Report of the Birmingham Inner Area Study* (London: Department of the Environment, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe, *Racism and Reaction*. pp.58-62

<sup>12</sup> Gordon E. Cherry, *Birmingham: A Study in Geography, History and Planning* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1994). P.187

harmony, and also saw immigrants 'as a single (and distinctly inferior) breed', but demonstrably based on 'limited direct empirical evidence'.<sup>13</sup> Other examples used in the book demonstrate different layers of racism, that pitted some groups against others. For instance, the author uses the example of 'a gang of approximately 200 'dreads' [young Black Rastafari men] who were deemed to be the direct cause of social ills, by terrorising local white and Asian communities'.<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates a perceived or constructed divide between Black and South Asian communities, and a sense (real or otherwise) of unity of interests and concerns between white and South Asian people. This was also found in discourses surrounding the 1985 Handsworth disturbances. For instance, a press release from the Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre after a meeting of over one hundred representatives from 'Asian, Afro-Caribbean and indigenous organisations' included the resolution that: 'the attempts to split the African Caribbean and Asian Communities was condemned. The pledge was taken to defeat this dangerous conspiracy.'<sup>15</sup> Despite the efforts of activists within these communities, these were public perceptions that were both constructed and reinforced by government policy and rhetoric, and which shaped public policy in turn.

Political and social narratives accompanied the growth in immigrant populations in the city. Birmingham was the site of Wolverhampton MP Enoch Powell's much-cited 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968, criticising immigration and race equality legislation. Nearby Smethwick saw the electoral victory of Peter Griffiths in 1964, who, according

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<sup>13</sup> Ratcliffe, *Racism and Reaction*. P.128

<sup>14</sup> Ratcliffe, *Racism and Reaction*. p.142

<sup>15</sup> Press Release Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre 18 September 1985, *Handsworth Riots*, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

to Perry, publicly distanced himself from the infamous campaign slogan “If you want a n--- for a neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour” that was printed on leaflets circulated around the area, but still adopted inflammatory rhetoric and campaigned on a distinctly anti-immigrant platform.<sup>16</sup> A rise in racialised policing and highly punitive sentencing of, in particular, young Black men, typified by the 1972 arrest and extreme sentencing of three young people for ‘mugging’ in the Handsworth district of Birmingham, led the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham to write *Policing the Crisis*. It argued that ‘mugging’ and the figure of the mugger, imported from the United States, had become the highly racialised scapegoat or ‘folk devil’ in a nationwide ‘moral panic’ of the decade.<sup>17</sup> Disturbances in Handsworth in 1981 and 1985 were branded as ‘race riots’ by white politicians and the press, who sought to pit white and middle-class Asian communities against Black African Caribbean groups. However many organisations, including BCT, argued that these were more to do with oppression, deprivation and unemployment.<sup>18</sup> Given the well-documented problems in these areas of social policy, commentators such as Clare Short MP, member of parliament for nearby Ladywood from 1983 – 2010, expressed a lack of surprise that Handsworth had, finally, been a site of ‘spectacular nationally known incident[s]’, as predicted by Ratcliffe just a few years before.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Perry, *London is the Place for Me*.

<sup>17</sup> Kieran Connell, "Policing the Crisis 35 Years On," *Contemporary British history* 29, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>18</sup> Barrow Cadbury Trust Secretary Confidential Report 15 September 1985, *Handsworth Riots*, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>19</sup> Clare Short MP, ‘Handsworth: Thatcher’s legacy’, *The Times* September 12 1985, *Handsworth Riots*, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

Organised community-based resistance and anti-racism was, of course, also present in the region; for instance, Sikh bus workers in Wolverhampton lobbied the local corporation over a period of 20 months from 1967 to 1969 for the right to wear religious symbols – namely, turbans – when working.<sup>20</sup> Nationally – or at least in London, where historical analyses tend to focus - the British Black Panther movement, led from 1970 by Althea Jones-Lecointe, was involved in grass-roots, community-based work in some of the poorest neighbourhoods. This included outreach and adult education, support for workers' movements and involvement in justice campaigns. It also facilitated the setting up of Black Defence Committees, including one in Birmingham, which additionally tried to leverage support from radical white groups and individuals to aid in the fight against injustice and oppression of Black people.<sup>21</sup>

Later, a 1991 BCC directory of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) organisations listed around 265 associations, trusts, centres and other groups serving different faith- and ethnicity-based communities across the city. The directory provides a snapshot of organisations operating in this single moment, and serving specific Black, South Asian, East Asian and other minority ethnic populations in the city. It includes details such as limited data on which ethnic population the organisation served, which religion, and whether it had a specific focus on other identity groups such as women, older people or young people. It also includes a brief indication of activities ('educational, political, welfare, cultural', etc.) and in some cases the mission of the organisation is included.

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<sup>20</sup> George Kassimeris and Leonie Jackson, "Negotiating race and religion in the West Midlands: narratives of inclusion and exclusion during the 1967-69 Wolverhampton bus workers' turban dispute," *Contemporary British history* 31, no. 3 (2017).

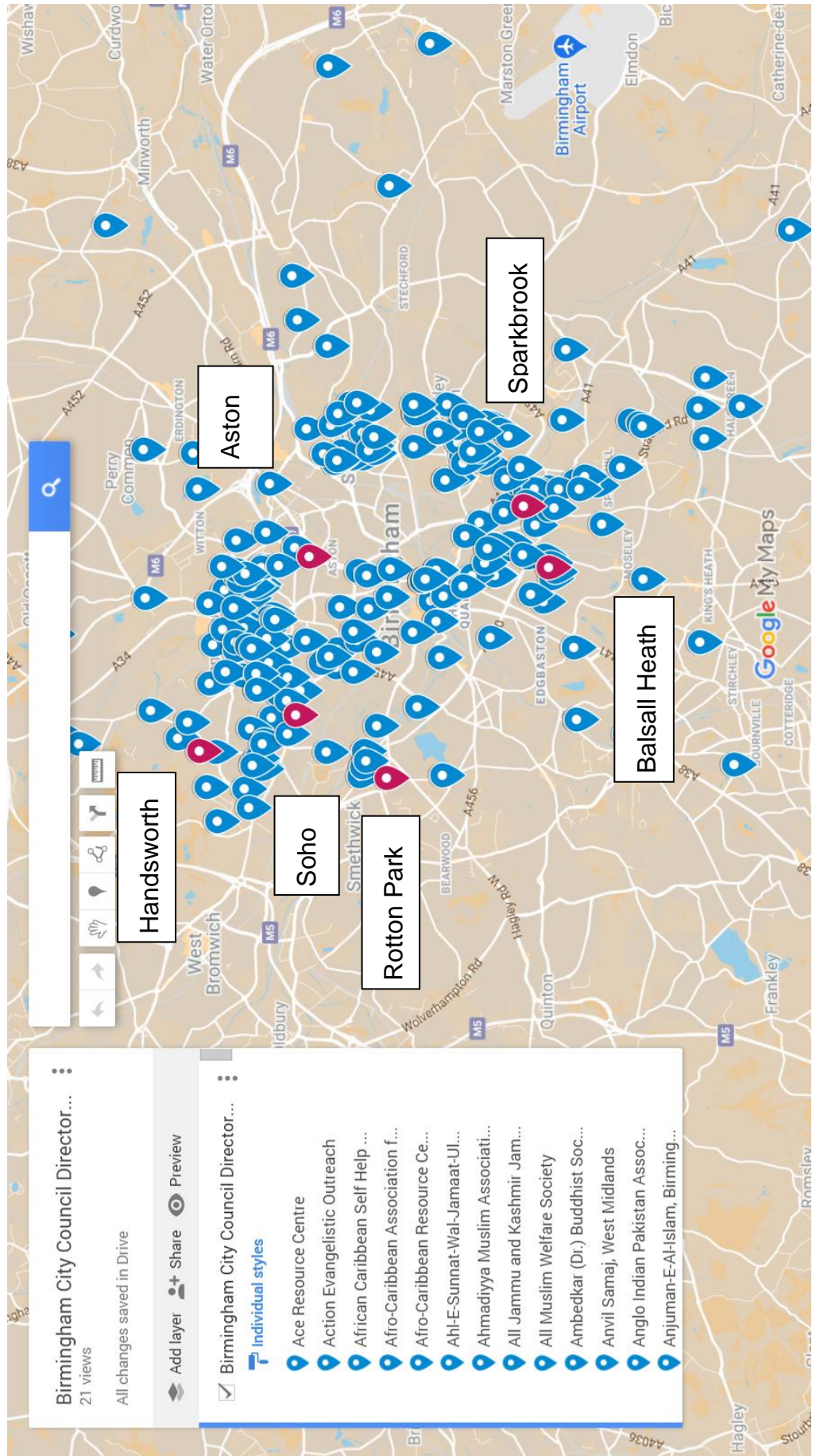
<sup>21</sup> Letter from Handsworth Community Support Group to Barrow Cadbury Trust Secretary 1 October 1985, *Handsworth Riots, File 3/15/2 MS 1579/2/3/1/33*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

This in itself provides an interesting insight into local activities run by and for minority ethnic populations at this time, although it has not been possible to locate any similar directories for years prior or subsequently to allow for a more longitudinal analysis. The distribution of these mirrored, to some extent, the description of a 'horseshoe' of incoming migrant settlement around Handsworth, Soho, Aston, Balsall Heath, Sparkbrook and Rotton Park, with some additional concentrations of organisations in the city centre, either serving Birmingham as a whole, or setting up in areas near Chinese and Vietnamese populations.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Interactive map available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5duxzme4>

**Figure 2: Birmingham City Council Directory of Voluntary Organisations 1991 (map available: <https://tinyurl.com/5duxzme4>)**



Other groups were created with competing ideological groundings, emphases and priorities, in what was a busy and fractured field.<sup>23</sup> This included, among other things, tensions relating to the definition of political Blackness, as discussed by Connell, and exclusion of Black women from both Black male and white women's spaces, explored by historian Natalie Thomlinson and contemporary activists Surinder Guru, Shirin Housee and Kalpana Joshi.<sup>24</sup> There is not room to do justice to these debates, and their ideological and epistemological underpinnings, in this thesis, but some notable examples can be highlighted. The Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), for instance, mentioned in Chapter 3, formed in 1978 as a national umbrella organisation for Black women's groups and Afro-Asian unity, although in reality it struggled to bring together groups with different cultural contexts and experiences of oppression.<sup>25</sup> Asian women, with degrees of involvement from African Caribbean women, who felt excluded from male-dominated Asian Youth Movement groups and similar, organised to form Southall Black Sisters in Southall, London in 1979 and Birmingham Black Sisters in 1982.<sup>26</sup>

### **6.3 Trading off resources across different overlapping fields**

The chapter will now turn to the experience of Black- and South-Asian led organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, and consider how they might be seen as operating across separate, nested fields of strategic action. This goes

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<sup>23</sup> R. E. R. Bunce and Paul Field, "Obi B. Egbuna, C. L. R. James and the Birth of Black Power in Britain: Black Radicalism in Britain 1967-72," *20th century British history* 22, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>24</sup> Connell, *Black Handsworth*; Thomlinson, *Race, ethnicity and the women's movement*. Pp.91-92; Surinder Guru, Shirin Housee, and Kalpana Joshi, "Birmingham Black Sisters: Struggles to end injustice," *Critical social policy* 40, no. 2 (2020).

<sup>25</sup> Thomlinson, *Race, ethnicity and the women's movement*.

<sup>26</sup> Guru, Housee, and Joshi, "Birmingham Black Sisters.". Collective, *Against the Grain: Southall Black Sisters 1979 - 1989*.

beyond considering how their beliefs in competing ideologies and theories of 'race' might affect their shape and nature as organisations. It considers how they and others hold symbolic resources that can help them improve their position in the field, *if* the amount they hold is sufficient, and how those resources are operationalised. This is potentially a difficult conversation for a voluntary action field that might lay claim to roles, missions and values relating to equality and social justice. This thesis does not argue that these organisations are necessarily explicitly racist in their actions and operations (although there is a small number of examples of this in the archives). Rather, it interrogates how even fields that are established on principles of 'doing good' can replicate oppressive structures and work within arbitrary, instrumental hierarchies of discrimination, in Bourdieusian terms.<sup>27</sup>

We saw in Chapter 5 how aligning with values and behaviours such as the value of being 'grass roots' earned organisations a degree of symbolic capital, regardless of the extent to which they might be considered grass roots in their practice. We also discussed literature from other researchers in Chapter 3 that raised issues of different sources of legitimacy, and how decisions made by organisations to increase levels of legitimacy from one source might diminish levels from another source. The issue discussed in this section is a similar, but explicitly racialised one, that considers the different pressures on community-led organisations that are subject to pressures from different fields to demonstrate legitimacy, defined by different rules of the game. This adds further complexity to the discussion of field dynamics, and recognises how (real and perceived) alignment with values and behaviours translates into symbolic

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<sup>27</sup> Moore, *Capital*.



resources, that can then in turn translate into material ones. It also stresses the heterogeneity of Black and Asian voluntary organisations, and the populations they serve.

Examples of these different pressures, based on the need to cultivate different resources of more or less value in different fields, can be seen in differences of behaviour between organisations such as the Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (ACSHO), and the Asian Resource Centre (ARC), as well as the closely state-related structure of the Birmingham Community Relations Council (BCRC), among others. ACSHO and the ARC can be seen as members of both the Birmingham voluntary action field and a separate but closely related minority ethnic voluntary action field, including organisations run by and for people from Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic-backgrounds. BCRC was part of and had close involvement with some incumbent members of the Birmingham voluntary action field, and was also part of the second field, whether (as we shall see) welcomed by other Black- and South Asian-run organisations or otherwise. Adding further complexity, BCRC was also subject to pressures from the proximate state field, as local CRCs were seen as local functions of national public body the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), were formally endorsed and part-established by it, and heavily supported by the local council and national state funding. While this meant the boundary between state and voluntary organisation was considerably blurred, histories of CRCs suggest they *were* registered charities, and thus part of voluntary action fields.

ACSHO and ARC have featured prominently throughout this thesis, and have also been written about elsewhere, as have CRCs,<sup>28</sup> albeit not using these specific archival sources and not through the institutional lens of voluntary action. This chapter adds further analysis of the symbolic resources these three chose to deploy, influenced by their ideological base and established norms of the voluntary action field, and the ways in which they spanned multiple fields.

### 6.3.1 Birmingham Community Relations Council and other intermediaries

It is important to understand BCRC in its historical context, the resources it appeared to value, and how it sought to operate across fields with different normative rules and constraints. The central CRE was established as a public body by the Race Relations Act 1976, replacing its predecessor the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI). Local Community Relations Councils (CRCs), initially called voluntary liaison committees, friendship societies and welfare committees, began forming independently from around 1955 and grew in number substantially between 1965 and 1968.<sup>29</sup> Anthony M. Messina described founding committees as 'community leaders, do-gooders, and a motley group of civic-minded citizens', forming to 'assist recent immigrants to adapt to their new environment'.<sup>30</sup> After the publication of the 1965 White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth*, a process was introduced for the NCCI to formally recognise, endorse and – crucially – provide funds for a worker

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<sup>28</sup> Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Across All Boundaries: 25 Years of Asian Resource Centre in Birmingham*, Asian Resource Centre (Birmingham, 2003); Connell, *Black Handsworth*.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony M. Messina, "Mediating race relations: British Community Relations Councils revisited," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10, no. 2 (1987); Rajwant K. Athwal, "Housing Policy and Community Relations: The Case of Birmingham Community Relations Council" (MSc University of Birmingham, 1982).

<sup>30</sup> Messina, "Mediating race relations." P.188

for each individual organisation that it approved. These could be withdrawn if the state body was dissatisfied.<sup>31</sup> When replaced by the statutory Community Relations Commission in 1968, government granted it £200,000 (over £3.5 million adjusted for inflation in 2020) to provide grants to local bodies. Its successor, the CRE, produced a green paper providing six prescriptive models for relationships between the national Commission and local community relations officers, further centralising the power and direction of local bodies. At a local level, too, CRCs were funded by local authorities as a means of discharging their responsibilities under the Race Relations Act 1976.<sup>32</sup> As such, they were closely tied to the state.

The work and role of these bodies in relation to anti-racism were criticised by Black and other activists and authors, including A. Sivanandan, who went as far as to describe these state-sponsored structures as 'domestic neocolonialism', which 'took up the Black cause and killed it'.<sup>33</sup> In the case of BCRC, Newton summarised the pressures it faced. It had, according to his study of democracy in Birmingham:

*...very little money, no real power, is rather isolated from those who do have real power, and tries to accomplish the impossible trick of balancing the incompatible interests of local government, central government, a range of immigrant groups, and a variety of white racist and white liberal organisations.*<sup>34</sup>

This description gave the impression that it could no more make a significant impact on the proximate state fields it sought to influence, than it could on the Black, South Asian and immigrant groups it sought to represent. Ratcliffe's 1981 study went further

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Banton, *Promoting racial harmony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). P.101

<sup>32</sup> Messina, "Mediating race relations."

<sup>33</sup> Waters, *Thinking Black*. p.189 Ramamurthy, *Black Star*.P.162

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Newton, *Second City Politics: Democratic Processes and Decision-Making in Birmingham* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

in describing some of the tensions inherent in operations for the Birmingham branch, including in relation to the field of minority ethnic voluntary action it was attempting to exist within. While the CRC's approach was to stress ideas of integration, Ratcliffe described other Black organisations as feeling 'stifled by the overriding aura of paternalism'. The risk of national or local government funding, according to Ratcliffe's description, was the creation of organisations for controlling the Black population, with the implication being that BCRC represented exactly this.<sup>35</sup>

BCRC was seen to take a paternalistic approach seen to be common to historic charitable activity, working to benefit the population it represented, but without any involvement by that population. Government funding posed a two-fold problem. Firstly, the organisation had to demonstrate it was using that money in ways that the funder – government – approved of, otherwise it could have its independence of action restricted. Secondly, it could find itself in the position of being a tool for exercising the national conscience, allowing government to say it had 'dealt' with the problem of racism by, essentially, making it BCRC's problem instead. Ratcliffe further quoted the sole paid organiser of the Asian Resource Centre (ARC) at the time, who described BCRC 'as 'a waste of time' because of its remoteness from the ordinary Asian family'.<sup>36</sup> It is notable that, in a handwritten note attached to the BCRC file, BCT's Secretary admitted that 'in spite of BCT involvement in race issues, we scarcely even touched on BCRC. It may have been useful – how could anyone know?'<sup>37</sup> This suggests its lack

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<sup>35</sup> Ratcliffe, P. (1981). *Racism and reaction*. Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul., p.289

<sup>36</sup> Ratcliffe, P. (1981). *Racism and reaction*. Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul., p.295

<sup>37</sup> Handwritten note by Barrow Cadbury Trust Secretary, n.d., *Birmingham Community Relations Council (BCRC)*, File 3/23 MS 1579/2/3/4/9, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

of legitimacy within the Black community was something white organisations with an interest in equality, and relationships with Black-led organisations, were aware of and had responded to in behaviour, whether consciously or otherwise. It could also suggest that BCRC itself had not sought to build a relationship with BCT, despite its self-declared 'involvement' with fields relating to voluntary action and the Black and South Asian communities.

Helen Ball's article later in the decade (1988) on Black organisations' experience of Birmingham ICPP funding also considered the changing role of BCRC. This was potentially in acknowledgement of the legitimacy deficit described above, but also in response to the creation of Race Relations Units within local authorities, duplicating some of CRCs' established role. The article argued that 'perhaps instead of pushing against a resistant local authority, CRCs should turn more directly to the local community and assist it in organising and becoming strong enough to challenge the local authority itself when the need arises.' This role would have to be 'legitimised... from a new power base: that of representing and servicing effectively the black voluntary sector itself.'<sup>38</sup> This would still include a role of providing 'an effective voice at the policy level', and thus it would still require a different kind of legitimacy from political partners as that derived from the Black community. It is unclear whether the intention was for CRCs to act as specialist voluntary sector infrastructure bodies, supporting Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic-led organisations to improve their position within a mainstream voluntary action field, or whether such support would be delivered in a way that prioritised the values, norms and aims of a minority ethnic

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<sup>38</sup> Helen Ball, "The limits of influence: Ethnic minorities and the partnership programme," *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 15, no. 1 (1988).

action field. These values, norms and aims would undoubtedly overlap, but also have distinct elements. Taking on an infrastructure role had the potential to make it easier, in theory, for Black organisations to gain material resources, although access to these would remain constrained by competition with organisations racialised as white in a white-majority society. It might also necessitate adopting logics from the ‘mainstream’ field, that might conflict with other values and behaviours, similarly to how organisations in the previous chapter had to balance the value of being ‘grass roots’ with other values and behaviours that might gain them more legitimacy with proximate state field partners.

BCRC itself was naturally aware of the tensions it was subject to, and its Council members had divergent views as to how its work should be done, as noted in an annual report from around 1980. The year in question had been one ‘of conflict and progress’, according to the Chairperson. Some of this conflict focused on the ‘sharpness of tone’ taken in a newsletter called the Bulletin, which had ‘pleased many of our friends and disturbed many others’. The argument, which had extended across two Council meetings, had really been about ‘this business of persuasion’, according to the report, reflecting ‘a deep difference of opinion in our society about the kind of persuasion which ought to be used to combat prejudice’. On the one hand, there was the argument for a ‘drastic’, loud and confrontational form of persuasion and resistance to prejudice – language that itself features a degree of racial coding. On the other was a ‘dialogue’ form, stressing moderation and reason. The report does not come to an explicit conclusion, although the author seems to lean more towards the latter, posing a question as to whether ‘over-strident protests or demonstrations against the National

Front again and again give a very small movement a free publicity which is to their advantage and which they do not deserve?’<sup>39</sup>

It was by no means the only organisation leaning this way, or choosing to engage in this discourse in order to position itself as compliant with certain established field rules and norms; the East African Muslim Welfare Association, for instance, stated in its organisational objectives in around 1982 that it ‘will not take part in any riots’, and that any member seen to be taking part would be disciplined ‘as [the] Organisation believes that democratic way is the best method to solve a problem’.<sup>40</sup> This in itself indicates the importance with which conforming to the policy-driven norm of integration and conciliation was viewed; it is perhaps not a coincidence that the organisation was funded by the West Midlands County Council Race Relations Council, and was applying for ICPP funds at this time, and this certainly distanced it from groups and individuals perceived by various institutions as ‘problems’ themselves. As well as the reformist versus abolitionist divide, this also speaks to issues of ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’ campaigning, discussed earlier in Chapter 3.

Other Black-led organisations were also subject to the (real or perceived) pressures of institutionalisation, with its impact on perceived legitimacy, in the same ways as described above by Ratcliffe in reference to BCRC. Professionalisation, as a feature of this process, can be seen as another resource within the voluntary action field, and

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<sup>39</sup> Chairman’s Annual Report, n.d., *Birmingham Community Relations Council (BCRC)*, File 3/23/ MS 1579/2/3/4/9, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>40</sup> Objective, n.d., *East African Muslim Welfare Association (EAMWA)*, File EA/3/23 MS 1579/2/3/2/19, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

one carrying increasing value as the voluntary sector's role in service delivery grew. Professionalisation did not necessarily have the same value in a distinct minority ethnic action field, however. Indeed, for some it presented a conflict between the symbolic value associated with being grass roots, led by those with lived experience of challenges faced by those they served, and that of being professional, which was in part driven by independent of forces and pressures from the proximate state field.

On the other hand, the emergence of the Black Community Strategic Network (BCSN) around 1995, a specialist infrastructure organisation, showed that there was some appetite among Black-led organisations for engaging in norms of professionalisation, in the hope of reaping financial reward. BCSN likewise tried to span multiple identity values of grass roots and professionalism. It was established, working out of the Asian Resource Centre, with links to the Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre, and applied for funding from BCT in 1995. This was at a time when core government funding streams were being consolidated into the Single Regeneration Budget. BCSN described this as 'detrimental to the resource base of all voluntary organisations but particularly the Black Voluntary Sector.'<sup>41</sup> In this case, the need was around supporting Black community organisations that had not previously had access to the kind of organisational, governance and other technical support that more established, often white-led organisations did have; 'there is currently no organisation in the City of Birmingham that provides the much needed strategic technical development support, and therefore having the experiences of working at the grass roots of the black

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<sup>41</sup> Letter to BCT 21<sup>st</sup> December 1995, *Birmingham Black Community Strategic Network (BBCSN)*, File B/12 MS 1579/2/18/3/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.



community, and having an understanding of the issues that face black organisations every day.’<sup>42</sup>

While the racialisation of these organisations matters, their age also likely played a part, insofar as those older, usually white organisations would have had more time to develop robust practices, and a stronger reputation, than newer Black- and South Asian-led organisations, which were often serving newer, or newly growing, populations. Nevertheless, BCSN argued that the growth in the ‘voluntary sector’ overall, and associated demands for greater professionalism, had left Black voluntary organisations disadvantaged, because of this lack of infrastructure support. This in turn, BCSN argued, meant that public services were not reaching those most in need, because:

*Many supporting or commissioning agencies were not reaching the grass roots voluntary organisations who were best placed to assist the most disadvantaged and/or some of these agencies often felt that such organisations were unable to deliver the programmes which they wished to support.*<sup>43</sup>

There appears to be a tension here. While the definition is neither fixed nor simple, as discussed in chapter 5, grass roots organisations are likely to be smaller, more local, more specialist and run or led by the people they also exist to support. Engaging in tendering for public service delivery requires substantially more infrastructure than organisations of this type are likely to have and thus, as the BCSN acknowledged, this

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<sup>42</sup> BCSN Business Plan 1996, *Birmingham Black Community Strategic Network (BBCSN)*, File B/12 MS 1579/2/18/3/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to all members October 26<sup>th</sup> 1997, *Birmingham Black Community Strategic Network (BBCSN)*, File B/12 MS 1579/2/18/3/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

obliges organisations to become more ‘professional’ – that is better equipped and resourced to manage contracts and the bureaucracy associated. The kind of growth necessary to be able to engage with this kind of practice may well precipitate a movement away from a grass roots identity, however, as more resource is needed for these activities than for working with and for a membership or community, to different scales, and perhaps with less of a specialist focus or audience. The value of being grass roots is thus, in this situation, lost, *because* of its perceived desirability. It is very difficult to maintain both values associated with being grass roots and the resources, values and practices associated with being equipped to engage in public service delivery at the same time. Actors, in this case voluntary organisations, within the field must choose to prioritise one and relegate the other. Given the promises of financial resources attached to the latter, field actors might be expected, at least in the short term to choose that approach; but this carries with it risks to claims of legitimacy. This is where organisations may be accused of co-opting grass roots as a value, without demonstrating related organisational features or practices.

### *6.3.2 The Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation*

In contrast, ACSHO was one organisation that eschewed professionalisation on these terms. ACSHO was founded in 1964 in Handsworth,<sup>44</sup> and in 1971 found a stable home at 104 Heathfield Road, a property bought with funds and practical support from BCT. It was explicitly and consistently anti-racist, following the ideology of ‘Pan-Africanism’ promoting bonds of solidarity and shared destiny between those of African descent, and engaged in supporting economic self-help, alternative education through

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<sup>44</sup> Connell, *Black Handsworth*.

supplementary Saturday Schools,<sup>45</sup> and other activities. It survived through changes and government and approaches to policy, and was active as recently as 2018.<sup>46</sup>

It did not exist entirely independently from the proximate state field, however, and was faced with the same pressures and choices as other Black and South Asian-led organisations in the field. For instance, Ratcliffe highlighted concerns about institutionalism with reference both to ACSHO, positioned as a challenger organisation, and to Black housing association Harambee, which, according to Ratcliffe, viewed capitalism as the fundamental 'enemy', but was willing to work with white institutions. The following from Ratcliffe's study is quoted at length because it engages with exactly the issues of field dynamics – albeit in different terms – with which we are engaging here:

*There are now some signs that Harambee is becoming 'institutionalised' or, in Althusserian terms, 'incorporated'. There are also fears among some of its workers that it will become just another social work organisation. This will inevitably influence the future of Handsworth since many of the more militant young blacks [sic] will turn to other groups as a solution to their 'dilemma'. Many already have. One possible 'solution' would be that offered by the Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO). To this group the possibility of a large-scale confrontation with whites is accepted as inevitable. It is a body, moreover, which refuses to have any contact with white society and bases its ideology on Pan-Africanism and, in particular, the belief that 'the black man's destiny is Africa'.<sup>47</sup>*

The reference here to Althusser and neo-Marxist ideas of 'incorporation' into the 'superstructure', 'spectacle' or dominant system fundamentally speaks to the

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<sup>45</sup> Diane Reay and Heidi Safia Mirza, "Uncovering Genealogies of the Margins: black supplementary schooling," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18, no. 4 (1997).

<sup>46</sup> Andy Richardson, "Bullied and caned, how Bini Brown escaped beatings to form African Caribbean Self-Help Organisation," *Midland News*, 2018, accessed 07/10/2021, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/bullied-caned-how-bini-brown-14800450>.

<sup>47</sup> Ratcliffe, *Racism and reaction*, p.290

theoretical issues explored in this thesis, albeit from an alternative theoretical standpoint. Bourdieu himself, whose theory underpins SAF theory used here, opposed Althusser on a number of fronts,<sup>48</sup> but Julien Pallotta highlights some parallels.<sup>49</sup> As with Bourdieu's symbolic capital, for instance, dominant ideological rituals can be deployed by institutions – including public and private institutions – to bolster the power of the state and reproduce the social order.<sup>50</sup> SAF theory, based on more Bourdieusian concepts, allows for a far greater degree of actor agency within this process, including active and explicit challenge to those dominant orders. Nevertheless, there would likely be a material benefit for organisations to align with incumbent norms of the voluntary action field, and external pressure to do so from the proximate state field, which would benefit in turn.

The institutionalisation referred to by Ratcliffe in 1981 could have hypothetically included adopting normative standards of professionalism, working more closely with white-dominant state structures, or, perhaps likely given the reference to becoming 'just another social work organisation', pivoting away from more confrontational, radical political action. ACSHO, however, did none of these things. It may have improved ACSHO's position within the Birmingham voluntary action field to do so, and gained it endorsement by the proximate state field. However, as Ratcliffe's description implies, such institutionalisation would likely harm its position within a distinct but closely linked

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<sup>48</sup> Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014). Pp.147 - 148

<sup>49</sup> Julien Pallotta, "Bourdieu's engagement with Althusserian Marxism: the question of the state," *Actuel Marx* 58, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>50</sup> Pallotta, "Bourdieu's engagement with Althusserian Marxism."; Matthew Lampert, "Resisting Ideology: On Butler's Critique of Althusser," *Diacritics* 43, no. 2 (2015).

minority ethnic action field, which placed higher value on campaigning than it did on service delivery and professionalisation. ACSHO was presented as a contrast, a challenger of the norms in the 'mainstream' field. The implication was that ACSHO could be seen as having 'purer' adherence, using Krause's terminology, as referenced in Chapter 3, to the norms of the minority ethnic action field by rejecting those of the mainstream field and setting itself apart from other actors in the process.<sup>51</sup> This would mean taking an opposite approach to organisations like Harambee. This meant greater legitimacy for ACSHO in the minority ethnic action field, but relegated it within the hierarchy of the white-dominated Birmingham field.

While the independence from state and other white-dominant structures that Ratcliffe described may have been the position presented by ACSHO publicly, we know the reality was a little different, given its long-term funding relationship with BCT. We also know that from at least 1980 it was in receipt of MSC funding, and had been making 'continuous applications', albeit unsuccessful ones until 1983, to ICPP.<sup>52</sup> Activist and ACSHO founding leader Bini Brown also engaged in local authority-led work, including in the production of a 1995 African Caribbean 'Community Profile', part of a series commissioned by the Race Relations Unit, where he appeared in the acknowledgements. The organisation was also noted and described in a section on key community organisations.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Krause, *The Good Project*.

<sup>52</sup> Rodney Stares, David Imberg, and John McRobie, *Ethnic Minorities: Their Involvement in MSC Special Programmes* (London: Manpower Services Commission, 1982); Letter from ACSHO to BCT 13th March 1980, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 2, File JM/A/1 MS 1579/2/3/4/3*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>53</sup> Birmingham City Council, *Community Profiles: African Caribbean* (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council, 1995).

This is indicative of the kind of complex, intersecting and sometimes contradictory narratives voluntary organisations deployed in order to make the best use of symbolic resources, to increase their chances of converting them into material ones. The narratives deployed varied according to audience, so that on the one hand it was an organisation independent of and fighting against white institutions, but on the other hand complained that it was excluded from them, sought to build relationships with them and to solicit funds from them. Indeed, in one letter to BCT's Secretary in 1980 ACSHO claimed to have heard a local Councillor state 'that as long as he is on the Committee he will make sure that ACSHO will never get a cent from the City of Birmingham.'<sup>54</sup> Of course, we can see from its records that it did, in fact, receive BCC funding as part of ICPP grants. The BCC *Community Profiles* document is some years later (1995) than the Councillor's comments, and we do not have a full intervening picture of how ACSHO came to be involved in that project, or its motivations to do so. BCT certainly suggested that, by this point in time, ACSHO had developed a more 'relaxed' approach to working with others.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it also appears that ACSHO's steadfast adherence, in its public statements at least, to its grass roots, Black-led identity *did* in fact gain it legitimacy with the proximate state field. Likewise, BCC could be seen to secure legitimacy with the Black-led field and wider community through working with Brown and ACSHO.

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<sup>54</sup> Letter from ACSHO to BCT 13th March 1980.

