

LOCAL HEROES? A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVATIONS AND  
IDEOLOGIES UNDERPINNING COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEERING

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to draw upon several advances in discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis in order to contribute to current understanding of volunteers' motivations to volunteer (MTV) and the ideologies underpinning them. However, given the generally positive reception that community-based volunteering receives in the public domain, this thesis aims not only to describe and explain informants' MTV but also to critically evaluate volunteers' representations of volunteering practice. A central argument in this thesis is that while a strong sense of concern for the suffering and flourishing of beneficiaries is expressed throughout volunteers' representations, volunteering tends to be represented as an optional act of goodwill, rather than a moral duty or obligation. This raises questions about the dominant ways we think about helping others in contemporary society and about the ideologies underpinning such beliefs. It is argued that bringing to the fore and problematizing such beliefs is critical in a time where traditional collectives are breaking down and the social contracts underpinning British and European society, together with the nature of our obligations as citizens in an increasingly globalised society, are subject to increasing scrutiny and debate.

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## Introduction

Local volunteering often involves the performance of simple tasks for a couple of hours a week or month in relatively mundane environments such as tired community centres or unheated school halls. However, beneath the often unglamorous exterior of this social practice lie significant economic, social and political implications, and consequently over the last decade volunteering has become, as Rochester et al. (2010) point out, a hot topic. Last year volunteers are estimated to have contributed £45.1 billion to the British economy (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2015), greater than either the defence or education budgets for 2016 (UK Public Spending, 2015). Volunteering is also credited with the capacity to ‘revive communities, train effective citizens, build habits of respect and co-operation, provide a moral alternative to self-interest, limit intrusive bureaucracies and reinvigorate the public sphere’ (Ehrenberg, 1999: 234). Perhaps for these reasons, volunteering has over the past two decades enjoyed unprecedented attention from across the political spectrum both nationally and internationally (See Rochester et al, 2010). In 2006, Tony Blair included the

challenge to increase overall levels of volunteering across all age ranges and backgrounds as one of his key challenges for government (Rochester et al, 2010). Volunteering also played a prominent role in the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Big Society initiative, which formed a central pillar in the Conservative 2010 campaign. Volunteering also re-emerged as a key issue in the 2015 Conservative campaign. As a result of the economic, social and political significance attached to volunteering, it has been widely discussed and researched in various fields, including social theory, sociology, psychology and the media generally.

A key issue for many has concerned volunteers' motivations for volunteering: why, it is asked, in a world characterised by increasing neoliberal pressures and individualism, and in an era when leisure opportunities are so varied and accessible, do volunteers choose to give up their time to work for free? Why, for instance, does a teenager choose to leave the company of friends or Netflix for an evening to help deliver food packages to community members that need them? Why does a retired person choose to venture out of their warm and comfortable home to run a quiz at a club for stroke victims? Contributing to an understanding of the motivations of volunteers and the beliefs underpinning these motivations is one of the central aims of this thesis. This understanding potentially has implications for a wide range of stakeholders, not least for charities themselves as they seek to maintain and expand their workforce.

In this thesis I will analyse the language volunteers use as they talk about their volunteering, particularly as they talk about their significant volunteering experiences, in order to contribute to an understanding of their motivations to volunteer (henceforth abbreviated as MTV) and the beliefs underpinning them.

However, this thesis not only seeks to describe and explain MTV, it also seeks to critically evaluate the ways volunteers talk about volunteering practice. This might seem mean-spirited. What problems, it might be asked, could there possibly be with an otherwise lonely or self-interested person getting out of the house to do ostensibly useful things such as helping children to read? Given that volunteering practice is widely assumed to be an unequivocal social good and given the significance of volunteering as a social practice, it is, however, timely to critically evaluate dominant ways of talking and thinking about it. This thesis however, seeks to be truly critical, rather than dogmatically cynical, seeking to bring to light both the positive as well as that which can be challenged or improved upon.

By eliciting and analysing volunteers' accounts of significant volunteering experiences in order to understand volunteers' motivations, this research shares methodological territory with other social research into MTV. However, while all of the existing analyses of narrative data for understanding MTV necessarily rely on an analysis of the language informants use, the explicit description and analysis of different levels of language tends to be limited. The identification of themes in this research is rarely supported by a systematic description and analysis of language patterns across a given set of data. This thesis aims to draw upon and develop methods of description and analysis in order to do this, which I hope will contribute to the use of discourse analysis in social research more broadly.

In Chapter Two I define some of the key terms discussed in this thesis and locate this research in relation to existing studies of MTV. In particular I argue that accounts of MTV tend to often rest on a simplistic dichotomy between egoism and altruism, which suggests that there is a need for a more complete account of MTV. I

also point out that much of the existing research is survey-based and involves asking volunteers directly why they volunteer. I argue the need for less confrontational and more indirect forms of data collection, and discuss in greater detail the arguments for focusing on linguistic analysis.

In Chapter Three I create a space for the critical analysis of the ways volunteers recontextualise volunteering practice, drawing on the work of Theo van Leeuwen (2008). I review some of the key arguments in favour of volunteering and also some of the criticisms of volunteering that have arisen over the past few decades as a way of contextualising some of the critical motivations of my own underpinning this thesis.

In Chapter Four I describe and discuss my methodology. In order to identify the motivations volunteers express in the data, I firstly provide a model of MTV. I then discuss in more detail my methods of data collection and introduce my methods of analysis, which I will discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters.

In Chapters Five to Nine I adopt and adapt various methods of identifying and describing linguistic patterns across the data, focusing on different levels of language including lexis, grammar and text, and also discuss my findings. In the concluding chapter I bring together the various findings of these different methods of analysis as I summarise the key arguments of this thesis. In this chapter I also highlight ways that these findings might challenge and change currently dominant ways of thinking about and ultimately performing volunteering practice.

A central argument of this thesis is that volunteers represent volunteering as an optional act of goodwill, rather than as a moral obligation. A genuine sense of empathy and even affection for beneficiaries is frequently evident in the ways that informants talk about volunteering and this is often underpinned by a conception of

beneficiaries as vulnerable, interdependent equals. However there is also a sense of distance from beneficiaries, who are represented as fundamentally outside volunteers' sphere of moral responsibility.

In a time when the borders of various collectives appear to be shifting, breaking, contracting and expanding and when the social contracts underpinning British and European society are subject to increasing scrutiny, the pressing issue of our time is to bring to the fore, to discuss and to clarify the nature of our moral obligations to others and what it means it to be a citizen in an increasingly globalised society. The public conversation about volunteering, to which I hope this thesis will contribute, provides a platform for such a discussion. This conversation has the potential to bring to the surface and challenge latent and dominant conceptions of morality and create a space in which to reconfigure the prevailing beliefs and ideologies of our time.



## Research Context Part I: Motivations to Volunteer

### Introduction

As discussed in the introduction, this thesis aims to draw on models of linguistic description and analysis as well as corpus research methods in order to contribute to an understanding of why volunteers choose to give their time on a regular basis to help those in the local community. I will begin this chapter by defining several key terms in section 2.1, including the term volunteering itself. In 2.2-4 I will review existing research on MTV. I argue that current models of MTV in the existing research tend to be under theorised, for instance resting on simplistic divisions between egoism and altruism, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive account of MTV. I also argue that while research into MTV in other countries, particularly the United States, is a useful reference point for this thesis, there is also a need for more qualitative research on MTV, particularly in the United Kingdom, which moves beyond the description of MTV towards an understanding of the beliefs and ideologies underpinning these motivations. Finally I argue that while existing qualitative

approaches to MTV research necessarily rely on an analysis of informants' language, there is very little explicit and systematic description and analysis of language or language patterns in these studies, which suggests the need for a more linguistically focused method of analysis.

## 2.1 Key Concepts

In Section 2.1.1 I will define the term volunteer and will also distinguish between several different types of volunteering which will contextualise the focus of this chapter and this thesis generally. In Section 2.1.2 I will distinguish between what I call beneficiaries and recipients. Finally in 2.1.3 I will evaluate different models of MTV.

### 2.1.1 Definitions of Volunteering

There are several different definitions of volunteering (see Rochester et al., 2010). Low et al. define volunteering as 'any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment' (2007: 10). Although we might want to give other entities that benefit from voluntary action such as animals a mention in this definition, it is broadly acceptable for the purposes of this thesis. A volunteer by implication is thus anyone who is the agent of such action. Low et al. also distinguish between formal and informal volunteering and define formal volunteering as 'giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organizations to benefit other people or the environment (for example, the protection of wildlife or the improvement of public open spaces)'. Formal volunteering is thus distinguished from informal volunteering in that it is institutionally organised, always forming part of a

coordinated effort to achieve positive outcomes for beneficiaries. We could also add to this definition the distinction that volunteering is not paid work, although there might be compensation for costs incurred through this involvement such as travel. The focus in this thesis and throughout this chapter is on formal volunteering and formal volunteers, although for ease of reference they will be referred to as simply 'volunteers'.

We can also distinguish between different types of formal volunteering. Rochester et al. (2010) distinguish between three kinds of volunteering. The 'dominant paradigm' of volunteering is dominant in the sense that it is the primary focus of volunteering research and policy makers. Areas of activity within this paradigm include 'social welfare' activities, or those volunteering activities that provide assistance, support, advice and other activities 'for the benefit of people in need such as children, older people, people with disabilities or mental and physical health issues and people living in poverty or social exclusion' (p10). They distinguish this dominant paradigm from the 'civil society' and 'serious leisure' paradigms. The 'civil society' label is potentially confusing, given that the term is often used to include other types of volunteering, some of which include social welfare volunteering, which is an issue I will return to in the next chapter. However they also, perhaps more helpfully, describe this paradigm as the 'activism' paradigm and it involves 'offering mutual support in self-help groups or campaigning for improvements in provision' (p13). It is also focused on other areas of public policy such as 'transport, town planning and the environment'. The 'serious leisure' paradigm covers activities such as theatrical and musical performance, local history and heritage and sporting clubs such as rambling associations. These three paradigms are not intended to be exclusive

categories, and Rochester et al. recognize that these activities in many instances overlap. As I shall discuss in further detail in the Chapter Four, the focus of this thesis is more particularly focused on the dominant paradigm of volunteering, however these three types of volunteering are not so distinct that research on one type does not have applications or implications for research in another.

Further distinctions can be made between different types of volunteering, for instance between temporary volunteering projects abroad and consistent, regular volunteering in the local community and I will return to this in Chapter Four.

### 2.1.2 Definitions of Beneficiaries and Recipients

Having defined a volunteer it is also necessary to define what I will refer to throughout this thesis as a *beneficiary*. A beneficiary is someone the volunteering role is specifically designated by the charity to benefit, recognising that the term is not ideal for a variety of reasons, chiefly because it is an abstract, impersonal and passive representation of the social actors involved, but also because the term beneficiary is used to refer to grammatical beneficiaries in several grammatical process types which is potentially confusing given the linguistic focus in this thesis. To distinguish the two I will refer to the latter as grammatical beneficiaries. Beneficiaries are distinguished from *recipients*, in that while beneficiaries are those whom the volunteering role is specifically designated by the volunteer organisation to benefit, recipients are those social actors whom the volunteer sees as actually benefiting from their volunteering actions. For example, a volunteering role may be specifically designed to serve the homeless (the beneficiaries), but a volunteer may place more value on the service they render to other volunteers (recipients).

### 2.1.3 Motivations to Volunteer

As discussed earlier, one of the aims of this research is to contribute to an understanding of volunteers' MTV. Motivation can be distinguished from motivations. Motivation is the compulsion to act, but 'a' motivation is the reason for the compulsion. This might be instrumentally focused on personal outcomes such as wanting to improve a CV, or a sense of moral obligation or a desire to mitigate others' suffering, and it can of course be a combination of different things. We can also distinguish between motivations to begin volunteering and motivations to continue volunteering. Given the focus in this thesis on regular volunteers who have demonstrated a commitment to volunteering, the focus here is on motivations to continue volunteering, one aim being to understand why volunteers continue to do what they do, or how they make sense of the value of their actions. A number of models of MTV exist and in this section I will describe a number of problems with these models.

In some research on MTV, volunteers are given a list of MTV and are invited to select the motivations that apply to them. As Musick and Wilson (2008: 56) point out an issue with some of these surveys is that informants are given an ad hoc and unsystematically formulated list of motivations with no rationale or underlying theory for the list provided. This seems to be true of Low et al.'s (2007) national survey in which informants were given a list of 19 motivations to select from. The authors do not explain how this list of reasons for volunteering was generated and it appears to exclude motivations that have been important in other studies, such as moral obligation, to have interesting experiences, or to develop as a person.

Clary et al. (1996) improve on this by presenting the volunteer functions index (VFI), which is a list of 20 motivations they present as comprehensively covering all MTV, and which is based on functional theories of human behaviour. The VFI has been highly influential in a number of more recent studies. According to this model, all motivations fall within six exclusive categories of human needs: Values (the need to be a moral person which, for instance, drives the desire to 'make the community a better place'); Enhancement (the need to learn); Social (the need to be with people and have friendships); Career (the need to provide for self and others); Protective (the need to avoid pain and suffering); and Understanding (the need to develop personally and feel good about the self). Research that uses the VFI index draws links between what people report as important to them and these underlying needs. For example, if someone says that they want to make their community a better place, a VFI approach will link this to the need to 'remain true to an ideal conception of themselves' (Musick and Wilson, 2008: 57). An issue with the underlying focus on the needs of the volunteer is that it ultimately precludes the possibility of any truly altruistic action – i.e. action that is not ultimately self-regarding. According to this perspective, all volunteering action is action that is designed to satisfy a personal need. However as Batson and Ahmad argue, 'self-interest is a powerful and pervasive motive, but it now seems clear that the human capacity for caring is not limited to one's own interest' (2002: 433).

At a broader level of abstraction there is a dominant tendency throughout the research into MTV to distinguish between egoistic or self-regarding and altruistic or other-regarding motivations. (e.g. Frisch and Gerrard, 1981; Latting, 1990; Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Hwang et al., 2005; Rochester et al., 2010; Brewis et al., 2010;

Holdsworth, 2010; Hustinx 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Hustinx et al., 2010). This usefully recognizes the distinction between acting in the interests of others or self. However altruism in these instances is often used to cover a variety of moral meanings some might not consider to be 'altruism', such as a religious duty - is this other-regarding or self-regarding? Religious duty does not seem to easily fit into either category. In addition there is a tendency to equate altruism with moral motivations and egoism with non-moral motivations, which overlooks the possibility that self-oriented motivations may have a moral dimension to them, an issue I will return to below.

Chappell (2003) expands on the altruistic/egoistic division introducing a third category of obligation. Egoism refers to any self-interested motivation, including wanting to meet people, learn skills, make employment contacts and so forth. Altruism refers to wanting to help others or a cause, and the obligation motivation includes obligations to one's heritage, to an organization or to a community. Chappell's distinction points to the possibility of two different kinds of moral significance that volunteers might attribute to their actions: concern for others and obligations to help them. However Chappell still does not clearly account for the connections and disconnections between altruism and obligation or distinguish between different kinds of obligation. Some forms of obligation seem tied up with a sense of concern for others' wellbeing and others are not. For instance a sense of obligation that I ought to help a customer because my employment contract demands it, is different to the kind of obligation I feel I have to help someone because I feel sorry for them.

Batson and Ahmad (2002) distinguish between four kinds of motivations which are defined as goal-directed forces since each motivation has an 'ultimate goal' to be realized. Egoism is aimed at increasing one's own welfare; Altruism is aimed at increasing the welfare of one or more other individuals; Collectivism is aimed at increasing the welfare of a group or collective; and principlism is aimed at upholding a moral principle (e.g. Justice). Altruistic motivations are driven by empathic emotions, with empathy defined as 'other oriented feelings congruent with the perceived welfare of another person' (p436). With principlism, volunteering action is motivated by principles such as justice and equality based on moral reasoning. One of the important strengths of this model is that it highlights the distinction between moral feelings and moral thinking, in other words between actions that are based on feelings such as empathy or compassion, and actions that are rationally commensurate with principles such as equality and fairness. Like others, Batson and Ahmed also allow for the possibility of having multiple motivations, so that for instance a volunteer can be motivated by both principles and empathy for others.

However, there are some overlaps between the four different motivations here. They argue that a collectivist motivation is driven towards the welfare of a group that the volunteer may or may not be a part of. For instance they suggest that a student working for the plight of the poor has a collectivist orientation because s/he is working for a group of people. Their definition of altruism seems to cover this type of motivation, since it is defined as increasing the welfare of one or more other individuals. They also argue that collectivism includes working for the benefit of a group of which the volunteer is a part. This seems to be related to the egoistic motive of increasing one's own welfare but with a collective sense of self, or the principlist



motivation that encompasses feelings of duty, which in this case is predicated on a view of beneficiaries as part of a collective. What Batson and Ahmad's model highlights, however, is the connection between motivations and underlying social perspectives, or the social orientation on which a motivation is predicated, an issue I will return to in 2.4.

There is thus a tendency for models of MTV to be under-theorized in the current research. In some models there is an assumption that we are incapable of truly selfless behaviour. In addition, understanding of MTV is frequently based on a dichotomy between altruism and egoism that is problematic for several reasons. As we have seen, obligation occupies a troubled relation to this dichotomy. It seems to be an issue of altruism, but it is possible to feel obliged to do things for others without feeling a sense of concern or compassion for others. As we shall see in Chapter Four, philosophers often distinguish between feelings of compassion for others and moral obligations to help but there is little reference to these discussions in definitions of MTV in social research. We can also feel obliged to do things for ourselves, a possibility that seems misrepresented by the term egoism. Finally where obligation is acknowledged as something that is different to altruism there is little differentiation between different kinds of obligation. There is thus a need for a more detailed model of MTV, which I aim to provide in 4.1.1.

## 2.2 Methods of Identifying MTV

In this section I will move on from a discussion of MTV models, to a discussion of the methods used in research that aims to identify MTV. I will argue that current qualitative research on the MTV of committed, dominant paradigm volunteers is

necessary and lacking, particularly in the United Kingdom. I will argue that this research could be strengthened through the systematic description and analysis of informants' language, given that language is the primary source of evidence on which interpretations and findings are based.

### 2.2.1 The Survey Approach

The dominant method for identifying MTV is the survey method (Clary and Snyder, 1991; Clary et al., 1996; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Hwang et al. 2005; Handy et al., 2010; Hustinx et al., 2010; Low et al. 2007; Brewis et al., 2010; Independent Sector, 1996; Smith, 1998; Gillespie and King, 1985). As discussed above, a common approach in these studies is to provide informants with a multiple-choice list of motivations for informants to select from. In some studies, informants are given the option to rank or grade their motivations in importance (e.g. Clary et al., 1996; Hustinx et al., 2010). These studies provide insights on the reported motivations of significant numbers of participants usually numbering in the thousands. While these large samples strengthen authors' claims about general patterns of MTV, there are a number of issues with the survey approach taken in these studies.

One issue is that these surveys provide participants with a limited, closed number of predetermined motivations for informants to choose from (Rehberg, 2005). Informants are invited to adapt their own motivations to the options provided, choosing the options that 'best fit' their motivations.

Being given a list of motivation options also potentially primes students to select responses. For instance, some responses may be perceived as more appropriate than others. This may partly be a problem of linguistic priming: the linguistic

construction of particular motivations may have particular connotations that might dissuade informants from selecting them. For instance, in the Clary et al. study (1996), one option for informants to choose from was 'volunteering experience will look good on my resume'. This option does not deal with why a good looking CV might be valuable to informants, but focuses more on 'looking good' itself. Informants that are motivated by the instrumental value of volunteering experience might nevertheless shy away from selecting this option because of the value the option placed on appearances rather than on the outcomes derived from looking good. In other words, there is an implicitly negative connotation here in the representation of volunteering to 'look good' that informants may want to distance themselves from.

An additional problem with surveys is that responses to these questions can be ambiguous, and thus resistant to simple categorisation. For instance in Hustinx et al.'s study (2010), informants are given the option 'to help others' as a reason for volunteering. Selecting this option would seem to indicate an altruistic orientation to volunteer, and this is how Hustinx et al. interpret these responses. While this finding suggests that informants attach some kind of moral significance to their volunteering, it is still unclear whether volunteers' desire to help others is for self- or other-oriented reasons. For example, we can investigate further the extent to which volunteers value the opportunity to help others because it is an opportunity to stop the suffering of another person, a motivation which is directed towards the welfare of others, or whether they value the opportunity to help others because they want to 'be' a moral person, which is a motivation that is self-directed. In other words we can question the extent to which volunteers value the opportunity to help others because it forms part of the reflexive project of constructing a positive, moral identity. Qualitative work is

needed to more fully understand and explore the significance volunteers' attach to their volunteering practice.

### 2.2.2 Direct Questions

As Rochester et al. point out, 'listening to volunteers as much as surveying them can give insights into why people do what they do' (2010: 130). One way of avoiding some of the problems associated with giving volunteers a list of motivations is to give volunteers the chance to independently identify and articulate their motivations themselves. The most obvious way of doing this is to ask people directly what motivates them to volunteer through an open ended question about MTV such as 'why are you interested in volunteering in the field of international cooperation?', which is an approach taken by Rehberg (2005) and Luping (2011).

However, many have highlighted the issues with relying on volunteers' own accounts of their motives as explanations of volunteering action. Musick and Wilson point out that 'people's declarations of motives are notoriously unreliable... we claim we are volunteering because we feel compassion, although we are volunteering to improve our job prospects' (2008: 69). They suggest that people give the most acceptable response, which might be, for instance, self-aggrandising or self-effacing depending on various factors such as culture. Musick and Wilson also point out that what people say about what motivates them is insufficient as an explanation for why they volunteer. They point out that in spite of people's declared motives, being asked has proven to be a key explanatory factor in why people volunteer. There are further issues with informants' own declarations of their motivations, which will be addressed in the next sub-section.

### 2.2.3 The Continuous Reflexive Self

Two other issues that have been raised by social theorists and psychologists further complicate the reliability of volunteers' own descriptions of their motivations. These relate to two underlying assumptions in the work I have discussed thus far. The first assumption is that volunteers' motivations are on-going, being connected to a set of concerns that are relatively continuous throughout different times and places. In other words, that the MTV they express on the day of the interview is the same motivation that they have had for some time. The second assumption is that volunteers are able to reflexively identify their actual concerns and motivations, and articulate them to others. Some arguments and counter arguments for and against these assumptions will be discussed below.

Gergen argues that 'individuals harbour a sense of a coherent identity or self-sameness only to find themselves propelled by alternative impulses... increasingly we emerge as the possessors of many voices. Each self contains a multiplicity of others, singing different melodies, different verses and with different rhythms. Nor do these many voices necessarily harmonise' (1991: 49). Gergen's argument thus challenges both of the assumptions described in the last paragraph. Firstly he challenges the idea of a unitary self with a defined and continuous set of on-going concerns. Secondly he emphasises a disjuncture between what people say and their underlying impulses. He argues that we present a coherent self when there is in fact no such thing. We thus shift from discourse context to discourse context, projecting identities that have no necessary relation to underlying impulses to act (see also McAdams, 1997).

Craib (1998), however, takes issue with the heterogeneous, performative and circumstantial conception of identity proposed by postmodern theorists such as

Gergen. He distinguishes between social identities which come and go and an underlying identity 'which unites all the social identities I ever had, have, or will have' (p.4). The implication of Craib's argument is that there is an underlying self beneath the symbolic flow of discursive interaction and that it is therefore theoretically possible to access the ongoing concerns of this continuous self.

Haidt (2001) does not contend with the idea that we are propelled by a distinctive and continuous set of impulses, but she does argue that all post-hoc moral rationalisations, which by implication would include reasons volunteers give for choosing to help others, are disconnected from the process of making moral choices, which, she argues, are made intuitively and emotionally, and are derived from social and cultural influences.

However Sayer (2006) challenges the idea that what we say has little to do with underlying motivations and concerns. He argues that 'it is essential to challenge the common view that values are beyond the scope of rational deliberation', and points out that 'when asked what our friends mean to us, what we say will have something to do with how and why we value them what it is about them that we value' (p450). Similarly, Archer (2008) argues that we have the potential to be reflexive, in other words that we have the capacity to reflect on our thoughts, desires and actions as well as the capacity to communicate that reflection to others.

From a social-constructionist perspective, Wuthnow (1995) argues that accounts of MTV are a reflection of the broader conceptual frameworks, or the dominant beliefs and values of a society, by which informants understand and make sense of their actions. Expressions of motives are thus 'part of a discourse giving meaning to and helping to shape behaviour' (Wilson, 2000: 218). In other words they

reflect the available resources for legitimating their actions. From this perspective, expressions of volunteering motivations tell us about the broader cultural context in which volunteers operate, as much as they tell us about the internal psychological drivers behind volunteering action.

The position that I will adopt in this thesis is that while informants' accounts of their MTV may be to some extent a contingent performance that has more to do with presenting a particular version of themselves within the context of the interview, and while informants' motivations may be fluid and changing, it is also possible to generate responses from informants that elicit the on-going value or significance that volunteers attach to their choices and behaviour and these may be connected to on-going concerns, values and motivations. At the same time the significance and value informants attach to their behaviour does not take place within a psychological or social vacuum, but rather may reflect broader frameworks of understanding volunteering action, by which volunteers make sense of their actions. The methodological challenge is thus to elicit responses from informants that move beyond situationally contingent performances and which reflect the on-going significance, meaning and value that volunteers attach to their engagement in volunteering, both to gain insights into volunteers motivations and the dominant ideological framework in which volunteers make sense of their actions.

#### 2.2.4 Other Qualitative Methods

Various researchers of MTV have adopted a variety of methods to reduce the potential desirability bias or 'observer's paradox' (Labov, 1972) of direct questions, and also to gain further insights on MTV and the significance volunteers attach to volunteering.

Rather than seeking to identify MTV through direct questions, several researchers seek to understand MTV indirectly, by exploring volunteers' larger biographical narratives (e.g. Paollici, 1995; Nakano, 2000; Slight, 2002; Holdsworth, 2010). This will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Others elicit and analyze stories of particular volunteering experiences (e.g. Wuthnow, 1996; Gurguis-Grafanaki, 2008; Andersson and Ohlen, 2005; George, 2011; Cox and McAdams, 2012; Reich, 2000). Most studies however feature a mix of different interview methods.

A dominant approach to the analysis of data in these studies involves the thematic coding of interview data. In this process, evidence of motivations is identified in transcripts and then organised into motivational categories. It is usually acknowledged to be a highly interpretive process and various steps are taken to reduce the potential biases of the researcher. One strategy for doing this is to code the data several times on multiple occasions. Another is to have two or more independent analysts code the data. A high degree of correlation between multiple codings strengthens the analysis, along with illustrative analyses within publications.

A key point here is that the primary interface between analysts and the motivations of informants is the language that is used by informants to talk about or reflect these motivations. Analysis of the data is thus analysis of the language used by informants. However the process of analyzing this language use is usually opaque and there is little discussion of the analytical and interpretive process itself. Explicit description and analysis of the language is thus rare. When it does occur, linguistic analysis strengthens the findings of this research, but there is a need for more detailed analysis, both on the context of linguistic features identified and on other linguistic features that support a particular interpretation. For instance, Rehberg (2005) argues



that 'helping, giving and doing good' is a theme in his data, a collection of interviews in response to direct questions about MTV among students who had expressed an interest in volunteering in temporary international work camps. He supports this finding by arguing that 'about one third (36%) of the respondents explicitly used the word 'help' or 'helping' when talking about their motivation for volunteering' (p115). He argues that this supports the idea that volunteers present themselves as being altruistically motivated. While this is a useful observation, it seems to be the start of an investigation, rather than an end in itself. It is not entirely clear that when these informants use the word 'help' or 'helping' that they are using it to signify an altruistic attitude. This line of argument would be supported by further analysis of the use of the words 'help' or 'helping' in their linguistic context and through the identification of other linguistic patterns that iterate the same meanings and which support this interpretation.

### 2.3 Participants

Another key issue in the existing research on MTV is the lack of UK based analyses of MTV. Much of the current research has been conducted in the United States and Canada. Some similarities in the motivations of volunteers in different countries have been identified, suggesting the relevance of these studies for understanding the motivations of student volunteers in the UK. For instance, a survey conducted by Hustinx et al. (2010) found similarities in the reported motivations of 5794 students in the United States, Canada, China, Finland, Belgium and Japan. However in spite of these general similarities, they also identified significant differences with Finnish students being most likely to rate what they define as altruistic motives as important,

and Japanese, Belgium and Chinese students least likely to report altruistic motives. Canadian students accorded the greatest value to resumé motives compared with others countries, followed by China and the United States. American students assigned a greater value to 'Social-Ego' motives, or motives related to looking good and building friendships than students in other countries. Given the differences that have been identified in these countries, it is useful to ask which motivational orientations are characteristic of volunteers in the United Kingdom, where there have been several national surveys of MTV but few qualitative studies.

#### 2.4 Motivations, Ontologies and Ideologies

There is a strong relationship between motivations and the beliefs underpinning these drivers of action, and the relationship between these motivations and these underlying beliefs is often neglected in MTV research. In this section I will begin to develop a framework for thinking about this relationship.

Motivations are predicated on particular beliefs and ways of conceiving the self, others and the relations between them. For instance, self-oriented motivations may be predicated and justified on a view of the self and others as disconnected, individualised beings, while a sense of obligation to help others may be predicated on a view of selves and others as interconnected parts of a collective whole, the parameters of which may be defined by various attributes, which might be genetic, gendered, geographical and so forth. I will refer to particular ways of defining the self, others and relations between them as ontologies, recognizing that this is a much narrower use of the term than is commonly accepted. The legitimacy of these ontologies is predicated on particular beliefs or ideologies. For instance, the definition

of some social actors as part of a collective national whole from which immigrants, for instance, are excluded, may be predicated on a nationalistic ideology in which people are defined, organised and attributed value in relation to their national origins. The term ideology as I will use it is more general than the use of ideology by some who specifically define ideologies as beliefs underpinning imbalanced power relationships and the domination of some by others (e.g. Fairclough, 2003: 9). Ideologies as defined in this thesis refer to any beliefs or ideas, whether we might be critical of them or not.

As we saw in the work of Batson and Ahmed above, the idea that motivations and beliefs are interconnected is not new. Several psychologists and social researchers of MTV highlight the relationships between motivations and beliefs. Some of this work will be summarized below, and these ideas will be drawn upon and returned to later in this thesis.

Kohlberg (1976) implicitly distinguishes between moral judgments and underlying social conceptions in his theory of moral development. During what he describes as the pre-conventional stage, which is the norm for children, a judgment of the morality of an action is derived from the avoidance of punishment. This basis for moral judgment changes as people develop, with the highest level of moral judgment being based on reason and the universal application of principles such as equality. On this final plane of moral judgment, there is a relationship between the ways that others are perceived, for instance as equals, and the consequent moral judgment and by implication actions about what is right and wrong behaviour. In other words, he argues that there is an ontological basis for moral judgment and by implication, motivations to act, which is anchored in a belief in the equality of all people.

Gilligan criticizes Kohlberg's model observing that 'he equated moral development with the development of justice reasoning' (2007: 459). Gilligan points out that Kohlberg's model gives primacy to reason over emotion and proposed the existence of a 'care orientation' as an alternative to a 'justice orientation'. While a justice orientation is characterised in terms of fairness, equality and the obligations that arise from the universal application of these principles, a care orientation is characterised by feelings of concern for the wellbeing of others, or in other words compassion and empathy. Gilligan argues that each orientation 'denotes different ways of organising the basic elements of moral judgment: self, others and the relationship between them' (p469). A care orientation is based on a view of the self and others as connected and interdependent and within this orientation there is an emphasis on relationships and attachment. A justice orientation disregards affective attachments as a basis for moral judgment but nevertheless judges 'the conflicting claims of self and others against a standard of equality or equal respect' (p469).

Gilligan sees these two orientations as distinct, and controversially argues that a justice orientation is more typical of men and a care orientation more typical of women. However this gendered distinction between these two orientations obscures the possibility of subscribing to the ontological and ideological assumptions underpinning both orientations. It is possible to have a sense of justice based on the belief in the equality of all and also to have a sense of compassion and empathy based on a view of the self as connected and interdependent. In addition this perspective also obscures the fact that it is possible to feel empathy for someone without feeling a sense of personal connection to that person. There is thus a need to explore the ontological or ideological assumptions underpinning particular moral judgments,

rather than, for instance, assuming a relation between an expression of empathy for others and a care orientation.

The connection between motivations and underlying beliefs about the self, others and the relations between them is also a major concern in the influential work of Wuthnow (1995). As discussed above, Wuthnow argues that volunteering motivations are an expression of particular frameworks of understanding, or discourses, and following an analysis of interviews conducted with students in North America, he identifies four. The first he calls 'humanitarianism' in which feelings of compassion and sympathy are linked to a view of people as having a 'common bond that ties people together and obligates them to help one another'. It 'stresses the basic equality of people and thus legitimates efforts to redress inequities'. He argues that 'humanitarianism, more so than the other frameworks... tends to evoke the language of moral duty or moral obligation' (p466). In this account, there is a clear link between a sense of obligation and a sense of people as being connected in terms of whole. The second framework is 'the pursuit of happiness'. In this framework obligation is less important than seeking the happiness of the self and others, and the happiness of both are seen as interlinked. Helping others is interpreted as a mutually beneficial activity. Personal happiness is seen as 'something that depends on the wellbeing of others' (p68). This framework is more oriented towards care than towards obligation. The third framework of reciprocity can be summarised as the desire to 'give something back' after having received so much. It is distinguished from the humanitarian framework in that whereas 'humanitarianism emphasises people's basic equality, reciprocity stresses the special privileges or unique resources of a few' (p70). Volunteering from this perspective is based both on caring for others and also

possibly a sense of obligation 'to give others the chance to experience the same sense of somebody caring for them that you have [had]' (p70). The final framework Wuthnow identifies is the framework of self-realization, which 'emphasises the personal benefits gained from helping others but focuses less on happiness than on growth' (p73). It involves caring for others but is driven by a desire for personal growth.

Wuthnow thus expands on the care and justice dichotomy implicit in Gilligan's theory and also points to the different beliefs that may underpin particular motivations without drawing necessary links between, for instance, an expression of obligation and concern for justice.

However, while Wuthnow refers to collectivist conceptions of self and others, he does not refer to individualism, which has been an important concern for other researchers of MTV (e.g. Bayerlein and Vaisey, 2013; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Slight, 2002; Hustinx et al., 2010). Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) argue that volunteers' moral motivations are based on collective and individualistic conceptions of the self and society. Drawing on the work of Giddens (1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and others, they argue that volunteers increasingly see themselves as individuals rather than as part of collectives. While some sociologists such as Bayerlein and Vaisey (2013) among others, tend to equate 'individualistic' with 'self-oriented', this conception of individualism rather denotes an individualistic conception of the relations between the self and others that no longer relies on traditional collective groupings such as kinship and gender. With the 'death' of these groupings and this collective way of thinking, they argue, there is a shift away from a sense of obligation and duty. This may result in 'self-centred' motivations but they

also argue that altruism is not necessarily incompatible with individualism – despite the lack of obligation to other members of a group, people may still feel a sense of concern or compassion for perceived others.

Despite the differences between these studies it is important to highlight here the shared understanding that motivations do not exist in a psychological vacuum but are contingent on particular ontologies and ideologies and that we need to understand these beliefs in order to more fully understand MTV. As discussed at the outset of this section, I will draw upon these ideas in discussing the beliefs underpinning MTV at a later point in this thesis.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that existing research into MTV tends to rest on under-theorised models of MTV. I also argued that research on MTV has been dominated by quantitative methods with which there are several important issues and which needs to be supported by more qualitative research methods, of which there has been very little. In addition much of this research focuses on volunteers in other countries, particularly the United States, raising questions about the relevance of this work for understanding MTV in the United Kingdom.

There have, however, been a growing number of qualitative studies into volunteering, which employ a number of interview methods. While several studies ask participants direct question, others take a more indirect approach, focusing on biographical narratives. A common analytical strategy in all of these qualitative studies is to code the data for themes, a process that is analytically opaque, and tends to be supported by the use of multiple coders or the analysis of isolated quotations. In

addition some of these studies often use very small samples of participants. These interpretations are based on an analysis of language, however there is little explicit description and analysis of language. There is thus a need for a more transparent and comprehensive analytical approach, which is based on data produced from larger samples of participants. In addition, there is also a need for a greater understanding of the underlying ontological and ideological foundations underpinning volunteers' MTV, which are points I will return to in Chapter Four.



## Research Context Part II: The Critical Analysis of Volunteer Discourse

### Introduction

In this chapter I argue that since dominant conceptions of community service volunteering in politics, media and academic discourse are generally positive, there is a need for greater critical engagement with this widespread and increasingly politicised social practice. While several criticisms and concerns regarding volunteering have arisen over the past few decades in a number of fields including political science, sociology and philosophy, very little empirical research has been conducted to support or challenge these concerns. I argue that, based on a theory of discourse articulated in this chapter, the critical analysis of volunteer discourse can provide a useful focus for such an investigation.

In order to provide evidence to support or challenge these criticisms and concerns of volunteering, we first need to know what they are. In 3.1 I review these criticisms and concerns and contextualise these by also reviewing the case in favour of

volunteering. In 3.2 I move on to discuss why an analysis of volunteer discourse can support or challenge these arguments and in doing so I define discourse and what a critical analysis of it can reveal. In 3.2 I also review several critically oriented discourse-based studies of volunteer discourse that have found a variety of evidence to support some of the criticisms made of volunteering. However, these studies are primarily oriented towards volunteer tourism, reinforcing the value and need for the critical analysis of locally oriented volunteering discourse. In addition, as with much of the qualitative research on MTV, these studies often lack the systematic and explicit description and analysis of the discourse features upon which interpretations are necessarily based.

### 3.1. Critical Perspectives of Volunteering

Over the past few decades, critical engagement with volunteering practice has emerged in a number of different fields including political science, social theory, social research, philosophy and critical discourse analysis. In particular political scientists and social theorists have raised a number of arguments for and against volunteering in discussions of the concept of the 'civil society', which will be described in Section 3.1.1. Social researchers have also debated the value and values of volunteer tourism, and these arguments will be reviewed in Section 3.1.2. Moral attitudes towards volunteering are also implicated in philosophical discussions of the nature of our moral obligations to others and these arguments will be reviewed in Section 3.1.3.

### 3.1.1 Volunteering and the Civil Society

Community service volunteering is often equated with the concept of civil society. This concept stretches back to ancient times but discussion of the civil society revived in modern times with the work of Tocqueville, who conceptualised civil society as ‘a sphere of mediating organisations between the individual and the state’ (Ehrenberg, 1999: 161). Civil society today has a range of meanings (Kaldor, 2003) but is generally understood to refer to the broad range of non-government, non-profit organisations which address a variety of needs of the members of a community (Wedel, 1994; Ehrenberg, 1999; Powell, 2007). These non-government organisations make up what has come to be referred to by some as the ‘third sector’, although for some this has more particularly commercial associations, generally associated with sponsored charity work and fundraising (See Kaldor, 2003). The borders of the civil society are usually represented as co-extensive with state borders (e.g. Powell, 2007) and the concept of civil society is closely associated with issues of active democracy and citizenship. However, sometimes the concept is localised to smaller communities (e.g. Putnam, 1993) or extended to wider global communities (e.g. Pithouse, 2005; Sem, 2010).

Many see the formation of civil society as necessary for revitalising an ‘overworked, disengaged, acquisitive and self absorbed population [that] has allowed its moral connections to atrophy’ (Ehrenberg, 1999: ix) (e.g. Giddens, 1998; Powell, 2007; Ehrenberg, 1999; Putnam, 1993, Musick and Wilson, 2008). For these and others, engaging citizens in civil society will, as Ehrenberg summarises, ‘revive communities, train effective citizens, build habits of respect and co-operation, provide a moral alternative to self-interest, limit intrusive bureaucracies and reinvigorate the

public sphere' (Ehrenberg, 1999: 234). Given its intermediate position between the market and the state, the civil society enjoys both support and criticism from both the right and the left and some of these arguments will be reviewed below.

#### 3.1.1.1 Support for Volunteering and the Civil Society

As mentioned above, an important strand of contemporary support for the civil society is rooted in the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, a French commentator on American life in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tocqueville (1990) was impressed by the Americans' self-reliance and ability for self-governance beyond the influence of centralised power. In particular he was impressed with the way they formed local voluntary groups from the 'ground up', to solve particular problems in the local community, rather than depending on the state or other forms of centralised power: 'Wherever at the head of some new undertaking you see the government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association' (p106). Tocqueville saw the voluntary formation of groups for dealing with a variety of problems at the local level as a means for citizens to overcome individualism and selfish desires and a means of developing a more reflexive and active society, a position that dominates contemporary American thinking about civil society and volunteering (Ehrenberg, 1999: 233).

This dominance is evident in the influential work of Putnam (1994). Putnam and his colleagues sought to understand the origins of effective government in Italy. Following the use of a wide variety of research methods in six regions, including large scale surveys, interviews with hundreds of councillors, analysis of legislation as well as other methods, they argued that regions with efficient and stable governments with

effectively implemented policies on health, housing, agriculture and industrial development are characterised by a vibrant, active, public-spirited citizenry and 'a social fabric of trust and cooperation' (p15). They also argued that communities characterised by top-down, vertically structured politics correlated to 'a social life of fragmentation, isolation and a culture of distrust' (p15), which in turn correlated to decreased institutional success.

Tocqueville's conception of the civil society was an anti-statist alternative to centralised power. Recently, however, others have argued that the state and the civil society have the potential to complement each other. Giddens, for example, argues that 'state and civil society should act in partnership, each to facilitate, but also to act as a control upon the other' (1998: 79). From this perspective, the active participation of citizens within civil society moderates and checks the activities of centralised power.

In addition to its potential to regulate the state, supporters from the political left also highlight the role of civil society in challenging and regulating market forces, as argued by Powell: 'Citizen participation brings civil society and the state together in a fusion that has the potential to regulate the market and promote the principles of interdependence, mutuality, cooperation and shared vulnerability' (2007: 219).

For various combinations of all of the reasons discussed above, as discussed in the introduction, the concept of civil society and volunteering activity enjoys support from all British political parties. Tony Blair included the challenge to 'increase overall levels of volunteering across all age ranges and backgrounds' as one of his key challenges for government (cited in Rochester et al: 2010: 2). The Conservative/Liberal Democrat 'big society' programme, launched in 2010, aimed to

encourage people to regularly volunteer in their local communities, which was also at the core of the Labour 'one nation' concept. At the time of writing the Conservative party has revived the concept with measures designed to encourage volunteering as part of its manifesto for the 2015 general election (2015: 46). This support for volunteering at the national level is also matched by support for volunteering at an international level. For example, the potential contribution of volunteering to local and global communities was recognised by the United Nations in the designation of 2001 as the International Year of the Volunteer (Rochester et al., 2010: 1-3).

In addition, while some forms of volunteering such as volunteer tourism are treated with scepticism by the media, local volunteering tends to be treated neutrally or favourably, a pattern that is on the whole mirrored by existing academic research. Research on MTV for instance is generally motivated by the assumed value of volunteering for everyone involved and thus that any motivation to volunteer is ultimately a good one. There is thus a space for greater critical engagement with community-based volunteering.

