HOW YOUNG VOLUNTEERS LEARN IN PRACTICE FROM ESTABLISHED VOLUNTEERS: AN EXAMINATION OF VOLUNTEER LEARNING IN COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE UK

BY

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examined the learning in practice of fourteen young volunteers at four community radio stations in the UK. I queried what learning in practice as a volunteer constituted by examining how the participants accessed support and knowledge from established members, and how practice defined their volunteering and learning. Using an interpretivist methodology applied to private blogs and group interviews, participants recorded their perspectives for between six and nine months. Communities of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was applied to understand how the participants developed their learning relationship with established members.

Analysis reveals that established members legitimised participant practice through three phases; an initial phase of broadcasting training where participants began at the periphery of the membership; a second phase of broadcast reviews that sought to develop their relationship with members; and a third phase of non-broadcast activities to establish their membership. The relationship between the participants and established members meant the phases were not linear. Participants creatively constructed their broadcasts by developing a fragile, embryonic network of active citizenship (Kenny *et al*., 2015) to generate community content. In doing so not all participants wanted to establish themselves as members and engage in non-broadcast activities, and drew distinctions between broadcast practice on the periphery and the community development practice of established members.

My original contribution to the literature is that by examining volunteering as a learning practice the hidden pressures and conflicts in relationship between newcomers and established members are revealed. I argue that becoming an established member of a voluntary organisation may not be for everyone, but that this does necessarily mean a loss of committed practice to the organisation. Initial volunteering opportunities that are exploratory and creative can establish commitment. I therefore link commitment to practice as a volunteer, rather than as a biographic strategy as suggested elsewhere in the literature.

For Natalie, my wife and best friend

Thank you also to Egan and Nerissa for lighting up my life so brightly

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I first describe the context for this thesis. I start with a brief explanation of what led me to undertake this research before stating the originality of this research. I suggest that the learning experience of young volunteers is less examined in the learning and volunteering literatures and that community radio is a suitable sector for study because how young volunteers learn to become broadcasters may be a key factor in their commitment and retention, but also significantly, community radio is new area of the voluntary sector, and therefore worthy of research attention. To contextualise the study, I explicate the relationship between community radio and policy in which a broader social mission has replaced a sole historic mandate to campaign for access to the radio airwaves for minority voices. This change has consequences at organisational level for minority voices, including young volunteer broadcasters. I then introduce the research in this thesis by explicating my research approach, the research objectives and research questions. Finally, I describe the structure of this thesis in a summary of each chapter.

1.1 The researcher and what led to this thesis

My background as a community radio worker led me to undertake this research. I trained young people to become broadcasters through formal training courses and through experiencing broadcasting. I began as a community radio producer and teacher in the 1990s in Birmingham when community radio was rapidly developing a national profile. My first training course attracted nearly one hundred applicants for 18 places, testament to the appeal of voluntary broadcasting. The mix of cultures, histories, class background and ethnicities made for what I considered very special radio and certainly different from mainstream BBC and commercial radio.

In the early 2000s more community radio stations appeared and some became full time as the Government Office for Communications (Ofcom) commissioned first a pilot scheme and then began awarding licences from 2004. Public policy bodies and charitable foundations began to fund community radio to address their priority needs including social exclusion, citizenship and community cohesion, and this intensified when full time licences became available. This expanded brief excited some that I worked with in the sector. Community radio has historically been starved of political support but these marginalised voices now appeared to be political priorities at last.

Yet my feeling at the time was that hearing the voices of minority groups on air was no longer enough. At the community media conferences I attended, a political appetite pervaded that wanted to mould volunteers as citizens and as economic producers with community radio bosses complicit in this move. Volunteers were no longer broadcasters but sources of income as an output of a funded project. This thinking particularly applied to young people who attended long training courses which funded the community radio stations, sometimes attending training without being offered a broadcast slot at the end. This could happen even when presenter turnover was high and new presenters were needed. Young volunteers were always to be managed whilst older broadcasters were given freedom to produce their own content. Working on funded training programmes with volunteers became increasingly organised, with young people, the elderly, cultural or minority ethnic groups learning their craft in separate groups. The station sounded like a strong cultural mix on air but behind the scenes it was not.

Redundancy from a poorly managed radio station made me reflect on what I did that was successful and unsuccessful, and how the conditions in which I worked enabled or disabled my ambitions, as well as those of the many young volunteers I worked with. What alternative models of how stations operated existed, with or without staff, and where were they? Were there stations whose principles supported the broadcasting of many voices, a mode of operating that rejected the social policy model, or the pursuit of advertising, or at least mitigated its impact? Did the young people considering

community radio volunteering understand there were many approaches to community broadcasting? These questions fermented until I decided to pursue this research.

Ultimately my starting position for this research was that I believe community radio at its best celebrates the myriad ways the world's cultural heritage has become local for so many, reflected in the voices heard, the debates people choose to engage in, and the music they play on air. That young people want to volunteer in community radio when national trends are otherwise (NCVO, 2015) suggests it has something they find attractive, and that they are willing to learn what it takes for them to become successful community broadcasters. But what if the voluntary experience does not match expectations? What are the contextual, organisational and individual conditions for successful youth volunteering and how do they combine to create the learning experience of being a young volunteer broadcaster?

1.2 Context for this thesis: youth volunteering

Globally, volunteering attracts researchers because as Wilson (2000) suggests, '*it embraces a vast array of quite different activities*' (Wilson, 2000: 233). Hustinx *et al* (2010) and others (Esmond and Dunlop, 2004; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Rochester *et al*, 2010) observe that it is of interest to researchers from multiple paradigms, with political scientists, economists, sociologists and psychologists all studying it. In the UK, it has also attracted political interest: governments have directed public resources to harness volunteering for policy purposes through initiatives such as Make a Difference, Millennium Volunteers and National Citizen Service (Davis Smith, 1998; Osborne, 1996; Davis Smith *et al*, 2002; Birdwell *et al*, 2013). A variety of research projects, surveys and initiatives have been designed and conducted to inform UK policy on volunteering, including: the *Commission on the Future of Volunteering* (Neuberger, 2008); *Citizenship Surveys* (CLG, 2010); *Unshackling Good Neighbours* (Hodgson, 2011); and the ongoing *Community Life Surveys* (Cabinet Office, 2015). Policy

attention has culminated in an increased public profile for volunteering including the United Nations designating 2001 as the International Year of the Volunteer (United Nations, 2001).

Much of the academic literature seeks to define what a volunteer is and what constitutes volunteering using cohort data to define external boundaries and internal characteristics (see for example, Cnaan *et al*, 1996; Snyder and Omoto, 2008; Rochester *et al*, 2010). This approach places a heavy emphasis on the individual volunteer as the source of data but may not always be the most appropriate to understanding volunteering. Marginalised communities may be less represented in these survey studies because of how data are collected and the questions they ask. For example, the 2007/8 Citizenship Survey reported that black and Asian young people are less likely to volunteer (Hill *et al*, 2009: 4) a position re-affirmed by data from the Office for National Statistics who suggest that over 80% of youth volunteering is undertaken by white young people (NCYVS, 2014). Yet in a study using wave two data from the 2010/11 Understanding Society survey, Bennett and Parameshwaran (2013) found, '*ethnic minority youth are more likely to volunteer than white British youth*' when a broader conception of volunteering practice, including extra curricular religious classes, is included in the analysis (Bennett and Parameshwaran, 2013: 3-4).

Wilson (2012) also notes that limiting research to the individual in survey responses cannot offer a complete picture, and that alternative approaches to research such as ethnographic study may offer insights into how organisations develop and retain volunteers to ensure the continuity of the mission and practice of the organisation:

> *…research should pay more attention to organizational context...the most likely determinants of volunteer satisfaction, commitment and loyalty, are to be found in the organization of the volunteer experience.*

> (Wilson, 2012: 201)

Yet the experience of the volunteer cannot be the only relevant data to understanding practice. Hill *et al* (2009) suggest the relevance to study of the attitudes of the established members of voluntary organisations:

> *The attitudes of volunteer-involving organisations remain under researched. In particular there is a lack of information about how organisations involve, support and value young volunteers.*

(Hill *et al*, 2009: 26)

Hill *et al* (2009) focus on young volunteers as the future of voluntary organisations. In this they refer to the need for understanding how volunteers develop an affinity with an organisation. I suggest that this may be a call for more understanding about the process of becoming established volunteers. In the volunteer management literature, Fletcher (1997) describes volunteering as a process in which new volunteers must learn how to become established volunteers (Fletcher, 1997). This work however focuses principally on training schemes and the formal teaching of the skills required to be a volunteer (see also Percy, 1998; Cox, 2002; Rochester *et al*, 2010) and less on other ways that learning might be conceived. Recent research has focused on learning through voluntary practice rather than through formal training, described as informal learning (Quarter and Midha, 2001; McGivney, 1999; Akingbola *et al*, 2010; Duguid *et al*, 2010). These studies identify fundamental differences from the volunteer management literature, suggesting that learning occurs between volunteers using a variety of techniques including observation, discussion and learning in practice (Akingbola *et al*, 2010).

Fewer researchers have examined the experience of young volunteers as learners from an informal learning perspective. Two studies (Pantea, 2012, 2013) attempt to address this gap by researching the ways in which young volunteers learn from more established members to become effective and established volunteers themselves. Through interviews with young volunteers, Pantea (2012, 2013) identifies supportive practice including discussions and observation, but also notes issues of neglect, disinterest and abuse of authority. Pantea raises important questions about the dynamics of the

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relationship between young volunteers and more established volunteers, and the process by which new volunteers access the knowledge of established volunteers. Although Pantea (2012) does not link neglect with changes in policy within the organisation, such an analysis of volunteering offers a very different picture of youth volunteering from elsewhere in the literature, and highlights the importance of researching from the perspective of young volunteers to uncover new knowledge. If young volunteers are to become the established volunteers of the future, what they learn and how they learn to become these volunteers is of vital importance.

1.3 Context for this research: community radio

Community radio provides fertile ground to understand the experience of youth volunteering. Since the Labour Government licenced full time community radio in 2004, Ofcom have awarded over 270 licences and considered over 500 licence applications, with 217 community radio stations currently on air (Ofcom, 2015). Levels of volunteering in community radio appear healthy. Whilst the Community Life Survey (Cabinet Office, 2014), suggests that around 28% of 16-25 year olds volunteer at least once per month, according to one survey of 220 licenced community radio stations, 81% (n=177) work regularly with young volunteers (Radio Regen, 2014). The Government Office for Communications (Ofcom) also collects data on volunteering in community radio. Although data are not examined in age groups it does include youth volunteering. The appetite from volunteers for volunteering in community radio has increased. Ofcom report that in 2010 community radio volunteers contributed 10,000 hours of original radio output *per week* across licenced stations, with an average of 75 weekly volunteers giving a total of 213 volunteering hours per station per week on average (Ofcom, 2011) with arts-based stations reporting twice the average volunteer hours per week (ibid). By 2014 the average number of weekly volunteers had risen to 82, with community radio stations licenced for more than five years reporting the highest number of volunteer hours, on average (Ofcom, 2015). The key factor to draw from this data is that volunteers in community radio, including

young volunteers, appear committed to producing radio content. However, we cannot say whether there are differences between the experiences of younger or older volunteers, or between ethnic groups or social classes, or genders, and so we cannot determine whether community radio has maintained its mission to broadcast the voices of those less represented on mainstream radio or not, including young people.