<sup>55</sup> BCT Agenda notes October 1992, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO)*, part 3, File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/6/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

ACSHO's strong and enduring appeal to Black Power and pan-African ideology brought symbolic capital in terms of its reputation as a Black-led, committed and progressively radical organisation, winning it praise from academics such as Ratcliffe and affording it a certain position within a minority ethnic action field. Rhetorically it rejected any association with the wider Birmingham voluntary action field, as a majority white institution that either would not understand or actively worked against its aims. Leader Bini Brown even argued in a 1983 Birmingham Post newspaper article that white council officers overseeing project grants was 'an insult to black intelligence', and that instead government should make reparations for money owed to Black people after profiting from 'cheap black labour', which could refer to historic slavery or to the political and economic benefits of promoting post-War in-migration.<sup>56</sup> Behaviourally, though, it sought access to the same material resources targeted at the Birmingham field, and despite its complaints was generally granted these (although that is not to dismiss the possible validity of these complaints). It could be that it viewed these financial resources as precisely the reparations it argued the Black community was entitled to, being pragmatic about taking what finance was on offer and using it to their own ends, just as other parts of the voluntary sector did - although it would still have to be subject to oversight from white officials when accepting it.<sup>57</sup>

These were also changing narratives and behaviours, however. 'Self-help' as an approach and ethos was always present in ACSHO's self-descriptions (and, indeed,

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<sup>56</sup> Newspaper cutting Birmingham Post 15<sup>th</sup> March 1983, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 2, File JM/A/1 MS 1579/2/3/4/3*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>57</sup> Crowson et al., "Witness Seminar: The Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain."; Connell, *Black Handsworth*. P.52

name), as it focused on generating its own income through membership, fees and enterprise, and supporting others to do the same. Grant requests to BCT continued over years covered by the archives, but in 1990 it did state that it was 'trying to break out of the rut of begging for money' by asking for, essentially, pump-priming for revenue-earning activities.<sup>58</sup> BCT reflected on its evolution in 1992, noting that it was 'amongst the few black-led voluntary groups to be surviving the recession'. This was attributed to owning its own building (originally paid for by BCT); its voluntary ethos, whereby 'no one expects to get paid';<sup>59</sup> and its independence from outside funding, both statutory and philanthropic – BCT having ended its core grant ten years previously. It also noted its new, wider appeal to Black communities of different ideologies in Handsworth, rather than its previous 'rather narrow spectrum of Afro-Caribbean awareness'. This, BCT expected, would help it significantly in its public fundraising appeals. Having, in previous years, been subject to unwanted police attention and raids, and even to scrutiny from security services, they were latterly described as having a 'much more relaxed' relationship with bodies including the police than some other Black-led groups – something which might have helped its involvement with the BCC *Community Profiles* project noted above. BCT's Secretary concluded his 1992 agenda notes by stating 'they should be seen as an integral part of the Handsworth scene, with ACSHO'S successes and crises having some impact on AC [African Caribbean] attitudes.'<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from ACSHO to BCT, n.d., *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 3, File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/6/5*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>59</sup> BCT Agenda notes October 1992, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 3, File 3/3 MS 1579/2/3/6/5*.

<sup>60</sup> BCT Agenda notes October 1992.



This is an important indication of the organisation's place within a field hierarchy, but it is important to be precise about which field. It would be incorrect to suggest ACSHO was an incumbent in the Birmingham-wide voluntary action field, given its relatively low level of financial resources, its lack of political resources in terms of endorsement from key statutory bodies, or, just as importantly, in terms of its own self-image and rejection of many of the norms attached to that field. Within a minority ethnic action field, however, that places higher value on social and cultural capital associated with being community-based, grass roots and led by those it serves, an organisation like ACSHO can, and according to this did, achieve more success. Its legitimacy, as a symbolic resource, is higher in that field, and that matters more in that field. Conformity to the norms established by the majority-white field, and ratified by the white proximate state field, is valued considerably less.

### *6.3.3 The Asian Resource Centre*

According to Ratcliffe in 1981, the Asian Resource Centre (ARC) was also at risk from the pressures of institutionalisation and the ramifications of developing closer relations with bodies like CRE and BCRC, because of its need to find sustainable funding. This had the potential to bring it into conflict with organisations like the more radical Indian Workers Association (IWA), who might consider them 'tarred with the brush of paternalism' and forced to adopt more integrationist policies.<sup>61</sup> Again, this demonstrates the kinds of choices organisations faced, between pursuing greater opportunity, legitimacy and position within a general Birmingham voluntary action field, at the risk of losing those same symbolic resources within a specific minority ethnic

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<sup>61</sup> Ratcliffe, *Racism and Reaction*. p.295

action field. However it also suggests that improving position within the general field, through endorsement by an organisation already working within it and with strong ties to the proximate state field, would provide greater access to *material* resources. Thus, ultimately, these decisions could quickly become about survival and ability to continue providing existing services to the people who needed them, weighting the options in favour of the white-dominated field considerably, although without any guarantee of success.

ARC was successful at securing state funding. Despite its financial precarity, which left it in crisis in the summer of 1980, only three or four years after its establishment, ARC was recorded as in receipt of funding from ICPP, MSC and the social services department of BCC from the beginning of its correspondence with BCT in 1979. It had an active relationship with the local council via the Birmingham Social Services Department Voluntary Liaison Section.<sup>62</sup> It was also described as 'heavily used' by Social Services in BCT minutes (to what end is unclear, but likely to help individuals with accessing welfare benefits and other services), 'almost to breaking point', implying a level of trust in and endorsement of its provision.<sup>63</sup> It also might suggest a lack of alternative organisations with the same level of trust, and the same kind of demonstrable track record that could generate that trust. This does not necessarily mean that other, similar organisations did not exist, but rather that others did not hold

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<sup>62</sup> Application form, 'City of Birmingham – Urban Programme 1981/82: Voluntary Organisations - Application form for Grant Aid', n.d., *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of Trustees Meeting 07<sup>th</sup> December 1980, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

the same kind of strong position within the Birmingham voluntary action field, or the same kind of endorsement by other in-field actors and the proximate state field.

BCT was one example of an in-field actor offering endorsement. Indeed, ARC had clear endorsement from BCT, with its Secretary writing unambiguously in 1980 'As far as I personally am concerned, ARC must and will overcome its financial difficulties: only need the necessary ammunition to play my part in the exercise.'<sup>64</sup> It pursued charitable status from the beginning, aided by BCT and its contacts, and adopted clear models and rules for committee meetings, minutes, reports and annual general meetings (AGMs).<sup>65</sup> It established a constitution, and proposed setting up a separate 'wing' of the organisation for its campaigning work, in order to not jeopardise its charitable status.<sup>66</sup> By 1985, it had two local councillors sitting on its management committee.<sup>67</sup> When it was finally granted charitable status BCT's Secretary wrote to ARC's leader stating that ARC had 'achieved the ultimate in bourgeois respectability'.<sup>68</sup> While obviously tongue-in-cheek, this was also indicative of alternative viewpoints that saw such engagement in state structures as politically unacceptable, and of ARC's early ease with such structures. Indeed, all of these examples demonstrate ways in

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from BCT to Asian Resource Centre 27th October 1980, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from BCT to Wates Foundation 20th February 1981, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>66</sup> Constitutional Sub-Committee Meeting 13th December 1982, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes from the Management Committee 24<sup>th</sup> June 1985, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from BCT to Asian Resource Centre, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1981. *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

which ARC set out to actively engage with the norms of voluntary action, to build relationships with other influential proximate fields, and thus stake a place in Birmingham and national voluntary action fields.

This was a conscious choice, and one on which ARC reflected in different ways at different times. It did not negate its parallel existence within a minority ethnic action field; indeed, this was also central to its identity. In a 1979 progress report, it alluded to this dual existence:

*Both people and institutions recognise it as a service agency in so far as it is able to differentiate and assist with the specific needs and aspirations of Asian people, and as an agent of change in so much as it participates in the reconstruction of traditional value-structures and social norms.*<sup>69</sup>

Services such as an Asian Girls Intermediate Treatment Group (a youth justice initiative in the 1980s) were set up and run by ARC because, by their own admission, majority-white social services didn't 'have the right staff to run such specialist groups'.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, ARC referred to the majority of social workers as 'agents of the dominant middle-class English culture', seriously limiting the ability of statutory services to understand the needs of Black people. Thus in what was quite a familiar role for a charitable organisation at this time, ARC sought to fill gaps in the system and work within it to shift and improve it, while also maintaining, and indeed capitalising upon, the organisation's ethnicity-based identity and lived expertise. In its own words, it had a dual role – 'to compensate for the inadequate and restricted frameworks of social

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<sup>69</sup> Asian Resource Centre Progress Report 1979, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>70</sup> Asian Resource Centre Management Meeting 08<sup>th</sup> September 1981, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

workers, and to highlight the fact that social work alone is not enough'.<sup>71</sup> In order to successfully fulfil this gap-filling role, and to secure legitimacy from both other voluntary organisations and the proximate state field, it complied with the rules of the game established in the voluntary action field, such as those described above. The reference to 'reconstructing' these (and other) norms, however, underlines that it did not do so uncritically.

Some of the tensions raised here, relating to dual existence, were also raised by incumbent and majority white-led Birmingham voluntary action field actor, Birmingham Settlement. The Settlement included a case study on 'Partnership with Black Voluntary Organisations' in its 1990 report on early developments in government contracting for public services, *Partners or Agents?*<sup>72</sup> The report presented Black voluntary organisations as particularly at risk from a lack of core funding that would enable them to work 'independently'; they were, seemingly more so than white organisations, in the position of having to make a choice between switching to contract funding, with all its uncertainties, or refusing new funding conditions and thus risking their survival. It also highlighted concerns about a potential split both within the 'black voluntary sector', and between small, Black grass-roots groups and 'better-resourced, normally white, voluntary organisations that are able to adapt and prosper in the new environment'. In the first case, the authors stated, this might see larger Black-led organisations 'increasingly alienated from the concerns of the communities they aim to represent',

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<sup>71</sup> Report, 'Asian Girls Intermediate Treatment Group', n.d., *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Gutch, Christian Kunz, and Ken Spencer, *Partners or Agents? Local Government and the Voluntary Sector - Changing relationships in the 1990s*, NCVO (London, 1990).

and in the latter, it might see Black-led organisations increasingly isolated within the voluntary action field as a whole.<sup>73</sup> While the report overall clearly positions Black-led organisations as ‘other’, or aberrant from the norm of white voluntary action, it also made these points in a way that would likely be familiar to ARC.

In some ways, ARC’s very existence was a reaction *against* the majority-white Birmingham voluntary action field, and was in itself generative of a distinct Black field. It also did not shy away from criticism of white systems of oppression. It was established principally to fill a void in advice provision in Handsworth, where the older Action Centre at 40 Hall Road was seen to be ‘for’ white residents. Without naming the Action Centre directly, the 1979 progress report states, for instance, that ‘multi-racial information and advice centres had a limited attraction for black people and particularly Asians who operated within distinct cultural and linguistic frameworks, and suffered from an inferiority complex that had its roots in centuries of colonial exploitation and oppression.’ The report added that ‘the most well intentioned attempts at bringing people together in collective action were invariably set against the background of sustained hostility towards black people, issuing from all sections of white society and many of its major institutions’.<sup>74</sup> ARC explicitly, at this time, set itself up against ‘integration’ or ‘assimilation’, and also framed itself as an ‘intermediary’ between statutory services and local Asian people in need of help delivered within a culturally-relevant framework. Again, to be successful in this role it would have to secure symbolic resources that generated legitimacy within both of these fields, which valued

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<sup>73</sup> Gutch, Kunz, and Spencer, *Partners or Agents?*

<sup>74</sup> Asian Resource Centre Progress Report 1979, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

different forms of capital to different degrees. Being Asian-led and holding community expertise was clearly valued by the local proximate state field, and thus secured it a degree of endorsement that would help its position within the Birmingham voluntary action field. However, as with ACSHO, this required working within and alongside white-majority systems, which could risk its legitimacy within a minority ethnic action field that may well have prioritised anti-racism and grass roots action. There was, as such, a trade-off to be managed.

A few years later, in 1984, and under new management, ARC sought to rebalance its work and approach somewhat, seeking funding from charitable trusts to increase its campaigning work. Implied was a desire to become more independent from government funding streams such as ICPP and MSC, upon which there was greater reliance across the whole voluntary sector, and which actively restricted organisations' ability to participate in 'political activity'.<sup>75</sup> In a five year review of its activity between 1977 and 1982 it reflected that in the face of rising demand and falling resources, the Centre, like others, would 'face inevitable crises of direction as it attempts to strike the impossible balance between its role as an agency of change and as a provider of services'.<sup>76</sup> While the intervening years are sadly not covered by the BCT archives, ARC reflected on this balance further in 2002, in a report reviewing its 25 years of existence. The commentary notes that 'from the beginning ARC sought to create a dialogue with mainstream services', adding that 'rightly or wrongly, ARC was viewed

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<sup>75</sup> Application for funding 8<sup>th</sup> February 1984, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>76</sup> Report, 'Asian Resource Centre – A five year analysis 1977 – 82', n.d., *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

as a safe organisation to support'. Campaigning was seen as separate to this work, and as adding to the 'credibility and visibility' of the Centre. A contrast was drawn between the 'romantic' spontaneity of earlier community activism of ARC (whether real or imagined) and the perceived need to develop more formalised ways of working as the services developed. Muhammad Idrish, the Centre's coordinator from 1992 until later in the 2000s, summed up his perception of the balance needing to be struck as follows:

*They [law centres] didn't manage things very well, so they have gone more or less, whereas Citizen's Advice Bureau don't have any political backbone but at least they manage people's files better and they have remained. We probably fall in the middle somewhere.<sup>77</sup>*

This demonstrates the coordinator's view that professionalism and organisation ultimately trumped other concerns, including political action; while CAB might be weak on the political front, it had, at least, survived. However, the positioning of ARC as between the unprofessional and the unpolitical suggests that Idrish considered the organisation to be demonstrating the best of both worlds.

ARC has also survived, and continues to host free professional immigration advice sessions. It has also received funding to provide a 'Covid 19 BAME Elder's Big Lottery Project' in Handsworth, Lozells, Aston and Perry Barr, including welfare advice, support with shopping and attending places of worship, exercise sessions and a befriending service.<sup>78</sup> Its 2015/16 accounts showed it to have a slim surplus and a range of grants from philanthropic trusts and funds, major UK funder the Big Lottery

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<sup>77</sup> Bhattacharyya, *Across All Boundaries*. p.50.

<sup>78</sup> Birmingham Asian Resource Centre, "Current Project: You Me, Body and Mind Project", accessed 08/05/2022, <https://asianresource.org.uk/projects/>



Fund, and from the local authority.<sup>79</sup> There is no evidence in the archives that it ever engaged in tendering for government contracts, although it may have engaged in other provider accreditation processes, similar to BWAIC discussed in section 1 of this chapter, in order to receive its local authority grants. It continued to apply for and often receive grants from successive government funding schemes, such as the Single Regeneration Budget (replacing various Urban Aid funds), New Deal for Communities and the Community Fund.<sup>80</sup> It can certainly be seen as a success story, in terms of survival and service continuation, and BCT recommended in 2002 that the Centre should commission an evaluation, 'as it offers an exemplary model of good practice in governance, ethos, methods of working and community relations'.<sup>81</sup> However, like other examples discussed in regard to independence, ARC was concerned about the potential impact of continuing to pursue state funding, and sought to create new means of fundraising from the general public. One of ARC's concerns in 2003 was:

*Traditional Funders of the Centre are increasingly shying away from funding work which are unpopular, if it continues, one day the Centre might find itself compromising its values and principle or its funding drastically reduced to a level whereby it could not function.*<sup>82</sup>

This again highlights how concerns about independence of action and funding, as a definitional feature of voluntary action, were enduring ones. It is interesting to note that

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<sup>79</sup> Birmingham Asian Resource Centre, "Reports and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016", *Register of Charities*, accessed 08/05/2022, <https://tinyurl.com/ys45czzz>

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of Board of Directors 11<sup>th</sup> November 2002, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham; Financial Report 2004, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>81</sup> Meeting minutes BCT 25<sup>th</sup> January 2002, *BCT/BCF termly meeting minutes 2001-2003* MS 1579/1/9/1/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>82</sup> Meeting minutes 2003, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

at the time of writing ARC does not mention campaigning or political action on its website or in its most recent annual reports. It may well continue to lobby local government and other bodies behind the scenes, and to highlight problems in welfare and immigration policies, but public-facing political work does not feature in its description of itself. That is not to say it *has* compromised its values and principles, and it is not possible to say whether this is due to lack of resources, strategic choice or another reason, but it certainly indicates that its turn towards operating as a service organisation, and away from more public political messaging evident in archival material from previous years, has been completed.

There was also an enduring sense of precarity for ARC. Despite its apparent success in securing statutory funding, there remained problems. In 2001, for instance, BCC cut funding for two workers it had been funding for 23 years. In its annual report, the organisation contrasted this with a number of other advice organisations including Handsworth Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), which ARC claimed received more funding for managing fewer queries. It stated: 'there is no other rationale but to conclude that White led Organisations are treated more preferably than the Black led Organisations'.<sup>83</sup> While this study cannot offer conclusive proof of this either way, this was at least a perception within the field. Two other Black and minority ethnic-serving organisations described faced similar financial precarity. The 'highly thought of' Minorities Resource Centre in Saltley came into financial difficulty when its statutory

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<sup>83</sup> Annual Report Asian Resource Centre 2000/01, n.d., *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

funding was reduced to £5,000 per year in 1985,<sup>84</sup> and the Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit was noted as receiving short term and contract funding from statutory sources, but not core administrative funding.<sup>85</sup> This is not to say that organisations racialised as white did not face precarity and cuts – they certainly did. Rather there has been a specific narrative in writing about the Black voluntary sector, as far as it can be seen as a distinct sector; it is perceived to have experienced cuts and hardships earlier and to a greater degree than the mainstream sector.<sup>86</sup> It should be noted that this is also a narrative used in relation to other organisations seen as ‘specialist’, or meeting ‘niche’ needs, as noted in Chapter 5 regarding women’s organisations and the BWAIC.

### **6.3 Racialisation and field ‘entry’**

The final part of this chapter presents the perspective of some white-led organisations to consider how the racialisation of organisations in the field was perceived by field actors. This includes a case study of Birmingham CAB. Archival records can tell us something about how organisations racialised as white were able to leverage their symbolic and material resources, to preserve or improve their position within the Birmingham voluntary action field. Their racialisation as white was never the only factor at play in these examples, but a reading of the material that is conscious of this racialisation can help to highlight where it was playing a part.

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<sup>84</sup> Agenda Notes BCT 30<sup>th</sup> June 1985, *Minorities Resource Centre (MRC), Saltley, File JM/M/4 MS 1579/2/3/4/34*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>85</sup> Meeting minutes BCT 13<sup>th</sup> October 2001, *BCT/BCF termly meeting minutes 2001-2003 MS 1579/1/9/1/3*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>86</sup> Afridi and Warmington, *The BME third sector*; Craig, "Forward to the past: can the UK black and minority ethnic third sector survive?."; Tilki et al., "The BME third sector: marginalised and exploited."

One example from Handsworth, the same area of base and operation as ACSHO and ARC, was the Action Centre, also known as Handsworth Action Centre and 40 Hall Road. This example shows a white-led initiative moving into an area of high poverty and high diversity of ethnicity, in order to encourage community action. It was aware of its whiteness, and its status as an 'outsider', but it also used these factors as resources to leverage in funding and support. It was set up in 1969 by two University of Birmingham graduates. They moved into the Handsworth area, buying an eight year lease of an old three storey house at 40 Hall Road. They lived at the property, sustaining themselves and their community activity by 'tak[ing] part-time jobs, pool[ing] their earnings, and then deduct[ing] for rent, food etc.'<sup>87</sup> Its 1971 funding bid established its identity as filling a gap, innovating a new service and developing the community:

*Although several organisations with whom we co-operate, are already working in the area, we feel that there is room for a fresh approach which recognises that*

*(i) There is no "Community" as such, but a large number of unorganised sub-groups, internally divided yet experiencing common deprivation.*

*...*

*(iii) It is too simple to see the solution in terms of "reducing racial tension", or "creating community spirit". Racial tension is not the cause of the problem, but is exacerbated by different groups having to compete for scarce resources, particularly in the fields of housing, employment, and the social services.*

*(iv) One way to attempt to change the situation is to stimulate the people of Handsworth to recognise their common needs, and to organise themselves towards articulating those needs and taking action to meet them.<sup>88</sup>*

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<sup>87</sup> Memorandum BCT 20 September 1974, *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83 MS 1579/2/7/1/1*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>88</sup> Application for a grant to finance expansion, 40 Hall Road to BCT, 1971, *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83 MS 1579/2/7/1/1*

This statement appeared to recognise an existing sub-field of groups, possibly quite informal, in need of help and support to organise better to secure change. The role of this organisation, then, was to facilitate that as an external, presumably 'expert' party. This was a model that was similar to how BCT used funds in other areas to generate community action – as described in Chapter 5. From the start, as the initial aims quoted above suggest, the project involved getting to know a community of which they were not a part:

*We spent the first 6 months trying to see Handsworth through the eyes of local people, and to understand their feelings about the area, before we could begin to define a role for the project.<sup>89</sup>*

In some ways this could position them as a 'challenger' organisation trying to enter a field, and seeking to establish legitimacy through generating a basis for appeals to community knowledge and proximity, as virtues. This brings some additional complexity to the meaning of 'challenger'; it was white-led, with secure seed funding, social skill and ample institutional connections so could reasonably be seen as an actor of some power, and thus position in the Birmingham voluntary action field at the time. However, its approach was presented as relatively novel (if recognisable for those with knowledge of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Settlement Movement) in terms of embracing tenets of community development, rather than more paternalistic charity. It also highlights the need for precision when looking at an organisation that might sit in multiple fields, and thus be motivated by different field norms. In this case, the Action Centre was also a relatively early player in a new Handsworth voluntary action field (as a geographic sub-field of the wider Birmingham one). This in itself gained it a preferential position, as it

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<sup>89</sup> Application for a grant to finance expansion, 40 Hall Road to BCT.

could have a key role in coalescing and shaping the field. This suggests age, or 'coming in first', is a symbolic resource in itself. In economic and organisational studies this might be referred to as 'first mover advantage', and indeed this has been theorized extensively, albeit more in policy and for-profit settings than nonprofit.<sup>90</sup>

Read critically, it could also be seen as quite a paternalistic approach – asserting expertise even in an area that it acknowledged it was unfamiliar with. Early on the Action Centre staff reflected on their position as an 'all-white' group in a mixed ethnicity community, and the lack of trust people from West Indian and Asian communities had for them. This reflexivity, however, did not extend to questioning racist and colourist tropes that were commonly used to blame Black people for issues of poverty and crime.<sup>91</sup> For instance, one report discussed how different family relationships and a lack of 'stable cultural patterns' might mean different ethnic groups had more or fewer problems.<sup>92</sup> By its own admission, the Centre served a predominantly white clientele; indeed, one activist, originally a worker at the Action Centre, established ARC across the road in recognition that Asian people were unwilling to seek support and advice from a white organisation with limited understanding of the issues they faced.<sup>93</sup>

The Action Centre drew on its whiteness as an organisation - run by white academics from a predominantly white institution - to access to levers of power of different kinds.

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<sup>90</sup> One nonprofit focused example, about physical movement of premises, is Joshua D. Potter and Sue E.S. Crawford, "Organizational Ecology and the Movement of Nonprofit Organizations," *State and Local Government Review* 40, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>91</sup> Connell, *Black Handsworth*. P.30

<sup>92</sup> Application for a grant to finance expansion, 40 Hall Road to BCT.

<sup>93</sup> Papers for BCT meeting: 'New Projects', n.d., *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83 MS* 1579/2/7/1/1

These ideas, specifically in relation to voluntary action, have been more extensively explored in more detail in American nonprofit scholarship than British to date.<sup>94</sup> Certainly in the early days it used some of this capital to support Black-led projects, including providing infrastructure to incubate a Black Community Worker project from 1971, employing them to work and develop community projects. From the outset the Action Centre recognised itself as an outsider in terms of trying to forward this project, stating in the funding application: 'His [sic.] acceptance into the black community might be hindered by the existence of open, formal links between him and Forty Hall Road.'<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the Action Centre worker later joined up with two other workers –from the Outsiders Trust and Handsworth Adventure Playground – to form an independent organisation. The reasoning for this is in the minutes of the project's steering group in October 1972; 'The community feeling is moving towards doing something for themselves therefore the project must be, and seen to be, directed by black people, but not just from the local community.'<sup>96</sup>

The project group minutes also reflected some reluctance to let the project go, stating the steering group 'would not hand over the active involvement to another group until we felt we could pass on our one obligation "not to turn out just another social worker."'

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<sup>94</sup> Nuri Heckler, "Whiteness and Masculinity in Nonprofit Organizations: Law, Money, and Institutional Race and Gender," *Administrative Theory & Praxis: Critical Perspectives on Nongovernmental Organizations and Action* 41, no. 3 (2019): 266–85; Keith Lawrence, "Reconsidering Community Building: Philanthropy Through a Structural Racism Lens," *Souls - A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 4, no. 1 (2002): 45–53; Jo Anne Schneider, "Organizational Social Capital and Nonprofits," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (August 2009): 643–62; Eve E Garrow, "Does Race Matter in Government Funding of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations? The Interaction of Neighborhood Poverty and Race," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 24, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 381–405; Stephen Danley and Brandi Blessett, "Nonprofit Segregation: The Exclusion and Impact of White Nonprofit Networks," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2022).

<sup>95</sup> Application for a grant to finance expansion, 40 Hall Road to BCT.

<sup>96</sup> Summary of meeting minutes, Black Community Worker Steering Group, 31 October 1972, *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83 MS 1579/2/7/1/1*

Indeed, the Action Centre was still playing a 'nominal administration and supervisory role' in October 1973. We cannot tell if this role was welcome, or the extent to which it was necessary, although there is no suggestion to the contrary within these archives. It may not have been responsible to cut all ties until the new, independent organisation was established. Nevertheless there is a sense of paternalism that can be read in these records. The Black Community Workers project was later – independently - involved in establishing Harambee, a hostel for homeless black people and a central player in Handsworth's community action field. The Action Centre's indirect role is, incidentally, a part of the story absent from Connell's account of Harambee's founding.<sup>97</sup> This is not to elevate or celebrate the contribution of white organisers over Black workers and activists, the latter of whom were undoubtedly the driving force behind the project. Rather, it emphasises the importance of actions taken later by the Black Community Workers to move away from the 'parent' organisation, and to operate independently.

The Action Centre's whiteness, and a related racism, threatened the survival of the organisation in 1983 when, after a series of incidents, a serious allegation of racism against the Centre Manager at the time was made by a number of Black individuals and organisations, including the Handsworth Single Homeless Action Group (HSHAG).<sup>98</sup> This, in part, could be seen as related to the organisation adopting more formal structures, as noted above; the structures increased the power of the Centre Manager, but also introduced a mechanism by which his racism could be challenged – namely, the management committee. The crisis, suspension of the Centre Manager,

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<sup>97</sup> Connell, *Black Handsworth*. P.42

<sup>98</sup> Open Letter from Handsworth Single Homeless Action Group, n.d., *Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83 MS 1579/2/7/1/1*.



and subsequent legal action taken by him, led to a constitutional crisis when the majority of the Board resigned, including an official from the BCC Social Services Department. The Social Services Department also withdrew its funding in terms of its direct grant and Urban Programme funding. This led to work to reform the constitution, reconstitute the Board, and a campaign to 'save' the centre. The organisation demonstrated its resilience, perhaps aided by the social, cultural and symbolic capital resources of its networks and friends, surviving this crisis, with Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) taking on financial responsibility for an interim period. BCT was keen to see it survive and recover, stating: 'it would be the Trustees' wish that their financial assistance might help to contribute to a larger reconstruction of the Centre, so that its service to the community could grow in line with needs – without the management problems which have taken up so much of your time and energy.' It also recovered both its local council board members and statutory funding quickly, with grants from the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), West Midlands County Council (WMCC) Economic Development Unit, the City of Birmingham and Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP) referred to at various points in 1984, 1985 and onwards. Indeed, at one point BCT cautioned the Action Centre against becoming over-reliant on this local government funding.<sup>99</sup>

The Action Centre appointed a new Co-ordinator at some point in the early 1980s after the racism allegation. He highlighted ways in which the organisation continued to struggle to access local government funding, even with the social capital it held.

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<sup>99</sup> Letter BCT to Action Centre Handsworth 12 December 1985, *The Action Centre, Lozells, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

Indeed, at one point the Co-ordinator complained to Council leaders about the funding of a new purpose-built Citizens Advice Bureau building planned for Handsworth, over the funding of existing services like the Action Centre.<sup>100</sup> Birmingham CAB itself provides an interesting case study of a long-established player in both local and national voluntary action fields, and the ways in which its whiteness, along with interrelated symbolic resources such as longevity and brand, helped to secure its position in the field, even where others could have been seen to hold greater, or more important forms of, legitimacy.

### Figure 3: Case study: Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau

Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB) was not funded to a significant degree by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, but it appears in its archives in part due to its prominence as an advice organisation in the city. It does apply to BCT for funds, and some small amounts were made available to cover, for instance, transition points between personnel and grants. However, BCT's Secretary summed up BCT's attitude when writing to BCAB in 1985, stating 'Trust priorities remain helping less well-established agencies, which do not have the benefit of public recognition'.<sup>101</sup> This also highlights the capital the organisation was seen to hold, as a well-known, longstanding charity – although in this case symbolic capital did not translate into financial support from BCT. Its 1979-80 Annual Report included a lengthy statement of support from the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, with implicit encouragement to the city council, and others, stating; 'even the prudent housekeeping practised by CAB will not keep the service running so

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<sup>100</sup> Newspaper cutting: Rosemary Edwards, 'Crisis-hit help centre 'collapsing'', July 31 1986, *The Action Centre, Lozells*, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1.

<sup>101</sup> Letter BCT to BCAB 25 April 1985, *Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB)*, File 5/16/2 MS 1579/2/5/1/2, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

efficiently if the City slacks its support for this most worth-while work'.<sup>102</sup> In the same financial year 90% of its £170,000 income (roughly £745,000 in 2020 values) came from local authority and government department grants, although it should be noted that CAB services had historically been majority financed by government at different levels. This again cements its place as an incumbent organisation in the city. This does not mean it was without its own struggles; a report from a district organiser in 1980 pointed out that funding from statutory bodies was badly stretched, and that notice of grant renewal came late in the year, making planning difficult.<sup>103</sup> BCT's Secretary added in 1982 that 'the City is cutting back its grant so much that CAB's own existence as we know them is under threat'.<sup>104</sup>

There are two notable moments described in the archives that are illustrative of the impact of the organisation's racialisation as white. Its racialisation can have an impact on its ability to generate forms of cultural capital such as political relationships and reputational resources; relationships and positive reputations are more easily developed by white organisations in the context of white dominance in society. These moments are also inherently about the relationship between Black-led organisations, and a mainstream, incumbent, white charity; as such, the racialisation of organisations and the consequential leveraging of resources are highly relevant.

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<sup>102</sup> Annual Report BCAB 1979-80, n.d., *Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB)*, File 5/16/2 MS 1579/2/5/1/2.

<sup>103</sup> Annual Report BCAB 1979-80.

<sup>104</sup> Letter BCT to Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 26 November 1982, *Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB)*, File 5/16/2 MS 1579/2/5/1/2.

The first example comes from an application for BCT funding for an 'ethnic minority worker' in November 1981. This followed swiftly on from a previous BCT meeting which noted that BCAB was concerned about its lack of clients from a minority ethnic background, suggesting conversations on this topic had been ongoing. The application stated that, despite BCAB's City Centre office serving 98,000 clients in 1980/81, it had 'almost no enquiries from clients whose countries of origin were India or Pakistan'.<sup>105</sup> It felt that this group was 'suffering more than their proportion' of issues, and that there was a need for the Bureau to build links with their communities, through provision of 'effective provision of advice' for 'these ethnic minority groups whose families have language and cultural backgrounds so different from the other citizens of Birmingham'.

This language conveys a sense of 'doing to' – delivering services *for* a group, but without necessarily any meaningful involvement *of* that group. This is not to criticise its intention, and the reference to building links with communities demonstrated an awareness of its starting point as a white organisation with a need to get to know other local groups. Nevertheless, it positions the community firmly as 'other' to the rest of the city, alien in its cultural norms. It also implies that there was no 'effective provision' available to them, which could imply a lack of awareness of other, existing organisations, or a value judgement about their quality.

The BCT Secretary appealed on behalf of BCT to the knowledge of a longstanding South Asian activist with, among others, the Indian Workers Association (IAW) in Birmingham. This activist pointed out the existence of organisations like IAW, the

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<sup>105</sup> Funding application: for an ethnic minority worker, 17 November 1981, *Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB)*, File 5/16/2 MS 1579/2/5/1/2.

Bangladeshi and Kashmiri Workers Associations, the Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre, ARC, Sparkbrook Bangladeshi Centre, and the network of immigration aid units, law centres and gurdwaras that already actively supported South Asian people, and closer to their own homes than BCAB's city centre base. This list is a good indication of the active and crowded field of advice services, including those specifically designed for and led by minority ethnic communities. Again, it is unclear whether BCAB did not know about these, did not credit them as reliable and effective providers, or merely saw an opportunity to expand its own practice.

By expanding its practice, and thus being able to say it served ethnic minority populations, BCAB could potentially draw in the benefits of being associated with grass roots community work. The perception of legitimacy this might create for BCAB could lever in other, more material resources, in a context where local and national attention and money was at least rhetorically focused on such issues. This is not to say that BCAB's behaviour was nefarious – it undoubtedly came from a genuine desire to better serve Birmingham's diverse population. Nevertheless, it can be seen as co-optive of Black and brown struggles in a way that would serve the organisation, without necessarily empowering those populations, or recognising their existing work. It could thus continue to benefit from its existing resources of reputation and political relations, while also adding to its reputation by laying claim to symbolic values associated with engaging in equality and diversity practice.<sup>106</sup> BCT did not approve the application, and its Secretary's actions in questioning the validity of the scheme, and reaching out to activists in the community, demonstrated a limit to these values, insofar as it relied on

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<sup>106</sup> Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

other (white) parties to reify it. However, funding for an Asian worker did come from the West Midlands County Council (WMCC), providing such reification.

The second example involved BCAB's plans to open a purpose-built advice centre in Handsworth, a famously diverse area of Birmingham, in 1986. This was levered to political ends by the coordinator of the Action Centre in Handsworth, with its Co-ordinator stating in a local newspaper article about its own financial struggles; 'if they can afford to build that, they can find £7,000 to help us continue our much-needed work'.<sup>107</sup> This was, of course, a strategic and politically intelligent move by an organisation that had in its earlier years served a majority-white base itself, and which had been set up by white academics looking to 'help' an underserved area. That does not negate the central concern, however; that large, incumbent, non-local white organisations were being funded over smaller, well-established community services, including Black- and South Asian-led groups.