#### 3.1.1.2 Criticisms of Volunteering and the Civil Society

As discussed above, critical analyses of civil society and volunteering are relatively rare, and some criticisms of volunteering are now several decades old, but given the lack of critical engagement with volunteering, these perspectives are nonetheless worth reviewing. One strand of criticism concerns the inward looking, localised focus of dominant conceptions of civil society. Ehrenberg warns against the 'parochialism, localism and hostility to central thinking' (1999: 234) that, he suggests, dominates post-Tocquevillean conceptions of the civil society and which underpins support for

community based volunteering. He argues that while the localised approach to community issues supported by Tocqueville might have worked in the 'face-to-face democracy of early-nineteenth century New England towns', such an approach to social justice 'cannot furnish a credible model for public life in a highly commodified mass society marked by unprecedented levels of economic inequality' (p234). He argues that 'it is time to move past small thinking and the celebration of local fragmentation to engage the big questions of economic justice and political democracy ... as we move into a future in which economic justice and political democracy will demand more, not less of the state' (p. xvi).

Similarly, several have highlighted that the emphasis on local interests in dominant conceptions of the civic society excludes the interests of those in the wider global community. Several critics argue that current conceptions of civil society are biased or oriented towards the global north rather than fairly distributed across the globe (Pithouse, 2005; Sem, 2010).

Gorham (1992) argues that service-based volunteering does not bring people together and foster unified communities, as proponents of the civil society suggest, but rather the ideology of service is characterised by unequal divisions and distinctions between those who serve and their beneficiaries:

'the ideology of service is antithetical to citizenship [because] service re-inscribes an individualistic, atomised society... [The] service ethic legitimates individuals whose capacity is to see their neighbour as somehow deficient, as personally deficient. The deficiency is placed in the client'. (p117)

Underpinning this is the argument that service-based formal volunteering is an apolitical, ahistorical practice:

‘the remedial practice [of service] isolates the individual from the context. Thus the theory of service is simply persons serving persons – persons without a history and without a position in a particular class or ethnic group. The server and the served become deontological beings where the service being performed is an act between individuals’. (p117)

Thus, according to Gorham, the broader structural and historical issues that form the context for particular social issues are not perceived in their wider context, and service tends to be reduced to able individuals helping other individuals perceived as deficient (see also McKnight, 1981).

As discussed above, many construct civil society as ‘formally distinct from the body politic and state authority on the one hand, and the immediate pursuit of self-interest and the imperatives of the market on the other’ (Ehrenberg, 1999: 235), and point to the room this creates for the agency of citizens to collectively engage with and shape their society. Others, however, are skeptical of the ‘deregulation, privatization and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision’ (Harvey, 2005: 3) and are wary of the ways that volunteering is shaped and exploited by both the state and the market to offload their responsibilities onto the shoulders of local citizens, a move in which state responsibilities and collective obligations are relegated to a casual option for individuals who feel so inclined (Harvey, 2005; Kramer, 1981; Nakano, 1999; Cox, 2000; Nihei, 2010). Kramer (1981) argues that ‘there is a danger



that those who have jumped on the bandwagon of the era of limits, signalling the end of the welfare state by advocating more volunteerism, are being co-opted by others who share less concern with social justice than with tax-deduction'. More recently, Nihei summarises the arguments made by some: 'the activation of the volunteer generates the precondition for dismissing social rights, which have been guaranteed by the state, by leaving social rights in self-help and mutual cooperation. In other words, volunteer discourse emphasizes solidarity with the others on a micro-level, but it contributes to the disintegration of the basis of "social" solidarity on a macro-level between strangers vis-à-vis income transfer, previously guaranteed by the welfare state' (2010: 116).

Others warn of the consequences of this 'offloading' of state responsibilities onto a voluntary workforce, with services that may require trained, committed and accountable staff increasingly being assumed by the untrained and uncommitted in a semi- or unstructured environment. As Kramer (1981) argues 'voluntarism is no substitute for services that can best be delivered by government, particularly if coverage, equity and entitlements are valued'. Speaking of the reclassification of some health challenges faced by elderly members of society as matters of health care to social care, Heath (2000) similarly argues that 'the provision of intimate personal care with skill and sensitivity can restore dignity and independence; it is the most important dimension of health care for those rendered frail and debilitated by chronic illness. Yet this type of care has been devalued, taken away from nurses, and redefined as social care which can be delivered by those who are poorly trained and even more poorly paid', an issue she describes as a 'dereliction of duty'. These arguments might

also be levied at the devolution of some welfare issues traditionally seen as state obligations to a volunteer workforce.

Throughout these criticisms there is thus an emphasis on the fact that volunteering is often an individualised, sentimentalised, immediate, parochial and unfairly focused ahistorical and apoliticised practice often characterised by unequal power relations, which needs to be expanded with greater state involvement to properly address the scale of social injustice both nationally and internationally. The question thus arises: to what extent are these criticisms and concerns also evident in the ways that local community-based volunteers talk about their practice.

### 3.1.2 From Intra-National to International Volunteering: Critical Perspectives of Voluntourism

The above discussion of civil society and volunteering has focused predominantly on the arguments for and against intra-national or localized, community based volunteering. As discussed, critical perspectives on volunteering at a local level tend to be relatively rare. However, international volunteering, or 'volunteer tourism' has been the target of criticism in the media and more recently in academic research, including several critical discourse analytical (CDA) studies and this research raises several questions regarding the representation of volunteering at a local level.

Volunteer tourism 'applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment' (Wearing, 2001: 1). There are obvious differences between volunteer tourism and community based

volunteering as social practices. Two of the most significant are that such projects are normally temporary and short term, whereas the community based volunteers that I will focus on are regular long-term volunteers. In addition, volunteer tourism obviously combines volunteering with tourism – volunteer tourists not only give of their time and resources but also frequently pay large sums of money to participate in volunteer tourist projects. The ostensibly paradoxical mix of altruism and egoism that this suggests is perhaps what drives critical thinking in this area. However, in spite of the differences of location and duration, there are also fundamental overlaps between volunteering abroad and volunteering in more local community based settings. For instance, both forms of volunteering often fall within the dominant paradigm of ‘social welfare’ volunteering in which volunteers give their time and resources to help others in face-to-face situations. An interesting point of discussion and one of the key concerns in this thesis is the extent to which the issues and concerns that these critics of international volunteering raise are also evident in the ways that volunteers working on an intra-national basis talk about and represent volunteering. In this section I will review some of the arguments for and against volunteer tourism and will also move on to review some empirically based analyses.

#### 3.1.2.1 Support for Voluntourism

The motives and outcomes of volunteer tourism are frequently the subject of widespread skepticism and cynicism in the British media (see Sin, 2009), a cynicism which is captured well in the viral Youtube clip ‘Gap Yah’ (Lacey, 2010), described by its creator as a satire ‘on the great number of people who seem to be leaving these shores to vomit all over the developing world’ (cited in Metzger, 2010). In contrast,

until relatively recently academic research on volunteer tourism has on the whole been either critically neutral or supportive of volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001; Wearing and Ponting, 2006; Lyon and Wearing, 2008; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; McIntosh and Zahra, 2008; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Clifton and Benson, 2006; McKinnon, 2006; Hutnyk, 1996; Pezzullo, 2007; see also Guttentag, 2009 and Sin, 2009).

Wearing argues that 'volunteer tourism experience is a direct interactive experience that causes value change and changed consciousness in the individual which will subsequently influence their lifestyle, while providing forms of community development that are required by local communities' (2001: X). Similarly, McGehee and Santos (2005: 760) argue that volunteer tourism organisations provide opportunities to 'encourage or intensify social movement participation and activism support, either through the establishment of network ties or via various consciousness-raising experiences'. Wearing and Ponting (2009) argue that while some forms of 'shallow' volunteer tourism:

'...may be in danger of becoming another example of commodified tourism... deep volunteer tourism enables social value and identities to be developed within the host's cultural presentation by allowing a higher degree of experiential interaction. Social value is developed where cultural Third Spaces of hosts are included through community consultation, policy decision-making and other participation opportunities. This enables a breakdown of the self-other in the dominant subordinate dichotomy and provides sufficient freedom

in the re-presentation of host identity to explore a third space of the hybrid selves created for both parties'. (257)

### 3.1.2.2 Criticism of Voluntourism

Over the past decade, however, there have been a number of scholars who have highlighted the potentially negative impact that volunteer tourism might have on local beneficiaries. Several highlight the potential for volunteer tourism to encourage dependency rather than self-reliance among host communities. For instance, McGehee and Andereck warn that 'an environment of dependency may arise as residents begin to rely on volunteer tourists to provide economic support for their communities' (2008: 22) and further warn of the potential for this dependency to be transferred to the next generation. Wearing also warns that 'volunteers can reiterate the ethos of the 'expert', thus promoting deference in the local community to outside knowledge, therefore contributing to the curtailment of self-sufficiency' (2001: 51; see also Guttentag, 2009). Others highlight the potential problems caused by the 'demonstration effect', which is the effect of volunteers drawing attention to their wealth and lifestyles in host communities (Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 236). Ver Beek (2006) points to the reality that in some instances, volunteer tourist projects deprive locals of opportunities for work. Guttentag (2009) also highlights that some organizations are more geared towards making a profit than actually helping local communities, leading to projects in which the needs and desires of the local communities are ignored.

In spite of the differences between volunteer tourism and community based volunteering, many of these concerns can be extended to local community based

volunteering. For instance we might investigate the extent to which community based volunteering promotes dependency, or the extent to which volunteering is more oriented towards the needs of volunteers than recipients, issues I will return to at a later point.

### 3.1.3 Obligations or Ideals? The Philosophical Debate

As discussed in Chapter Two, some research has highlighted differences in the extent to which volunteers represent themselves as motivated by a sense of duty or obligation. The literature on MTV is normatively neutral on this issue, aiming to describe rather than critique volunteers' representations of their motives. However, this can also be viewed as a point of discussion in the critical analysis of volunteering and volunteering discourse. In some discussions of civil society, volunteering is represented as an opportunity for citizens to exercise their civic duties or obligations. It is thus sometimes assumed that these obligations exist and that more volunteering will encourage a greater sense of civic responsibility. On the other hand, the term 'volunteering' itself suggests that engaging in volunteering is a matter of free will and choice, rather than an obligation. There appears to be in many instances some confusion or ambiguity about the extent to which we are obligated to volunteer. However, beyond discussions of MTV and in the field of philosophy, the extent to which we are or not obligated to help others, and by implication to volunteer, is a hotly contested issue and some of these arguments will be reviewed below.

Several philosophical positions reject the concept of objective moral obligations. Moral nihilists, for instance, reject moral principles altogether. Ethical relativists refute the realist claim that obligations exist independent of particular

cultural contexts, and moral subjectivists hold that moral claims are a merely a matter of opinion (Warden, 2000: 6). In contemporary society, strict support for these positions is, however, relatively rare.

Ethical egoists hold that we have moral obligations, but these are towards the self rather than others. Like the positions mentioned above, orthodox versions of this are rare, but it does have a prominent place in contemporary moral thinking. Hampton (1993), for example, argues for the primacy of obligations to the self over others and rejects the idea that we should act out of duty towards others and argues that action should be 'authentic', 'done out of love' (p152). She thus advocates that actions should be based on desire and emotion and not on a sense of obligation.

The dominant view in contemporary society, however, is that we do have obligations to others, but to whom we are obligated and what we are obligated to do are both fundamentally contested issues. There is a general consensus, for instance, that parents have an obligation to take care of their children, and perhaps also elderly parents. But the nature of our obligations to those beyond the family are less concrete. In 1989, Wolfe suggested that 'citizens of capitalist liberal democracies understand the freedom they possess, appreciate its value, defend its prerogatives. But they are confused when it comes to recognizing the social obligations that make their freedom possible in the first place. They are, in a word, unclear about the moral codes by which they ought to live' (p 2). This confusion about our moral obligations seems as relevant twenty-five years on.

Some argue that while we are obligated to avoid causing others harm, actions that move beyond this are more optional. Gert (2005) for instance distinguishes between moral rules and moral ideals. For Gert, moral rules govern actions that

actively cause others harm such as killing, lying, stealing, committing adultery, breaking a promise, cheating and causing pain. It is argued that we have an obligation not to do any of these things. Moral ideals, however, are actions that actively diminish others' suffering or contribute to others' flourishing. While not obligatory, they are morally desirable (see also Warden, 2000).

Singer (2011), however, introduces a more challenging standard of what we are obligated to do with the following oft-cited thought experiment:

'on my way to a lecture, I pass a shallow ornamental pond and notice that a small child has fallen in and is in danger of drowning. I look around to see where the parents, or babysitter, are, but to my surprise, I see that there is no one else around. It seems it is up to me to make sure that the child doesn't drown. Would anyone deny that I ought to wade in and pull the child out? This will mean getting my clothes muddy, ruining my shoes and either cancelling my lecture or delaying it... but compared with the avoidable death of a child, none of these things are significant'. (199)

Singer thus argues that in this instance we are obligated not only to avoid causing others harm but also to actively reduce their suffering, challenging the idea that to help alleviate another's suffering is an ideal rather than an obligation. Singer argues that the obligation to help the child rests on the following, which is referred to as the Singer Principle: 'if it is in our power to prevent something very bad happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, we ought to do it'.



Singer also argues that the interests of all those affected by an action should be considered equally: 'we must go beyond a personal or sectional point of view and take into account the interests of all those affected, unless we have sound ethical grounds for doing otherwise' (p20). For this reason, he argues, we need to regard equally the interests of those of a different race, age, gender and so forth. In particular, Singer highlights the arbitrariness of location and relation. While the concept of the civil society is sometimes used to emphasise obligations to those in the local community, Singer argues that, based on the principle of equal considerations, our obligations to persons far away are as binding as to those who are local to us or related to us (p202-3). Thus for Singer, we are as obligated to help a child who is starving far away as we are to one that is drowning in front of us. The fact that we are geographically closer to them is arbitrary due to the principle of equal consideration of interests. Thus Singer argues that 'helping is not, as conventionally thought, a charitable act that is praiseworthy to do but not wrong to omit. It is something that everyone ought to do' (p 200).

Singer's arguments primarily concern our obligation to prevent others' suffering, rather than actively promoting their flourishing. However, his arguments can be extended to defend such an obligation. Most would argue that parents not only have an obligation to prevent something - to refer to Singer's scenario above - 'very bad' happening to their children, but that they also have an obligation to promote their flourishing. This is because the two are interlinked - a child not flourishing is 'very bad'. Likewise, given the principle of equal consideration, such an obligation can be seen to exist beyond the family. From this perspective, the obligation parents and siblings feel to nurture immediate family members and to promote their flourishing

might be extended beyond this family circle, particularly to those in society who are vulnerable and who do not have a family support network of their own, or those whose support network is insufficiently able to support their flourishing.

Arneson expresses a possible response to Singer's work: 'given human nature, which strongly inclines us to put ourselves and those near and dear to us first in our priorities when we decide how to act, it would at the least be extremely difficult for people to adhere to the Singer Principle and given the great difficulty of complying with this code, it is no great sin that we do not, and priggish to act as though it were' (2004: 51). Arneson also points out that moral intuitions are to some extent socialised, so that we might not feel guilty about not doing something that we ought to do. However, Singer argues 'No doubt we instinctively prefer to help those who are close to us... the question, however, is not what we usually do, but what we ought to do, and it is difficult to see any sound moral justification for the view that distance, or community membership, makes a crucial difference to our obligations' (p203).

Singer does defend a 'recognised system of responsibilities' in which family and community responsibilities are given priority. He argues that:

'it would be absurd to propose that from now on we all regard ourselves as equally responsible for the welfare of everyone in the world... to allow one's own kin to sink into extreme poverty would be to sacrifice something of comparable significance; and well before that point had been reached, the breakdown of the system of family and community responsibility would be a factor to weight the balance in favour of a modest preference for family and community' (p204).

Thus while the principle of equal consideration of interests means that we should be extending the same care and attention to others as we do for those in our family, Singer allows for the possibility of prioritising family and community needs over the broader needs of others. However, this does not absolve us of the continuing obligations we have to help others when we can. Thus it can be said that ‘much of what we think of as charity is in fact a duty’ (Atterton, 2007: 154).

### 3.2 The Critical Analysis of Volunteer Discourse

In Section 3.1 I have reviewed several critical perspectives of volunteering. Given the overwhelmingly positive view of community-based volunteering that is currently dominant in contemporary British society, in this section I argue that the validity of the criticisms of volunteering discussed above can and should be supported or challenged through empirical research. In particular I argue that one avenue for exploring these concerns is through a critical analysis of the ways that volunteers themselves talk about and represent volunteering. In Sections 3.2.1-2 I present some definitions of discourse and discuss in more detail some of the reasons why an analysis of discourse is a useful focus for critical analysis. In Section 3.2.3 I discuss current gaps in some of the existing critically oriented discourse studies.

#### 3.2.1 Discourse

There are many definitions of discourse and versions of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (see Wodak, 2004 and Wodak, 2006). In this thesis I will draw upon van Leeuwen’s (2008) definition of discourse as the recontextualisation of social practice.

Van Leeuwen states that 'all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices' (5). He defines social practices as 'socially regulated ways of doing things' (6), which are made up of a number of elements and he provides an inventory that helps to further define the term. A social practice involves specific types of participants who have particular roles and responsibilities within the practice. Social practices involve specific actions that are sequenced in more or less fixed patterns. They take place at particular times, locations and involve particular resources. Van Leeuwen's argument that 'all' texts are representations of social practice implies a very broad conception of social practice that points to the social character of activities some might find difficult to accept as social practices such as sleeping or thinking, and this could be discussed further elsewhere. However, this conception of social practice usefully describes formal volunteering practice involving volunteers who work through an organisation that aims to provide direct assistance to particular people with specific issues.

When people talk or write they represent or recontextualise social practices. For example, they delineate the roles of participants in a social practice. Some participants might be foregrounded, others marginalised and participants might be grouped together in particular ways. The recontextualisation of social practice in discourse thus 'transforms' these social practices in discourse. Van Leeuwen articulates four ways that social practices are transformed in discourse: through substitutions; deletions; rearrangements and additions. Additions might involve: repetitions; reactions; purposes; legitimations and evaluation (p17-21). The specification of evaluation as a particular type of addition seems to refer more specifically to explicit evaluations. From one perspective repetitions and reactions

have an evaluative function and from another perspective all the ways that social practices are recontextualized may be involved in the process of evaluation. This will be discussed in further detail at a later point.

The ways that people recontextualise social practices in text – for instance what they leave out or the ways they evaluate events - reflect ontological and ideological viewpoints. For instance the representation of some social actors as individuals, rather than as collectives, may reflect a belief in or conception of people as fundamentally individualistic, rather than as a collective.

### 3.2.2 'Discourse' and 'Discourses'

Whenever someone speaks or writes they produce specific recontextualisations or particular ways of talking and thinking about the various constituents of a social practice. Often such recontextualisations are characteristic and routine in particular social contexts – they become normalised or naturalised ways of representing these aspects of social practice either in local or more general social contexts. For instance, in the representation of some practices in particular communities of practice, some social actors may be routinely ignored or marginalised. We thus need to distinguish between 'discourse' as an instance of language use and 'a discourse', which refers to routinized and potentially dominant ways of recontextualising a social practice.

Discourses as defined here are thus patterns in the representation of social practice – patterns in the ways that social actors, social action, places, events and so forth are represented. It is worth highlighting here that since this conception of 'a discourse' is focused on patterns of representation, the patterns are semantic rather than linguistic because there is no one-to-one relationship between meanings and

linguistic forms (van Leeuwen, 2008). However, these representational patterns are inevitably tied to, or realised through, various linguistic realisations, which may be patterned across different texts, an issue I will return to in the next chapter.

Various forms of authority shape and legitimate these dominant ways of talking and thinking, including the media, politicians, organisational leaders, celebrities and others (See van Leeuwen, 2005; 2008), and these ways of talking and thinking can pass into the realm of normalised 'common sense' (Fairclough, 2014), with speakers often adopting or inculcating and reiterating these discourses uncritically. Discourse can thus become evidence of 'power behind discourse'. The successful domination of a discourse means that the discourse has become naturalised. It becomes the standard and normal way of talking and thinking about a social practice. For this reason it is important to identify and critically assess dominant or normalised ways of representing particular social practices, in order to bring to light and potentially challenge naturalised conceptions and beliefs embedded in social practice (Fairclough, 2014). A key methodological point here is that in order to identify a dominant discourse we necessarily need to identify a discourse pattern or repeated ways of representing social practices as realised through different levels of language including the lexical, grammatical and textual levels. This suggests the need for a quantitative discourse analytical approach, which I will discuss further in the next chapter.

Identifying discourses is also important because ways of representing a social practice – discourse - contribute to further shaping the social practice and discourse recursively (van Leeuwen, 2008: 12-15). In other words, discourse not only reflects but also constructs the ways that people think, talk about and also 'do' social practices.

For instance, a volunteer who speaks about beneficiaries as dependent victims to other volunteers, to friends and neighbours and to beneficiaries, may reinforce this representation, encouraging all of these parties to perceive beneficiaries as dependent victims. One of the effects of this may be to contribute to promoting a sense of dependency and victimhood among beneficiaries themselves.

Having highlighted the agency of those with power behind discourse, it is also important, however, to highlight the agency of individual discourse participants who are able to challenge, embrace, modify or ignore dominant discourses to varying degrees as they reflect personal values, beliefs and concerns. Van Leeuwen highlights this when he states that discourses 'can be and are used as resources for representing social practices in text' (2008: 6). The modalising 'can' and the representation of discourses as 'resources' highlights the agency of the speaker. Speakers and writers are not constrained to automatically regurgitate existing cognitions of social practice promoted by sources of authority, but rather speakers exercise their agency to varying degrees as they draw upon discourses of social practices in various ways to reflect both personal and social cognitions and beliefs about social practices. As Fairclough points out 'social agents are not free agents, they are social constrained, but nor are their actions totally social determined. Agents have their own 'causal powers', which are not reducible to the causal powers of social structure and practices' (2003: 22). The critical analysis of discourse thus points to the potential or possible, rather than actual or inevitable, impact of discourses on discourse and social action.

One implication in the foregoing is that an analysis of the ways that community-based, social welfare volunteers represent volunteering can provide

insights on the ways that such speakers individually construct volunteering practice. However, the identification of discourse patterns across multiple volunteers can also suggest the existence of discourses of volunteering that are characteristic of these members of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998) more generally, which may also reflect dominant discourses of volunteering in contemporary society.

### 3.2.3 Critical Analyses of Volunteer Discourse

A key issue for this thesis is thus the extent to which volunteer discourse reflects and thus potentially contributes to the problems associated with volunteering, as discussed in section 3.1. In this section I will review some studies that suggest it does. These studies are predominantly focused on volunteer tourism, rather than community based volunteering. However as discussed above there are important overlaps between these two practices and a key question underpinning this review are the ways that discursive aspects in these studies might be identified in the analysis of more locally oriented community-based volunteering discourse.

Simpson argues that gap year projects ‘produce and re-produce particular notions of the ‘third world’, of ‘other’ and of ‘development’ (2004: 686). She bases her arguments on the analysis of, firstly, the representations of volunteering in gap year advertisements and secondly, the ways that these representations are reproduced in reflective semi-structured interviews with gap year students aged between 18-20, some of which involve groups of students.

Simpson’s arguments about gap year advertisements are supported by particular quotations from various adverts. These adverts, she argues, tend to represent beneficiaries of gap year projects as needy others, although such needs tend



to be vague in these adverts. She argues that 'what is being promoted is a geography of need' (p686), in which the 'global north' and the 'global south' are defined in terms of those who have and those who have not. Implicit in such representations is a conception of development in which communities need the help of those from the global north. These needs are represented as simple enough that unskilled and unqualified gap year students are able to successfully address them through particular development activities such as building a well or a school. Such discourse, she argues, implicitly represents the gap year student as the 'central and even only agent of development' (p685). Furthermore, gap year advertisements represent gap year volunteering activities as consumable experiences with an exotic 'other', a view of the global south that is, she argues, consistent with Said's (1978) 'Orientalism'. Implicit in her argument, then, is the idea that gap year adverts perpetuate colonial conceptions of 'third world' citizens. She also notes in such discourse various absences. She argues that 'questions around long-term strategy, along with questions on the appropriateness and impact of volunteers, appear to be missing from the majority of gap year programs' (p685).

She also argues that these representations are reproduced in gap year volunteers' reflections on their experiences of volunteering. She argues that such discourse encodes an opposition between 'us' and the distant 'them' by emphasizing differences rather than similarities and shared experiences. In addition, the inequalities and differences they encountered tend to be explained in terms of good or bad 'luck' rather than by any reference to the structures and systems that created and uphold such inequalities.

Simpson concludes that the gap year experience 'is lacking a pedagogy for social justice' or in other words, it lacks opportunities for gap year volunteers to explore the historical and structural reasons for continuing global inequality. In short she argues that 'the gap year industry largely attempts to maintain its right to operate in a 'neutral' environment, one seemingly without history. Such neutrality disguises, rather than mitigates, the inequalities within the gap year' (p690).

As discussed above, several scholars have extolled the virtues of volunteer tourism for challenging stereotypes about beneficiaries of short-term international volunteering projects, which is perceived as a natural result of their exposure to other cultures. Raymond and Hall (2008), however, challenge this idea in an analysis of the ways that volunteer tourists and leaders in volunteering organisations talk about and evaluate their experiences and the value of volunteering. They interviewed ten representatives from ten gap year organisations, selected to represent the range of sending-organisations offering short-term volunteering projects, and also several representatives in the host community. They also conducted 7 focus groups and 7 one-to-one interviews with volunteer tourists lasting between 30-60 minutes. Questions were based on a range of (unspecified) opinions and experiences. Transcripts of all the interviews and focus groups were analysed and coded thematically.

Raymond and Hall found that informants repeatedly stressed the benefits of these volunteer projects for improving cross-cultural understanding, both for the locals who have the opportunity to get a better view of host nations and for volunteers. However, 'several interviewees implied that the positive relationships they had developed with individuals from different countries were simply 'exceptions

to the rule” (p536) and thus stereotypes, for instance about Americans, were maintained. In addition, volunteer informants often reiterated rather than challenged stereotypes about host community members and romanticized notions of host community members as ‘poor but happy’ because they didn’t know any better. They thus conclude that ‘while cross-cultural understanding has the potential to develop through volunteer tourism, it cannot be assumed to be an automatic outcome of an individual’s participation in a VTP [Volunteer Tourism Program]’. Rather they argue that ‘the development of cultural appreciation and understanding should be approached as a goal of volunteer tourism’ (p538).

Sin (2009) also undertook a critical investigation of volunteering, focusing on the ways that volunteers talked about their experiences of volunteering. Sin accompanied a group of 11 young volunteers from Singapore on a 24 day service expedition to South Africa. She conducted interviews with the participants one week before the trip, one week into the trip and one week before the end of the trip. Students were asked questions such as why they joined the trip, what their expectations were and what difference the trip had made to them. She also conducted informal conversations with participants and recorded and transcribed informal group discussions about particular topics, which took place each evening. These topics included for example, motivations for volunteering and perceptions of aid recipients. The data was then thematically coded.

Sin highlights the self-oriented nature of participants’ motivations, highlighting in a rare moment of linguistic analysis the frequent use of ‘I want to...’ (p488). Only two of the 11 participants explicitly expressed a desire to help the community, while a strong theme throughout all of the participants’ data was the desire to travel and to be

personally challenged. She argues that 'instead of grooming a generation of youths who are passionate about volunteer work, research for this paper seems to suggest that respondents interviewed are instead passionate about travelling and going overseas' (p494), a desire that supersedes the desire to address social injustices. Building on the work of Giddens (1991) she argues that volunteer tourism is for these volunteers a resource in the reflexive self-construction of younger volunteers as they seek to generate a savvy, socially conscious and well-travelled identity. Moreover, she argues that volunteers 'tended to adopt a giving attitude' towards aid recipients, and suggests that this implicitly positions themselves as able to give and superior to aid recipients. She also notes that 'volunteer tourists were also hardly encouraged to question why communities in host-countries needed volunteer services. Instead, there is a risk that volunteer tourists can be led to assume that aid-recipients were naturally poor, and [fail] to understand prevailing circumstances that impede aid-recipients' efforts to break out of the poverty-cycle' (p496). She concludes that 'if volunteer tourism continues to be organized in an apolitical manner that neglects critical engagement with issues of democracy and active citizenship, it could easily fail to achieve its purported intentions of being "pro-poor" or addressing social inequalities' (p497).

Vrasti's (2013) critique of volunteer tourism was based on ethnographic research, which saw her take part in a three-month work project in San Andres, Guatemala. During this time she took notes and conducted interviews with volunteers and others, including local project organisers, and coded the data thematically. The project involved working on various projects in a forest, such as constructing nature trails. However, during her time she noted that volunteers did not understand the

purpose of their work or the problems that they were supposed to address and lost the motivation to help. As a result, volunteers spent less time on the volunteer project and more of their time with locals, redirecting their affective sensibilities away from addressing social injustice and towards 'a romantic longing for authentic meaning and spiritual renewal... and a multicultural appreciation for the 'poor but happy' lifestyle of developing populations' (p56). Vradi argues that this did 'more to consolidate than challenge orientalist sensibilities' (p56). She thus characterises the volunteer tourist experience as far as she witnessed it as being less about challenging social inequality and more a means of performing an identity characterised by 'magnanimity, worldliness and adaptability' (p57) and a way of reinforcing the moral superiority of white middle-class subjects. She argues that these volunteer projects 'depoliticize the material and historical roots of difference and, as a result, end up denying local people's claims to development, progress and equality in the name of cultural preservation' (p56-7) and that 'without a political pedagogy to introduce volunteers to the socio-economic conditions that banish places like San Andres to the frontiers of modernity, volunteer tourism cannot fulfil its transformatory promise' (p57).

Conran (2011) conducted nine months of ethnographic fieldwork with three non-profit NGOs, as well as eight months of preliminary fieldwork observations. The three NGOs were an English teaching organisation, a social welfare organisation involving, for instance, work in women's shelters and orphanages, and an organisation involving various activities such as biodiversity modelling and nature trail construction. Her research included semi-structured interviews with 40 volunteers, 10 NGO co-ordinators and 25 host community members. Among other questions, informants were asked to 'describe the most meaningful aspects of their experience,

how they benefited from their experience and how they perceived the benefits derived by their counterparts' (p1458). The interviews were coded twice for themes and colleagues independently checked this coding.

Conran found that for informants the most significant experiences almost always focused primarily on emotionally intimate experiences with beneficiaries. She argues that 'the consumption of intimate experiences is at the heart of volunteer tourism' (p1459). For voluntourists, there is, she argues, a desire for experiences that move beyond the consumption of commodities and go 'backstage' to have a genuine emotional connection with local beneficiaries, which suggests a desire to connect with or identify with 'the other'. She suggests that this conception of the voluntourist experience originates in volunteer tourism promotional discourse (p1460). She argues, however, that 'while the desire for intimacy and closeness that volunteer tourism participants experience may indeed be noble' there is in such narratives the 'implicit assumption in volunteer tourism that some lives are for saving while others are for being saviors' and that 'the commodified helping narrative in volunteer tourism perpetuates a logic which suggests a binary opposition between 'us' vs. 'them'" (p1464). She suggests that 'even when participants' politics go beyond the immediacy of the sentimental, to a consciousness of the larger politics of the encounter, their actions nevertheless contribute to the structural foundations that contribute to the inequality they seek to subvert' (p1462).

While some entirely dismiss the value of volunteer tourism as a 'supercilious apolitical endeavour', Conran is nevertheless optimistic about the potential for volunteer tourism to be a platform for social change. Drawing on the work of various scholars (McKinnon, 2006; McGehee, 2002; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Hutnyk, 1996;

Pezzullo, 2007) she suggests that these intimate encounters can contribute to a broader social consciousness and engagement in local and international issues. However, she concludes that 'if volunteer tourism is to achieve its broader goals of contributing to a more equal and just global community, its current focus on the individual and the intimate must be broadened to address the current policies and practices which perpetuate and exacerbate the structural inequality on which it is based' (p1468).

Mostafanezhad (2013) also focuses on the importance of emotional intimacy in volunteer tourism discourse. Mostafanezhad conducted 16 months of ethnographic research with three NGO's in Northern Thailand, the beneficiaries of which were a women's shelter, a HIV orphanage, schools, an elephant camp, rural villages and schools as well as other causes focused on biodiversity and trail construction. She conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 international volunteers and made fieldwork and participants notes. This data was then coded thematically.

Like others discussed above, Mostafanezhad argues that there is an 'us versus them' binary which structures volunteer tourism discourse. As with Conran, she argues that there is an implicit assumption in this discourse that 'some lives are saving and others for being saviours', implying differences of power and superiority between the volunteers and beneficiaries. At the same time she argues that 'sentimentality is a core aspect of the volunteer tourism encounter, in which volunteers seek out more intimate and empathetic experiences'. She argues that 'this type of sentimental politics perpetuates the idea of the cosmopolitan, apolitical consumer who is neither a part of the problem nor responsible for the solution'.

Throughout these papers then there is a variety of evidence that volunteer tourists construct an unequal division between themselves and beneficiaries and represent volunteering as an apolitical practice. There is also evidence of a sense of moral detachment from the problems faced by beneficiaries characterised by the lack of a sense of obligation. However, as discussed above, the focus in these studies on volunteering abroad raises questions about the extent to which similar issues are reflected in the ways that volunteers working in their local community also represent and evaluate volunteering.

These studies also suffer from the same analytical issue I raised regarding discourse-based studies of MTV. Many of these analyses are summarized and supported by the analysis of one or two quotations, making it difficult to assess the analytical process. These studies would thus be further strengthened by the more systematic description and analysis of linguistic patterns across their data.

Sandaran's (2008) study addresses both of these issues. She examines the discourses drawn on to represent Voluntary Community Service (VCS) in America by George W. Bush in four political speeches between 2001-2002 and by those engaged in VCS at the operational level, including volunteers. She thus seeks to identify the extent to which these discourses were successfully inculcated by Americans and the VCS community. In addition to the four speeches by Bush, Sandaran undertook ethnographic research in a college preparatory school VCS program, in which she interviewed volunteers, teachers, trainers, parents and others involved in the program. One of the activities involved asking 36 (young) volunteers to write a reflective piece on something they observed, something they learned and something they were thankful for as a result of their volunteering.



Sandaran argues that through the strategic use of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, Bush was able to persuade people to volunteer by drawing upon nationalistic conceptions of American unity, generosity and moral superiority. However, she also argues that this discourse helped to shift 'the responsibilities of government in the delivery of social services to the people'. According to her analysis, Bush created a division between those able to help (including himself) and those in poverty through the strategic subject positioning of social actors in his use of pronouns. She argues that 'Bush marginalizes the people in poverty, attributes blame to them for their conditions of poverty to construct poverty as lacking in moral and spiritual values rather than resources. At the same time, Bush represents volunteers as the good moral Americans who help people in poverty'.

She goes on to assert that this elitist separation between the morally good and the poor was reflected in the ways that volunteers themselves talked about their volunteering. She argues that there was in volunteers' responses 'a preoccupation with the doing of service and the volunteers rather than the people in poverty'. Volunteers represented a separation between the volunteers as 'us' and the beneficiaries as 'them', representing themselves as active and beneficiaries as passive, with volunteering being represented as a 'heroic act', which has the effect not just of making a small contribution but of changing lives.

Like the studies of volunteer tourism, Sandaran's study provides a useful reference point for this study. However, being focused in the United States, her study raises questions about the extent to which the same volunteering discourses exist within the United Kingdom. In addition, while her points are supported with more explicit linguistic description and analysis, there are also a number of questions here

concerning the extent to which claims about discourse patterns are adequately supported by quantitative evidence, a point I return to in the next chapter.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that while a number of criticisms have been levelled at volunteering, little empirical research supports or challenges these arguments. I also argued that the critical analysis of volunteer discourse can provide evidence for or against these criticisms. Finally, studies that have taken this approach have found evidence in favour of some of the criticisms that have been made of volunteering, but these studies are largely directed towards temporary volunteer projects abroad and in spite of the overlaps between regular local and temporary international volunteering suggests the need for further research. In addition many of the existing discourse based studies would, like the qualitative analyses of volunteer motivations discussed in the last chapter, be supported by more detailed, systematic analysis of quantitative language patterns, which is an issue that I discuss further in Chapter Four.

## Methodology

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe and defend the research methods used in this thesis. In 4.1 I discuss the aims of this research. This section includes an account of MTV that aims to address some of the problems of current models of MTV discussed in 2.1.3. In 4.2 I describe my data collection methods, and in 4.3 I move on to discuss some key analytical principles before introducing the analytical process adopted in this thesis. These analytical methods will be described in more detail in subsequent chapters.

### 4.1 Research Aims

Given the issues with current models of MTV discussed in Section 2.1.3, we first need to develop an MTV model that addresses these issues before we can outline the best ways of identifying these MTV; this is the aim of 4.1.1. Following this I move on in 4.1.2-3 to articulate the key aims and research questions of this thesis.

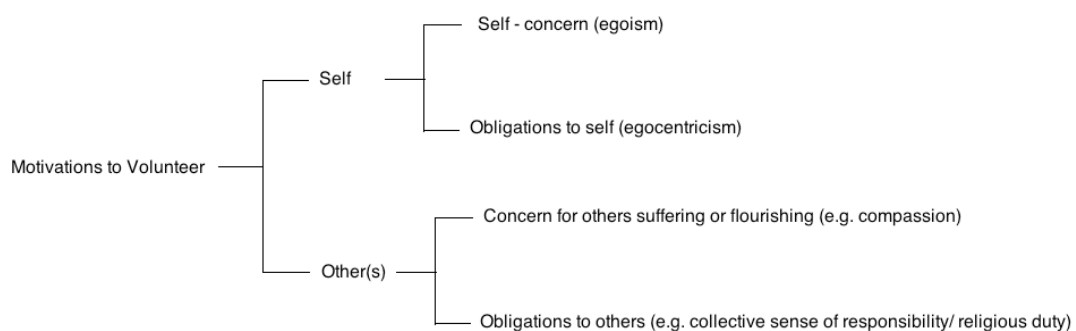
#### 4.1.1 Concern and Obligation: A Model of Volunteer Motivations

As discussed in Chapter Two, models of MTV in the existing research tend to rely on a division between egoism and altruism, in which altruism is broadly understood as other-oriented motives and egoism as self-oriented motives. There are several issues with this dichotomy, many of which are shared by alternative models. For example, the term 'egoism' suggests that self-oriented motives are amorally or even immorally directed towards the self. This overlooks the ways in which we can, as discussed in Section 3.1.3, feel a sense of obligation to ourselves as well as to others. Furthermore, there often appears to be some confusion in these models about the nature of obligation and its relation to altruism, with some seeing the two as necessarily interlinked and others as separate. The aim of this section is to provide a model of MTV that provides answers to these questions.

We can distinguish between two kinds of motivations: concern and obligation. These can be directed inwardly to the self, or externally towards others. Firstly, we can feel concern for the wellbeing of others or ourselves. From this perspective, action is based on wanting to achieve particular outcomes to improve our own or others' wellbeing. Concern for selves is based on the desire to benefit the self in some way, while concern for others is based on compassion or empathy with others' suffering or a desire to see them flourish. From this perspective, we see others' suffering or we see opportunities for personal growth and wellbeing and we want to help. We can also feel a sense of obligation to either others or ourselves. For example, we can feel, regardless of whether we want to or not, that we ought to volunteer in order to get out and socialize more or to improve our job prospects, which are obligations that are

inwardly focused on the self, or that we ought to help those who are suffering or in need, which is an obligation that is outwardly focused on others.

As discussed above, the conventional distinction in volunteering motivation research between egoism and altruism tends to cast altruism as moral and egoism as amoral or even pejoratively 'selfish'. The motivational model proposed here moves beyond the traditional egoistic/altruistic divide above in that it allows for the possibility of a self-oriented morality, in other words, it allows that people can feel a sense of obligation or duty to themselves. I will refer to motivations based on concern for the suffering or flourishing of the self as egoistic and motivations based on obligations to the self as egocentric. Both can be described as self-oriented motivations. My focus in this thesis, however, is on the extent to which volunteers represent themselves as motivated by concern for beneficiaries (henceforth 'concern') or by obligations to help them (henceforth 'obligation'), with self-oriented motivations (both egoistic and egocentric) as the alternative. This account of MTV is summarized in Figure 4.1 below.



**Figure 4.1:** *Motivations to volunteer*

We can also distinguish between different kinds of obligations. Kant makes a distinction between legal and ethical duties. According to Kant, 'a legal duty can be

extracted from the agent by someone else as a 'right', whereas an ethical duty is always the result of 'free self constraint' (in Atterton, 2007: 139). Another kind of obligation is the obligation to follow through on a given commitment. For example having said I would volunteer to others, I might then feel an obligation to turn up and volunteer, because I said I would. This kind of contractual commitment is a different kind of obligation to the feeling that I ought to help relieve the suffering of others. Religious commitment may be closely related to this contractually oriented obligation, because the obligation to act is rooted in a contractual commitment to a religious code rather than an obligation to help relieve others' suffering, even if a religious commitment may lead to or be based on moral obligations to others. For the purposes of this thesis, I will distinguish between two kinds of obligation I will call *social obligations* and *moral obligations*. Social obligation refers to any sense of obligation that is rooted in the avoidance of social or legal consequences, or that is rooted in the commitment to a contract, whether social, legal, religious or otherwise. Social obligation is distinguished from moral obligation, which is a sense of obligation derived from concern for the suffering or flourishing of others. A moral obligation can also of course be a social obligation. For instance, in Singer's (2011) thought experiment discussed in Section 3.1.3 there is likely to be both a social expectation or obligation as well as a moral obligation to help save the drowning child.

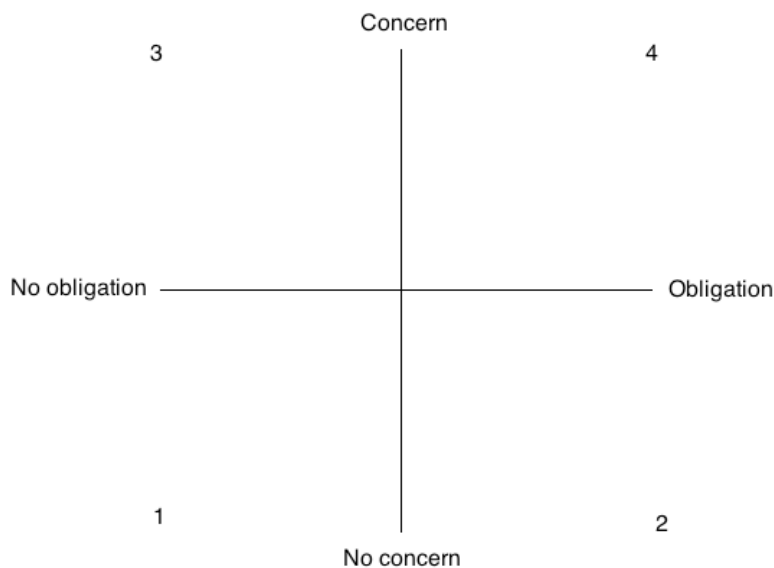
As previously discussed, some see concern for others and obligations to help them as necessarily interlinked; however, it is critical to highlight that concern for others and obligations to others are distinct types of motivations. A key concern in moral philosophy, as we have seen, is the extent to which we are obligated to help those for whom we may feel compassion or concern and thus it is rightly taken for

granted that feeling compassion for others and feeling obligated to help them are not necessarily interconnected. As discussed in Chapter Two, Gert (2005) and Warden (2005) both argue that while we have obligations not to cause harm to others, to actively prevent the suffering or promote the flourishing of others is an optional ideal to work towards. In contrast, Singer argues that helping to relieve the suffering of others, such as children in poverty, 'is not as conventionally thought, a charitable act that is praiseworthy to do but not wrong to omit. It is something that everyone ought to do' (2011: 200). The point here is that obligation and concern for others' wellbeing are two separate kinds of motivation. I might see that someone is in pain and feel concern or compassion for them, but not necessarily see myself as having a responsibility, obligation or duty to help them. Likewise I might see myself as obligated to volunteer because of a sense of religious or social duty, without necessarily feeling a strong sense of concern for the wellbeing of others. One implication here is that while discussions of morality often focus on our obligations to help others, there is a moral dimension to feelings of compassion. I will here refer to both as two kinds of moral motivation.