An examination of community radio as a sector may offer some insight into its attractiveness to volunteers. It has undergone dramatic changes in the past forty years in the UK as it has evolved in its relationship with volunteers, funders and policy makers. Early community radio stations failed to convince governments that minority voices should be given equal access to radio airwaves (Hallett & Wilson, 2010). Instead, a significant shift towards social outcomes eventually led to full time community radio, with mandatory social policy outputs enshrined in law as 'social gain' in the Community Radio Order (2004) deemed as the route to working with minority groups. Moreover, the media industry is more mature and complex, with several ways for minorities to access radio news and entertainment, including satellite and internet. Community radio, now part of a community media sector, has also matured into covering print, online and television as well as radio. Coyer (2011) suggests that community radio has become, *'a complex space'* (Coyer, 2011: 167) in which policies of funders and government, and the money of advertisers and sponsors, may have a powerful influence over how the station engages with its volunteers. Yet if community radio volunteering remains persistently attractive in such complex policy and funding terrain, why this is needs unpacking.

1.4 Researching young volunteers in community radio in the UK

In this thesis, I aim to understand how young volunteers learn to become broadcasters in community radio, how this experience is shaped by practice as part of the station membership, and what influence contextual factors, including the influence of funders and policy on volunteering and community radio, might have. I began by formulating research objectives to generate a statement of enquiry that would

help me formulate my research questions. These objectives focused on what it was that I wanted to discover and to address gaps within the literature.

The objectives were to investigate:

- What if anything characterised the experience of young volunteers

- What they understood key volunteering terms to mean

- How they saw the voluntary context shape their practice

- What implications these findings have for community radio

My statement of enquiry was:

I will examine the experiences of young volunteers in community radio to understand their experiences from their perspectives, to reflect on the factors that shape these organisations, including policy, funding and the volunteers themselves, to understand how volunteers learn to become community radio broadcasters.

This led me to develop three research questions:

Research Questions

1. What can an examination of practice tell us about young people's perceptions of volunteering in community radio in the UK?

2. What does community radio volunteering by young people tell us about formal volunteering in the UK?

3. How do young people develop understanding and access knowledge when they engage in the social practice of volunteering at a community radio station?

Through these research questions I attempted to understand the experiences of young volunteers in community radio and relate them to the wider debates on what volunteering is and what volunteering is for, as well as contributing to the literature on learning theory. To do this data are collected from a variety of sources. Firstly, the voices of the young volunteers describe their experience and secondly, the policies of the community radio stations, represented by established member perspectives and policy documents. In pursuing data this way, I aim to place the voice of young volunteers as the main source of data, and will be able to contextualise their perspectives using the views of established members and policy documents.

Given the complex relationships between participants and context I could not pre-judge their opinions to test a hypothesis for this research, nor apply a theory without collecting data. I was also aware that my own opinions on community radio, drawn from my experience, would always be present. Weber (1978) suggests that bias is the position of every researcher (Weber, 1978) and as a former community radio worker I recognised my own biases towards the research subject and sought to use them through the research methodology and design to provide participants with a platform for expression that they were comfortable enough to produce data without too much input from me. In this, I follow Wolcott (1995) who suggests that bias, *'is like air…it can freshen or stale'* and therefore needs to be subject to *'quality control'* (Wolcott, 1995: 164-5). Too much bad air might stink out this research, and so a concern for fresh air lent me methodological focus. By recording data from the unexamined voluntary settings by previously silent groups of young people, I understood that I could not generalise from this research but instead I offer new knowledge into young volunteers in which their private lives become of public interest.

To provide contextual information on each of the settings, including the history of the community radio station and the mandatory remits set in licensing conditions, as well as internal policies on working with volunteers and young people, I also interviewed the station managers although their

data sits as context only, not to challenge the perspectives of young volunteers. Data are evaluated in a separate section from that of the young participants.

1.5 Undertaking the research

This section explicates how I undertook the research. In order that I could more fully understand the experience of volunteers, I planned for fieldwork to extend over a period to ensure participants could describe changes and continuities in their experiences. The fieldwork period was designed to last around six months to the end of the school year in June but was extended to nine months by several participants who shared data vital to their experience.

I drew from two recent studies (Lewis & Mitchell, 2014; Radio Regen, 2014) into youth volunteering in community radio. Both used a cross-sectional model of before and after interviews, and this raises questions about young people accurately recalling events, being under pressure to provide appropriate answers, and being influenced by the authority of the researcher. The chosen methods of blogging and group interviews sought to address these concerns. Blogging allowed me to remove, as much as possible, my pre-judged conceptions in the research design whilst group interviews maintained rapport and provided a non-electronic method for one participant who was dyslexic. The design also needed to ensure I could problematize how other researchers had understood learning in practice. Studies that examine the volunteer learning experience (McGivney, 1999; Duguid *et al*, 2010; Akingbola *et al*, 2010) as well as grey literature studies (Lewis and Mitchell, 2014; Radio Regen, 2014) describe such learning as informal without problematizing the term. These studies also do not explore learning as a political, contested dynamic but appear to consider informal learning as a value-free concept. Imbalances in the relationship between new and more established volunteers, between older and younger volunteers, and between staff and the volunteers may offer insights to how learning can be a positive and negative experience (Pantea, 2012, 2013).

The research was undertaken at four community radio stations in the UK. By researching in multiple settings, I addressed the issue of how variations of organisational settings operate to affect the learning experience of young volunteers, and understand the variations in how policy influences an organisation, and the individuals within that organisation. A study of relevant policy documents, such as the Key Commitment documents which detail the mandatory social policy targets (such as number of volunteers trained, number of minority ethnic people engaged) as well as interviews with the station staff, provided background information that contextualised the experiences of the participants.

Finally, to contextualise the organisational setting and practices therein, I undertook a review of relevant volunteering history and policy as well as a review on community radio history and policy. Data provided by the participants reflects policy and voluntary sector trends, which are likely to affect the organisation and how it operates, including how community radio is funded, how young people engage with voluntary organisations, and the value they ascribe to voluntary experiences.

1.6 Structure of this thesis

This introductory chapter is followed by Chapter Two which details the history of the community radio movement and how government policy and funding relationships have transformed the sector, particularly during the Labour government era when in 2004 community radio was licenced for full time FM broadcasting. The effects of this change, and the policy conditions under which licences are granted, are explained as contextual factors for the community radio station settings. Chapter Three focuses on volunteering policy to evaluate how successive governments have sought to shape voluntary practice through funding and policy, but also how other conceptions of active citizenship may contest these approaches through practice (Kenny *et al*, 2015). In Chapter Four I review the literature on volunteering to examine how academics have answered the questions 'what is

volunteering?' and 'who is volunteering for?' In doing so, I problematise the binary of altruistic or individualised notions and suggest a focus on how voluntary practice connects and intersects in society as an approach to understand youth volunteering. In Chapter Five I review the literature on learning in practice. I first examine the literature on learning as a volunteer before investigating the approaches to understanding learning in practice, including formal and informal learning, self-directed learning, experiential learning, tacit learning, and communities of practice theory. In Chapter Six I restate the research questions and explicate my methodological position and how this was operationalised through a research design. I introduce the participants in this research and the community radio stations at which they volunteered. I then review the research process before explaining how data were analysed to structure the findings chapter. Chapter Seven presents the interviews with the radio station managers, who state how their community radio stations define volunteering and how they seek to work with youth volunteers. Chapter Eight presents data from the young volunteers to answer the first two research questions on definitions of volunteering. Chapter Nine presents data from the young volunteers to answer the third research questions on learning in community radio.

Chapter Ten is a discussion of findings in which I address the research questions directly before concluding the thesis. I argue that volunteering by the research participants was motivated by a desire to broadcast – to connect as active citizens through a creative, fragile and emergent network, seeking to reflect through broadcasting their community and their own place within it. This practice as volunteers began immediately and whilst on the periphery of the station membership. There they identified how broadcasting did not qualify them to become established members whose practices were perceived to reflect the community development skills needed to maintain a community organisation (Gaynor & O'Brien, 2012). Instead the participants remained peripheral to the established members, choosing to engage in *'playing'* at radio (Hay, 1996: 96) whilst established members got on with running a community organisation. Established members therefore were perceived to legitimise the practices of those participants willing to undertake the non-broadcast activities of established members.

Understood through the lens of practice, I suggest that legitimacy is the key feature of understanding how volunteers learn through practice but this not need be a programme-style (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) approach to volunteer management. The very first practices undertaken by newcomers that are creative and connected to local issues and people may also develop commitment.

2. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR THIS RESEARCH: COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE UK

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the next two chapters is to explore the policy influences that shape the experience of young people volunteering in community radio in the UK today, and so provide policy background to inform analysis later in the thesis. In this chapter I focus on community radio. The policy context is complicated for community radio as it not only occupies a place within the highly-regulated media sector and the voluntary or third sector, it also sits within a global community media movement. As Coyer (2011) suggests, community radio stations are in a, *'complex space'* (Coyer, 2011: 167), generated by expectations from market-based government policy directives and its own history as grassroots community media. I query whether the tensions between these competing influences make community radio attractive to a diverse pool of young volunteers.

The chapter is organised thus. First, I explicate how community media (of which community radio is part) developed through action and debates over rights of expression, particularly for minority or non-mainstream voices, on media platforms including radio. Theoretical models of community media as a sector (Bailey *et al*, 2007) and community radio as hybrid organisations (Billis, 2010) are examined. I conclude that the network of influences and voices makes a single unifying philosophy of community media problematic. I then examine in detail the UK community radio sector. I make an historic analysis to show how a focus on diversity of voice by community radio operators failed to secure a distinct place in the radio eco-system alongside BBC and commercial radio. Instead, through relationships with publicly funded bodies such as regeneration bodies, local authorities, colleges and universities, community radio adopted features of voluntary sector organisations. With the introduction of legislation for full time community radio in 2004 by the Labour Government, community radio accepted a legal mandate to achieve social policy outputs, called 'social gain' (Ofcom, 2015), but using an increasingly market-oriented funding model (DCMS, 2015). Whilst community radio stations in

2016 may be hybrid organisations, this raises questions about how the experience of the volunteers in this research is shaped by organisational responses to policy context(s), and raises a query about whether complexity of practice generated by attending to a diverse set of policy influences may attract a broader constituency of volunteers with differing motivations to volunteer.

2.2 The media policy context for community radio

The contradictory movement of globalization and the fragmentation of culture simultaneously involves the revitalisation and worldwide extension of the local.