The Action Centre's Co-ordinator pushed this point with leader of Birmingham City Council, Councillor Dick Knowles. Claiming to represent a number of agencies in Handsworth, Aston and Lozells, he stated that they were 'extremely disturbed to hear that the CAB had received funding [from the Council], given that other organisations in the area are underfunded and therefore understaffed'. He pointed out that BCAB had no track record in the geographical area, where there were existing centres 'crying out' for funding. These agencies had not been consulted by BCAB, according to Roberts, and indeed when BCAB had tried to host a meeting to elect a management committee,

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<sup>107</sup> Newspaper cutting: Rosemary Edwards, 'Crisis-hit help centre 'collapsing''.

local agencies had told the organiser to 'go back to the council and the CAB hierarchy to report the concerns expressed by those attending'. The meeting had proposed that 'there should be no CAB in the [area] and that any funds that were to be used to set up such a centre should be diverted to existing local advice centres in the area'.<sup>108</sup>

Councillor Knowles' reply, however, restated the Council's support for BCAB, arguing that 'what we need is a broad spectrum of agencies at work so that all members of the community can find a sympathetic and understanding organisations to assist with their problems'. He stated 'we should support the CAB initiative at the same time as continuing to support existing agencies', and claimed that he was lobbying central government for increased resources to be funnelled through Birmingham ICPP.<sup>109</sup> The reply did not address issues of track record in the area or connection to the local community; BCAB's broader track record, reputation and political relationships were presumably sufficient for the Council to approve funding.

A subsequent letter from BCT's Secretary to the Action Centre's Co-ordinator suggests that BCT did not feel the City Council was doing its part to fund existing and valuable community services, asking whether Cadbury funding might 'shame' the Council into providing funding itself. The Action Centre replied to the contrary, arguing that 'it is time the city stopped seeing Cadbury as a form of financial cow, who's milk is there to subsidize voluntary organisations that the city council fail to support as part and parcel

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<sup>108</sup> Letter Action Centre to Birmingham City Cllr Dick Knowles 14 July 1986, *The Action Centre, Lozells, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1*.

<sup>109</sup> Letter Birmingham City Cllr Dick Knowles to Action Centre 30 July 1986, *The Action Centre, Lozells, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1*.

of their duty'.<sup>110</sup> This phrasing raises additional issues of funding sufficiency and the role of philanthropy in relation to the state which will not be explored here, but are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

Again, however, this example underlines how political relationships and the clout afforded an incumbent organisation meant it was well-placed to secure more material resources, regardless of its knowledge of the community it was trying to move into, or the perceived legitimacy in the eyes of that community. The racialisation of the organisation was relevant to its ability to build those relationships and clout. Again, these are not explicit, violent or targeted instances of racism, but more subtle mechanisms and processes that benefit and allow an organisation racialised as white, such as BCAB, more power, influence and material resource compared to those racialised as Black, in the context of a white majority system.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has raised and illustrated issues of legitimacy and identity discussed in a range of voluntary action literature, in a specific, racialised and local context. The argument that it makes is that 'race' matters, and mattered considerably to organisations in Birmingham campaigning and providing services after 1965. The impact of different racialisations on organisations' material success, and field position, is subtle and difficult to quantify, but reading the archival material used here through a lens that considers the symbolic value of different racialisations can bring to light where it could have played a part, and where organisations perceived that it did. This can be

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<sup>110</sup> Letter Action Centre to BCT 19 August 1986, *The Action Centre, Lozells, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1*.



uncomfortable, but the implication is not that organisations racialised as Black, South Asian, or other ethnic minority identities have any deficit in quality, or that those racialised as white are openly racist, but rather that those racialised as white have access to something inherent to the system within which they operate, without having to do an extra layer of work for legitimacy in a white-dominated and reified field.

Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic-run organisations are not homogenous, and will not be affected by or react to field events in the same way. Given 'race' is not the only factor affecting positions within the voluntary action field, there are still opportunities for organisations racialised as Black, Asian or another minority ethnicity to make use of other resources to improve their position. An alternative approach for these organisations, however, might be to focus instead on building resources of value to other fields or sub-fields. This potentially includes a distinct minority ethnic action field. So, organisations may choose to spend time building resources that will gain them position within a white-majority voluntary action field, or to build those that will improve their position within a distinct Black-led field. However, what is valuable in the former is not necessarily the same as what is valuable in the latter, and vice versa. Indeed, what is valuable in the former may negatively affect position within the latter. These strategic decisions are, as such, complex internal negotiations and existential choices for organisations spanning multiple fields.

The issue of needing to trade off different values against one another is raised here again, as it was with regards to BWAIC and others in the previous chapter, who faced trading off behaviours associated with the value of being 'grass roots' and those

associated with professionalism. This was also a challenge faced by Black and Bangladeshi-run organisations identified in Cookingham Bailey's study of Bethnal Green; she found that they were, in fact, able to maintain both identities, rather than seeing advocacy for their communities pushed out by service delivery.<sup>111</sup> In Birmingham, too, organisations like ARC were able to balance these two roles, and to maintain legitimacy with both a Black and South-Asian voluntary action field, and a 'mainstream' Birmingham field, but were acutely aware of the challenge doing so posed. BCRC leant further towards the values and behaviours associated with the mainstream field and proximate state field, while ACSHO pursued legitimacy from the Black-led field, rejecting many of the associations with the mainstream field, even where it was pursuing some of the same goals and resources.

Through this discussion, this thesis argues that organisations exist across multiple, often overlapping fields. These fields may have many beliefs and norms in common, but also prioritise different values, behaviours and goals. Organisations have to make strategic decisions about which is their 'primary' field, following Billis' concept noted in Chapter 2. This then determines what they prioritise, and how their behaviours are constrained. It can also affect their position in the field, if adherence to one set of institutional logics conflicts with another. SAF theory helps draw our focus to these negotiations and conflicts, and on the strategic interactions between different field actors. However, it also fails to deal adequately with issues of 'race', or other macro-level social structures and processes. It is not that these are incompatible, but rather that we are not explicitly encouraged to examine the impact of the macro-level on the

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<sup>111</sup> Cookingham Bailey, "Advocacy and Service Delivery in the Voluntary Sector." P.1415

meso. It is important that scholars deploying SAF theory in their studies explicitly consider these interactions, given they help form the context in which the meso-level social orders operate.

Material in the BCT archives demonstrates the importance of the racialisation of organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, and the way in which this was expressed over time. It also demonstrates the volume of activity, beyond the action of the 1960s and 1970s typically associated with anti-racist movements, Black power and changing demographics, through to later periods trying to navigate the same changes to the voluntary action field as other organisations, but with additional constraints related to their racialisation. As we will see in the next chapter, the Birmingham voluntary action field did not always centre the voices of Black- and South Asian-led voices and activities, even in the case of inner city policy that directly affected them. Linking back to the previous chapter, however, they could be perceived to benefit from an association with groups that embodied the value of being 'grass roots', community run and in touch with marginalised groups. This discussion raises issues specific to whiteness as a concept. There is not room to do this justice here, but following from the work of largely American scholars of voluntary action, deploying critical race theory and whiteness studies, this is an area of further interest.<sup>112</sup> Stephen Danley and Brandi Blesset, for instance, conclude that white-led well-resourced nonprofits in Camden, New Jersey (NJ), are able to access funding from white foundations because of their social-political and economic capital, 'without having community ties or expertise in

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<sup>112</sup> Heckler, "Whiteness and Masculinity in Nonprofit Organizations: Law, Money, and Institutional Race and Gender." Danley and Blessett, "Nonprofit Segregation."

local affairs'.<sup>113</sup> This raises the prospect of 'whiteness' as a field resource for those organisations racialised as white, in a system subject to macro-level processes that prioritise whiteness.

BCT, perhaps unlike the funders encountered in Camden, NJ, saw funding Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic community-run organisations as a duty, to play its own part in the anti-racist, anti-colonial struggle.<sup>114</sup> BCT was not solely an anti-racist funder, sometimes to the disappointment of the anti-racist organisations it funded.<sup>115</sup> As a field shaper, however, as we argue it is, its interventions were constrained by the operating context of the field – namely, the macro-level social processes of racialisation and racism – and because of its own existence as a predominantly white-led actor. Its resources also had practical limits, which increasingly affected the extent to which it could fund organisations. This is not to judge the work of BCT, which did much to strategically support anti-racist organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, and to challenge racism directly, but rather to ensure it is set in its context.

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<sup>113</sup> Danley and Blessett, "Nonprofit Segregation." P.523

<sup>114</sup> Bhattacharyya, *Across All Boundaries*.

<sup>115</sup> ARC, for instance, wrote in 2005 to BCT to express its concerns about a perceived move away from funding grass roots, 'race' focused organisations. Letter ARC to Chairwoman BCT 11 November 2005, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5MS 1579/2/14/5/1, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

## CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS - THE PROXIMATE STATE FIELD: THE BIRMINGHAM INNER-CITY PARTNERSHIP

### 7.1 Introduction

The proximate state field, its power and its impact on adjacent fields, are of considerable importance within SAF theory.<sup>1</sup> Its impact on the Birmingham voluntary action field is clear within archival material. This chapter completes the narrative of this thesis; we began with an examination of which values matter to the Birmingham voluntary action field, followed by a discussion of what role different symbolic resources play, and finally, here, we will move to consideration of the ways in which we see these values and resources enacted through the field's engagement in social policy initiatives. The initiative examined here is a national government funding stream that began in the early 1970s and ran until the early 1990s –the Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP), a major funder of voluntary action in Birmingham and beyond. It was a funding programme based on grants, as opposed to contract funding that emerged later in the 1990s and which has become increasingly dominant. However, it is argued here that it is an example of policy that sowed the seeds for a much wider frame for policy reform that changed the relationship between different purchasers and providers of public services.

This process can be seen in rhetoric and in relation to, for instance, practical requirements placed on voluntary organisations to professionalise in different ways; some organisations were better placed than others to take advantage of these

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<sup>1</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. Pp.71 - 74

developments. Organisations were still able to utilise the funding stream to fund core activities of their organisation, and as such maintained greater flexibility than was available later, as service commissioning arrangements became standard. Nevertheless, this programme began to shift agreed understandings about the role of voluntary organisations in relation to the state, and of the alleged benefits of involving the voluntary action field, as well as the limits placed upon involvement. These limits included the extent to which organisations were able to influence policy, as well as *which* organisations were allowed to have influence. Specifically, this raised the issue of 'race', as Black-led organisations appear to have had less access to influence – and possibly to funding - than their white counterparts, while organisations racialised as white may have still been able to benefit from claims to accessing so-called 'underserved' communities. This brings us full circle, as we again see the benefit of associating with certain normative values agreed to be of worth by the field.

The initial Urban Programme, described by Aaron Andrews as an 'ad hoc system of urban aid intended to provide assistance to struggling communities', was officially launched by the Labour government in 1968.<sup>2</sup> The 'inner city' continued to be an increasing concern for 1970s Labour and 1980s Conservative governments alike. It was a somewhat nebulous concept. Saumarez Smith characterises the idea of the 'inner city' as a 'prism modulated by issues ranging from race, the north–south divide, the persistence of poverty and social polarization, to de-industrialization, and increasingly to law and order, and the perceived breakdown of civil society and the

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<sup>2</sup> Aaron Andrews, "Multiple Deprivation, the Inner City, and the Fracturing of the Welfare State: Glasgow, c. 1968–78," *Twentieth Century British History* 29, no. 4 (2018). p.610

family.’<sup>3</sup> ‘Inner city’ replaced the terminology, geography and ideas of ‘twilight areas’ and ‘Victorian slums’.<sup>4</sup> Bookended by two government policy reports – the 1977 Labour *Policy for Inner Cities* White Paper and the 1987 Conservative *Action for Cities* statement – initiatives came in the context of intensifying de-industrialisation and spiralling unemployment. Andrews argues that this first report was the conclusion of processes begun by the 1968 initiative, which, with its explicit focus on area-based initiatives, began a fracturing of the welfare state, and ‘the consequent erosion of universalism in social policy’. This fracturing, he states, was a much larger political and social process, but the concept of the ‘inner city’ can be seen as its special dimension, stemming from the ‘rediscovery of poverty’ in the 1960s and continuing through the New Labour New Deal for Communities and similar place-based policies in the 2000s and beyond. At the same time, the 1980s saw cuts to the local government Rate Support Grant, which restricted their ability to ‘bend’ resources toward social services in deprived areas, as urban policy intended.<sup>5</sup>

Andrews and Saumarez Smith both look at these issues from a policy level, both local and national, to highlight ways in which policies rhetorically embedded meanings and understandings of concepts like the inner city, and multiple deprivation. However, they do not look at the practical application of this policy at an organisational level. This thesis argues that it is important to consider both the role of the voluntary action field, and individual voluntary organisations, in enacting any fragmentation of the welfare

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<sup>3</sup> Otto Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities: the Thatcher government and inner-city policy," *Urban history* 47, no. 2 (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Andrews, "Multiple Deprivation, the Inner City, and the Fracturing of the Welfare State."

<sup>5</sup> Susan J. Smith, *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence: Citizenship, Segregation and White Supremacy in Britain* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). P.74

state, and also the way the field was itself shaped by these processes, especially as its role in relation to the proximate state field changed. The way organisations viewed, used or were excluded from ICPP and similar programmes will have had an impact on understandings of the role of the field, as well as on the communities it served.

ICPP was a funding programme that had significant reach into and impact on the Birmingham voluntary action field. The nature of the funding, its duration and priorities, determined by the proximate state field, would affect behaviour of actors within the field, and encourage more competition for resources among them. It would also privilege certain actors – incumbents that adhered more closely to certain norms – over others, who might struggle without key symbolic resources, and ability or will to enact required behaviours, in order to access funding. This and other policy and funding initiatives demonstrate something of the dialogue between the voluntary action field and the influential proximate state field, part of the role of which is to reify the behaviour of other fields, guided by its own interests. Material relating to Birmingham ICPP also shows us some of the results of field-shaping activity over time, including the way different normative values associated with the field were strategically enacted, and the impact that had on the field as a whole.

There is plenty of literature on the Urban Programme and broader urban development initiatives at this time, but fewer studies of ICPP in its historical context, and very little that focuses on the role of voluntary organisations within these programmes. While urban policy in the 1980s increasingly focused on improving the built environment and



encouraging business,<sup>6</sup> charities and community groups were also a fundamental part of delivering on its stated social aims, and thus deserve attention. The chapter will discuss the extent to which the voluntary action field was able to influence the policy to which it was subject (if it chose to be); which actors did and did not have a voice in this process; which actors did and did not benefit financially from the programme; the ways in which it shaped behaviour of actors in the field; and the ways in which the policy helped to manufacture a sense of precarity and, in turn, competition, which then reinforced the field hierarchy. It will consider how these processes were enacted or contested by some organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field.

#### *7.1.1 Inner city concerns*

The Labour government established a more robust urban policy than previous iterations via the White Paper *Policy for Inner Cities* in 1977. The policy sought to bring together different strands of inner-city policy under a coordinated strategy, starting in seven pilot Partnership areas of Liverpool, Birmingham, London Docklands, Hackney and Islington, Manchester and Salford, Lambeth, and Newcastle and Gateshead. The aim was to tackle problems in the inner areas around the centre of major cities which had experienced economic decline, physical decay, a lack of private investment and a concentration of poverty, reflecting both high unemployment and low wages. The policy programme included increased funding and a broader scope for the Urban Programme, from which some voluntary organisations were also funded for both capital and social projects, and redirecting some education, housing, transport and Rate Support Grant funding towards inner-city policy concerns. £75 million (around

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence*. P.73

£358 million in 2021 values) was reserved for these seven inner-city Partnerships, intended for 'pump-priming projects for stimulating community involvement, for undertaking projects which fall outside the main programmes of central and local government, or for topping up what has been done in other ways'.<sup>7</sup>

New ideas and initiatives for urban planning developed in the 1980s. This was underpinned by a new orthodoxy, specifically the belief that too much government intervention and the inefficiency of local government caused or contributed to urban decline. 'Dependency culture', engendered by 'municipal socialism', was, according to Conservative thinkers, to blame for stifling an 'entrepreneurial spirit'.<sup>8</sup> However, even the more novel developments of the Conservative government in urban policy fell short of the free market, non-interventionist ideals that appeared to underpin them. In fact, the first Thatcher administration continued, and in many cases greatly expanded, interventionist programmes, such as the Urban Programme, begun by the previous Labour government. By 1989 there were 35 separate inner-city schemes, administered by nine different central government departments or QUANGOs, cutting through a full range of domestic policy areas.<sup>9</sup> Saumarez Smith argues that the difference between Labour and Conservative inner-city policy, in fact, lay in the Conservative Party's use of the portfolio to restrict local authorities, who were too attached to 'high rates, gay rights, Nicaragua and nuclear free zones'. Indeed, Thatcher press secretary Bernard Ingham accused them of conducting a 'guerrilla war against the Government at the

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<sup>7</sup> Rupert Nabarro, "Inner City Partnerships: An Assessment of the First Programmes," *Town planning review* 51, no. 1 (1980). p.25; Bank of England, "Inflation Calculator," 2022, accessed 20/03/2022, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>.

<sup>8</sup> Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities." p.281.

<sup>9</sup> Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities."p.279; Murray Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy," *Town planning review* 58, no. 2 (1987). Smith, *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence*.

expense of their rate-payers'.<sup>10</sup> This rhetoric and underpinning ideology, even where contradicted by practice, had implications for voluntary organisations in multiple ways. Campaigning and service organisations funded by local authorities, working on the kinds of issues (and others) disparagingly referred to by Ingham, were at risk of losing grant funding. The prospect of Urban Aid, ICPP and other related funding for inner city projects provided an opportunity to mitigate those losses for some and bolster funds for others. However, this came with the risk of supporting or contributing to government aims, including limiting local government, that organisations either might not support, or that might compel organisations to change methods or missions in unpredictable ways.

Both Labour and Conservative inner-city policy programmes, and the concept of multiple deprivation underpinning it, were rhetorically linked to race and immigration in Birmingham and other areas with high rates of in-migration.<sup>11</sup> Policy, research and political debates included a focus on 'ethnic minorities' and their settlement. The 1977 Labour Government White Paper acknowledged that this was not the case in every city, and that smaller towns had also experienced migration of people and communities from other countries. It did also, however, frame this as part of the inner-city 'problem', although passed on responsibility for addressing the specific problem of racial discrimination, and its role in creating and entrenching disadvantage, to work being undertaken by the Commission for Racial Equality. Peter Shore MP, at the time the Secretary of State for the Environment, stated in a parliamentary debate on the policy that 'Substantial ethnic minorities in some cities have added an extra dimension of

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<sup>10</sup> Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities."; p.287.

<sup>11</sup> Andrews, "Multiple Deprivation, the Inner City, and the Fracturing of the Welfare State." p.611

difficulty', although the difficulty remained unspecified in that debate.<sup>12</sup> 1981 guidelines from the Department of the Environment continued to stress the centrality of ethnic minorities and race relations to the Urban Programme. It was described as 'of particular benefit to the ethnic minorities, not only as a result of the projects designed to help them specifically, but also because nearly 40 per cent of the ethnic minorities live in partnership or programme areas.'<sup>13</sup> In a review of 10 years of inner-city policy from 1976 – 86 Stewart highlighted that 'fear of racial tension [had] always been at the heart of urban policy', with the first Urban Programme announcement in 1968 seen as a direct response to anti-immigration speeches of Enoch Powell and others, and the increasing visibility of the National Front in the mid-1970s drove a fear of racial tension and consequent loss of social control. So too did the 'disturbances' in 1981, 1983 and 1985, associated by the press and politicians (if not by local people) with racial tension and unrest. This was reflected in policy over the period at least implicitly, although it did not propose specific anti-racist action nor reflect the needs of Black, Asian or other minority ethnic communities.<sup>14</sup>

However, while 'race' may have been central to the rhetoric of the policy, its success in funding ethnic minority-led programmes was questionable. Susan J. Smith suggested that the area-based structure of the programme, as opposed to a targeted population basis, was demonstration of a reluctance by officials to endorse 'positive discrimination in favour of immigrants', which was deemed politically difficult. Unlike the accounts above, in fact, Smith argued that moving responsibility for the programme

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<sup>12</sup> House of Commons, *Inner Cities (Government Proposals)* (1977).

<sup>13</sup> in Ball, "The limits of influence". p.8.

<sup>14</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy." pp.132-133

from the Home Office (formally responsible for race relations) to the Department for the Environment in 1978 in fact sidelined the issue of supporting ethnic minority communities.<sup>15</sup> She advocated taking a population approach rather than a geographically determined one, as a result. Saumarez Smith also points out that the term 'inner city' could act as a slur, deployed to 'anathematize' sections of the population, especially Black and South Asian communities.<sup>16</sup> Given the centrality of 'race' to this major policy programme and attached funding streams for the voluntary sector, it is important to similarly centre questions of race and Black- and South Asian-led organisations in voluntary action studies of this period, as this thesis hopes, in part, to do.

The 1977 White Paper strongly implied a need for relatively new immigrant communities – and their representative voluntary organisations - to invest their own resources and to 'play their part' in economic regeneration, in keeping with themes of duty, responsibility, national unity and earned citizenship evident in other political rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> This had relevance for the expectations that would have been placed on Black- and Asian-led voluntary organisations in particular by government funding programmes. The 1977 White Paper stated that 'minority groups... need to be given a full opportunity to play their part in the task of regeneration', and that in some areas 'immigrant communities' had already 'shown their willingness to invest their resources and energy' into their neighbourhoods.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, this could be seen as

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence*. Pp.67 - 74

<sup>16</sup> Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities." p.277.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Francis, "Mrs Thatcher's peacock blue sari: ethnic minorities, electoral politics and the Conservative Party, c. 1974–86," *Contemporary British history* 31, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>18</sup> Secretary of State for the Environment, *Policy for the Inner Cities*, Cmnd.6845 White Paper, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977).

government recognising a gap in funding and provision for African, Caribbean, South Asian and other settled migrant communities, and acting to fill it. On the other hand, it could be read as an expectation that they should metaphorically 'pay something back' to the neighbourhoods into which they had moved, in return for their citizenship.

The White Paper also positioned the role of local communities and voluntary bodies as 'agencies for action'. Involving local people through 'self-help' and community effort was described as 'both a necessary means to the regeneration of the inner areas and an end in its own right':

*The improvement of the inner areas needs to harness the good will and energies of tenants' and residents associations, local councils of social service, settlements and charities, and more informal groups such as pensioners' clubs... Public policy should aim to stimulate voluntary effort and help voluntary bodies to play a constructive role.<sup>19</sup>*

This phrasing described a relationship that would make the most of the resources and energies of community groups and established charities in meeting government aims, but in a way that characterised this as a two-way relationship. This potentially offered the possibility for organisations to influence or change government practice where necessary. However, this kind of rhetoric did not acknowledge or address potential issues of what theorists have termed 'philanthropic insufficiency' – a limit on voluntary resources – or indeed 'philanthropic particularism' – the way various biases work to direct voluntary resources in some directions but not others.<sup>20</sup> Voluntary bodies could play a *role*, but could not in all likelihood be the solution to societies 'wicked problems', however great the promises of partnership might be.

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<sup>19</sup> Environment, *Policy for the Inner Cities*. pp.8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government."

The White Paper further called for greater collaboration between government and the community, including voluntary bodies, as well as between government and the private sector, in achieving environmental improvement and better social conditions. Earlier Urban Programme funding was described as a means of 'stimulating innovation and self-help [projects]' among both voluntary bodies and ethnic minorities, and the Paper set out the intention to extend this. This again evoked long-held values of voluntary action, that appear throughout this study. The narrative presented demonstrated some clear, core beliefs about the role, nature and expected behaviour of the voluntary action field, from the perspective of the proximate state field. While the core beliefs were not created by the state field alone, but rather a product of long-term rhetorical exercises and interactions between both fields, attaching grant money to those values and behaviours could help to further enact and entrench them. The fact that faith in these intrinsic values was so persistent demonstrates the success of the field and other interested parties in perpetuating them, regardless of their truth. Their strategic deployment could then take the field in different potential directions, to the benefit of different groups of actors, as we shall see.

### *7.1.2 The Urban Programme under the Conservatives*

After the election of the Conservative government in 1979, programmes broadly continued, with some elements of streamlining, a re-emphasis on economic development, and an expansion in the number of Programme authorities. There was a greater focus on evaluation, programme control and managerialism, as ran throughout the Thatcher administration. There was also a proliferation of new

organisations wielding related powers; Enterprise Zones, City Action Teams and employment Task Forces are examples mentioned at points in the BCT archives, for instance.<sup>21</sup>

Stewart, in his ten year review of inner-cities policy up to 1986, noted an 'elevation of the role of the private sector both in the philosophy and the practice of the policy', most notably under the leadership of Michael Heseltine MP from 1980 onwards, and most visible in the privatisation of housing policy. He also reflected on the role of the voluntary sector, or, in his view, 'more accurately the non-statutory sector', which had been 'drawn more heavily into inner cities policy as a consequence of the availability of funding'. Stewart reported that in 1985/86 there were over 4,500 voluntary projects in receipt of Urban Programme support, worth £76 million (£183 million adjusted for inflation at 2021 values), representing a mix of capital and revenue funding for a range of initiatives.<sup>22</sup> Although this was only at most around 3% of registered charities, assuming all were registered, across England and Wales in 1985 (of a total of 154,135), there would likely have been particular concentrations in selected cities eligible for funds.<sup>23</sup>

In Stewart's view, however, this had not been a positive development for the sector. The pace and extent of the involvement of voluntary organisations, he argued, had 'brought about the increased bureaucratisation of the non-statutory sector and forced many organisations into an organisational culture and style quite unsuited to their

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<sup>21</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy." p.134.

<sup>22</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy"; Bank of England, "Inflation Calculator."

<sup>23</sup> Comptroller and Auditor General, *Monitoring and Control of Charities in England and Wales* (London: National Audit Office, 1987).



functions'.<sup>24</sup> This was also a concern raised in broader terms by Ralph Kramer in his 1981 study of voluntary agencies in welfare states.<sup>25</sup> Of particular concern to Stewart was the potential for Urban Programme funding to force a 'reorientation of philosophy and priorities', and to encourage a strong, 'arguably unhealthy' dependence on government funding.<sup>26</sup> In terms that seem well-aligned with Salamon's theory published the year after Stewart's study, of voluntary failure and philanthropic insufficiency,<sup>27</sup> Stewart cautioned with some urgency that the consequences of withdrawal of funding for non-statutory activity would be 'enormous'. 'Having generated and supported a powerful non-governmental interest group', he said, 'ministers seem about to damage that interest severely'.<sup>28</sup>

These concerns, part of a section reflecting on the distribution of influence and power, constitute the only reference to the voluntary sector in the article, and it is interesting that it seems to be such an impassioned one. It raises points raised elsewhere, and by other funding programmes, including the impact on voluntary organisations' behaviour ('increased bureaucratisation'), understanding of the overall terrain of the field, or what is going on within it ('philosophy and priorities') and identity ('organisational culture and style'). It also highlights the issue of precarity, as funding programmes waxed and waned, while at the same time encouraging a two-way dependency; for local authorities a dependency on voluntary sector service delivery to fill gaps in its own provision, and for voluntary organisations on funding for services, projects and paid

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<sup>24</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy." P.141.

<sup>25</sup> Kramer, *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State*.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy." P.141.

<sup>27</sup> Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government."

<sup>28</sup> Stewart, "Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy." P.142.

staff. With the exception of the positive reference to the growth in the role of intermediary organisations, this is a pessimistic description of a field navigating developing changes in its shared understandings, and facing an imminent loss of funding, driven by state policy and practice.

Lawless points out that the need to coordinate inner-city policy more effectively was again stated by the Conservative government's 1988 statement *Action for Cities*, a little over 10 years after the White Paper called for the same. As he highlights, researchers and lobbying organisations suggested that the policy area consistently lacked a coherent vision. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), for instance, described it as a 'series of piecemeal measures which do not add up to a co-ordinated policy'.<sup>29</sup> This was in part due to a 'multiplicity of ministerial interests', with the policy programme spread across different central government departments and QUANGOs. This splintering was replicated at a local level in the Inner City Partnerships, where multiple tiers of local government, district councils, health authorities, the police, the private sector and voluntary groups struggled to work together; partnership agreements in Liverpool and Hackney, for instance, 'dissolved into [their] constituent parts' due to disagreements and difficulties working together.

Lawless also argues that urban policy focused more on administrative procedures than strategic planning, particularly under the Conservative governments. The first Thatcher administration saw policy pivot away from strategy and towards 'the attainment of annual budgetary cycles'. This, Lawless' review suggests, brought a minute pragmatic

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Lawless, "Urban Policy in the Thatcher Decade: English Inner-City Policy, 1979 - 90," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 9, no. 1 (1991). p.18.

obsession with issues such as time expiry of grants and how to re-fund 'worthy' projects – an issue already raised here, and clear throughout the BCT archives.<sup>30</sup> This 'obsession' is writ large across the Birmingham ICPP policy documents that will be examined in the next section, and perhaps this focus on organisations and bureaucracy was to the detriment of direct consideration and views of residents. Its importance, however, should perhaps not be minimised to the degree that Lawless does, especially considering the degree to which some voluntary organisations relied on ICPP grants while they were active, their role in communities, and the perpetual cycle of perceived precarity caused, in part, by such funding cycles.

## **7.2 ICPP in Birmingham**

We will now turn to ICPP in Birmingham, and its impact on the voluntary action field. It is worth noting that this experience will be specific to Birmingham, not only because of the usual specificities of local contexts, organisations and actors in the city, but because each geographical Partnership took different strategic approaches to setting priorities, making grants and monitoring activity. Comparing Partnerships with a particular focus on their relationship to voluntary and community organisations could be a potentially interesting avenue for future research. This has not been explored in this way to date.

In 1977 the Department of the Environment published three 'inner area studies', including *Unequal City*, a study of the Birmingham inner city. These reports were an influential precursor to ICPPs and other aspects of urban policy. The report argued that

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<sup>30</sup> Lawless, "Urban Policy in the Thatcher Decade." p.21.

‘the problems of inner areas will not be solved, or even significantly alleviated, without a very substantial change in the distribution of society’s resources’, including rebalancing personal and collective power in favour of inner-city residents. It further argued that without help to residents to become more organised, it would be unlikely that they would gain a greater voice.<sup>31</sup> This, in the authors’ view, had to be coordinated, supported and catalysed by the local authority: ‘it must be an element of strategy in its own right’, the authors argued, a duty to be dispensed through grant aid, practical support and ‘by the creation of a catalyst where apparently none exists’.<sup>32</sup> This echoed some of the previous approaches and discussions noted in Chapter 5 regarding local authorities and outside bodies stimulating community action in the so-called ‘twilight areas’.<sup>33</sup> It rhetorically set the tone for views about the role of voluntary action in this policy area: it should be an essential part of community landscapes, manufactured by proactive strategy and practical, financial support.

Contemporary policy documents and research papers on the topic of Birmingham ICPP show us other ways the roles, associated norms and rules of the game for the voluntary action field were constructed and enacted by the proximate state field. This did not happen in isolation, but in (metaphorical and literal) dialogue with the voluntary action field itself. We can see the state field shaping and reifying some of the boundaries and parameters for voluntary action, incumbent organisations in the field

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<sup>31</sup> Llewelyn-Davies et al., *Unequal City*. p.197.

<sup>32</sup> Llewelyn-Davies et al., *Unequal City*. p.199.

<sup>33</sup> *Handsworth voluntary organisations* MS 1579/2/3/1/34; *Pineapple Estate, Stirchley*, File EA/7/45 MS 1579/2/7/2/30; *Shard End Community Project (SECP)*, File 5/16/3 MS 1579/2/5/5/6; *Quinton/Woodgate Valley North Neighbourhood Project (QWVNNP)*, File EA/7/94 MS 1579/2/7/3/31, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

enacting and reinforcing dominant views constructed by both themselves and the state, and, sometimes, challengers pushing for alternatives. Financial and other data can also give us an indication of which organisations gained from ICPP in terms of resources, and which were well-placed to influence the way it worked, with implications for wider operations and partnerships with the proximate state field. We can, in short, see some signs of the practical results of field-shaping activity.

There is a considerable volume of references to Birmingham ICPP in the BCT records, ranging from simple budget lines to extensive critiques. This material presents a sense of intensification of state funding, and a particular type of state involvement, in the Birmingham voluntary action field. It was not, of course, the first grant funding programme organisations had engaged with, but previous to this, and particularly previous to the beginning of the stretch of Conservative governments from 1979, there was more of a sense from organisations in the BCT archive at least of ad-hoc funding applications to 'main programmes' such as adult education and social services, without a strategic, directive programme and without central government influence. While the era of commissioning and the split between purchaser and provider of public services can be seen as a major step-change in voluntary sector form and function, programmes such as the ICPP did some of the groundwork for preparing organisations to engage with the state in this way, encouraging greater professionalisation and engagement with bureaucratic, managerial practices. Again, this means an examination of the Birmingham ICPP can be instructive in terms of how the proximate state field and the local voluntary action field viewed one another, sought to influence one another in their own interests, and the extent to which this was successful.

Archival material in this chapter is supplemented by five contemporary policy, research and evaluation reports from across the programme's life-span, detailed in Table 3 below. To some degree, this provides some of the perspectives from outside of the BCT archives, which this project hoped to collect but could not due to limited access to the archives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3: List of Birmingham ICPP reports

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Type</b>
Priorities in the inner city 2	1978	BVSC	Voluntary organisation report
Five year review of the Birmingham inner city partnership	1985	Public Sector Management Research Unit: Aston University	Independent report, commissioned by statutory agencies
Birmingham Inner City Partnership Programme 1986-89	1986	Birmingham Inner City Partnership	Statutory report
Birmingham Inner City Partnership Programme 1988-91	1988	Birmingham Inner City Partnership	Statutory report
The limits of influence: Ethnic minorities and the partnership programme	1988	Helen Ball	Research paper, working with voluntary organisation

These reports came from different perspectives, and carried different agendas, so it is worth briefly describing their origin. *Priorities in the Inner City 2* by BVSC was a report from a consultation meeting held to discuss the draft ICPP plan.<sup>34</sup> It replicates speeches given by prominent individuals from BVSC, Birmingham City Council and the ICPP, as well as summarising discussions by participating organisations. The speeches are presented without comment, although a summary of the Q&A after each

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<sup>34</sup> Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*, BVSC (Birmingham, 1978).

is provided, and along with the discussion summaries can give some flavour of organisations' views. Other than in the speech given by the Chair of BVSC, there is no real clear policy statement from the organisation about its views or vision for the Programme, so it appears as more of a descriptive reporting tool than a campaigning one, albeit filtered through an organisational and individual intermediary with, presumably, some agenda and influence.

Researchers from Aston University led a *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership* published in 1985.<sup>35</sup> Its scope was to assess the impact and managerial effectiveness of the ICPP itself, and the effectiveness and value for money of a sample of ICPP-supported projects. The evaluation of voluntary sector programmes took a random sample of 41 funded projects, examined their files, gathered feedback from the statutory-side contact officers, and visited eight voluntary groups to get further insight. This is a process which would have privileged the views of the statutory partnership, which was the commissioning agent for the evaluation. The report also focused on the experiences of funded organisations, but not those that missed out, beyond some brief comments. While independent, and thus offering some interesting insights, it nonetheless was influenced by these factors.