However it is also, of course, possible to have a variety of motivations. Volunteers may be motivated by both egocentric concerns as well as a sense of concern for others. And they may represent themselves as motivated by both a sense of concern for others and a sense of responsibility to help others. As Singer points out, most people if they saw a child drowning in a pond and were the only person capable of saving them would feel both a sense of concern for the child's suffering and also feel a sense of responsibility to save them (2011: 199).

The extent to which volunteers can represent themselves as concerned for others or obligated to help them can vary in strength. People can value volunteering more or less for what they will get out of it, for example I may want to get experience primarily in order to build my CV, or I might find the opportunity to make friends marginally appealing. I might see myself as strongly or vaguely motivated by a sense of concern for the suffering or wellbeing of others, or not at all. Likewise the sense of an obligation to volunteer might have different degrees of strength. I might see volunteering as a fundamental responsibility, or that it is something I ‘ought to do’, or I might see volunteering as entirely optional.

Given the foregoing we can see concern and obligation as existing on two intersecting motivational clines, as in Figure 4.2 below:



**Figure 4.2:** *Intersecting clines of obligation and concern*

The extent to which someone represents themselves as motivated by concern for others or obligations to help them could theoretically be plotted on this graph,



however this degree of specificity would be difficult to realise in practice for reasons that will hopefully become clear later in this chapter. However one of the aims of this thesis is to examine in a general way the degree of obligation or concern for others expressed by informants.

#### 4.1.2 Motivations and Ideology

As discussed in Section 2.4, motivations to volunteer can and have been explained in terms of their relationship to underlying ontological perspectives, or in other words, in terms of their relation to particular understandings of the self, others and the relations between them. For example, in Chapter Two we looked at several instances in which particular motivations, such as a sense of obligation or a desire for personal development, have been linked to particular worldviews, in particular to individual or collective worldviews. Within an individualised worldview, volunteers and beneficiaries are separate beings whereas in a collective worldview, they are part of a whole. There are relations between these ontologies and particular motivations. Seeking to understand the ways that volunteers see themselves, others and the relations between them can contribute to an understanding of MTV and this is one of the aims of this thesis.

However as discussed in the last chapter, the aim of this thesis is not only to *describe* the motivations of volunteers; it also has a critical agenda. This thesis aims to investigate the extent to which volunteers' representation of volunteering practice reflects and potentially contributes to the possible problems associated with volunteering discussed in the last chapter. In addition, given Singer's arguments regarding the nature of our moral obligations, there is a critical agenda for

understanding the motivations of volunteers: in seeking to identify the extent to which volunteers represent volunteering as an obligation, it also seeks to test Singer's claim that we tend to think of helping others as optional rather than as a moral obligation.

As discussed in the introduction, this thesis aims to be truly critical however, rather than dogmatically cynical towards volunteering discourse. The aim is not to attack volunteers but rather to evaluate and weigh up the absence, presence or risk of problematic discourses of volunteering in order to highlight that which is laudable as well as raising to consciousness that which may need further attention and action. My position is that volunteering is a valuable practice for many of the positive reasons discussed in the last chapter. At the same time, however, given the generally positive attention volunteering receives in the public domain, and the need to investigate the negative potential of volunteering and volunteer discourse, this thesis does more frequently veer in the direction of the negative because, as I hope to show in this thesis, I believe there are important ways we can improve the ways that we think and talk about, and thus ultimately do, volunteering.

#### 4.1.4 Research Questions

Before moving on to describe my data collection and analysis procedures in more detail, I shall finish this with a summary of the key research questions for this thesis.

These are as follows:

1. To what extent do volunteers represent volunteering as motivated by:
  - a. Self oriented outcomes?

- b. Concern for others?
  - c. A sense of obligation to others?
2. What are the ontologies and ideologies underpinning these motivations?
3. To what extent does this evidence legitimate or challenge criticisms of volunteering practice?

#### 4.2. Data Collection

In this section I describe my data collection methods. Section 4.2.1 will describe the participant selection criteria. In 4.2.2 I review the methods used for contacting participants. Several aspects of the interview context for these interviews will be reviewed in 4.2.3. Section 4.2.4 describes and explains the structured interview process adopted in this research, including the focus on narratives. In section 4.2.5 I review some of the issues associated with the process transcription and how these were dealt with. Finally in 4.2.6 I discuss several ethical issues associated with the collection and use of the data.

##### 4.2.1 Participant Selection Criteria

I focused on 20 younger (18-35) and 30 older (65-80) formal, service-based volunteers who work directly with beneficiaries in a variety of organisations. Unlike most previous critical analyses of volunteer discourse, I also focused on volunteers working on a regular and consistent basis, who in all but two cases worked in their local community. In this section I define and defend these choices.

#### 4.2.1.1 Volunteering Type

As discussed in the last chapter, in spite of the various criticisms that have been made of volunteering, there has been little empirical research into their validity. Furthermore, most of the existing research on social welfare oriented volunteering has focused on temporary volunteering abroad suggesting the need to focus on regular, community-based volunteering practice.

Volunteer tourists are usually involved in short-term projects abroad. It is on the whole, transient and temporary, and there are some potentially obvious personal incentives for being involved that are borne out by the existing research, such as having a different kind of experience in a different social, cultural and geographical environment, hence the designation as a form of tourism. Regular local community based volunteering seems, ostensibly at least, to be quite different. Firstly it lacks the exoticism of volunteer tourist destinations, tending instead to take place in relatively mundane locations such the tired local community centres or unheated school assembly halls mentioned in the introduction. Secondly, although it lacks the degree of sustained involvement of some volunteer projects, it often requires a regular commitment of volunteers over a prolonged period on a weekly, monthly or sometimes annual basis. This suggests a potentially different set of MTV and beliefs about what they as volunteers do than volunteer tourism. Thus while a number of criticisms have been levied at community based volunteering, very little research has been conducted to see if these criticisms can be supported or challenged by an analysis of the ways that these volunteers, who give of their time on a regular basis to help those who are vulnerable in society, themselves represent and evaluate what they do. This research aims to address this gap.

I thus focused on community service-based volunteers who had demonstrated a regular commitment to the volunteering role. Two ways of measuring such commitment are through regularity and consistency. Regular volunteers are those who volunteer on a regular basis, whether weekly, monthly or annually. Consistent volunteers are volunteers who have a demonstrated pattern of volunteering in their lives. In almost all cases this referred to volunteers who had volunteered on a weekly or monthly basis for more than six months. However in several instances, volunteers had volunteered at an annual event for several years, such as a summer camp for disabled children.

I also focused on those volunteers who worked directly with beneficiaries, rather than indirectly. Direct volunteering is volunteering in which volunteers interact directly with beneficiaries either as an individual or as part of a group of volunteers, with individual beneficiaries or a group of beneficiaries. Indirect volunteering is oriented towards the welfare of others, but takes place 'behind the scenes'. For example it might involve cleaning up after a lunch club or managing the finances of a youth group. This was for the pragmatic reason that, given the interest in the representation of beneficiaries, it was potentially more interesting to interview those volunteers who work directly with beneficiaries as opposed to those who work behind the scenes.

I also sought participants from a range of volunteering organisations in order to investigate discourse patterns across similar volunteering types, and to mitigate the extent to which discourse patterns might be said to be characteristic of participants in a particular volunteering organisation. The organisations with which informants volunteered were as follows:

1. A horse riding club for disabled children
2. Emergency helplines (The Samaritans, Nightline)
3. A social club for stroke victims
4. Homeless shelters
5. The Citizens Advice Bureau
6. St John's ambulance
7. A prison (as inmate counsellors)
8. Helping hands (A food bank)
9. A tennis club for disabled children
10. PHAB – A summer camp for disabled children
11. The Girl Guides
12. Cookery Plus (an after school cooking club)
13. EP Africa (an organisation providing development advice and resources for schools in Africa).

#### 4.2.1.2 Age

The above participant criteria have focused primarily on volunteering type. However, a common approach in research on MTV is to investigate differences in demographic variables, including gender (McClintock, 2000; Okun et al., 1998; Switzer et al., 1999; Fletcher and Major, 2004; Musick and Wilson, 2008), marital status (Okun et al., 1998, Musick and Wilson, 2008), religion (Bowen, 1999; Musick and Wilson, 2008, Bayerlein and Vaisey, 2013), ethnicity (Latting, 1990; Low et al, 2007; Musick and Wilson,

2008), nationality (Hwang et al., 2005; Handy et al., 2010; Hustinx et al., 2010), income and employment (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

Sealey (2007, 2009) takes issue with research that preselects ethnographic categories to investigate, arguing that such categories are a 'mirage' in that they have no inherent point of reference. Drawing on the work of Fenton (2003) and others, she argues that social categories such as ethnicity and gender for instance, are social identities that are performed and can be challenged and resisted rather than passively adopted by informants. For this reason she argues that ethnographic categories should be abandoned as objectively 'real' research categories. She proposes that a better approach is not to predetermine the significance of ethnographic categories, but rather to research discourse patterns in data and then investigate causes for these variations, at which point 'surprise' relations between discourse patterns and demographic variables might be considered.

A practical issue with this approach, however, is that it precludes the sampling of *potentially* significant demographic variables in sufficient quantities to support a final evaluation of their actual relevance. For example, a research project in which it is finally suggested that marital status has an important relation to the findings might be weakened by the fact that only two out of 30 participants in the study were married. A solution to this impasse is to have good reasons for believing specific demographic variables to be potentially relevant and not over-determining their significance by allowing room for the possibility that such a variable might finally be proven to be irrelevant, or in Sealey's words, a 'mirage'. In this study I included the variable of age in my selection criteria, and the reasons for choosing this variable above others will be discussed below.

The demographic of age has been a focus of more studies on MTV than any other demographic factor (e.g. Sundeen and Raskoff 1995; Hustinx, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Hustinx, 2010; Hustinx et al, 2010; Handy et al., 2010; Holdsworth, 2010; Low et al, 2007; Friedland and Morimoto, 2005; Rehberg, 2005; Wuthnow, 1995; Luping, 2011; Handy et al, 2010; Haski-Leventhal et al. 2008; Slight, 2002; Omoto et al. 2000; Brooks, 2002; Low et al. 2007). The quantity of these studies in itself does not validate the selection of age as a demographic variable. However, as discussed in the literature review, a variety of these studies suggest differences in the ways that younger and older volunteers talk about their reasons for volunteering, with several studies suggesting that younger volunteers generally report more self-oriented, individualistic and instrumental motivations than older volunteers, and older volunteers reporting the value they attach to social connections, a greater sense of obligation to volunteer and a more collective sense of community and national identity.

The apparently generational shift from reports of a collective obligation in older volunteers to self-oriented individualism in younger volunteers in this research is also supported by a variety of studies that have observed a more general shift in public discourse away from collective obligation and towards a discourse of individualized caring. Chouliaraki for instance notes in military discourse how a discourse of obligation and duty has been supplanted by a discourse of empathetic emotion, or in other words, 'an ethics of patriotic duty [is] now turn[ing] into an ethics of empathetic commitment, into 'making a child smile for a day' (2014: 601). Nafstad et al. (2007) also suggest that, based on a diachronic study of media discourse in Norway between 1984 and 2005, lexical items associated with neoliberal discourse



such as the Norwegian equivalents of 'rights', 'entitlement', 'optional', 'freedom' and 'choose' have been on the rise, while 'duty', 'equality', 'solidarity' and 'obligation' have been in decline. They conclude, 'we are content that [in Norway] an ideological climate is developing which does not call on people to take sufficient responsibility for the welfare of society, community and others' (p. 317). Based on all of the foregoing we might expect these discursive shifts to be reflected in the ways that younger and older volunteers represent and evaluate what they do and testing such a hypothesis may provide not only insights into the ways that MTV are different among younger and older volunteers, but also provide evidence of critically significant generational shifts in the moral orientations of volunteers and potentially also, more broadly, of the changing moral fabric of society.

There are further related reasons for considering age as a potentially significant variable. Age is in some ways different to more fluid and socially constructed categories such as ethnicity and we can see in age more definite points of reference. As Sealey and Carter point out, while 'attaining the age of fifty means many different things in different parts of the world' there is 'an unavoidable physical, biological dimension to the ageing process' (2001: 3). Other external forces also shape and influence what it means to be a certain age. For example particular cohorts are affected differently by particular social changes and historical events they have experienced, such as the Second World War and the following economic boom. As Elder et al. argue, 'characteristics of a birth cohort and events that the cohort experiences combine to affect members in distinctive ways, influencing their attitudes, behaviours and outcomes across the entire life course' (2005: 495). Furthermore, institutions such as families, labour markets, schools, churches and

governments also create 'normative pathways' which include 'key transitions, and the psychological, behavioural and health-related trajectories of persons as they move through life' (p493). Being a different age in our society involves having to navigate different transitional phases embedded in such pathways. Such differences may be fundamental explanations for differences in the findings of younger and older volunteers.

In this study I sought volunteers aged 18-30 and 65-80. These age ranges do not of course represent discrete, homogenous cohorts all having the same, shared experience. Individuals included in these age ranges experience a range of unique circumstances and are capable of exercising their agency in response to their circumstances in a variety of ways. However these age ranges provide 'windows' onto two groups of individuals experiencing, having experienced and being influenced by distinct sets of biological, psychological, social and historical circumstances as well as navigating lives in relation to different normative trajectories. Certainly, these age ranges relate to the 'bookend' phases of the labour market trajectory in British society- those in the 18-30 year old aggregate have generally been prepared by a variety of institutions - family, schools, government - to make life choices in relation to a trajectory which establishes those in this age range to be in the starting and establishing phase of a career, in contrast to the 'winding down' and retirement phases of the labour market trajectory against which those in the 65-80 year old bracket make their life choices.

I initially sought to have an equal sample of both age ranges; however, the final group consisted of 20 younger (Y) and 28 older (O) volunteers. In addition the Y sample included two volunteers who were 33 and 34.

#### 4.2.2 Identifying and Contacting Volunteers

While some participants were identified through cold-calling relevant organisations, for the most part informants were contacted through referrals from, initially, family and friends and then through informants themselves. Relationships with the informants were thus characterised by varying degrees of social and emotional proximity. For example, one informant used to babysit me when I was a child and another was a close friend of my mothers. However for the most part informants were relatively unknown to me prior to the interview and in no cases were they personal friends or family members. This relative degree of informality and proximity may have affected informants' responses – informants may open up or close down in various ways with a relatively anonymous interviewer in a formal context that they might not if there was more of social or personal connection, a point to which I will return later.

#### 4.2.3 Interview Context

All of the interviews were one-to-one and face-to-face. They were held in a variety of locations, always out of the hearing range of any peers or beneficiaries in order to reduce the potential self-consciousness of informants. They were generally held either in public and relatively informal places such as coffee shops or in a quiet, out of the way space on the volunteering site. As with the relative social proximity of the interviewer-informant relation, the location for the interview may have affected informants' responses. For instance, speaking to volunteers 'on location' may have encouraged informants to speak collectively for the organisation and to emphasise the value they attached to other volunteering relationships, while a one-to-one interview

in a coffee shop, far from the location of the organisation itself, might have encouraged more individualised, detached responses.

Interviews were usually initiated by a brief conversational exchange to build a relationship of trust (see Labov, 2014). Various types of recording equipment can have an impact on informants' responses. I decided to use the recording device on an iPhone. Not only was this an effective recording device, but by its general conspicuousness in everyday life potentially had less presence or intrusiveness within the interview context than traditional recording devices, thus potentially encouraging informants to relax and speak openly.

#### 4.2.4 Interview Questions

As discussed in Chapter Two, a dominant approach in research on MTV is to directly elicit reports of MTV either in surveys or through direct interview questions. The alternative approach adopted in this research is to look at the motivations and ideologies that are both explicit and implicit in the ways that volunteers represent and evaluate their volunteering practice. My interview questions were thus designed to facilitate representations of volunteering practice, particularly representations of the social actors and social action involved in volunteering practice. These questions were as follows:

1. Can you tell me about the charity you work for?
2. What do you have to do as a volunteer?
3. Can you tell me a bit about the people you help?
4. How did you get into it?

5. Thinking back over your time as a volunteer, which experiences stand out as being significant or important to you in some way?
6. Why are these important to you?
7. What other experiences are significant to you? Why?

In the following sections I contextualise and explain further the reasoning behind these questions.

#### 4.2.4.1 Questions One to Three

Question one was designed to elicit representations and evaluations of the charity, and also to examine how informants positioned themselves and beneficiaries in relation to the charity and others. For example, I was interested to see whether informants defined the charity in large, impersonal, institutional ways, or whether they defined it as the group of volunteers working together at a local level, or whether they defined the charity as a group which included beneficiaries, or as a group working for beneficiaries.

The aim of question two was to elicit representations and evaluations of the purposes of volunteering as conceived by the informant. For instance, I was interested to see whether they represented volunteering as a sequence of intransitive actions, suggesting less of a person focus, or whether they represented themselves as doing something specifically for beneficiaries or perhaps even other volunteers or the organisation. I was also interested to examine the kinds of actions and attitudes represented and expressed here, for instance whether they saw themselves as solving

problems or empowering beneficiaries to solve problems, and also whether they saw their own role as an individual or a collective one.

Question three was specifically designed to elicit representations and attitudes towards beneficiaries. I was particularly interested in the extent to which they represented beneficiaries as passive victims, or whether and to what extent they might conceptualise beneficiaries in more agentic terms.

#### 4.2.4.2 Questions Four to Seven

The aim of questions four to seven was to elicit narratives in which informants would indirectly represent and evaluate their volunteering practice. Question five was designed to give participants the chance to indirectly evaluate and articulate the meaning and significance that volunteering had for them personally through the telling of a story, rather than through a direct response, as a way of understanding further MTV for volunteering. As question seven indicates, I probed for other significant experiences and aimed to elicit three different responses. Participants were prepared for this question via an email I sent prior to the interview in which I expressed a particular interest in any stories they had to share, thus giving participants time to identify and reflect on what they considered to be their most significant or important experiences, a point I will return to later.

The bulk of the data collected were narratives in response to question five and these were the central focus of much of the analysis, making it the core question of the interview, and the focus on narratives underlying it a fundamental aspect of my research method. This approach, a form of narrative inquiry, will be discussed further in the following sections.

#### 4.2.4.3 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry has emerged over the past fifty years as a major area of focus for many scholars in a variety of disciplines including 'cultural and media studies, linguistics, historical theory, historiography, anthropology, philosophy, theology, psychology, pedagogy, political science, medicine, law and economics' (see Heinen: 2009: 193). A principal distinction that can be made between different forms of narrative inquiry for social research is between, firstly, approaches that focus on internal, psychological narratives, which McAdams (2003) refers to as 'psycho-discursive constructs', and secondly approaches which focus on narratives as linguistic texts. The first of these approaches rests on the claims of a significant number of social and psychological theorists who suggest that narrative is fundamental to the way that we internally organise our identities and generate a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives (Jameson, 1981; Turner and Bruner, 1986; Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1990; Mair, 1989; Sarbin, 1986; Ricoeur, 1986; Giddens, 1991; Habermas and Bluck, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). This concept underpins much narrative-oriented social research including the fields of oral history and psychotherapy (McAdams, 1993, 2003; Crossley, 2000; White and Epston, 1990; Wade, 2007; Strong and Knight, 2012). In this thesis the focus is on narratives as linguistic texts; however, there are methodological and theoretical overlaps between these two fields and a core assumption of this thesis is that the narratives informants share are likely to reflect particular cognitions of volunteering practice, which is a point I will return to later.

In narrative inquiry that focuses on narrative as a linguistic text, a major concern has been to define the essential characteristics of a linguistic narrative (see

Toolan, 2001). Labov and Waletzky's (in Labov, 2013) six part model of narrative, composed of an abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda, has been a dominant influence in narrative based social research. Much of the subsequent research into narratives has sought to elicit what are seen as prototypical or 'complete' narratives for social research based on linguistic models such as that provided by Labov and Waletzky. However a 'second wave' (Georgakopoulou, 2008) of narrative inquiry takes issue with this focus, arguing that it dismisses the value of the more heterogeneous, fragmented narratives of everyday interaction (Ochs and Capps, 2001; Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2008). A distinction has thus been drawn between 'big' and 'small' stories (Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2008; Freeman 2006; Labov, 2013), with big stories referring to the 'prototypical' or 'complete' narratives described by Labov and Waletzky, or the extended narratives of oral histories, and small stories referring to the messier, incomplete narratives told and co-produced in everyday social interaction.

Small story research emphasises the 'contested and indeterminate' (Georgakopoulou, 2006: 122) nature of narrative. In contrast to structural descriptions of narrative like those offered by Labov and Waletzky, Ochs and Capps (2001) argue that:

'narrative bows to no simple generic blueprint that sets it apart once and for all from other forms of discourse. More tightly organised narratives, with coherent thematic progression of actions, reactions and resolutions are more amenable to formal analysis, but even these narratives overlap with other kinds of discourse. Narrative is a cognitively and discursively complex genre



that routinely contains some or all of the following discourse components: description, chronology, evaluation and explanation.’ (p11).

Despite this emphasis on the existence and value of non-prototypical narratives, there is nevertheless a common understanding of what constitutes a prototypical or ‘default’ (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 20) narrative, which underpins the interest in and value of narrative inquiry. Ochs and Capps provide a way of thinking about the common elements of both big and small stories by articulating five narrative dimensions according to which narratives may vary. These are *tellership*, *tellability*, *embeddedness*, *linearity* and *moral stance*. Tellership refers to who is involved in the telling of a story. According to Ochs and Capps, ‘Tellership runs from one primary teller recounting to a relatively passive audience to multiple active co-tellers who respond with reactions, queries or relevant details’ (2001: 64). Tellability refers to the extent to which a story is interesting or engaging, e.g. stories of near death experiences, for instance, might be considered to be highly tellable. Embeddedness refers to the extent to which a narrative is embedded or enmeshed in surrounding discourse and social activity. For instance a teller might break out of the telling of story to tell their children to go back to bed. Linearity refers to the extent to which the events told in a story match the chronological sequence of the events as they actually occurred. Moral stance refers to the moral position or moral worldview of the narrator, which might be certain and constant or uncertain and fluid.

From this perspective, we can expect narrators of big or small stories, to a greater or lesser extent, to organise, represent and evaluate events, characters,

actions and reactions in a way that reflects personal and broader social concerns, values or moral positions. As Schiffrin argues:

‘One reason why stories provide a useful discourse site for the self is that narrators can create “worlds” through their stories. In addition to providing basic descriptive material (who, where, when), and reconstructing and evaluating a series of events that are temporally and often causally related, narrators bring together a cast of characters who interact with one another: they talk, do things, assess and think about each other, react to each other, create and/or solve problems, manage situations either together or separately. The interactions between characters within a story world provide a framework within which relationships—and hence the interacting self and other comprising that relationship—can be situated, displayed, and evaluated.’ (2000: 1).

While, as discussed in Section 3.2.1, discourse always recontextualises social practice, we can expect in narratives a more generically standard framework within which reality is reconstructed according to the values and beliefs of the speaker. In narratives the events people choose to share and the way that they are organised; the representation of social actors including the agentive roles assigned to them are all motivated by personal values and concerns, making narratives of significant volunteering experience a particularly useful focus for studies wishing to analyse volunteers’ MTV, in relation to their moral positions and underlying beliefs.

#### 4.2.4.4 Co-Construction

Small story research emphasises the ways in which narratives are co-constructed by participants in a telling, including both narrators and listeners. Ochs and Capps describe narratives as an 'interactional achievement' and endorse the Bahktinian view that a text 'always develops on the boundaries between two consciousnesses, two subjects' (2001: 3). This means that when we elicit a story in any context, either in a formal or informal setting, we are not eliciting a pre-existent linguistic structure as if mining for a resource, but rather narratives are always a response to a particular discourse context. For instance they are produced in response to the anticipated expectations and reactions of the audience or are influenced by the relative formality or informality of the social setting. More particularly, stories can be co-constructed in an interview through the specific questions, prompts and feedback given by the listener (see Linde, 1996; Schiffrin, 2002; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

A criticism of the big story approach taken in research interviews made by advocates of small story analysis is that this approach overlooks the co-constructed nature of big stories in interviews. This criticism is summarised by Freeman 'the big story... is likely to be the product of an interactive situation (an interview dialogue, for instance) that is largely effaced in the telling, thereby creating the illusion that the resultant story is self-sufficient, wholly "one's own," surging up from the depths of being' (2006: 133). Small story analysts argue that rather than trying to 'extract' a narrative from an informant in an artificial discourse context such as a research interview, analysts should turn their attention instead to the narratives that are co-constructed by actual interactants in everyday settings.

However, there is no reason, at least in these arguments, as to why the narratives of everyday interaction should be seen as inherently more authentic than the narratives produced in a research interview. Rather it is possible to see these narratives as the product of a different and equally valid discourse context characterised by different social dynamics, discourse expectations and which can be located at different points on the narrative dimensions that Ochs and Capps articulate. The solution to the problem is to acknowledge and consider the ways in which stories told by participants are influenced and co-constructed by the participants in the specific discourse context.

Moreover, there are methodological advantages to eliciting narratives in research interviews. As Labov points out, the extent to which the interviewer co-constructs the narrative told can be reduced to allow the narrator greater authorial control (2013: 8), or in terms of Ochs and Capps narrative dimensions to increase informants' autonomy as tellers of their story. I employed several strategies to maximise the authorial control of the participants. Firstly, it is common in oral history interviews for interviewers to ask multiple questions in a semi-structured or unstructured way, which means that the interviewer is centrally involved in organising and evaluating the story. However within the interviews in this research, all narratives were thus initiated by a single question – no other questions about the narrative were elicited, thus arguably giving participants greater control over the construction and the telling of the story. In addition, one of the reasons for emailing participants prior to the interview was to give them time to reflect on and construct narratives themselves prior to their telling in the interview setting, thus giving them

greater autonomy to construct narratives in their own way than they would have had without such preparation.

A related advantage of this approach was that my linguistic role as co-constructing participant in the interview was, to a relative degree, standardised across the interviews, meaning that informants' responses were more comparable than they would have been, should I have adopted a more ad hoc, individualised, organically responsive role in each interview. This was especially useful given the use of corpus research methods in my research, a point I will return to later.

These strategies were designed to limit or standardise my role as co-author of participants' narratives. However, this co-authorial role is, to some degree, inevitable and unavoidable. It is therefore important to acknowledge the various ways in which I influenced the selection, representation, organisation and evaluation of events, characters and actions through my questions and my actual, imagined and anticipated responses to informants' responses, sometimes signalled or interpreted through prosodic cues such as facial expressions, laughter and back channelling. Thus while I sought to maximise the authorial control of speakers over their narratives, it should be reiterated that the elicited narratives were necessarily a response to a particular social and discursive context, which must be considered in any analysis of the data.

#### 4.2.5 Transcription Methods

Following the interview process, interviews were then transcribed. Like any recontextualisation, a transcription involves the substitution, deletion, rearrangement and addition (van Leeuwen, 2008: 17-18) of various multimodal discourse features. As Flewitt et al. point out, 'transcriptions must be recognized as reduced version of

observed reality, where some details are prioritized and others left out' (2009: 45). Among the details that may or may not be prioritized in a transcription are prosodic features such as hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, laughter, volume, pauses and intonation, phonetic features related to particular accents and emphases, discourse features such as false starts and overlapping, and other features might be added to this list. Even if a transcription were to represent all of these features, reading the transcription would be a very different process to actually hearing a recording, which in turn would be very different to actually being a participant involved in the speech even itself. A transcription for instance foregrounds certain modes and discourse features (Muller et al., 2006: 14). While a transcription is a useful focus for the analysis of some features of discourse with a number of methodological advantages, it nevertheless needs to be highlighted and acknowledged that any transcription is a motivated and incomplete recontextualisation.

In this research I focused my transcription primarily on the words produced by informants in the interviews, representing a limited number of other discourse features such as pauses, false starts, back channelling and fillers such as 'mmm'. This focus does not imply that other communicative modes involved in the interviews were irrelevant, merely it is a reflection of the pragmatic limits of this study. A more comprehensive study would consider other discourse features.

On the whole the orthographic representation of informants' lexis involved standard spelling conventions, however in some instances it was not always this clear cut, as Thompson points out:

‘There will be several features of spoken language that are not clearly dealt with [in a dictionary], and decisions must be taken over how best to represent them in orthographic form. How, for example, to represent a part of an utterance that sounds like 'gonna'? Should this be standardized to 'going to'? Would standardization present an accurate representation of the language of the speaker? If, on the other hand, a decision is taken to use 'gonna' in some cases, and 'going to' in others, what criteria are to be employed by the transcriber for distinguishing one case from the other?’ (2005: 77)

These orthographic decisions can be particularly relevant in studies using corpus research methods such as this one. However, rather than providing an exhaustive list of transcription methods and decisions in an appendix, I will discuss these choices wherever they are analytically relevant.

Despite the bias towards lexis in the transcription and analysis of the data, the process of analysis was nevertheless informed by observations of this lexis within its wider discourse context during my participation in the interviews themselves and through careful listening and transcription of the recorded interviews. It was also possible to contextualise lexis where necessary by returning to recorded versions of the interview. In this regard, the current research concurs with Mautner’s (2009: 130) argument that ‘audio or video recordings of spoken data ought to be preserved, so that contextual clues lost through transcription and conversion into machine readable format can be retrieved if and when necessary’.

#### 4.2.6 Ethics

The research methods involved in this interview process were subject to a review by an ethics committee of the University of Birmingham and were approved. Specifically, the means of contacting potential participants including the specific emails sent to them and questions posed to participants were reviewed and approved by the committee. All participants gave explicit verbal consent prior to the interview to have the interviews recorded, transcribed and stored securely for analysis by myself, but not to be shared with third parties other than as referenced in the final thesis and any subsequent publications. All participants were given the right to request a copy of the final thesis publication and reassured that they have the right to withdraw their data and have it destroyed at any time. Participants were also informed that they would be anonymised in any resulting publications.

#### 4.3. Principles of Analysis

Having discussed the methods of data collection used in this study, I here move on to introduce several key principles guiding the analytical process adopted in this thesis. In Section 4.3.1 I review two of the key problems identified in existing qualitative research into MTV and critical analysis of volunteer discourse in order to argue the need for an explicit, linguistically oriented and quantitative analysis of the data. The need for a quantitative approach suggests that corpus methods might be of use in this research. Accordingly, in 4.3.2 I discuss some issues of corpus research affecting this thesis, and in 4.3.3 I discuss some of the opportunities these tools and methods offer. In 4.3.4 I provide an introductory overview of the analytical approach adopted in this thesis, which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.



#### 4.3.1 Issues with Existing Analytical Methods

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, a common strategy in both qualitative MTV research and the critical analysis of tourism discourse is to identify themes in the data. A fundamental point here is that the primary source of evidence in both efforts is the language used by informants. Analysis of the data is thus analysis of the language used by informants. Rarely however do these studies explicate the linguistic basis of their interpretations. The research tends to summarise and instantiate interpretations rather than provide clear linguistic evidence for the existence of these thematic patterns, which raises questions about how replicable and reliable the findings are (see Fowler, 1996 and Stubbs, 1998). In addition, not only would the explicit and replicable identification of themes in linguistic data strengthen the arguments made by these authors, it would also raise awareness of the ways that problematic meanings are encoded in discourse. Discourse analysis and CDA both attempt to explicitly describe and analyse language use for these reasons (e.g. Fairclough, 1995) and I will return to a discussion of these below.

A related problem is that those who adopt a thematic approach to the analysis of data do not tend to cite quantitative evidence to support their claims, and when they do, it is insufficiently supported by more detailed analysis. Critical discourse analysis has likewise been criticised for making claims about discourses based on the analysis of a limited quantity of data (Stubbs, 1998).

Corpus research methods are increasingly being used to address the challenge of supporting claims about discourses with quantitative evidence of discourse patterns using a number of different methods (e.g. Baker, 2006; Baker and Gabrielatos, 2008; Baker et al., 2008; Mautner, 2009; 2010; Sealey, 2012). However

CDA practitioners are often sceptical about the potential contribution of corpus linguistics for CDA. Fairclough in particular argues that the contribution of corpus linguistics to CDA as exemplified in the work of Baker et al. (2008) is 'limited and superficial' (2014: 20-21). For Fairclough (2014), corpus linguistics can be useful in providing statistical information about certain features of discourse, such as keywords (see Fairclough, 2000), which can be used to formulate general impressions to be investigated further and it can be used to stimulate new directions, but asserts that 'it is best regarded as part of the preparation from which the real work of analysis and critique can begin' (p20).

Fairclough sees corpus linguistics as 'a tool which can serve analysis' (2014: 21), which has a useful but ultimately limited contribution to make. This is, I would argue, a misrepresentation of corpus linguistics. Corpus research is currently associated primarily with particular software packages that are lexically oriented such as Wordsmith and Wmatrix, and with a number of research methods that use this software. The software and current methods of using them have a variety of benefits and challenges I will return to below. But to reduce corpus linguistics to the tools and methods currently used misrepresents of the aims and potential contribution of corpus linguistics to CDA. Corpus linguistics is at its core an effort to identify linguistic patterns in a corpus and to support claims about these patterns with reliable evidence. If the aim of CDA is to identify discourses, and we define discourses as routinized ways of representing elements of a social practices, as discussed in the last chapter, then CDA should involve identifying discourse patterns across multiple instances or large samples of linguistic data. This implies a quantitative approach, even if it is not lexically focused. Fairclough along with others are of course right to

highlight the issues with and limitations of current resources and methods of corpus linguistics for CDA, and these will be discussed below. However, these issues suggest the need to improve and develop corpus research methods to better analyse and describe discourse patterns, rather than to advocate a more restricted role for corpus linguistics within CDA.

#### 4.3.2 Issues with Corpus Linguistics

One of the key issues with the use of corpus research methods in CDA is that while CDA emphasises the need to understand discourse in its broader textual and social context, a corpus abstracts language from its textual and social context (Widdowson, 2004). However, as Baker (2006), Mautner (2009) and others have argued there are various ways that current methods of corpus research can complement and support the more detailed analysis of discourse and I will return to discuss this issue later.

Another key issue with current methods of corpus linguistics is that they are heavily oriented towards lexis. While corpus research methods can identify linguistic patterns beyond the lexical level, the methods most amenable to CDA work (such as keyword, collocation and n-gram analysis) are currently rooted in an analysis of lexis. As Mautner observes, in corpus linguistics currently 'there is a very strong bias in favour of the individual lexical item and clusters thereof. Put simply, the word is the peg that everything else is hung on' (Mautner, 2009: 124). However, critical discourse analysis as defined in the last chapter involves identifying patterns in the representation of social practice, rather than lexical patterns. It is semantically oriented rather than lexically oriented. As van Leeuwen and others have observed, the representation of an element of a social practice is a meaning that can be realised in

multiple ways at different linguistic levels, including lexis, grammar and text as well as through other semiotic modes. For instance, as we shall see in this thesis, volunteers can potentially represent beneficiaries as victims in the words they use to describe them (e.g. adjectives), the way they are passivized in grammatical structures and the way they are positioned within the narrative as a whole as the subject of the narrative problem. Thus in order to provide evidence of a dominant discourse, we primarily need to provide quantitative evidence of patterns of meaning, rather than patterns of linguistic form. However, in order to provide evidence of these representational patterns, we also need to articulate and provide evidence of the linguistic means by which these meanings are realised. Thus one of the aims of this thesis, both for understanding informants' motivations and the ideologies underpinning them, is to demonstrate the existence of relevant patterns of meaning by quantifying the different linguistic means used to convey them.

#### 4.3.3 The Possibilities of Corpus Linguistics

Another issue for both CDA and thematic analysis is that the process of analysis in both usually relies on the researcher being able to successfully identify patterns of meaning in the data. In addition to the problems of potential analyst biases, it is at the very least possible for an analyst to miss particular discourse patterns. The ideal situation is one in which significant representational patterns are identified in systematic and replicable ways, and also automatically, rather than relying on the biased and flawed perceptual capacities of the analyst. While it is not yet and may never be possible to automatically identify particular representational patterns in a corpus, corpus research does currently offer some tools that can automatically flag

significant lexical patterns, which the analyst can subsequently investigate manually, in order to assess whether they may reasonably be linked to broader patterns of meaning.

For instance, Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008) is able to identify statistically significant keywords, key parts of speech (POS) and key semantic domains. For ease of reference I will henceforth refer to these collectively as *key features*. A keyword search will identify statistically significant word forms, a key POS search will identify statistically significant types of words focusing on their grammatical classification, and a key semantic domain search will identify statistically significant types of words or phrases focusing on the broad categories of meaning they relate to. Significance is calculated by comparing one corpus with another, an issue I will return to in the next chapter. It is important to stress that these methods are lexically focused and need to be followed up with analysis of their wider context and with other approaches that attend to other levels of language beyond the level of the word, which I will discuss further in Chapter Five.

#### 4.3.4 Overview of the Analytical Methodology

To summarise then, in order to address the research questions summarised in Section 4.1.4 above, we need an analytical approach that is as data-driven as is currently possible to mitigate researcher bias, and which considers the different ways that meanings are generated through different semiotic modes, in particular language and its various lexical, grammatical and textual resources. In addition, we also need to be able to provide evidence of these patterns of meaning, by providing evidence of the various resources used to express these meanings. This thesis aims to address these

issues as well as it can within the limits of current technology and the limits of the thesis. Each of the next five chapters has a different methodological approach that will be described and explained in more detail in each chapter. However, the ways that these chapters address the issues described above are introduced below.

In Chapter Five I begin by adopting as data-driven an approach as possible by identifying and exploring discourse patterns across the corpus as a whole as well as exploring potential differences in the sub-corpus of younger (Y) and older (O) informants' responses. As discussed above, key features are viewed as providing potentially significant signals of discourse patterns that might suggest particular motivations and ideologies, as well as any differences between the two corpora, which need to be investigated in more detail. Given that, as Sealey and Carter point out above, the significance of age was not a given, this key features approach was partly adopted to 'screen' the significance of age as a variable, and to see whether differences connected to age were worth pursuing in subsequent chapters. Ultimately, however, I argue that despite some evidence of differences in self-oriented motivations, there is little evidence in my data of differences in Y and O informants' moral motivations and at this point I focus more on general patterns across the corpus rather than continuing to focus on age-related discourse patterns.

Given the limitations of the key features approach described above, in Chapter Six I move on to a more detailed analysis of representational patterns that draws upon and modifies critically relevant aspects of van Leeuwen's social actor and social action network. As with the other chapters, the aim of this chapter is to provide clear, quantitative, linguistically based evidence of the existence of dominant patterns across the corpus, which tell us something about informants' moral motivations and

about the extent to which volunteers' responses reflect and potentially contribute to social injustice.

Both Chapters Five and Six focus on representational patterns at the lexical and clausal level. In Chapter Seven I draw upon the work of Hoey, Martin and White and others as I seek to move beyond the level of the clause to consider discourse patterns at the textual level, focusing in particular on the narrative structure of responses to questions five and seven. Again the aim here is to support the interpretation of meanings in the corpora with linguistically based, quantitative evidence of the existence of discourse meanings at the textual level.

While the key methodological challenge of this thesis has been to support claims about larger discourse patterns with quantifiable and replicable linguistic evidence, Chapter Eight adopts what is perhaps a more traditional, holistic approach to the analysis of data in investigating the extent to which informants embrace or resist the representation of themselves and beneficiaries as heroes and victims respectively.

For reasons that are explained further in Chapter Nine, the expression of obligation can be seen as a form of modality and a variety of lexical and phraseological resources have been identified as expressing modality. In Chapter Nine I explore the presence or absence of these items and their alternatives in the corpus in order to further investigate the presence or absence of a sense of moral obligation in the corpus.

There are several necessary methodological limitations to this approach. As I have mentioned above, this research is weighted towards the analysis of limited number of semiotic resources (van Leeuwen, 2005). In particular I focus specifically

on the lexical, grammatical and textual resources of speakers, rather than analysing the use of semiotic resources such as the various non-verbal modes discussed in Section 4.2.5 above. Furthermore, in striving to balance the challenge of supporting an analysis of multiple linguistic levels quantitatively, I often deal with these levels separately. However, in the final chapter I draw together the evidence identified throughout this thesis in a final evaluation of the motivations, ontologies and ideologies of these community service volunteers.



## Key Features

### Introduction

As discussed in Section 4.2.1.2, a key variable in the informant selection was age, focusing on younger (Y) informants between the ages of 18-30 and older (O) informants between the ages of 65-80. In this chapter I examine the keywords, key parts of speech (POS) and key semantic domains in the Y and O corpora in order to analyse similarities and differences in informants' representations of volunteering. In Section 5.1 I describe and explain this method of analysis and in Section 5.2 I discuss my findings.

### 5.1. Methodology

In this section I describe the 'key features' approach adopted in this chapter. While I this method was introduced in Section 4.3.3, in Section 5.1.1 I provide a more detailed rationale for taking this approach. In 5.1.2 I discuss some factors that need to be considered in applying this method. In 5.1.3 I explain the use of my reference corpus.

### 5.1.1 The Type III Approach

Within CDA and discourse analysis, claims about whole discourses have often been rooted in the analysis of one or a few texts, which has incurred questions about their representativeness (Stubbs, 1998; Baker et al, 2008). Thus over the past decade, CDA studies have increasingly made use of corpus research methods on larger, more representative data samples. These methods allow analysts to support claims about the existence and significance of particular discourse features with statistical frequencies.

As discussed in the last chapter, it is, however, not only possible to defend the existence and significance of particular discourse features with frequency statistics, but it is also possible to introduce a greater degree of objectivity into the selection of discourse features for analysis by allowing statistical frequency to drive the selection of particular words and phrases to be analysed, an approach Rayson describes as 'data-driven' (2008: 521). Software such as Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008), Antconc (Anthony, 2014) or Wordsmith (Scott, 2012) can calculate the frequency of all the words in a corpus and compare this list with a frequency list in another reference corpus, and through the use of a statistical algorithm such as Log Likelihood (LL) calculate which features are statistically more frequent or 'key' in one sample of data compared to a reference corpus. Keyword searches can thus flag features of discourse that are more characteristic of one discourse compared to another.

The keyword function has a variety of limitations however. It cannot distinguish between the different senses of a word, or the ways that particular words and phrases might share the same, similar or other degrees of semantic territory with

other words and phrases, such as synonyms (Baker, 2009: 133). It also treats words as independent units rather than as parts of phrases of multiword expressions. In addition, Gries argues that a keyword analysis will 'have little or nothing to offer a linguist who is primarily interested in grammatical phenomenon' (in Rayson, 2008: 116).