(Martin-Barbero, 2001: 236)

Despite the growth of online and other media as platforms for expression, radio endures as one of the most popular ways for people across the globe to hear news and entertainment. It offers an intimate and immediate platform, and can be organised at low cost with few resources. The popularity of radio broadcasting has led to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimating 43,773 legal radio stations globally (CIA, 2016) operating as public, private (commercial) and community broadcasters. The CIA estimate does not include illegal or 'pirate' radio stations, called '*pirate community stations* (Hind & Mosco, 1985: 2) to reflect their representation of minority voices, which also proliferate. Wolfson (2015) notes how Ofcom have closed 400 pirate stations in London, England, in the two years since 2013 (Wolfson, 2015: n.p).

The number of radio operators, both legal and pirate, suggests a desire to be heard at all levels of society over the airwaves in their immediate locality. As radio is highly regulated in the UK by the Office for Communications (Ofcom), demands to broadcast from citizens raises questions about who the government allows to broadcast, how broadcasting is funded, and what regulations ensure fair access for everyone in society for the opportunity to voice their opinion. In response to these issues, community radio has emerged as a global alternative to mainstream media.

2.2.1 Context: the development of and philosophies of the community media sector

In the UK and across Europe, media plurality has also been addressed by legislation for community media, and in particular for this thesis, community radio. Community media sit as a '*third sector*' (Coyer, 2011: 167) of media, complementing public and commercial operators, although policy and regulatory frameworks differ between nations. The UK is a relative latecomer to the global community media movement. For example, community radio has broadcast in the UK since the 1970s, firstly on cable in new towns such as Milton Keynes (Lewis, 2010) and on radio waves with 234 community radio stations now on air (Ofcom, 2016). Globally, community radio is much older. The Pacifica Foundation launched KPFA in Berkeley, California in 1949 (Pacifica Network, 2016). France legislated for full-time community radio in 1982, Denmark in 1986, and the Netherlands in 1987 (Buckley, 2009). According to research by the Community Media Forum for Europe (CMFE), there are 2228 community radio stations in Europe alone (CMFE, 2012). The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) claim nearly 4000 organisational members (AMARC, 2016). Recent additions include those from India, which legislated in 2004 (Kumar, 2005) Bangladesh in 2009 (Al Rasheed, 2012) and Syria in 2013 (Dollet, 2015).

Growth in community radio sits within a developing and wider community media sector, converged around multiple offline and online media including radio, Internet, print, video and television. Whilst it is in community radio that we are interested in for this thesis it is important to recognise that the philosophies that informs the wider community media movement also applies to community radio, and that, like mainstream media, community radio stations also offer online, print and television services. For example, in the UK, *Sheffield Live!* broadcasts community TV and community radio using online, FM and digital TV (Sheffield Live!, 2015) as does SPARK FM in Sunderland (Spark, 2016).

As a contribution to the media plurality landscape Martin-Barbero (2001) suggests that the growth of community media represents the, *'revitalisation...of the local'* (Martin-Barbero, 2001: 236) as a platform for voices to not only consume but to particpate in the democratic creation of media content.

This signifies the spread of a debate about the need for an alternative to mainstream media. However, in attempting definitions, commentators focus on different aspects, revealing a complex and dynamic community media. Thus the idea of a unifying philosphical context for community radio in the UK, including what is meant by community, requires unpacking and examining.

2.3 Defining 'community' in community media

Cammaerts (2009) identifies the philosophy of community media as:

External pluralism – by being a different voice among public and commercial broadcasters, and to internal pluralism – by being basic-democratic and providing a platform for a diversity of voices and styles, often lacking in mainstream media.

(Cammaerts, 2009: 641)

Cammaerts firmly locates community media within the mainstream media landscape to and reminds us of the need to understand media to spread democratic rights. Buckley (2011) extends this definition to include the concept of solidarity, locating community media within communities, with less focus on the media landscape. For Buckley they are:

Independent, civil society based media that operate for social benefit and not for profit. They are present in all regions of the world as social movements and community-based organisations (and) have sought a means to express their issues, concerns, cultures and languages. They provide communities with access to information and voice, facilitating community-level debate, information and knowledge sharing and input into public decision making.

(Buckley, 2011: 7)

Buckley (2011) associates community media with practices that reflect social policy and not just media access, through, '*a deepening of democracy and the strengthening of civil society…more effectively*

achieved by empowering and giving voice to people who themselves face poverty and disadvantage' (ibid). For Buckley community media offers an opportunity to celebrate the local, its diversity and potential as a forum for teaching, learning and expression. Finally, Howley (2005) defines community media by identifying characteristics that by comparison are lacking in mainstream media. For him community media are:

> *Grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.*

> (Howley 2005: 2)

Howley (2005) above suggests '*free expression*' and community '*solidarity*' are idealised drivers of community media, but also extends the concept of democracy into the political arena, thus '*dissatisfaction*' may be interpreted as frustration with policy decisions that create the media '*form*' as much as mainstream media '*content*'. Howley (2005) therefore posits community media as an antidote to the mainstream, non-democratic status quo.

There are two ways I might analyse 'community' in community media. First, by exploring what is meant by content, or voice, and secondly through how community media position themselves as an alternative to the mainstream. Firstly, how is voice, or content, understood within this conception? Debate may be encouraged but only in so much as it is for social benefit, including '*empowerment'* and *'community solidarity',* to use Buckley's (2011: 7) and Howley's (2005: 2) terms. Yet there are examples in the community radio sector that do not reflect this, including in the UK in 1978 and 1979, pirate station '*Radio Enoch'* which promoted right wing anti-immigration political radio for the West Midlands (Lewis, 2008; Lusting & Michaels, 1979) and more recently Rwandan '*Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines*' which has been accussed of using group listening to radio to encourage genocide (Kellow & Steeves, 1998; Baisley, 2014). If we are to understand the multiplicity of views that can be

broadcast across many outlets, 'community' may be thought of as representing participation and voices, however extreme or unacceptable the view.

The second version of community the commentators note is as an alternative from the mainstream media sector. Bailey *et al* (2007) posit four possible definitions of 'community' in community media, identified in table one, below:

	Media-centred	Society-centred
Autonomous identity of community media (essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	
		Approach III: Part of civil society
Identity of community media in relation to other identities (relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	Approach IV: Rhizome

Table one: Four Approaches to Defining Community Media

(Bailey *et al*, 2007: 7)

Essentialist approaches apply an autonomous identity for community media generated by its own self-defined virtues, which are perceived as stable identities. Relationalist perspectives understand community media as part of a wider eco-system in which relations and influences are fluid and definitions dynamic. These two positions can be '*media-centred'*, in which the focus is on the media landscape, or '*society-centred'*, in which community media are understood as part of civil society in which their operational context is the voluntary and charitable sector. Approach IV suggests the metaphor of a rhizome, based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), in which the many connections and chains established by actors, circumstance and power diffuses idealised community media into a complex reality. Minority voices under this model are examined for their lack of influence or their subversion of rules to gain or retain some shaping influence, however small.

Whilst a valuable contribution to the debate, the model fails to account for how community media organisations are simultaneously part of both the media and society landscapes in which influences cannot be reduced to single actors. For instance, proposed changes in the UK broadcasting infrastructure may have dramatic consequences on community media. Community Media Forum for Europe (2015) argue that the move from analogue to digital transmission '*could be a significant risk for the future of Community Radios*' (CMFE, 2015: 2) because digital transmission cannot mirror FM transmission coverage. Thus, community media on digital would broadcast in larger areas, significantly affecting how they define their communities and who they work with, and therefore their social remit approved by government.

Bailey *et al* (2007) suggest that that any analysis of community media needs to reflect on the relationships which sustain a community media organisation. These include the involvement of the state through licencing and transmission, funders including commercial advertisers and charitable foundations, as well as an age-diverse group of volunteers and staff, perhaps drawn from a varied cultural and class background, with differing ambitions for their practice. Not all voices and influences will operate harmoniously, and friction and tensions may be a regular feature in many community media organisations. The shifting contextual background of both political will, market choices and technical development in transmission must also be properly understood. My analysis posits a constant shifting of broadcast content, predicated on the priorities, intentions, interests and influences brought to bear on the configuration and content of community media by volunteer broadcasters, staff and legislative bodies.

In the next section, I apply this analysis to community radio. I use the term 'community radio' rather than community media, though I accept community radio stations may see themselves as community media organisations.

2.4 Community radio operators seek a voice

This section attempts to unpack the increasingly complex relationships that shape community radio volunteering today through an examination of the attempts to accommodate community radio and its mission into the media landscape in the UK. First, between 1985 and 1993, government licenced community radio as an alternative to the mainstream, an attempt which quickly failed. The aim here is to highlight how minority voices may be compromised by commercial models for community radio. Second, between 1993 and 2004 community radio began to develop links with the voluntary and public sectors, expanding and transforming its remit from plurality of voice to social policy goals. This section shows how minority voices began to be engaged to fulfil public policy outcomes. Finally, the model for full time community radio is examined, including social gain and its impact on community radio, including the model for funding that pushes community radio more towards the market.

2.4.1 1985 – 1989: Community radio as small scale commercial radio

After the Home Office cancelled a pilot scheme for community broadcasting in 1985, it took '*tentative*' (Hallett & Wilson, 2010: 5) reform in 1989 to allow community groups to apply for full-time local radio licences, called incremental licences, designed to complement the growth of commercial radio stations. The newly created Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) sought to protect a commercial radio market in its infancy and so conditions for maintaining incremental licences, including licencing costs and funding, made no distinction between commercial organisations and community groups (Hallett & Wilson, 2010). The Community Radio Association (CRA) unsuccessfully lobbied for public funding to ensure advertising was not the sole income (Venue, 1988). The Chief Executive of the CRA, Bevan Jones (1987), complained that government, *'seemed to see community radio as no more than a means for expanding the radio advertising market'* (Jones, 1987: n.p).

The experience of the incremental community stations reveals the dangers in accepting licensing on commercial terms that stray too far from the ideals that drove the community radio proposition in the

first place. The IBA initially licenced four incremental stations, including two former pirate stations, Sina Radio, which became West London Radio based in Hounslow, London and FTP (For the People) in Bristol (Henry, 1989). FTP was a black music station, its popularity reflected in the support it received from a diverse constituency. Babs Williams, Chair of FTP, explained that, *'We aimed the station solely at the black community but we were getting forty of fifty letters a week, mostly from people outside the black community'* (Venue, 1989: 26). FTP evidenced demand for community radio in Bristol by including an 8000-signature petition in their application (Venue, 1989). The enthusiasm for community broadcasting did not stop at individuals. Groups also sought to get involved:

> *Community access was a two-way process. Groups from the community were asking for airtime. FTP had to find the time and resources to train groups such as Shelter, Women and Safe Transport and The Avon Sexual Abuse Centre.*

> (ibid)

In reflecting on the licensing conditions under which FTP would operate, Venue Magazine (1989) presciently concluded that, '*FTP will have to show that there is a commercially viable alternative within their youth oriented music-based multicultural format. Provided they can get their act together'* (ibid). Ultimately, twenty-one community groups succeeded in application but struggled to survive as small-scale commercial stations.