Birmingham ICPP published a series of programme reports, including brief descriptions of the annual programme and its priorities for the report's opening year, an assessment of bids and projects, and the budget allocation for each Topic Group.

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<sup>35</sup> Public Sector Management Research Unit: Aston University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership (Inner Cities Research Programme)*, Department of the Environment (London, 1985).

The reports also included lists of projects funded. The two reports cover planned expenditure for the 1986-1989 and the 1988-1991 programmes, and were published in 1986 and 1988 respectively.<sup>36</sup> This takes us from the initial Birmingham ICPP plans and consultation, and the five-year progress review, to towards the end of the Partnership, signalled by the *Action for Cities* White Paper in 1988. These records, of course, only tell us what was funded, but not which applications were rejected. They were also only formal information reports, which reported on decision-making processes but not Programme evaluation or success.

Finally in 1988, ten years after the Partnership launch, researcher Helen Ball revisited the issue of whether ethnic minority groups had benefited from ICPP in Birmingham.<sup>37</sup> The study, done through Birmingham CRC, was designed to find out applicants' perceptions of ICPP processes, and to build a database of independent information outside of ICPP. A questionnaire was sent to each of the 314 organisations that had applied to Birmingham ICPP in 1987/88, and 113 responded, including 20% that self-defined as Asian groups, 8% African Caribbean groups, 33% white groups and 32% that identified as multicultural. This 44% sample of applicants has the benefit of including organisations that were unsuccessful in securing funding. It also meets a shortcoming in ICPP's own data, which did not ask directly about the ethnicity of groups applying for funding, but rather assigned a label about leadership, staff and beneficiaries based on the subjective judgement by officials. It also asks about whether

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<sup>36</sup> Birmingham Inner City Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89* (Birmingham: Birmingham Inner City Partnership, 1986); Birmingham Inner City Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91* (Birmingham: Birmingham Inner City Partnership, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence."



grants were fully or only partially awarded – something not represented in ICPP data. However, it is not as complete a record of grants as ICPP data in other ways.

### *7.2.1 ICPP Inception: Involving Voluntary and Community Groups?*

Organisations in the contemporary reports and archival data expressed hopes that voluntary and community organisations would be involved as key policy partners in developing the Birmingham ICPP from its inception, as well as being widely described as central to tackling difficult urban problems. As we shall see, there was some variation in how well different organisations felt they were involved.

As well as being seen as a key part of ‘tackling inner area problems’, community organisations *were* positioned as a partner or contributor to Birmingham ICPP policy, at least on paper. An Initial Birmingham ICPP Policy Paper in December 1977 had more of a focus on economic decline and regeneration and environmental improvements in the ‘core area’, but mentioned the role of voluntary groups in supporting minority communities a number of times. It concluded with the hope that the paper would ‘act as a focal point and stimulus to discussion between the partnership authorities and individuals; community and voluntary service organisations, and bodies concerned with all aspects of industry and commerce’.<sup>38</sup>

The 1978 report by BVSC on its consultation meeting demonstrates that there was some clear attempt at engaging voluntary and community groups, at least to some

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<sup>38</sup> Birmingham Inner City Partnership, *Birmingham Inner City Partnership: Initial Policy Paper*, H.M. Government, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands County Council (Birmingham, 1977).

degree, with over 100 people from 50 different organisations attending.<sup>39</sup> The report also mentions a consultative document from December 1977 that was sent to 250 organisations, although with limited response. Table 4 below shows the organisations represented at the BVSC event. While this does include two residents associations and a small number of organisations working with, although not necessarily run by, minority ethnic people, it is interesting to note that these are generally well-established Birmingham groups and branches, alongside local government partners and trade unions, rather than some of the self-identified grass roots community groups we have followed in the archives. In other words, those present at the meeting were, for the most part, incumbent organisations within the field. At this meeting, they had the opportunity, potentially, to shape a policy and funding programme that could have a significant impact on their field, its resources and its operations.

Table 4: List of Organisations Attending BVSC Consultation Meeting on Birmingham's Draft Inner City Partnership Programme, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1978<sup>40</sup>

<b>Organisation name</b>
Action Force Volunteers
Balsall Heath Association
Birmingham Central Mission
Birmingham Council on Alcoholism
Birmingham Council of Churches
Birmingham Council of Neighbourhood Groups
Birmingham District Council [local government]
Birmingham Polytechnic
Birmingham Settlement
Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
Birmingham Young volunteers
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies [University of Birmingham]
Chestnut Residents Association
Citizens Advice Bureau
Commission for Racial Equality
Community Health Councils: Central, East, North and South Birmingham
Community Relations [local government]

<sup>39</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*.

<sup>40</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*. pp.47-50.

Copec Housing Trust
Engineering Industries Association
English for Asian Adults
Family Planning Association
Family Service Unit
Inner City Team [ICPP Partnership, Birmingham City and West Midlands County Councils]
Lane Neighbourhood Centre
Lozells Social Development Centre
Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Steward's Committee
St Martin's Church
NALGO [the National and Local Government Officers' Association]
National Council of Social Service
N.U.T. [National Union of Teachers]
Personal Services [local government]
Pilgrim Social Action
Priority Area Playgroups
Royal Town Planning Institute
St. Basil's Centre
Small Heath Co-operative Housing Services
Small Heath Community Law Centre
Social Projects Group (Quakers)
Sparkbrook Association
Standing Conference of National Voluntary Youth Organisations
Toc H
Trades Council
Triangle Industries
Trinity Arts
Visiting Service for Old People
Volunteer Bureau
Weld
Westhill College
Workers Education Association

The meeting was held nine months before the formal start of the funding process, and intended to help with 'sharpening up the projects and persuading agencies that the suggestions in the Programme should go ahead' – language that suggests this may have been more an exercise in persuasion, or in setting the parameters of expected activity, rather than a genuine consultation.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, in the introduction, BVSC

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<sup>41</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*. p.6.

expressed the hope that this attempt to consult would be taken further, proposing formal consultation meetings at six-monthly interviews, and highlighting a 'pressing need for the direct involvement of inner city residents through some form of area committee structure', which should be written into ICPP governing documents. As discussed later, this did not come to pass. Concerns were also expressed that major decisions would be made long before communities could have sight of them, and that their role might be reduced to deciding 'the "colour scheme"', rather than the 'design of the "building"', indicating a clear fear of tokenism at this early stage.

Developing a partnership between the state and voluntary organisations was seen as key by BVSC, which described 'the integration of voluntary and statutory effort' as more important even than funds for voluntary organisations.<sup>42</sup> This indicated a real desire for strategic, political partnership by the incumbent infrastructure organisation, to which the resource of influence may very well be as valuable as the resource of funding, in this instance. ICPP, for BVSC, was an opportunity to establish 'voluntary effort' as central to services and communities, rather than services being something the local authority alone provided. However, at this same event the leader of Birmingham City Council Neville Bosworth explicitly ruled out representation of voluntary groups on the Partnership Committee, which he felt was the realm of elected members, shutting off one avenue for influence from the beginning.<sup>43</sup> Graham Shaylor, lead Council planning officer for the ICPP, urged attendees to 'be free with your comment and criticism but at the end of the day leave us with something that is better not in shreds'. This limited the ultimate scope for the consultation somewhat. Shaylor even stated that 'certain

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<sup>42</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*. p.4.

<sup>43</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*. p.16.

decisions have already been taken – for better or worse’.<sup>44</sup> This did, at least, clearly and honestly communicate the boundary of engagement, but it would have offered limited optimism for organisations hoping to influence policy to work better for them and their constituents. It also made very clear that the voluntary action field would be central to ICPP’s success, but that that success was to be judged on the statutory-run Partnership’s terms. If the voluntary action field wanted to engage and reap the financial benefits – and it did have a choice – it would have to engage in ways sanctioned by the proximate state field. This may seem like an obvious point to make, but it is illustrative of a transactional underpinning to this funding scheme (and others), and of the degree of power the proximate state field could wield when shaping other fields.

The five-year review of Birmingham ICPP in 1985 also reflected on the involvement of voluntary organisations in the strategic direction of the programme, as it continued to develop. The Voluntary Topic Group, a cross-cutting non-policy specific Birmingham ICPP funding stream, was described as different in terms of its management and approach to other topic groups, insofar as there was no specific committee responsible for steering activities, and a wide range of activities of different kinds was encouraged within a loose policy framework. The report highlighted that there was no voluntary sector representation in the management of the Topic Group, although an ‘advisors and observers’ group was nominally comprised of BCRC and BVSC.<sup>45</sup> As with the example of the BVSC consultation, it is notable that these are two established, incumbent and relatively powerful actors within the field, and that other less well-

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<sup>44</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*.

<sup>45</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.

resourced 'grass roots' organisations were not involved in this way. Despite the lack of representation, the mere fact that there was a dedicated workstream for the voluntary sector and voluntary projects in what was a significant policy initiative demonstrates the increasing positioning of the field, relative to the proximate state field, as central to community improvement and service delivery.

Similarly, residents associations raised concerns about the administration of Birmingham ICPP in a 1984 Community Forum report.<sup>46</sup> Much of their critique was about a perception that voluntary groups had not been involved in Birmingham ICPP strategies and processes. They questioned the ability of ICPP to meet its own aims as a result. Some groups felt funding allocation was 'irrational', as they did not perceive it to be based on local need, and that while it used various numerical metrics to allocate funding, ICPP had not conducted necessary research into the actual needs of local areas. It was broadly seen by Community Forum's members as 'unresponsive' to the actual social needs of the inner city, and unaware of the variation from area to area, with the emphasis perceived to be on 'getting money spent' rather than meeting need. High turnover of planning officers, a resulting lack of continuity and a lack of collected information on area needs meant that ICPP had a low understanding of the nature of different areas, including whether funding a project would create duplication of effort. One residents' association suggested that associations like itself should be involved in ratifying grant decisions, given its knowledge of the area.<sup>47</sup> While some groups said that ICPP officers continued to be involved in successful projects, visiting them and

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<sup>46</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme', Community Forum 1984, *Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, publications and reports* MS 1579/2/7/6/14, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>47</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

being flexible with extra funds where needed, most groups said there was a lack of consultation, difficulty getting in contact and inflexibility. This added to the sense of 'remoteness' attributed to ICPP officers by these organisations. The lack of consultation extended to involvement regarding private sector projects such as local factory conversions, with no effort to offer premises to local businesses or jobs to local residents, or to consider whether it would benefit the local community.

Where associations had themselves made efforts to consult on local issues, ICPP had sometimes ignored them, and at other times seemingly taken offence. On one occasion, according to the Community Forum report, a local councillor with responsibility for ICPP accused residents of 'being Marxist housewives and troublemakers, when they demanded that non-asbestos slates should be used on [housing regeneration] envelope schemes'.<sup>48</sup> This echoed political opinions from elsewhere in the country about voluntary groups using local authority funds to campaign for 'Left' causes, typified by the quote from Thatcher press secretary Bernard Ingham cited earlier.<sup>49</sup> This indicated that the hope expressed in the 1977 initial policy statement, for dialogue between the Partnership and community organisations, had not been realised, at least for these groups.

### *7.2.2 Those not in the room: involvement of minority-led groups?*

The attendee list for the BVSC-led consultation presented in Table 4, as noted, does not appear to include many, or possibly any, of the Black- and Asian-led, grass roots organisations that policy documents identified as central to the challenge of improving

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<sup>48</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

<sup>49</sup> Saumarez Smith, "Action for Cities."

the inner city. Indeed, only one of the topic group workshops at BVSC's consultation meeting explicitly discussed minority communities, and it was in the context of 'the ability of [ethnic minority] youths to obtain and hold down jobs in the inner city'.<sup>50</sup> Some mention was made of the language needs of Asian patients in the Health and Personal Social Services section workshop, but no other mention of issues, and no mention at all of Black- or South Asian-led organisations. The five-year review of Birmingham ICPP also stated that 'neither the general aims of the Partnership nor any of the operational objectives of individual topic groups were geared specifically to this sector of the community prior to 1981.'<sup>51</sup> The fifth iteration of the Programme, from 1983-86, was the first to include a specific stream on 'racial disadvantage'. This aligns with the lack of policy attention paid at a national level described by Susan J. Smith; while supporting ethnic minority groups may have been a priority rhetorically, specific policy and practice was extremely limited.<sup>52</sup>

The assumption, according to the Aston University-authored five-year review, was that voluntary project bids would provide a 'corrective balance' to the programme overall, on the basis that statutory services 'do not deal satisfactorily with the needs of ethnic minorities'. This could be seen as positioning services for minority ethnic people outside of statutory responsibility for provision and delivery, at least in perception and practice, if not formally. It also represented a fairly long-standing rationale for voluntary action: voluntary organisations were better able to tackle 'new' problems or underserved populations because they were better able to experiment without fear of

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<sup>50</sup> Council, *Priorities in the Inner City 2*. p.23.

<sup>51</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.. p.19.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence*.



‘wasting’ public money, to provide non-generic services to smaller, targeted groups, and to react quicker than statutory services dependent on legislation.

This follows from the value of being able to ‘access’, or being closer to, marginalised populations, a value to which we have seen voluntary organisations of different sizes and types within this field lay claim (Chapters 5 and 6). Here, for some, we can see it paying off; if the voluntary action field is seen as better able to access or reach certain populations that the state feels it cannot, or cannot do as well or as cost-effectively, then resources follow. However, unless concerted effort is made by incumbent organisations to restructure the field so that challenger groups – those with fewer material and symbolic resources – have a better chance of gaining more of said resources, the logic of the field’s hierarchy, and the proximate state field’s other needs, suggest that resources will flow to incumbents. These are not necessarily the organisations most ‘in touch’ with communities, or those directly led by them. Thus we see the incumbent organisations benefiting from values enacted by challenger, or less powerful, groups, without necessarily needing to enact those values as well or as completely, as BWAIC described in Chapter 5. The consequence, theoretically, is a further entrenchment of the favourable position of incumbents in the field. This is broadly what happened with Birmingham ICPP. This is not to say that those incumbent organisations delivered any services that were necessarily inappropriate or poor quality. There is no evidence to suggest so, or indeed to suggest otherwise. Rather, the point here is to highlight one way in which agreed field values can potentially act to reinforce the field hierarchy.

The ICPP itself made some efforts to channel funding to ethnic minority-led organisations, after its late start, although its success appeared to be limited at first. The five year review report noted that this was a 'continuing source of concern', and that a Partnership meeting in January 1984 spent considerable time considering the question of perceived insufficiency of funding for ethnic minority projects.<sup>53</sup> At the time of the review's writing in 1985, there had never been a Topic Group specific to ethnic minorities, despite the priority they were seemingly afforded, and despite the minority ethnic population comprising nearly half the total population of the core area, according to the authors. The focus brought to the issue mentioned above led the authors to include a specific section on ethnic minorities across Topic Groups, to consider the population's needs, policy to meet them, the impact of projects on needs to date, and the involvement of minority ethnic people in voluntary projects.

The authors reflected that 'in practice... paying attention to the needs of ethnic minority groups, as with the rest of the voluntary sector, has been confined to reacting positively to proposals from ethnic organisations or from other voluntary bodies whose proposed objectives included assistance to ethnic minorities.' This seems a long way from a proactive strategy to funnel money into ethnic minority communities and the organisations that represented them. They also noted how white-led voluntary organisations were more likely to have and use informal contacts in relevant departments to get guidance on applications before submission. This might raise the quality of bids, the authors argued, but worked against the interests of Black-led groups, and hurt the chances of less well-established groups to develop successful

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<sup>53</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.140

proposals. We can see field-shaping processes in play here. Organisations with greater symbolic resources, including the privilege and access to white spaces that being racialised as white brings, would be more likely to be able to access and benefit from material resources on offer.

This was also demonstrated by the tendency to fund those with low perceived risk attached; the Five Year Review noted that the policy of Birmingham ICPP to fund white and multi-racial organisations with a clear track record of managing projects already had meant that schemes were generally more efficient, but that Black organisations were unable to develop their own experience of running 'self help projects'.<sup>54</sup> The age of organisation is also clearly relevant here: longstanding organisations would likely have had the time to develop their own ways of working, create productive links to state actors, and to build more robust, and thus less risky organisations, compared to those serving and led by, at this time, still relatively new migrant populations, which may still be in a formation phase. Again, this would have favoured already dominant, incumbent and most likely white organisations that already had the means and self-interest to conform to dominant managerial behaviours.

According to Ball, in 1988, the voluntary sector as a whole was excluded from discussions about timetables, direction of funding and decision-making, and thus could not influence those matters most important or problematic to them. In Ball's words, 'the voluntary sector is constantly reacting to changing agendas and moved goal posts and is never consulted or involved in decision making'.<sup>55</sup> This, and other problems, were

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<sup>54</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.151

<sup>55</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence." p.18.

compounded for ethnic minority-led organisations. Describing the findings of an unpublished conference paper, Ball highlighted the conclusion that ‘the problems faced by those running ethnic minority projects are basically similar, but more extreme than those found in other small voluntary sector projects’, and that ‘the gap between ethnic minority groups and the local authority appeared to be even wider’ than for other small groups.<sup>56</sup> Officials, it was felt, neither understood nor sympathised with the problems and needs of ethnic minority groups, and this was seen to be a result of racism. Those problems included lack of access to relevant networks, and lack of support to develop organisational management skills in order to demonstrate groups’ competency to manage funds.

A lack of understanding on the part of officials was compounded by a lack of quality data. ICPP did not collect self-reported monitoring data from the projects it funded, but rather assigned ethnic minority markers based on its own subjective judgement, which compromised the data and the Partnership’s ability to monitor its own mission.<sup>57</sup> Some white-led organisations were also reluctant to collect ethnicity data from their service users, although they are not explicit about their reasons.<sup>58</sup> The imprecision of process and the resistance on the part of some organisations already in receipt of funding worked in favour of white-led organisations, as it did not divert funding away to minority-led organisations, or those that more comprehensively served those populations, as there was only limited evidence to suggest that the population might be under-served.

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<sup>56</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence."

<sup>57</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence."

<sup>58</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

This is not to suggest that there was a concerted effort to deprive Black- and Asian-led organisations of resources, or that no organisation pushed for better practice, but that the structures and systems in place, and dominant organisations' reluctance to challenge or change them, would have helped to maintain that status quo. For incumbent organisations, there was little incentive to change it. Challenger groups, and in this case especially ethnic minority-run groups, did not appear to be in the room to influence these structures and systems, but there also did not appear to be a will to design or consider structures and systems that would bring them into the room. Thus, the hierarchy of the field would likely be reinforced.

### *7.2.3 The nature of ICPP funding in Birmingham*

The Birmingham ICPP, established in 1979, included the City Council, the County Council, the Department of Environment and the Department of Industry, local Manpower Services Commission (MSC) representatives, and other local statutory bodies such as the Health Board.<sup>59</sup> Financial accounts from organisations such as Ashram and the Asian Resource Centre demonstrate how ICPP funds were combined into single grants with other funding streams such as MSC, and from local government departments.<sup>60</sup> In fact, combinations were built into the fund's design, given central government ICPP grants were up to 75% of the value applied for, with local

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<sup>59</sup> The MSC was set up as a quasi non-governmental organisation at the beginning of 1974 by the Employment and Training Act 1973. It sought to amalgamate employment policy, training policy and employment planning, to improve the efficiency of the labour market and, ultimately, to sustain full employment. Over one million people were directly or indirectly employed through MSC programmes in 1986, and its budget for that year was £2 billion. It was a major funder of voluntary organisations at this time. It closed down in 1988.

<sup>60</sup> Ashram Community Service Project Report of Grants to 31st March 1985, *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook - various papers* MS 1579/2/7/3/4 ; Asian Resource Centre Accounts 1986, *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1* MS 1579/2/3/1/13b, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

government or other funders contributing the remaining 25%, although this is not always expressed in clear terms in accounts.

Birmingham ICPP's aims were to assist in regeneration of the inner city, to tackle the problems of 'obsolescence', to improve personal services and to encourage people to 'help themselves' by placing an emphasis on projects of an 'enabling' nature, interpreted by Community Forum to mean 'attracting private sector or other sources of investment for services to inner cities'.<sup>61</sup> After initially increasing from year to year, total expenditure became more static from 1982 to at least 1984 at between £26 million and £28 million per year (around £73 - 74 million in 2021 prices), available to statutory, private and voluntary sector organisations.<sup>62</sup> ICPP established a number of topic groups, including:

- Economy, receiving a 35% allocation of ICPP funds for the 1984-87 programme
- Social and Community Services, receiving 12%
- Movement, receiving 8%
- Housing, receiving 10%
- Physical Environment, receiving 15%
- and Voluntary Organisations, receiving 11%.<sup>63</sup>

This demonstrated the relative worth attached to each of these topic areas, with 'Economy' a clear priority. Handsworth, Soho, Aston, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill were identified as priority areas in the 1979/80 programme, with Small Heath identified as an area for potential medium-term regeneration and Acocks Green, Nechells and

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<sup>61</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

<sup>62</sup> Bank of England, "Inflation Calculator"; Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'.

<sup>63</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

Washwood Heath as areas with most vacant land. In 1982 the priority areas were revised to form a continuous 'inner ring', with a slight extension of geography covered.

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The 1986/87 Birmingham Programme's 'voluntary organisations' stream had 346 applications for a total of £5.5 million (almost £16.5 million in 2021 values).<sup>65</sup> 128 awards were recommended, worth £950,000 (£2.8 million), with around 7% from local authority main programme funding and a further 2% from transitional arrangements from local government reorganisation, after the abolition of the WMCC in 1986. £612,000 of this (£1.8 million), or 64%, went to new project proposals across 93 projects, with all but £95,000 (£284,000) awarded in the form of one-off capital or non-recurring revenue grants.<sup>66</sup> In 1988/89, 155 projects were funded. 48 grants went to new projects, totalling nearly £700,000 (£1.9 million) across revenue and capital grants.<sup>67</sup>

Percentage allocations to each topic group were reviewed at various times, and changed across the years, according to changing priorities. An article in a local voluntary sector magazine called NETWORK 13 around 1981 stated that the Partnership viewed the growing allocation to the Voluntary Topic Group 'as a problem in that it uses resources that could be used in more politically favourable areas'.<sup>68</sup> It is

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<sup>64</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

<sup>65</sup> Bank of England, "Inflation Calculator."

<sup>66</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*.

<sup>67</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

<sup>68</sup> 'Inner City Money Cut – 80% less to groups', NETWORK 13 magazine, n.d., *Community Forum (CF)*, Birmingham, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

not explicit about what ‘politically favourable areas’ means, but it can be reasonably inferred from the rest of the article that it means policy areas, rather than geographical, and specifically those receiving larger budget uplifts for 1982-85, namely Economy, Housing and to a lesser extent Physical Environment. Other topic groups – Learning and Leisure, Health and Personal Social Services, and Movement and Society – would all see budget reductions. These were areas, generally, where voluntary groups would be more likely to apply for funds. The article went on to say that Birmingham ICPP had decided to limit funding to ‘new’ projects, and to restrict the type of project it would fund, with grants not exceeding £5,000 unless topped up by individual topic group budgets. It worried that ‘social welfare’ projects, or any others outside of the employment and housing topic areas, would struggle to secure funding for beyond short-term projects, representing a ‘marked change from previous years where open invitations for all sorts of projects were made’.<sup>69</sup> This introduces some themes that we will discuss in more detail shortly – namely cuts, precarity and insufficiency. These are discussed at length in both the contemporary reports and the archival material, and cuts are presented as a perennial feature of the programme, although one facing considerable opposition.

In the report from its 1977 consultation event, BVSC General Secretary Michael Matcham expressed a sense of eagerness regarding the emerging plans in his speech to the meeting, stating that, when they were released the previous year, there was ‘widespread enthusiasm for the concept that a partnership was necessary for the regeneration of the Inner City.’ Co-operation between local government bodies was

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Inner City Money Cut – 80% less to groups’, *NETWORK 13* magazine



welcomed, and even more so was the emphasis placed on the active involvement of the whole community. Matcham reported that ‘many people will be pleased to know that the years of talking have come to an end, that now is the time for action’, although he cautioned that this should be the *right* action.

In the face of this enthusiasm, BCC planner Graham Shaylor made it clear that there would *not* be substantial amounts of funding available for organisations, stating frankly: ‘what is proposed in extra resource terms is very little – it must therefore be used for pump priming operations’. This positioned ICPP as a sort of start-up fund, as noted in discussion of national government White Papers, although without any indication of where the money for continuation would come from. Even so, the Leader of the Council pointed out that the £1,000,000 (£6.4million in 2020 values) agreed for new voluntary group projects by the Partnership represented ‘a basic significant increase compared with the £100,000 to £200,000 norm of previous years’. The leader of the council was not explicit about which figures he was referring to, so it is unclear which pre-ICPP fund he is referring to here, and it might not represent the full degree of statutory support the Birmingham voluntary sector received. Nevertheless, these statements conveyed a sense of urgency and an excitement for an expanding role for voluntary organisations in solving entrenched problems – albeit with limited funding. The voluntary action field had for many years made claims to values of innovation, as discussed in Chapter 5, and of connection to marginalised communities and beneficiaries. In many ways, these values were now intrinsic to the overarching vision and intentions of the ICPP. This potentially would mean a clear, important role for voluntary organisations in realising these intentions.

These values were repeated and re-emphasised throughout subsequent local policy documents and reviews. The five-year review report in 1985 again stressed the desire of the Programme to fund projects that encouraged 'self-help', and that explored new approaches to meeting the needs of the inner city. The Programme defined the role of voluntary organisations as 'complementing and extending the work of other bodies in developing activities and services where an approach different to that of the public or private sectors would be effective', evoking older, persistent concepts of the value and role of voluntary action, as discussed in this thesis.<sup>70</sup> Both Birmingham ICPP reports for programme years 1986-88 and 1988-91 also reiterated the perceived purpose of funding voluntary groups, namely so that they can 'complement and extend' statutory work, provide alternative approaches to public and private sectors, innovate new solutions to inner city problems, facilitate 'self-help', and encourage a 'high degree' of community involvement.<sup>71</sup> As discussed above, these aims all appeal to the established values of the field, and demonstrate some success on the part of incumbents in strategically promoting and sustaining perception of these values.

The 1985 Five Year Review found that, while most of the projects were in the general category of 'self-help', only a quarter actively involved the community in the provision of services. Most of these were community centres or volunteer-based projects. The rest, according to the researchers, 'provide a non-statutory form of service delivery similar to the approach favoured by statutory agencies'.<sup>72</sup> This stressed the

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<sup>70</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.p.121.

<sup>71</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*.P.36, Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*. p.123

<sup>72</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.127

'additionality' element of voluntary services, seen as a key benefit of their involvement. They also identified some voluntary organisations that had had more than 10 projects funded by the Partnership, and even one having received funding for more than 20 projects.

The review found that the programme had made 'significant progress' in responding to its main aims of assisting regeneration, tackling vacant land and industrial sites, and improving personal social services while encouraging self-help. However, the authors found that many were neither genuinely innovative nor distinctive from main programmes (i.e. non-ICPP related local authority service expenditure). This was clearly disappointing, given the vision stated above. They attempted to measure the extent to which funded projects met these role expectations referenced earlier, rephrased as 'additionality, complementarity and innovation'. They identified that 36% of sample projects could be described as 'purely additional' or providing broadly the same services as those provided 'by main programmes', including a number of adventure playgrounds, schemes for older people and community centres. 32% addressed 'clearly defined unmet client needs even though this was sometimes in the form of service provision similar to main programme'. Most of these were providing services for ethnic minority people. 12% were classed as complementary, in that they generated additional activities or blended with other activities within the organisation, and a further 20% were complementary in that they provided services not provided in any way by the main programmes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.

The authors noted that voluntary organisations continued to present themselves and their projects as innovative, even if they lacked substantial demonstrable innovative elements:

*...all of the sample projects considered themselves as innovatory on their application forms. Whilst this is entirely logical and rational in view of the funding circumstances which apply, there clearly is some ambiguity as to the meaning of innovation.<sup>74</sup>*

Nevertheless, they themselves identified a number of different dimensions of 'innovation', including new – or new to the City of Birmingham - approaches to particular concerns, new client groups, or new services not provided by main programmes. They estimated that 65% of the sample projects could be seen as innovative in at least one of these respects, particularly in terms of new provision for ethnic minority groups, and building new partnerships. Few projects introduced new approaches, or brought approaches from elsewhere into the City of Birmingham. 'Being innovative' is a value and behaviour long associated with the voluntary action field, as noted in Chapter 5, so it may have been reasonable to expect voluntary organisations to present innovative projects and solutions to address perceived inner-city problems. However, as explored shortly, the risk-aversion of ICPP funding, as well as its limited nature, worked against this ambition.

While they didn't consider the question of innovation, a number of residents associations, perhaps understandably, did feel their own projects were cost-effective. In the 1984 Community Forum report a number referenced savings to the Council delivered through voluntary labour and promoting self-help, tapping into some

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<sup>74</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.

established views of the value of voluntary action. They felt their projects made valuable contributions to their areas, and that ICPP *could* be leveraged to deliver significant results for inner cities, including an 'increase in 'community pride' and social awareness' among residents. However, other residents associations in the same report challenged this kind of narrative, that sidelined the state's role in providing services, and was perceived to focus on the problems of the individual rather than the more entrenched problems of the community.<sup>75</sup> In the words of the Balsall Heath representative, ICPP was not only 'more bother than it was worth', but also 'merely a "sop" by the government to appear to be doing something about the problems of the poor'. Others felt projects were being used to provide services 'on the cheap', to justify cutting statutory services on the basis of cost savings, or to 'fill gaps in mainstream activities', with a perception that ICPP funds were increasingly being used to 'shore up' mainstream services as need increased and mainstream funding reduced.<sup>76</sup>

#### *7.2.4 Who benefited?*

Not all organisations that applied for funding were awarded it, and not all organisations were awarded the full amount for which they applied. With, as Graham Shaylor stressed to the BVSC consultation attendees, a limited fund to draw upon, some groups would miss out. SAF theory would suggest that actors with higher levels of social skill, better able to take advantage of new opportunities such as funding streams, would inevitably be more likely to gain benefit and improve or maintain their position within the field. Evidence from the policy reports examined here seems to back this up, and to suggest that this predominantly benefited those which were already incumbent,

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<sup>75</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

<sup>76</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

further reinforcing the hierarchy of the field and the distribution of material and symbolic resources within it.

The authors of the 5-year review suggested that the Topic Group's funding approach was inherently risk-averse, as a result of adopting a 'deliberately loose policy framework', which is taken to mean it had a broad-brush approach to funding inner city projects on different topics, rather than having specific approaches or ambitions to guide its awards. The report also suggested that the Topic Group's reliance on formalised administration belied its lack of awareness of grass roots and community approaches, compounded by its lack of communication or mechanisms for receiving feedback from those groups. Risk aversion was also encouraged by a tendency for ICPP 'contact officers', who were each responsible for a large portfolio of funded organisations and projects, to 'play safe' by funding familiar, reliable voluntary groups. This meant that project failure rate was low, and the efficiency of the system higher, because less time was spent on dealing with problems, issues or calls for assistance. In the authors' view, this led to an 'inevitable tension' between the drive to fund 'soundly based projects which meet clearly visible client needs', and those which sought out 'innovatory experimental or genuinely inventive projects... in the full spirit of the partnership'.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have data that can tell us about which applications were rejected, so we cannot interrogate these tendencies further at this stage.

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<sup>77</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.125

The authors also stated that there was a ‘fragmented approach to the perception of voluntary sector needs within the inner city’, with a lack of assessment criteria to assess the merit of different projects. Again, this meant a reported tendency to opt for familiar projects already funded by local authority departments – in field terms, these were highly likely to be incumbent organisations. They felt this might lead either to areas of need being neglected, or an over-emphasis on service delivery in particular areas. While procedures were described as ‘highly formalised’, monitoring was seen to be flexible and light-touch to a fault. Only expenditure was monitored, which did not allow an examination of performance, and further compounded the funding of known quantities, who could be ‘trusted’ to deliver. They concluded, however, that this problem went beyond just ICPP, and it was something the ‘main programme’ of local authority funding had to be alive to as well.

These concerns were all echoed by residents associations in the 1984 Community Forum report too.<sup>78</sup> Organisations told Community Forum that they felt that ICPP was ‘biased in favour of funding more ‘professional’, organised voluntary groups who had articulate paid workers to put the case of such groups’, and highlighted the perceived need for groups to have internal – financed – infrastructure in order to be successful. Concerns were raised about demands for monitoring, including book keeping, increasing conditions attached to grants, whether the funding was really worth the effort required, and whether the conditions and requirements meant groups lost control of their projects. In some ways this could justify the proliferation of infrastructure and technical advice services developed in response to ICPP, although it can also be seen

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<sup>78</sup> Report, ‘Inner City Residents’ Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme’

as an illustration of the kind of pressure to adopt certain behaviours leveraged by state field processes. It was felt that volunteer-run self-help groups were excluded due to their lack of 'track record'. They weren't the known, low-risk option that ICPP officers favoured, as detailed above.

Indeed, the report suggested that ICPP should distinguish between two separate elements of 'the 'voluntary' sector', the phrasing indicating its scepticism about the voluntary nature of more professional groups, versus the 'entirely voluntary' constituents of the second category. This was not dissimilar to the view expressed by Barry Knight in 1993 in his report *Voluntary Action*, which proposed a division between service delivery organisations and what he perceived as traditional, self-help volunteer-led organisations.<sup>79</sup> With reference to this current study, SAF theory would suggest this illustrated a divide and disagreement about which normative behaviours and values should be held and promoted by the field, and differences in organisations' ability to enact them, relative to their resources, rather than a total split. The Community Forum report here provides narratives that support this view. These professional organisations were also seen as 'less accountable to inner city communities' than groups such as residents' associations, based on a perception that they were less directly connected to or run by communities. This wasn't a universal view, with one group feeling that it only had to show that it was 'active' and 'organised enough to take on the responsibility of running a scheme', but it does again raise questions of the agreed values associated with voluntary action, their relative worth in terms of symbolic resource, and the extent to which they were visible in practice.

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<sup>79</sup> Knight, *Voluntary Action*.