In response to these limitations, the same method of establishing the keyness of words has been extended to parts of speech (POS) and semantic domains in the Wmatrix software created by Rayson (2008). The CLAWS and USAS taggers in this software enable the automatic POS and semantic tagging of words or multi-word expressions, the keyness of which can then be calculated using the same process as the keyword function, with 97% accuracy for the POS tagger and 91% accuracy for the semantic tagger. These methods thus provide 'a more automated and inclusive method of categorisation' (Baker and Potts, 2012: 296) than keyword searches alone.

Bondi argues that keywords 'may be shown to be indicative of the writer's position and identity, as well as the discourse community with its values and beliefs about the subject matter' (2010: 7). The same may be said of key POS and key semantic domains. I begin my analysis of the motivations, moral orientation and ideologies that are implicit in informants' interviews by examining key features in the O and Y corpora. In the remainder of this section I explain my methods for carrying out this analysis.

### 5.1.2 Investigating Key Features

Stubbs describes keywords as 'the tips of icebergs' (2010: 23), a description which highlights their potentially significant but also potentially deceptive nature. Initial

impressions about the significance of particular features can be misleading and need to be explored for several reasons.

Key features need to be checked that their keyness 'is not due to any obvious skewing of its distribution in the corpus' (Leech and Fallon in Rayson, 2008: 522). For example, what might appear to be a key feature across the whole corpus may only be a key feature for a minority of texts within the corpus. We thus need to examine the ways that particular features are spread across the interviews. These surprises can however lead to new hypotheses and further avenues of investigation (e.g. Sealey, 2009).

Words derive their meaning from their context, however as Hunston points out, 'a corpus presents language out of its context' (2002: 24). Before drawing conclusions about the meaning of a particular key feature finding, we thus need to examine the concordances, collocations of keywords, clusters and the wider textual context of a key feature. These can frequently reveal patterns in the use and meaning of a word that can challenge initial impressions about the significance and meaning of a particular key feature.

Given the work involved, it is not possible, as Sardhina points out, to sufficiently analyse the meaning and context of all key features (in Rayson, 2008: 522). One way of narrowing the focus is to give priority to the most 'key' features. Like Archer et al. (2009) and Busse et al. (2010), I disregarded from my investigation key features with a LL of less than 15.13, recognizing that other measures of statistical significance might have produced different results. However even with this cut off, there were still too many results to fully investigate. I thus focused on those features that seemed potentially revealing of informants' motivations, moral orientations and

ideologies. This unavoidably reintroduces a degree of subjectivity into the process of selecting discourse features for analysis, however it is arguably better to begin an analysis of a corpus with the intuitive selection of discourse features based on keyness, rather than basing this analysis on general intuitions alone.

### 5.1.3 Reference Corpus

As described above, keyness is calculated by comparing one corpus with another reference corpus. Keyness is therefore a relative term, and the relative standard - the reference corpus - affects the results that keyness functions provide. Scott suggests that 'the keyword procedure is fairly robust and keywords identified even by an obviously absurd reference corpus can be plausible indicators of aboutness' (2010: 51). However he also warns that the choice of reference corpus can affect the emergent picture 'in ways that are still not fully understood' (p52). For this chapter I used the Millennibrum corpus, which is a 1.8 million word corpus consisting of 144 transcribed oral history interviews of people living in the Birmingham area. Since I am particularly interested here in the discourse of volunteering, I chose this corpus in order to exclude, to some extent, features of discourse common to the genre of spoken biographical research interviews and to highlight features of discourse specific to the topic of volunteering.

## 5.2. Analysis and Findings

In this section I describe and discuss the most significant findings of my analysis. In Section 5.2.1 I focus on patterns across the corpus as a whole and in 5.2.2 I discuss emergent differences between the O and Y corpora.

### 5.2.1 General Patterns Across the Corpus

In section 5.2.1.1 I argue that an analysis of some key features in the corpus as a whole suggests that volunteers share a sense of concern for beneficiaries. However, in Section 5.2.1.2 I discuss some evidence that suggests a tendency for informants to position volunteering as an optional gift rather than a responsibility.

#### 5.2.1.1 'Disease'

An analysis of the key semantic domain 'Disease' reveals some evidence that informants' responses are empathically oriented towards what are represented as beneficiaries' constraints or problematic circumstances.

'Disease' is a key semantic domain in both the Y and O corpus. In the Y corpus, 'Disease' has a LL of 27.12 and there are 76 items in the Y corpus distributed across 13 of 20 interviews. In the O corpus, 'Disease' has a higher LL of 162.21, and a slightly more even distribution across the corpus, with 159 items distributed over 22 of the 28 interviews.

In almost all instances the identified node items refer to beneficiaries' medical conditions, as in the randomised sample in Table 5.1:

put me into a school with	autism	and statemented children -
people with mental health	disorders	just they can be very inten
rally people with learning	disabilities	and mental illness , they s
t camp , now the ranges of	disabilities	could be downs syndrome , c
e girl with Foetal Alcohol	Syndrome	so she ca n't write for her

s ? Which means she has an	ulcerated	gut , and she could n't dri
d - they do n't have major	disabilities	, there is no wheel chairs
have some minor - learning	disabilities	and they come and it 's a b
at 's for clients that are	sick	that ca n't work because of
get children that have got	autism	, severe autism - get there
now but I 'm working with	autism	now , so it has had an impa
lot of people with various	illnesses	and disabilities because ag
e to see me who erm she had	health problems	, she was on some benefit ,
own , he 's obviously had a	stroke	, he wears dark glasses he o
as a child who - she 'd got	disabilities	as well , but she could n't
hty two , he 's had a brain	haemorrhage	, you ca n't expect him - th
ith today , he was severely	autistic	, he 'd got no facial expres
know we had a little downs	syndrome	group , they came and I was
d he was seven and he was a	brain damaged	twin - he was the second one
help children with various	disabilities	, erm , including learning d

**Table 5.1:** Randomised sample of 'disease' nodes in the Y and O corpus

The frequency of these terms in itself suggests a tendency among both Y and O informants to orient themselves towards beneficiaries' physical and mental conditions in the interviews. In other words, while informants might have focused on themselves and marginalized or objectified beneficiaries in these interviews, informants frequently refer to beneficiaries' suffering. Moreover, the use of evaluation of these conditions throughout these concordances suggests an empathic attitude towards these conditions. Evaluative strategies include the use of negation, as in 'he'd got no facial expressions', 'they can't work', 'she couldn't drink', 'she can't write'. 'Disabilities' could arguably also be included as an instance of negation here since the

'dis' highlights what beneficiaries are not able to do. The medicalization of beneficiaries' circumstances as conditions also implicitly represents these circumstances as negative.

The keyness of 'disease' and the tendency to negatively evaluate it in both the Y and O corpora thus suggests an empathic orientation towards beneficiaries' suffering in both the Y and O corpora. The higher LL of 'disease' in the O corpus and the greater distribution of 'disease' potentially suggests a greater concern with beneficiaries' suffering among O informants than Y informants, although I will return to this below.

This evidence is, however, clearly more suggestive than conclusive and requires further investigation which I will return to in subsequent chapters.

#### 5.2.1.2 'Giving'

Some evidence in the key feature results suggests a tendency among both Y and O informants to represent volunteering as a gift rather than as a responsibility or obligation, suggested by the keyness of the semantic domain 'Giving' in both the Y and O corpus.

'Giving' is a key semantic domain in both the O and Y corpora, with a LL of 95.55 in the Y corpus and 34.42 in the O corpus. A closer analysis of the concordances reveals that 35 of the 48 informants represent themselves as the agent who 'gives' to beneficiaries or recipients, as in the examples below:

ely - I mean you never push anything, faith, just	give them the opportunity to be quiet, light a can
, that's what we are here for, yknow, to	give you food to help you over this difficult peri
job, she's a real worker and I'll	give her as much support as I possibly can, and



'yeah, I've got four healthy grandchildren, I'll	give something back?' and yknow 'I've got the time
was in a wheel chair and we had to	give her a terrific amount of support on the pony
ust being able to - and having the opportunity to	give my time I think, and help? Just a few
to bring them out, sometimes you might have to	give them a wash or so, and that's what
and you either stay at the clothes pot and	give out clothes to homeless people, or - you most
children something else to do after school, maybe	give their parents a break and stuff?
people everywhere and I really can't afford to	give a lot of money out? So I try to
that? Yknow if I've got the time to	give which I do at the moment because I'm
tax rebate in January so I always used to	give it to a homeless shelter, or shelter I think
tell other volunteers yknow, what information to	give clients and what to do - so I've really
you but actually we're giving up our time,	giving up - yknow - all that sort of thing, so I

**Table 5.2:** *Informants giving to beneficiaries*

In contrast to 'provide' or 'supply', the verb 'give' seems more aligned with the representation of volunteering as an optional gift than a duty or responsibility. There is also some evidence in the concordance list for the lemma /GIVE/ that some informants represent volunteering as a bi-directional, reciprocal arrangement, in which they give but also get something from volunteering practice. In eight interviews, informants represent themselves as the grammatical beneficiaries of the giving process, as in Table 5.3 below:

and said they wanted to say thank you and	give you a box of chocolates or something so it'
I've seen in people are amazing, and that	gives me an awful lot of - it uplifts me and
're not going to do that but err it	gives you a certain sway within the place if that'
all feel, it's just something that makes you -	gives you goose-bumps yknow when you see it.
I just so enjoyed it? do you know, it	gave me a purpose. I didn't want a paid

I had weren't really keen and didn't	give much back to me and I almost left when
so like. Polite, he was always so polite, always	gave me the time of day, always complemented me, a
and how he's managed to cope with it	gives me strength? And gives me kind of it makes
managed to cope with it gives me strength? And	gives me kind of it makes me think everything is
about really, at the end of the day yknow,	gives you a bit of - pride? I suppose.
issues, and it really touches me and they even	give me advice for life so, yknow, I really apprec
ally touched me the advice that clients sometimes	give me and it motivates me to, yknow, keep on

**Table 5.3:** *Informants receiving*

In these instances what is received includes 'strength', 'pride', 'sway within the place', 'a purpose', 'advice', 'goosebumps' and 'chocolates'. Some of these can be interpreted metaphorically, thus chocolates can be seen as sign of validation and success and 'sway within the place' could be interpreted as a metaphor for the acquisition of status. In six of eight of these interviews, volunteers talk both about what they give to beneficiaries and what they receive through volunteering. There is implicit in this use of 'giving' an orientation towards and acceptance of a discourse of reciprocity - volunteering is represented as an exchange of goods and services, an activity in which goods and services are given to others but something is received in return.

This discourse of reciprocity is also evident in the keyness of 'Rewarding' in the Y corpus. 'Rewarding' has a LL of 65.29 in the Y corpus and occurs 14 times across the 20 interviews, as in Table 5.4 below:

part of Nightline association it's not a very	rewarding thing - experience to volunteer for beca
---	--

trying to think - - yeah it's not a particularly	rewarding experience, so I don't particularly good
shifts with them, and I suppose that's really	rewarding, that makes me feel good, that people ar
really enjoying themselves and - that's the most	rewarding time on PHAB camps -
mentoring in way but in groups - but - the most	rewarding experience about that was that in the or
so amazing about it, that's what's so	rewarding about it, like we go rock climbing and f
it all comes through to fruition is the most	rewarding things of it.
like a really long call, and it's really	rewarding - and maybe the person was suicidal -
to do. erm - erm I mean its	rewarding in every kind of visit I suppose, I've
with a massive sense of - like it is a	rewarding feeling, it is that goodness feeling jus
ling just feeling like (-interruption) it is that	rewarding feeling. I felt exhausted afterwards but
it took really quick and that's the most	rewarding thing really - is that really quickly yo
a funny way and erm - that's the most	rewarding thing is that you see them come - and th
when they enjoy it it's really good, really	rewarding so yeah.

**Table 5.4:** *'Rewarding' in the Y corpus*

Here 'rewarding' tends to be defined in terms of feeling a sense of satisfaction. Interestingly the first two instances are negated. For this volunteer, volunteering is explicitly 'not' a rewarding thing. This negation highlights the implicit assumption throughout these instances that volunteering is supposed to be a 'rewarding' activity, in other words an activity in which something is received for something given. This provides further evidence that reciprocity is a key theme in volunteering discourse.

Rewarding is not a keyword in the O corpus, which might ostensibly suggest that reciprocity is a greater theme among Y informants' responses than O informants' responses. However the key semantic domain 'Sensory' in the O corpus points to a similar phenomenon, evident in the concordances in Table 5.5:

go in I get I personally get a lot	out of it I'd - if they said 'look we
isn't it because it's what I get	out of it, it is always two way it's
is always two way it's what I get	out of it which makes my life richer.
fun with other people - that's what I get	out of it, seeing people having a good time basically
, it's a fun thing, they get a lot	out of it, and it's nice to have a
people and events, and you're not sort of -	out of it, you're in it if you see
the er the erm - the advantages the children get	out of it and how they - it helps their development
it's the combination of what we all get	out of it plus the children are getting this erm -
out but, no it's what the children get	out of it - and we had one lad who had
is what I like to see - what they get	out of it, not us so much. As you can
lunch and so I went and what has come	out of it is the camaraderie of the other volunteers
've put in, I've certainly got a lot	out of it yeah.
the fun we had at - cause you get something	out of it and yknow after you've done a
what I mean when I say you get something	out of it yourself, erm, and I suppose
the - the bit where you get the most fun	out of it I think is - daft as it seems
main thing (yeah) that everybody's got something	out of it, yeah (yeah) - including myself of course

**Table 5.5:** *Getting something 'out of it' in the O corpus*

The phrase 'out of it' appears in 11 O interviews and as the concordances illustrate this phrase has been inaccurately tagged in all cases. Rather than suggesting sensory disorientation as in the phrase 'he was so *out of it* for days after', the phrase 'out of it' in these instances refers to someone 'getting' something out of volunteering, normally the informants themselves. A semantic sequence (Hunston: 2008) is operational here, with 'out of it' as the core element that is preceded at some point by 'get' or 'got'. This can appear directly before 'out of it' as in 'everybody's *got something out of it*', or an

intermediate element can appear such as ‘a lot’ or ‘something’ as in ‘you get something out of it’. Like ‘rewarding’, this sequence also highlights the underlying assumption in these interviews that there is supposed to be some kind of reciprocal benefit or reward for providing voluntarily given goods and services, providing further evidence that reciprocity is a theme in the corpus.

## 5.2.2 Differences Between the O and Y Corpora

5.2.1 focused on key features in the corpus as a whole and in this section I discuss several key differences between the O and Y corpora. In 5.2.2.1-2 I focus on the keyness of ‘experience’ and the semantic domain ‘Education’ in the Y corpus and in 5.2.2.3 I discuss evidence that suggests O informants attach greater value to the opportunities volunteering provides for informal social interaction than Y informants.

### 5.2.2.1 ‘Experience’ in the Y Corpus

‘Experience’ is a keyword in the Y corpus, with a LL of 57.89. It occurs 52 times across 12 of the 20 interviews, compared to a LL of 6.24 in the O corpus, well below the cut off for statistical significance of 15.13. ‘Experiences’ is also key in the Y corpus, with a LL of 32.43. Collocates of ‘experience’ and experiences one to the left of the node in the two corpora also indicate some differences in the way the word is used in the two corpora. In the O corpus, there are two evaluative adjectives among the nine collocates appearing one to the left of ‘experience’, which are ‘scary’ and ‘best’, the rest generally being grammatical function words, with the exception of ‘volunteering’. In contrast, there are 16 different evaluative adjectives used directly before

'experience' in the Y corpus, several of which are used more than once, as listed below:

refreshing  
shitty  
overwhelming  
negative  
frustrating  
direct  
strange  
rewarding (x2)  
personal (x2)  
brilliant  
interesting  
new (x2)  
positive  
great  
learning  
best  
first

The keyness of 'experience' in the Y corpus may in part be a consequence of the interview questions, which encouraged informants to share 'experiences' – discrete, narrativised episodes from informants' perceived self-biographies as volunteers. However, the greater frequency with which Y informants talk of 'experiences' and the variety of ways in which they evaluate them compared to O informants, suggests that this construction of volunteering biographies in terms of discrete episodes was embraced more readily by Y informants or resonated with them. This suggests that the opportunity for having discrete 'experiences' that volunteering provides is a more important consideration for Y informants than for O informants.

### 5.2.2.2 'Education: General' in the Y Corpus

Throughout this chapter I have been discussing key features that have been identified by comparing the O corpus with the millennium corpus, then the same with the Y corpus and then comparing the results. However this approach has a weakness. Discourse features that are as frequent in both the Y corpus and the Millennium corpus but which are infrequent in the O corpus will not be revealed using this method. In other words, this method will not identify the absence of discourse features in one corpus compared to another. However comparing the two corpora against each other is one way of addressing this problem.

Adopting this method reveals that 'Education: General' has a LL of 91.18 in the Y corpus. This suggests that education is an important frame of reference for Y informants' volunteering. Probing this further by examining concordances reveals that this frequency largely reflects the phase of Y informants' life course. For instance some Y informants talk of having to balance the demands of school and volunteering commitments. Some informants refer to the role of educational institutions in promoting, encouraging or expecting Y informants to volunteer which is an interesting issue to be pursued elsewhere. However, the most relevant finding here is a set of node items involved in explicit positive evaluations of the role of volunteering as a means of learning. This key semantic domain highlights explicit evaluations of the learning value in volunteering in eight – almost half - of the 20 Y informant interviews, as listed in Table 5.6 below:

1	'It's been a really brilliant experience and I've <b>learned</b> so much over the
---	---

	last two years'
2	'it's been a good <b>learning experience</b> ... it's just - <b>learning</b> how to handle that situation and not running from it is one of the biggest things I've <b>learned</b> that really stands out for me'
3	'because it's personal care you do <b>learn</b> more from it in terms of skills I think'
4	'I like helping people, that's what it is, but I also like <b>learning</b> at the same time'
5	'on a very selfish level, erm I think you only get to really <b>learn</b> about other people's cultures by actually being involved in them'
6	'a lot of it is valuable in terms of accretion, for want of a better word, yknow - as you saw there you <b>learn</b> just a little bit and then you pass it on, and they you <b>learn</b> just a little bit more and then you pass it on'
7	'it's always been at the back of my mind that I wanted to <b>expose myself</b> to different people... I just wanted to take myself out of my comfort zone? And just. Forget about myself and my issues and try and <b>witness</b> . Erm. people who are in like yknow. Really difficult situations'
8	'its nice meeting people... and also as I say helping people for my own benefit and for other people's... but also as I say, having like minded people and <b>learning</b> from them'

**Table 5.6:** *The value of volunteering as an opportunity to learn in the Y corpus*

In these examples, learning is explicitly evaluated by all informants as one of the primary objectives of volunteering and a source of satisfaction and purpose. Learning



is sometimes positioned as a desirable outcome in its own right, rather than as a means to an end. In examples four and seven, informants report ‘I *like* learning’ and ‘I *wanted* to expose myself’, which in functional terms position learning as the phenomenon of desiderative processes (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 197-210), as an object of desire in itself, rather than something which facilitates the acquisition of an alternative object of desire. In example 5 the verb ‘get’ positions learning as an outcome that is acquired through volunteering. Elsewhere this sense of learning as an important and desirable outcome is conveyed through the use of positive evaluation as in the adjectives ‘nice’ (8) and ‘valuable’ (6).

By contrast, instances of the lemma /LEARN/ which do occur in the O corpus do not generally relate to the personal value attached to learning through volunteering, but rather O informants tend to talk of the learning difficulties of recipients or the opportunity to apply what has been learned earlier in life. There are two occasions where O informants talk about their own learning through volunteering:

1	‘I had to <b>learn</b> by going with other experienced advisors... you had to keep a learning journal’
2	‘we had to <b>learn</b> how the various - changing the reigns and different sorts of stirrups and things... felt like someone was putting you through your paces’

**Table 5.7:** ‘Having to learn’ in the O corpus

In contrast to the representation of learning as a positive benefit of volunteering in Table 5.6, here the modal verb ‘had’ suggests a lack of agency or willing complicity in

the process. Learning is represented as an imposed necessity rather than a desirable outcome. This comparison suggests that Y informants value the opportunity volunteering provides to learn to a greater extent than O informants.

#### 5.2.2.3 'Speech: Communicative' in the O Corpus

'Speech: Communication' is a key semantic domain in the O corpus with a LL of 91.18. Of the 608 items relating to the semantic domain 'Communication: Speech' (Q2.1) in the O corpus, 196 occur in two of the 28 interviews. Taking these two interviews out of the corpus reduces the overall LL of this semantic domain across the remaining O corpus to 12.89, below the cut off for statistical significance. However, a comparison of the concordance lists for this semantic domain in the Y and O corpora suggests a greater tendency among O informants to represent volunteering as a way of addressing their own and others' need for informal social interaction.

O informants tend to represent verbal interaction with beneficiaries as a more informal activity than Y informants. The Q2.1 concordance list in the O corpus contains more references to informal communication than the Y corpus Q2.1 concordance list, for example in phrases such as 'have a little chat', 'have a general chit chat' or 'had a word'. More specifically the lemma /CHAT/ appears 20 times across nine out of 28 interviews in the O corpus, compared with five times across five out of 20 interviews in the Y corpus. In contrast, there appears to be a greater tendency among Y informants to refer to social encounters with beneficiaries in more formal ways. For example, 'Interaction' and 'Interactions' are both keywords in the Y corpus. The lemma /INTERACT/ occurs 20 times in the Y corpus across 8 interviews and never appears in the O corpus and all apart from two instances refer to interactions

involving informants and beneficiaries. O informants thus tend to represent the verbal interaction involved in volunteering practice as more informal and social whereas Y informants tend to represent such verbal interaction in more formal and professional terms.

There is also a tendency for O informants to refer to beneficiaries' emotional, physical or psychological incapacity to speak more frequently than Y informants, suggesting that O informants attach more value to verbal interaction than Y informants, and also that they attach more value to the capacity of volunteering to address this need. Referring to beneficiaries' inability to communicate is to be expected from informants who volunteer for organisations whose primary objective is to provide opportunities for recipients to speak, such as the Samaritans. However, excluding the four O informants who volunteer for such organisations, a further 11 O informants choose to speak of experiences involving a beneficiary who was emotionally, physically or psychologically unable to communicate in contrast to just three Y informants, as in the following examples:

1.	'he err – couldn't <b>speak</b> , brain damaged at birth, erm... a <b>voice</b> came through this iPad and it said, I cannot <b>speak</b> but I can hear, and I've got a brain I can use' and we thought 'right''
2.	'she didn't find it easy <b>talking</b> to people. when she was interviewed by this guy over the phone she just couldn't deal with it, she just became flustered...'
3.	'she never <b>spoke</b> – she was able to but she just never <b>spoke</b> , she was so <b>withdrawn</b> ... but she started to <b>speak</b> for the first time... she started

	communicating by using her voice, which was fantastic'
4.	'just imagine, you are in the house, you can't hardly walk, you probably can't speak very well and there's nowhere to go'
5.	'I did some speech therapy with him and he had a stroke, unfortunately he could only relate four words... so they felt that if I went with him, sort of like if I was his voice? He would integrate more with people'

**Table 5.8:** Talk of beneficiaries' communicative constraints in the O corpus

In these examples, various evaluative resources represent the inability to communicate as a source of empathy and concern for the informants towards their recipients. The basic evaluative resource of negation (Labov 1972) as in 'couldn't speak' (1), 'cannot speak' (1), 'didn't find it easy talking' (2), 'never spoke' (3), 'can't speak'(4) and 'unfortunately' (5) explicitly marks out 'the difference between what is and what might have been' (Sealey, 2012: 198). The implicit comparison drawn between those who can't speak and those who can is emphasised in these examples by other kinds of comparative evaluation (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 21) as with the exclusivisers 'only' as in 'he could *only* relate four words' (5), some of which emphasise the polarity of the negation as in 'she *just* never spoke' (3). The degree of empathy informants express for beneficiaries' inability to communicate suggests that being able to communicate is important to these informants and that volunteering is an important means of addressing this need.

The implicit value O informants attach to being able to communicate is also reinforced in a set of comments that explicitly evaluate verbal communication, which appear in separate interviews:

'it's so important to communicate'

I'm glad I retain the ability to speak'

'As you've gathered I like chatting'

'I like just chatting'

These explicit evaluations of the value of verbal communication appear in four different interviews in the O corpus and there are no equivalents in the Y corpus. There is thus some evidence here that suggests that O informants value volunteering as a means of enabling informal social interaction for the benefit of both informants and beneficiaries.

### Conclusion

This analysis of the key features in both corpora thus suggests that volunteers have a range of motivations. The key difference between the Y and the O corpora relates to the type of self-interested motivations of Y and O informants, with Y informants appearing to attach greater value to learning and having interesting experiences, and some O informants appearing to attach a greater value to talking and social interaction. However, overall the similarities between the two corpora are perhaps more compelling than the differences. On the one hand both Y and O informants tend to speak about beneficiaries' suffering, suggesting a concern for their suffering. On the other hand, both Y and O informants represent volunteering as a form of giving, thus suggesting a view of volunteering as an optional gift rather than an obligation. This suggests the greater significance of general discourse patterns across the corpus as a

whole, or in other words that there is a dominant conception of the moral value of volunteering that is common to both Y and O informants.

Given the issues with the key features approach discussed in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, there is clearly much more that can be investigated here regarding the broader discursive difference between older and younger informants. However, given that the same could be said of other demographic variables and that there is little evidence thus far of significant differences in the moral motivations between younger and older informants, I will at this point move on from a discussion of the potentially age-related differences to focus in greater detail on dominant discourse patterns across the corpus as a whole.

## Socio-Semantic Frequencies

### Introduction

In this chapter I argue that evidence of MTV, and evidence which supports or challenges the criticisms made of volunteering, can be identified in the ways that volunteers represent the social actors and social action in the stories they share of significant personal experiences as volunteers. The narratives analysed here were for the most part extracted from relatively continuous stretches of talk in the interviews, in other words they were embedded in surrounding discourse to varying degrees and in Section 6.1 I discuss my criteria for extracting these narratives.

As discussed in Chapter Four, a key aim of this chapter and thesis more generally is to anchor insights on the motivations and existence of volunteering discourses in, as far as is possible, a replicable, transparent and systematic method of quantifying relevant meanings across a representative sample of data. In this chapter I draw upon and modify selected aspects of van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor and

social action networks in order to identify and examine the frequency of socio-semantic meanings across the corpus. In Section 6.2 I describe this method in more detail and in 6.3 I discuss the findings. A key argument in this chapter is that a strong sense of concern for the suffering and flourishing of beneficiaries is a dominant theme throughout the corpus.

### 6.1 Data

The data for this chapter are narratives extracted from responses to question five, which was: *'Thinking back over your time as a volunteer, which experiences stand out as significant or valuable to you in some way?'*. These responses generally involved a mix of generic types, but in almost all cases involved narratives, perhaps partly because, as discussed in 4.2.4.2 and 4.2.4.4, informants were explicitly primed in advance to share stories in response to this question. The criteria for the extraction of these narratives from the various generic types followed Labov and Waletzky's definition of narrative as text minimally containing at least one temporal juncture and which also ideally included other structural elements of a narrative including an abstract, orientation, complicating actions, resolution and a coda (in Labov, 2013: 14-32). Such narratives occasionally incorporated 'back stories' as part of the orientation in a larger narrative. Acknowledging the variability of narrative discourse as discussed in 4.2.4.3, the extracted narratives might be described generally as 'archetypal' narratives in that they always have one teller, can be fairly easily extracted from surrounding discourse and can exist independently from them, and generally relate a linear sequence of events. I shall return to the issue of moral stance later.



Labov identifies the possibility of ‘pseudo narratives’ (2013:17), which relate a sequence of events that generally happen rather than a single set of specific events that have occurred in a particular space and time. The following is one example from my own data:

*Abstract:*                   when you’ve had like a really long call, and it’s  
really rewarding-

*Complicating action:* and maybe the person was suicidal-

*Resolution:*               and like then said ‘oh you might have changed my  
life’ or like ‘I might not end my life now’

*Evaluation:*               having that said to you it’s quite overwhelming, and  
it’s like a natural high? Almost, at the end, and you  
put the phone down and it’s just like ‘oh my god’, -  
and you just feel so good? That you maybe kind of  
would have helped someone and not- things aren’t as  
bad as they thought they could have been before,

*Coda:*                       so that’s always good.

This is not a story about a particular person and a sequence of events that happened only once. The shift from the past tense (‘you’ve *had*’) to the present tense in phrases

such as ‘it’s really rewarding’, ‘it’s like a natural high’, ‘it’s just like ‘oh my god’’, along with the clause ‘that’s *always* good’ and various generic representations of self (‘you’ve’) and beneficiaries (‘the person’), suggests that this sequence of events is often repeated and it is the pattern of events that is being evaluated as significant here. Rather than describing such narratives as ‘pseudo-narratives’, which suggests a subordinate relation to a ‘standard’ narrative form, I would prefer to recognise such narratives as existing at one end of an additional narrative dimension according to which events are represented as more or less generic or specific and, borrowing Genette’s term, refer to these as iterative narratives (1980: 114-116). This term acknowledges the equal validity in my data of, on the one hand, a response that emphasises the significance of a sequence of events that is often repeated and equally valuable, and on the other, responses that emphasise the unique value of a specific sequence of events on a particular occasion.

Having said this, it is important to recognise that a ‘specific’ narrative may have a symbolic value and be told as an instance of a sequence of events that is often repeated and which are equally significant. For example, at the end of telling the story of a specific sequence of events, one informant comments ‘I’ve had lots of other children with similar stories’, indicating that in many ways the story is an instance of a sequence of events which is often repeated. Thus, the distinction between iterative and specific narratives is a formal distinction rather than a semantic one.

## 6.2 Analytical Methodology

In this section I describe the method I use for analysing the representation of informants and beneficiaries in informants’ narratives. In Section 6.2.1 I focus on the

ways that informants and beneficiaries can be represented in accounts of volunteering practice, selectively drawing upon and modifying critically relevant aspects of van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic inventory of the ways social actors can be represented in discourse. In Section 6.2.2 I describe the kinds of actions and reactions informants and beneficiaries can be represented as doing or having, again selectively drawing upon and modifying van Leeuwen's social action network.

### 6.2.1 The Representation of Social Actors

Van Leeuwen (1996) uses the term 'social actor' to refer to human participants in a social practice, and the term could potentially refer to other participants being represented in an anthropomorphic way. The use of the term 'actor' focuses on the agency rather than the subjectivity of human beings, in other words it focuses on their ability to act rather be acted upon. In this sense the term 'social actor' resists a tradition in social theory that defines people primarily in terms of their subjectivity, as social 'subjects' (e.g. Althusser, 1971). However in resisting the primacy of this passive conception of human agency, it gives equal primacy to a view of humans as active agents, which is problematic since people are capable of being both passive subjects and active agents. More recently van Leeuwen (2008) seems to prefer the term 'participant' to social actor, but continues to use the term social actor as it is gaining currency. 'Participant' is neutral in terms of agency, however there are confusing overlaps between the term 'participant' with the concept of a grammatical participant. The 'social' in 'social actor' also usefully emphasises the primary interest here on the 'social' dimension of human existence and interaction. The term 'social

participant' might be invoked, but since I am working with van Leeuwen's model I will continue to use his terminology here.

Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic inventory of the ways social actors can be represented in discourse is a complex network. In this section I draw upon three critically relevant aspects of van Leeuwen's socio-semantic inventory: inclusion, assimilation and activation, which can, as I argue here, provide insights on the ways that informants construct volunteering practice.

#### 6.2.1.1 Inclusion

Van Leeuwen points out that in different representations of social practice, social actors can be included, marginalised or excluded altogether and in the analysis of his data, van Leeuwen provides frequencies for which social actors were included, which were marginalised and which were suppressed (pp. 28-32). In determining the extent to which informants are motivated by concerns or obligations to the self or others, it is critically useful to investigate the frequency with which informants refer to particular social actors in the narratives. Such a frequency suggests the centrality or marginalisation of particular social actors in their accounts and is potentially indicative of a more or less other-orientation towards volunteering. For example, a narrative in which the informant does not mention his or her self and frequently mentions beneficiaries suggests a greater other-orientation to volunteering, as in the following example, in which references to beneficiaries have been coded in purple and self-references have been coded in yellow:

The main one is if someone new comes along and they don't know anyone it's getting them to take part and the first session they'd be really quiet and not take part much but over a few weeks and then months you can see them develop in confidence and you see them develop their skills and - they get better and better at it and they interact with the other kids more and that's the most important thing really they just - and then really quickly they become part of it and it's - different when they're not there in a funny way and erm - that's the most rewarding thing is that you see them come - and they might not have done anything like before on a Saturday, they might just be at home, something to get them out, and when they enjoy it it's really good, really rewarding - so yeah.

In this narrative the informant refers to himself, albeit in the second person, three times, but refers to beneficiaries seventeen times and no other social actors are explicitly referred to. The frequency with which the informant refers to beneficiaries in this narrative reflects a general tendency in this narrative for the informant to marginalise himself and foreground the centrality of the beneficiary in this representation of volunteering practice. There is of course not a necessary correlation between a higher frequency of reference to beneficiaries and an other-orientation towards volunteering, but it is a potential indicator of a more selfless representation of what informants find significant about volunteering, and can be usefully considered in relation to other factors.

I generated a score for the frequency with which informants referred to themselves, beneficiaries and others by counting the number of references to each group and dividing each number by the total number of references to social actors.

Van Leeuwen provides an extensive socio-semantic inventory of the ways that social actors can be included, or referred to, in discourse (pp. 28-54), which I used to identify references to social actors. There is not the space to recount all of these possibilities here, however I discuss some of these further in the next two sections.

Different social practices were recontextualized in the narratives. Since I was particularly interested in how informants represent themselves as participants in volunteering practice, I excluded in my analysis instances where informants refer to themselves outside of volunteering practice. For example, in the following extract the informant represents himself in two kinds of social practice:

*'I think we managed to get him a couple of hundred pounds payment back'*

In the phrase 'I think', the informant represents himself as a social actor engaged in the process of reflection within the social practice of the interview. However in the phrase 'we managed' the informant represents himself as part of a collective group engaged in volunteering practice. Since I was interested in the ways the informant represents himself within volunteering practice, I excluded the 'I' in this instance.

#### 6.2.1.2 Assimilation

In addition to examining how frequently informants refer to themselves, we can also examine the different ways informants refer to themselves. Van Leeuwen points out

that social actors can be individualized or they can be assimilated into groups (p37). This distinction is relevant in mapping the affiliations and distinctions informants draw between social actors, potentially providing insights on the social conception underlying their view of volunteering and also their motivations for volunteering. For example, as referred to above, some volunteers refer to themselves and other local volunteers with the collective inclusive 'we', suggesting a strong sense of affiliation and collective identity with other local volunteers, while others refer to themselves individually with 'I' and refer to other volunteers as 'they', suggesting a more individualised orientation to volunteering. Looking at overall patterns of assimilation can thus provide some insights on the social orientation towards volunteering implicit in the ways that volunteers talk.

It was sometimes difficult to determine whether the representation of a social actor was assimilated or individualised. For example, Myers and Lampropoulou point out that the referent of 'you', which is characteristic of the research interview genre (2012), is often ambiguous, as in the following example from a narrative by a volunteer at a homeless shelter, who has just related the tragic story of a homeless man:

'I'm more used to it now I don't cry anymore, but the first few months was really upsetting, the stories that you hear and stuff.'

On one hand, the informant could be claiming that her reactions to stories are typical of the types of stories volunteers generally tend to hear, in which case she is identifying herself as one of many volunteers who listens to stories, and we might

interpret 'you' as an instance of assimilation. On the other hand, 'you' could arguably be a reference to the self in the second person rather than being a claim to a collective identity.

To cope with this occasional ambiguity I generated an individualisation score and an assimilation score by dividing the number of clear instances by the total number of references.

I also noted the referents of assimilated references to selves and beneficiaries. These referents needed to be inferred or deduced from the context of the reference. Retrieving assimilated referents was not always a straightforward task requiring a degree of interpretation at times, as in the following example:

Well erm - yes **we** had a blind - little blind girl a few years ago and she was extremely bright - and I hadn't led her pony for a while and **we** were looking at things and she had matching up cards that were all on the side, and **we** walked around once and **we** had to match them up and she was telling me where to go (wow) after having walked round once, that sort of thing sticks in your mind as well

The first instance of 'we', coded yellow in the extract above, has a degree of ambiguity. It could refer to the organisation as a whole, the local organisation, or to the local group of volunteers, with possibly some slippage between these, but definitely not the beneficiary. In instances such as these, I noted the possible referents. The green instances however are more narrow in their scope, and while they might arguably be



said to be similarly ambiguous, I interpreted these as referring more narrowly to the informant and the beneficiary.

#### 6.2.1.3 Activation

As van Leeuwen points out, 'representations can endow social actors with either active or passive roles. Activation occurs when social actors are represented as the active dynamic forces in an activity, passivation when they are represented as "undergoing" the activity, or as being "at the receiving end of it"' (p33). Given that this research aims to understand the value or significance that volunteers attach to volunteering, it is critically relevant to examine whether volunteers represent themselves and beneficiaries as people who actively do, think, feel and say things, or whether they represent themselves as the passive recipients of others actions. Similarly, given the criticisms of volunteering discussed in chapter three, it is also critically relevant to examine whether beneficiaries are on the whole represented as passive rather than active.

Critical discourse analysis of the active or passive representation of social actors has often focused on particular linguistic devices such as transitivity structures in which a particular social actor is the agent of a process, or is deleted altogether. However van Leeuwen points out that there are a variety of ways that social actors can be represented as active or passive, and a focus on a particular linguistic strategy will provide an incomplete account of the active or passive representation of social actors in a text. He provides an inventory of the ways that activation and passivation can be realized linguistically.

According to van Leeuwen, activation may be realized linguistically by transitivity structures in which social actors occupy the ‘actor in material processes, behavior in behavioural processes, senser in mental processes, sayers in verbal processes or assigner in relational processes’ (p33). Social actors can be ‘circumstantialised’, that is, their agentive role can be referred to in a prepositional circumstantial, as with ‘from neighbours and co-workers’ in the following example:

‘People of Asian descent suddenly received a cold-shoulder from neighbours and co-workers’

Social actors can also be activated or passivated through pre- or postmodification, for example ‘public’ in ‘they acquired public support’. More specifically, social actors can be ‘possessivated’ as with ‘my’ in ‘my intervention ultimately changed everything’.

Likewise, according to van Leeuwen, social actors may be passivated by being represented as the goal or beneficiary in a material action, phenomenon in a mental process, receiver or target in a verbal process or carrier in an attributive relational process. And also like activation, they can also be represented as passive through being circumstantialised, possessivated or through adjectival premodification. In my analysis I found other linguistic means of representing social actors as active or passive which will be discussed below.

We can classify some forms of negative evaluation as activating or passivating social actors. For instance, in one narrative, following a sequence of tragic events in the life of a young boy in Sierra Leone that included the death of his mother, the informant says of the beneficiary that ‘he *ended up* working for gangs’. Although the

beneficiary is the agent of a material process in this clause, 'ended up' suggests that this was a situation he was forced into, rather than a situation he actively chose.

Some material processes implicitly passivate the actor involved. For example although one beneficiary is the agent of a material process in the clause 'he died', it makes more sense in this instance to describe him as the passive subject at the receiving end of a circumstance, rather than an 'active, dynamic force' in this process.

While van Leeuwen points out that social actors can be passivated as the carrier in a relational process, the nature of the attribute and the way that it is evaluated can activate or passivate the represented social actor. For example, 'she was so aggressive' is a relational attributive process that suggests the carrier is an active, dynamic force, rather than a passive subject.

Negation can reverse the representation of social actors as passive or active. For example, in one interview where an informant is nervous about taking on a new and difficult task, she states 'I'd never done this before'. Although she is the actor in a material process here, the process is negated and she thus represents herself as the passive subject of inexperience.

There are thus a variety of linguistic means for representing social actors as active or passive. The test question for distinguishing between the two was ultimately a semantic one based on van Leeuwen's definitions of activation or passivation: is the social actor represented as the active, dynamic force in an activity or are they represented as undergoing the activity, or at the receiving end of it?

Using this criteria I counted the number of instances where informants were represented as either active or passive and divided the number of active

representations by the total to establish an 'activation' frequency score for the representation of informants. I did the same for the representation of beneficiaries.

### 6.2.2 The Representation of Social Action

In 6.2.1.3 above I focused on the ways that informants and beneficiaries are referred to in accounts of volunteering practice. In this section the focus shifts from how they are represented as participants to the kinds of things they do in informants' accounts of volunteering practice. As above, I draw selectively on an adapted version of van Leeuwen's social action network (2008).

#### 6.2.2.1 Actions and Reactions

In section 6.2.1.3, I focused on the extent to which volunteers are represented as people who enact processes or as people who are subject to processes enacted by others. However another way of examining agency is to look at the kinds of processes which informants are the agents of.

Van Leeuwen draws a distinction between what he defines as two types of social action: actions and reactions. While reactions involve people feeling and thinking things, actions involve social actors doing things, and unlike reactions 'can be probed by means of 'do' question' (p57). For example, we can answer the question 'what was he doing?' with the answer 'he was lifting him on to a chair', but not so easily with the response, 'he was feeling sorry for him'. As I shall discuss below there are some exceptions to this test, but it is nevertheless useful as a general guide.

In understanding the significance and value that volunteers attach to volunteering it is useful to examine whether, in narratives of significant volunteering

experiences, informants represent themselves and beneficiaries as primarily doing things or whether they represent themselves and beneficiaries as primarily reacting or responding to things, or in other words whether they represent themselves and beneficiaries as agents of action, or as subjects of reactions.

The representation of informants as primarily actors or reactors suggests a distinction between two different conceptions of, and agendas for, volunteering. On the one hand, the active representation of the self in these narratives suggests a conception of volunteering as a form of action. For example, they may see volunteering as a means of transforming lives, a means of overcoming personal challenges or achieving goals. The 'reactive' representation of self suggests that volunteering is less about being an agent of action and more about being the subject of reactions, of mental and emotional processes, for example of feeling good about seeing others flourish and change, or of witnessing and learning about the self, others or the world. Likewise the frequent representation of beneficiaries as people who primarily react, who think and more importantly feel things, suggests a greater concern with beneficiaries' emotional and conceptual experiences, which in turn suggests a more altruistic concern for beneficiaries' wellbeing. In following sections I also examine the kinds of actions informants and beneficiaries perform or reactions informants and beneficiaries are subject to, and also look further at whom these actions and reactions involve.

Van Leeuwen points out that actions can be realized by material, verbal or behavioural processes, and reactions can be realized by mental processes in all their varieties. In seeking to understand the kinds of action or reaction informants

represent themselves performing, it is tempting to perform a transitivity analysis. However, there are two issues with this approach.

Firstly, the linguistic realization of particular processes may involve lexical or phrasal metaphors. For example, as van Leeuwen points out, the emotive processes 'feel' and 'fear' can act as cognitive processes (p58). A frequent example from my own data is the phrase 'brought home' as in the sentence 'that brought home to me how vulnerable these people are'. 'Brought home' is a material process functioning as a cognitive process, suggesting the realization of something.