In an era before social policy-based charitable and public funding for community broadcasting, the commitment of the new licence holders to volunteering and community did not compensate for the increased costs and expertise required for full-time commercial broadcasting. Shortly before launching, FTP failed to, '*raise sponsorship for a charitable model*' (Venue, 1989: 25) and invoked an IBA ruling to allow commercial stations to take a 20% stake in incremental stations in exchange for investment and support (ibid). Babs Williams of FTP explained that commercial group GWR asked for and got 20% of revenue and 10% voting rights on the board in exchange for, '*training, advertising, engineering and cheap access to their national news link*' (Venue, 1989: 26). The partnership was an

attempt to become '*more professional'* according to station manager Clement McLarty (Ellison, 1989: n.p). As McLarty further claimed, '*If we got rid of the old staff, we'd lose the magic of FTP. They should keep their personality, their charisma, but refine their radio skills.'* (McLarty, 1989: n.p*).*

Limited in their local marketplace but with all the costs associated with selling airtime and broadcasting, community operators began to fail. Commercial operators with expertise and clients ready to advertise purchased the incremental licences (Gray & Lewis, 1992; Crissell, 1997: 216). It took less than a year for FTP in Bristol to be sold, as Barbrook (1992) states:

> *In January, 1991, the Bristol station, For The People (FTP), was relaunched as Galaxy. Instead of a name promising a community service, the station now shares the same trademark as a chocolate bar.*

> (Barbrook, 1992: 240)

Crissell (1997) concludes that incremental licencing was a failed experiment, arguing:

> *What had begun as an exciting attempt to free up the airwaves, to enable them to carry the full range of values, tastes and opinions that shape our society, ended in an increase of stations sounding virtually indistinguishable from one another.*

> (Crissell, 1997: 216)

Smith (2016) however notes that several of the incremental licences have been a success and do offer a local alternative to mainstream radio:

> *Spectrum Radio, Sunrise Radio and Choice FM in London, Isle of Wight Radio and Centre Sound in Stirling are notable for their success, and are still on the air, a tribute to their unique and thoughtful programmes, though some have now been absorbed into larger radio groups.*

> (Smith, 2016: n.p)

Indeed, Wear FM in Sunderland survived as part of the University of Sunderland until the licence was re-advertised in 1995 and lost to a commercial operator (Smith, 2016). That licence is now Kiss FM (part of Global) whilst Sunderland University now operates the full-time community station Spark FM as part of Spark Media (Spark, 2016).

Government sought to use a mainstream commercial model to support the enfranchisement of minority voices as community broadcasters, and so market-inspired policies trumped, *'the broader imperative'* (McLarty, 1989: n.p) to ensure minority voices were broadcasting. The disappointment of the incremental experiment also reflects the failure of lobbying body the CRA to achieve legislative protections from government to distinguish community radio from commercial radio. Commercial operators were savvier in their relationship with legislators. The FTP licence was re-configured with Ofcom: instead of a 40-watt local output, it is now the Severn-estuary licence with a 200 watt, commercially acceptable, coverage.

2.4.2 1993 – 2004: Restricted Service Licences and new relationships with the voluntary and public sector

After the struggles under the incremental commercial model, the distinctiveness of community radio found expression during the 1990s using restricted service licences (RSLs), temporary licences granted for up to 28 days, permissible every six months. A return to short-term licences seemed to be a successful solution for community radio, with a study of 25 Millennium RSLs by Gordon (2000) noting that operators did not suffer volunteer fatigue, worked with schools, universities and colleges, as well as public and charitable bodies who acted as funders. Applicants for these licences included voluntary groups and niche interests such as sports events, religious festivals, music festivals and student radio as well as commercial stations hoping to win a local or regional license (Ofcom, 2010). Between 1991 and 2000 the Radio Authority estimated between 20,000 and 30,000 people participated in

community group-based RSLs each year (Stoller, 2001), demonstrating the appetite for voluntary broadcasting.

During this period, the concept of community broadcasting broadened through an increased understanding of the many practices undertaken beneath the community radio banner. In this sense, those involved in the sector began to explore more meaningfully what the 'community' in community radio could mean. This included working with charitable foundations and public funded bodies to develop connections with communities. For example, Mornemont (2005) describes how from 1995 Vale FM in Castle Vale, Birmingham was funded in part by the government regeneration body the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust, whilst operating bi-annual training for Sutton Coldfield College (Mornement, 2005: 98). New Style Radio in Birmingham operated, '*with support from the Millennium Commission, the Arts Council of England and the city council'* (Everitt, 2003: 38). GTFM in Pontypridd, funded by Objective 1 European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund (ESF and ERDF) finance, developed through a relationship between city stakeholders, Pontypridd tenants and residents' associations, and the University of Glamorgan (ibid: 47).

In the period between 1993 and 2004 community radio stations sought legitimacy from the public sector and voluntary sector to explore and define their own identity through licenced, regular, very local broadcasts. These relationships expanded the possibilities of community radio as a social policy resource and gave some stations stability of income to achieve their broadcasting aims. In the next section I discuss how community radio transformed into a subsector of the voluntary sector. This change brought greater government policy influence over the direction of community radio and at little cost to the public purse. Whilst the Community Media Association (CMA) achieved their plan of creating a distinctive third tier of legal full- time community radio, I argue it failed to deliver the direct public funding required to support very diverse broadcasting or a primary mandate to enhance media plurality. As such, the market-oriented approach to media by government did not change through the

introduction of a new tier of public broadcasting but the position of community radio changed significantly. I conclude by addressing the impact of these changes on voluntary broadcasters.

2.5 Community radio goes full time under the Labour government

In this section, I examine how a full-time model developed for community radio. First, in 1997 the Labour government sustained the policy of the marketisation of the mainstream radio sector in the UK, started by earlier Conservative governments. Approval of mergers between radio groups created a space for small scale, full-time community-focused broadcasters defined by local characteristics. Second, community radio lobbyists articulated a distinctiveness that embraced the Labour government public policy agenda. This developed into a mandatory remit for achieving 'social gain' outputs (DCMS, 2004). The Labour government also designed community radio to operate at virtually no cost to the public purse, a model that continues today. Community radio operators therefore compete for funds in a market to achieve mandatory social gain outputs, effectively the private financing of public service.

Under Labour from 1997 a change of perception of how community radio was part of the radio eco-system took shape. Chief Executive of the Radio Authority (RA) Tony Stoller argues that because of the, *'consolidation of…commercial radio there was a gap* [for] *precisely that type of small-scale, innovative, unusual and perhaps even subversive radio'* (Stoller, 2001: n.p) although as Jones (1987) notes, radio frequency planning meetings identified 300 places on the FM band for small-scale broadcasting over ten years earlier. Carpentier and Scifio (2010) suggest that the market-oriented policies began by earlier Conservative governments merely continued under Labour, and that community radio operators were effectively shut out of planning the exploitation of FM radio frequencies. Thus, community radio's inclusion in debate about their broadcasting future was understood by the RA in terms of their achievements in the social policy arena in the decade previously, and not in terms of their involvement in frequency planning.

The RA presented recommendations for the inclusion of community radio on the FM spectrum to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (Radio Authority, 2000). This submission set the grounds for a pilot scheme of experimental access radio licences to be broadcasting by late 2001. The pilot scheme, according to Tony Stoller, *'was to inform the future, not pre-judge it'*:

> *At all costs, avoid the mistakes of the experiments of the mid-1980s. We will not be forgiven if over-enthusiasm and an uncontrolled rush, followed by failure, jeopardises what could be the last chance to give effect to the aspirations we all have for the third tier of radio, and what it can achieve for our communities.*

(Stoller, 2001: n.p)

The tone adopted by the RA under Labour was markedly different than under previous administrations (Hallett & Wilson, 2010). Having seen community groups fail in an adversarial system previously (2.3.1) the RA pilot tested a, *'selection of localities and styles of service'* as well as *'a range of funding models'* that delivered *'socially-regenerative and educational links',* with fifteen established community radio stations that operated, *'as not-for-profit services, in defined neighbourhoods, with clear public service remits'* (Stoller, 2001: n.p).

Anthony Everitt (2003) evaluated the 'Access Radio' pilot scheme, first providing an interim report, then a final report, both in 2003 (Everitt, 2003). At the same time, the government created the Office for Communications, Ofcom, which absorbed the Radio Authority into a broader remit to manage communications companies in the UK, including telephony, Internet, television and radio. Everitt's (2003a) remit reveals Ofcom's desire for a clear mandate for community radio that was oriented towards social policy goals, including an increase in broadcast languages, and ensuring financial sustainability with little or no government subsidy, and with minimum impact on commercial radio:

> *(1) the extent to which projects delivered promised benefits and involved local participation to examine costs and funding models;*

(2) to assess their impact on the local radio ecologies;

(3) to propose an appropriate licensing regime for Access Radio; and

(4) to assess the experiment's linguistic impact so far as those taking part in the projects were concerned

(Everitt, 2003a: 4)

Everitt's (2003) assessment offers insight into the issues this thesis is concerned with, including business models, participation and voice, and the licence conditions for community radio stations. The models the stations adopted suggest a quasi-market approach in which income is generated from commercial and public sources, as well as charitable foundations. Everitt (2003) offers that, *'A number of pilot projects see themselves as social enterprises, dependent on the public sector, less for grants than for contracts'* (Everitt, 2003: 4). This evidenced the relationship with public policy that had developed in the previous decade:

The most important developments among the Access Radio stations have been the growth of their community role and the rapid extension of the work of staff beyond the business of broadcasting to wider concerns for social and individual empowerment.

(ibid: 3)

Community radio operators sought public policy relationships which enabled them to develop a legitimising, funded, foothold in the local community, a position which was consolidated through licensing conditions based on a mandatory public service, called 'social gain'. The effect of this has been to significantly change community radio in the UK. The next section examines how community radio operates in the UK today. It does this by looking at (1) the effect of social gain and key commitments approved by Ofcom; (2) funding community radio stations as key components in how they are able to practice community radio; and (3) The organisational structures of community radio. Together with an understanding of the historic context and philosophy that underpins the sector,

these three features of community radio provide a full contextual understanding for the volunteers and community radio stations that were part of this thesis.

2.5.1 Social gain

Everitt (2003) identifies social gain as the specific quality of community broadcasting that defines the relationship with public policy funders. It is important to note that social gain is not regarded as an aspiration but is a measurable social output, and as such might hold a strong grip over community radio stations mandated to achieve measurable targets. For Everitt (2003a) community radio stations should achieve:

> *Quantitative targets for the delivery of social gain – under the headings of training opportunities, work experience opportunities, contribution to tackling social exclusion, contribution to local education, service to neighbourhood or interest groups, access to the project by local people.*

> (Everitt, 2003: 6-7)

It is worth noting that participation of minority voices (as a measurable output of broadcast content) is absent from these measures. Making community radio stations more focussed on outputs raises questions about groups which are prioritised as broadcasters, and on what terms. How social gain is constructed is central to an understanding of the context in which the voice of young people may struggle for a platform for expression.