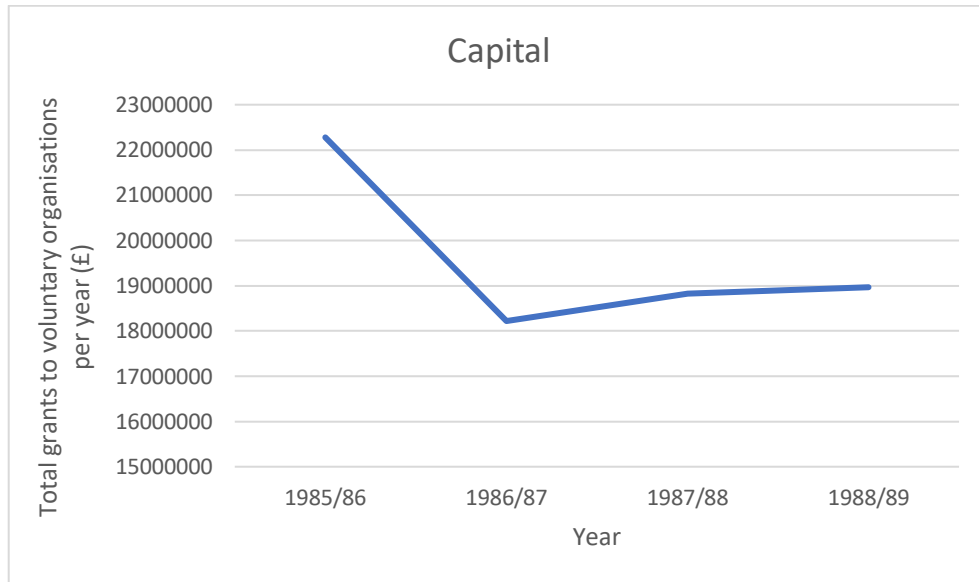


Statutory Birmingham ICPP reports provide some additional insight into the kinds of voluntary sector projects and organisations that were being funded. We can see some names familiar from the BCT archives, including ACSHO, which received two recurring revenue grants for its supplementary school project of £2,100 and £6,406 respectively per year over each of the four years covered by the accounts. ARC had five grants for projects including a housing welfare officer, women's community worker, Asian elderly project, general coordinator and its advice and information centre. Combined these grants provided between £52,493 in 1985/86 and £19,960 in 1988/89, as three grants became time-expired. The Action Centre also had a grant for its coordinator. BCRC received a grant of around £17,000 for three years for an 'inner city community project', and BCAB received five grants, four of which were time-expired by 1988/89, for projects including a mobile service and an ethnic minority advice worker. Birmingham Settlement received grants for two projects totalling £116,211 between 1985/86 and 1987/88. A range of church and Islamic centres, community and residents associations, theatre and arts groups and scout and cadet units also received grants, and recipients included many groups serving ethnic minority communities.

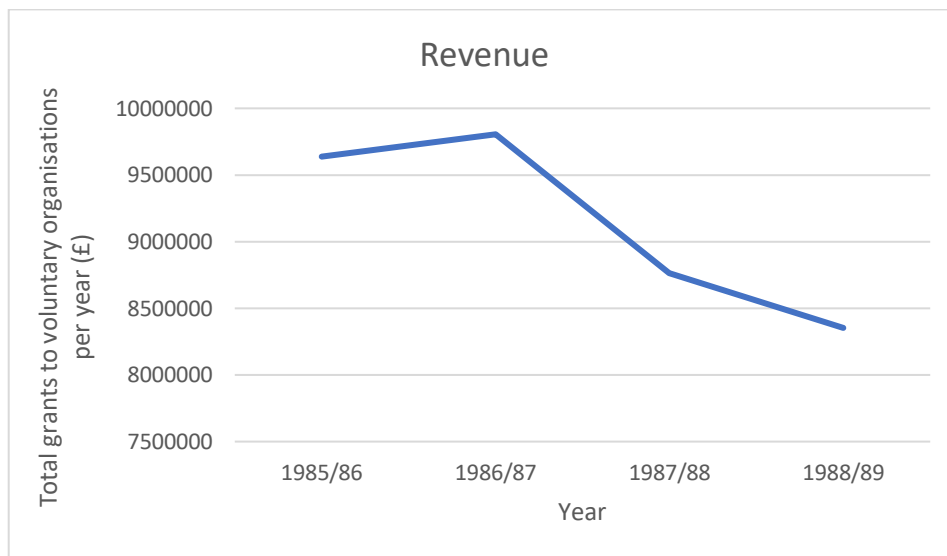
This data does not tell us which organisations applied for funding and were turned down, or how rates of applications – in number or value – changed over the years. Nevertheless, the records for 1985/86 – 1988/89, for instance, show that capital funding for voluntary organisations, after a steep initial drop of £4million from the first to the second year, remained relatively steady. Revenue funding took a deep cut of

almost £1.5million from a high point of £9,805,402 in 1986/87 (over £28million in 2020 prices), falling year on year.

**Figure 4: ICPP capital funding for voluntary organisations 1985/86 – 1988/89<sup>80</sup>**



**Figure 5: ICPP revenue funding for voluntary organisations 1985/86 – 1988/89<sup>81</sup>**



Based on the archival material, cuts were viewed as a perennial feature of ICPP and the Urban Programme. The Inner City Unit held an open meeting unsubtly titled ...*And*

<sup>80</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

<sup>81</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

*the cupboard was bare* in June 1981, for instance, about ‘how cuts in Inner City Money will effect voluntary organisations, community groups and the inner city programme in Birmingham’. In a flyer for the event organisations were told ‘if you have a project in the inner city for which you want funds, you’ll have to work out your project in great detail, and take a lot of time in considering it’, stressing the amount of labour necessary for a successful application, again pointing to the bureaucracy of the process.<sup>82</sup> A BVSC magazine called NETWORK 13 carried more detail on cuts to the 1981/82 programme. Central government, it said, had not increased the budget for Birmingham ICPP from the previous year, amounting to a cut of around 15%, and prompting a reorganisation of budget percentages allocated to different ‘topic groups’.<sup>83</sup>

The same article noted that problems for the voluntary sector went beyond percentage cuts, with a potentially unsustainable amount consumed by voluntary sector projects and, again, raising the issue of time expiry:

*Over the last three years the percentage of the total budget consumed by the voluntary sector has risen to more than 18% as opposed to the formal allocation of 10%... it means that when Urban Programme funding ends for individual groups at the end of three or five years, Local Authority Committees have, potentially, a very large amount of money to find if they want to take these groups into their main budgets. In the next three years almost £2,000,000 worth of projects will become ‘time-expired’.*<sup>84</sup>

This suggests the expectation was still that local authorities would take over the funding of these projects, just as they would previously have been expected, or at least encouraged, to take on either the funding or direct delivery of voluntary projects funded

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<sup>82</sup> Leaflet: ‘An Open Meeting – “...and the cupboard was bare...”’ Tuesday 23 June, *Community Forum (CF)*, Birmingham, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/13

<sup>83</sup> ‘Inner City Money Cut – 80% less to groups’, NETWORK 13 magazine

<sup>84</sup> ‘Inner City Money Cut – 80% less to groups’, NETWORK 13 magazine

through philanthropy. As this indicates, however, that expectation was looking like an unrealistic one. This was supported by Aston University's *Five Year Review* which stated that there had been 'relatively few examples of Partnership initiatives incorporated into local authority main programmes.'<sup>85</sup> There is a sense of tension here as previous practice began to change, driven to some extent by necessity, given the insufficiency of local authority funding available, but also driven by policy that sought to shift responsibility away from the state over the longer term. This may have been a successful approach for profit-making companies, which could use start-up or pump-prime funds as intended, before generating their own profit for further development and provision of goods and services. It could not work with nonprofit services, without alternative funders or levying charges for services – behaviour that would, in some cases, be too far from existing norms in the field at the time. This was also an issue of practicality; it would be unrealistic to levy charges for many support and advice services, especially where the clientele did not have the means to pay. Organisations could not expect a market to appear, just by introducing charges.

Cuts and changes to ICPP funding in 1987 from the Department of the Environment, and their impact on Birmingham City Council's wider voluntary sector grants programme, prompted considerable backlash in Birmingham. Essentially, groups that had ICPP grants ending in March 1987 would not be refunded by central government, and local government only had limited funds to replace that funding themselves. The specific funding problem was described in a BVSC letter to members:

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<sup>85</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. p.26.

*Birmingham City Council has severe limitations on its budget in the coming year and as a result the Social Services Department is faced with the need to find £742,000 in respect of time-expired Inner City Partnership Programme projects and a shortfall against the provisional grants for 1987/88 which had been recommended by the Committee in December 1986. Since there is no flexibility within the Department budget ways are being sought to make savings from the main programme voluntary organisation grants. In 1985/86 the main programme grants to voluntary organisations amounted to £1.7 million with a further £1.5 million from ICPP, giving a total of £3.2 million of grant aid to the voluntary sector. If £742,000 were to be cut from this budget it would represent some 23%.<sup>86</sup>*

It added that these cuts would fall disproportionately on some groups, as others would be protected as either falling into the 'priority work' of the Social Services Department, or having some time left to run on their ICPP grant. The decision would principally affect a group of 16 to 18 organisations, including three citizens advice bureaux, Harambee and Friendship Housing Associations, Balsall Heath Link, Birmingham Volunteer Bureau and the Sahali Playbus Scheme in Handsworth. Community Forum newsletter Residents' Voice pointed out that this cut came in the context of others, including a £39 million cut from the Government Rate Support Grant to Birmingham City Council, which would have a knock-on impact on voluntary group funding from non-ICPP sources as well.<sup>87</sup> A press article about the cuts reported that a number of organisations said they 'would have to fold and axe staff'.<sup>88</sup> This statement could have been exaggerated for dramatic effect, in the interests of mobilising public support and lobbying the local council. However, given the high percentage ICPP funding represented in relation to total income for some organisations such as ARC, it may

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<sup>86</sup> Letter from BVSC to 'Colleague': 'Grants to voluntary organisations' 13 March 1987, *Social services - ethnic minorities*, File 3/27 MS 1579/2/3/3/25, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>87</sup> Newsletter: 'Birmingham Voluntary Projects face cuts of £750,000', Residents' Voice April 1987, *Community Forum (CF), Birmingham*, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/16, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>88</sup> Newspaper cutting: Maggie Matthews, 'Projects facing cash crisis – Groups may fold as council halts grants', March 10 1987, *Social services - ethnic minorities*, File 3/27 MS 1579/2/3/3/25

also have been a very realistic assessment. Organisations that faced time expiring grants at the end of the 1986/87 financial year were told in a letter from the Director of Social Services to 'seriously consider the fact that your grant may be completely withdrawn' due to budgetary pressures.<sup>89</sup> They were asked to detail 'the effect immediate withdrawal of funds will have on your obligations to any staff you employ', but the article made clear that the decision had been made by the full council to not allocate the full amount needed to the social services committee to fund all projects.<sup>90</sup>

These cuts came suddenly, at least from the perspective of voluntary organisations, which were only informed of the decision three weeks before they would have expected to receive their grants. Indeed, in the press article mentioned above the Chair of South Birmingham Family Services Unit was quoted as saying: 'all through last year we were given the impression that there were no problems, and just a few weeks ago we were given an informal verbal assurance that everything was fine'.<sup>91</sup> This sudden 'bombshell', as the chairperson called it, created a crisis for those groups affected, according to the Chair of BVSC's Board of Management in a lobbying letter to Nicholas Ridley MP, the Secretary of State for the Environment. This crisis for individual organisations was framed in terms of their place in the voluntary sector, and the voluntary sector's 'contribution to welfare provision'.<sup>92</sup> The Residents Voice newsletter also expressed considerable dissatisfaction with this lack of communication, and

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Director of Social Services: 'ICPP Schemes – time expiring at 31st March 1987', n.d., *Social services - ethnic minorities, File 3/27 MS 1579/2/3/3/25*

<sup>90</sup> Maggie Matthews, 'Projects facing cash crisis – Groups may fold as council halts grants'

<sup>91</sup> Maggie Matthews, 'Projects facing cash crisis – Groups may fold as council halts grants'

<sup>92</sup> Letter from BVSC General Secretary to Nicholas Ridley MP 13 March 1987. *Social services - ethnic minorities, File 3/27 MS 1579/2/3/3/25*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

'feeling somewhat manipulated by the 'politics' of it all', perhaps alluding to ways in which government funding programmes were perceived to be covers for harsh cuts to local authority funding. It commented that the voluntary sector appeared to disproportionately at risk when times got hard:

*The Voluntary Sector should not be picked off as the more vulnerable parts of this City's services, the convenient labelling of them as "Government Funded" increases the feeling they are marginal and dispensable. They certainly regret that it is only in the last 3 weeks of the financial year that the City Council have shown what they really think of the Voluntary Services.<sup>93</sup>*

This illustrates one potential or perceived impact of shifting responsibility for delivery to voluntary organisations; that funding was easier to cut, or to not renew, when it was given out to a multiplicity of voluntary groups than when it was more obviously linked to statutory service delivery by one public sector provider. There is also a sense conveyed here of a lack of respect for voluntary organisations and their role on the part of the local authority, displayed by their lack of communication as much as their lack of continuation funding. There is also something important to unpick about *why* the labelling of them as 'government funded' might increase the sense they are 'marginal and dispensable'. It is not expanded upon in the original material. It might be that they are government funded but not government owned or directed, and thus not given the same status or protection. This is certainly in keeping with the frustration expressed in the newsletter that the Council did not plan for 'the likelihood of cuts', but instead reacted late, and without turning its axe towards its own services (although this is only the perception of this organisation). Thus voluntary services were seen as valuable insofar as they remove pressure to deliver from statutory services, but this is always

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<sup>93</sup> 'Birmingham Voluntary Projects face cuts of £750,000', Residents' Voice

dependent on the proximate state field's willingness to fund services of the kind being delivered in the first place.

BVSC called for organisations funded through the Social Services Department to develop a coordinated response to any proposed cuts, and to coordinate an approach to the Leader of the City Council specifically, to ask them to find alternative funding for the groups at risk. It was also keen to 'explain the importance of the voluntary sector in Birmingham's community life and in particular the work of those organisations funded through Social Services'. Finally, it called for a 'system of liaison' to be set up between the Council and the voluntary sector 'to enable future discussions, review and negotiation to take place in a less crisis affected context', and to build 'a more productive partnership'.<sup>94</sup> The Residents' Voice newsletter also called for proposals to establish a 'Voluntary Organisations Charter' to be reignited; this had first been proposed in 1982 but shelved, and aimed to ensure regular discussion between the Council and the sector. This material rather punctures the strategic hopefulness expressed during BVSC's 1978 consultation meeting on ICPP policy, discussed in the previous section, where the 'integration of voluntary and statutory effort' in relation to Programme development was described as a more important potential development for the sector than increased funding. It also underlines the extent to which this funding and associated developments were on the state field's terms, but still had a profound impact on the voluntary action field, possibly hoping for greater, more sustained benefits from adapting to new roles and rules.

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from BVSC to 'Colleague'



It is important not to overstate the powerlessness of the voluntary action field in the face of the proximate state field, however. After all, organisations ‘won a reprieve’ after this outcry, with the City Council voting to continue funding for the coming year. Opposition to and criticism of ICPP (and other) systems described here demonstrate ways in which groups resisted or challenged changes. What we cannot see is other ways this happened in day-to-day face-to-face interactions between different actors, but these almost certainly happened and probably had some influence. Nonetheless, in this case, the leader of the Council warned that ‘we will have to look at all the voluntary organisations’ funded by the Social Services committee, as he claimed had been done already with a number of other council committees. In other words, organisations should only consider this reprieve as temporary.<sup>95</sup>

Not all applications were successful, of course; the Balsall Heath Residents Action Group had their application for the cost of secretarial services rejected in 1983, a decision which BCT’s Eric Adams described as ‘a sad commentary on the relative assessment of values when one is aware of many of the much larger financial requests which were granted’, and evidence of the ‘age-old stigma attaching to ‘administration’, even when the voluntary activities of many residents must save thousands of pounds offered to less energetic and committed groups for workers.’ It is unclear to which workers’ groups and larger organisations Adams was referring here, in BCT Agenda Notes where he could not be fully candid, but he certainly seemed frustrated at the difficulty faced by small, active, volunteer-run groups in securing even small amounts of state funding to advance their day-to-day organising work.

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<sup>95</sup> Newspaper clipping: Roy Smith, ‘Voluntary groups win a reprieve’, Evening Mail, 17 March 1987  
*Social services - ethnic minorities, File 3/27 MS 1579/2/3/3/25*

Birmingham Federation of Community Organisations also encountered problems with accessing even small amounts of funding when it was trying to establish itself, complaining in July 1986 that its approved application for pump-priming funds from February of the same year had not yet been processed – ‘and this from a fund which is intended to be easily accessible to new groups!’.<sup>96</sup> These experiences corroborate some of those described in earlier policy reports, especially in terms of the slowness of some processes for getting funding out to communities and groups that needed it. This could be the result of lack of involvement of small voluntary and community groups in the Programme’s design and operation, but equally could be a result of the complexity of relationships between different local statutory agencies and the national Department of the Environment. Whether the organisation Eric Adams championed lost out because it was applying for administration costs, that the Programme might not deem ‘innovative’ enough, or because more established incumbent organisations used up grant monies instead is a matter of speculation, but Adams seemed to think it was a combination.

#### *7.2.5 Minority ethnic-led groups and Birmingham ICPP*

One group of organisations that could potentially have been left out, as already suggested, was ethnic minority-led organisations.<sup>97</sup> The Five Year Review noted that

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<sup>96</sup> Report on the Inauguration of Birmingham Federation of Community Organisations, 9 July 1986 *Birmingham Federation of Community Organisations (BFCO)*, File EA/7/A(D) MS 1579/2/7/3/21, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>97</sup> This principally means organisations run by and for people from Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, although as noted in Chapter 5, the extent and nature of user leadership of organisations is another disputed concept. The reports examined here do not define leadership, so it may vary from having people from minority ethnic backgrounds doing the day-to-day running of organisations in Chief Executive or similar leadership roles, to having those people represented as

across different Topic Groups, there were many projects that were ‘explicitly multi-racial in intention’, but that few Black-run projects had been approved, and in some projects there were few ethnic minority staff involved.<sup>98</sup> There was also significant variation between the topic groups. The Health and Personal Social Services Topic Group, for instance, awarded substantial grants to improve health education facilities and train staff in ‘relevant issues’, building, apparently, on work done earlier by the Birmingham Community Relations Council. The Housing Topic Group, however, still did not appear to have developed a proactive focus on either projects for the benefit of ethnic minority populations, or those run by Black or Asian people.

The researchers found that all the schemes in the sample ‘gave slight assistance’ to African Caribbean people, and most gave ‘little or no assistance’ to Asian people. The Economy Topic Group was found to have been slightly more successful in its targeting, with skills and business development schemes reaching communities that MSC had apparently failed to reach. Groups like the Community Roots Resource Centre, Ashram and the Handsworth Employment Scheme were noted as having ‘reached clients much more effectively than other established agencies’, again signalling the field value of access or reach. Ashram, indeed, which is discussed elsewhere in this thesis, was noted to have recently achieved ‘major contractor’ status under the Partnership, although this was not, at this time, a purely Asian-run organisation as the Aston report seems to suggest, but rather a ‘radical Christian community’ with a ‘multi-

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individuals on governance boards, to having them involved in discrete projects or advisory boards within an organisation.

<sup>98</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.

racial management committee'.<sup>99</sup> This topic group was noted as the one 'in which 'ethnic projects' were allocated a greater share of funding than the proportion of black people in the inner-area population'.<sup>100</sup>

The majority of the section on ethnic minorities in the 1985 report is devoted to a section titled 'the involvement of ethnic minorities in voluntary projects', reflecting the aforementioned, assumed role of voluntary organisations in meeting the needs of ethnic minority populations, as well as the cross-cutting policy nature of the Voluntary Topic Group. Of the random sample of projects examined, it found that nine were run by Black (including South Asian) staff for Black and South Asian clients, and accounted for 22% of expenditure, at an average grant value of £38,000 between 1979-84. However, there was a dramatic difference between the value of funding for African Caribbean projects, averaging £36,600, and Asian-led projects, averaging only £3,500. Eight projects were run by white staff and for white clients, taking up 19% of total expenditure. 21 projects benefited a 'mixed clientele', and represented 54% of expenditure. Here there was a further stark difference, between white-run projects for mixed populations which had an average grant of £61,300 compared to £33,600 for those with mixed ethnicity staff. Among this group, five of the eight largest grants were made to white groups with white staff delivering to a mixed ethnicity audience.

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<sup>99</sup> This is illustrative of the problem of defining 'user led', mentioned above: in this case it seems to be sufficient to have people from ethnic minority backgrounds on the governance board to be classed as 'Black or Asian-led', while other organisations might have a much more extensive model of being established and run by and for people from those communities. Leaflet: 'Ashram Community House Sparkbrook', n.d.; Annual Report 1986/87 Ashram Community Project, n.d., *Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook - various papers* MS 1579/2/7/3/4, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>100</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*.

Overall, it was concluded that 60% of funding within the random sample was of direct benefit to ethnic minority populations. This benefited African Caribbean people more than Asian people, despite the African Caribbean population being smaller in the core area than the Asian population. Additionally, while 53% of funds intended to benefit African Caribbean communities were won by Black-run groups, only 5% of funding for the Asian population went to Asian-led groups. The low numbers of Asian organisations receiving grants was attributed in early years to poor advice, a lack of material in different languages and a lack of appropriate support to complete bids. The average size of grant for Asian schemes was less than half of that for African Caribbean projects. These issues had apparently been rectified by the time of the Five Year Review, and both applications for funding and grants awarded to Asian groups was increasing, although Ball also highlighted a low awareness among Asian groups especially of alternative sources of funding in 1988.<sup>101</sup> In general, though, it was felt that the level of benefit received by Black and Asian people was commensurate to the proportion of the population they represented.

The report authors acknowledged, however, that this was in contrast to a parallel 1985 report by the BCRC. This alternative report found that Black-led groups were granted 8% of the funds they applied for for new projects in 1984/85, compared to a 36% success rate for white-led groups. Only around a third of grants benefited ethnic minority communities.<sup>102</sup> The authors of the Aston report argued that their methodology was based on 'an assessment of actual benefit to black people from all voluntary projects', rather than the number of 'ethnic projects' awarded grants, and thus they

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<sup>101</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence."

<sup>102</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence." p.8.

deemed it a better measure of benefit. This is certainly broader, but perhaps risks including organisations that reported benefiting ethnic minority populations but took what could be labelled a paternalistic approach, or existed in areas with large minority populations, but without much assessment of actual reach or effectiveness.

Despite this apparent success, the report acknowledged that the success rate of white applications was four times higher than that of Black applications. 47% of bids for funds for 1984/85 came from Asian and African Caribbean groups but they only received 13% of grants. White groups made 44% of applications and were granted 75% of awards. Black-led groups were more often awarded a smaller proportion of the grant value they had applied for as well; Black groups were awarded 7.5% of what they applied for, on average, compared to 34.4% for white group applications. This, in fact, seems remarkably low in both cases, but clearly particularly for Black-led groups, which would in turn impact on their ability to deliver to a high standard. This was a problem noted in Ball's study of ethnic minority groups and ICPP in 1988 as well. There was a particular problem with groups being awarded only partial funds, or capital rather than revenue funding, which was described as a 'recipe for long term failure', as groups would attempt to do the same work with too few resources and no guarantee of long-term funding. This was a higher risk for South Asian and African Caribbean groups compared to white groups, according to Ball's study. The former only had eight successful revenue bids, and only two awarded for the full amount applied for, compared to 19 successful bids and 11 for the full amount for white groups (although the article does not state the total number of bids submitted for either group).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence." p.13.

The core area of Birmingham had an ethnic minority population of close to 50% in 1988. Ball's article reported that 13.8% of funding went to Black, Asian and other minority ethnic organisations in 1986/87, based on Birmingham ICPP figures. By ethnic minority organisations, the Department of the Environment meant either those run by minority communities, those where a high proportion of beneficiaries were from a minority community, or those specifically directed at 'ethnic minority needs', but not run by, for instance, the Black community. This grant level was low compared to Hackney, where 22.2% of ICPP funding went to ethnic minority projects, and Liverpool where the proportion was 22.4%.

Moving to later ICPP years, the 1986-88 Programme report noted that 159 bids, representing 44% of total monies bid for, were for projects specifically benefiting ethnic minority communities. 33% of grant money awarded for new projects (£309,000 (around £847,350 in 2020 values)), across 49 projects, was for ethnic minority projects, and close to 90% (£277,000 (£759,599)) of that total was for 42 projects run by Black-, Asian- and other minority ethnic-led projects. The subsequent Programme report, covering 1988-91, reported that £509,000-worth (£1,117,539) of grants to new projects went to 'ethnic minority projects', with 89% of new grants going to 31 projects run by minority ethnic communities in 1988/89. Total expenditure on voluntary projects, including new and continuing, for this year was £8.1 million (£17,784,013) – the same as the previous year – of which £2 million (25%) was for ethnic minority groups (although it is unclear if this means solely groups run by minority ethnic people). These percentages seem significantly lower than the 60% of grants benefiting ethnic minority

projects estimated by Aston researchers in 1985 – although, of course, some of those projects would not have been Black- or Asian-led – and well below the percentage minority ethnic population in inner city areas.

It was not just the rates of application success that Ball's survey explored. These figures did not fully convey the experience of Black-led groups, who Ball's study found to carry a lot of frustration and resentment, and a strong perception of inequality:

*Groups do not **feel** successful. They have applied for years and received nothing or they have applied for capital and revenue and only been given a small part of what they applied for<sup>104</sup> [original emphasis]*

Given the emphasis placed on the importance of involving ethnic minority communities, and community organisations, in 'solving' inner-city problems, and the expectations that they might thus be funded to do so, this frustration and sense of disappointment is perhaps understandable. This was only three years after the second Handsworth disturbances of the 1980s, which again, given the focus of analysis on interracial tension (rightly or wrongly) and poverty, criminalisation and unemployment among young Black men might have raised the expectations of Black and South Asian organisations that they might be engaged as part of a solution. Instead they appear to have felt excluded from the success of other organisations, and that they were below the notice of statutory authorities. We do not know if white groups felt the same. We also do not know the full extent to which the perception was based on demonstrable practice. Nevertheless, the perception itself was important, and shaped beliefs and behaviours of some Black and South Asian organisations in the Birmingham field. This

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<sup>104</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence." p.10.



kind of perception could, for instance, influence a culture of scarcity, summarised by ARC in 2003: 'In the black voluntary sector no-one trusts anybody, everybody thinks, wrongly thinks, that the pot of money is fixed and small and they are all fighting for it. You are always my rival – you know, poor people's thinking.'<sup>105</sup>

'Race' is touched on only briefly in the Community Forum's 1984 report on the views of residents associations regarding Birmingham ICPP. In terms of meeting the needs of ethnic minority inner city communities, one Saltley Residents Association representative felt that the programme was failing to meet the needs of those it intended to help, stating that 'ICPP had made no provision for ethnic minorities in the area despite demands from well-organised Pakistani groups'.<sup>106</sup> This is the only explicit reference to minority ethnic communities or minority-led groups in the report, despite a number of the residents associations operating in areas with significant minority ethnic populations. Elsewhere, ACSHO reported having struggled to secure a grant in its 1980 informal annual report to BCT, and felt its own work was both co-opted (as good ideas) and devalued (as unprofessionally presented):

*We have made continuous applications to Urban Aid and the Inner City Partnership for grants and all of them have been unsuccessful. The most important thing about these applications that we have sent in is that the Inner Partnership Scheme and the Urban Aid has been using our ideas to set up projects in the community and telling us that our application was not professionally done.*<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Bhattacharyya, *Across All Boundaries*. P.60

<sup>106</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

<sup>107</sup> Letter from ACSHO to BCT 13 March 1980, *Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO)*, part 2 File JM/A/1 MS 1579/2/3/4/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

It did receive funding later in 1983, with a grant of £8,000 (£27,607 at 2020 values) over four years under the housing topic group. Nevertheless, this speaks to Ball's reflection on Black-led organisations not 'feeling' successful. A perception of co-option of its project ideas but also its very identity and value as 'grass roots', or having 'access' to communities, by other organisations with less of a legitimate claim to this value could have fed into this feeling. ACSHO reported having failed to meet standards of professionalism in their application here, but those standards were generated and ratified largely by the proximate state field, and then promoted and embedded by the voluntary action field in which they existed, but without necessarily their consent, as a less powerful challenger organisation. Their resistance to adopting normative behaviours of reporting activities or financial records has already been discussed, and this is another example that illustrates the difficulty in resisting those norms within a field, if the organisation also wants to receive the same resources offered in exchange for conformity. It is difficult to improve one's position without doing so, and also poses challenges for survival where other financial resources are scarce.

Mentions of 'race', ethnicity and Black- and South Asian-led organisations are few and far between in the residents associations' critique, published by Community Forum. The ethnicity of residents association representatives is not noted, but this may link to resistance to collecting ethnicity data mentioned earlier. It is an extremely stark absence given the focus on minority ethnic communities in central and local government ICPP policy documents, and it is an absence that is notable across other voluntary organisation's documents in this and previous sections. It is also noticeable given the geographic areas of operation for some of these organisations, and their high

minority ethnic populations, and because of other events happening around this time – namely inner-city disturbances in Birmingham and beyond that were characterised as ‘race riots’, and the multitude of publications discussing them that followed. It underlines the whiteness of incumbent organisations – those writing the critiques and campaign documents, reinforcing their own concerns as the ones of importance – which may factor into why Black- and Asian-led organisations did not hold the same power within the field, and in turn were absent from activities and events that shaped it.

The statutory reporting data explored earlier is coded to indicate geographical areas of benefit for each grant, and whether the work was targeted at specific groups, such as women, disabled people or minority ethnic groups.<sup>108</sup> As discussed, this data is far from perfect; ethnicity, as Ball pointed out, was assigned by ICPP officers, rather than collected directly. It is also interesting to note a low number of projects assigned as relating to disability. It does still provide some indication of what officers thought they were funding, based on their work and relationships with the organisations they funded. Overall, out of 411 projects funded, 182, or 44%, were classed as serving some ethnic minority grouping from a limited list of ‘Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Multicultural or Other’. Officers recognised the difference between community-led organisations and services benefitting certain communities, assigning markers such as ‘Ethnic Group Afro-Caribbean’ alongside ‘Ethnic Service Afro-Caribbean’. More Black-, South Asian- and other minority ethnic group-run projects were funded than projects that were only ‘serving’ these communities – 132 compared to 50, with some organisations running

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<sup>108</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

multiple projects. Capital grants were much more limited and infrequent, and so the focus here is on revenue grants. With the exception of the final year covered by the report, ethnic minority-led projects were also awarded a greater total value of revenue grants.

However, as Figure 6 shows, the total value of grants began to fall earlier for ethnic minority-led groups (1986/87) than for serving groups (1987/88), and fell much more steeply, eventually dropping slightly below the total value of grants to minority ethnic community-serving groups. The highest value grant for each grouping each year shows a similar trajectory. Table 5 below shows overall total revenue grant funding for each year, for reference.

**Figure 6: Total value of ICPP revenue grants 1985/86 – 1988/89, minority ethnic-serving projects compared to minority ethnic-led projects (£)<sup>109</sup>**



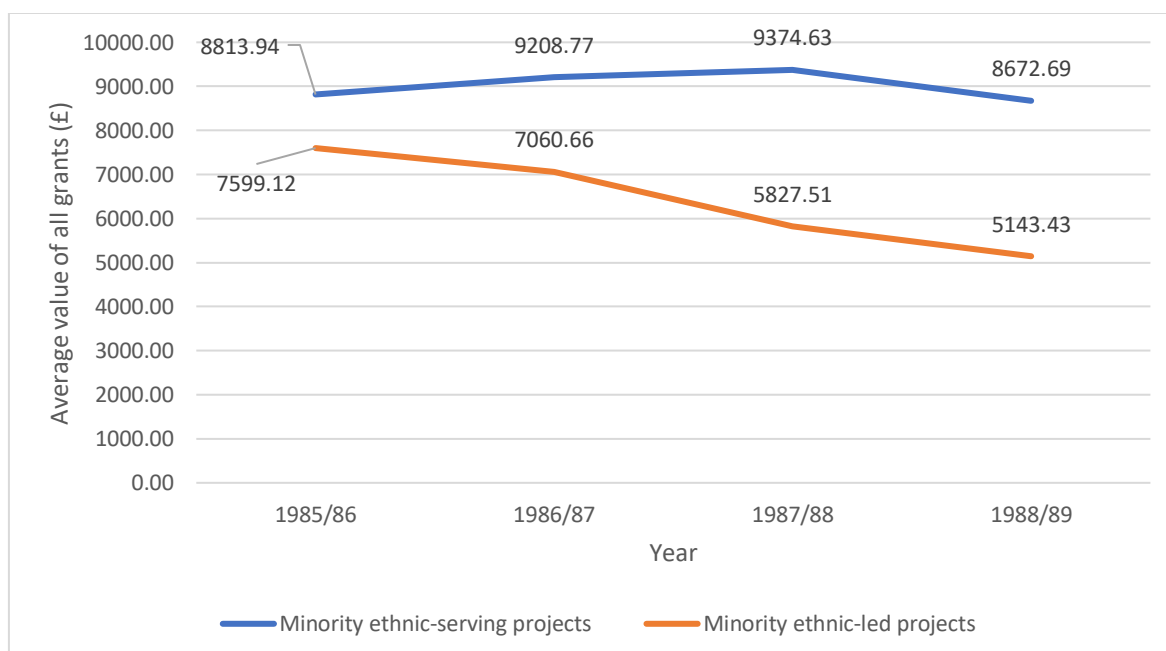
<sup>109</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

**Table 5: Total value of ICPP revenue grants to voluntary groups overall 1985/86 - 1988/89<sup>110</sup>**

Year	Total (£)
1985/86	3,308,626
1986/87	3,503,587
1987/88	1,843,070
1988/89	720,487

However, in every year the average value of revenue grants to minority ethnic-serving projects exceeded that of minority ethnic-led groups. Indeed as Figure 7 shows, the gap between the two widened over time. Again, Table 4 shows the average revenue grants overall for each year for reference. This also demonstrates that minority ethnic-led projects received grants of an average value somewhat lower than the overall rate.

**Figure 7: Average value of ICPP revenue grants 1985/86 – 1988/89 (excluding 0 values), minority ethnic-serving projects compared to minority ethnic-led projects (£)<sup>111</sup>**



<sup>110</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

<sup>111</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

Table 6: Average value of ICPP revenue grants to voluntary groups overall (excluding 0 values) 1985/86 - 1988/89<sup>112</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average (£)</b>
1985/86	10,604.57
1986/87	10,155.32
1987/88	9,649.58
1988/89	9,237.01

While we cannot say which group was more successful in securing grants, as we do not have data on the number or nature of applications, this does suggest, in these years at least, Black-, South Asian- and other ethnic minority group-led projects individually received grants of a lower value than projects serving, but not run by, those communities, even if more of the former received them. The steeper and earlier fall in funding also supports a perception, at least, that they faced greater precarity, and comparatively larger cuts. To understand the full picture, these figures would have to be compared with data regarding the overall size of the groups, grants as a proportion of their overall budget, and the nature of the work funded by Birmingham ICPP.