This issue can be circumvented relatively easily. However a more serious issue, as van Leeuwen observes, is that process types are an insufficient and ultimately inadequate criteria for identifying representations of social action, because process types 'are bound up with the grammar of the clause, and fail to provide recognition criterion for actions and reactions realized at other linguistic levels' (p58). For example 'I felt amazing' and 'it was an amazing feeling' are arguably grammatical variants of the same meaning. In the first variant a feeling of amazement is realized as an affective process, in the second it is realized as a value in a relational process.

Halliday allows for the semantic equivalence of different grammatical constructions through the concept of grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 2014). According to this concept, one grammatical construction can be said to be the grammatically 'metaphorical' realization of another 'congruent' construction. For instance, although 'feeling' is a value in a relational process in the above example, it can be interpreted as a grammatical metaphor for an affective mental process. Van Leeuwen takes issue with the characterisation of one linguistic realization as congruent and the other metaphorical, arguing that they are 'two different ways of

representing [actions and] reactions, both equally metaphorical or equally literal' (p57). Van Leeuwen's approach is to distinguish between the semantic affordances of different linguistic realizations. For example, according to his socio-semantic inventory of social action, 'it felt amazing' 'activates' the reaction of 'feeling', because by representing feeling as a verb it represents the process of feeling as a dynamic, active process. In contrast, 'it was an amazing feeling' deactivates the process of feeling by representing the process as an adjective, thus 'descriptivising' it. For van Leeuwen, both are different and equally metaphorical ways of representing reality, neither is more 'congruent' than the other. While it is important to recognise van Leeuwen's warning that one linguistic realization is not more congruent with reality than another, it is nevertheless useful on a practical level to consider material, behavioural and verbal processes as archetypal grammatical realizations of action and mental processes as archetypal grammatical realizations of reactions, and to use the term 'metaphorical' to refer to linguistic realizations that are semantically equivalent to grammatically 'congruent' processes.

Recognising that actions and reactions can be realized in lexically and grammatically variant ways means embracing a formally messy approach to linguistic description. But as van Leeuwen points out 'one cannot have it both ways with language. Either theory and method are formally neat but semantically messy... or they are semantically neat but formally messy' (p24). Van Leeuwen points out some of the various ways that actions and reactions can be realized at the clausal level. Actions and reactions can be realized as verbs and adjectives as we have seen, but they can also be realized by, for example, nominalisations and process nouns as with 'migration' in 'migration has dried up'. This does not exhaust the possibilities, but the

point here is that we need to recognise the representation of actions and reactions at other levels of the clause. As with the identification of active and passive representations, the distinguishing test is a semantic question: is a social actor represented as doing something (action), or responding to (thinking/feeling) something?

However the formal messiness that van Leeuwen refers to gets considerably messier if we take into account reactions that are represented indirectly rather than those that are directly inscribed. Sometimes reactions are expressed implicitly, as in the following example:

1. 'so I went round and introduced myself personally and his wife came to the door and I said 'do you mind if I come in and talk to your husband' and she said 'yes, come in' an she led me into the lounge and *nothing would have prepared you for this David, nothing would have prepared you for this*, and she said 'this is my husband', and the poor man was sitting on his settee and he was just his torso - he was - he'd lost all his limbs, yknow.'

If we try to identify the lexically inscribed reactions of the informant here it would be difficult to pinpoint a particular word or phrase that inscribes a reaction by the informant. However, there is the clear sense here of shocked and empathic reactions by the informant to what he witnessed, which are not expressed directly, but rather are expressed indirectly in his use of evaluation. In the above example, the repeated phrase 'nothing would have prepared you for this David, nothing would have prepared you for this' could reasonably be interpreted as a semantic variant of the



‘congruent’ realization ‘I was so shocked by what I saw’. An empathic reaction is further signalled through the inscribed evaluation of the beneficiary in ‘the poor man’, and in the evoking signal ‘just’ in ‘he was just his torso’, which together could be interpreted as a semantic variant of the congruent realization ‘I felt so sorry for him’.

At this stage we can thus say that reactions can be realized directly through mental processes, or their metaphorical equivalents, or indirectly through the use of inscribed or invoked evaluation (Table 6.1). This distinction is drawn by Martin and White (2005) and will be returned to in the next chapter.

<i>Realizations of Reaction</i>	<i>Example</i>
Direct realization - Congruent mental process (inscribed evaluation)	‘I was <i>shocked</i> by what I saw’
Direct realization - Metaphorical mental process (inscribed evaluation)	‘What I saw was <i>shocking</i> ’
Indirect realization – inscribed or invoked evaluation	‘ <i>Nothing would have prepared you for this David, nothing would have prepared you for this</i> ’

**Table 6.1:** Realizations of reaction: From congruent realizations to invoked evaluations

As discussed above, van Leeuwen’s approach is to inventorize the meanings that different realizations of the same meaning encode. Following this lead, we might say that reactions can be objectivized or subjectivized. ‘What I saw was shocking’ suggests that anyone would likewise be shocked by what they saw, whereas ‘I was shocked by what I saw’ suggests a personal affective reaction. The former is an attempt to

objectivize the reaction, while the latter can be seen as a subjectivization of the reaction. The objectivization of a reaction may serve various functions. For example, it may be used to increase the tellability of the narrative, as an invitation for listeners to react in the way the teller reacted, whereas a subjectivized reaction may be selected to emphasise the personal values of the speaker.

The discussion above has focused on affective reactions, but cognitive and perceptive reactions can also be invoked rather than inscribed, as in the following example:

2. 'there was the man that was sitting in front of me that wasn't the same as the man that was on this white card and again that was quite shocking'

The evaluation in the final clause inscribes an affective reaction. However, there is also implicit here a perceptive process of observation and a cognitive process of comparison between the image of the man on his card and the man sitting in front of her 'that wasn't the same'. We could reasonably translate these into the congruent realizations 'I *looked* at the man in front of me and the man that was on the white card, I *compared* their appearance and was *shocked* at the difference'. Thus a perceptive reaction is invoked by the description of the cognitive process, rather than inscribed.

#### 6.2.2.2 Calculating Action Frequency Scores

To identify the frequency with which informants and beneficiaries are represented as actors or reactors, I firstly generated an 'action' score by dividing the number of references to informants' actions with the total number of references to informants'

actions and reactions. I then did the same for beneficiaries. This involved a number of practical decisions in my analysis that I explain below.

A directly inscribed reaction or action was counted as one reference. False starts sometimes involved the repetition or correction of an action or reaction and these were discounted. Informants often intentionally repeated the representation of particular actions or reactions throughout the narrative for emphasis. These repetitions were counted as separate references.

References to reactions which were realized indirectly were, however, more complicated to isolate and count. Martin and White point out that evaluative meanings can be 'splash[ed] across a phase of discourse' (2005: 10), making it difficult to equate one evaluative strategy with one reference to a reaction. For example, in the first extract cited above, the reaction of shock is expressed through various aspects of the evaluation – the repetition of the phrase 'nothing could prepare you for this', various lexical items such as 'just' and 'all', as well as various prosodic features not represented in this transcription. Should each evaluative device be counted as a separate reaction, which is repeated, or should they collectively be treated as one? In my analysis I treated them collectively as one reaction that is emphasised, recognising that, like other approaches to statistical frequency, such emphasis is not represented by a frequency statistic. A test question for classifying such responses was: can the evaluation be collectively replaced with one congruent realization, or are additional realizations needed?

However, in some instances, informants both signal an invoked reaction and then follow this up with an explicitly inscribed reaction, as in extract two above. In

these cases, I counted the invoked reaction and the inscribed reaction as separate instances.

Some actions and reactions are not explicitly inscribed but are ellipsed, as in the following example:

3. 'us as volunteers come in quite shy and - whether we're going to fit in and whether we're going to like it'

There appears to be an ellipsed verb here between 'and' and 'whether', indicated by the pause. The verb 'wonder' seems the most reasonable candidate, and even this seems to be the metaphorical realization of the affective mental process of fear. In these instances, informants resort to a shared knowledge to imply the representation of an ellipsed action or reaction, rather than explicitly expressing it. In these instances, the action was inferred and counted as a reference.

Similarly, the informants themselves were sometimes ellipsed as agents of actions or subjects of reaction, but are the implied agents. This was especially true of reactions realized as evaluations, as in the following evaluation that follows a story in which the informant learns of the death of one of the beneficiaries at the homeless shelter:

4. 'that was difficult but valuable'

'That was difficult' expresses an affective reaction by the informant to the death of the beneficiary. The informant is not explicitly mentioned but can be inferred as the

ellipsed subject of this reaction. After 'that was difficult', we could reasonably insert the phrase 'for me'. Thus in some instances, reasonable inference was required on my part to identify the implied agent or subject of an action or reaction.

Some represented actions or reactions were negated as in the following example:

5. 'I'd never done this before'

These are instances of marked inaction rather than action, and were not included as instances of action. However, in this instance, as in most instances, the representation of negated action realizes a reaction, and could here reasonably be replaced with the congruent realization 'I felt intimidated by the prospect of doing this'.

As discussed above, van Leeuwen suggests that material, behavioural and verbal processes correlate to actions and mental processes correlate to reactions. This distinction passivates mental processes as things people experience rather than things that people do, and on the whole this is a fair reflection of the ways that mental processes are represented in my data. However, some cognitive and perceptive processes seem more accurately described as forms of action, as in the following example:

6. 'I was always wondering about his background'

Using van Leeuwen's test question for identifying action 'what was she doing' we can answer that 'she was wondering about his background'. In this example, the informant

represents herself as actively thinking about and reflecting on the background of the beneficiary. It is something she represents herself as choosing to do, rather than something she experiences passively. These (infrequent) representations of mental 'action' were counted as instances of action.

### 6.2.2.3 Interactive Action

Drawing on Halliday's distinction between transactive and non-transactive material processes, van Leeuwen distinguishes between actions that are 'transactive' in that they have an effect on the world or others, and actions that are 'non-transactive' in that they do not. Furthermore he distinguishes between 'interactive' transactive actions, which affect people, and 'instrumental' transactive actions, which affect other kinds of entities (p60). While Halliday's distinction applied to material processes, van Leeuwen extends the concept to apply to all kinds of represented action.

In seeking to understand the significance that volunteers attach to their volunteering, this distinction is critically relevant in determining the frequency with which informants represent themselves as agents of people-oriented action or other kinds of action. More particularly, we can ask: to what extent do volunteers represent themselves primarily as agents of interactive action involving the beneficiaries of the charity or other kinds of action?

One way of investigating the extent to which volunteers represent themselves primarily as agents of interactive action involving beneficiaries is to compare the frequencies of represented interactive action involving beneficiaries with representations of other kinds of social action in the narratives. For ease of reference,

when I refer to informants' interactive action, I am referring specifically to action that involves informants acting in a way that affects or benefits beneficiaries.

I also conducted a similar analysis for beneficiaries, but focused more generally on all kinds of interactive action they were involved in.

#### 6.2.2.4 Calculating Interactive Action Frequency Scores

I generated an informants' 'interactive action' score by dividing the number of instances of informants' interactive action by the total number of instances of informants' represented action. I also did the same for beneficiaries. For ease of reference here, I will henceforth refer to the social actor(s) with whom either the informant or the beneficiary is interacting as the *interactant*.

Interactive action can be realized through grammatical participation. The interactant may be represented as the goal or beneficiary in a material process, the receiver, target or beneficiary of a verbal process, or in the case of mental action, the phenomenon in a mental process.

Following what has been said above, we also need to include the ways that interactants are represented in grammatical metaphors. For instance, 'I had his tea ready' is a relational process that does not explicitly refer to the beneficiary as a participant. However, it can reasonably be interpreted as an alternative variant of the congruent form 'I made tea for him before he arrived', which is a material process involving an interactant as a grammatical beneficiary.

Just as we need to infer ellipsed agents of action and ellipsed action, so also we sometimes need to infer ellipsed interactants, as in the following example:

‘It meant so much to him. For me to help with his benefit form’

‘Help’ in this instance is a non-transactive process followed by a circumstance. However we could reasonably insert ‘him’ after ‘help’ in this instance, rendering the clause semantically equivalent to the interactive action ‘I helped him with his benefit form’.

An examination of the following instance raises several issues:

‘she found it so hard to get ready because she didn’t want anyone to help her but she couldn’t help herself at the same time and *it was hard to manage that*’

Here, the deictic ‘that’ points to a situation, represented in the previous clauses in which a beneficiary is the subject, and which the ellipsed informant found hard to ‘manage’. There is an affective aspect to this verb, but also a material aspect. It can be interpreted as an interactive action because the goal of the verb is a situation involving a beneficiary. This example also illustrates the role that deixis can play in pointing anaphorically or cataphorically to such situations.

#### 6.2.2.5 Interactive Reactions

In van Leeuwen’s inventory, the concept of ‘transaction’ applies to action but not to reactions. However, I would argue that the concept is also relevant in describing different types of reaction. It is possible to represent a reaction as ‘non-transactive’ e.g. ‘I felt sad’, in which a reaction is not represented as a response ‘to something’, or ‘transactive’, e.g. ‘I felt sad about losing’, which is a reaction to something. In this case



the 'transaction' is happening in reverse – rather than an actor affecting a thing, a thing is affecting an actor.

Similarly, transactive reactions can be represented as interactive or non-interactive. 'I felt sad about losing' is a transactive reaction towards a non-human thing, but it is also possible to represent reactions as interactive reactions that are directed towards people, for example 'I felt sorry for him', or circumstances involving people, for example 'I am pleased when people have got enjoyment'.

#### 6.2.2.6 Calculating Interactive Reaction Scores

In my analysis, I generated an 'interactive reaction score' for informants by dividing the number of informants' interactive reactions by the total number of informants' represented reactions. I also did the same for beneficiaries.

As in the examples above, interactive reactions can be realized through grammatical participation, when human actors, or circumstances involving human actors, constitute the phenomenon of a mental process. As with interactive action, for ease of reference when I refer to informants' 'interactive reactions' here I am specifically referring to reactions involving beneficiaries.

Interactants can appear as almost any participant in clauses functioning as the phenomenon of an interactive reaction. For example, in the extract given above 'I am pleased when people have got enjoyment', 'people' are the carriers of a value in a relational clause, which functions as the phenomenon of the affective process 'pleased', in which the informant is the senser. However, in the following example of an interactive reaction, 'I was pleased to see them do that for him', an interactant ('him') is the grammatical beneficiary of a material process, in which others ('them')

are the actors. Mental processes can be realized metaphorically as I have discussed above, and as some of the examples below illustrate.

As with interactive actions, deixis can be used to point anaphorically or cataphorically to other clauses designated as the phenomenon of an interactive reaction. This is especially common with reactions represented as evaluation, as in the following example of a cataphoric reference pointing to the phenomenon of the descriptivised affective process, represented in the final clause:

'she was crying one Christmas – because between this meeting and January, she wasn't go to see anybody. (hmm) – now whether you're religious or like me – an agnostic – I don't care, *that to me was heart breaking*'

In this example, 'that' refers anaphorically back to two clauses in which a beneficiary is a behavior ('she was crying...') and a senser ('she wasn't going to see anybody'). Thus 'that to me was heart breaking' can be interpreted as an interactive reaction towards the phenomenon mentioned in these earlier clauses.

Similarly, referring back to the extract I cited earlier, 'this' in the following is an example of cataphoric deixis pointing forward to a clause that is the phenomenon of a reaction represented as invoked evaluation:

*'nothing would have prepared you for **this** David, nothing would have prepared you for **this**, and she said 'this is my husband'. And the poor man was sitting on his settee and he was just his torso'*

The emboldened deixis in this example points forward to the clause 'he was just his torso', in which the beneficiary is the token ('he') in an identifying relational clause. The whole is semantically equivalent to the grammatically 'congruent' interactive process 'I was shocked by the man's condition'.

While in these cases, the deictic reference is signalled lexically through 'that' and 'this', it is also possible for deixis to be signalled in other ways, as in the following example:

'She wasn't go to see anybody. I mean I've got family and friends I can call on, but this poor woman was not going to see anybody, *I thought 'nah'* – that made a mark on me.'

'I thought 'nah'' can be interpreted as the representation of a feeling of empathy in response to the situation of the beneficiary he describes in previous clauses. We know that this situation is the phenomenon of the reaction because of the sequence, rather than lexical signalling. There is a 'stimulus/response' relation between the description and the evaluation that is semantically equivalent to the senser/phenomenon relation in an affective mental process.

#### 6.2.2.7 Types of Reaction: Mental and Emotional

Van Leeuwen draws upon Halliday's distinction between 3 types of mental processes in distinguishing between cognitive, perceptive and affective reactions (p58). In more recent work, Halliday distinguishes between perceptive, cognitive, emotive and desiderative processes (2014). Semantically, cognitive and perceptive processes are

very closely related and often difficult to separate. For example, 'I saw him' involves both the process of seeing something, but also mental recognition of a stimulus. Likewise, desiderative processes and emotive processes are also semantically related – desire is a type of emotion. For these reasons I will distinguish between mental reactions, which consist of either cognitive or perceptive processes, and affective reactions, which consist of either emotive or desiderative processes.

In order to understand what volunteers understand themselves to be doing when they volunteer, it is useful to know the relative frequency with which they represent themselves as people who think – who observe and reflect on what they see - or people who feel. 'Education' is a key semantic domain in the Y corpus, and several words related to education are statistically significant keywords. The frequent self-representation of Y informants as people who think rather than feel could suggest that observing, learning and reflecting is a significant aspect of why younger volunteers do what they do, supporting the findings of several research projects. In my analysis I divided the total number of reactions by the number of mental or emotional reactions in order to determine a frequency score for each.

Likewise, to return to an earlier point, the frequent representation of beneficiaries as people who feel rather than think, suggests a more altruistic concern for beneficiaries' emotional wellbeing than those who either do not talk about beneficiaries' cognitive or emotive states, or even their cognitive states.

There were some instances of overlap between mental and emotional processes. For example, 'surprise' as in 'I was surprised by what I saw' involves both the mental recognition of something unexpected or unusual, and an affective reaction

related to shock. In order to reflect the two types of meanings in the frequency score, in these instances I counted both a mental and an affective reaction.

#### 6.2.2.8 Interactive Mental and Emotional Reactions

In understanding how volunteers make sense of and value what they do, I am particularly interested in the extent to which volunteers represent volunteering as a moral activity and the nature of informants' moral orientations. A high frequency of interactive reactions suggests a deeper concern with or for beneficiaries, which might reflect an altruistic concern for the wellbeing of recipients. But we can probe this further to explore the nature of these reactions. Do informants primarily represent themselves as people who observe and reflect on what they see concerning beneficiaries, or do they represent themselves primarily as people who feel things for or about beneficiaries? In my analysis I divided the number of mental or emotional interactive reactions by the total number of interactive reactions, to determine a frequency score for each. I also did the same for beneficiaries.

#### 6.2.2.9 Beneficiaries' Reactions

Above I argued that the frequent representation of beneficiaries' affective reactions suggests a sense of concern for beneficiaries' emotional wellbeing. However, it is possible to probe this further by investigating the kinds of affective reactions beneficiaries are represented as having. Martin and White distinguish three types of affect: un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction (2005: 49). Since in/security and dis/satisfaction are forms of un/happiness, I often found it difficult to distinguish clearly between these affective types. I classified a number of sub-types of emotion in

my data such as physical/emotional pain, anxiety, frustration, gratitude, confidence and so forth, which can be broadly classified into positive and negative affect. I counted the instances in each interview to generate a frequency of affect types for each interview.

### 6.2.3 Section Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have thus presented my methods for addressing the following questions:

1. How frequently do informants refer to themselves, beneficiaries or others?
2. How frequently do they refer to themselves or others as a group? Who do they include in this group?
3. How frequently are informants and beneficiaries activated or passivated?
4. How frequently are informants and beneficiaries represented as actors or reactors?
5. How frequently are informants and beneficiaries' actions and reactions represented as targeted at or benefiting beneficiaries?
6. How frequently are informants and beneficiaries' reactions cognitive or emotional?
7. What kinds of emotions are beneficiaries represented as feeling?

Asking these questions will be the basis for identifying insights and areas for further analysis in relation to the central research questions of this thesis, which will be addressed in the following section.

The focus here on general frequencies is likely to engender two criticisms. Firstly, frequencies overlook the significance of particular instances and the sequence of instances across a text. For example, one approach taken in this chapter is to identify the frequency with which informants represent beneficiaries as active or passive. This approach ignores the role of evaluation in picking out one particular instance as more important than others. It also ignores the way in which the representation of beneficiaries' agency over the course of the narratives might change from passive to active or vice-versa. As van Leeuwen points out, 'it is important to realize that frequencies often shift with the stages in the writer's argument and may not be an overall characteristic of the text' (p31). However, statistically significant frequencies can nevertheless provide general indications of informants' concerns and motivations that can be a useful point of analysis in conjunction with other analyses including an analysis of structural patterns at the textual level, which is the focus of the next chapter.

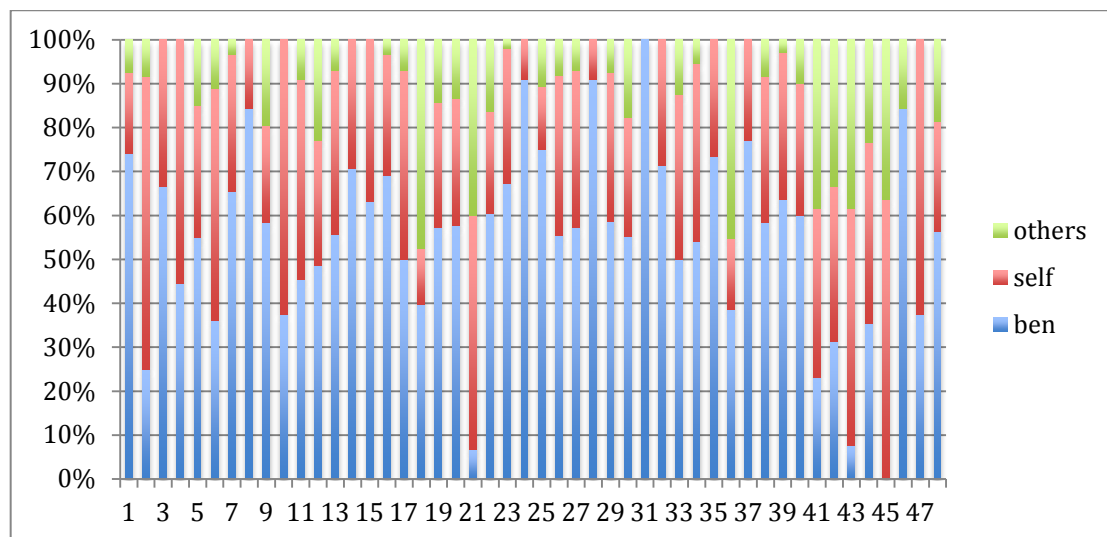
Another issue is that the extracted narratives are sometimes short and the numbers involved for each narrative can sometimes be small. However, an assumption in this chapter is that even a short narrative can convey the significance volunteers attach to their volunteering. For instance exclusively referring to beneficiaries rather than other volunteers in a small narrative suggests that an informant is more concerned with or for beneficiaries than other volunteers. The aim of this chapter to identify patterns of frequency that emerge across the interviews and small numbers frequently repeated across the 48 interviews constitutes a significant pattern.

### 6.3. Findings

In this section I present my findings and discuss their potential significance, highlighting in the process pathways for further investigation.

#### 6.3.1 Inclusion

Figure 1 depicts the proportion of references to self (red), beneficiaries (blue) and others (green) in each narrative.



**Figure 6.1:** *Social actor reference frequencies*

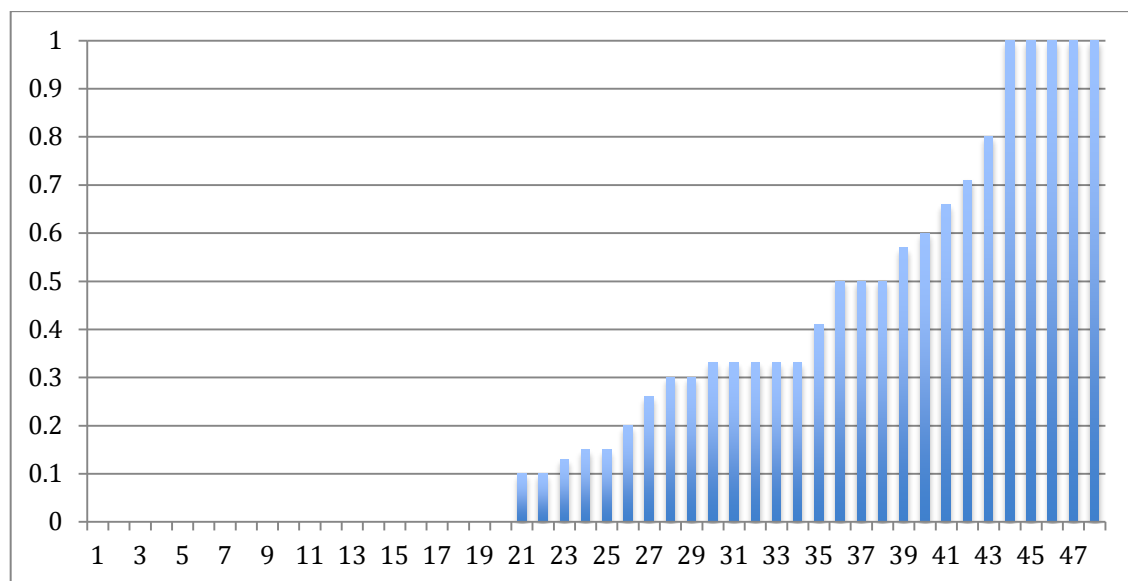
Figure 6.1 illustrates that despite some exceptions there is a dominant trend for informants to refer to beneficiaries more than any other group including themselves. On the whole this suggests that informants represent beneficiaries as playing a key role in what they find significant about volunteering, or beneficiaries are foregrounded as key participants in the narratives informants share. However, Figure



6.1 also suggests that informants refer to themselves fairly frequently and thus also appear to play a key role in these narratives.

### 6.3.2 Assimilation

Figure 6.2 illustrates informants' assimilation scores, in order of frequency.



**Figure 6.2:** *Informant assimilation frequency scores*

Of the 47 informants who refer to themselves, 19 informants never assimilate themselves. Of the 27 informants who do assimilate themselves, only ten informants assimilate themselves more than half the time. There is thus a tendency for informants to refer to themselves as an individual more frequently than as a collective.

Out of the 27 informants who assimilate themselves, 24 informants assimilate themselves either definitely or possibly with other volunteers, or the volunteering organisation. Four informants either definitely or possibly assimilate themselves with

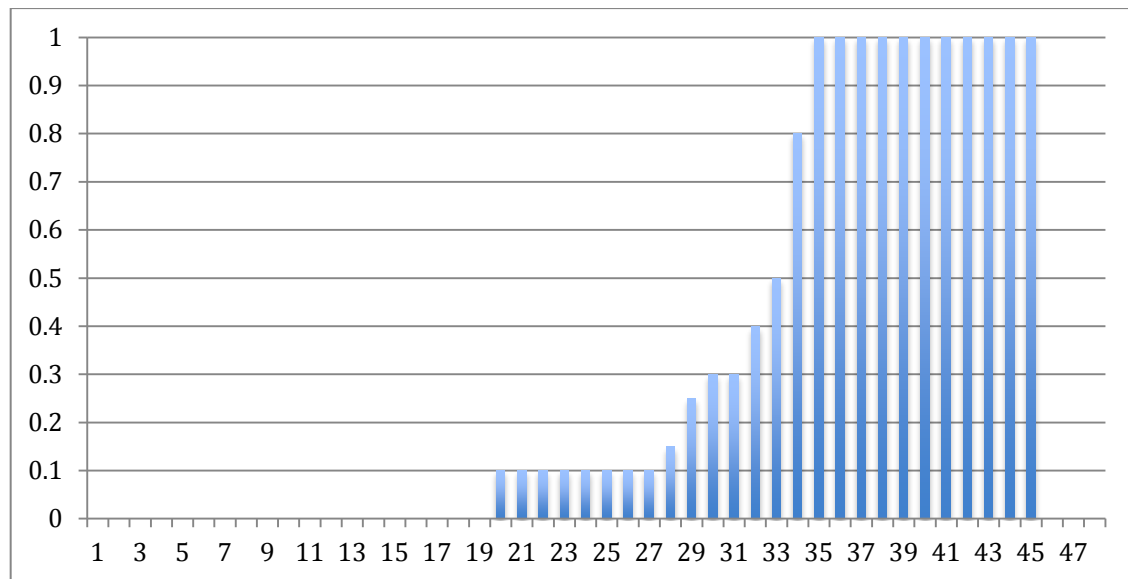
beneficiaries and a further four volunteers assimilate themselves with others. Thus when informants do assimilate themselves they demonstrate a tendency to assimilate themselves with other volunteers or the organisation in which they volunteer.

Informants do not tend to affiliate themselves with beneficiaries in these experiences. Thus while volunteers appear to frequently talk about beneficiaries, these do not seem to be experiences in which informants have experiences with beneficiaries, but rather experiences involving beneficiaries as separate entities. There appears from these overall frequencies to be a distance or separation between volunteers and beneficiaries in these narratives. There may be a variety of reasons for this distance. The most obvious explanation is that this division is a reflection of the nature of the volunteer-beneficiary relationship, in which volunteers (collectively and individually) provide services and beneficiaries benefit from those services. This relationship necessarily entails representing a distance between these two types of participants. However, from another perspective this distance may reflect a desire on the part of informants to position themselves in opposition to beneficiaries, as a way of shaping and constructing an identity in opposition to that of the identity of beneficiaries.

There is a tendency for some informants to affiliate themselves with other volunteers and the volunteering organisation. Perhaps for these informants, volunteering is at least to some extent a collective rather than an individual experience, and perhaps belonging to a group, whether a local group of volunteers or a volunteering organisation is an important part of what it means to be a volunteer. However, the overall tendency for informants to represent themselves as an

individual also suggests that volunteering is for most informants a predominantly personal and individual activity.

Moving now from informants to beneficiaries, beneficiaries' assimilation frequency scores are illustrated in Figure 3 below:

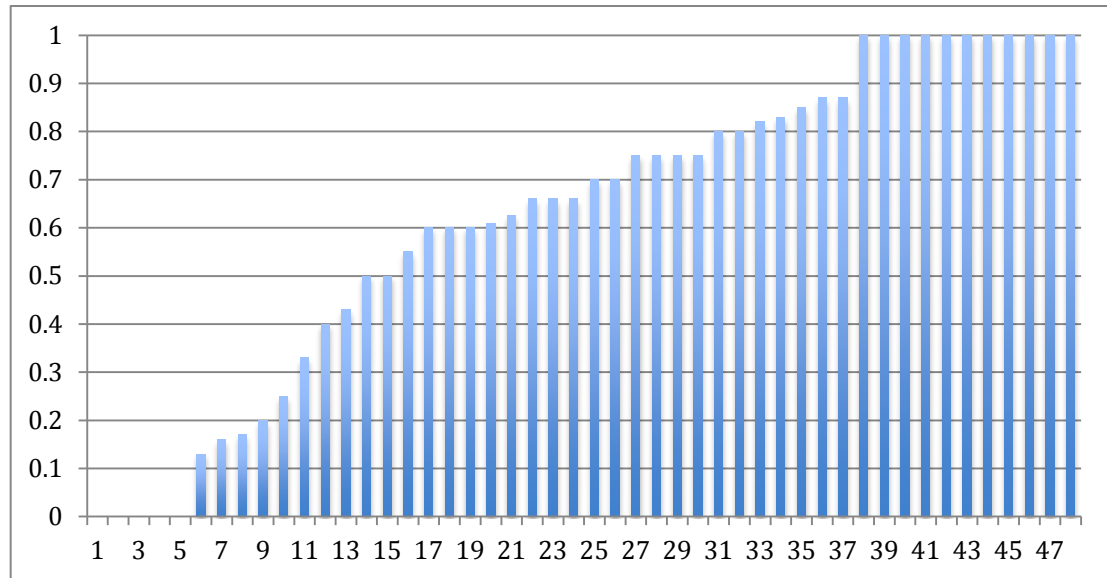


**Figure 6.3:** *Beneficiary assimilation frequency scores*

Figure 6.3 illustrates the frequency with which beneficiaries are assimilated or individualised. While 13 informants assimilate beneficiaries more than half of the time, there is a dominant tendency for informants to refer to individual beneficiaries more frequently than groups of beneficiaries. This suggests that volunteers attach more value to experiences involving individual beneficiaries than groups of beneficiaries and that for these volunteers volunteering is more about the one-to-one experience of helping individuals, rather than collectives.

### 6.3.3 Activation

Figure 6.4 below illustrates informants' activation scores.



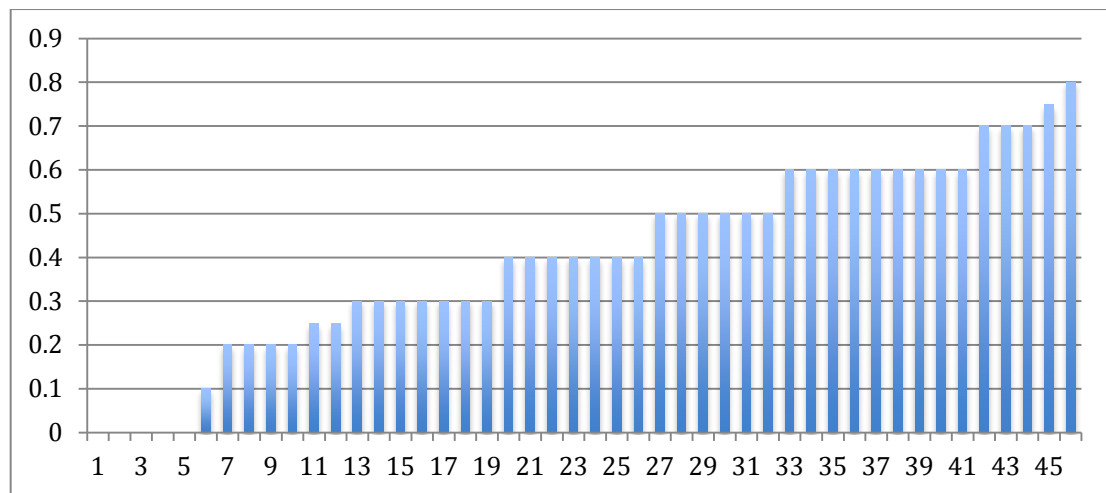
**Figure 6.4:** Informant activation frequency scores

As illustrated, 33 of the 48 informants represent themselves as active more frequently than passive. There is thus a degree of preference across the interviews for active self-representation. This preference suggests that being an agent, whether of thoughts, feelings, speech, behaviour or material action is an important aspect of being a volunteer for these informants. However, the chart also illustrates that that a significant proportion of informants passivate themselves more frequently than they activate themselves and there is also a significant degree of variation overall.

There are several possibilities for why some informants passivate themselves. One reason may be that these informants generally attach more value to experiences in which things happen to them as opposed to experiences in which they are the agent. The reasons for the degree of variation with which informants passivate or

activate themselves needs further exploration but could reflect the range of motivations informants have for volunteering.

Beneficiaries' activation scores are illustrated in Figure 6.5 below.



**Figure 6.5:** Beneficiary activation frequency scores

As discussed in Chapter Three, many have criticised volunteering as embodying an unequal power relationship between volunteering and beneficiaries in which volunteers are represented as active heroes and beneficiaries represented as passive. From this perspective we might expect a dominant tendency for beneficiaries to be represented as passive across the interviews, given that volunteering action is designed to benefit them. However, the findings illustrated in figure 6.5 challenge this hypothesis and demonstrate that, in terms of socio-semantic frequencies at the clause level this is not the case and it is quite variable. In 14 of the 50 interviews, beneficiaries are more frequently activated. Thus while some informants more frequently represent beneficiaries as the passive subjects of others' thoughts, feelings, words and actions, other informants represent them more dynamically, as the agents

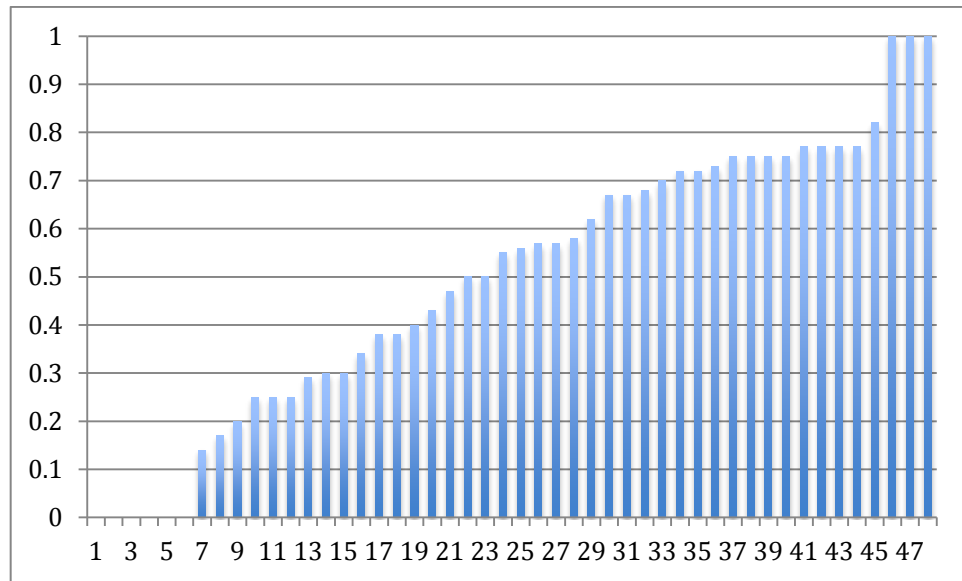
of various kinds of processes. Beneficiaries are thus often represented as empowered agents of various processes to varying degrees.

However, as discussed above, socio-semantic frequencies only deal with part of the picture. We also need to think more carefully about the sequence of the actions – do beneficiaries start out being passive subjects but become active agents towards the end of the representation? Also we need to consider the kinds of processes of which they are agent. As van Leeuwen points out some processes of which social actors can be the agent are mental processes, which include, for instance, feeling sadness or realising something. Such processes are arguably more passive than active, since they involve the participant being at the receiving end of something, rather the empowered agent of action that has an effect on the world.

#### 6.3.4 Social Action: Informants

In this section I discuss the frequency with which informants are represented as actors or reactors, and the frequency with which they act or react in different types of ways. In particular I focus on the extent to which their actions or reactions are interactively directed towards beneficiaries and what kinds of reactions towards beneficiaries they represent themselves as having.

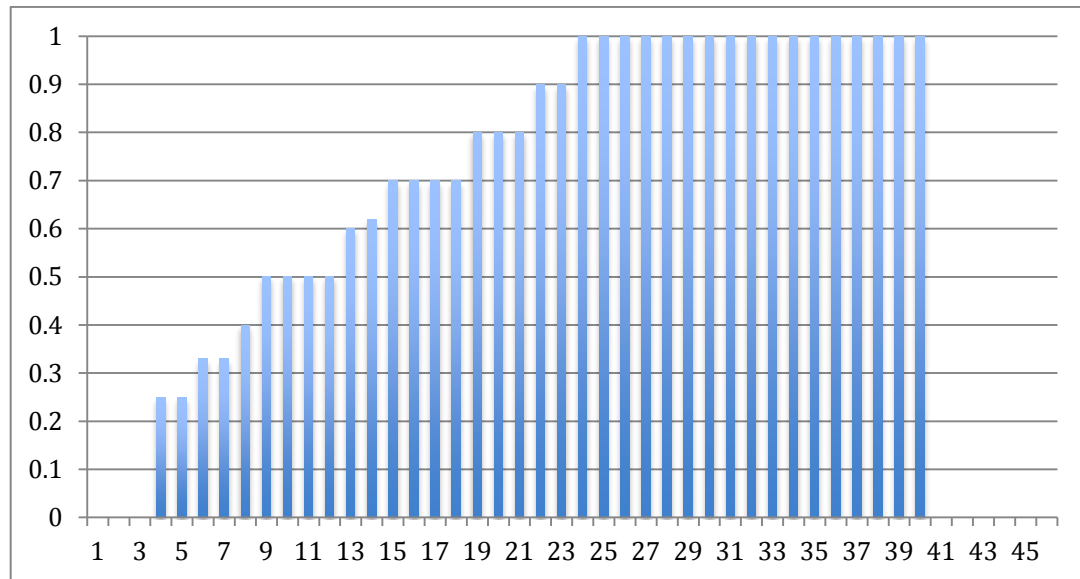
### 6.3.4.1 Informants' Action Scores



**Figure 6.6:** *Informants' action frequency scores*

Figure 6.6 illustrates that informants are represented as actors or reactors with varying frequencies and, like the activation scores, there appears to be no dominant pattern. Some volunteers more frequently represent themselves as social actors who experience feelings of various kinds, which might include excitement, fun, sympathy, sadness, satisfaction, or cognitive and perceptive processes such as seeing, learning, understanding, acknowledging, or processing. However other volunteers primarily represent themselves as affecting changes in the self or others and so forth. As Figure 6.6 illustrates there is great variation.

### 6.3.4.2 Informants' Interactive Action

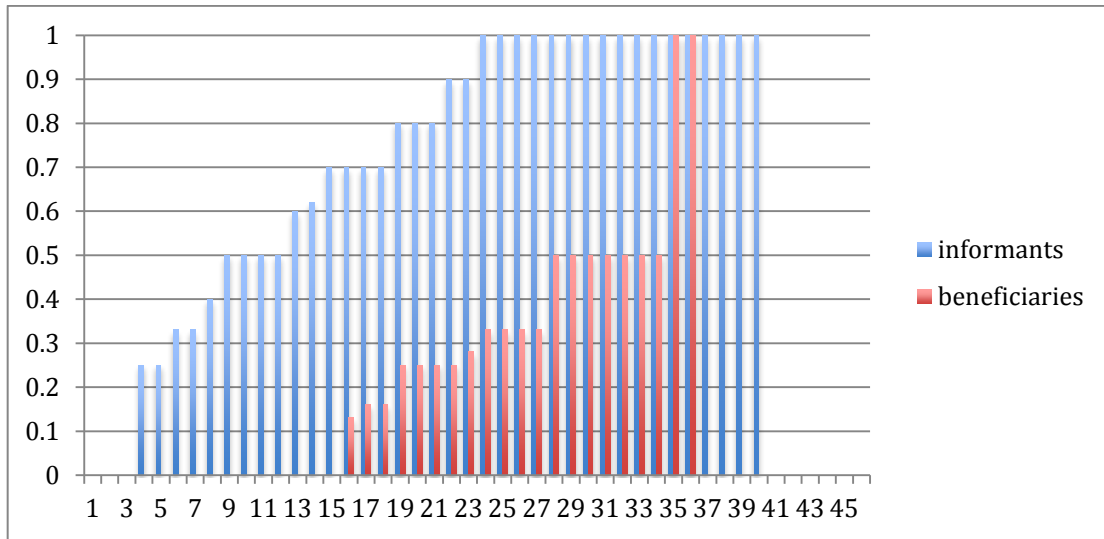


**Figure 6.7:** *Informants' interactive action frequency scores*

As Figure 6.7 illustrates, when informants do represent themselves as acting, it tends to be action that takes a beneficiary as an interactant. 32 of the 40 informants who represent themselves as actors represent their actions as interactive half or more than half of the time. In other words, when volunteers act in the narratives they tell, there is a strong tendency to represent their action as directed towards or involving beneficiaries in some way.