Under the Community Radio Order 2004 social gain codifies the content distinctiveness of community radio, necessitating a relationship between community radio and public policy. According to the Department for Culture, Media and the Sports (DCMS) who sponsored the 2004 Community Radio Order, a community radio station is '*primarily*' for the '*public good*' and should provide '*social gain*' for

one or more communities that they serve (DCMS, 2004: 3). Social gain is described in the Community

Radio Order (2004) (CRO) as:

(a) *The promotion of employment;*

(b) *The provision of opportunities for the gaining of work experience;*

(c) *The promotion of social inclusion;*

(d) *The promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity;*

(e) *The promotion of civic participation and volunteering.*

(Ofcom, 2011: 27; DCMS, 2004)

In application for a licence, a community radio station makes 'key commitments' to achieve against

the social gain objectives set out by Ofcom, linking their intended local activity to social gain in highly

structured and targeted ways. Ofcom (2015) state that:

Key commitments: social gain objectives should be specific and measurable rather than just

stated in aspirational terms, as you will need to deliver these 'promises' and measure progress

against them.

(Ofcom, 2015: 6)

An annual return to Ofcom and an evaluation of achievement forms part of the decision to renew a

licence and so achieving key commitments is vital for a community radio service to continue beyond

its initial five-year licence.

The effect of social gain on the mission of community radio is examined by Charles (2010) through

secondary analysis of the 'Key Commitments' documents and using interviews with those involved in

drafting community radio policy. Though she does not examine how or whether community radio

stations achieve their key commitments, Charles argues the impact of social gain targets creates a, *'re-*

orientation…towards explicit social policy rather than media policy goals' (Charles, 2010: 38). As a

result, Charles concludes that, *'community radio stations are less likely to emphasise access to and*

participation in radio, and when considered as a whole, provide less diversity of output' (ibid: 39). This conclusion is borne out in discussions on the Community Media Association's mailing lists. According to one contributor, stations are struggling to achieve (and report to Ofcom) social gain outputs:

> *Stations are fulfilling the Commitments but they are jumping through hoops, not having a good time of it, something that is meant to be enjoyable and a nicety is actually a challenge beyond belief and that spinning 35 plates doesn't last forever and some start falling off.*

> (CMA, 2014b: n.p)

Charles (2010) fails to account for the other voices that contribute to how full-time community radio operates, including advertisers and other funders such as charitable foundations, as well as volunteers. By doing so, a more nuanced picture may be arrived at where the difficulties in achieving social gain outcomes are understood against a background of competing demands, not just those mandated by government. It may be that community radio operators focus on many voices within their organisation because of the increased complexity of the context in which they operate and the many relationships that feed into a community radio station. By examining this broader context, the balance of influence between funders, advertisers, volunteers and legislators may be revealed. Yet such a prospect may lead to a complex sectoral framework in which we cannot talk about a homogenous community radio station because of the diversity of approaches generated by context. Thus, some stations may focus on media policy goals (i.e. plurality of voices and opinions) whilst others on social goals, and, indeed, a single organisation may focus on both to a lesser or greater extent, and simultaneously. In short, we cannot assume from a partial view, the primacy of social gain objectives in determining how people engage as volunteers to run community radio stations.

The funding and organisational structure of community radio also affects how community radio stations achieve community and media plurality outcomes. In the next section I explain that a market-oriented funding model imposed by government now encourages community radio stations to earn

more than half of income from advertising and sponsorship (Ofcom, 2015) and that hybrid organisational structures reflect the complexity of voices within the community radio station.

2.5.2 Funding community radio

Despite a public service remit, community radio does not automatically receive state funding. In the most recent analysis, diagram three identifies how community radio generates income from five areas (Ofcom, 2014).

Community radio stations' income 2013

Income by type
The average community radio station income was around £55,500

Other 26%
On-air advertising 30%
Donations 13%
Grants 25%
SLAs 6%
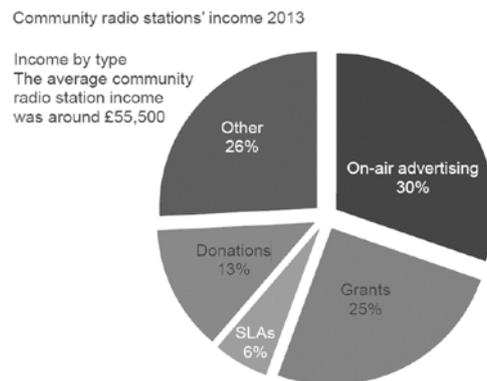
Diagram one: Income by source: Ofcom, 2014: 228

In 2013, the average income for a community radio station fell to £55,500, down from £66,250 in 2011 and £84,000 in 2008 (Ofcom, 2014: 226). As a proportion of income, grants have fallen to 25% of income (2011 n=37%) and advertising income has risen to 30%, an increase of 9% over the same period (ibid: 227). Ofcom also note that non-broadcast activities, including training, events and merchandising accounts for 26% of income (ibid). Taken as an average, there is an increasing emphasis on commercial income, particularly advertising, and less on income that directly targets the broadcasting mission of community radio.

Some types of station are faring well although the national picture is mixed. Ofcom (2014) report that on average ethnic minority stations earns 45% of income from advertising whilst urban stations continue to be heavily subsidised to 40% of total income by grants (ibid). Rural and regional town

stations have fared less well on both counts. For example, whilst Resonance FM in London, as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, will receive nearly £500,000 over three years to 2018 (ACE, 2015) to support, '*London's strangest radio station*' where, '*genuine artistic expression is the only programming criterion for the station*' (Hodgkinson, 2003: n.p), in December 2009 the first community radio station licenced by Ofcom, Forest of Dean FM, licence number CR001, folded due to lack of funding and restrictions on generating income under the terms of its licence (Buckley, 2011). Since then other stations have folded, including the Superstation in Orkney (Martin, 2014), with the total closures now standing at 29 (Ofcom, 2016).

As recommended by Everitt (2003) DCMS established an annual fund called the '*community radio fund*', administered by an Ofcom panel (Ofcom, 2016). Up to £500,000 is available annually although more recently less funds have been awarded: in 2014/15 DCMS made £393,000 available and £373,000 in 2015/16 (Ofcom, 2015: 4). An average award has been around £15,000 (Ofcom, 2011: 18) or a quarter of the turnover of an average station. The fund has not increased with inflation since 2004 and so in real terms its contribution to community radio is shrinking, particularly as the number of eligible stations increases year on year. It currently stands at less than 3% of community radio's total income (Ofcom, 2014: 228). Accessing the fund is competitive with around a one in four chance of success, despite fewer applications in recent years: in 2011-12, 32 awards were made from 130 applications, in 2012-13, 32 awards were made from 118 applications, and by 2013-2014, 94 applications were made and 25 awarded (Ofcom, 2015).

The focus of the fund has also changed. Ofcom's (2014) guidance notes explain in bold font: '**The Panel considers promoting long-term sustainability a critical, core activity'** (Ofcom, 2014: 2). Most of the recent awards are to support fund raising positions or initiatives (ibid: 6). Earlier rounds funded station manager positions and community development and outreach (Ofcom, 2007). The fund is therefore now seen as an investment:

Where grants were made specifically for fundraising purposes, the return on investment has been particularly successful. An average grant of £18,500 for fundraising or business development posts saw an average return of £101,000 – over five times the size of the grant.

(Ofcom, 2008: n.p)

The fund may be inadequate given the expectations of mandatory social gain targets, although there is no clear correlation between the community radio fund and key commitments. Ofcom's (2009) analysis suggests an increase in the fund substantially based on the relationship between policy and funding:

The [Community Radio Fund] *Panel's submission to the Government's Digital Britain project suggested that the minimum required for the Fund to adequately support the sector would be around £1.75m*

(Ofcom, 2009: n.p)

Other sources of income support activities that aim to satisfy social gain objectives, for example, charitable grant funding accounts for around 25% of income, which suggests some synchronicity between the approved social gain and the objectives of charitable funders. The Connect-Transmit project (2015) at All FM, funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, supports community radio stations to develop training income streams:

Delivering training could be one way that stations could maximise revenue streams whilst fulfilling their 'social gain' remit in serving their communities

(Radio Regen, 2015: n.p)

With the decrease in grant revenue and increase in commercial revenue, community radio stations are moving towards a commercially-sustaining model in which public service remains a mandatory though flexible component. The community radio fund is telling in this equation: moving from supporting social gain activities to supporting sustainability measures – in effect, social gain will only

be directly supported where grant funding matches the social gain ambitions of the community radio stations or is at the discretion of spending advertising income. The strengthening of commercialism in community radio has echoes of the incremental licences above, which struggled to match the differing expectations of advertisers and volunteers. Community radio stations also operate in smaller transmission areas than the incremental stations, which will test their commercial viability. Thus, as Charles (2010) warns, to survive community radio may become mainstream and this may exclude the minority voices they sought their original mandate from, notwithstanding the increase in overall volunteering numbers and commitment.

2.5.3 The organisational structure of community radio in the UK

Understanding the organisational structure of community radio stations is relevant to this thesis as how decision-making occurs, by whom and through what policies, fundamentally affects practice at a community radio station, and reflects the wider policy conditions in which the station operates. An examination of the organisational structure may also reveal the priorities of the community radio station, through for example, the titles or roles of staff, how roles are funded, and the philosophy that underpins the station.

The Community Radio Order (DCMS, 2004) sets specific terms to ensure licenses could not be sold, unlike the incremental licences (section 2.3.1). Therefore, community radio stations cannot not be privately owned organisations but are owned on behalf of a community. The objective of the station must be *'primarily'* for the *'public good'* with any profit re-invested in the service. Members participate to operate and govern the service (CRO, 2004: 3). These characteristics determine some but not all aspects of community radio stations. To further understand the nuances of organisational structure, I develop from Everitt's (2003) analysis that the fifteen pilot stations (section 2.3.4) acted as social enterprises and use Billis's (2010) theory of hybrid organisations to suggest that community radio stations draw on principles from associational organisations, public bodies and private business,

reflecting not the purist definitions of community media (section 2.2), but rather a complex identity that reflects the many influential factors within a single organisation.

Billis (2010) suggests that hybrid organisations are those organised using combinations of 'elements' and 'principles' associated with state, private or third sectors. Billis identifies five core and distinctive elements (1) ownership; (2) governance; (3) operational priorities; (4); human resources; (5); other resources (ibid: 49). Principles are the, *'rules of the game'* that, *'provide a coherent explanation for meeting objectives and solving problems'* (ibid: 47-8). In creating these distinctions, Billis works to develop ideal types and then highlight convergence or hybridity. For the voluntary sector, he suggests the ideal type is an associational organisation where, *'people establish a formal organization in order to resolve their own or other people's problems'* and where work principles are, *'driven neither by the need to make profit nor by public policies but primarily by the association's own agenda'* (ibid: 53). This is redolent of the purist model of community media suggested by Cammaerts (2009) and Howley (2005), and also the essentialist models I and II developed by Bailey *et al* (2009).