#### *7.2.6 Time expiry, dependence and precarity*

The Five Year Review from 1985 considered voluntary organisations' dependence on Partnership funding, and the issue of time expiry of grants. The report estimated that overall expenditure of Partnership funds on voluntary projects was in the region of 20-25% of total ICPP expenditure, taking into account spend across all topic groups.<sup>113</sup> It described the voluntary sector as growing in its importance to ICPP, and as 'significantly affected' by the Partnership. It also sounded an alarm bell for the future,

<sup>112</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1986 - 89*; Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

<sup>113</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. p.19.

stating that the Partnership had almost been ‘too successful’. It had created a situation where the expectations of voluntary organisations had ‘been raised significantly’, but the level of demand was such that ‘many will be unable to gain renewal or be incorporated into the main programme’.<sup>114</sup> In addition, competition was raised as an issue by one residents association, which felt that ‘ICPP was actually a negative influence in that it was forcing residents’ groups to compete over what was in fact a paltry sum of money and was resulting in groups losing their autonomy’.<sup>115</sup>

The authors of the Five Year Review noted that most projects considered Partnership funding as ‘vital to the undertaking of their activities’, and, for 80% of organisations surveyed, ‘to their continuance’. Scrutiny of project files showed it was the main source of funding for 50% of projects. While other sources of statutory, non-statutory and commercial income were highlighted, it was deemed to be a ‘very significant source of funding’ for Birmingham groups, and its reduction or withdrawal ‘would have very serious consequences for this sector’. The researchers went so far as to say that ‘most voluntary organisations could continue their activities only with the utmost difficulty’ if their funding was withdrawn, reducing the level of activity possible, and limiting their ability to meet people’s needs.<sup>116</sup>

This seems like a wholly unsustainable, and highly dysfunctional way for organisations to operate. It also put communities at risk of rapidly gaining and then losing support that might help. There was no real sense of how this structural issue might be

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<sup>114</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. p.201.

<sup>115</sup> Report, ‘Inner City Residents’ Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme’

<sup>116</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.133

addressed in any of the policy documents examined. There was some sense in archival material, however, of the dependence of organisations on ICPP to continue to fund spaces, staff and services, as will be discussed shortly. This could also have a very real impact on the communities being served by projects, especially if there was any truth in the perception that ICPP funding to voluntary organisations was substituting for investment in public services. While this project has not identified financial evidence from statutory sources to support or counter this perception, the authors of the formal Five Year Review of Birmingham ICPP noted that there was ‘considerable evidence to show that, during the early years, the Partnership has been used to cushion cut-backs affecting main programmes.’<sup>117</sup> The report highlighted benefits of this ‘topping up’, such as improving conservation areas, Victorian parks, roads and footpaths, and the environment in certain hostels, but also the limitations; it could not extend service provision very far, nor improve services very much. It also noted that, in general, voluntary projects tended to be cheaper than comparable local authority-led activities, and that voluntary provision often reduced the ‘reliance of the community on other forms of public sector funding’.<sup>118</sup> While this does not go as far as criticisms by the residents’ associations, it does suggest some statutory corroboration of the fundamentally limited nature of a funding programme like this.

Time expiry was a concern expressed by organisations represented in the BCT archives. The authors of the Five Year Review also highlighted the particular issue for voluntary organisations of requiring, predominantly, revenue rather than capital funding, and how that determined essentially whether or not an organisation could

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<sup>117</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. p.iv.

<sup>118</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. p.v.



employ full-time high quality staff. The build-up of continuation grants for ongoing projects reliant on ICPP funding inevitably limited what was available for new projects. They stated that 'since most voluntary projects need long-term funding to survive, and be effective, the pressure to re-fund at time-expiry is increasing at a time when available resources on main programme are contracting'. This issue was raised by organisations represented in the archives as well. It posed a particular problem because, in the view of the authors of the Five Year Review, 'the voluntary organisations in question are tackling an enormous reservoir of unmet client needs', and 'have generally done this job both effectively, and with reasonable efficiency'. The dilemma that this posed – whether to prioritise re-funding of time expiring grants or new projects – was seen to 'increase the gap between the 'have' and 'have-not' voluntary organisations.

Time expiry also put additional pressure on non-ICPP sources of funding, as Community Forum explained in 1984. As budgets ceased to receive annual increases, it was increasingly difficult to secure continuation funding. If projects were to continue, it explained, they would have to secure funding either from the private sector, through ICPP as a 'new' scheme, or from the local authority main programme. As the membership organisation stated:

*If all the schemes are funded by local authority main programme funds then an equivalent sum to the grant support being lost has to be found from the main programme. This will result in an increasing cumulative demand on main programme funds as ICPP develops... In 1983 the City Council absorbed some £800,000 of time expiring schemes into its main programme. However, cuts in local authority rate support grants severely limit the extent to which ICPP projects can be absorbed into the main programme.<sup>119</sup>*

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<sup>119</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

This was a difficult dilemma to solve, without more money; not refunding successful projects, even if they were the 'safe' low risk projects that Programme officers had prioritised, might lead to their demise, and the end of new services that had just started to benefit the community. Prioritising new projects might lead to more innovative approaches, and better distribute resources to groups that had less to start with – but these were perceived to be higher risk, and more focus on truly innovative, experimental projects meant a higher likelihood of project failure, reflecting poorly on the Programme and its officers.

This, along with previous discussions of established, well-known organisations, was also explicit recognition of structuring and hierarchy in the field, albeit not phrased in that way. In theoretical terms, it indicates the self-reinforcing nature of the hierarchy, where incumbents rely on their resources of networks and good relationships, in part, for their position, but need to agree to work in certain ways and according to others' needs in order to preserve those relationships, and thus their position. Incumbent organisations like Birmingham Settlement, Birmingham CAB, and even newer organisations like Ashram, had the symbolic resources of reputation and a perceived 'safety' to allow them to build further material resources, in turn enhancing their reputations, demonstrating they could work well with the proximate state field, and cementing their positions within their own field's hierarchy. Even where challenger organisations were willing to conform more closely to these expected behaviours, they still represented a more 'risky' option for endorsement by the proximate state field because their reputation and legitimacy with *that* state field was less strong. This leads to a field full of contention and jostling for position, but also relatively stable, because

of the strength of the hierarchy, as described by Fligstein and McAdam.<sup>120</sup> A challenger organisation *can* succeed and even become an incumbent, but it may either have to wait for an opportunity in the form of a field crisis in order to deploy its social skill to secure a new field settlement, *or* it may have to increase its conformity to the existing field norms and behaviours, to help it build legitimacy within the field, and with the proximate state field.

The policy expectation for sustainable, equitable funding, at central government level, was that voluntary projects should be funded for four years in the first instance, and then, if successful, transferred to 'main programme' local authority funding. Continuation funding from the Urban Programme was only intended for exceptional circumstances. In practice, however, in Birmingham and other ICPP areas, 'a high proportion of revenue funded projects is put forward for refunding under Partnership auspices and this has exacerbated the 'silting-up' effect due to long term revenue funding.' 44 applications for refunding were made in 1982/83, and all but two were refunded. The following year there were 77 applications, with 75 successful. In the two years from 1982-84, 228 applications for new projects were rejected, and 158 approved. Time expiring schemes represented between 15-25% of all Birmingham ICPP funding in 1983/84 and 1984/85. By the time of report writing (1985), the authors reported this was a better ratio than at the beginning of the Programme, but that this was in part because new projects were newly subject to a maximum funding limit of £5,000, more projects were part-funded or topped-up by ICPP grants, and timescales had become progressively shorter. We shall see from comments in the archive data

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<sup>120</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*.

that the increasingly short-term nature of the funding was a cause for concern for voluntary organisations looking for sustainability.

As stated, one intention of ICPP and wider Urban Programme funding was that the private sector and agencies other than the local authority would pick up the tab for funding successful inner-city initiatives. However, the 1985 Five Year Review found that there was an 'extremely variable level of induced expenditure' – leveraging in other funding from public or private agencies as a result of ICPP 'pump prime' funding. This suggested that the policy architects' ambition to see the private sector stepping in to invest in communities may not have been a realistic one for all cases. That said, the housing section of the report notes that 'Partnership funding for voluntary organisations [delivering hostel projects] has reduced reliance on the public sector and provided a key to attracting additional resources'. These came from the Housing Corporation, the MSC and European Economic Community (EEC) funding, with some charitable funding, rather than from the private sector.<sup>121</sup>

In 1988/89, in an effort to further make best use, as it saw it, of funding, the Partnership stated that it would favour projects 'that encourage strong community involvement' in the development of self-help groups; that 'make the best use of resources to meet the special needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities'; and which linked up priorities of different Topic Groups, for instance as 'part of a co-ordinated programme of projects in, say, a neighbourhood context'.<sup>122</sup> It should be noted that this final priority would have seemed familiar to attendees at BVSC's original 1977 consultation event,

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<sup>121</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. pp.65-66.

<sup>122</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*. Pp.123-24

detailed above, where voluntary organisations proposed a much more integrated neighbourhood approach. In 1988/89 there were 550 applications for funds totalling over £22 million, including a number for large revenue grants adding up to around £11 million. The report stated 'assessment has been difficult this year, as the City Council has been increasingly concerned about the build-up of potential demand on its future revenue budgets by successful projects funded under the Partnership Programme'. This had led to 'more rigorous' assessment of time expiring schemes, although it does not detail the criteria or assessment process.<sup>123</sup>

Again, this speaks to issues of insufficiency and the precarity that it engenders. Ball described ICPP in 1988, after the abolition of the MSC in the same year, as 'the only major source of funding for the voluntary sector'. Her description of the contradiction between guidelines and theory, and the experience of small community groups in practice, was indicative of many of the problems of this and other government funding programmes. She stated that much of the work of community based and black-led projects did not easily fit into a model that would see them become self-sustaining over time. They were 'self help' projects that had developed organically from people's needs, in a way that rhetorically government policy makers would have advocated for, as discussed earlier. However, 'self help' here did not mean 'self-funded'. In fact, these advice centres, support groups and specialist service groups *did* need considerable funding but could not, 'by their very nature, find effective alternative long-term funding', according to Ball.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Partnership, *Programme 1988 - 91*.

<sup>124</sup> Ball, "The limits of influence." pp.15-16.

As with other government funding programmes available at the time, such as the MSC, organisations were faced with relatively short-term funding, and no guarantee of longer-term security.<sup>125</sup> This would act as a self-perpetuating and ultimately weakening cycle, whereby organisations would continue to pursue more short-term funding, be forced to invest more in the bureaucratic managerial systems required to successfully do so (and to manage multiple grants), and thus require more funding, often of the kind that would not be provided by statutory funders, unwilling to pay for overheads or back-office costs. This is by no means an inevitable cycle, but one that seems difficult to avoid if funding schemes only come in this form. It demonstrates how the proximate state field can and did have a profound impact on the voluntary action field in ways that went beyond just funding for programmes, and began to reshape the nature, form and functional norms of organisations.

There is a considerable volume of discussion in the archives of the impact on organisations of changes and cuts to ICPP, as it came to account for more significant proportions of some organisations' incomes. Applications mentioned in the BCT archives – including the Asian Resource Centre, Balsall Heath LINK and the Handsworth Action Centre - were sometimes for the full cost of running centres, co-ordinator roles and overheads, rather than discrete programmes.<sup>126</sup> The Asian Resource Centre was, in fact, 85% funded from government sources in 1986 with the

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<sup>125</sup> Patrick Ainley and Mark Corney, *Training for the Future: The Rise and Fall of the Manpower Services Commission* (London: Cassell, 1990).

<sup>126</sup> Annual Report 1986/87 Asian Resource Centre, n.d., *Asian Resource Centre (ARC)*, File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13; Report: 'Balsall Heath LINK', 1982, *Balsall Heath Residents Action Group (BHRAG)*, File EA/7/4 MS 1579/2/7/8/2; Annual Report The Action Centre 1985-86, n.d., *The Action Centre, Lozells*, File AW/7/2 MS 1579/2/7/3/1 Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

vast majority - £37,687 out of £45,343 - coming from an ICPP and BCC Social Services Department joint grant.<sup>127</sup> A decision to change the typical grant period from five years to four exacerbated a lack of long-term security, with one Community Forum member stating 'that ICPP should give more commitment and longer periods of funding to established projects if they were to be successful in generating 'self-help' in inner city areas (considered a long and difficult process).'<sup>128</sup>

This again highlights the tension seen in Birmingham ICPP policy documents between funding new projects and continuation of service. It also belies the seemingly inevitable failure of schemes like ICPP, premised as they were on the idea that alternative funding would appear to enable successful voluntary sector initiatives to continue to be delivered by voluntary organisations, and thus benefit from the values perceived to be inherent to the voluntary action field (whether enacted or not) – especially, in this case, their innovative nature and their closeness to communities. It seemed as though the voluntary action field had been successful in establishing and promoting these values, reiterated throughout policy, reports and other material for many decades, as evidenced by the consistency of the values attributed to the field, even as its behavioural norms began to change. One logical conclusion might be that if voluntary organisations had a better way of delivering services, they should deliver them instead of the state. However, where the proximate state field saw the benefit of greater involvement of voluntary organisations in services, on its terms, it did not appear to be prepared to apply the same principles of the welfare state – namely, sustained taxation-

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<sup>127</sup> Accounts 1986 Asian Resource Centre, n.d., *Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/13*

<sup>128</sup> Report, 'Inner City Residents' Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme'

based spend for universal services – to their operation. Indeed, for this government, that would defeat the point and negate one of the other perceived benefits of the voluntary action field – its low cost.

Not only does this relate to the end of universalism and increasing fragmentation of service highlighted by Andrews, described earlier, but also raises the question of whether the *implications* of some of these stable, long-held field values had changed, along with the changing normative behaviours described. The value (and behaviour) of innovation, for instance, had long been highlighted as a key benefit and role of voluntary action; voluntary groups could see gaps in service and practice, highlight these to local authorities and others, pioneer experimental services without the risk of wasting taxpayer's money and, if successful, these would be taken on by the state as universal practice. Under ICPP, the implication of being innovative changed, as organisations were expected to both generate new ideas and services, to fully deliver those services, and to find their own funding to ensure they were sustainable, in order to 'solve' societal problems. At the same time, however, their incentive to be truly innovative or experimental was curtailed by the risk averse nature of ICPP pump-prime funding. This had the potential to reinforce the existing field hierarchy, and encourage greater homogeneity between organisations, as conforming to normative behaviours that were perceived to be more successful than others would be in their interests – a demonstration of mimetic isomorphism. This is not the emergence of the field, 'sector' or governable terrain, as some policy analyses have suggested,<sup>129</sup> but rather a change and consolidation of an existing field, in part manufactured by a proximate state field

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<sup>129</sup> 6 and Leat, "Inventing the British Voluntary Sector by Committee: from Wolfenden to Deakin." Carmel and Harlock, "Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain."



with different ideas for its use to earlier periods, and in response to slow, cumulative exogenous shocks generated to enable and enact those ideas.

This is a funding model that can be seen as an extension of Andrews' description of the fragmentation of welfare. Andrews focuses on the spatial dimension of this fragmentation, but here we can see a fragmentation of services, which may only exist for a relatively short time, in a limited geographical area and serving a limited population. Again, while some services may be innovative, the consequent expectation that they would ameliorate perceived inner-city problems in the long term was one destined to fail without the guarantee of future security, or a mechanism for universalisation. This is, to some extent, the function that was served by local authorities when they took on successful, experimental pump-primed voluntary services into mainstream local delivery. The fracturing of services delivered by voluntary projects on the scale created by ICPP funding meant this was not practically possible, especially given pressures on main programme budgets and cuts to rate support grants being handed down by central government. The fragmentation created by this policy also helped to manufacture the sense of constant precarity,. This in turn generated a greater sense of competition for resources, and the need to conform to the norms of the voluntary action field, established by the field itself but strongly influenced, ratified and reinforced by the proximate state field.

#### *7.2.7 A more technical type of funding: changing norms in the field*

The requirement to adopt new practice, or improve existing practice, was one way that programmes such as ICPP could exert influence over the voluntary action field. It could

prescribe norms of behaviour, in return for the funding it offered. This drove the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of organisations, guided by visions of perceived efficiency. This process laid the groundwork for the field's ability and willingness to participate in contracting and competitive tendering. Incumbent and challenger organisations both had an opportunity to respond to these shifting norms, ratified by the proximate state field, in order to improve their position, and the archives provide evidence of both doing so. The policy literature described above noted issues with poor monitoring and record keeping on the part of voluntary organisations in receipt of funding. Long-established and new umbrella bodies sought to prove their necessity in supplying infrastructure support to other organisations, establishing themselves as experts in the field while also embedding those same norms. These organisations *were* responding to a need presented by those they represented, but the need was manufactured by a state field that required organisations to behave in a certain way in order to meet the state's own priorities. The field's response was not necessarily mercenary, and improving or introducing internal organisation not necessarily bad, but neither was it disinterested.

Urban Renewal funding, ICPP funding, and Urban Programme funding more generally, required more technical advice and information at application stage, in particular where it related to capital funding for building projects. Legal and accounting advice was also needed where organisations were required to create legal charity structures or adopt specific accounting procedures. While BCT had long encouraged organisations to keep proper accounts and to consider registering with the Charity Commission, as discussed earlier, these government funding streams now made this a more urgent

need, for many more voluntary groups. Organisations in turn needed considerably more infrastructure support to make changes to organisational practice. Both the widespread uptake of government funding streams and the response of voluntary sector leaders began to fully entrench this organisational practice as a norm for the field, in a way that was more pronounced, and more widely accepted as necessary, than material from the earlier period suggests.

BVSC, supported by BCT, established a Technical Advisory Service at the end of 1978. It emerged in response to several requests for professional advice on book-keeping, building projects and charity registration procedures through existing (and overlapping) BVSC services such as the Charities Information Bureau, the Training Group and the Inner City Unit. The intention was that professional assistance would be given for free in the first instance, up to a point, and then reimbursed from successful Urban Aid or ICPP grant applications. This obviously posed the problem of what would happen if applications were unsuccessful; BVSC asked Birmingham City Council's City Planning Officer to consider introducing a simplified application process in the first instance, so that outside help could then be engaged with some certainty of being able to pay for it. It is unclear whether this request was successful. Organisations applying for Urban Aid, BVSC reported, 'totally lack the resources, ie: people and money, to prepare adequate applications'.<sup>130</sup> The hope at the start of the project was that it would generate learning that could be passed on to the local authority in the hope they would 'also make proper provision for the preparation of grant applications'. BCT was

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<sup>130</sup> Draft Report Birmingham Voluntary Service Council Technical Advisory Service, n.d., *Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) background material* MS 1579/2/7/3/44, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

optimistic that help would be forthcoming on this front, based on comments at a seminar on fundraising from the local authority – itself another sign of an increasing need to support organisations to receive government funds.<sup>131</sup> It was also excited by the local innovation, which it hoped would inspire more nationally: “To my knowledge this is the first scheme of its kind in the country. I hope the Trustees will support BVSC in breaking new ground.”<sup>132</sup> Indeed, it *did* attract this attention to some extent, as BCT reflected in 1982, when considering its future: “National attention is being focussed on this kind of service and it may be possible to attract statutory interest and support nationally for an independent initiative.”<sup>133</sup>

BVSC applied for Urban Programme funding itself in 1981 to ‘meet the needs voluntary organisations have in developing, implementing and managing projects’, so they could ‘make the best use of finance made available through BICP’.<sup>134</sup> It had become ‘obvious’, apparently, to BVSC that:

*The [Birmingham ICPP] has stimulated the growth of new organisations and project proposals, and by also funding a large number of schemes, has thus greatly increased the need for development and support services.*

By this time, technical advice needs had moved beyond town planning and charity registration, although these services were still needed and TAS continued its work. Help, BVSC stated, was needed in developing ideas into project proposals, project

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<sup>131</sup> Notes of discussion between BCT and NCVO held on 7 December 1978, *Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) background material* MS 1579/2/7/3/44

<sup>132</sup> Agenda Notes BCT 20 May 1979, *Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1981 - 1984, File EA/7/29 MS 1579/2/7/3/46*, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>133</sup> Agenda Notes BCT 8 September 1982, *Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1981 - 1984, File EA/7/29 MS 1579/2/7/3/46*

<sup>134</sup> Application to Urban Programme 1981/82 – Project Development Worker, n.d., *Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) background material* MS 1579/2/7/3/44

implementation and management.<sup>135</sup> This seems to move beyond basic record keeping, monitoring and reporting, and into issues of how organisations would deliver their services, according to which principles or ideas of management BVSC might choose to promote. It would be in organisations' interests to adopt these principles, ideas and ways of working, as they would increase their chances of gaining resources, and thus maintaining or improving their position in the field. It would conversely make it less attractive, and less advantageous, to propose an alternative or practice in alternative ways.

It was not just BVSC offering this kind of technical support to organisations. Community Forum, which had originally started as a committee of city planners concerned with social problems at neighbourhood level in 1973, becoming an umbrella body for local residents groups in 1976, was involved in the original establishment of the Inner-City Unit in partnership with BVSC for the voluntary sector in 1977. This was explicitly set up to support organisations to navigate ICPP, according to BCT, and received funding and support from it. Community Forum and BVSC later ended this relationship, in 1983, over perceived maladministration and unfair treatment by the latter organisation.<sup>136</sup> BCT took a dim view of BVSC's performance, commenting in agenda notes 'It is in my view almost a tragedy that BVSC has proved incapable of even maintaining let alone building on such an exciting innovation.'<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Proposals for Urban Programme Application 4 September 1980, *Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) projects* MS 1579/2/7/3/45, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>136</sup> Agenda Notes BCT 7 December 1980; Report: 'Forum at the Crossroads', 1982, *Community Forum (CF), Birmingham*, File EA/7/41 MS 1579/2/7/6/13, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>137</sup> Agenda Notes BCT 8 September 1982.

The Birmingham Branch of the Standing Conference of National Voluntary Youth Organisations, sponsored by BVSC but independent from it, additionally established the Youth Employment Resource Unit to 'help voluntary and community groups in the inner city areas of Birmingham to take initiatives in the area of youth unemployment, and to encourage the growth of community-based enterprises', with similar methods of linking groups to professional advice and helping new projects 'get off the ground'.<sup>138</sup> Birmingham for People also looked to step into a void formed by the demise of the Technical Advisory Service in 1988 with its *Own Back Yard* 'community technical aid' service, part of a wider West Midlands 'Know-How Network'. While almost 60% of its funding for 1992/93 already came from ICPP,<sup>139</sup> its 1992 application for further ICPP support for a Technical Aid Centre for the voluntary sector was turned down at national level, despite passing local stages, as the Department of the Environment was not funding new projects as ICPP approached its end.<sup>140</sup>

This proliferation of infrastructure services, designed to help organisations meet norms of behaviour within the voluntary action field, demonstrates some of the tension and competition within that field. BVSC can reasonably be regarded to be an incumbent of the voluntary action field, given its profile and symbolic resources, particularly in terms of networks and reputation with statutory partners. However, it did not hold a monopoly

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<sup>138</sup> Leaflet from the Youth Employment Resource Unit, n.d., *Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) projects* MS 1579/2/7/3/45

<sup>139</sup> Report: 'Overview of Progress and Identification of Priorities 1992-1995, In Support of Application for Grant Funding to the Barrow Cadbury Fund Ltd', 1991, *Birmingham for People (BFP)*, File EA/7/7 MS 1579/2/7/6/3, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>140</sup> Note, n.d., *Birmingham for People/West Midland Technical Aid* MS 1579/2/7/6/5, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

on these services, and was not necessarily even viewed as the best at delivering them, indicated by some of BCT's comments and actions. The turn-over of services, with a number closing down over this period, speaks to the difficulty in funding and sustaining them, but also to the level of duplication created by some new services set up specifically to help organisations navigate the state-determined requirements of ICPP. It also demonstrated that even incumbent organisations were not immune from the pressures and constraints of changing funding regimes, although they may have been better equipped to weather them than less well-established challenger groups.

Infrastructure and technical aid of this kind can be seen as performing a series of important roles in the field. They communicate norms of behaviour passed down by the proximate field, as well as selling the benefits of conforming to these norms (increased resources, financial and otherwise). They can also influence those norms, by attempting to influence the state field, and by interpreting the space around norms – if monitoring and evaluation is a behavioural norm, for instance, a technical advice service might take the initiative in prescribing a certain *method* for enacting that behaviour. The shape and nature of the field will change and adapt in response to which actors are more or less successful in performing behaviours, and those behaviours are then reinforced by the shape and hierarchy of the field. The norms influenced, recommended and ratified by the proximate state field, and enacted by the voluntary action field, are not neutral, and the behaviour is not disinterested. Rather, they are ideologically informed and motivated by self-interest, in terms of improving or maintaining a favourable position in the field.

This does not mean that there is necessarily anything nefarious going on, only that the choices made about which norms of behaviour to adopt and promote *matter* and have a material, self-perpetuating impact on the field. Specifically, in this case, they contributed to centring the idea and norm of service delivery on behalf of the state and to achieve state aims within the field, and certain behaviours that would enable organisations to do this, in a way that suited the state. Further, those choices are in fact severely constrained by the operating environment; without any real alternative, the other 'choice' would be to refuse funding and support all together. As we have seen, some organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field, such as St Joseph and St Saviours Youth and Community Association and ACSHO, expressed a desire for financial and operational independence, but this was difficult to realise in practice.<sup>141</sup>

In these ways they could be described as IGUs – the internal governance units of SAF theory that help to enforce the shared understandings and rules of the field. This is certainly how Lang and Mullins position a similar proliferation of infrastructure organisations and services during the emergence of the English Community-Led Housing field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>142</sup> The fact that there appear to be 'challenger' IGUs, competing for business in different ways, complicates this categorisation, however, as does the potential role of BVSC as both incumbent *and* IGU. There remains ambiguity regarding this role, and we will return to these questions in the final Chapter 8.

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<sup>141</sup> Letter St Joseph and St Saviours Youth and Community Association to BCT 8 September 1986, *St. Joseph and St Saviours Youth and Community Association (YCA)*, File JM/5/2 MS 1579/2/7/2/34, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

<sup>142</sup> Lang and Mullins, "Field Emergence in Civil Society."



### **7.3 Conclusion**

ICPP was not the only initiative exerting pressure on the voluntary action field, but it is an instructive case in terms of how specific and broad state aims and behaviours could contribute to its shape, and could reinforce its internal hierarchy – in the interests of both the incumbent actors, and the proximate state field that relied on the compliance of those actors to meet its aims.

This section has explored material relating to Birmingham ICPP from policy documents and the BCT archives in close detail. This has allowed us to closely consider rhetorical and action-based processes that started to reshape the existing voluntary action field, introducing forms of behaviour as normative in new ways, encouraging greater homogeneity and reinforcing the field hierarchy. We can also see which actors were less likely to succeed, either in securing funding or in influencing either the voluntary action or proximate state fields – namely Black-, South Asian- and other minority ethnic-led organisations, even at times and in geographical areas where their concerns and views would seem more prominent, by dint of their presence.

The Community Forum report was damning in its final judgement of Birmingham ICPP after six years of operation, citing rising unemployment, declining public services and increasing poverty. It felt that, given its design, ICPP was destined to fail. Its ‘modest expenditure programme’ could not be expected to either meet the need for personal social services in the inner city, or to counter the impact of economic decline. While ICPP’s aim had been, in part, to ‘bend’ local authority funding towards inner city

projects, and to attract private sector investment for them, this had not happened. Living conditions for inner city residents had not improved.<sup>143</sup> In contrast, The Aston report concluded with some clear positives, although these focused on the immediate context rather than the bigger picture. Voluntary organisations in receipt of grant funding, perhaps unsurprisingly, said that ‘the situation is a hundred times better than that which existed before the Partnership’. The authors endorsed this on the basis that ICPP funding was ‘genuinely additional funds’ for the majority of organisations; that voluntary projects directly addressed the aims of the Partnership; that they generally achieved those aims and did so in a cost-effective way. The central problem, however, already highlighted, was a structural one, and related to the rapidly widening gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ in the voluntary sector. The report stated that ICPP funds were not enough to address unmet needs in the inner city, nor to meet the increased demand for funding from organisations and projects.<sup>144</sup>

There was a clear demand for funding support but also, from the outset, a clear insufficiency of funding. The expectation that voluntary organisations could innovate new, cheap solutions to solve perceived inner-city problems was never going to be realised. The Partnership did provide *more* money, but this was not sustained over time, and the combination of this limited fund and parallel cuts to other elements of local authority funding in fact exacerbated this problem. Successful projects that might make a difference over time could not unless they secured further funding. The increase in projects led to an increase in competition for that funding and, in turn, an

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<sup>143</sup> Report, ‘Inner City Residents’ Views of the Birmingham Partnership Programme’

<sup>144</sup> University, *Five Year Review of the Birmingham Inner City Partnership*. P.137

increased sense of scarcity, precarity and a need to maintain or gain position within the field hierarchy.

The Community Forum report is the only substantial document criticising ICPP in the archive files, although the comment from ACSHO indicates there was other critique elsewhere. Other documents cited above criticise cuts to ICPP and other funding, but not the programme itself. This may just be a result of looking at a limited selection of material, but even the other cuts-focused critical material does not mention some of the more fundamental concerns about shifting responsibility, disguising cuts or difficulties for certain groups in securing funding, as might have been expected, given they are related issues. This could indicate a greater priority given by the voluntary action field to access to financial resources over more existential questions, if it is not simply a matter of missing material. Certainly even these critical organisations continued to apply for funding and engage with ICPP.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While there is much scholarship on the merits of bringing together social theory with historical methodology, there are far fewer that do this in practice. This thesis does just that, presenting historical archival research analysed and understood through a neo-institutional lens. The findings chapters above explored three dimensions of SAF theory, applied to a Birmingham voluntary action field, and driven by material found and analysed within the BCT archives; field identity and values, symbolic power and resources, and the proximate state field. Together, these will tell a story of how a field constructs itself, how certain actors may benefit or lose out based on the field's shared understandings of which values matter, how this is then enacted in practical terms, and how it interacts with other fields, in particular the powerful proximate state field.

The original overarching research question for this study was: *How does a local voluntary action strategic action field (SAF) change over time, and to what extent does this reflect established narratives of national voluntary sector development?* This included a focus on how SAF theory might help us understand the Birmingham voluntary action field, and the extent to which SAF theory can benefit from application through archival research. It has raised some critical questions about the theory itself, including around roles ascribed to actors, the worth of different resources, the role of a philanthropic funder in a local voluntary action field, and how actors' behaviour is governed when they exist across multiple fields. This final chapter draws together those questions and the responses presented throughout the thesis. It emphasises the strength that a social theoretical lens brings to historical research, and summarises the novel developments I have made to that lens through its application.

## **8.1 What the archives could(n't) tell us**

This study was first conceptualised as a kind of 'field history', charting voluntary organisations' continuing and changing operations, identities and challenges framed within each of the three 'eras' noted in Chapters 1 and 3. In the analysis and writing, however, it quickly became apparent that while these eras provided a useful analytical tool for examining and understanding the historical context of different parts of the archive, the gaps in material were too large and too numerous to construct a full field biography. It is possible that looking at a wider range of material from the BCT collection – and plenty remains beyond the sample here – may fill some of these gaps. However, the points of inquiry explored here provide useful, detailed and focused insight into the identity, values, resources and relationships of the Birmingham voluntary action field.

As noted in Chapter 4, the material available in these records is extensive and varied. It is curated by the BCT secretaries who chose what to keep and organised material into files, but the files give the impression, at least, of a comprehensive record of interactions between organisations and their funder. Material also goes well beyond the funder-grantee relationship, both through annual reports and similar organisational material, and because of BCT secretaries' involvement in issues beyond just grant monitoring and management. They got involved in challenging the local council over its own funding decisions, in wider conversations about campaigns and policies, and in the aftermath of the 1981 and 1985 Handsworth Disturbances. This archive takes us beyond an understanding of the funder itself, and beyond the records of large, national, long-standing charities that have the resources, understanding and drive to

maintain archival records, either through deposits with key national repositories or through maintenance of their own in-house archive services. It is sincerely hoped that other similar archives of funders who have supported locality-based voluntary action, including those from private businesses, might be similarly deposited and used for study.

Even so, the gaps in archival material make it difficult to answer certain questions, or develop empirical accounts for some theoretical positions. It is not easy, for instance, to identify exactly what resources actors hold, and what value they have, from the archival material, although it is also difficult to establish this through other forms of empirical research, so this is not a unique problem. There is some financial data that can speak to material resources, but not a comprehensive supply across the whole sample, or even within individual organisations. We also cannot tell which resources matter *most*, or how they weigh up in relation to one another; is it an organisation's whiteness, longevity, personal connections or another factor that help it to become successful in the field, or is it a combination? This thesis argues the latter, and that indeed some of these resources cannot be separated out from one another, because of their pervasiveness and persistence throughout society. This also highlights a simple conclusion of this study: that racialisation matters. As Chapter 6 has discussed, the racialisation of organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field was certainly perceived by different actors to make a difference to the ability of organisations to improve their field position. This raises two potential issues for continuing study: firstly whether, as some critical race theory scholars have suggested, whiteness can be characterised (problematically) as a kind of 'resource' for organisations racialised as

white. Secondly, whether studies that use SAF theories and others that focus on the meso-level take enough account of the impact of macro-level processes of race, class, gender, and other structural normative hierarchies that value some bodies over others. Even if these are not the focus of study, they surely underpin the operating environment for meso-level social orders, and as such should be taken into account.