This finding is even more striking when we compare these scores with the interactive action scores for beneficiaries, as in Figure 6.8 below:



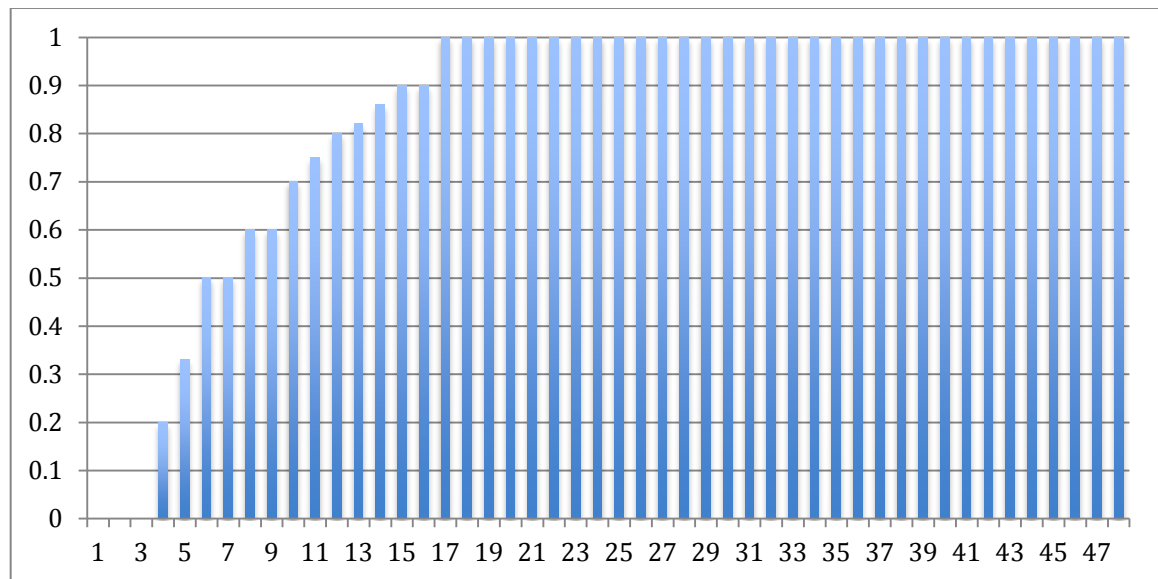


**Figure 6.8:** *Informants and beneficiaries' interactive action frequency scores*

It is important to highlight that informants' interactive action scores only counted action involving beneficiaries, whereas beneficiaries' interactive action scores included interactive action that involved any social actors, making the frequency with which informants represent their action as interactive all the more significant. I will return to beneficiaries' interactive action frequencies below.

The frequency with which informants represent themselves as interacting with beneficiaries suggests that having an impact upon or affecting beneficiaries is for these informants an important aspect of their volunteering experience.

### 6.3.4.3 Informants' Interactive Reactions

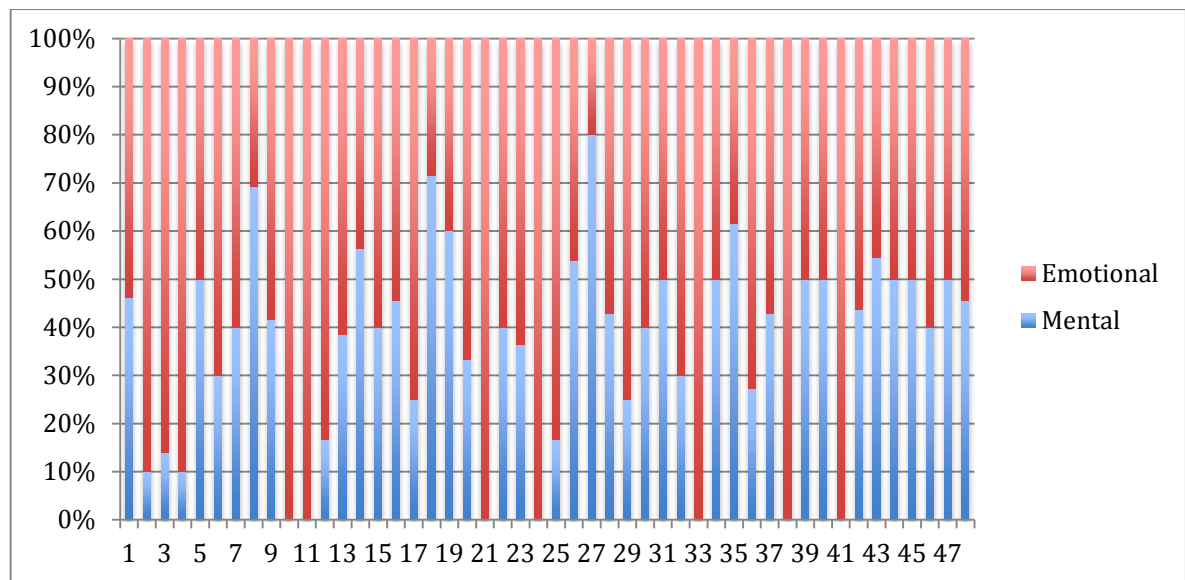


**Figure 6.9:** *Informants' interactive reaction frequency scores*

Moving now from informants' actions to reactions, Figure 6.9 illustrates informants' interactive reaction frequency scores. It indicates that there is an overwhelming frequency throughout the corpus for informants' emotional or cognitive reactions to be about or directed towards beneficiaries. In other words, when informants represent themselves as experiencing an emotional reaction such as excitement, sympathy, anxiety, sadness and so forth, it is an emotional reaction that tends to involve or be directed towards a beneficiary. Likewise, when informants experience a cognitive reaction such as a realization, a surprise, a comparison, an acknowledgement and so forth, it tends to be about, is directed towards or in some way involves beneficiaries.

#### 6.3.4.4 Informants' Mental and Emotional Interactive Reactions

Figure 6.10 illustrates a more detailed comparison of the frequencies with which these interactive reactions are mental or emotional.



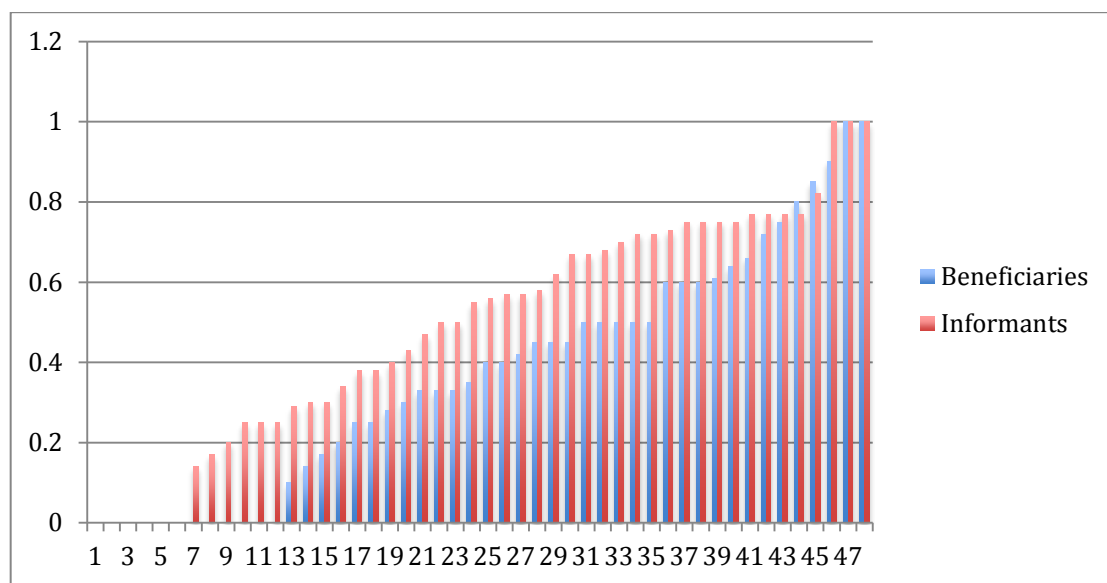
**Figure 6.10:** *Informants' interactive reaction types*

Figure 6.10 illustrates that informants' interactive reactions are both emotional and mental, but with an overall tendency towards emotional interactive reactions. Thus informants' interactive reactions frequently involve mental processes such as seeing, observing, comparing, assessing and so forth, but more often, and in some cases exclusively, they are about feeling emotions such as excitement, sadness, sympathy, and satisfaction, for or about or in some way involving beneficiaries.

### 6.3.5 Social Action: Beneficiaries

In this section I move on from focusing on the social action of informants to the social action of beneficiaries. In sections 6.3.5.1-2 I discuss beneficiaries' action and interactive action scores, and in the following two sections I discuss the different types of emotions beneficiaries are represented as having.

#### 6.3.5.1. Beneficiaries' Action Scores



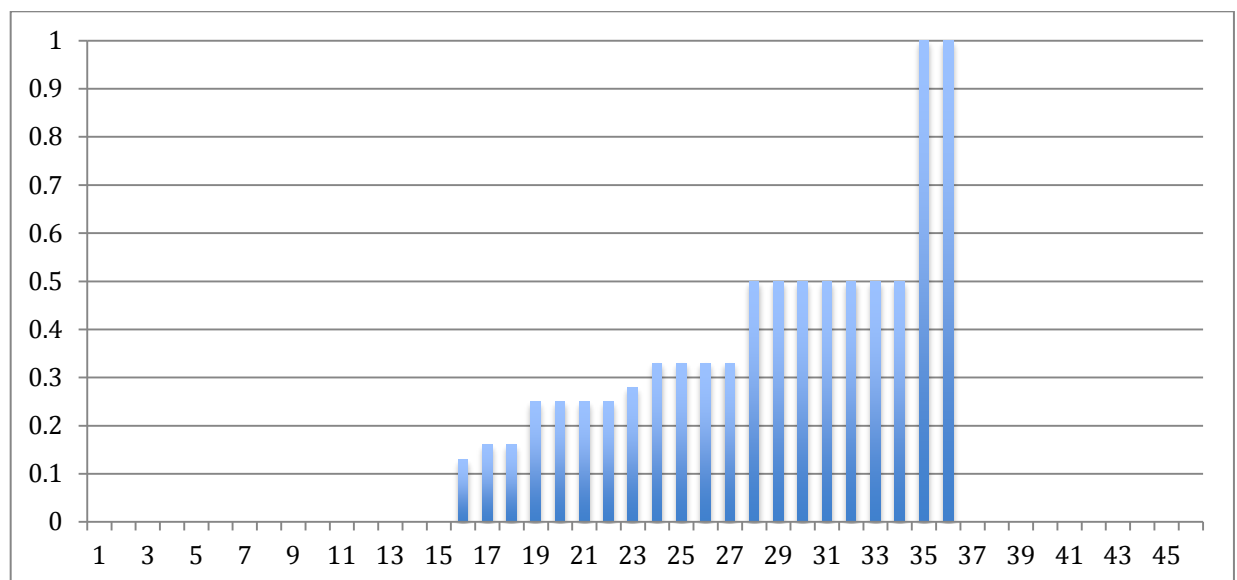
**Figure 6.11:** *Informants and beneficiaries' action frequency scores*

Figure 6.11 is a comparative graph of informants' and beneficiaries' action scores. Scores for informants and beneficiaries have been sorted from smallest to largest and have been layered over the top of each other. Doing so illustrates that on the whole beneficiaries are represented as reactors more frequently than informants. However, an important finding here is that, like the activation findings discussed in section 6.3.3 this difference is not as great as might have been expected and there is a great deal of

variability throughout the corpus, which challenges the hypothesis that beneficiaries would be more likely to be represented passively than actively.

### 6.3.5.2 Beneficiaries' Interactive Action Scores

Focusing more specifically on beneficiaries' interactive action frequency scores, Figure 6.12 illustrates that unlike informants, with the exception of a few beneficiaries, interactive action enacted by beneficiaries across the corpus is relatively rare.



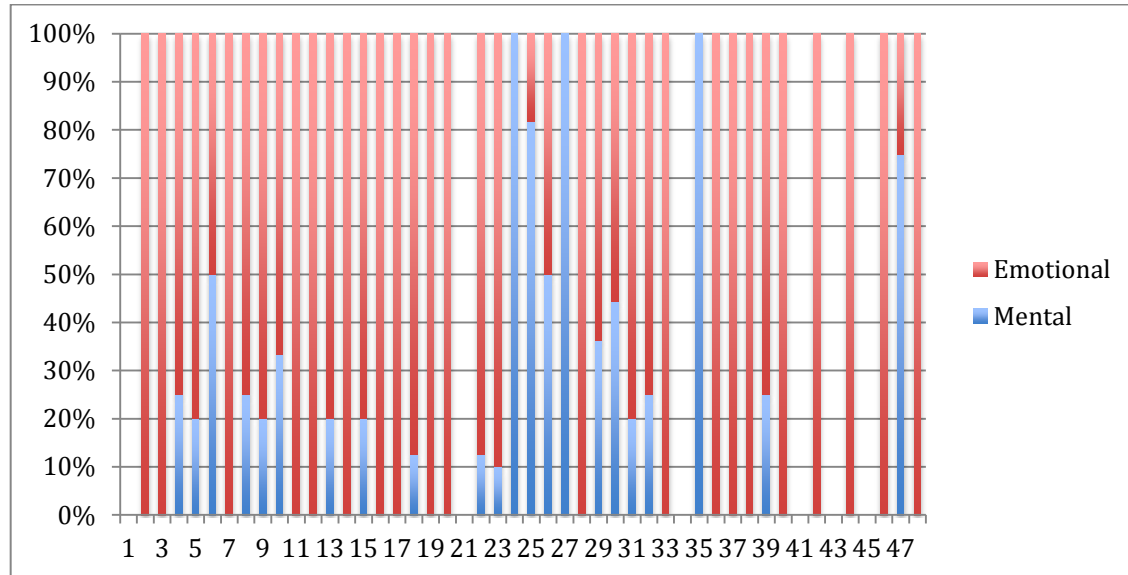
**Figure 6.12:** *Beneficiaries' interactive action frequency scores*

Thus when beneficiaries are reported as acting in the corpus, these actions are normally intransitive or they affect things. There is thus more of a tendency for informants to focus on beneficiaries' actions rather than their interactions with other people. In these narratives, beneficiaries are thus more disconnected from others in terms of their effect or impact upon them. The focus is more narrowly centred on the

movements and actions of beneficiaries in isolation from others. This point requires further investigation, which I will return to below.

Above I noted that informants' reactions are generally interactive with beneficiaries as the interactant. In striking contrast, the representation of beneficiaries' reactions as interactive is extremely rare. There are only four instances across four interviews. Thus while informants' reactions are generally directed towards beneficiaries, beneficiaries' reactions are, with very few exceptions, not directed at anyone. In other words, while informants generally feel, perceive or think things about beneficiaries, beneficiaries either just feel things or feel things about entities such as a situation or an object.

### 6.3.5.3 Beneficiaries' Reaction Types

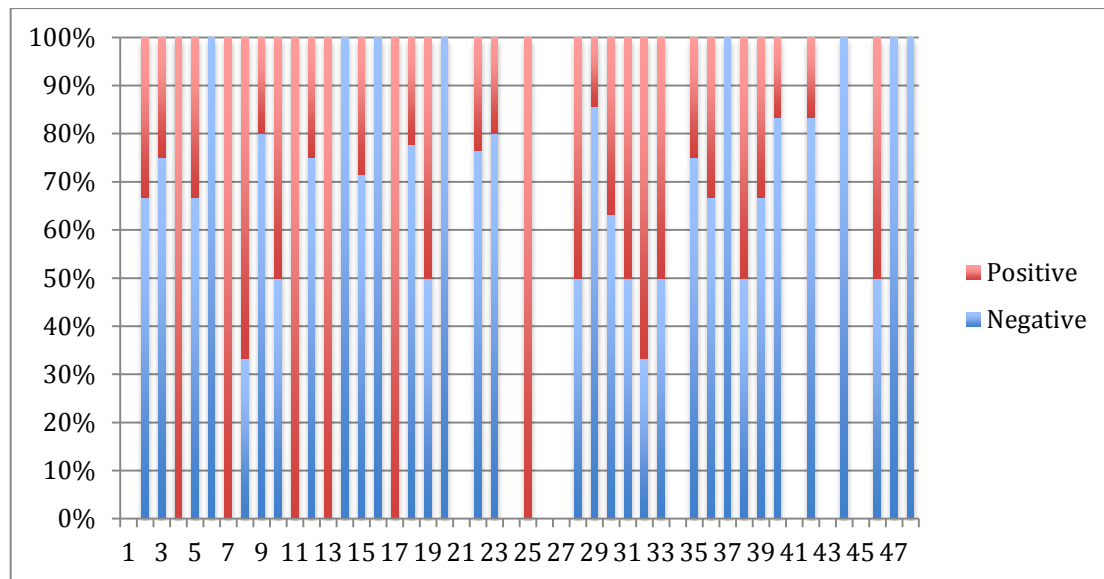


**Figure 6.13:** *Beneficiaries' mental and emotional reactions*

Figure 6.13 illustrates that when beneficiaries are represented as reactors, their reactions are more often emotional than mental, with a few exceptions. This suggests

that informants have a greater interest in beneficiaries' emotional experiences than their mental experiences.

Figure 6.14 illustrates the proportion of positive and negative emotions experienced by beneficiaries as represented in the interviews.



**Figure 6.14:** Proportions of beneficiaries' positive and negative emotions

As Figure 6.14 indicates, there is a greater tendency across the interviews to report beneficiaries as the subjects of negative emotional reactions such as frustration, anxiety, insecurity, dissatisfaction and sadness. This greater frequency suggests that there is in general a sense of concern for beneficiaries' negative emotional experiences.

### 6.3.6 Conclusion

These socio-semantic patterns across the corpus of interviews suggest a number of insights in relation to the central research questions. Firstly, informants represent

themselves as both passive and active, and both as actors and reactors to varying degrees and there is no overall pattern in terms of frequency, which seems to suggest that volunteers have a range of motivations for volunteering. Some more frequently represent themselves as involved in cognitive reactions - of observing, looking, learning, comparing, while others primarily represent themselves as involved in emotional reactions involving beneficiaries, such as feeling sympathy for others or having feelings of personal satisfaction. Others see themselves as primarily effecting action and possibly change in either the lives of themselves or beneficiaries.

Likewise, beneficiaries are also often represented as active or passive, and actors or reactors, with varying frequency. On one level this seems to challenge the criticism by some, as discussed in Chapter Three that beneficiaries are represented in volunteering discourse as passive - this is highly variable across the interviews with beneficiaries frequently represented as the agents of a variety of processes and are often represented as actors rather than just reactors. I have suggested here that the sequence of active/passive, action/reaction representations could provide further insights and this possibility will be explored in the following chapter.

Despite the variety of motivations indicated by these statistics, a number of patterns here suggest that informants frequently represent themselves as concerned for the wellbeing of beneficiaries. Informants talk about beneficiaries, particularly individual beneficiaries, more than other social actors including themselves. Their actions and more particularly their reactions tend to be directed towards or about beneficiaries. Thus volunteers do not primarily focus on social experiences with other volunteers or moments of accomplishment such as receiving recognition from a leader or an awards ceremony. At the core of what volunteers find significant about



volunteering are experiences that are focused on beneficiaries, and often individual beneficiaries.

Furthermore there tends to be a greater concern with beneficiaries' emotions, and more particularly their negative emotions, and descriptions of beneficiaries often focus on their changing constraints and enablements. While these descriptions arguably represent beneficiaries as weak, there is also the sense in these descriptions that volunteers are concerned in a nurturing way for beneficiaries' vulnerability, with an often-positive view of this vulnerability as contingent and changing.

As discussed in the introduction and elsewhere there is a need to interpret the general frequencies discussed here in conjunction with their sequence within the structure of a text and this will be addressed in the next chapter.

## Text Structures

### Introduction

The last chapter was primarily concerned with identifying overall socio-semantic frequencies across informants' narratives and providing replicable criteria for identifying these patterns. However as I discussed, overall frequencies can obscure the centrality or significance of individual representations in informants' narratives or the ways that meanings are structured or sequenced in a text. In this chapter I describe and investigate the significance of two structural patterns in informants' narratives. In doing so I continue to draw upon the modified versions of van Leeuwen's models of social actors and social action discussed in the last chapter, as well as Hoey's (2001) account of problem-solution structures. In 7.1 I will discuss patterns in the sequence of representations of beneficiaries' emotions in informants' responses. In 7.2 I move on to discuss the extent to which narratives are oriented around a problem and the ways that beneficiaries and informants are positioned in relation to this problem. As in Chapter Six and elsewhere, a key concern in this

chapter continues to be the identification of replicable criteria for identifying semantic patterns across the data.

## 7.1 Beneficiary Reaction Sequences

In this section I discuss the presence and potential significance of patterns in the chronological sequencing of beneficiaries' emotions in informants' narratives. In 7.1.1 I describe the ways I identified these patterns and in 7.1.2 I discuss the findings.

### 7.1.1 Method

The overall frequencies of beneficiaries' represented emotions discussed in the last chapter do not reflect the ways that beneficiaries' reactions frequently appear in a sequence in the extracted narratives, as in the following example:

I think the thing for me is when you've had someone and you pick up the phone and they are hysterical and they are- they can't talk- they're crying, they can't articulate- things have got to that point where things are so bad and you just- - give them the time and space, take however long they want, and then at the end of the call they're laughing and joking- so that's the thing, some people think we don't laugh on the phone, we do, it's okay to have a laugh, yknow, and they say 'ah do you know what, I'm just going to have a cup of tea and nice hot bath now, and you can hear in their voice that actually everything's okay- maybe not in a- style- pretty Disney glittery type ending, but actually they've got through that- whatever it was, and you can hear it in their voice and the call

just kind of comes to a natural end and they're like 'alright I'm off now', and to me it's that – yknow

The highlighted phrases and passages here indicate references to the beneficiary's emotions, which as discussed in the last chapter include instances where emotions are both directly inscribed ('they are hysterical') or indirectly invoked ('they can't talk'). The yellow and blue highlighting indicates references to negative and positive emotions respectively, and looking at the overall pattern indicates a shift in the representation of the beneficiary's emotions from negative to positive.

Determining the chronological sequence of the beneficiaries' emotions involves reconstructing the sequence of emotions based on temporal cohesion markers and deduction. For instance in the narrative above, the chronological sequence of the emotions matches the sequence in which they are told in the narrative. The state in which the beneficiary is 'hysterical' is succeeded by the state in which they are laughing and joking as indicated by the phrase '*and then at the end of the call*'. 'then at the end' signals the successive sequence of these two states. I will return to this process of reconstructing the chronological order in more detail later.

In contrast to this movement from negative to positive in the above extract, in some narratives this shift is reversed from positive (highlighted blue) to negative (highlighted yellow), as in the following example:

I don't cry a lot but this guy made me cry in the homeless shelter because he was telling me his story, erm I had basically it was a one to one interaction and erm – he was telling me about his wife and he had a quote unquote normal life,

erm – but he was telling me this story about his wife, that **it was the love of his life** blah blah blah, everything – **they married and finally like ten years later they managed to conceive a baby**, and she was pregnant and **had a car accident and she died and the baby died** and – he was just telling me and **the way he was speaking about her just made me really upset** and - yeah that’s my first kind of week and yeah – **he went downwards from that depression** and became homeless. **He’s okay now actually, he’s at the er – he’s at a shelter – he’s actually inside, he’s got a room now** but erm – yeah – I’m more used to it now I don’t cry anymore, but **the first few months was really upsetting**, the stories that you hear and stuff.

This story is characterised by a transition in the beneficiaries’ emotions from positive to negative and as before these emotions are both inscribed (‘the love of his life’, ‘depression’) and invoked (‘they managed to conceive a baby’ ‘she... had a car accident and she died and the baby died’). The sequence is complicated by references to positive emotions by the beneficiary at the end. However this passage can be read as an epilogue and not a part of the story proper. Invoking evaluative cues by the informant both at the beginning and the end (highlighted green in the extract above) focus attention on the transition from positive to negative as the core story being told.

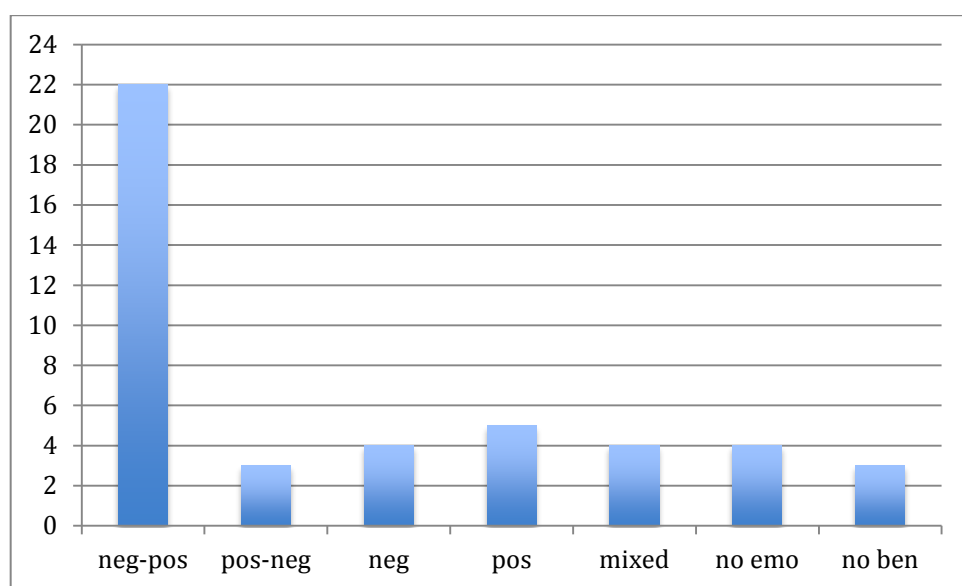
### 7.1.2 Beneficiary Reaction Sequence Findings

I classified the narratives into the following categories:

1. Negative to positive emotions (neg-pos)

2. Positive to negative emotions (pos-neg)
3. Only positive emotions (pos)
4. Only negative emotions (neg)
5. No emotions (no emo)
6. Narratives in which there are no beneficiaries (no ben)

Figure 7.1 illustrates the findings of this analysis.



**Figure 7.1:** *The sequence of beneficiaries' represented emotions in informants' narratives*

Figure 7.1 illustrates that the most significant sequence in the representation of beneficiaries' emotions is the shift from negative to positive. Figure 7.1 also illustrates that there either tends to be a binary shift in beneficiaries' emotions from negative to positive or positive to negative, or they only have either positive or negative emotions. Other types of mixed emotion structures are rare.

These findings build on the findings of the last chapter by highlighting that not only do informants express concern for beneficiaries' emotions, particularly negative

emotions, but there is also a particular concern for the ways that beneficiaries' emotions change over time, and overwhelmingly this is a shift from negative to positive. This pattern suggests that there is a strong tendency among informants to be concerned for beneficiaries' moving from a state of suffering to a state of flourishing, or that they are concerned with beneficiaries' positive emotional progression in some way.

However, the full significance that informants attach to this transition is still unclear. It may be that informants value causing this change rather than simply observing it, which suggests a more egoistic orientation to these changes. It is even possible that this pattern has little to do with an intrinsic concern for beneficiaries' wellbeing. The role of informants in relation to this transition is explored in more detail in the following section and subsequent chapters.

## 7.2. Activation and Passivation at the Narrative Level

As we saw in the last chapter, van Leeuwen describes several resources for passivating and activating social actors at the level of the clause. This model built on the existing list of linguistic resources referred to in CDA for passivating and activating social actors, such as transitivity. Looking at overall frequencies with which social actors are passivated or activated can identify useful patterns, however this focus on passive or active frequencies does not consider, and can obscure, the significance of the actions or circumstances that social actors are the agent or the subject of. A social actor can be the agent of many mundane events in a story but still ultimately be represented as a passive victim because of a major catastrophe that happens to him or her at one point. We can thus further investigate the passivation or

activation of social actors by investigating the significance of the actions or events they are the agents or subjects of.

In this section I explore the passivation or activation of informants and beneficiaries by exploring their cause and effect relation to the central problem in informants' narratives. In Section 7.2.1 I discuss my method of analysis and in Section 7.2.2 I discuss my findings and their implications for my research questions.

### 7.2.1 Method

As Hoey (2001) and others have observed, a problem-solution sequence often structures various kinds of text, and this is true of the narratives in my data. These problems and solutions are the most significant events and actions in the narratives around which the story is based. Hoey also points out that it is possible to identify cause and effect links between participants and the problems and solutions in a narrative and this is the aim of this section. We first need to be able to identify a problem-solution structure and in 7.2.1.1 I discuss how this is done. In 7.2.1.2, I develop Hoey's methods for linking participants to these problems and solutions in order to establish as replicable a criteria as possible for identifying the victims and the heroes of the narrative.

#### 7.2.1.1 Identifying Problems and Solutions

To identify the role that participants play in relation to the problem and resolution in a narrative we need first to identify the problem and solution. Hoey (2001) uses the following probe questions to assist this process:



1. What is the problem?
2. What was the response?
3. What was the result?

Hoey defines a problem as 'an aspect of the situation requiring a response which gives rise to the expectation of a response' (p124). He points out that a response does not necessarily constitute a successful solution and there can be many responses that fail before a successful response occurs. He thus distinguishes between actions and outcomes. I will refer to successful actions as *resolving action* and the solution as the *resolution*.

Hoey points out that the 'problem' of a text is signalled through the use of evaluation. Adopting Martin and White's (2005) model of evaluation, he points out that a situation can be negatively evaluated as a problem through either inscribed or evoked evaluation ('appraisal' in Martin and White's terms). He succinctly distinguishes between the two: 'Inscribed appraisal is explicitly encoded evaluation. Evoked appraisal refers to lexical choices that evoke in the reader an evaluation' (p126). Since evoked evaluation is 'evoked' in the intended reader (or intended listener in the case of my data), Hoey helpfully describes evoked evaluation as 'evoking' evaluation, signals which invite evaluation rather than explicitly inscribing it (p126).

The evaluative signalling of a problem will be illustrated through the analysis of the following narrative:

‘There was a situation a few months back – [a] gentleman had incurred a massive council tax debt, for some reason, and he didn’t agree that he’d owed it but he was in a real problem because he was on a load of benefits and he was having a lot of other problems, and – and so he was very panicking about this, so we went ‘right, we’re not sure -’ – the first stage is we’re not sure how much the debt is, so we rang up the council and we went through the various things with them and they went ‘ah – no, he’s not got all this debt, actually he’s overpaid us’, and I think we managed to get him a couple of hundred pounds payment back, which lightened his mood considerably, and that’s very – important’

Asking Hoey’s question ‘what is the problem?’, the reasonable answer seems to be ‘the massive council tax debt’. The status of this situation as the problem of the story is signalled through a constellation of inscribed and evoking signals. Within the phrase ‘massive council tax debt’ itself, ‘massive’ emphasises the enormity of the debt and the word ‘debt’ itself also carries inherently negative connotations. It is also explicitly described as ‘a real problem’ and the description of the beneficiary’s ‘panicking’ reaction to the debt is an evoking signal that further emphasises the debt’s problem status.

The resolution of the problem is represented in the clause ‘we managed to get him a couple of hundred pounds payment back’. We can partly deduce that it is the resolution - the problem is a lack of money and they manage to get him some money. However like the problem of the story, it is also signalled as the resolution through evaluative signals. ‘Managed’ implicitly evaluates the getting as a positive response,

and the clause ‘which lightened his mood considerably’ evokes a positive evaluation of the action.

#### 7.2.1.2 Identifying Agentive Roles

Hoey points out that social actors can be linked to the represented problem, responses and solution in a problem-solution structure. And just as we can ask questions to identify the problem and solution of a story, so also we can ask questions to identify relations between represented social actors and the problems and the solutions in a story. In determining what I will call the *agentive roles* of social actors in the events depicted, we can ask:

1. Who caused the problem?
2. Who was affected by the problem?
3. Who solved the problem?

I will refer to the first as the *causal agent(s)*, the second as the *affected subject(s)*, and the third as the *resolving agent(s)*. Further explanation of these terms and methods for identifying them is provided below.

##### 7.2.1.2.1 Affected Subjects

The affected subject is a social actor who is affected by the core problem of a story. There may be more than one social actor who is represented as the affected subject. For example, in some narratives the affected subjects include beneficiaries and their

relatives while in others the affected subjects include both beneficiaries and the informant telling the story.

Social actors can be signalled as the affected subject of the core problem through passivation, as described in 6.2.1.3. In these instances social actors are passively represented as being 'at the receiving end' (van Leeuwen, 2008: 33) of a process, which evaluative signals (within or without the clause) position as the core problem of the story. The following example will illustrate how passivation signals the affected subject of what is the core problem of the story from which this extract is taken:

'he left *her* with all the debts. He left *her*, who had cancer, with all the debt and she didn't know where he was, didn't know his address or phone number, so – desolate'

Various evaluative signals in this extract define being 'left' as a problem, including the repetition of the clause 'he left her... with all the debt', and the invoking evaluative signals of the description of the beneficiary's circumstances in the clause, 'who had cancer', and her responses, 'she didn't know where he was... so – desolate'. However, a more complete analysis of this extract in its broader narrative context is required to fully establish this as the core problem of the story. The point here is that the beneficiary is signalled as the affected subject of the problem of the story through passivation, being represented here as the goal of the material process in 'he left *her*'.

Participation, as one resource for passivating social actors, can thus be used to signal the status of a social actor as the affected subject. They may be the beneficiary

or goal of a problematic material process (e.g. 'he left her'), beneficiary or target of problematic verbal process (e. g. 'They verbally abused her'), the phenomenon of a problematic mental process (e.g. 'they hated her') or the carrier, value or token in a problematic relational process (e.g. 'she has really profound autism'). But as discussed above, passivation can also be realized through circumstantialization (e.g. 'a backlash *against them* followed'), possessivation (e.g. 'suddenly *their whole world* had come to an end') and adjectival premodification (see van Leeuwen, 2008: 30).

Alternatively, rather than being the subject of problematic processes, they can also be the subject of negated desirable processes (e.g. 'they didn't speak to her', 'Nobody would help her'). In these instances, negation forms at least one of the evaluative resources used to signal the problem of the story.

However, affected subjects are not only signalled as such through passivation. They can also, perhaps paradoxically, be positioned as the affected subject by being represented as the active agent of problematic processes. As also discussed in Chapter Six, participation can be used to signal activation, thus they can be the actor of a problematic material process (e.g. 'this gentleman incurred a debt'), sayer in a problematic verbal process (e.g. 'he spoke through a machine'), behavior in a problematic behavioural process (e.g. 'she flipped out') or senser of a problematic mental process or phenomenon (e.g. 'she was feeling suicidal'). And as with passivation, activation can be realised through circumstantialization, possessivation and adjectival premodification.

Alternatively, as above, the representation of social actors as the affected subject may also be signalled through the negation of a desirable process. Thus they may be the negated actor or beneficiary of a material process (e.g. 'He couldn't move');

‘The other organisations wouldn’t touch her’), sayer, target or beneficiary of a verbal process (e.g. ‘She couldn’t speak’; ‘nobody would talk to her’), senser of a mental process (e.g. ‘She couldn’t feel her legs’) or carrier in a relational process.

#### 7.2.1.2.2 Resolving Agents

The resolving agent is the social actor who is represented as the agent of social action that causes the resolution of the problem in a story. There can be multiple resolving agents in a narrative, and the resolving agent may also be the affected subject or the causal agent. In my data, affected subjects tend to be positioned as such through grammar as we have seen. For reasons that will become clear in my analysis, the resolving agent is less clearly inscribed. Their identity more frequently needs to be deduced and inferred using the following methods.

A necessary first stage in identifying the resolving agent is to identify the resolving action of which they are the agent. Resolving action is action that causes the resolution to the problem of the story and necessarily occurs chronologically between the occurrence of the problem and the occurrence of the resolution. It usually also follows any unsuccessful attempts to resolve the problem. Thus one approach for identifying the resolving action is to reconstruct the order of events as told in the narrative according to their represented chronological order, a process I will illustrate below.

The events of a story do not need to be narrated in their chronological order, there can for example be moments of analepsis or prolepsis. However, as discussed in section 7.1 the chronological order of the narrated events can be deduced logically

and inferred through various temporal cohesion devices as illustrated by the following example:

‘when you’ve had like a really long call, and it’s really rewarding- and maybe the person was suicidal- **and like then** said ‘oh you might have changed my life’ or like ‘I might not end my life now’ like having that said to you it’s quite overwhelming, and it’s like a natural high? Almost, **at the end**, and you put the phone down and it’s just like ‘oh my god’, - and you just feel so good? That you maybe kind of would have helped someone and not- things aren’t as bad as they thought they could have been before, so that’s always good.’

In this story, the narrator tells of a frequent sequence of events she values as a volunteer. The sequence of events as told does not always match the chronological order of these events. However, the chronological order can be inferred from temporal markers (highlighted in the extract above), and it can also be deduced logically. For example the clause ‘maybe the person was suicidal’ is followed by ‘and then’ to indicate a movement forward in the temporal order. We can also deduce that the beneficiary ‘was suicidal’ before rather than after the ‘really long call’. The narrative could thus be chronologically reconstructed as follows:

1. they thought things were bad
2. **‘the person was suicidal’**
3. ‘you’ve had a really long call’
4. ‘you maybe kind of would have helped them’

5. '[the person]... then said 'oh you might have changed my life'; They realise 'things aren't as bad as they thought they could have been before'
6. 'you put the phone down'
7. 'and its just like 'oh my god' and you just feel so good'

Thus between the beneficiary feeling suicidal (the problem, highlighted yellow above) and feeling that 'things aren't as bad as they thought' (The resolution, highlighted blue) lies the resolving action contained in the clauses 'you've had a really long call' and 'you maybe kind of would have helped them'. The position of this action between the problem and the resolution thus points to its status as the resolving action. In other words, the causal relation between the resolving action and the resolution is signalled partially by the chronological order of the events.

This causal relation between the resolving action and the resolution can also be explicitly inscribed. For example, the following is the conclusion to a narrative in which an informant helps a mother and a child establish a new life after the husband and father abandoned them:

'they came back to me and said if it wasn't for me they'd be completely lost and sunk, and she said 'we think of you and talk about you all the time', yknow, that's my best thing.'

Here the causal relation between her actions and the resolution is explicitly inscribed in the highlighted phrase 'if it wasn't for me'. It is worth noting that this informant projects this causal relation in the speech of another social actor. Along with hedging



and assimilation, this is one of many strategies informants use to diffuse the force of their positive self-evaluation, which I will return to below.

Resolving agents can also be positioned as such in oblique ways by marginalising or suppressing their role to varying degrees. This marginalisation can be achieved in various ways linguistically. As discussed in Section 6.2.1.1, van Leeuwen distinguishes between excluded or included social actors. Excluded social actors can be suppressed or backgrounded. Suppressed social actors are social actors who could have been represented in a text but are not (2008: 30). Sometimes there is a radical exclusion of social actors where there is no trace of them at all, while in other texts there are traces of their exclusion. For example, in the phrase 'protesters were killed' the killers as social actors are excluded, but their action leaves a trace of their existence. As van Leeuwen points out 'we can ask 'but who did the killing?'... even though the text does not provide the answers' (p29). Van Leeuwen points out that suppression can be realised through passive agent deletion as in the example above. They can also be suppressed through nominalisations e.g. '*support for immigration* was at an all time low' and process nouns e.g. '*stopping* immigration was a priority'. Backgrounded social actors are social actors who are excluded in a text but to a lesser degree. Van Leeuwen observes that 'backgrounding can result from simple ellipses in non-finite clauses with *-ing* and *-ed* participles, in infinitive clauses with *to*, and in paratactic clauses. It can also be realized in the same way as suppression, but with respect to social actors who are included elsewhere in the text' (pp. 30-31). Finally social actors can be included in a text and can be linguistically represented as active or passive as discussed in 6.2.1.3. The resolving agent, then, is the social actor who is either actively represented as responsible for the resolving action, or who is the

backgrounded or suppressed social actor who can be deduced or inferred to be the social actor responsible for the resolving action.

In some instances an analysis of the chronological structure, inscribed causation and the representation of agency are not enough to identify the resolving agent, as in the following example:

Little victories become massive. Erm. that child hadn't eaten or drank for over a year, he was fed through a tube- he was capable of eating or drinking, he'd just decided he didn't want to. Every time we would try and then one evening he just decided to- to eat and it was only two or three mouthfuls- it was sausage and mash I think it was- that was- that was phenomenal, yknow it sounds- yknow, two or three mouthfuls of sausage and mash and I've never been so excited about something I'd ever experienced so, yknow, little victories suddenly become massive.

Here the chronological order can be identified as follows:

1. 'he was capable of eating or drinking, he'd decided he didn't want to'
2. 'that child hadn't eaten or drank for over a year, he was fed through a tube'
3. 'every time we would try'
4. 'one evening he just decided to – to eat'
5. 'that was phenomenal'

There are arguably two agents responsible for actions between the problem and the resolution here, the informant and his colleagues referred to as the actors in the in the material process 'we would try', and the beneficiary referred to as the active senser in the cognitive process 'he just decided to – to eat'. There is no inscribed causation to help distinguish who is the resolving agent (or whether it is both). However, there are several evaluative cues that suggest that the informant and his colleagues are being represented as the resolving agents here. This experience is evaluated in the abstract and the coda of this story as a 'massive' 'victory'. Victories involve triumphs over enormous challenges, however the agent who seems to have the challenge in this story is the informant and his colleagues who 'try' 'every time', rather than the beneficiary who firstly is represented as someone who 'doesn't want to eat' and then is represented as someone who 'just decided to eat'. There is not the sense in this description of a personal battle leading to a 'victory', but rather the minimiser 'just' seems to represent his decision as fairly spontaneous. Thus assignment of causal responsibility here is partially signalled through the use of evaluative cues, rather than through chronological structure, activation or explicit causal relations alone.

#### 7.2.1.2.3 Causal Agents

The causal agent is the social actor that is wholly or partly responsible for actions that caused the aspect of the situation requiring a response. As with the other agentive roles, the causal agent may occupy any other agentive role, for example, the causal agent may also be the affected subject, with a problem they 'brought on themselves'. Like resolving action, causal action necessarily occupies a chronological relation to the problem and solution of the story, but in the case of causal action necessarily comes

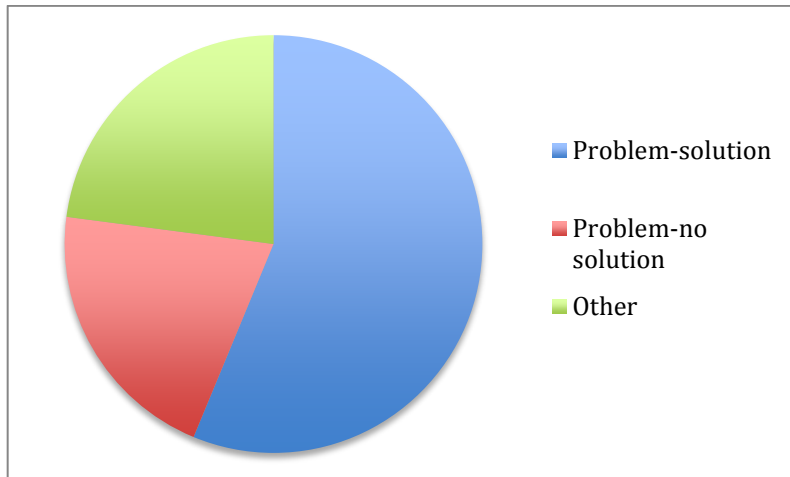
prior to, or is itself the problem. Like resolving agents, causal agents can thus be identified through an examination of the chronological structure, explicit causal relations, participation (activation) and through evaluative cues.