Billis further distinguishes between private, state and third sector by re-conceptualising ownership as *'accountability for different levels of decision-making'* (Billis, 2011: 63), rather than ownership conceived in economic terms. In this, Billis suggests the role of, *'principal, active and formal owners'* (ibid). This distinction has the benefit of not just identifying hierarchal levels at which influence can be identified, but how executive or non-executive roles are both influential in different ways. He argues:

> *Even in small, tightly knit group it is possible to distinguish between those who stay in the shadows; those who play an active part in committee and other activities; and a core group of those (principal owners) 'who everybody knows' will really be the key players in the defining moments of the group's history*

> (ibid: 53-4)

This conceptualisation has utility in describing community radio stations where a blend of activist history and policy-focused activities may generate tensions, played out between those who appear active and those who remain, as Billis describes, '*in the shadows*' (ibid).

Billis (2010) develops a table of, '*ideal type sectors and accountability*' below, where an order of importance is created through an hierarchical numbering system but that '*in reality, organizations within any sector, whilst adhering to the core principles, will vary in degree to which they fully match the ideal model*' (ibid: 48).

Core Elements	Private sector principles	Public sector principles	Third sector principles
1. Ownership	Shareholders	Citizens	Members
2. Governance	Share ownership size	Public elections	Private elections
3. Operational Priorities	Market forces and individual choice	Public service and collective choice	Commitment about distinct mission
4. Distinctive human resources	Paid employees in managerially controlled *Firm*	Paid public servants in legally backed *Bureau*	Members and volunteers in *Association*
5. Distinctive other resources	Sales, fees	Taxes	Dues, donations and legacies

Table two: Ideal Type Sectors and Accountability (Billis, 2011: 55)

There have been several critics of Billis's theoretical model. Milbourne (2013) asks how helpful a theoretical model is for describing a sector beset by, '*fields of tension where different sectors or spheres intersect, pointing to areas of intersectoral influence*' (Milbourne, 2013: 10). Even if she were to accept the utility of the model in offering some theoretical coherence to the voluntary sector, Milbourne suggests that the model's focus on distinctive features fails to account for how organisations remain contested entities. Indeed, ownership is considered by Billis (2010) of primary significance yet other factors may emerge as more fundamental for some organisations. Nonetheless, this thesis is examining the community radio sector, and not the whole voluntary sector. Given that community radio has been developed between grassroots activism and policy demands, the structure

of Billis's typology does point to areas of tension within the various business models that community radio stations might adopt. To demonstrate this, I examine the requirements of the Community Radio Order (DCMS, 2004) using Billis's model. They shall be dealt with in order of importance as determined by Billis (2010):

(1) Ownership: Organisations that hold licences are not restricted to associational boards built from a private election. They may have shareholders, including local authorities (limited to 5% ownership), political parties (limited to 5%) and advertising agencies (limited to 5%) (Ofcom, 2011: 12);

(2) Governance: Ofcom (2011), '*consider the constitutional structure and proposed governing membership of the applicant group, especially in so far as this may determine the effective control of the licence'*. The nominated licensee must be held to public account once per year but there is no direct recommendation of a suitable governance structure (Ofcom, 2011: 13).

(3) Commitment about distinct mission: holding a community licence is a public service as well as an associational service – it is for the benefit of members as well as an audience;

(4) Distinctive human resources: community radio stations may employ paid staff, hire consultants, but rely chiefly on volunteers (Ofcom, 2011: 5; 2012; Everitt, 2003). Everitt (2003) notes how stations may pay a fee or expenses to some volunteer presenters to retain their services, *'a trend in which local volunteers could find themselves increasingly excluded from real broadcasting opportunities'* (Everitt, 2003: 19);

(5) Other resources: Community radio stations are permitted to generate income from grant funding, donations, membership dues, advertising, sponsorship, sales and service level agreements, with an increased focus on commercial advertising income since 2015

(Ofcom, 2011: 15-16; DCMS, 2015).

Mirroring Billis's (2010) table above, a legislated 'ideal type' community radio station, below demonstrates the level of hybridity within the community radio sector:

Core Elements	Community radio as hybrid organisation
Ownership	Membership and SHAREHOLDERS
Governance	Constitutional structure and PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
Operational Priorities	Commitment about distinctive mission and PUBLIC SERVICE
Distinctive human resources	Members and volunteers in *Association*, sometimes WITH PAID STAFF, CONSULTANTS AND 'PAID' VOLUNTEERS
Other resources	Dues, donations, charitable funding and legacies, SALES, SPONSORSHIP, CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES

Table three: Community Radio as a Hybrid Organisation

Community radio stations have legal clearance to operate as a hybrid of private, public and third sector or associational organisations, allowing them to work with large numbers of staff whilst generating income from the market to cover costs of broadcasting but without being profit distributing. What is less known is how these factors, and the different possible combinations, affect staffing and volunteering, ages and genders and ethnicities as they operate together within the '*tight knit*' model that Billis (2010) theorises. If for example, as Billis (2010) argues, some members remain '*in the shadows*' (Billis, 2010: 54), then what is it to do that and what is the impact, including how it affects the most marginal of volunteers?

2.6 Chapter summary

Successive UK governments have continued to champion market-based policies for the media sector and community radio has not been immune to this. With a history in the struggle to ensure fair access for minority voices to the airwaves, community radio developed relationships with government and funders, and has moved towards explicit and mandatory social policy goals, adopting a hybrid model of organisational structure (Billis, 2010) to accommodate community voices and policy influences.

Analysis by Charles (2010), suggests the future mainstreaming of community radio and funding trends (DCMS, 2015) towards increasingly commercial models, and this reflects the past experiences of community radio in which diversity struggled to thrive alongside commercial imperatives. Whether today these imperatives are at the expense of minority voices participating in community radio is not known. This thesis is interested in how young volunteers experience participation as community radio broadcasters today, and this chapter raises issues this thesis attempts to address. How do young people perceive community radio as a sector in which to take an opportunity? How are the voices of young people as volunteers and as the audience engaging in community radio heard? Are young people helping community radio fulfil its remit to be distinctive from the mainstream?

3. THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR THIS RESEARCH

3.1 Volunteering in the UK

Volunteering has been a key strategic tool for achieving economic and social policy goals for successive UK governments associated with moving people into the job market (Zimmeck, 2010) and more recently with the shrinking of the state (Eliasoph, 2013; Brooks, 2013). In this chapter, I describe the policy environment for volunteering in the UK, and how policy contributes to shaping volunteering opportunities. In doing so, I do not ignore volunteering outside of government policy influence, such as informal volunteering, but focus on volunteering in organisations to highlight the impact of policy on volunteers claimed by researchers and to reflect that this research is conducted with four community radio stations.

I examine policy historically to accord with analysis of the history of community radio in the preceding chapter and for later analysis. Continuities with and differences from the past inherited by the Labour administration (1997-2010) and the Liberal Democrat Conservative administration (2010-2015) are discussed. I examine the contested concept of active citizenship and the relationship between it, voluntary organisations and the state. I conclude that contradictory messages around individualisation and community create a complex policy landscape for organisations and volunteers to navigate. This adds to an already complex environment for volunteers and organisations in community radio.

3.2 The Labour Government and volunteering policy 1997-2010

In this section, I describe the Labour policies on volunteering. I briefly discuss the background to these policies to highlight how expectations from government have complicated the management of and roles undertaken by volunteers, as well as public conceptions of volunteering.

The Labour Government of 1997-2010 was not the first government to attempt to use volunteering for policy purposes and continuity is evident from earlier initiatives by Conservative governments. Davis Smith (1998) suggests the Labour Party learned from *Make a Difference*, launched in 1991 by John Major, then Conservative Home Secretary, which attempted to highlight the value of the volunteer in the community (Home Office, 1992 <u>in</u> Davis Smith, 1998). Through *Make a Difference* volunteers would support others into voluntary positions and voluntary sector organisations would be able to bid for grants to support projects that were aimed to increase numbers of volunteers. This policy was aimed at addressing, '*the ground between those areas which are the responsibility of individuals and those which are the responsibility of the government*' (Home Office, 1992 <u>in</u> Davis Smith, 1998: 8). The role of government was to provide what Home Secretary Michael Howard in 1994 called, '*the catalyst to unleash the power of volunteering*' (Howard, 1994 <u>in</u> Smith, 1998: 9). Criticisms were plenty: government allocated £470,000 in the first instance which Davis Smith (1998) suggests was parsimonious. However, the main criticism came from commentators raising questions about the relationship between the state and the individual:

> *…those people with the lowest stake in society … are being asked to give up even more. The government...has the gall to pontificate about creating a neighbourly society by suggesting that we who have so little to give in the first place should now do more.*

> (Azeez, 1995 <u>in</u> Davis Smith, 1998: 12)

Zimmeck (2010) argues that under Labour from 1997 volunteering became a key component in the Labour government's strategy for addressing social issues including social exclusion, citizenship and community cohesion (Zimmeck, 2010). Howlett and Locke (1999) suggest that this strategy, "*emphasised common purpose and 'the community' in the singular.* [Prime Minister Tony Blair] *espoused plurality but sounded unitary*" (Howlett and Locke, 1999: 75). According to Howlett and Locke (1999), the Labour Government intended volunteering by the individual to lead to personal success and therefore less reliance on the welfare state. Greater demand for voluntary opportunities

would lead to community support for each citizen, ultimately supported by the state. In this way, the *'millions of decisions'* would become *'unitary'* by coalescing around government policy. The Labour Government adopted active citizenship, a contested term (Bee & Pachi, 2014), to describe this approach, and it is examined in the next section.

Active Citizenship

A comprehensive debate on active citizenship is beyond the scope of this thesis but the debate in the literature over contested definitions and uses of active citizenship by communities and policy makers is relevant to how community media operate with volunteers in their local area. I therefore briefly study community definitions that challenge the singular policy vision, before examining how community organisations can find themselves caught between community and policy.

Gaventa and Tandon (2010) note that the term active citizenship has attracted contested meanings based around how it may be used and by whom (Gaventa & Tandon, 2010). For instance, Fuller, Kershaw and Pulkingham (2008) suggest that the term developed as an alternative to a needs-based welfarism, an idea initially promoted by Giddens (1994) and closely linked to the development of Labour policy. Such approaches are associated with an increase in individual responsibility that others (Beck, 1994) argue are a feature of the neoliberal society. Etzioni (2000) considers this a version implemented by the UK government, to reflect a single vision of citizenship in which inalienable rights and obligations become conditional on behaviour approved by policy (Etzioni, 2000). Thus, active citizens operate as flag bearers for state policy. From a critical perspective, Kenny el at (2015) suggest that:

> *Neo-liberal agendas, which seek to roll back the state…encourage self-help and the provision of public services on the cheap via an increasing use of unpaid, 'voluntary' labour, whilst opening the way to more comprehensive marketisation*

(Kenny *et al*, 2015: 2)

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This critical perspective contrasts with how active citizenship may be theorised to operate in communities. Kenny *et al* (2015) draw from complexity theory of Chia (1999) to suggest multipart, situated and emergent practice, composed of shared civil support based on notions of activism, altruism and obligation (Kenny *et al*, 2015: 16). For Kenny *et al*, some forms of active citizenship may be situated locally, initially emergent and drawing from local support to become embryonic networks that depend on bonding social capital to build trust and relationships around a shared concern (Kenny, *et al*, 2015: 163). This form of citizenship can be creative and inquiring but is fragile as support develops. Kenny *et al* also note the debates within the literature about the extent to which activism expresses different values, ideas and scale of desired change, and so ambitions may be limited and even contested within the group (ibid: 17). Taking this approach, communities are spaces for dynamic contestation, in which the singular policy vision may or may not align with active citizenship as practiced by some. Within communities, meeting places can be invited spaces in which community members are invited to engage, or popular spaces which are used to develop their own interests (Gaventa & Rootes, 2007; Taylor, 2011). Therefore, community organisations may be sites of contestation as much as collaboration, and it is these I turn to next.