Any analysis of symbolic resources will always be subjective and interpretive. Chapter 5 discussed how the field claimed association with different values and behaviours, such as independence, being grass roots, or ability to innovate, and that actors within the field could benefit from this association, regardless of how closely they actually performed those values and behaviours in practice. Elsewhere, Dean's work on symbolic capital generated, held and used by charities discusses processes by which the concept of charities (and the people associated with them) 'doing good' is symbolically and culturally constructed, and what happens when the reality challenges the perception. A lack of profit motive, Dean suggests, 'provides an image of objectivity and perfection', while the association with voluntarism 'provides an image of morality, able to 'influence from a moral sense''.<sup>1</sup> He points out that this is seen by some as under pressure, for instance, from the drive toward professionalisation, leaving charities 'caught between the need for dedication and sacrifice from (voluntary) employees and delivering 'professional' services'.<sup>2</sup> We saw evidence of this tension in the records of BWAIC, and more in the subsequent section on proximate state field initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Dean, *The Good Glow*.P.90

<sup>2</sup> Dean, *The Good Glow*. p.116

What we can see from the material in the BCT archives is the enduring presence of the values associated with voluntary action, almost regardless of actors' adherence to or performance of them. The kinds of organisations that benefited from the associated value of closeness to community, for instance, were not necessarily those that best enacted that value. This suggests a hierarchy of symbolic value attached to these normative values and behaviours within the field; an organisation's ability to resist conceptions of professionalism might have greater symbolic value, and thus win more resource, than its demonstration of being grass roots or truly community led. Nevertheless, it still benefits from the association with the value or behaviour, because it is applied to the whole field as a single institution. However, adherence to a set of values could only ever take an organisation so far, regardless of position in the field; the symbolic resources gained from adherence (or perceived adherence) could only be converted into material, financial resources if they existed. As the assessment of Birmingham ICPP shows, these resources were inevitably constrained, and the whole field experienced the sense of precarity generated by time-expiration of grants, and the eventual closure of the fund. Some more established, incumbent organisations may at least have been better prepared to adapt to this change, however.

As highlighted in Chapter 3, it is difficult to identify whether change occurs because of major crises, either generated from within the Birmingham voluntary action field or exogenously through (for instance) recession or austerity, or because of longer-term routine field contention. Indeed, as the section on Birmingham ICPP suggests, the groundwork for major changes can be laid gradually over time, and can be hard to identify in the immediate term. This underlines why historical study of field theoretical



processes is important; because it brings focus to the detail and complexity of these social processes, in their wider historical context, rather than flattening events to relatively isolated moments of change.

By its very nature the hierarchy of a field should, in theory, be a moveable feast; the field is subject to constant contention and jostling for position, according to Fligstein and McAdam. At the same time, because of the self-reinforcing nature of power dynamics in the field, the hierarchy in *practice* is remarkably stable. In this study, the stability of the field is suggested by the survival over time of many of the actors which feature in the archive, and through the material which unpicks the funding habits of ICPP. I cannot make any definitive statement about the precise hierarchy of the field, but this thesis did not set out to make this kind of statement. What the study does reveal is that the list of roles within the field— incumbents, challengers and IGUs – does not provide a sufficient account for *all* actors, as the next section outlines. This could indicate the limits of such theory, insofar as it struggles to account for every single actor. The suggestions for expanding the theory to include the role of ‘field shapers’, however, is driven by the empirical research behind the thesis, and brings an important focus to a role that matters considerably to voluntary action fields, but which is not accounted for yet in SAF theory.

## **8.2 Actor identities**

As noted, it is clearly difficult to provide a simple empirical account of which actor holds which position in the field through this kind of research, because of the complexity and changeability of field hierarchies, especially over longer time periods. Incumbent

organisations appear to be relatively stable in their position – as evidenced by examples such as BVSC, the Birmingham Settlement and Birmingham CAB in these archives, who are all organisations with relatively long histories and settled places within the Birmingham field. While not without their financial and other challenges, they seem able to continue to secure funding, respect and other material and symbolic resources over time. Challenger organisations are perhaps more changeable, because they are more likely to fail, due to an inability to secure those same resources. Some survivors like ACSHO have managed to do so on the basis of high levels of legitimacy from overlapping fields of which they are also a part, while others like the Asian Resource Centre have done so by strengthening their ability to generate legitimacy in the ‘mainstream’ Birmingham voluntary action field, but perhaps at the expense of legitimacy in other fields. Yet others like BWAIC have not survived, which perhaps demonstrates the limits of being able to demonstrate conformity to normative field values and behaviours, and proximate state field expectations, in the reality of constrained resources.

Concerns remain about the role of IGUs in strategic action fields, and specifically within a voluntary action field. It is a complex role, especially where it is held by an organisation that is also an incumbent in the field, and thus highly motivated to reinforce its own position. Fligstein and McAdam do allow for this in their theory, stating that IGUs are not objective or disinterested, often acting in the interests of powerful field actors or even of the proximate state field. Even so, it is hard to distinguish between the activity of an IGU and activity of an incumbent when they inhabit this dual role. Further, as material in Chapter 7 has highlighted, ‘marketplaces’ of IGUs can

emerge, where multiple organisations are competing to provide the role. These 'marketplaces' themselves can be seen as a constructed product of a competitive funding environment, instituted by governments reluctant to guarantee secure funding. During the lifetime of ICPP, several organisations in the Birmingham voluntary action field began providing the kind of infrastructure services that could indicate an IGU role. This, indeed, presented a challenge to the incumbent organisation BVSC, which had historically filled the infrastructure role for the field. Specialist infrastructure organisations like BCSN also emerged later to represent the interests of the overlapping minority ethnic action field, adding additional complexity and a further competing voice to this network of IGUs. Ultimately, the conceptualisation of the IGU role – as bodies responsible for 'overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning of the system', remains unconvincing in the voluntary sector context.<sup>3</sup> However, I agree that the specific functions performed by these organisations deserve further attention, because of a *dual* role in enforcing field norms and reinforcing field hierarchies.

There is room for another kind of actor within the SAF account, one which is here termed 'passenger'. This might include organisations not, in fact, interested in the business of routine field contention, or of improving their position within the field, but rather content to continue providing cultural, social and other services to their constituents. These are important organisations, that are a central part of the fabric of communities. Because of the nature of the sample taken from the BCT archives, and BCT's tendency to fund more political organisations in the first place, there are not a

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<sup>3</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields."

large number of these organisations represented here, but some examples might include the Iraqi Community Association, East African Muslim Welfare Association, and the Caribbean Senior Citizens and Disabled Members Association (no inference should be taken from the fact that these all represent communities of colour, although it is notable that they are all membership clubs or organisations that may not rely on external income generation to the same degree as those without membership dues).<sup>4</sup> These files did not yield much material relating to the nature of the voluntary action field, although clearly represent important services and spaces for the communities they served. Of course, they may have contributed to the discourse in ways and forms unrelated to BCT, and thus not captured by the BCT records. Nevertheless, the possibility of this role should remain open, to allow for the important existence of organisations 'doing good' without engaging to any great degree with field or state processes.

I propose an additional role within SAF theory for organisations like BCT, which sits somewhat apart from the rest of the field as a funder of activity rather than an actor delivering services of some kind. It nonetheless has a fundamental role in shaping the field. The role and views of BCT itself are reflected upon throughout the three findings chapters. BCT has a particularly strong role in shaping the Birmingham voluntary action field, but other funders might have similar roles in more policy thematic fields, such as criminal justice, disability or the arts. BCT is not an IGU, as described in the theory, as it has no role in enforcing shared understandings. Indeed, the difficulty in

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<sup>4</sup> *Iraqi Community Association (ICA)*, File I/2 MS 1579/2/12/2/3; *East African Muslim Welfare Association (EAMWA)*, File EA/3/23 MS 1579/2/3/2/19; *Caribbean Senior Citizens and Disabled Members Association (CSCDMA)* MS 1579/2/3/2/16, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

identifying IGUs in a voluntary action field suggests the need for a modified understanding of this role. Neither is BCT an organisation from a separate proximate field, although it certainly *also* exists within proximate fields. It does not have the power of the proximate state field, nor necessarily the same agenda, and can even be at odds with it. Nevertheless what it does and, crucially, doesn't fund can have a fundamental impact on the shape and nature of the field.

Indeed, as noted in Chapter 6, when BCT's funding priorities began to shift, ARC wrote to the funder to complain that its new strategy and the perceived negative impact on the field, especially with regard to a perceived move away from funding grass-roots, Black- and South Asian-led organisations.<sup>5</sup> ARC felt that resources to these organisations had shrunk dramatically, while the challenges of racism, discrimination and a lack of opportunities for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities continued. If support from the Trust was falling at this time, it was in fact more likely to be a result of its own limited resources. BCT could not be expected to 'solve' these problems, or to fund these organisations alone. Again, this relates to arguments of philanthropic insufficiency. Nevertheless, it underlines a perceived impact on the Birmingham field of a field shaper's changing circumstances and priorities. Funders should be alive to this risk, and there is room for further research on the impact of field shapers such as these on a field.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter ARC to Chairwoman BCT 11 November 2005, *Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC)*, File A/5 MS 1579/2/14/5/1

### **8.3 A theory of multiple fields**

This idea of multiple field membership is not discussed in depth in *A Theory of Fields*, but it is one this thesis argues is of central importance, and which deserves further attention. It is important for understanding why organisations actively choose to pursue certain agendas over others, depending on which sources of legitimacy they see as being worth the most to them. Organisations that are members of multiple fields have to balance or trade off different sources of legitimacy.

This is explored in Chapter 6 of this thesis in terms of 'race', the multiple fields within which Black, South Asian and other minority ethnic group-led organisations exist, and the tensions that generates. Black-led organisations may exist in the 'mainstream', majority-white voluntary action field, but they may also exist in a specific, Black, South Asian and other minority-ethnic voluntary action field, with its own norms and logics. Broadly, and based on the organisations prominent in the BCT archives, normative values might include a user-led ethos and structure, organic rather than imposed or artificially generated origins based on resistance to or rejection of normative whiteness in neighbouring fields, anti-racism and a mix of political orientations including reformist, radical and non-engaged. Faith is also an important factor in this field, as is cultural expression. Points of contention exist in relation to political orientation and the degree to which organisations are deemed user-led or well-connected to the communities they serve, and thus the level of legitimacy, as a resource, they hold. The concept of a distinct Black, Asian and minority ethnic-led voluntary action field, sector or sub-sector is not a new one by any means, as literature highlighted in Chapters 2 and 6 indicates. However, this thesis does bring a novel focus on the interaction between these two

fields, as field members try to navigate and improve their position in one, the other or both, we can start to understand some of the dynamics at play and some of the trade-offs of legitimacy and other symbolic resources that may be necessary. We can also examine how valuable norms from one field, such as being 'grass roots' or having a strong connection to communities, can be translated across to overlapping fields, and how incumbents can make strategic use of these to improve their position, regardless of the degree to which they exhibit them in practice.

Thus, this thesis proposes a theory of *multiple* fields, in which actors must make decisions about which sets of normative behaviours, understandings and values take precedence, and which field is most important in which to improve their position. As noted in Chapter 2, the idea of a 'prime' field, borrowed from hybridity theory, can be a useful way of understanding the ways in which organisations are constrained by which sets of norms. It would also be interesting to note how interactions at the boundaries of these overlapping or neighbouring fields influence different fields in turn – for instance, does the fact that the value of being 'user-led' is high in the Black-led voluntary action field increase the value of the same factor in the 'mainstream' voluntary action field, and thus drive behaviour in that direction? It also underlines the importance of including the experience of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic-led organisations, and of disabled people's organisations, LGBT organisations and others, in voluntary action research, rather than only studying them as distinct groups. The latter approach is important, but so too is capturing their experience in the more general voluntary action field. These are interesting, if empirically challenging, questions for further research.

#### **8.4 Continuity and change within the Birmingham voluntary action field**

Finally, we return to the title of this thesis – continuity and change within the Birmingham voluntary action field. The findings chapters have focused on continuity and change with regards to meanings and values of voluntary action, as discussed in Chapter 5, but have also touched upon how these can be affected by policy processes and the proximate state field, in Chapter 7.

While the values attached to the voluntary action field endured, their meaning and their consequences were not static. Thus we see innovation enduring as a value and/or behaviour, but its implication changes from organisations demonstrating they can come up with new experimental ideas and shed light on ‘hidden’ problems, to be taken up by universal services if successful, to being responsible for identifying the problem, coming up with the solution, and then delivering it itself. This means the organisation takes on more responsibility and more risk, but not necessarily more material resource, as the ICPP funding cuts, to some extent, demonstrated. This also speaks to and extends analyses that highlight the increasing fragmentation of services under Conservative governments in the 1980s, but crucially examines the views and activities of some of the actors that directly enabled, or resisted, this – a perspective missing from some other literature.

In policy terms, the premise of voluntary organisations being able to take on responsibility for designing, delivering and paying for solutions to major social problems rooted in poverty, un- and underemployment and racism, would always be



an impossible one to meet. Other theorists have discussed the idea of 'philanthropic insufficiency', as a dimension of 'voluntary failure'.<sup>6</sup> Systems that rely on voluntary contributions, and are subject to fluctuations in those contributions, are likely to have insufficient resources compared to those funded by involuntary taxation. Further, 'philanthropic particularism' means that voluntary groups are likely to focus on particular groups or specialisms (noted as one of the strengths of the voluntary sector), and so too will philanthropic funders, meaning some populations will be overserved, and some underserved. The expectations placed upon an inherently insufficient system by programmes like the ICPP set it up for failure. As noted, some groups did argue at the time that ICPP looked like a means for government to shift responsibility for services into the private realm. There is an absence of discourse directly related to the fundamental insufficiency of the voluntary action field, however, perhaps because it would not have been strategically prudent to engage in one in dialogue with a philanthropic funder.

One could frame ICPP and other similar funding programmes at this time as exogenous shocks. However, this may give the misleading impression that they were sudden, with clear direction and straightforward outcomes, reshaping the field over a short term. This is one area where the language of SAF theory is not necessarily helpful, in its emphasis on single moments of change, rather than long processes. Whereas the theoretical framework simplifies these processes, historical inquiry complicates them; a difficulty but also a benefit of bringing the two disciplines together

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<sup>6</sup> Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government."; Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff and Derick W. Brinkerhoff, "Government-Nonprofit Relations in Comparative Perspective: Evolution, Themes and New Directions," *Public Administration and Development* 22 (2002).

as this thesis does. The 'shock', perhaps, was the beginning of the Thatcher governments; programmes such as these were enactments of the new intentions, visions and ideology that brought. Either way, these were long, gradual and sometimes stumbling processes, with a multiplicity of state, private and voluntary sector actors involved, and not ones that were accepted uncritically by all actors within the field.

The malleability of values and meanings associated with voluntary action is an issue raised by Stuart Hall in a 1989 talk to Islington Voluntary Action Council entitled *Voluntary Action Under Threat..?* In it he highlighted how easily, in his opinion, voluntary organisations could fit into the contemporary Conservative Party ideology that was reshaping public services at the time:

*...haven't you always really believed in the voluntary principle – that is to say, that people should be involved themselves, active and not dependent, that it is good for society to give, that 'give' has a different meaning when not enforced by law or taxation or institutional regulation... Can you, as it were, stand up and give us a quick one-liner on the real difference between self-activity and self-help? Aren't they just equal and equivalent terms for the same thing? Is there any real difference between serving the needs of ordinary people and consumer sovereignty and parent power? Can you really get in between these difficult and troublesome concepts and ideas? Can you define your distinction in the end from something like an enterprise culture?<sup>7</sup>*

This critical view suggested that certain values associated with voluntary action could in fact provide a source of distinction, or competitive advantage, in new fields of public service delivery, but from Hall's Marxist perspective this represented a danger of co-option, rather than an opportunity. It expressly referenced self-help, a term much used but with different meanings in the archival material, similarly to the value of being grass roots. It also points to the difficulty of navigating these concepts, their ideologically-

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<sup>7</sup> Stuart Hall, *The Voluntary Sector Under Attack..?* (London: Islington Voluntary Action Council, 1989).P.12

informed meanings and practical implications. Hall was addressing an event hosted by an incumbent actor, albeit one prepared to invite him to speak and publish his comments, in a different geographical voluntary action field, and as such he provocatively referenced long-held conceptions of voluntary action in order to challenge them. This includes the use of the word 'residuum' at one point, to describe charity's principal audience – those that the state cannot (or will not) help – echoing 19<sup>th</sup> century paternalistic, eugenicist and classist conceptions promoted by the likes of Helen Bosanquet of the Charity Organisation Society.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as Hall no doubt knew, the Birmingham voluntary action field (and presumably the Islington or London one) was more heterogenous than this argument implied, with more actors challenging the values deemed important and the meanings and implications attached to them. However, there is limited evidence within the archival material of critical engagement by organisations themselves with values, their meanings and their implications for the voluntary action field. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the genre of material; organisations can reasonably be expected to present their best 'face' in annual reports, applications and communications with their funders. Historical study of this material can help us interrogate these seemingly shared values in historical and ideological context. This in turn helps us better understand implicit meanings shaped by actors who are looking to preserve or improve their position within the field.

Within the examples highlighted in Chapter 5, there is an inherent contradiction in the idea of grass roots action stimulated by state and other establishment bodies. Nevertheless, the fact that the state has *wanted* to stimulate it in various ways and at

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<sup>8</sup> Helen. Dendy, "The Industrial Residuum," *The Economic Journal* 3, no. 12 (1893).

various points across the time span of this study indicates an endorsement of the value of being grass roots. However, again, the meaning of that, and *why* it is a value that matters, changes depending on when the argument is being made, and who is making it. The argument could be made that communities with low levels of certain forms of social, cultural and financial capital might need investment to make up for the shortfall and enable them to initiate such action. Such arguments can overlook the difficulty faced by individuals in getting involved in unpaid community labour as a result of childcare and other caring responsibilities, low income, precarious work, disability and other factors, or indeed individuals' simple choice not to get involved in community action, and by implication lay blame at the feet of communities for a lack of available services. On the other hand, grass roots organising can focus on liberation and campaigning, mutual aid provided by and for those living in the community, rather than 'outsiders', and progressive education. Schemes designed to support it can help those facing exactly the barriers noted above to be part of such action. In short, the implications of the value of being grass roots are affected by the ideological lens through which it is viewed. As with other values, while 'being grass roots', and the related values of access to communities and representing communities, may seem constant in discourse around what matters to the voluntary action field, they can look quite different in implication and practice.

There remain tensions regarding whether organisations stick to a 'pure' model of grass roots, which might include rejecting associations with other organisations, government bodies or practices, and the pressure to engage with these for growth or survival. Some

analysis, such as DiMaggio and Powell's theory of isomorphism,<sup>9</sup> or theories of hybridity,<sup>10</sup> would suggest that pressures to move into the latter camp, are driven by outside forces of government, economy and developing sector norms. There is some evidence of this, including in the case study of BWAIC above. There is also clear evidence of organisations choosing to take the alternative path, resisting external pressures, as well as organisations who could not reasonably be described as grass roots trading on the merits associated with such a value set. Essentially, this is a complex process, with benefits and drawbacks to centring the value as part of an organisation's identity. It is not just a matter of external pressures; it is a choice by the leaders of the organisations as well. As a resource to the field, the persistence of appeals to the value of being grass roots from different angles and ideologies, and the ways in which this is translated into legitimacy, suggests it has considerable symbolic worth. However, while it is stressed as an important means of reaching communities, and attempts are made to artificially stimulate mechanisms to enable this, it is not a value in itself that is inherent to the functioning of the field, or that determines its hierarchy. Those organisations with seemingly greater power, for the most part, appeal to ideas associated with being grass roots, but they trade these off against the benefits of other values, relationships and behaviours. A conception of isomorphism that recognises outside pressures but also foregrounds the active choices made by organisations to pursue certain strategies fits well with SAF theory, and helps to explain and understand organisational strategies in the Birmingham voluntary action field.

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<sup>9</sup> DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

<sup>10</sup> Billis, "Towards a theory of hybrid organizations."

## **8.5 Conclusion: Strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the interdisciplinary approach**

This thesis has made a number of contributions to knowledge. This includes developing understandings of local-level voluntary action in its 20<sup>th</sup>-century historical context, and with an awareness of the racialisation of organisations within the field. It has contributed to scholarship on the history of Birmingham by filling a clear gap – namely the history of Birmingham voluntary organisations. It has also extended elements of SAF theory, using empirical application of the theory to historical study to explore critical questions and identify areas that need strengthening. Specifically, this includes building in elements of isomorphism to bring an understanding of the external and internal pressures that motivate organisations to act in certain ways over others; using a ‘prime sector’ approach to understand how organisations that exist across multiple fields prioritise competing sources of legitimacy; and identifying an additional role for field actors – that of ‘field shaper’.

While problems remain with SAF theory, and equally limitations remain with the completeness of information from archival sources, I believe that bringing these two approaches together has enabled a focus on social factors, structural constraints, and the effect of government, ideology and policy, without a flattening of events or causal processes – an oversimplification, in the interest of generating a universalisable theory. The interdisciplinary approach adopted for this study was intellectually difficult. It has involved keeping two types of analytical process running tangentially during data gathering and analysis, to ensure the historical research process was conducted through a social theoretical lens from start to finish, but without *forcing* evidence

through such a lens for the sake of constructing examples. However, the approach succeeds in capturing the complexity of voluntary action, motivations and meanings. A social theoretical lens has allowed us to focus on symbolic values, dynamic relationships and resources, while historicising the material has made sure we do not underplay the complexity involved.

The strength of SAF theory for this kind of study lies in its focus on how actors collectively coalesce into fields of activity through subscription to sets of values, meanings and behaviours that they see as having worth. Its strength also lies in its awareness of the changing historical context of these values, meanings and behaviours, and of how they change over time, and according to the ideological visions and strategic purposes for which they are deployed. We see this through exploration of the changing meanings and implications of values such as being independent, innovative and grass roots. Actors experience isomorphic pressures but this experience includes elements of choice in which approach to pursue. This choice can be constrained by struggles for survival, as we see in the case of BWAIC, which ultimately lost that struggle. It is also constrained by conflict between different sources of legitimacy, sometimes from within the voluntary action field but also from overlapping fields of which actors may be members of a number. Again, there is a choice to be made about which field an organisation positions as its 'prime' field of strategic activity, and that choice makes a difference to the strategies it pursues, as we see in the case of Black- and South Asian-run anti-racist organisations in Birmingham.

Future research can bring further understanding of local voluntary action fields. Oral history or other forms of interview, for instance, can better elucidate some of the nuances of positioning and relationships within the field, and between different fields. The experience of other minoritized groups and movements, and of their interaction with a more generic voluntary action field, can further help us to understand conflicting values, norms and logics. Studies of other cities and localities, using other local philanthropic, local charity or local governments can bring additional and comparative insight. More attention should also be paid to those organisations in potential 'field shaper' roles in a neo-institutional context, including but not limited to philanthropic funders like BCT. More application of social theory, whether through historical studies or (historically informed) social sciences, can help us better understand the social processes that create and shape voluntary action, and the organisational impulse to 'do good'.



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## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF FEATURED ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Table 7: List of organisations, characteristics and catalogue numbers featured in study

Name	Formation date	Date range of material	Area of operation	Description of organisation/material in files	Catalogue number(s)
40 Hall Road Action Centre Handsworth	1969	1971-83 1983-86	Handsworth	Set up by two white University of Birmingham academics as a community centre and 'shop front' providing advice and information services. Hosted a range of other groups in the same building. Also began the Black Community Worker project, which later became independent and Black-run. Had strong ties to the Social Services local authority department.	MS 1579/2/7/1/1 MS 1579/2/7/3/1
Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation	1964	1970-73 1973-75  1975-78 1977-85 1985-92	Handsworth	Established by a group with a strong anti-racist, Black Power, 'Back to Africa' ideology, for the promotion of self-help among Black people. Services included a Saturday Supplementary School, library, support for Black-owned businesses, and an attempt to establish a social club/night club, among other things. BCT supported them to purchase their first building, and with other running costs over the years. Organisation had strong links to other groups, and its founder was an influential voice - although it also came into conflict with a number of voluntary and statutory groups.	MS 1579/2/3/1/1 MS 1579/2/3/1/2 (2 of 3) MS 1579/2/3/1/3 MS 1579/2/3/4/3 MS 1579/2/3/6/5

Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre	1980	2000	Winson Green	The BCT file records a fundraising effort to open a Millenium Centre. This still exists, providing radio broadcasting, recording studios, community space, training, and welfare and immigration advice. It received funding from the central government Single Regeneration Budget scheme, and from local authority departments.	MS 1579/2/18/7/1
Ashram Community Service Project Ashiana	1976-81	Late 1980s 1981-89 1989-91 1996-98 2006-09	Sparkbrook	This organisation opened as a house first in 1976, and then as the Ashram Community Service Project in 1981. It was a 'Settlement' style organisation, with people living in the house and working as volunteers to provide services, including a community garden, support and advice services, services for women and adult education. It stressed its identity as grass roots, and as interfaith - although early material also stresses its roots in a 'radical' Christian tradition. It later had paid staff. It maintained strong ties with the local authority. By 2006 it had an income of £241,000, of which £102,000 came from Birmingham City Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and it employed 15 full and part time staff. £77,000 of its income was self-generated. It also hoped to be able to win contracts for adult health advisory services from BCC.	MS 1579/2/7/3/4 MS 1579/2/3/4/7 MS 1579/2/3/4/8 (two parts) MS 1579/2/18/2/1 MS 1579/2/22/2/1

Asian Resource Centre	1979	1979-88 2002-04	Handsworth	<p>Community centre providing welfare and benefits advice, support around immigration, homelessness, domestic violence, criminal justice, education and more. Initially founded after a gap in service for South Asian people was identified; South Asian people were not comfortable using the white-led services in Handsworth. Strong relationships with the local authority, especially where providing specialist services the local authority felt it could not. It struggled financially at various points in its history, running a deficit of -£6,000 in 1981, -£2,000 in 1983 and -£4,000 in 1984. In 1986 85% of its income came from government sources, to a total of £45,343. The records from the 2000s show fluctuating budgets; in 2002 it ran a surplus of £68,746, but fell back to a deficit in the following year of -£21,296. From 2003 its most significant funder was the Legal Services Commission, representing close to 50% of its £373,000 income in 2006.</p>	MS 1579/2/3/1/13a and b MS 1579/2/14/5/1
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Balsall Heath Association Balsall Heath Residents Action Group	1964	1964-76 1979-80 1981-84 1983-89	Balsall Heath	Balsall Heath Association was founded in about 1964, 'designed to do good community work' in the area, based initially at Varna Road (later subject to clearance). From early days it was a registered charity. A more informal Balsall Heath Friends Group also emerged at a similar time. It seems to be, or to aspire to be, part of a larger network of very local councils for social service. It struggles with its identity and role over time. BHRAG appears to be either the same organisation or closely linked, and is referred to as 'the Association' in the 1980/81 annual report. Both concern themselves with community development, community centres, young people, social services and services for immigrants (although initially unwilling to engage with these).	MS 1579/2/7/8/1 MS 1579/2/7/8/2
Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau	Unknown	1980-85	Birmingham City Centre, Yardley, King's Heath, Kingstanding, Northfield and mobile.	Advice service with numerous offices and a mobile unit in the city. Formed as an independent company limited by guarantee in 1987, but operating with a longer history. Material in the folder relates to an application for an 'Asian' worker. It describes strong relationships with the local area and other organisations in the 'Inner City' area, into which it expands during the 1980s.	MS 1579/2/5/1/2
Birmingham Black Community Strategic Network	1995	1995-99	Birmingham	Specialist infrastructure organisation that tried to establish itself in response to a perceived resource gap for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic-led voluntary organisations. It was ultimately unsuccessful due to lack of funds.	MS 1579/2/18/3/2

Birmingham Community Relations Council	c.1970	1979-88	Birmingham	Established as part of a wider national movement of organisations promoting integration of immigrant communities. BCT did not have an extensive relationship with this organisation but monitored some of its activity. This included a 1985 conference of minority ethnic organisations, and challenges/scandals regarding perceived inappropriate use by other organisations of local authority funding.	MS 1579/2/3/4/9
Birmingham Federation of Community Organisations	1985	1985-89	Birmingham	Local branch of national organisation, looking to promote community action and in particular to 'enlist the participation of ethnic minority organisations'. It struggled to do so, as it was seen as a London-based organisation, and used the Council House as a venue, which some groups objected to, particularly in the aftermath of the 1985 Handsworth disturbances.	MS 1579/2/7/3/21
Birmingham for People	c.1988	1988-91 1992	Birmingham	The organisation promoted community organising and community involvement in local planning, including work on women and safe physical spaces (they tried to ban underpasses at one point), campaigning for consultation, otherwise absent, regarding redesign of the Bull Ring. They applied for ICPP funding but were unsuccessful – they passed local stages only to find out that DoEnvironment was not funding new projects. They had a physical base at Custard Factory along with Friends of the Earth and others. They are also part of a wider regional 'Know-How Network'.	MS 1579/2/7/6/3 MS 1579/2/7/6/4



Birmingham Settlement	1899	1988-91 1988 1991 - 99  2005 2006-08	Aston, Newtown	Birmingham Settlement has a number of community centres offering family and employment support, social work placements for trainees, and various support programmes for people in deprived communities, including minority ethnic people. In 1987 its turnover was £600,000 and it employed around 60 paid staff. By mid 1994 its turnover was just over £2 million with 105 paid staff. . In 2006 they were receiving 36% of income from government-sourced grants including the Single Regeneration Budget, Learning Skills Council, Community Fund, New Deal for Communities and home office. In 2005 this was 57% with extra sources from the Department for Trade and Industry, and the European Social Fund. In the late 1980s and early 1990s its research division published a number of exploratory reports on the commissioning of voluntary organisations for services, including sector-wide reports and issue-specific ones such as 'Contracting for Alcohol Services'. In 2005 material it strongly positioned itself as a partnerships based organisation, working directly with people but also building capacity among other organisations and community groups.	MS 1579/2/6/4/2 MS 1579/2/10/4/3 MS 1579/2/3/11/1 MS 1579/2/3/11/2 MS 1579/2/3/11/3 MS 1579/2/3/11/4 MS 1579/2/22/1/1 MS 1579/2/22/2/6
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Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre	1983	1999-02 2003-05 2008-09	Birmingham	BWAIC presented itself as a grass roots organisation. It was founded according to BCT notes 'in 1983 by a group of local Women who were concerned about the lack of provision/services for women subjected to domestic violence.' It was part of Birmingham's Inter Agency Domestic Violence Forum and the Black Country Women's Development Network on exploring networking arrangements across the West Midlands, through which it did policy and campaigning work. In 2009, after 26 years, they make the decision to close due to lack of funds.	MS 1579/2/16/8/4 MS 1579/2/16/7/1 MS 1579/2/16/8/5
Birmingham Voluntary Services Council	1916	1988  1978-88  1988-89	Birmingham	City-wide voluntary sector infrastructure organisation. This folder concerns a 1988 Building appeal. Additional material is included in folders covering a Technical Advisory Service and the Community Networks newsletter.	Building Appeal: MS 1579/2/7/3/22 Technical Advisory Service: MS 1579/2/7/3/44 MS 1579/2/7/3/45 MS 1579/2/7/3/46 MS 1579/2/7/3/47 MS 1579/2/7/3/48 MS 1579/2/7/3/49 MS 1579/2/7/3/50 Community Networks: MS 1579/2/7/6/19
Caribbean Senior Citizens and District Members Association	1984	1986-87	Birmingham	Founded 1984, with a membership of over 250, funded by the Inner City Partnership Programme, with additional raised through 'self-help fundraising'. One aim is to 'Be a channel of information and communication between the aged and disabled and central and local government and similar organisations'	MS 1579/2/3/2/16

Charitable Trusts West Midlands	1975	2012-15	West Midlands Birmingham	In its own words, ' <i>Established in 1975 and formerly known as the West Midlands Charitable Trusts Group, it is the leading membership association for trusts and foundations in the West Midlands. With 50 members ranging from large national trusts that give grants in the region to local grant givers and individuals.</i> ' It was unincorporated and unregistered at this point. In 2015 they were discussing the process of registering as a CIO.	Box 1 of 4 MS 1579/2/24/1
Community Forum	1976	1980-87	Birmingham	Community Forum started formally in 1976, after three years of employment of a worker to help residents groups with planning issues. It was 'a democratically representative body of some twenty or thirty local residents groups' in 1980. They started off as a kind of sub-project to BVSC, funded in part by ICPP, but after some prolonged tension and a significant dispute, it split to end its relationship with BVSC. There is lots of material on housing quality and Urban Renewald. There is also material from more local groups like the Lozells Action Group in August 1982 who launch an SOS (Save Our Services) Campaign, as 'the Council have decided to cut back on social services'. There is also a substantial report on residents associations' views of the ICPP which is useful, for a review around 1984. It describes the background to the funding programme, as well as structural problems with it.	MS 1579/2/7/6/13 MS 1579/2/7/6/14 MS 1579/2/7/6/15 MS 1579/2/7/6/16 MS 1579/2/7/6/17 MS 1579/2/7/6/18

East African Muslim Welfare Association	Unknown	1982-83	Small Heath	From the organisation's objects: <i>Objective of the Association is to advise members on Immigration matters, assist illiterate members in completing passport application forms, housing forms, advise on housing, social security benefits, arrange gettogethers of various racial groups, especially youths and elderly, celebration of Muslim Festivals, visit elderly and sick people and assist them as necessary, promote racial harmony, assist local leaders to eradicate racial discrimination. The Organisation will not take part in any riots. Any member seen taking part will be disciplined as Organisation believes that democratic way is the best method to solve a problem.</i>	MS 1579/2/3/2/19
Iraqi Community Association	Unknown	1990 - 94	Birmingham	The Association was funded by BCT for a short time. They were previously considered 'just another' self help group, but Gulf War threw into a different light, with funding approved for three annual grants for a worker. However, funding is withdrawn when objectives are more to do with general activities with population, rather than empowerment work.	MS 1579/2/12/2/3
Kingstanding Project	Unknown	1986-88	Kingstanding, Bandywood, Wryley Birch	This is a project run by the Circle Community Association. It claims to be independent of statutory funding and self-sustaining, but is in fact in receipt of council funding and Manpower Services Commission funding at this time. They hosted other groups in their building, although had to 'cut ties' with several interest groups that could not afford the fees. It also appears to have been run by a mix of statutory, charitable and private partners, as well as local residents.	MS 1579/2/7/3/30

Midland Chinese Centre	1978	1985-87	Birmingham West Midlands	The Chinese Community Centre emerged as a separate voluntary advice centre funded under the Birmingham Inner City Partnership as a result of the Sparkbrook Advice Centre being increasingly inundated with enquiries from local Chinese residents, particularly around housing and overcrowding. Its initial budget was £7,000. Its portfolio of work developed to include translation, legal advice regarding immigration, housing, health, unemployment, education and providing practical help through interpreters and advocates.	MS 1579/2/3/4/33
Minorities Resource Centre	c.1976/77	1984-89	Saltley	This organisation is described as having an 'excellent track record', and being highly thought of. They share their centre with lots of other agencies and work closely with Saltley Action Centre. They also seem to have relationships with different local government bodies. It is described as financially precarious, and struggling to run its services on minimal local authority funding.	MS 1579/2/3/4/34
Quinton Neighbourhood Project	1986	1986 - 87	Quinton, Edgbaston, Woodgate Valley North	The project applies for funding for a community worker for the area. The application itself comes on local authority Department of Recreation and Community Services notepaper, suggesting it could have been local authority initiated (or initiated by a local authority officer at least), but charitably funded.	MS 1579/2/7/3/31
Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre	1978	1980-86	Handsworth	Focused on workers' rights. The organisation by its nature is very well networked with other rights based organisations, particularly Asian ones, as it has a printing press and runs flyers etc. for other campaigns. Folder also includes a project initiated by Jagwant Singh Johal, called 'A Campaign to Promote the Inner City', with a focus on partnership work post-1985 riots	MS 1579/2/3/2/36

Shard End Community Project	1986	1989-91	Shard End	SECP was focussed on crime prevention. It was set up jointly by the West Midlands Probation Service, Birmingham Social Services and NACRO's Opportunities for Volunteering Unit to address the issues of crime and the fear of crime in the Shard End area. It describes itself as rooted in community development approaches and self help, providing a 'bridging point' between residents and statutory authorities. Accounts in 1987-88 show total income is only £4759.03. In around 1990 however they secured Safer Cities funding of £30k over two years, along with an ICPP capital grant. Income rose to £30,900 in 1991. There are then some struggles securing a third year of Safer Cities funding, but they do eventually set up a new arrangement with the Home Office in 1992.	MS 1579/2/5/5/6 MS 1579/2/5/5/7
South Aston Residents Association	1978	1980-87	South Aston	On a council housing estate built in the late 1970s. Quite focussed on children, young people and play. However good relationships with council departments. Was established as part of the South Aston Neighbourhood Development (S.A.N.D.) project in 1978, itself a project of the South Aston Church Centre. Focus on self-help, providing physical space for statutory services where relevant. Not a campaigning organisation, although raises individual issues with relevant local authority departments.	MS 1579/2/9/2/2
St Basil's Centre	c.1976	1977-82	Deritend	St Basil's operated a homeless shelter and a community centre for 'young blacks' called Citadel, opened 1976. It was well networked, and was a white-led. It saw itself as filling a serious gap in services that the Probation Service could not meet, and had applied for funding for Black support workers at Birmingham law courts.	MS 1579/2/5/2/13

St Joseph and St Saviours Youth and Community Association	1977	1986-88 1979-83	Saltley, Alum Rock, Washwood Heath	<p>Successfully registered as a charity in 1979, with a focus on youth activities. The central purpose of the organisation included 'To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the Saltley, Washwood Heath and Alum Rock area of Birmingham without distinction of sex or of political, religious or other opinions by associating the Local Authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.' It described itself as a 'grass roots' organisation, led by members of the community, and with a desire to be self-sufficient. It was a 'black-led' organisation 'because of the area in which we operate'. It was also operating in an environment where other Black organisations have been failing because of a loss of public funds. Its answer to improve sustainability was to turn to profit-making activities – a social club with licensed bar.</p>	MS 1579/2/7/2/34 MS 1579/2/7/3/35
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West Midlands Vietnamese Association	1982	1982-88	Birmingham	<p>Set up in Handsworth, Birmingham to support refugees from Vietnam. Last registered accounts September 2017, but website not updated since 2011. 3 Vietnamese families first settled in Handsworth 1976, with increasing settlement (and resettlement from North/Scotland) between 1976-78 and 1983-84. 1985 accounts show they received money from West Midlands County Council and the ICPP. Children's Society also promotes them and fundraising efforts for them. Grant applications and press reports were around things like setting up a noodle factory or a restaurant where community members can work. Their 'virulent anti-communism' was said by BCT to lead them to reject any voluntary agency perceived as left wing, which isolated them from other organisations in Handsworth.</p>	MS 1579/2/3/3/26
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## APPENDIX 2: FULL ARCHIVE CATALOGUE REFERENCES

Table 8: Full list of Barrow Cadbury Trust archive catalogue references used, Records of the Cadbury Trusts, Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham.