#### 7.2.1.2.4 Obligatory and Optional Agentive Roles

An affected subject is an obligatory participant in a problem-solution. The problem has to affect a social actor (or a thing being represented as a social actor) to be a problem at all. However, a resolving agent and a causal agent are both optional participants. A resolution may occur without a social actor doing anything. For example, 'time' or 'chance' may bring about a resolution. There may be no explicit cause for the problem, and thus no social actor represented as the cause of the problem. The choice of causal agent or the choice to represent a problem as simply 'there' rather than caused by a social actor is potentially significant ideologically and I will return to this below.

#### 7.2.2 Findings

The narratives in my data can be split into three categories: problem-solution narratives, problem narratives and other kinds of narratives. 27 of the 48 narratives are problem-solution narratives. Ten of the narratives are problem-no solution narratives and there are 11 that do not fit into either category. Figure 7.2 provides an illustration of the overall proportions of each. These will be discussed in more detail below in the following sections.



**Figure 7.2.** *Proportions of structural types in informants' narratives*

### 7.2.2.1 Problem-Solution Structures

In 21 of the 27 problem-solution narratives, almost half of all the narratives, informants are the resolving agent of a problem. In 20 of these narratives, informants resolve a problem that affects a beneficiary. For these informants solving problems and causing positive change, particularly in the lives of beneficiaries, is a significant aspect of being a volunteer.

When volunteers do position themselves as the resolving agent, they often appear to marginalise or downplay their causal role, which on one level mitigates the value they attach to being the resolving agent. In seven of the 21 instances where informants position themselves as the resolving agent, they suppress or marginalise their role as the agent of the resolving action. In six of the remaining instances, informants assimilate themselves as a collective group of volunteers, and two others refer to themselves through impersonal second person 'you'. These could both be seen as strategies for marginalising their role by diffusing the sense of personal responsibility for the resolving action. Only six of the 27 informants explicitly take

personal, individual responsibility for the resolving action. Thus while informants often position themselves as the resolving agent in problem-solution structures in the narratives, they also tend to diffuse the sense of personal responsibility for their actions.

A similar tension in the extent to which volunteers emphasise their causal role is also evident in the ways that informants evaluate these problem-solution narratives, as in the examples in Table 7.1:

1	'felt so proud', an 'achievement'
2	'massive... victory'
3	'gives you a bit of pride'
4	really rewarding'
5	'ovewhelming', 'a natural high', 'you just feel so good'
6	'THAT to me - when they came back to me and said if it wasn't for me they'd be completely lost and sunk, and she said 'we think of you and talk about you all the time', yknow, that's my best thing.'
8	'(she started communicating by using her voice), which was just fantastic, really fantastic'
9	'that was really good - that his son came and he was going back into the family - because he was ever such a lonely old man.'
10	'this is why we do it, it's the joy you get at - the reward you get when you see a little child like that who'd been so disadvantaged who was suddenly a little extravert who was doing quite well at school'

11	'To see people progressing like that is one of the best things out, and I've see this a lot of times and I think that's one of the things that you look out for and you see'
12	'it was - absolutely fantastic story, the benefit she got from it.'
13	'and I suppose it's an ego trip in the sense of you achieving that, but it's basically about getting that result for the client.'
14	'it was just fantastic... I think it's so wonderful. And you think if we can do that for him, it's probably not so noticeable with the other children, but it was just so remarkable with him'
15	'that was quite satisfying'
16	'I'm always pleased at the end of the day when I feel that it's been a good morning, er, that people have got enjoyment'

**Table 7.1:** *Evaluating problem-solution narratives*

The value of some of these stories is explicitly self-oriented, as in 3 in the table above, 'gives you a bit of pride', and the description of the outcome as an 'achievement' in 1. However, elsewhere informants stress the value of witnessing, rather than causing, positive outcomes for beneficiaries, as in 11, where the informant is positioned as the senser of change rather than the agent of change. Other informants stress the value of the outcome for the client as in 12 where what is 'fantastic' is not being the agent of the resolving action, but rather 'the benefit she [the beneficiary] got from it'.

The tendency for informants to focus on experiences in which the suffering of beneficiaries is resolved consolidates the evidence discussed elsewhere which

suggests that a sense of concern for beneficiaries' suffering is a core theme in the data. However, while informants may downplay their role as the resolving agent in these narratives, and while they may emphasise the value they attribute to the outcomes for beneficiaries, the fact that they themselves, and not someone else, are positioned as the resolving agent in these stories of personal significant volunteering experiences nevertheless suggests that being the agent of change holds significance for them.

In 14 of the 20 problem-solution narratives in which beneficiaries are the affected subject, there is no causal agent. In other words, beneficiaries are most frequently represented as the victim of a problem nobody caused. Problems affecting beneficiaries usually just exist or are just there, rather than being attributable to any social actors. In two of the remaining instances, beneficiaries themselves are positioned as the causal agent of their own problem. Thus in only four of the 20 problem-solution structures are other social actors involved as causal agents. Two of these instances refer to beneficiaries' immediate relatives. The remaining two refer to wider corporate and political entities. Thus those in the wider social structure who might be involved in negatively shaping beneficiaries' experiences of their constraints are in most cases excluded from these accounts.

These problem-solution structures thus tend to dislocate beneficiaries' problems and solutions from their wider social and political context, thus lending support for some of the criticisms of volunteering reviewed in Chapter Three and demonstrating a parallel between voluntourism discourse and the discourse of community based volunteering. As discussed in Chapter Three, this is a potentially problematic way of constructing both beneficiaries' problems and the potential solutions to these problems. Others who might be involved in resolving these



problems are excluded from these accounts. In these narratives there are only beneficiaries with problems rarely caused by anyone, and volunteers who personally provide a solution. This conception of volunteering as the provision of a personal solution to an individual problem thus dislocates beneficiaries' problems and the range of potential solutions to these problems from their broader structural context. Implicit is an individualised, destructuralised view of others' problems and how we might help them. The problems and solutions in these narratives tend to exist in a socio-political vacuum in which there are only individuals with problems and other individuals who care enough to help. This is a potentially dangerous logic that has the potential to be exploited by charities, governments and other institutions. As long as beneficiaries' problematic experiences are caused by nobody, and as long as helping is an optional act of kindness by caring individuals or groups of individuals, society as a whole is absolved from its role in either causing or alleviating beneficiaries' suffering or flourishing, and absolved from any sense of obligation to help those who are vulnerable in society in a more comprehensive and structured way.

#### 7.2.2.2 Problem-No Solution Structures

As discussed above, in ten narratives, there is an unresolved problem. In nine of these narratives, the affected subject is a beneficiary, and in all cases they are individualised. All the narratives have the same generic structure. In these stories the informant encounters a beneficiary, makes a discovery about them and reacts to this discovery in some way. In all cases these are emotional reactions such as shock, but in some cases there is also an explicit personal lesson that is learned in the process. This will be illustrated in the following analysis:

There was an elderly gentleman who came as a guest from February, but I think he'd come for many years and he - gentleman I use that word deliberately, he was the gentlest, kindest man you'd ever meet, and er- all the guests and all the volunteers thought he was very wonderful, erm- he was always- no matter what he was wearing actually he was always very smart, always very well put together, erm and er had a real sense of decorum, and er always seemed kind of relatively of sound mind, yknow in quite good health, and then I think it was very cold - it had been a very long winter this year, I think still in March yknow still sort of sub-zero a lot of the time, erm he was in hospital so he didn't come for a couple of weeks, erm- and then he died in hospital, and didn't come back - I suppose he'd been coming every week - he'd been there for a long time and he'd become sort of part of this community - it can - sometimes going every week I guess can blind you actually to how vulnerable these people are because you're actually your experience of them is quite stable, you see them every week and- yknow there are very few people I see once a week, and I guess that was difficult but valuable and it brought home to me the sense in which, erm- it sounds very glib but a week is a long time, erm in these circumstances and so things can really change, so that was- I guess quite a difficult story.

The informants' detailed description and evaluation of the 'elderly gentleman', including his appearance, attributes and others' feelings towards him, all position the informant as an observer and someone who reflects on what he sees. This is also

evident in the repeated representation of himself as the senser of mental processes, as in the following:

- ‘your *experience* of them is quite stable’,
- ‘you *see* them every week’
- ‘it *brought home to me* the sense in which ... a week is a long time’.

He is not, however, a dispassionate observer. The intensified evaluation of the beneficiary as the ‘gentlest, kindest man’ invokes a sense of affection for the beneficiary. He also invokes a sense of shock to the beneficiary’s death in the passage ‘he was in hospital so he didn’t come for a couple of weeks, erm- and then he died in hospital, and didn’t come back’. The passage builds tension and then evaluates the events through the use of negation and repetition. The story is also evaluated in emotional terms as ‘difficult’.

This emotional reaction and specifically a sense of shock in response to what is observed is also a common motif throughout these problem-no solution narratives, as is evident from the following evaluations of the experiences in the other eight problem-no solution narratives in which a beneficiary is the affected subject:

1	‘It was a kind of overwhelming and affirming experience’
2	‘That was quite shocking’
3	‘The way he spoke about her made me upset... the first few months were really upsetting’

4	'it was really like - shocking and close to home'
5	'I think both the similarity and the gulf? between mine and Joseph's life? in that – yknow – we were quite similar in a lot of ways in that we weren't - erm – similar interests, similar sort of school position, played a lot of football together that sort of thing, and yet the fact that that was the circumstance and – mine was mine.'
6	'my view of him has completely changed, yknow it's put me in my place to not put everybody - yknow, what you see isn't always what you're going to get, so that was quite - that was, yknow so that that was good for me, I enjoyed that.'
7	'That was really profoundly sad that was'
8	'that to me was heart breaking... that made a mark on me.'

**Table 7.2:** *Informants feeling shocked or surprised*

For these informants, their most significant experiences involve encounters with beneficiaries, observing their circumstances, learning about beneficiaries and responding to their circumstances emotionally and learning something about people or themselves.

While on the one hand the focus on beneficiaries' problems and experiences is further evidence of concern for beneficiaries' circumstances and an awareness of their fundamental vulnerability, from another perspective the value these volunteers attach to learning and becoming aware of others' suffering and vulnerability can be seen as egocentric in the sense that it is a value that is internally focused. These experiences can be interpreted as the representation of important moments in the awakening of an altruistic self. This self-oriented value is expressed most explicitly in informant 6's

positioning of herself as the recipient of what is good about the experience, as shared in the final clause 'that was good *for me*'.

### Conclusion

In summary, there is much evidence here to reinforce the conclusion that informants express a strong sense of concern for beneficiaries' suffering and wellbeing. Beneficiaries are frequently the affected subjects in informants' narratives, suggesting a concern with the challenges and problems beneficiaries face. There also seems to be evidence that informants are concerned with changes in beneficiaries' emotions, most often from negative to positive emotions. Both suggest a strong sense of empathy and concern for the suffering of others. On the other hand, the frequent representation of the self as the resolving agent in almost half of these stories suggests that there is for these informants an egoistic value attached to being the agent responsible for changes in the beneficiaries' lives.

The agentic role that volunteers often occupy to some extent can be equated with the role of the hero in these stories, even if there is some evidence here that this heroic role is downplayed, a point I return to in the following chapter. However the implicit value attached to this role conflicts to some extent with a view of volunteering as an obligation or duty. An obligation or duty is a basic expectation, but that is not how resolving problems is generally represented here. Placing a high value on the actions and interventions suggests that they are praiseworthy, something to be proud of, rather than a basic expectation.

The frequent representation of beneficiaries and informants as affected subjects and resolving agents respectively on one level can be seen as an

acknowledgement by these volunteers of the constraints and challenges that some people face and the need that they have for help from others. In other words, it can be interpreted as evidence of an interdependent ontological perspective in which people are recognised to be vulnerable and in need of each other's help from time to time. However on another level, this representational pattern fuels the argument that volunteering discourse is frequently characterised by an unequal power balance between volunteers and beneficiaries in which beneficiaries are disempowered and informants are empowered. In these stories, beneficiaries are not represented as the resolving agents of their own problems – volunteers frequently solve these problems for them. The value that volunteers attach to their role as resolving agents and the reproduction of this relation through discourse in a variety of social practices including volunteering could potentially reinforce patterns of dependency among beneficiaries, rather than enabling beneficiaries to become empowered agents of change in their own lives.

Finally, there is a tendency for informants to represent both beneficiaries' problems and the potential solutions to these problems in destructuralised, individualised terms. Volunteering tends to be represented as an individual response to an individual problem, in which both beneficiaries' problems and the potential solutions to these problems are disconnected from the impact of social structures on the suffering of beneficiaries and the obligations of these social structures to deal with deal with these problems. The dominance of this tendency throughout the interviews suggests that this is a defining characteristic of volunteering discourse.

## Victims and Heroes: Tensions in the Representation of Volunteers and Beneficiaries

### Introduction

In Chapters Six and Seven I identified conflicting evidence regarding the representation of beneficiaries and informants. In terms of general socio-semantic frequencies, as we saw in 6.3.3, beneficiaries are passivated more than they are activated, however the difference is not as pronounced as might be expected and in 14 of the 49 interviews they are activated more frequently than they are passivated, which challenges the argument that beneficiaries are more frequently represented as passive victims. Similarly, informants are not always activated and in some narratives, they are passivated more than they are activated, which likewise challenges the argument that volunteers represent themselves as active agents. On the other hand beneficiaries are frequently represented as the affected subject in informants' narratives and infrequently represented as the resolving agent, which thus positions beneficiaries as the victims of these narratives, while informants are rarely the affected subject and frequently the resolving agent. While the structural analysis is

more reliable than general socio-semantic frequencies for reasons discussed in the last chapter, this discrepancy is still worth investigating in more detail and this is the aim of this chapter.

In this chapter I draw upon both corpus-assisted research methods as well as more detailed textual analyses of individual extracts from the corpus, to argue that while beneficiaries and informants are frequently represented as the affected subjects and resolving agents respectively, the extent to which informants embrace and defend or resist the representation of beneficiaries as disempowered others and informants as empowered 'heroes' is nevertheless a point of tension throughout the interviews which may be characteristic of volunteer discourse generally. In 8.1 I explore the ways that informants embrace or resist a view of beneficiaries as disempowered others. In 8.2 I discuss the ways that informants embrace or resist a view of themselves as the empowered heroes.

### 8.1. Beneficiaries as Disempowered Others

In Sections 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 I examine general language patterns across the corpus as a whole and subsequent sections investigate the extent to which informants resist or embrace the representation of beneficiaries as disempowered others in informants' individual narratives.

#### 8.1.1 Negating Capacities

Throughout the interviews, informants often defend a view of beneficiaries as vulnerable people with constraints and a need for support from others. One strategy



for doing this is by evoking sympathy for beneficiaries and emphasising beneficiaries' needs through the use of negation, as in the examples in Table 8.1

1. they can't communicate
2. he can't run around or anything
3. he can't even get a job anywhere
4. they just can't handle the way things are
5. she couldn't drink tap water
6. they can't really cope
7. they can't move their legs
8. they can't afford the uniforms and stuff
9. (they've received a letter and) they can't read it
10. they can't control their finances
11. they can't really cope with their bereavement in prison
12. he can't really see properly
13. she couldn't speak
14. he couldn't talk to any of the children
15. he couldn't help raise properly these hands
16. some can't even walk
17. they can't do it themselves
18. they don't know how to manage their finances
19. problems [...] they simply can't handle alone
20. they can't get out

**Table 8.1:** *Representations of constraint*

In each instance here the beneficiary is the subject of a clause involving a modal verb that is negated using a contracted form. There are 49 instances like these that describe beneficiaries' constraints, which appear across 29 of the 48 interviews. In each of these instances beneficiaries are defined as incapacitated in some way. They are generally in the present tense, suggesting that informants see these incapacities as on-going, not limited to a specific period of time or the past. On one level the fairly consistent definition of beneficiaries in terms of their constraints across the corpus supports the argument that a disempowered view of beneficiaries is characteristic of volunteer discourse.

On the other hand, this representation of beneficiaries' constraints is arguably predicated on an ontological view of beneficiaries as equal to those who have these capacities. Negation is always a marked choice (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2004), and the explicit negation of beneficiaries' abilities in these statements highlights what would and even should normally be the case, but is not. The sense of empathy in this use of evaluation is thus predicated on a view of beneficiaries as not fundamentally other and different but rather as fundamentally the same as everyone else. Thus while beneficiaries are on one level represented as disempowered, they are nevertheless represented to some extent as disempowered equals.

### 8.1.2 Identifying Beneficiaries as Disempowered

The negation of beneficiaries' capacities above focuses on actions that beneficiaries can't do, such as being able to walk or manage finances. The negation in these instances negates a verb. However at other times abilities are represented as attributes rather than actions. In other words, inabilities are represented as

inculcated aspects of the identity of the beneficiary. This is realized linguistically through adjectives and adverbs that modify nouns representing beneficiaries (e.g. ‘We had a *blind* boy’) and identifying relational clauses in which beneficiaries are explicitly identified (e.g. ‘He *was blind*’). Sometimes incapacities are implicitly suggested rather than explicitly described, for example through descriptions of beneficiaries’ behaviour. In one interview, for instance, ‘he was really quiet’ implies the beneficiary lacked confidence or was shy. Table 8.2 is a list of words and phrases explicitly or implicitly pointing to beneficiaries’ capacities and incapacities in the narratives extracted from the interviews that were the data for Chapters Six and Seven. Each cell in the table contains all the attributes attributed to beneficiaries by one informant (Cells on the same row do not necessarily correspond to the same interview). Items marked with an asterisk highlight attributes that changed through the course of the narrative.

	Empowered		Disempowered
1	smart, well put together, sense of decorum, of relatively sound mind, in good health, really well spoken, articulate, really really intelligent,	1	Elderly, Vulnerable,
2	really intelligent,	2	Really quiet*
3	married	3	Suicidal*
4	beautiful, tall	4	Homeless

5	intelligent,	5	Hysterical*
6	Bright	6	Little, old
7	so so bright, like david blunkett, bright, particularly bright	7	scared*, Desolate*
8	(had been) quite well off, gorgeous, very attractive	8	a little bit uncomfortable*, depressed, sad, depressed
9	extremely bright	9	blind, a little bit more difficult, slow (learners), a challenge,
10	a little extrovert, a bright little lad, cocky little lad almost (confidence)	10	just walking wounded, very mucky (when he eats), (a) messy (eater),
11	weren't on the scrap heap (?), they had <i>something to offer</i>	11	little, blind
12	handsome looking lad	12	withdrawn*
		13	lonely, old
		14	brain damaged (x2), blind (in one eye)(?), (hands were) spastic, withdrawn*, quite terrified*, like a frightened animal*, so disadvantaged
		15	Lacking in confidence*
		16	in a bad way*
		17	brain damaged, like a sack of spuds*
		18	just his torso, poor man

**Table 8.2:** Descriptions of beneficiaries

As Table 8.2 illustrates, 18 out of the 48 informants identify beneficiaries as incapacitated or disempowered in some way and 12 informants explicitly represent beneficiaries' as empowered. The mixed overall picture correlates to the mixed representation of beneficiaries as passive or active discussed in Section 6.3.3, confirming that a one-dimensional view of beneficiaries as disempowered is not a regular feature in the corpus as whole. There does appear from this table to be a slight tendency for volunteers to represent beneficiaries as disempowered than empowered. Beneficiaries are frequently represented as weak or vulnerable in descriptions such as 'he was like a frightened animal', 'scared' and 'vulnerable'. However in nine of the 18 interviews in which beneficiaries are represented as incapacitated, weak or disempowered, beneficiaries lose these negative traits during the course of the interview. For instance the boy described as 'like a frightened animal' is, by the end of the story, described as 'extrovert' and 'cocky'. Thus while some informants represent negative capacities as on-going character traits, other informants represent beneficiaries' negative capacities as temporary and dynamic, rather than integral parts of beneficiaries' continuous identities.

While informants frequently refer to beneficiaries' negative capacities that change, no informant refers to a positive capacity that changes. Rather informants that do refer to positive capacities tend to emphatically emphasise them through various evaluative devices such as adverbs (e.g. 'really', 'very' and 'extremely'), superlative adjectives (e.g. 'gentlest, kindest man'), repetitions (e.g. 'so so bright') and negation. This emphasis may be given to reflect the sense of surprise informants have at realising beneficiaries' positive traits, or perhaps reflects attempts by the

informants to challenge the stereotype of beneficiaries as disempowered others. More analysis of the context of these instances is needed to support this interpretation and I will return to this below.

In spite of the foregoing, there is also an overall tendency in the identifying descriptions above for some informants to represent beneficiaries as weak to some degree, as with the description of the beneficiary as a ‘cocky little lad’ in which the potentially empowered representation of the beneficiary as ‘cocky’ is mitigated by reference to his being a ‘little lad’. ‘Lovely’, ‘kind’ and ‘gentlest’ also arguably have prosodies associated with traditional feminine stereotypes and the related attribute of weakness.

‘Little’ in particular is used to describe beneficiaries 25 times across the corpus by 11 informants, as in the following examples from different interviews:

1.	There was a little boy who came
2.	We had one particular little girl
3.	My little guy
4.	He was a bright little lad
5.	They come in like me a scared little kitten
6.	We had a blind – little blind girl
7.	This little lot are lovely
8.	A little old lady came in
9.	He’s like a little old man who - so cute – little old man who
10.	We’ve got one little girl with foetal alcohol syndrome

11.	He was the grumpiest little kid
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**Table 8.3:** *Informants as 'little'*

The representation of beneficiaries as 'little' emphasises the vulnerability of these beneficiaries and their need for assistance from others. However, this disempowered representation is ratified by the implication that informants have a nurturing attitude towards these beneficiaries.

Above we have looked at general lexico-grammatical patterns that highlight the tension between the representation of beneficiaries as empowered or disempowered. In the following sections I examine the ways that views of beneficiaries as disempowered are embraced or resisted in individual interviews.

### 8.1.3 Defending a View of Beneficiaries as Disempowered

Some informants actively defend a view of beneficiaries as disempowered, as in the following extract:

There was an elderly gentleman who came as a guest from February, but I think he'd come for many years and he- gentleman I use that word deliberately, he was the gentlest, kindest man you'd ever meet, and er - all the guests and all the volunteers thought he was very wonderful, erm- he was always- no matter what he was wearing actually he was always very smart, always very well put together, erm and er had a real sense of decorum, and er always seemed kind of relatively of sound mind, yknow in quite good health, and then I think it was very cold - it had been a very long winter this year, I think still in March yknow

still sort of sub-zero a lot of the time, erm he was in hospital so he didn't come for a couple of weeks, erm- and then he died in hospital, and didn't come back (most reportable event) and I suppose he'd been coming every week – he'd been there for a long time and he'd become sort of part of this community – it can – sometimes going every week I guess can blind you actually to how vulnerable these people are because you're actually your experience of them is quite stable, you see them every week and- yknow there are very few people I see once a week, and I guess that was difficult but valuable and it brought home to me the sense in which, erm- it sounds very glib but a week is a long time, erm in these circumstances and so things can really change, so that was- I guess quite a difficult story.

In this story the informant contrasts the beneficiary's appearance of strength and independence at the outset of the story with the reality of his vulnerability to his circumstances. The beneficiary is described as a 'gentleman' who was always 'very smart, always well put together' and with a 'real sense of decorum'. This description suggests that the beneficiary had the appearance of someone who was able to take care of himself. However this appearance of stability and independence is later challenged and the moral of the story is that appearances can be deceiving. Volunteering every week, he argues, can 'blind you actually to how vulnerable these people are'. He thus explicitly describes 'these people', referring to the beneficiaries, as 'vulnerable', the realisation of which, in contrast to their appearance of independence, is the central message of the story.



Other informants explicitly defend the needs that people sometimes have for assistance from others, as in the following extract, which is a response to the question 'how did you get into volunteering':

'I think it was my brother-in-law – I'd seen him – yknow, this time last year, I'd went down to my sisters new year's day – okay it was motor neurone disease, but he was in a – I mean he'd always earned a lot of money - a nice house in Wokingham - he was in a bed, in the lounge, and he couldn't get to the toilet, and my sister she suffers with her back, she couldn't get him out of bed, and so I stayed there for a month? And I think that threw me - people need help? And okay he's dead now, he took a year to die, he died with dignity, but there are people out there that that just need a little bit of help? That's all'

This informant stresses that his brother-in-law had 'always earned a lot of money', emphasised by the description of his 'nice house in Wokingham' and yet despite this his brother-in-law 'couldn't get to the toilet' which surprised him, as indicated by the metaphorical mental process 'that threw me'. This sense of surprise underscores the moral of this story, that 'there are people out that that just need a bit of help'. The minimisers 'just' and 'bit of' suggest that this informant is defending the needs that this man has. They also suggest that not much is required of others to assist them and I will return to this point in 8.2. Overall there is the sense that this story serves the rhetorical function of an attack on the view that people should take care of themselves and a defence of the view that people sometimes need the help of others.

#### 8.1.4 Defending a View of Beneficiaries as Empowered

In contrast, some informants explicitly represent beneficiaries as active agents rather than passive and disempowered, as in the following comment by one informant who worked on several projects in a school in Kenya:

‘there is a really famous Daily Mirror headline, ‘Africa’s starving again’ – and a picture of a young boy looking very passive and you get this all the time, and you think they’re not passive people they’re active – they’re –they’ve got their own hopes for the future, they are actively trying to do something and the idea that – I mean it’s very much presented that a lot of the time that you are going to – to do something to them – and I think that what I like about EP Africa and what - I think we succeeded in doing was to – to work with them to enable, rather than to just kind of – erm – er – distribute - distribute aid’ (Joe)

This informant, aware of the ways that beneficiaries are frequently represented in the media and elsewhere, explicitly challenges a conception of beneficiaries as passive in the phrase ‘they’re not passive, they’re active’, a message which is reinforced repetitively throughout this comment. Volunteering is represented as enabling beneficiaries rather than doing ‘something to them’. In this view of volunteering, beneficiaries are represented as resolving agents of their own challenges alongside volunteers.

Other informants actively emphasise beneficiaries’ enablements and capacities, rather than their constraints and incapacities. Earlier in one narrative about an encounter with a beneficiary, an informant explains ‘looking at him I’d surmised that

it wasn't working- his brain'. She also emphasises a number of his other constraints including his inability to speak or eat normally. However later in the story she says:

I went up to him and touched him on his shoulder cause he can't really see properly and I said 'would you like coffee, I'm making coffee' and he started rabbiting, rabbiting on and I couldn't understand him, now he has a guy next to him who - erm - is a stroke victim, but a walking wounded, a lovely guy, he's blind, yknow he can speak, he's fine, I said 'will you translate for me?' and so he asked Ray 'what are you saying

Ray?' and he translated and he said 'Ray is saying 'are you Irish?'" and I was so taken back I said 'no Ray but I'm Welsh' and with that he went 'Oggy! Oggy! Oggy!' the rugby call and it just - well it makes me cry to think about it because again I had surmised that he didn't have any ability, his brain wasn't working but I am Welsh and he had picked up my accent or the lilt as being different from all the other carers around me, and so that for me made me look at him in a different light [...] my view of him has completely changed'

As in previous examples there is a given-new structure to this story in which an initial declared assumption that the beneficiary 'didn't have any ability', that his 'brain wasn't working', is contrasted with a new appreciation of the beneficiary's mental and social abilities, illustrated by the beneficiary's ability to identify the informant's accent, be positive and engage socially with her and others. As also in previous examples, this transition from given to new is emphasised by a shocked reaction, represented in this story by the phrase 'I was so taken back'. However while the

narrative structures in the other extracts I have discussed so far are similar and serve similar purposes, the preconception being challenged is reversed: rather than emphasising the needs and vulnerability of the beneficiary, this informant emphasises the beneficiary's capacities and enablements.

Other informants explicitly emphasise beneficiaries' capacities to independently deal with or manage disabilities by themselves, as in the following extract:

Over the years I've helped a lot with one little girl called [REDACTED] - she's still at the school but she's probably quite an older teenager - totally blind which was no handicap to her whatsoever - eyes were not even - they were totally (inaudible) I don't know whether she could even see light, and the sort of thing she was - whereas you see the different children, the ones with the glass half full and the glass was half empty, her's was certainly three quarters full, erm - on the exercises they said 'shut your eyes' - this is the teacher - 'drop your reins and then while you are walking round the school pick them up and drop them as many times as you can' and she said 'I've got a head start on this haven't I?' because of course - you could walk her round to these letters and she obviously had been counting, she knew where every one of them was, she was so so bright and thoroughly enjoyed herself, so when I first met her, I'll tell you what I said, I went home to my husband and 'you know we've got a little girl here who is like David Blunkett', I said 'she's as bright as that, and she'll go as far as somebody like that' while you've had some that have been a little more difficult, she was particularly bright, some are slow learners, they are a

bit more of a challenge, they don't remember things as easily - but you get through it all.

Rather than representing the beneficiary as someone who is an unfortunate and dependent victim of circumstance, this beneficiary represents the beneficiary as someone who thrives and flourishes in spite of her blindness. The phrase 'which was no handicap to her whatsoever' explicitly negates the conception of blindness as a constraint in her case. She explicitly identifies and positively evaluates the beneficiary's capacities and enablements in identifying clauses such as 'she was so so bright' and 'she was particularly bright' and makes comparisons between her and David Blunkett. The force with which this informant positively evaluates the beneficiary's enablements suggests that this was a surprise to her, a surprise that implies a challenge to her preconception of beneficiaries as defined primarily in terms of their constraints. The force of this evaluation may also imply a broader challenge to this preconception as a general stereotype about beneficiaries.

#### 8.1.5 Conflicted Representations of Beneficiaries

While some informants resist the representation of beneficiaries as passive victims by emphasising their capacities and abilities, these representations can be undermined elsewhere in their responses. The extract below is one example that I have discussed previously:

Little victories become massive. Erm. that child hadn't eaten or drank for over a year, he was fed through a tube- he was capable of eating or drinking, he'd

just decided he didn't want to. Every time we would try and then one evening he just decided to- to eat and it was only two or three mouthfuls- it was sausage and mash I think it was- that was- that was phenomenal, yknow it sounds- yknow, two or three mouthfuls of sausage and mash and I've never been so excited about something I'd ever experienced so, yknow, little victories suddenly become massive.

In this story the beneficiary is on one level the subject of processes he is not able to control as in the opening orientation 'that child hadn't eaten or drank for over a year, he was fed through a tube'. In this phrase he is represented as the passivated beneficiary of an agentless process. However, the informant also challenges this passivated representation by following this with a caveat, in which he backtracks from this passivated representation of the beneficiary by emphasising the beneficiary's agency. The beneficiary is described as someone who was 'capable' of eating and is positioned as the active agent of cognitive and volitive processes in the following phrase 'he'd just *decided* he didn't *want* to'. This emphasis on the capacity of the beneficiary to make decisions and take action continues later when he is represented as someone who didn't just eat but as someone who '*decided* to eat'. This emphasis on the volition of the beneficiary foregrounds the beneficiaries' agency and may be part of an effort here by the informant to resist a conception of the beneficiary as a passive victim of circumstance. However, the representation of the beneficiary as an independent agent is also arguably undermined at several points in this episode. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the representation of the beneficiary as someone who 'just' decided to eat, suggests that the beneficiary's decision making was fairly

spontaneous or whimsical. More significantly the beneficiary takes responsibility for the resolving action in this story by positioning himself as the resolving agent, as argued in 7.2.1.4.4. Thus while on one level the informant resists a conception of the beneficiary as a passive victim by foregrounding various aspects of the beneficiaries' agency, ultimately this resistance is undermined throughout the rest of the narrative.

This conflicted and ultimately compromised foregrounding of beneficiaries' capacities is also evident in the following extract, which is a response by a volunteer at a riding club for disabled children:

There's one and I think you'll get this erm, from erm each one of us, and I could cry now when I think back - there was a little boy who came, and when he first came he lay down on the pony's neck, or he'd either lay forward or he was back. And he erm - couldn't speak, brain damaged at birth, erm - had got an iPad and the first thing he did when he first came riding was - he pressed a button on his iPad like this - handsome looking lad, lovely masculine hands and everything, wonderful - and erm a voice came through this iPad and it said, 'I cannot speak, but I can see I can hear and I've got a brain that I can use', and we thought 'right' - and that lad after a few weeks - I've probably got a photo somewhere I'll show you - was sitting up - and we had er one of the smaller ponies for him but we couldn't have a bit in the pony's mouth because he was all over the place, he was like a sack of spuds, but he was sitting up. And er - so his hands weren't controlled very well, so we couldn't put a bit because the pony would have wondered what was going on, so he just had the head collar and the reigns - but seeing him, and yknow every time we spoke about him - it

was just fantastic. And I think if you only get one like that a year, you've done it haven't you. And his parents are absolutely - and he took part in the gymkhana and everything - erm - and you just think it's so wonderful. And you think if we can do that for him, it's probably not so noticeable with the other children, but it was just so remarkable with him

In this story the boy is described as 'handsome' with 'masculine hands' which both suggest strength. She also cites and thus appropriates the beneficiary's own defence of his capacities in the reported speech "I cannot speak, but I can hear and I've got a brain that I can use", in which the beneficiary emphasises his capacities and enablements, rather than his incapacities and constraints. In these instances the informant seems to be defending a conception of the beneficiary as determined and strong rather than vulnerable and weak. However, as in the last example, this empowered representation of the beneficiary is elsewhere contradicted or undermined. He is introduced as a 'little boy', a description that conflicts with the description of the beneficiary as handsome and masculine. Although the beneficiary emphasises that he has 'got a brain' in his reported speech, the informant's introduction emphasises that his brain is 'damaged'. In addition, the informant ultimately takes ownership of what could have been represented as the beneficiary's achievement, as is explicitly marked in the phrase 'and you think that if we can do that *for him*', in which the beneficiary is represented as the grammatical beneficiary of a process of which the volunteers are the agent.

A similar tension between the passive and active representation of beneficiaries is evident in the following narrative by a counsellor for prison inmates:



I'm impressed with some lads who come in without any education, get an education and get straight A's because they're bright and they've never had an opportunity. So if they can grab the education while they're there, they can - it's terrific. And a lot of them have talents which they've never been able to use before musically, or drawing, art, never drawing a thing in their life and they have these wonderful creations, so it's fabulous to see that given a bit of a chance-

In this passage there are several descriptions of beneficiaries' attributes and achievements, as in the relational clauses 'they're bright', 'a lot of them have talents' and 'they have these wonderful creations'. These phrases emphasise the beneficiaries' capacities and abilities rather than their incapacities and inabilities. However the implication here is that these abilities are 'impressive' precisely because these beneficiaries are the victims of circumstances out of their control, as indicated by the negation in phrases such as 'they've never had an opportunity' and '[they] have talents with they've never been able to use before'. These attributes and achievements are thus represented as surprising precisely because these beneficiaries are primarily the disempowered affected subjects of difficult circumstances.

## 8.2 The Representation of Informants as Empowered Agents

As we saw in Chapter Five, informants frequently position themselves as the resolving agents of beneficiaries' problems. By so doing, informants run the risk of aggrandising themselves as the heroes of the narratives they share and of seeming to attach an

egoistic value to 'being the hero'. Informants resist or embrace these potential readings of these narratives in various ways. In 8.2.1 I examine the various strategies informants use for negating or downplaying their agentive role and in 8.2.2 I review some of the ways that informants embrace and defend it.

### 8.2.1 Downplaying the Role of the Volunteer

As we saw in Chapter Seven, many informants do not represent themselves as the resolving agent of beneficiaries' problems in the extracted narratives. Many informants represent themselves as passive observers of beneficiaries' suffering. For these informants the significance of volunteering is often about witnessing and learning about beneficiaries' suffering rather than resolving it.

However as we also saw, 20 of the 48 informants narrated a story in which they resolved the problem of a beneficiary. Of these 20 informants, seven marginalised or suppressed their role as the resolving agent. This can be interpreted as one strategy informants deploy for resisting or downplaying their role as the hero in their narrative. It was noted that six other informants refer to themselves collectively as 'we' and two others refer to themselves with the second person 'you', which can similarly be interpreted as strategies for diffusing the sense of personal responsibility for the resolving action. Informants use a variety of strategies throughout the interviews to actively minimise the significance of their role and I will discuss these in the following sections.

### 8.2.1.1 Minimising the Role of the Volunteer

Throughout the interviews, informants downplay or minimise the scale of their interventions, as in the following example:

‘I don’t think I’ve done anything particularly... it’s a very minor role as a volunteer in a prison, because there is no responsibility as such’

Rather than claiming to be someone that has a transformative impact on the lives of beneficiaries, this informant explicitly negates the impact and significance of her work on beneficiaries in the first and last clause. She also minimises the role and impact by describing it as a ‘very minor role’.

Minimisers frequently reduce the significance of informants’ actions in the corpus, and the following methods were used to identify this frequency. I searched for all minimisers in the corpus using the Wmatrix semantic tag ‘minimiser’. These results included ‘a bit’, ‘partly’, ‘less’, ‘slightly’, ‘a little’, ‘partially’, ‘a little bit’ and ‘simply’. This list of minimisers in the corpus is not comprehensive. In particular, this search did not include ‘just’ which a closer examination of the data suggests is frequently used as a minimiser. I thus searched for all of the terms identified by Wmatrix as well as ‘just’ in the corpus using AntConc. I then coded the list to identify instances that minimised the volunteering role using these minimisers. I found 79 instances across 26 interviews, as in the following examples:

I suppose I feel that perhaps I'm helping	a bit? And because I feel that it's so
there are people out there that that just need	a little bit of help? That's all. And I

awful time, and hopefully help to make his life	a little bit easier, but at the same time to
, so the opportunity to just sort of spend	a bit of time, helping people who for whatever rea
, although they can - so - that's what we do -	a bit of a - help - in a way.
t spiralled out of control and actually they need	a bit of help.
at the same time she does need	a bit of a helping hand as well but it'
don't really need much as far as - yknow	a bit of support knowing there's someone there - y
the lurch deliberately, so that's what I do,	just pick somebody up to bring them here and help
all that, so this is very - easy - it's	just one day you put aside and - enjoy it really,
quite a lucky - situation, so the opportunity to	just sort of spend a bit of time, helping people
so it's not all that different really. You	just chat. They are human beings, some of them ver
about two hundred odd branches, and, we	just offer telephone support, face to face support
The team that goes around branches in the country	just helping them to make sure their doing what th
care involved with that, but mainly you are	just there to ensure that a child has a good
who don't have anywhere else to turn and	just need someone to listen to them, and to talk
do you think I should do?' (laughs) but you	just, by talking through it, you make your own min
in the process of taking their own life, and	just having to be there for them, it's a
is a erm - homeless shelter in Oxford, and I	just help out basically, we do quite a lot of
good deed can from someone, or someone	just being - just going out of there way and saying
And it will often surprise me how -	just going to sit with them and asking 'how are
school activity club cooking with them and it's	just for a few hours every week - yep so I

**Table 8.4:** *Minimising the volunteering role*

There is in each of these instances a semantic sequence in which a minimiser is followed by a volunteering action. These minimisers diminish the amount of work that is claimed by the volunteer. These informants suggest that volunteering doesn't take much – just a chat here, just a few hours there. Thus while there is tendency for informants to value being the resolving agent of beneficiaries' problems, there is also a tendency for informants to diminish the amount of work involved in being the

resolving agent, thus mitigating the potential self-representation as the hero of the story.

#### 8.2.1.2 Witnessing Outcomes

Informants frequently evaluate positively their witnessing, rather than causing, of positive outcomes for beneficiaries. As one informant states:

‘It’s quite amazing, you have people change and become much more confident and – actually initiate things, so that’s my biggest thing with this, just watching that happen – not because you’ve made it happen but it just happens?’

While the use of ‘have’ at the outset is ambiguous here and could be a subtle claim of ownership over changes in beneficiaries, this informant explicitly rejects the role of the ‘hero’ by explicitly negating the value of being the agent causing positive outcomes. She repositions herself as a passive observer of positive outcomes for beneficiaries, rather than the active cause, thus marginalising the significance of her role in the narrative rather than emphasising it. She also signals her greater interest in the beneficiaries’ experience of the outcomes than her own role in causing them. This focus on witnessing rather than causing positive outcomes happens frequently throughout the corpus as the following methods illustrate.

I identified all instances of the lemmas /SEE/, /WATCH/ and /HEAR/ across the corpus and identified all instances in which informants positively evaluated witnessing positive outcomes for beneficiaries. I identified 63 instances across 23 interviews, examples of which are illustrated in Table 8.5 below. There are clearly

other ways of representing perception processes, thus the instances identified are potentially indicative of a broader trend throughout the corpus.

I think it's absolutely wonderful if you can	see prisoners moving on and this is often
people - that's what I get out of it,	seeing people having a good time basically.
, so that's my biggest thing with this, just	watching that happen - not because you've
- as I've said it's satisfying when you	see those who are probably a bit iffy at times
really what you personally get back from it -	seeing the progress from the children it is
walk in virtually on his own now, and to	see people progressing like that is one of the
circumstances they had been in before, and	seeing them come out of themselves - with a
go off into paid work? it's nice to	see them - back in their- yknow work - working?
before and strengthening - it is fantastic to	see the results afterwards - and we have children
much good - and this is what I like to	see - what they get out of it, not us so
- training new recruits, it's really positive to	see them going through the training process
tea and nice hot bath now, and you can	hear in their voice that actually everything's okay
of helping them realise that end? And to	see that they actually do and it all comes through
over a few weeks and then months you can	see them develop in confidence and you see them
the best bit that I like, yknow when you	see them forget - they forget their differences an
about 15 years - and erm - it was great to	watch people coming in raw, and watch them growing

**Table 8.5:** *Witnessing rather than causing outcomes*

In these instances, informants do not evaluate causing positive outcomes for beneficiaries, but rather witnessing these positive processes and outcomes. By so doing they marginalise themselves as key agents in the story. The focus and key protagonist of the story becomes the beneficiary and the processes and outcomes affecting them, rather than their own role as the hero who enacts processes and

brings about positive outcomes. This focus on witnessing positive outcomes thus mitigates the representation of the informant as the hero of the story and also the value of being instrumental to realizing these outcomes.

### 8.2.1.3 Making a Difference

Five informants speak of the value of being someone who has ‘made a difference’ as in the following examples:

I think it's just knowing that you've	made a difference, knowing that someone reached
I suppose just because it shows that you've	made a difference and made a child happy and
Well you know that you're	making a difference and you know that what
main leader did say that she thought I'd	made a difference? And that this girl had reacted
And I get a sense of satisfaction from	making a difference? Yknow and helping people,

**Table 8.6:** *Making a difference*

Wanting to ‘make a difference’ is a more moderate claim than wanting to be a hero and thus mitigates the degree to which volunteering is represented as a way of securing an ego boost. ‘Make a difference’ is a key phrase in volunteer discourse. In a Google search for the phrase, seven of the first eight hits are related to volunteering. This mitigation of the role of the volunteer could thus potentially be characteristic of volunteer discourse generally.