Community and voluntary organisations operate within a loosely defined voluntary sector that might include several organisational forms, from large corporate-style charities to self-help groups or parent groups that meet regularly (Kendall and Knapp, 2005). They may be legally constituted, registered as a charity for example, or they may be a smaller unconstituted group that exists, *'below the radar'* (McCabe *et al*, 2010). This diversity has led some to claim the voluntary sector cannot be easily demarcated or defined (Halfpenny and Reid, 2002) despite an increase in research into the sector since the turn of the century (Smith, 2013). Nonetheless, theorists have attempted to understand the sector by demarcating boundaries (Evers & Laville, 2004) or suggest hybridity and flexibility as a feature of the voluntary organisational type (Billis, 2010; Alcock and Kendall, 2011). Evers (1988; 2005) has suggested the sector is a tension zone demarcated in relation to the informal sector, market and public sectors, a feature also studied by others (Buckingham, 2010; MacMillan, 2013).

Several approaches have been applied to analyse the relationship between government and voluntary organisations. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggest resource dependency theory, using this to examine the influence of external resources over internal matters. In this model, organisations lack the ability to make autonomous decisions because of the requirements of funding or other support. This approach however fails to account for cultural aspects of the organisation, including for example how complex the role an organisation may have in a community. Governmentality theory (Rose, 1999) attends to the complexities that govern the relationship between communities, organisations and governments by examining the systems, procedures and plans that make individuals governable (Rose, 1999). Theorists using this approach posit that organisations are used to promote acceptable ways of behaving. Thus, in the voluntary sector, Kendall (2009) identifies hyperactive mainstreaming in which voluntary organisations seek to adopt a directive policy discourse by partnership building with government. This theory is itself based on earlier work (6 and Kendall, 1997) in which the authors describe the increasingly legalistic nature of funding and pressure to adopt business techniques. Kenny el al (2015) suggest that this approach has been intensified under successive recent governments through a system of prime and subcontractors, with the programmatic nature of these approaches having implications for active citizenship. Benson (2014), for example, suggests that such a system reduces income at grassroots level and promotes complex partnership working that reduces the voice of minority partners (Benson, 2014), with little power in invited spaces to influence how funding is distributed and projects develop (Taylor, 2011).

Other research has focused on the volunteers within the debate to understand their perspective on policy influence on their active citizenship. In several projects looking at the role of volunteers in formal organisations, researchers found less sanguinity about changes to volunteering created by policy influence. From interviews with volunteers in formal voluntary organisations, Lewis (2005) suggests that volunteers noted the change at their organisations in how the managers and staff perceived the role of the organisation within the community, that, "*At the local level there are tensions between the idea of voluntary organisations as agents of 'civil renewal' and as 'service providers'*"

(Lewis, 2005: 121). Tensions were often acted out between the roles that volunteers wanted and what they were offered, often dictated by policy-based funding, with targets attached, rather than volunteers with greater freedom to shape their experience for themselves. Hutchinson and Ockenden (2008) came to similar conclusions in research that sought to, '*explore the impact of public policy on volunteering in community-based organisations*' (Hutchinson & Ockenden, 2008: 13) by examining a sample of eight similar-sized voluntary organisations from across the UK. Each had a small staff and turnover and relied heavily on volunteers to conduct their activity. Through interviews with staff and volunteers, Hutchinson and Ockenden found that government funding affected the autonomy of the organisations: '...*policies have shaped aspects of service provision and activities*' (Hutchinson & Ockenden, 2008: 7). In particular, funding restricted activities to those services they were funded to deliver (ibid: 8). Thus, the organisation becomes a respondent to government policy and funding and not the community, findings that are echoed elsewhere (Scott & Russell, 2000). Hutchinson and Ockenden (2008) also suggest that, '*volunteers were taking on more responsibility as a result of staff shortages caused by funding problems*' (ibid: 9). The organisations adopted a business model which they found difficult to sustain on the terms of funding they had agreed, and so volunteers undertook roles that sustained the model many felt was inappropriate. This line of enquiry was not developed by the researchers, an omission, as it may have revealed how volunteers understand the difference between the models of operation.

Gaskin (2004) also notes how volunteers are taking on greater responsibility because of policy measures, working with high risk, vulnerable people and occupying bureaucratic roles not advisory or trustee roles. Similarly, Scott and Russell's (2000) research into volunteering at formal organisations found volunteers subject to reviews and that applications to volunteer were becoming common. The increasing focus on performance of volunteers may lead to less people willing to commit their time. Low *et al* (2007), who in an analysis of the national *Helping Out* survey data suggests that nearly half of those who did not volunteer in organisations did not because of, '*being worried about risk and liability*' (Low *et al*, 2007: 64).

Yet there are issues to raise about these studies. They are taken from case study research at formal voluntary organisations and so cannot reflect all volunteers or types of volunteering. Evers and Laville (2004) question whether policy influence can be the only factor that dictates style of delivery, size of organisation or other services. Indeed, there are organisations that practice discrimination such as the Klu Klux Klan for example, or those that take a particular view to citizenship that runs contrary to the Labour Government definition, such as Woodcraft Folk (Prynn, 1983; Mills, 2014). Such organisations shape their own definitions beyond the influence of government. Secondly, policy may not be the only influence. Billis's (2010) theory of hybridity as a feature of the voluntary sector highlights the powerful influence of non-government ideas and practices, including for example how associational forms of organisation may maintain influential community hierarchies (Billis, 2010: 55). Finally, the theories fail to account for how active citizens may network, volunteering across a community in multiple organisations, and bringing with them influences from other spaces and creating new ones. Holdsworth and Brewis (2014), for example, use Deleuze (1991) and his theory of control society to describe how schools may influence how young people choose voluntary opportunities based on their future career needs, based on expectations of achievement in a competitive environment. They suggest that young people entering a voluntary organisation may therefore have expectations of outcomes more closely linked with active citizenship as defined in Government policy rather than communitarian principles. The 'network' effect of influences is also used by Kenny *et al* (2015), who examine case studies of emerging '*social formations'* (Kenny *et al*, 2015: 183) in five communities from across the world. The cases suggest communities have the, '*capacity to develop new community projects'* which depend not on government policy but, '*existing bonding social capital...common values...existing strong multiplex networks and new forms of bonding and bridging social capital'* (ibid: 182). As interests from outside the community may be challenged by community members, active citizenship becomes defined by '*collaborative action*' (ibid: 183) and networks may emerge to support local infrastructure, rather than the local infrastructure supporting communities.

This section has highlighted some of the tensions and contested definitions around the concept of active citizenship. It has sought to show how government policy may be influential but is not supreme. The relationship between active citizens and the organisations they volunteer for is complex and needs to be understood as a dynamic. In particular, how active citizens network to develop emerging practice may resonate in this thesis given its focus on young community radio broadcasters.

3.3 The Coalition Government 2010-2015 and youth volunteering policy

In this section, I outline the volunteering policies of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015) with a specific focus on youth volunteering. Continuities and changes from Labour government initiatives are identified through an analysis of the Coalition Government Positive for Youth policy, which includes the National Citizen Service (NCS) initiative. I suggest that an increased focus on employability has moved into non-governmental spaces with the advent of the National Citizen Service initiative. Thus, though volunteering is still conceived of as a valuable community activity, it is recast within a complex model that includes entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

<u>Positive for Youth and the National Citizen Service</u>

Positive for Youth is a cross-departmental initiative that seeks to represent a *'single vision'* of the future of young people in the UK involving, '*all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities, businesses'* (Cabinet Office, 2012: 2) by *'realising young people's aspirations and driving up participation and attainment in learning'* (ibid: 4). Nine government departments aligned policy with the initiative, sharing resources and funding as well as pursuing specific projects.

Pertinent to this study is the creation of the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme for young people, intended to, '*develop greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility. It encourages personal and social development by working on skills like leadership, teamwork and communication'*

(UK Government, 2015: n.p). Mycock and Tonge (2011) suggest communities may benefit from, '*the contribution to good citizenship development made by community service*', but that service requires channelling by policy (Mycock & Tonge, 2011: 57). NCS represents the volunteer strand of the Positive for Youth policy, seeking to link volunteering with employability skills as defined by the programme. As such, Positive for Youth represents continuity from the Labour government (and previous Conservative initiatives including Make a Difference) in using volunteering for enhancing the employment prospects of young people, but through promotion of leadership and entrepreneurship skills as core competencies for young volunteers.

Brown *et al* (2013) suggest the policy aims of NCS are:

Improving teamwork, communication and leadership	A more responsible society
Facilitating transition to adulthood	
Improving social mixing	A more cohesive society
Encouraging community involvement	A more engaged society
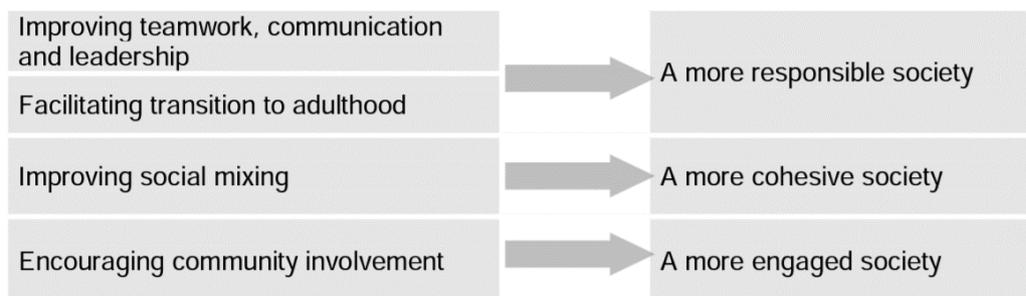
Table four: The Aims of National Citizen Service (Brown *et al*, 2013: 2)

NCS is designed so that, '*Participants develop a social action project to deal with a local issue they're passionate about, and spend 30 hours putting the project into action in their community*' (GOV.UK, 2014: n.p). Since it began in 2011, NCS projects have worked with over 35,000 young people, with over 26,000 young people taking part in in 2012, making a three-fold increase on the previous year (Brown *et al*, 2013: 1). Brown *et al* (2013) claim that NCS is popular amongst volunteers who in 2012 gave it a 90% endorsement rate (ibid) for developing friendships. However, NCS admit to not yet developing a diverse volunteer base (ibid). Thus, the endorsement appears to be for an opportunity to meet young people from similar backgrounds.