MS 1579/2/7/1/1	Action Centre, 40 Hall Road 1971-83
MS 1579/2/5/1/1	Apex Trust/Shape Trust 5/20 1979-1986
MS 1579/2/3/1/1	Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO), including the West Indian Federation (WIF) and Handsworth Debating Forum (HDF), File 3/3
MS 1579/2/3/1/2	Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO), File 3/3
MS 1579/2/3/1/3	Afro-Caribbean Self Help Organisation (AFSHO), File 3/3
MS 1579/2/3/1/13	Asian Resource Centre (ARC), File 3/1
MS 1579/2/3/1/33	Handsworth Riots, File 3/15/2
MS 1579/2/3/1/34	Handsworth voluntary organisations
MS 1579/2/5/1/2	Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB), File 5/16/2
MS 1579/2/12/1/1	Birmingham Community Association (BCA), Small Heath
MS 1579/2/18/1/1	Imani Venture, Birmingham, File I/4
MS 1579/2/22/1/1	Birmingham Settlement
MS 1579/2/24/1	Additional deposits of grant files
MS 1579/2/3/2/10	Birmingham Council of Voluntary Youth Services (BCVYS)
MS 1579/2/3/2/16	Caribbean Senior Citizens and Disabled Members Association (CSCDMA)
MS 1579/2/3/2/19	East African Muslim Welfare Association (EAMWA), File EA/3/23
MS 1579/2/3/2/36	Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre (SUSWC), File 3/6
MS 1579/2/3/2/42	United Youths Association (UYA), File 3/2/4
MS 1579/2/5/2/13	St Basil's Centre (SBC), File 5/18/5
MS 1579/2/6/2/2	Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs (BAYC), File EA/6/7
MS 1579/2/7/2/30	Pineapple Estate, Stirchley, File EA/7/45
MS 1579/2/7/2/34	St. Joseph and St Saviours Youth and Community Association (YCA), File JM/5/2
MS 1579/2/7/2/39	Weoley Castle Community Association (WCCA)
MS 1579/2/9/2/2	South Aston Residents Association/Community Project, File EA/9/2/20
MS 1579/2/12/2/3	Iraqi Community Association (ICA), File I/2
MS 1579/2/14/5/1	Birmingham Asian Resource Centre (BARC), File A/5
MS 1579/2/16/6/11	Saathi House (SH), Aston
MS 1579/2/16/7/1	Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC), File B/7
MS 1579/2/16/8/2	Birmingham Chinese Young Women's Project (BCYWP), File B/3
MS 1579/2/16/8/3	Birmingham Chinese Youth Project (BCYP)

MS 1579/2/16/8/4	Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC), File B/7
MS 1579/2/16/8/5	Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)
MS 1579/2/18/2/1	Ashiana Community Project (ACP), A/11
MS 1579/2/22/2/1	Ashiana Community Project (ACP)
MS 1579/2/22/2/6	Birmingham Settlement
MS 1579/2/22/2/7	Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre (BWAIC)
MS 1579/2/3/3/6	Handsworth Community Support Group (HCSG), File 3/15/3
MS 1579/2/3/3/25	Social services - ethnic minorities, File 3/27
MS 1579/2/3/3/26	Vietnamese Centre, Lozells, File 3/6/5
MS 1579/2/6/3/2	The Cotteridge Project
MS 1579/2/6/4/2	Birmingham Settlement, File 6/3 [1998]
MS 1579/2/7/3/1	The Action Centre, Lozells, File AW/7/2
MS 1579/2/7/3/4	Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook - various papers
MS 1579/2/7/3/21	Birmingham Federation of Community Organisations (BFCO), File EA/7/A(D)
MS 1579/2/7/3/22	Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) building appeal, File EA/5
MS 1579/2/7/3/30	The Kingstanding Project (KP), File EA/7/85
MS 1579/2/7/3/31	Quinton/Woodgate Valley North Neighbourhood Project (QWVNNP), File EA/7/94
MS 1579/2/7/3/34	St Cuthbert's, Castle Vale, File 7/93
MS 1579/2/7/3/35	St Joseph's and St Saviour's Youth and Community Association (YCA), Saltley, File EA/7/28
MS 1579/2/7/3/42	South Aston Church Centre (SACC)
MS 1579/2/7/3/43	South Aston Community Project (SACP)
MS 1579/2/7/3/44	Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) background material
MS 1579/2/7/3/45	Technical Advisory Service Committee (TASC) projects
MS 1579/2/7/3/46	Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1981 - 1984, File EA/7/29
MS 1579/2/7/3/47	Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1984 - 1985, File EA/7/29
MS 1579/2/7/3/48	Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1985 - 1986, File EA/7/29
MS 1579/2/7/3/49	Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1986 - 1987, File EA/7/29
MS 1579/2/7/3/50	Technical Advisory Service (TAS), 1987 - 1988, File EA/7/29
MS 1579/2/10/3/13	Manpower Services Commission (MSC), Community Aid Programme (CAP), File 7/7/3A
MS 1579/2/17/3/5	Seva Sedan, Birmingham
MS 1579/2/18/3/1	Bangladesh Centre
MS 1579/2/18/3/2	Birmingham Black Community Strategic Network (BBCSN), File B/12
MS 1579/2/3/4/3	Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 2, File JM/A/1
MS 1579/2/3/4/7	Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook, File EA/3/14

MS 1579/2/3/4/8	Ashram Community Service Project (ACSP), Sparkbrook, File 7/2/2
MS 1579/2/3/4/9	Birmingham Community Relations Council (BCRC), File 3/23
MS 1579/2/3/4/25	Handsworth/Lozells, File 3/15/2
MS 1579/2/3/4/33	Midland Chinese Association (MCA), File JM/M/11
MS 1579/2/3/4/34	Minorities Resource Centre (MRC), Saltley, File JM/M/4
MS 1579/2/3/4/36	Muslim Women's Centre (MWC), Moseley, File 3/6/6
MS 1579/2/3/4/43	Riots, File 3/29
MS 1579/2/7/4/41	Weoley Castle Community Church (WCCC)
MS 1579/2/10/4/3	Birmingham Settlement, voluntary sector bidding, File B/21
MS 1579/2/5/5/6	Shard End Community Project (SECP), File 5/16/3
MS 1579/2/5/5/7	Shard End Community Project (SECP), File 5/16/3
MS 1579/2/18/5/3	Bangladesh Community Development (BCD)
MS 1579/2/18/5/4	Bangladesh Community Development (BCD)
MS 1579/2/18/5/5	Bangladesh Youth Forum (BYF), Birmingham
MS 1579/2/18/5/6	Birmingham and District African-Caribbean Community Development Association
MS 1579/2/18/5/23	St James Community Support and Advice Centre (SJCSAC)
MS 1579/2/3/6/5	Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Organisation (ACSHO), part 3, File 3/3
MS 1579/2/3/6/6	Bangladesh Workers Association (BWA), Saltley, File JM/B/4
MS 1579/2/7/6/3	Birmingham for People (BFP), File EA/7/7
MS 1579/2/7/6/4	Birmingham for People/West Midland Technical Aid
MS 1579/2/7/6/5	Birmingham for People/West Midland Technical Aid
MS 1579/2/7/6/13	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, File EA/7/41
MS 1579/2/7/6/14	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, publications and reports
MS 1579/2/7/6/15	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, File EA/7/41
MS 1579/2/7/6/16	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, File EA/7/41
MS 1579/2/7/6/17	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham, File EA/7/41
MS 1579/2/7/6/18	Community Forum (CF), Birmingham
MS 1579/2/7/6/19	Community Networks, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSO), File 7/90
MS 1579/2/10/6/10	Druids Heath Neighbourhood Development Association (DHNDA), File EA/7/92
MS 1579/2/7/7/22	West Heath Community Association (WHCA)
MS 1579/2/7/8/1	Balsall Heath Association (BHA): Mount Pleasant Centre Social Service Group
MS 1579/2/7/8/2	Balsall Heath Residents Action Group (BHRAG), File EA/7/4
MS 1579/2/7/8/3	Balsall Heath Residents Action Group (BHRAG), part 2, File EA/7/4
MS 1579/2/7/8/4	Balsall Heath Residents Action Group (BHRAG), part 3, File EA/7/4
MS 1579/2/7/8/13	Warstock Community Centre (WCC), Birmingham
MS 1579/2/3/11/1	Birmingham Settlement, File B/8

MS 1579/2/3/11/2	Birmingham Settlement, part 2, File B/8
MS 1579/2/3/11/3	Birmingham Settlement, part 3, File B/8
MS 1579/2/3/11/4	Birmingham Settlement: publications and reports
MS 1579/2/18/7/1	Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre (ACRC), File A/5
MS 1579/1/9/1/2A	BCT termly meeting minutes 1998-2000 1 of 2
MS 1579/1/9/1/2B	BCT termly meeting minutes 1998-2000 2 of 2
MS 1579/1/9/1/3	BCT/BCF termly meeting minutes 2001-2003
MS 1579/2/3/1/35	Handsworth voluntary organisations and Handsworth Debating Forum (HDF)
MS 1579/1/9/1/1B	BCT (inc. BCFL) termly minutes 1994-1997 2 of 2
ms/579/1/9/1/1a	Barrow Cadbury Trust Minutes 1994-1997 1 OF 2



## APPENDIX 4: INITIAL CODING TEMPLATE FOR THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

Based on:

- Historiography
- SAF Theory
- Data diary

Applied to:

- 1 record from each period:
  - ACSHO 1971-73
  - Birmingham Settlement 1988-91
  - Ashiana 2006-09

Table 9: Coding template v.1 30/07/2019

<b>Cases</b>	
1965-79	
1979-97	
1997-2010	
2010-2015	
<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>
Origin story	Independence
Manpower Services Commission	Bifurcation
Urban Programme	Radical
Local government reorganisation	Establishment
Efficiency Scrutiny	Race/BME
Funding models	Incumbent
Service delivery	Challenger
Cuts	Conflict
Threats	Consensus
Closure	Field-shaping
[named people]	State gaps
Legal form	Distinction
Community Development Programme	Advantage
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	Invention
[areas of coverage]	Pioneering
New Deal	Values
Statutory responsibilities	Professionalisation
Voice/campaigning	Mainstreaming
Single Regeneration Budget	Instrumentalism
Internal shock	Partnership
External shock	Ethos
ICPP	Small
	Large

	Skilled social actor

## APPENDIX 5: REVIEW OF CODING TEMPLATE

Table 10: Groupings of codes and revisions – 31/07/19

- \* = cross cutting

<b>Cases</b>	
1965-79	
1979-97	
1997-2010	
<b>Original codes with additional sub-coding</b>	
<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>
Origin story	Independence
Manpower Services Commission	Bifurcation
Urban Programme	Radical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative forms*</li> <li>• Grass roots</li> <li>• Grass roots v establishment</li> <li>• Politics*</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Local government reorganisation	Establishment
Efficiency Scrutiny	Race/BME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community cohesion</li> <li>• Community relations</li> <li>• Hard to reach</li> <li>• Local culture</li> <li>• BME Providers</li> <li>• Equal opportunities</li> <li>• NOT race</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Marginalisation</li> <li>• Multicultural</li> <li>• Community control*</li> <li>• Community knowledge*</li> </ul>
Funding models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-sustaining</li> <li>• Short-term</li> <li>• Time-expiring</li> <li>• European funding</li> <li>• Funding requirements</li> <li>• Government funding</li> </ul>	Incumbent
Service delivery	Challenger
Cuts	Conflict

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources</li> <li>• Demand</li> <li>• Targetting</li> <li>• Alternative forms*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group tension</li> </ul>
Threats	Consensus
Closure	Field-shaping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaping behaviour</li> <li>• Transition</li> <li>• Voluntary sector</li> <li>• Community control*</li> </ul>
Formation	State gaps
[named people]	Advantage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits</li> <li>• Better</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Community knowledge*</li> </ul>
•	Invention
Community Development Programme	Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniqueness</li> <li>• Distinction</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Pioneering</li> <li>• Paternalism</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Credibility</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Politics*</li> <li>• Community control*</li> </ul>
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	Professionalisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership agreement*</li> <li>• Internal management/organisation*</li> <li>• Management*</li> </ul>
[areas of coverage] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local</li> <li>• Birmingham</li> <li>• Handsworth</li> <li>• Inner city</li> <li>• Saltley</li> <li>• Jewellery Quarter</li> <li>• South Birmingham</li> <li>• Sparkbrook</li> <li>• Newtown</li> <li>• Winson Green</li> <li>• Villa Cross</li> </ul>	Mainstreaming
New Deal	Instrumentalism



Statutory responsibilities	Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge building</li> <li>• Collective</li> <li>• Signposting</li> <li>• Consortium</li> <li>• Coordination</li> <li>• Partnership agreement*</li> <li>• Voluntary relations</li> </ul>
Voice/campaigning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Politics*</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Ethos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics*</li> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Common cause</li> <li>• Counter-individualism</li> <li>• Drive</li> <li>• Voluntary ethos</li> </ul>
Single Regeneration Budget	Skilled social actor
Internal shock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal crisis</li> </ul>	Competition
External shock	Field entry
ICPP	
[Bodies and initiatives] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probation</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Housing associations</li> <li>• Councillor</li> <li>• Leisure and Community Services</li> <li>• Leisure Services (Youth and Community Sub-) Committee</li> <li>• Aston Commission</li> <li>• BASSAC</li> <li>• Brumcan</li> <li>• Business in the Community</li> <li>• BVSC</li> <li>• Environmental Services</li> <li>• Environmental Task Force</li> <li>• ODPM</li> <li>• PCT</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Community Fund</li> <li>• Community Relations Council</li> <li>• Handsworth Task Force</li> <li>• Home Office</li> <li>• Jewellery Quarter Industrial Improvement Area</li> <li>• Social Services</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Branch</li> <li>• Summerfield Foundation</li> <li>• Department of Urban Renewal</li> <li>• East Birmingham Task Force</li> <li>• Economic Development Department/Unit</li> <li>• Educational Priority Areas</li> <li>• Education Department</li> <li>• MSF Union</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Forum</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Renewal Fund</li> <li>• New Deal</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> <li>• Sure Start</li> <li>• URBAN</li> <li>• Voluntary Services Unit</li> <li>• WMCC</li> </ul>	
<p>External views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCT view</li> <li>• Government view</li> <li>• Public view</li> </ul>	
Small	
Large	
<b>New codes</b>	
Environment	Accountability
External communications	Behaviour
Personal connection	Bureaucracy
Faith-based	Campaign v service
<p>Internal management/organisation*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal form</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Overheads</li> <li>• Paid staff</li> <li>• Parent organisation</li> <li>• Committees</li> <li>• Community management</li> <li>• Key staff</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Live-in</li> <li>• Physical premises</li> <li>• Local branch</li> <li>• Membership</li> <li>• Merger</li> <li>• Nonprofit</li> <li>• Partnership agreement*</li> <li>• Charity</li> </ul>	Group ecology

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management*</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul>	
Voluntary work	Uncertainty
Poverty	Pessimism
Communication	Positive
Community centre	Precarity
Community development	Commitment
Community engagement	Community control*
Community needs	Community identity
Community led	Informal
Community relationships	Injustice
Community resource	Integral
Community service	Legitimacy
Re-established	Reputation
Regeneration	Resilience
Restructure	Embedded
Self-help	Negative
Social and economic development	Survival
Support	Track record
Deprivation	
Education	
Employment	
Leisure	
New services	
Volunteer	
Women	

## APPENDIX 6: TEMPLATE ANALYSIS – HIERARCHY OF THEMES

NB: Top level codes reference and file numbers are aggregates of 'child' nodes below.

Table 11: codes – people, places and organisations

<b>Names</b>		<b>No. files</b>	<b>No. References</b>
Events		66	290
	cuts	31	125
	elections	1	1
	Handsworth Riots	8	13
	local government reorganisation	4	9
	Origin story	47	117
	recession	6	6
	riots	7	11
	Seebohm Report	2	3
	Skeffington Report	1	1
Individuals		52	178
	Councillor	20	30
	key staff	20	40
	Lord Mayor	1	1
	MP	12	16
	Personal connection	7	12
Location		81	534
	Acocks Green	2	2
	Allenscroft	1	1
	Aston	16	28
	Balsall Heath	11	15
	billesley	1	1
	Birmingham	5	10
	Bordesley Green	2	2
	castle vale	3	3
	Druids Heath	1	1
	Edgbaston	3	3
	forgotten area	1	1
	Fox Hollies	1	1
	Hall Green	1	1
	Handsworth	29	46
	Harborne	1	1
	Holmwood	1	1
	Holyhead	1	1
	inner city	25	88
Kings Heath	2	2	

	Kings Norton	1	1
	kingstanding	3	3
	ladywood	3	3
	local	35	110
	Lozells	10	18
	Moseley	3	4
	Mount Pleasant	2	2
	National level	19	31
	Nechells Green	5	5
	newtown	11	15
	north birmingham	1	1
	Northfield	1	1
	Northwest Birmingham	1	1
	outer city	3	4
	Perry Barr	4	4
	Quinton	1	1
	Saltley	10	17
	sandwell	2	2
	Shard End	3	3
	small heath	13	17
	Soho	5	11
	South Birmingham	3	3
	Sparkbrook	17	28
	sparkhill	6	8
	Spring Hill	1	1
	Stirchley	1	1
	Summerfield	1	1
	tiverton	1	1
	twilight area	2	5
	Villa Cross	3	4
	washwood heath	6	9
	Weoley Castle	2	2
	West Heath	1	1
	Winson Green	2	3
	witton	1	1
	Wyrley Birch	2	2
	Yardley	1	2
	Organisations	88	505
	about BCT	1	1
	ACSHO	3	3
	Action for the Voluntary Sector	1	7
	Adventure Playground	4	15

AFFOR	4	7
asian resource centre	7	12
Asian Youth Movement	1	1
Balsall Heath LINK	1	1
Bassac	1	1
BCT View	70	199
Big Lottery Fund	1	1
Birmingham Community Engagement Network	1	1
Birmingham Settlement	3	5
Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre	2	2
Brumcan	1	1
Business In The Community	3	4
BVSC	32	67
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies	1	1
Citizens Advice Bureau	9	10
Commission for Racial Equality	5	5
Community Forum	1	1
community relations council	5	8
Community Resource and Information Service CRIS	1	1
Community Resource Service Trust	1	1
Digbeth Trust	3	3
Handsworth Community Venture	2	8
Handsworth employment service	1	1
handsworth law centre	1	1
housing associations	9	20
indian workers association	3	5
local branch	6	8
lozells action centre	2	2
MSF Union	1	1
Nacro	5	8
National Lottery Charities Board	2	2
Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service	1	1
Neighbourhood Forum	2	2
Newspaper	13	27
Ockenden Venture	1	1
parent organisation	2	8

	residents association	8	17
	saltley action centre	4	6
	Scarman Trust	1	2
	Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre	1	2
	Sia	2	2
	Sparkbrook Association	2	3
	Summerfield Foundation	1	1
	supplementary schools	2	2
	Think Tank	1	2
	third sector assembly	1	1
	voluntary action resource library	1	1
	WELD	3	4
	West Midlands Charities Information Bureau	6	8
	Women's Enterprise Development Agency	1	1

Table 12: codes - field dynamics

Name		Files	References
Field dynamics		85	1775
	bridge building	9	16
	bureaucracy	14	30
	Challenger	12	29
	change	34	121
	close relationship	11	14
	collective	6	13
	conflict	28	104
	cooperation	13	33
	coordination	23	60
	desert	3	3
	external crisis	20	55
	failure	13	21
	field entry	9	14
	field formation	5	6
	field problems	4	6
	field-shaping	30	95
	formation	6	12
	Group ecology	56	199
	group tension	28	118
	Incumbent	23	55
	institutionalisation	1	3
	inter-agency	6	6
	Internal crisis	19	71

	junior partner	1	2
	mission drift	4	5
	new needs	11	16
	Outside field	1	1
	pessimism	2	2
	Professionalisation	42	138
	re-positioning	3	4
	response	6	17
	restriction	2	4
	risk	20	50
	shaping behaviour	3	7
	Threat	31	103
	transition	11	49
	uncertainty	12	41
	voluntary exclusion	11	17
	voluntary relations	62	235

Table 13: codes - identity

Name		No. files	No. references
Identity		82	1070
	advantage	7	10
	complexity	8	15
	definition	1	2
	demand	25	81
	duplication	13	28
	faith	28	101
	gaps	34	90
	Grass roots v establishment	22	55
	informal	6	18
	innovation	28	59
	mainstream	6	7
	militant	1	1
	mission	11	19
	motivation	4	4
	paternalism	7	13
	personal	1	10
	power	8	15
	purpose	32	61
	safety net	1	1
	sector identity	4	10
	top down	1	3
	traditional	1	1



	Value	73	466
	commitment	4	6
	cost-effective	13	21
	distinctive	1	1
	effectiveness	26	49
	efficient	5	7
	ethics	2	3
	experiment	8	12
	expertise	11	22
	Grass roots	18	33
	integral	2	2
	Legitimacy	6	17
	nonprofit	4	8
	pioneer	9	15
	radical	10	33
	quality	8	9
	reputation	31	49
	respect	6	7
	responsiveness	3	4
	specialist	13	24
	track record	17	28
	trust	8	11
	uniqueness	9	12
	voluntary ethos	18	18

Table 14: codes - independent voice

<b>Names</b>		<b>No. files</b>	<b>No. references</b>
Independent Voice		84	1237
	accountability	7	11
	advocacy	15	43
	Campaign v Service	30	79
	campaigning	41	177
	common cause	11	32
	community control	24	71
	community involvement	39	124
	community knowledge	35	97
	Council aims	11	45
	democracy	5	10
	empowerment	13	21
	independence	51	183
	lobbying	3	5
	non-political	2	2

	policy	31	108
	politics	29	79
	Representation	31	104
	resistance	1	1
	Voice	16	44

Table 15: codes – ‘race’ and equality

Names		No. files	No. references
Race and equality issues		77	859
	Access	16	57
	BME	52	251
	class	3	6
	community identity	19	50
	community relations	24	56
	deprivation	26	78
	discrimination	4	4
	diversity	7	12
	equal opportunities	10	17
	ethnicity	23	37
	hard to reach	6	13
	indigenous	2	5
	inequality	11	21
	integration	6	9
	marginalisation	6	7
	multicultural	4	5
	multi-racial	13	18
	New Commonwealth	1	1
	NOT race	4	4
race	22	138	
racist	7	32	
white	18	35	

Table 16: codes - activity/behaviour

Name		File s	Referen ces
Activity, behaviour - descriptive		93	4164
	adaptation	3	4
	alternative forms	24	52
	apathy	4	4
	Cause or reason	6	13

citizenship			1	1
Community needs			65	265
compassion fatigue			1	1
complementary role			14	27
exit strategy			4	4
External view			13	25
flexibility			2	2
good practice			23	41
growth			32	82
impact			18	38
Information Technology			1	1
internal organisation			87	1273
	closure		21	39
	communication		20	49
	data		1	6
	development		31	111
	development plan		9	11
	governance		12	38
	live-in		3	11
	Management		38	100
	marketing		8	10
	membership		14	39
	merger		5	5
	Monitoring and evaluation		28	77
	online		2	11
	Overheads		41	93
	paid staff		60	259
	Physical premises		56	231
	reorganisation		9	17
	restructure		10	14
	strategy		21	66
kitemark			2	4
large			9	13
name-type-identity			60	323
	advice sector		1	2
	civil society		3	4
	community agencies		2	2
	community and voluntary sector		4	4
	community association		1	1
	community organisations		18	42
	community sector		2	3

	development agency		4	8
	independent sector		1	1
	legal form		38	82
		charity	26	54
		CIO	1	1
		Cooperative	5	7
		friendly society	1	1
		social enterprise	5	8
	race relations industry		1	1
	third sector		3	8
	unemployment industry		2	2
	voluntary agencies		7	16
	voluntary and community movement		2	2
	voluntary sector		30	141
	voluntary work		4	4
	new services		23	51
	opportunity		7	21
	Partnership		53	349
		Coalition	3	3
		common deliverables	2	4
		consortium	10	18
		cross-sector partnership	19	48
		integrated working	1	1
		lead agency	3	8
		multi-agency network	3	4
		partnership agreement	4	8
	progress		6	6
	Public view		2	2
	re-established		7	11
	regulation		1	5
	Resilience		4	4
	role		12	24
	small		13	22
	social media		1	1
	Sub-sector or area		89	1269
		area based	1	1
		Benefits	6	15
		Casework	9	54
		community action	2	16
		Community Development	31	86
		Disability	4	5
		Drugs	1	4

	education	32	71
	employment	25	82
	enabler	1	2
	environment	4	6
	front-line	2	2
	health	11	16
	housing	20	80
	immigration	10	21
	Infrastructure	40	164
	international	2	2
	leisure	10	11
	LGBT	1	1
	poverty	13	20
	prevention	2	3
	regeneration	21	48
	self help	34	61
	Service	66	317
	social and economic development	2	2
	social services	20	75
	support	8	9
	training	2	2
	unemployment	21	53
	unpopular causes	2	2
	urban regeneration	2	4
	women	14	34
	success	1	3
	Survival	35	120
	targeting	6	7
	volunteer	49	96

Table 17: codes - funding

Name		Files	References
Funding issues		89	2271
asset transfer		1	1
Business approaches		49	174
Celebrity		1	1
consumers		2	3
continuation funding		1	1
core funding		10	19
economy and community		6	12
Funding		43	215
Funding mechanics		57	408

	bidding	5	28
	bidding partnership	3	3
	charging	1	1
	community budget	1	1
	competition	12	35
	Contracts	15	57
	economies of scale	1	1
	full cost recovery	1	1
	funding requirements	17	72
	Grants	46	132
	insourcing	1	1
	marketisation	2	4
	pump prime	8	10
	purchaser provider	2	6
	ringfencing	1	5
	service level agreements	3	5
	service specifications	1	1
	SORP	1	1
	sub-contracting	3	3
	Time expiring	20	46
	VAT	1	1
	fundraising	23	53
	Government funding	79	808
	Adult Training Programme	1	2
	awards for all	2	3
	challenge fund	1	1
	Change Up	1	1
	Community Chest	2	2
	Community Fund	7	11
	Community Learning	1	1
	competitive tendering	3	17
	DHS Opportunities for Volunteering	2	3
	Employment and Training ET	4	7
	EQUAL funding	1	1
	European funding	12	15
	ICPP	37	148
	Intermediate Labour Market programme	1	1
	MSC	24	61
	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	2	4
	Neighbourhood Support Fund	1	1
	New Deal	3	5
	new deal for communities	1	3
	new opportunities fund	1	1

	Partnership Fund	1	1
	People's Millenium Awards	1	1
	Quality of Life Programme	1	1
	safer cities programme	2	4
	Section 11	3	7
	SRB	10	32
	Strategic Futures Programme	1	1
	Urban Aid	18	35
	urban fund	1	1
	urban programme	12	26
	urban renewal	11	23
	West Midlands Police Community Initiatives Fund	1	1
	Youth Opportunities Programme	3	4
	inflation	1	1
	Lack of resources	62	266
	mixed economy	2	4
	neoliberalism	1	1
	precarity	39	115
	privatisation	1	1
	resources	27	74
	self-sustaining	17	41
	short term	19	51
	stability	4	6
	timescale	5	5

Table 18: codes - government relations

Name		Files	References
government relations		85	1415
Government body		80	696
	BCC	62	233
	BCC Partnership Team	1	1
	Birmingham Community Advisory- Liaison Committee	2	2
	Birmingham Drugs Action Team	1	1
	Cabinet Office	1	2
	Central Grants Unit	1	3
	Children's Department	1	6
	Community Development Committee	2	2
	Community Development Section	1	1
	community networks unit	1	1

	Community Relations Committee	2	7
	Community Service Unit	1	1
	DCLG	1	1
	Department of Health	1	1
	Department of Planning and Architecture	2	2
	Department of Urban Renewal	2	5
	DHSS	4	7
	district council	1	1
	DSS	2	3
	DTI	2	2
	Economic Development Committee	3	5
	Economic Development Department	1	2
	Economic Development Unit - EDU	10	15
	Education Committee	2	3
	Education department	10	17
	Environmental Health Department	1	1
	Environmental Services	1	1
	Ethnic Minorities Support Unit	1	1
	finance and management committee	2	2
	Government Office of the West Midlands Community Cohesion Unit	1	1
	Government Office of the West Midlands Race and Voluntary Sector Strategy	1	1
	Government Regional Office	2	4
	grants to voluntary organisations sub-committee	1	1
	Health and Wellbeing Board	1	1
	Health Authority	8	14
	Health Service	1	1
	Healthwatch	1	1
	Home Office	12	15
	housing department	13	27
	Inner City Unit	4	15
	Ladywood-Newtown Taskforce	2	2
	LEA	2	3
	Learning and Skills Council	3	7
	Leisure and Community Services	4	5
	Leisure Services (Youth and Community Sub-) Committee	2	2



	Libraries	1	1
	Local Education Authority	3	4
	Local Learning Partnership	1	1
	Local Services and Community Safety Committee	1	1
	Minister	3	4
	NHS	1	1
	PCT	1	1
	Police	27	67
	policy implementation sub-committee	1	1
	Probation	10	24
	Public Health	1	1
	Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee	3	6
	Recreation and Amenities Department	2	2
	Recreation and Community Services	8	13
	Select Committee on Race Relations	1	1
	Social Exclusion Unit	1	1
	social services department	20	68
	Special Branch	3	4
	third sector corporate strategy group	1	2
	urban sub-committee	1	1
	voluntary liaison section	5	7
	voluntary services unit	3	4
	West Midlands Probation Service	4	10
	WMCC	20	38
	Youth and Community Service	1	1
	youth service	3	3
	<b>Government Initiative</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>91</b>
	area liaison groups	1	1
	Aston Commission	2	5
	Aston Pride	2	4
	Birmingham Inner-Area Study	1	1
	City Action Team	2	2
	City Challenge	7	10
	City Taskforce	3	3
	Community Champions	1	1
	Community Development Programme	1	1

	community policing	1	1
	Community Programme	7	15
	East Birmingham Task Force	2	2
	Educational Priority Areas	1	1
	Efficiency Scrutiny	1	2
	environmental task force	1	1
	Handsworth Task Force	3	3
	Heartlands UDC	1	1
	Housing Action Area	1	1
	Integrated Area Initiatives	1	1
	Jewellery Quarter Industrial Improvement Area	1	1
	Lobbying Bill	1	2
	Local Development Experiment	1	1
	Local Strategic Partnerships	1	3
	newtown city challenge	3	3
	Partnership Authorities	1	1
	Race Relations Act	1	1
	Scarman Report	2	2
	South Birmingham Study	1	2
	STEP	1	2
	Sure Start	4	5
	URBAN	1	1
	Whitelaw Review	1	2
	workfare	1	1
	Government view	10	15
	insufficient	3	3
	local authority boundaries	3	4
	mixed responsibility	11	22
	spin off	1	1
	state failure	23	60
	statutory responsibilities	34	84
	Voluntary Organisations Charter	1	1