### 8.2.2 Embracing the role of the resolving agent

While in the above instances informants marginalise or minimise their role and its significance, at other times they actively highlight and celebrate it, as in the following

comment, in which the informant reflects on the common value of his most significant experiences:

‘it’s been those moments when you feel like you’ve actually done something really big for a client where you’ve really changed – even temporarily - their life around, erm – and I think you get quite a lot of those here’

Rather than minimising his impact as a volunteer, this informant explicitly emphasises the scale and impact of his volunteering as ‘really big’. This volunteer explicitly takes responsibility for having ‘really changed... their life around’. However this informant also mitigates the potentially self-aggrandising interpretation of his intervention by representing it as a personal surprise. The use of ‘actually’ suggests that people like him do not normally achieve outcomes of this scale and significance. The significance of his interventions as a volunteer is thus offset by a more humble representation of himself as someone who you might not expect to do something of this scale. He also represents himself with the generic second person ‘you’, making the significance more applicable to anyone that might volunteer rather than to himself specifically.

One informant explicitly acknowledges and partially accepts, with a degree of ambivalence, the potentially egoistic reading of the representation of themselves as the resolving agents, as in the following extract:

‘...A person who’s been assessed medically on re-examination by a person in the government and they’ve been told they’re not disabled at all – and you come out – you need 15 points to qualify for income support allowance – and



you come out with 30 points – and the client’s life has changed, so its all about that really – and I suppose its an ego trip in the sense of you achieving that, but it’s basically about getting that result for the client.’

Here the informant signals an awareness of how the narrated events might be interpreted and acknowledges to some extent the validity of the possible perception of his motivations as egoistic. However he also distances himself from this interpretation by suggesting that it is ‘basically’ or fundamentally about getting that result ‘for the client’, rather than for himself.

One informant emphasises the significance of her role by emphasising her causative role in the narrative during the final coda, as in the following example:

‘so that to me - when they came back to me and said if it wasn’t for me they’d be completely lost and sunk, and she said ‘we think of you and talk about you all the time’, yknow, that’s my best thing.’

This informant explicitly highlights her own role as the resolving agent here in the phrase ‘if it wasn’t for me they’d be completely lost and sunk’. Rather than minimising the scale and impact of her interventions, this informant ends this story by explicitly highlighting her causative role in bringing about a resolution for this informant. By quoting the beneficiary as saying this, she both validates the evaluation and also mitigates to some extent the potential egoism that might be attached to this self-representation.

Some informants embrace and ratify the value attached to being the agent of change by representing their success as a volunteer as a personal achievement. We saw earlier one narrative in which an informant describes his interventions with a problem affecting a beneficiary as a 'victory'. Others imply the same in various ways. Four other informants talk of the 'pride' they feel in being successful in their interventions. Two others describe the outcomes of their interventions as an 'achievement'. In these instances, informants embrace the personal value attached to being a successful agent of change by representing it as a personal highlight in their own life narrative.

In 8.2.1 we looked at various ways that informants negate or minimise the impact or scale of their interventions. However other informants emphasise the scale of their interventions by negating the representation of their interventions as minimal, as in the following extract:

'we deliver the food parcels and yknow what we try to do, we don't just knock on the door and say 'here's your food parcel, goodbye', we try to engage them in conversation, er we say 'look okay, we know a little bit about your background, we know you're in difficulties, is there anything we can do to help you'

Rather than representing himself as 'just' doing something, this informant states 'we *don't* just knock on the door', thus negating the minimising of the volunteer role and emphasising that these volunteers go above and beyond and look out for other ways to help.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that while beneficiaries are positioned as the affected subjects in 31 of the 48 narratives that informants share, overall there is evidence throughout the corpus of a struggle around the representation of beneficiaries as disempowered, incapacitated others. Some emphasise and defend the representation of beneficiaries as vulnerable people with physical or other limitations who need assistance. Others resist this view by emphasising beneficiaries' capacities and abilities.

Similarly, while informants are positioned as the resolving agent of beneficiaries' problems in 20 of the 48 narratives, some resist the significance of this role in various ways by minimising the work involved or its impact, marginalising themselves as agents and focusing attention on the value of seeing rather than causing outcomes. Others however embrace and defend to varying degrees the significance of the role and personal value they attach to being the resolving agent and 'hero'.

Thus while volunteering discourse is characterised primarily in terms of responding to the needs of beneficiaries, it is also characterised, on the whole by a degree of ambivalence and struggle in the ways that beneficiaries and informants are represented. A possible explanation for this might be that while informants value their role in improving the lives of beneficiaries and see beneficiaries as fundamentally victims of various circumstances, they are also aware of the general scepticism towards 'do gooders' and of the dangers of representing beneficiaries as dependent victims that I reviewed in Chapter Three, and as a result seek to mitigate representations of themselves and beneficiaries as heroes and victims respectively. The mitigation of their own role as heroes may be a uniquely British phenomenon

however. It would be interesting to compare such narratives with similar narratives in other countries such as the United States.

## Modality

### Introduction

We have so far seen a variety of evidence which suggests that volunteers are motivated by various egoistic reasons for volunteering, such as having experiences and opportunities to learn, opportunities to build informal relationships and the satisfaction of successfully altering beneficiaries circumstances for the better. We have also seen a variety of evidence that suggests that a strong sense of concern for the suffering and flourishing of beneficiaries is a major theme in these narratives. However as argued in Chapter Four it is possible to feel a sense of concern for others' wellbeing without feeling a sense of moral obligation to help them. We have already seen some evidence that suggests informants do not represent themselves as having an obligation to help (see Sections 5.2.1.2 and 7.3.2.1). This chapter seeks to explore this further by investigating a variety of evidence, in particular informants' use of modality.

I argue that although discussions of civil society often refer to our obligations as citizens, informants rarely represent volunteering as a moral obligation. Rather the evidence reviewed here supports the evidence discussed elsewhere that suggests volunteers see volunteering as a gift rather than an obligation. In 9.1 I examine the extent to which informants speak of or suggest that volunteering is a duty. In 9.2 I review the evidence that suggests a dominant tendency for informants to represent volunteering as a gift.

### 9.1 Deontic Modality

The expression of obligation in English is traditionally associated with modality. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) distinguish between two types of modality. Modalization on the one hand refers to the expression of either probability ('may be') or usuality ('sometimes'). Modulation on the other refers to the expression of volition or inclination ('wants to') or obligation ('ought to') (p 618), the latter being referred to sometimes as deontic modality. They observe that modality can be graded in strength, thus I can express strong or weak inclination or obligation.

Modality is thus a semantic category that can be realised in a variety of ways linguistically. The prototypical linguistic realization of deontic modality might be said to be the modal verb. Based on corpus research, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) identify the following modal verbs: 'must', 'should', 'may', 'need', 'can', 'could', 'should', 'ought' and 'shall'. However modality can be realised in other ways lexically. Huddleston and Pullum point out that other lexical realisations of modality include adjectives such as 'necessary', 'bound', 'supposed' (see also van Linden and Verstraete, 2011); adverbs such as 'necessarily'; verbs such as 'insist', 'permit', 'require'; and

nouns such as ‘necessity’ and modal phrases such as ‘be bound to’, ‘be supposed to’ and ‘be sure to’. We could add ‘had to’ or ‘have to’ to this list. Similarly Hunston (2011) highlights the existence of ‘modal-like expressions’ such as ‘*its up to them to decide*’, meaning approximately ‘the obligation is on them’.

One strategy for searching for evidence of a sense of moral obligation is to search for the list of words and phrases identified above in the corpus. This is on one level a relatively crude method of investigating the expression of obligation in the corpus, however given that these have been identified as typical lexical realisations of deontic modality, it is reasonable to expect volunteers who feel that volunteering is a moral duty or moral responsibility to use some of the resources listed here at some point in these interviews. For example, when asked how they got into volunteering we might expect those who see volunteering as a responsibility or duty to speak of volunteering as something they felt they ‘ought’ to do. Or when asked about their most significant experiences as a volunteer, we might expect informants to describe beneficiaries’ suffering or opportunities to improve their wellbeing and the sense that they felt they ‘had to’ do something to help. This search returned only three instances of modals expressing moral obligation, which are displayed in Table 9.1 below.

1.	We <b>have to</b> increase what we are doing, we just <b>have to</b> , and we <b>have to</b> get people to sign up monthly because small monthly amounts are the thing to do for everyone
2.	They wanted a driver and I thought ‘well I can do that’... I knew what I <b>had to</b> do

3.	I felt well 'I really ought to – I've got my skills so I really ought to do something' so I volunteered because I felt conscience driven into it – to do something
----	--

**Table 9.1:** *Instances of deontic modals*

In extract one the informant's sense of obligation is intensified through the repetition of the modal phrase 'have to' and the intensifying adverb 'just'. The emotive force behind the expression of obligation in extract one infuses these expressions with a sense of concern for beneficiaries and is a good example of how concern and obligation are not mutually exclusive motivations and in fact can be interconnected – her concern for the wellbeing of beneficiaries seems to drive her sense of obligation. Lesser degrees of obligation are expressed in the remaining two instances where there is a greater sense of compulsion.

The modal 'need' appeared in 29 of the 48 interviews. In no cases does it refer to a sense of personal obligation, however in most cases it refers to the needs of the beneficiaries, strengthening the general sense across the corpus that informants are oriented towards the suffering or flourishing of beneficiaries.

Another way of examining the expression of moral obligation in the corpus is to identify the ways that a sense of moral obligation to engage in the same or similar social practices is expressed regarding comparable practices in similar studies and then to search for these terms and phrases in the corpus. Looking through several discourse based studies on the motivations of blood, organ and tissue donation (Steele et al., 2008; Hallowell, 2008; Challenor and Watts, 2013), as well as looking through the related studies discussed in Chapter Two revealed the following:



'you have a *debt to society*'  
'I have a *moral obligation*'  
'It is somehow our *obligation*'  
'it's a *matter of conscience*'  
'I feel quite *responsible*'  
'if we don't do it, who else will?'  
'it seemed churlish not to'  
'a *duty*'

Searching for the italicised phrases and variants of them such as 'responsibility', and filtering instances that refer to a sense of social rather than moral obligation, returns only one statement by a different informant:

'I felt that I could be doing more and I felt that I was *under an obligation* to do more'

Informants can also imply a sense of moral obligation to volunteer when they speak of feeling guilt or feeling bad for not volunteering. However, as before, references to feelings of guilt are isolated and rare. Searching for the terms 'guilt', 'guilty', 'felt bad' and 'feel bad' return only the following two results. The first is from the same informant as the last quotation and the second is from an informant I have not referred to before:

1. 'I didn't do that much volunteering and I felt *guilty* about that'

2. 'I had a car at seventeen and its just – I don't want to feel *guilty* about that?

Yknow, if I've got the time to give which I do at the moment because I'm studying'

Based on the searches carried out above, there are thus a total of 6 instances where informants express a sense of obligation to volunteer in 5 interviews out of the 48 interviews. Thus even when the few informants that do express a sense of moral obligation to volunteer do so, they do so rarely.

The methods used above to explore the presence or absence of a sense of moral obligation rely on previously identified linguistic means of expressing moral obligation and a weakness of this approach is that it does not consider other ways of expressing obligation that might be used in the corpus. However we can also explore the presence or absence of alternatives to obligation and this is the subject of 9.2.

## 9.2 Volitive modality

In contrast to these representations of volunteering as something informants felt they ought to do, many informants speak of volunteering as something they want to do. I searched for the modals 'want', 'wanting', 'wants' and 'wanted' and found 40 instances in 21 interviews where informants talk about volunteering as something they want to do, as in the examples in Table 9.2 below.

, so erm, so I started off their because I	wanted to do bereavement because as a nurse I had
--	---

full time social work any more but still	wanted to - be involved and do something useful
I wasn't doing the job that I	wanted to be able to do, and I had a
that kind of thing - and I just	wanted something to contribute some time
when I left Allianz I thought - I	wanted to join the CAB because they helped my Mum
on the sort of person you are if you	want to get involved to a lesser or greater degree
was really just for the pure fact that I	wanted to build up my CV and I thought this
at the beginning of last term that I	wanted to do some volunteering, so erm - I looked
been at the back of my mind that I	wanted to expose myself to different people, peopl
kind of - not the risk factor but I just	wanted to take myself out of my comfort zone? And
never done this form before, but I did	want to do it because I did think it would
was a bit more precarious and I just	wanted to kind of - not the risk factor but I
the charity is, it was just because I	wanted to help people as much as I could I

**Table 9.2:** *Wanting to volunteer*

In most of these instances, informants are explicitly stating egoistic motivations for volunteering, such as 'wanted to build up my CV', 'wanted to expose myself to different people' and 'wanted to be involved'. These affirm the foregoing evidence that informants have a range of motivations, many of which are self-oriented. The explicitness with which they foreground these self-oriented motivations suggests that it is socially acceptable to acknowledge self-oriented motivations for volunteering and that this is perhaps a dominant way of thinking about volunteering – that on the one hand informants feel concern for beneficiaries, but on the other it is normal and expected that they would have their own self-oriented motivations for volunteering. It should be noted however that these informants in these instances may be expressing initial motivations which have changed over the course of their volunteering, in other

words that they started out wanting to improve their CV but what they value about continuing to volunteer may be different.

In contrast to the general focus on self-oriented motivations in these examples, the last volunteer cited here states ‘I wanted to help people as much as I could’ and there are traces of a similar sentiment in other lines here. This formulation, like the others, foregrounds volunteering as a choice rather than an obligation, representing it as something that is enacted freely, rather than out of a sense of obligation. It will be objected that it has to be better to want to do something than feel compelled to do something. However, as I have argued inclination and obligation are not incompatible motivations. A sense of obligation does not have to entail a sense of reluctance. It is possible to express both a desire to volunteer and an obligation to volunteer.

Informants also tend to foreground the enjoyment that they get from volunteering. I searched for the words ‘enjoy’ and ‘enjoyed’ and found 32 instances across 17 interviews where informants explicitly describe volunteering as something they enjoy, as in the examples in Table 9.3 below.

- it's just one day you put aside and -	enjoy it really, I really enjoy it but - yeah that
feel compelled to do them, so I've always	enjoyed the Citizen's Advice Bureau both then
learn how to do the tribunal stuff, and I	enjoy that I'm - not only helping a client but
doing it ever since, and I have thoroughly	enjoyed it - and we've been to all different ridin
like doing the money side of it, er I	enjoy that, I like anything to do with it. I
, yknow so that that was good for me, I	enjoyed that.
I was left with it, but I just so	enjoyed it? do you know, it gave me a purpose.
'd had enough of that. And I really really	enjoyed it, but by the time I'd done it
- once you do the first time and you really	enjoy it you want to do it again and again

and digging deeper to all these people that I	enjoy that.
's local, it's easy, it's something I	enjoy doing - and I knew that the kids get
in, that's the first thing I felt - quite	enjoyed it though - not the paperwork though -

**Table 9.3:** *Representing volunteering as enjoyable*

It is not clear what volunteers find enjoyable about volunteering. Some of what informants find enjoyable may be self-oriented. However it may be that these informants find enjoyment in helping others. Like wanting to volunteer, many will see enjoying helping others as healthy and perhaps noble. However as argued above, I can both feel an obligation to do something and enjoy doing it, in the same way that I can want to fulfil my sense of responsibility to others. The issue here is with what informants tend to foreground in the ways they talk about volunteering. There seems to be a greater tendency for informants to foreground inclinations over obligations, which suggests a greater tendency to see volunteering as a choice rather than an obligation.

In Chapter Five I observed that informants frequently speak of volunteering as 'giving'. I suggested that this suggests a view of volunteering as a gift. Further evidence to compound this interpretation is the frequency with which volunteers value the thanks or gratitude of beneficiaries. I searched for the terms 'gratitude', 'grateful', 'appreciate', 'appreciates', 'appreciated', 'appreciative', 'thanks', and 'thank' and examined the concordances to identify instances where informants positively evaluate signs of appreciation from beneficiaries for the work they do. I identified 45 instances of these words across 21 interviews, as in the examples in Table 9.4 below.

it's nice - it's nice when somebody says	thanks, yknow. And yknow you've done a good
Erm and I also think that the	gratitude of the people that we deliver - because
get some very nice letters and cards saying '	thank you very much, I don't know what we
and she was extremely	grateful for what they'd done for her. And then
be quite rewarding and people can be very	appreciative, and yknow people do respond and
come back and said they wanted to say	thank you and give you a box of chocolates or
of the interview he had erm - he was very	appreciative, he wanted to share - yknow 'thank
and one of the members stood up and said	thank you to all the volunteers, and I think it'
You think gosh yknow - they really - you are	appreciated - not that you do it for that, but it
they've hugged me and said 'ooh, God' and '	Thanks' and cried and stuff, and my prize is a
quite old people, and erm - they're all very	appreciative of what we do - there is the odd one
and somebody sidles up to you and says	thank you - and that's all they say.
you in all sorts of lights, and they really	appreciate it and I mean it sounds a strange thing
Ah - I suppose erm - when someone's really	grateful for the work that you've done,
when all these people come up and say 'oh	thank you so much, you saved my life, oh you
call up just maybe ring up just to say	thanks, you might not have even spoke to them
yknow if you come every week they do say	thank you at the end and they help out they
I made, and he comes in every week to	thank me? And it's like to me it's
them back to give them information, they	appreciate that, or when they're emailing -

**Table 9.4:** *Appreciating appreciation*

I also identified five other instances where informants positively evaluate expressions of gratitude from beneficiaries in more indirect ways, and three of these instances occur in interviews other than the 21 interviews I have mentioned. We might expect someone who felt responsible or obligated to help a beneficiary to dismiss or reject expressions of thanks or appreciation by that beneficiary as irrelevant. In a study on the motivations of blood donors, for instance, one donor consistently rejected the idea

that giving blood was praiseworthy. In contrast, he argued that that, as in the cited quotation above 'it would be churlish not to' (Challenor and Watts, 2013). For this donor, being praised was not commensurate with his view of donating blood as a necessary obligation. However the emphasis and value that these volunteers attach to these expressions suggests that they see volunteering more as a gift than a basic moral expectation.

The sense that volunteers see volunteering as optional is further compounded by the relative frequency with which informants emphasise the importance of volunteering as something that is convenient or something that they do on their own terms. Returning to 'want', there are five informants who talk about particularly not wanting to do certain types of volunteering, which include volunteering in a shop, volunteering in a hospital, volunteering in a certain location or working at certain times. Again, rather than foregrounding the sense of obligation these volunteers have to address a need, these informants specifically foreground their own ability to choose what types of activities they engage with. Volunteering is represented as an activity that is carried out on their own terms, rather than out of a sense of obligation. This sense that volunteering is something that should be convenient or that fits into the lifestyle and aims of the volunteer is also evident in the comments cited in Table 9.5 below.

1	it was only one day a week, and it was circumscribed, I didn't want to be dragged into something that goes on every day and - people ringing up - I didn't want all that, so this is very - easy - it's just one day you put aside and
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	- enjoy it really, I really enjoy it but – yeah that’s how I like things in days and not...
2	I’d planned out all the things you plan to do when you retire - so it suited me... Tuesdays suited me
3	with debt work you’ve got to see the client, fill out all the details and then start writing to all the creditors, making arrangements for them and so on – it’s an ongoing – and to come in as a volunteer and run that sort of work I found too demanding
4	I had retired so... I had time to spare
5	I thought ‘its local, it’s easy, it’s something I enjoy doing’

**Table 9.5:** *Volunteering on their own terms*

In contrast to Informant 1 in Table 9.1, these informants do not represent volunteering as something they feel they ought to do, rather they foreground and emphasise volunteering as something that is convenient and which fits in with their own individual priorities and goals – something that ‘suits’ their schedule, something which is ‘easy’ rather than being ‘too demanding’.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there is little evidence throughout the corpus of informants representing volunteering as an obligation. Rather, there is a greater tendency for informants to talk about volunteering as something they want to do and something they enjoy, and also as giving something to beneficiaries that beneficiaries appreciate. The overall picture is that informants display a greater tendency to



represent volunteering as an optional gift that has its personal rewards, rather than as a moral obligation or responsibility.

## Conclusion

### Introduction

In this thesis I have argued that research on MTV tends to rely on a simplistic dichotomy between egoism and altruism. I expanded on this dichotomy by proposing that volunteers can be motivated by either concern for or obligations to either the self or others, and also distinguished between social and moral obligations. I have sought to contribute to an understanding of the motivations of committed community-based volunteers by examining the extent to which they are motivated by self-interest (either self-concern or obligations to the self), or either concern for or obligation to alleviate others' suffering or promote their flourishing. I also observed that existing research into MTV often seeks to describe MTV, however I argued that we can better understand or explain MTV by understanding the ontologies and ideologies underpinning these motivations and this has also been an aim of this study. Given the lack of critical engagement with community-based volunteering in academic, media and political discourse, this thesis has also aimed not only to describe but also to

critically evaluate these motivations and underlying beliefs. In this thesis I have argued that volunteers' responses demonstrate a tension between both self-interested motivations and concerns for beneficiaries, however volunteers rarely talk about volunteering as a moral obligation. The evidence for this conclusion rests on a variety of evidence discussed throughout this thesis, and in Sections 10.1-3 of this chapter, I bring this evidence together and discuss some of the potential implications for policy makers. In sections 10.4-5 I also summarise and discuss the ontological and ideological beliefs underpinning these beliefs, evaluate the methodology adopted and discuss areas for further research.

### 10.1 Self-Oriented Outcomes

In Section 5.2.2.2 we saw that 'Education: general' was a key semantic domain in the Y corpus (when compared with the O corpus) and when probed further we saw that almost half of the Y informants explicitly evaluated positively the opportunity volunteering provided to learn. This suggests that the educational value of volunteering is an important motivation for Y informants. In Section 7.2.2.2 we also saw that nine of the 48 narratives extracted from the data as a whole involved informants learning something about beneficiaries. While this on one level suggests a degree of empathic concern for beneficiaries and can be seen as a way of highlighting the needs of beneficiaries, in these stories, informants position themselves not as social actors who do or change things, but as social actors who observe, who react and who learn things about others. Given the significance that informants attach to these experiences, this potentially suggests that these volunteers attach value to

volunteering as an opportunity for existing perspectives and ways of thinking to be challenged and reconfigured.

A related issue is the value that Y informants seem to attach to volunteering as a means of having experiences. In Section 5.2.2.1 we saw that 'experience' and 'experiences' are both keywords in the Y corpus (when compared with the Millennium corpus) and occur in 13 of the 20 Y interviews, roughly two thirds. When probed further we saw that a range of evaluative adjectives were used to describe these experiences such as 'strange', 'positive', 'rewarding', 'frustrating' and 'overwhelming'. I argued that the frequency with which Y informants talk about and evaluate 'experiences', compared to O informants, suggests that the opportunity volunteering gives Y informants to have 'experiences' – discrete narrativised episodes of volunteering practice – was an important motivation for Y informants.

This analysis correlates with Holdsworth's (2010) conclusion following the analysis of her data that younger volunteers do not value the opportunity volunteering provides to learn not merely as a means of improving their CV's in order to improve their employment prospects. Rather, Y informants seem to attach intrinsic value to the opportunity volunteering provides, for them to learn and experience new things. The apparent value Y informants attach to having experiences might explain the shift towards more episodic forms of volunteering practice among younger volunteers, as identified by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003). Y informants may not quit because of a lack of commitment, but rather because they at least partly volunteer in order to have a unique experience and once they have had this they move on. This preference for volunteering opportunities that offer them a range of discrete, finite experiences in the form of placements, rather than what might be perceived as the on-

going 'grind' of sustained and repetitive volunteering activity, suggests that there might be room for alternative constructions of volunteering practice at the local level. For instance rather than assigning younger volunteers to a particular hospital ward for an indefinite period of time, younger volunteers might be more interested in having lots of different kinds of volunteering experiences in a range of volunteering placements, for example, working for a month at a homeless shelter and then moving on to something very different such as working at youth club for disabled children and so forth. Secondly, the value that Y informants seem to attach to learning and having experiences might suggest particular emphases in the process of attracting and recruiting volunteers. For instance, given the range of emotions indicated by the adjectives used to evaluate different experiences discussed above, recruitment campaigns might focus on the opportunity volunteering presents to do things which provoke a variety of responses and allow volunteers to experience the full range of human emotions both positive and negative, including, for instance, fear, disgust, shame, respect, satisfaction, frustration, surprise and shock.

In Section 5.2.2.3 I also investigated the keyness of the semantic domain 'communication: speech' in the O corpus (when compared with the Y corpus) and argued that older informants value the opportunity volunteering provides to have verbal interactions with others and form social bonds through volunteering. Unlike younger volunteers then, older volunteers may have a greater preference for more continuous forms of volunteering in which there are opportunities to build and sustain social relationships that are formed in the process of volunteering. This also has implications for both the management and marketing of volunteering practice. Volunteering organisations involving older people may need to ensure that there are

opportunities for older volunteers to build informal social connections and this might also be reflected in volunteer recruitment campaigns targeting older people.

In 7.2.2.1, I observed that 21 of the 48 informants represent themselves as the resolving agent of the narrative problem, or in other words as the agent that changes a bad situation into a good one. In all but one instance these were problems that affected one or more beneficiaries. In some instances there is an explicit positive evaluation of being the agent of change in statements such as 'I felt so proud' and 'gives you a bit of pride'. However informants often mitigate or downplay the significance of this role in a variety of ways for instance focusing on seeing positive outcomes for beneficiaries rather than causing them, which I will return to discuss in more detail below. Nevertheless, the fact that when asked to relate a personally significant volunteering experience these volunteers relate a story in which they are positioned as the agent of positive change suggests that being this agent of change holds value for them. These volunteers do not relate experiences in which they witness beneficiaries resolving their own problems, or experiences in which the organisation as a whole resolves beneficiaries' problems – they relate stories in which they personally resolve beneficiaries' problems. This finding suggests that for many volunteers there is a self oriented value in volunteering which is focused not just on positive outcomes for beneficiaries but in personally being the agent who can change things, or in other words being the cause of this change. This finding thus confirms what might have been expected - that many volunteers want to 'make a difference', which may be about wanting to improve things for beneficiaries, but may also be about wanting to be an empowered agent of positive change. It highlights the

importance for volunteers of being the causative agent in beneficiary oriented transitions from negative to positive states and of resolving problems.

One potential implication for charities is that in order to attract new volunteers and provide a sense of satisfaction for existing volunteers, which may lead to sustained and regular volunteering activity, they may need to facilitate and promote experiences in which volunteers have the chance to be, or at least feel like, the agents of positive change. Volunteers may not be content with being a small cog in a great machine, performing relatively mundane tasks on a regular basis out of a sense of duty. They may need to have the clear sense that they are personally the agent of positive change in the lives of beneficiaries. Alternatively, the ways that volunteers think about volunteering action may need to be challenged or reconfigured, which I will return to below.

### 10.2 Concern for Beneficiaries' Suffering and Flourishing

In Section 2.1.3 I discussed the functional view of MTV, which interprets all volunteering as motivated by the personal needs of the volunteer. From this perspective all MTV are self-oriented. However I have argued at various points in this thesis that, as Batson and Ahmad observe, 'the capacity for human caring is not limited to one's own self-interest' (2002:433) and it is possible to be motivated by a sense of concern for others' suffering or flourishing, rather than exclusively one's own. In this thesis I have argued that while there is some evidence of self-interested motivations, informants communicate a strong sense of concern for beneficiaries' suffering or flourishing throughout the data suggesting that this is a significant

motivation for volunteering. The evidence for this sense of concern will be reviewed below.

In Section 6.3.1 I observed that in the extracted narratives of significant volunteering experiences, informants refer, in almost all cases, to beneficiaries more frequently than any other social actors, including themselves. In other words, when asked about significant volunteering experiences, informants do not focus predominantly on themselves, other volunteers, organisers, the organisation generally or social actors beyond the context of volunteering, to name a few possible contenders, but rather they predominantly focus on beneficiaries.

Informants also tend to refer to beneficiaries' problems, suffering and flourishing regularly and in ways that suggest a degree of empathic concern. In Section 5.2.1.1 we saw that 'disease' is a key semantic domain in the data and that it predominantly refers to medicalized labels for beneficiaries' challenges such as autism or stroke. This suggests that the interviews are to some degree oriented towards the beneficiaries' problems in these interviews. In Section 8.1.1 I observed that there is a strong tendency for informants to negatively evaluate beneficiaries through the use of negation as in 'they just can't cope' or 'they can't even walk', with 29 of the 48 informants using negation in this way. And we saw in Section 8.1.2 evidence of a nurturing attitude towards beneficiaries, with 11 informants, for instance, representing beneficiaries as 'little', as in 'my little guy' and 'a little old lady'.

In 6.3.5.1 I observed that beneficiaries are represented as reactors more frequently than informants, and in 6.3.5.3 I observed that in almost all cases, informants represent beneficiaries as experiencing emotional processes more frequently than mental processes and that these emotions are in almost all cases more



frequently negative emotions rather than positive. Thus beneficiaries tend to be frequently represented as reactors who experience negative emotions.

We saw in Section 6.3.4.4 that when informants represent themselves as reacting to something, it is overwhelmingly a mental or emotional reaction to beneficiaries, and that there is a tendency for these reactions to be more frequently emotional than mental. In Section 6.3.4.2 I also observed that the majority of actions informants perform in the narratives they share are interactive, with beneficiaries as recipients. Thus informants frequently represent themselves as responding emotionally to beneficiaries and their actions are directed towards beneficiaries.

In Section 7.1.2 I noted that there is a significant tendency for informants to be concerned with shifts in beneficiaries' emotions, most frequently from negative to positive. This suggests that informants are concerned not only with beneficiaries' negative emotions, but also with their moving from a state of suffering to a state of flourishing.

In Section 8.2.1.2, I also noted that almost half of the informants frequently positively evaluate seeing, rather than causing, positive outcomes for beneficiaries. While this may be used to mitigate the significance informants attach to being the resolving agent, it also suggests that they have an intrinsic interest in the flourishing of beneficiaries.

Overall then, the evidence cited here suggests that informants seem to be concerned, or seem to be expressing concern, for the problems and the emotional experiences of beneficiaries, particularly their negative emotional experiences, and that they are also often concerned with the shifting of these experience from negative

to positive. This sense of concern for beneficiaries' suffering and flourishing is thus a strong theme throughout the interviews.

On one level we could interpret this expression of a sense of concern for beneficiaries as the performance of a moral identity. However on another level the consistent strength of this sense of concern across the interviews suggests that there is for most informants a more than a superficial regard for beneficiaries' suffering and flourishing and that it actually does relate to a genuine concern for beneficiaries as a core motivation.

In any case it is interesting that in an age sometimes characterised by a scepticism towards 'do gooders' and altruistic behaviour generally, as discussed in Chapter Three, these volunteers do not talk in a completely Hobbesian, self interested, contractual, individualistic way devoid of empathy and concern for others. Rather informants repeatedly seem to express empathic concern for others in the ways that volunteers talk about and evaluate the personal significance of their volunteering experience. Altruistic concern for others continues to hold some relevance in the ways that volunteers talk about and make sense of the value of what they do.

### 10.3 Moral Obligation

In Section 3.1.3 I drew on Singer's (2011) work as I argued that we have an obligation to do what we can to both relieve others' suffering and promote their flourishing; albeit within a system of prioritised responsibilities in which, for instance, parents have a primary obligation to promote the flourishing of their children. I also argued in Section 4.1.1 that it is possible to feel a sense of concern for the suffering or flourishing of others without necessarily also feeling a sense of obligation towards

them. One of the aims of this thesis has been to investigate the extent to which informants express a degree of obligation as well as a degree of concern for beneficiaries, as a means of investigating the extent to which volunteering is characterised by a moral view in which helping others is perceived as optional rather than an obligation. Based on the evidence I review below, the overall conclusion is that informants speak of volunteering in terms of self-interest and concern for beneficiaries suffering or flourishing, but rarely in terms of a moral duty or obligation to help them.

One source of evidence for this is the scarcity of recognised forms of deontic modality in the corpus as realized through modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, phrases and other means discussed in Section 9.1. In this section I identified only six instances of deontic modality in five of the 48 interviews. We might expect volunteers who feel a sense of obligation or responsibility to volunteer to speak of volunteering as an obligation, or responsibility, something they felt they ought to do at some point in the interviews, but if the volunteers in this study do feel a sense of obligation to volunteer, they rarely speak about volunteering in this way.

It is possible that more subtle forms of expressing a sense of obligation are used throughout the interviews, which these methods have not identified. However informants' responses are not only characterised by an apparent absence of a sense of obligation, but also by evidence that suggests informants see volunteering as an optional gift rather than a responsibility. In Section 5.2.1.2 I pointed out that 'giving' is a keyword in the corpus as a whole, and on a closer inspection I identified that 35 of the 48 informants represent themselves as an agent who 'gives' something to beneficiaries. The possible implication that these informants see volunteering as a gift

rather than a responsibility is supported by the frequency with which volunteers positively evaluate receiving gratitude from beneficiaries, as discussed in 9.2 in which I observed that there are 48 instances in 21 interviews where informants positively evaluate receiving gratitude from beneficiaries. These representations of volunteering seem more commensurate with a view of volunteering as a praiseworthy act of goodwill rather than as the performance of actions that it would be wrong to omit. This interpretation, that volunteers more frequently seem to represent volunteering as optional rather than an obligation, is further strengthened by the frequency with which informants speak of volunteering more frequently in terms of inclination rather than obligation, as suggested by the frequency with which volunteers speak of volunteering as something they want to do and enjoy, and which is convenient for them (9.2).

The absence of obligation in informants' responses corresponds to Nafstad et al.'s (2007) diachronic study of media discourse in Norway between 1984 and 2005, discussed earlier in this thesis. As explained, they note that lexical items associated with neoliberal discourse such as the Norwegian equivalents of 'rights', 'entitlement', 'optional', 'freedom' and 'choose' have been on the rise, while 'duty', 'equality', 'solidarity' and 'obligation' have been in decline. They conclude, 'we are content that [in Norway] an ideological climate is developing which does not call on people to take sufficient responsibility for the welfare of society, community and others' (p317).

The force and clarity with which these informants express concern for the wellbeing of recipients is, however, at least partly inconsistent with a discourse of neoliberalism. While informants do value volunteering for self-oriented reasons, the findings also suggest a strong tendency for informants to define volunteering as a

response to the needs of others out of concern for their suffering or flourishing, which is a definition that rubs against the grain of the individualized, self-oriented, acquisitive ideology of neoliberalism (see Gledhill, 2004; Hall, 2011; and Harvey, 2005).

Some might also argue that it has to be preferable to have volunteers who want to help others rather than feeling obliged to help out of a sense of moral duty. However as I have argued elsewhere, feeling obliged to help does not necessarily have to entail the sense of reluctance that the phrase 'feeling obliged to help' implies. It is possible to feel, and express, both a moral obligation and a desire to help relieve others' suffering and promote their flourishing. For instance in the following tract promoting Singer's own charity, its executive director writes:

'My wife Diana and I have been having more and more conversations about how amazing our lives currently are from a health, relationship, family, and material perspective. Although we have donated a lot to The Life You Can Save in time and money, we are acutely aware of how much more *we want to do and should do* for those suffering from extreme poverty'. (Bresler, 2015)

As in the italicized phrases phrase both volitive and deontic modals are used to indicate both a sense of desire to help as well as a sense of obligation to help, which as we have seen is something that rarely occurs in informants' responses. While the emphasis on wanting to help others is entirely appropriate I would argue that as long as attending to the suffering and flourishing of others is perceived as an optional act of goodwill which is subject to the vicissitudes of personal convenience and interest,

rather than a sense of responsibility or obligation, the needs of others may be unlikely to receive the systematic and sustained attention that such challenges require.

#### 10.4 Implicit Ideologies

The concern informants demonstrate for beneficiaries' problems and the frequency with which volunteers represent themselves as the resolving agents of beneficiaries' problems both suggest that informants subscribe to an ontological view of people as fundamentally vulnerable and interdependent, often needing the help of others, rather than an ontology in which people are seen as responsible for and capable of resolving their own problems and challenges. This concern is arguably also predicated on a view of beneficiaries as equal to other social actors. While on one level the frequent use of negation in representations of beneficiaries' challenges, such as 'they can't move their legs' and 'they can't communicate', emphasises beneficiaries' incapacities, as discussed in 8.11, it also implicitly represents what should be the case but is not, which implies a view of beneficiaries as equals. This view contrasts with the claim by some, as discussed in Chapter Three, that volunteering is characterised by an unequal power relation between volunteers and beneficiaries.

However, despite the important recognition of beneficiaries' vulnerabilities and need for help, in some instances volunteers represent beneficiaries as disempowered victims who are incapable of helping themselves, which potentially could contribute to beneficiaries' problems rather than helping to relieve them. As discussed in 7.2, beneficiaries are usually the affected subject in the narratives informants share but are very rarely represented as the resolving agent of their own problems. These problems either remain unresolved or are resolved by others and the

latter are in almost all cases the informants themselves. While informants resist or defend this representation of beneficiaries as we saw in Chapters Seven and Eight, this positioning demonstrates a tendency for informants to overlook beneficiaries' own efforts and actions towards resolving or managing their own problems, their capacity for being the resolving agents of their own problems. This representation of beneficiaries is potentially inaccurate at best and detrimental to beneficiaries at worst, since the reiteration of such representations may ultimately encourage patterns of dependency and disempowerment among beneficiaries. One recommendation for charities is to encourage volunteers to recognise and celebrate beneficiaries' efforts to resolve their problems and to perceive themselves as partners with beneficiaries in empowering them to resolve or manage their own problems, rather than as passive recipients of others' interventions.

In addition, while informants often stress the vulnerability and equality of beneficiaries as discussed above, informants' responses are also characterised by an ontological perspective in which beneficiaries are seen as fundamentally separate from informants rather than interconnected parts of a collective whole. The representation of volunteering as an optional and praiseworthy act of goodwill, rather than an obligation, suggests a conception of beneficiaries as others, as separate. Informants observe and feel for beneficiaries, they recognise their need for help, and they step in to help them, but this seems predicated on a view of themselves as, in the words of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) 'altruistic individualists', in other words as people who perceive themselves as separate from others but who are capable of feeling compassion and empathy for them and who act to relieve their suffering or promote their flourishing. This sense of disconnection is also reflected in the

frequency with which informants represent themselves and beneficiaries as individuals rather than as assimilated parts of a collective (see Section 6.3.2).

One approach to addressing the absence of obligation that volunteers and others feel towards helping beneficiaries is to challenge the underpinning ideology of individualism, which is a challenge for various social agents and institutions with social influence, including in particular media and political agents. Politicians have often sought to promote a sense of the national collective in initiatives such as the 'big society' campaign. However as discussed in Chapter Three, too often these campaigns seek to offload state responsibilities onto local volunteers, when, as Ehrenberg suggests, what is perhaps needed is greater state involvement, as well as local volunteers in a combined effort. In addition such concepts often depend on and reiterate nationalistic ideologies in which the interests of citizens and members of local communities are given priority over the needs of those abroad, which are often more serious and pressing.

Finally, I have argued that volunteering tends to be represented by informants as individual volunteers responding and often resolving individual beneficiaries' problems. This supports the various criticisms of volunteering that it is often constructed as an apolitical, decontextualized practice as reviewed in Chapter Three. In informants' version of events, as discussed in Chapter Seven, volunteering takes place in a contextual vacuum, excluding and thus absolving those who might be involved in contributing to the negative experiences of beneficiaries or those who have a responsibility for alleviating their suffering or promoting flourishing such as family members, friends, neighbours, the local community, or the state. Problems tend to be represented as just 'there' or as inculcated into the identities of beneficiaries, as



in the various instances of negation such as ‘they can’t communicate’, as discussed in Section 8.1.1. Informants usually provide the solution themselves directly and do not refer to other social actors that might also be involved in the resolution process. A danger is that if this decontextualized conception of volunteering, in which individuals feel concern for other individuals and help them with their problems, is a dominant characteristic of volunteering discourse more broadly, it legitimates and could potentially contribute to the continued offloading of the responsibilities of the state and other agents onto well-meaning volunteers. This representational pattern may indicate the need for volunteers to have greater critical awareness of the broader socio-political context in which they operate.

### 10.5 Further Research

The key task of this thesis has been to identify general discursive patterns across responses from volunteers in a range of direct, community based volunteering contexts, which may be characteristic of volunteers in these contexts more broadly. However this focus on general patterns and dominant discourses of volunteering has overlooked for the most part a consideration of the differences as well as patterns across the data. As Sealey (2009) points out there may be ‘surprise’ relations between apparent anomalies or differences across the data that may be explained by further investigation into, for instance demographic factors. I have considered age as a potentially significant factor, however further research might identify other factors as significant. For instance, as discussed in Chapter Nine there are five informants who express a sense of obligation, albeit in relatively isolated instances. One point of

investigation for explaining this anomaly might be to identify what these informants have in common and what differentiates them from other informants.

One of the key features of this research has been that it takes an indirect approach to the investigation of MTV and underpinning beliefs, avoiding the pitfalls incurred by asking about informants' motivations directly, as discussed in Chapter Two. However, returning to informants and discussing these findings and analysis with them directly could potentially strengthen my findings and analysis and provide further insights. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate whether informants themselves agree with my conclusion that they do not feel a sense of obligation to volunteer or whether they challenge it.

My analysis of informants' narratives would also be strengthened by comparing informants' narratives with narratives of the same events by the beneficiaries involved. It would be interesting, for instance, to examine whether beneficiaries passivize themselves in the narratives as much as informants do or whether they ascribe themselves a more active part in resolving or managing the problems to which they are subject. It would also be useful to see whether they refer to causal agents and contextualise their problems to a greater extent than do these informants. It would likewise be interesting to interview beneficiaries about their reactions to informants' versions of events, specifically, to ask them how they feel about their representation by informants and whether they feel informants' narratives accurately represent the people and events involved. However, the significant ethical issues entailed in these activities would restrict such efforts.

This thesis has sought to contribute to an understanding of dominant discourses of volunteering. It is thus potentially one part of a larger project, which

could also critically analyse the ways that volunteering is represented by journalists, politicians and by non-volunteers more generally. More fundamentally this thesis has sought to understand, and to problematize, the dominant ways we talk and think about helping others in contemporary society, and to work towards mapping systematic methods for doing so. This research thus points to a much larger project, which might be applied to social contexts and social relations both within and beyond the field of volunteering. Other informants that might be interviewed could include parents, teachers, soldiers, fundraisers, politicians and care workers.

The unprecedented attention being directed towards volunteering creates a unique opportunity for a conversation about the nature and ideological foundations of our moral obligations in contemporary life. It is a conversation that has the potential to trouble the waters of moral feeling and thinking in contemporary society and unsettle the sediment of the dominant ontological and ideological assumptions of our time. The ripples created by such a troubling also have the potential to challenge and ultimately reshape the ways that we think not just about volunteering and about what it means to be a citizen in an increasingly globalised society, but more fundamentally about who we are and our relationship with those beyond the limits of our families. To be a citizen once entailed moral obligations to those beyond the immediate circle of friends and family (See Martin, 2013). Perhaps this conversation will lead to a renewal of this sense of obligation; not a sense of duty that rests on nationalist ideologies, but rather one that is tied to an ideology that legitimates an ontology of equality irrespective of place or time, and which leads to an increased sense of urgency and individual and collective responsibility to diminish the suffering and increase the flourishing of all.



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