Mycock and Tonge (2011) argue there was an expectation that employers would value those involved in NCS more highly than those who were not, with indicators of the success of NCS being numbers

into apprenticeships, jobs and fast-track interviews (Mycock & Tonge, 2011). Yet for Brown *et al* (2013) NCS focuses on moving into further education or employment as a soft measure of the impact of the programme, not on specific measures of NCS volunteers into jobs. Brown *et al* note that, '*NCS was also felt to provide something useful to add to young people's CV and open up opportunities to do more volunteering or work experience that could lead to paid work in the future*' (Brown et at, 2013: 5), with metrics on assumed future tax revenue from NCS volunteers (ibid: 44-45) rather than actual employment. The focus on employability of young people in the NCS programme was borne out in the annual review of the 2012 National Citizen Service programme:

> *Eighty per cent of participants felt more aware of educational and employment opportunities available to them and over 70% felt more confident about getting a job as a result of NCS.*

> (Brown *et al*, 2013: 5)

Yet in the same review, the majority of those involved in the summer of 2012 also claimed they had already determined their near future plans:

> *There was an impression that these effects would be felt at the margins as many young people had already made decision about their next steps in education or employment*

> (ibid: 38)

That plans were settled may reflect the social background of the young people, in which middle class young people are considered to have the social and cultural capital to have made informed decisions (Purcell *et al*, 2002). The findings of Brown *et al* (2013) also reflect those of Holdsworth and Brewis (2014) where schools were found to influence volunteering choices to support career plans. They suggest that some young people, '*appreciate multifaceted volunteering*' opportunities which are not clearly defined (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014: 215). This suggests that active citizenship as defined by government policy may be one aspect of '*multifaceted volunteering*', but that there are also other reasons.

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The rejection of NCS as a direct influence also reflects the concept of active citizenship as networking suggested by Kenny *et al* (2015), in which young people involved in NCS undertook the experience as a way to maintain friendships and meet people from similar backgrounds to develop new projects defined by the team. Indeed, although used for promotional purposes, case studies of participants on the NCS website describe the benefits of collective working. One case study of Frazer for example they explain, *'instead of being so self-reliant he now feels able to trust others'* and of another case study volunteer, the website states, '*Aimee feels that she has learned to put her trust into people a little more*' (NCS, 2016: n.p). NCS also describe the influence of NCS on leadership skills and communication skills, each vital to developing active citizenship as networking, according to Kenny *et al* (2015). Nonetheless, the case studies obviously do not critique NCS nor the politics of the programme: no mention is made of their volunteering acting to replace or supplement the work of state agents.

If NCS is designed to support the advancement of a state-approved form of active citizenship, it has perhaps been intensified under a new initiative. In 2013, the National Citizen Service Future Leaders programme was introduced to develop those identified nationally as future business leaders (Future Foundations, 2014). Positive for Youth policy documents describe the volunteers engaged in the NCS programme as, '*the dutiful citizen*', an opaque description according to Brooks (Brooks, 2013: 325). The character of the Future Leader volunteer is a unitary construction, with diversity of character and ability rejected for volunteers with *'communication skills'* and '*entrepreneurial ambition*' (Future Foundation, 2014: n.p). These values are similar to those noted by Read *et al* (2003) who argue that the ideal student is defined by adults in market terms as ambitious and competitive (Read *et al*, 2003 *in* Brooks, 2013: 328). Whilst the Future Leaders Programme fails to account for the ways leadership roles may vary across business cultures, this new initiative further refines a view of active citizenship in which market principles are identified as the solution to community ills. The initiative also fails to reflect how leadership and communication skills may be considered in terms of the non-market principles; Kenny *et al* (2015) argue that leadership skills are a necessary part of collective community

projects that respond to and challenge the status quo and vested interests, often of state or corporate bodies.

3.4 Chapter summary

By setting out the broad policy context, this chapter is relevant to the shaping of the research questions and focus for analysis in this thesis. Successive governments have sought to use policy and funding to influence how active citizenship and formal volunteering opportunities are defined and occur. However, research suggests the term is contested, and that in practice government policy may be less influential. New forms of active citizenship respond to the policy context, with networking and collaborative action key elements to community renewal. Nonetheless, from an examination of the Brown *et al* (2013) review of the NCS programme*, active citizenship as a policy approved form of volunteering may be evolving and refining into one that focuses on leadership and communication skills. Such as position adds complexity to the debate about the role and function of volunteering for young people, and brings focus on communication, leadership and innovation as concepts and practices that are not the sole property of market-based approaches to community work, as Kenny *et al* (2015) note, but also used to underpin collective forms of active citizenship.

If community radio developed under the Labour government out of ambitions to harness it for social policy purposes (as noted in the previous chapter) government ambitions identified in this chapter for NCS volunteers may be relevant to those young volunteers in community radio, in particular by how skills in communication, teamwork or leadership may be framed in narrow, market terms and not in terms of a broader definition of active citizenship. This has implications for community radio stations that already may feel tensions between policy demands and grassroots activism. Young volunteers in community radio may become active citizens shaped by these competing forces, played out through what activities young volunteers are offered by community radio stations. This issue underpins this

thesis. By examining practice, an understanding of the factors that combine to frame practice may be understood, and definitions from a young volunteer perspective arrived at.

4. DEFINING VOLUNTEERING

To examine the experience of young volunteers at four community radio stations in the UK, a clear understanding of the definitional issues identified in the literature on volunteering is required. In the first section, I examine the contested definitions of volunteering found in the literature. Four analytic approaches to defining volunteering are discussed to understand the relationship between the examination of voluntary practice and development of theoretical models and definitions of volunteering. In doing so I suggest that volunteering resists simple definition, and that innovative approaches are needed to avoid the unsatisfactory conclusion that volunteering is too complex to define.

In the second section I develop my analysis to address the question 'who is volunteering for?' I examine theoretical models on the motivations to volunteer and build on the policy chapter to understand the relationship between the agency of the individual and the contexts in which they volunteer. I suggest that we may find greater insight into what motivates young people to volunteer by understanding how volunteering operates as a dynamic and contested practice.

4.1 What is volunteering?

Volunteering is a contested term, with examples in the literature often confounding theoretical definitions. Indeed, Cnaan *et al* (1996) note that, in their review of the literature, authors often failed to define volunteering, assuming a stable identity for the phenomenon that readers would share (Cnaan *et al*, 1996: 369). Wilson (2000) suggests volunteering is, '*any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause*' (Wilson, 2000: 215). In their definition, Snyder and Omoto (2008) are explicit that time should extend over a period, and that volunteering is organised:

> *Voluntarism as freely chosen helping activities that extend over time and that are often performed by individuals through organizations and on behalf of receptive causes or individuals.*

From these two definitions, we have three key aspects of volunteering:

1. Time is freely given for a freely chosen activity;

2. It is organised over a period of time;

3. It is for the benefit of people.

At first glance, these features may lead to a coherent definition. Yet research provides examples that directly challenge these definitions and highlights the broadness of activity called volunteering captured by the literature. Rochester *et al* (2010) note that free choice is not necessarily entirely free. They quote Stebbins and Graham (2004) who examined volunteering as leisure, and found:

> *People are obligated when, even though they are not actually coerced by an external force, they do refrain from doing something because they feel bound in this regard by promise, convention or circumstances*

(Stebbins & Graham, 2004: 7)

Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest the obligation may be, '*an agreeable one not a disagreeable one…the obligation involved in volunteering can be seen as flexible*' (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 7).

The literature offers other examples that challenge simple definitions. Volunteering may be remunerated (Fiorello, 2011), or included within mandatory school programmes (Hustinx *et al*, 2008; Cnaan *et al*, 1996; Griffith, 2011); it may be expected by an employer (Pearce, 1993; Tschirhart, 2005); and undertaken out of self-interest to enhance status (Bekkers, 2010; Carpenter and Myers, 2010). The challenge to definitions also comes internationally. Verduzco reports a Mexican definition for volunteering does not include helping one's family (Verduzco, 2010) whilst Hustinx *et al* (2010) note, '*In India the term is social work and in Russia no specific word is used to denote volunteers*' (Hustinx *et al*, 2010: 410). Thus, where the literature examines experience, a clear definition is difficult to achieve.

Cnaan *et al* (1996) and Snyder and Omoto (2008) attempt to define volunteering by using the individual as the unit of analysis and developing scales and models to identify and categorise characteristics. I examine these first to highlight the limitations of such approaches, and suggest that they lack the capacity to capture the dynamics of volunteering and the influence of an environment. I then examine Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal's (2008) Volunteer Stages and Transition Model (VSTM) which uses a case study approach to demonstrate how the stages of volunteering experience, from newcomer to established volunteer, can lead to different conceptions about what a volunteer is. This model addresses some of the issues I raise, but fails to examine wider contextual factors. Finally, I examine Rochester *et al*'s (2010) three-perspective model of volunteering in which three paradigms - economic, leisure and activism - interact. I suggest this static model fails to account for a dynamic sense of what volunteering can be, including how in practice it can be multi-part and emergent.

4.1.1 Cnaan et al (1996): Guttmann Typology of Volunteering

Cnaan *et al* (1996) examined more than 300 academic articles on volunteering and found '*the term volunteer was seldom defined*' (Cnaan *et al*, 1996: 369). In their analysis, data are synthesised to reveal four key characteristics: (1) free choice; (2) remuneration; (3) structure; (4) intended beneficiaries. The researchers suggest that the broadness of the categories acts as an illustration of how wide-ranging the literature conceives of the volunteer and voluntary action but admit that the model, '*does not provide agreed-on definition, but rather provides the template used in all definitions and a means to compare all definitions*' (Cnaan *et al*, 1996: 382). To address the lack of *'agreed-on definitions'*, the authors introduce a Guttmann scale within each characteristic, designed to create a continuum of pure to less pure definitions. This creates a typology, below in table five:

Dimension	Categories
Free choice	1. Free will (the ability to voluntarily choose)
	2. Relatively uncoerced
	3. Obligation to volunteer
Remuneration	1. None at all
	2. None expected
	3. Expenses reimbursed
	4. Stipend/low pay
Structure	1. Formal
	2. Informal
Intended beneficiaries	1. Benefit/help others/strangers
	2. Benefit/help friends or relatives
	3. Benefit oneself (as well)

Table five: Guttmann Typology of Volunteering (Cnaan *et al*, 1996: 370)

The typology creates categories to help define volunteering and generate a hierarchy rather than categories afforded equal status. By creating the hierarchy, Cnaan *et al* (2010) make judgements for what features have a place higher than others, based on the assumption that, '*people would be more likely to define as a volunteer someone who met the strict criteria of the pure definition*' (Cnaan *et al*, 1996: 373). This approach may be problematic where, as noted earlier, cultures may value different aspects of volunteering and where motivations may be complex. The categories the authors generate are narrowly defined. There is no room for personal satisfaction, and remuneration only includes money, and did not include a wider array of other possible rewards. For instance, Rochester *et al* (2010) detail, '*birthday or Christmas gifts, free theatre tickets, parties*' found a '*significant number of volunteers had received some kind of payment over and above the reimbursement of expenses*' (Blacksell & Phillips, 1994: 21). According to Hustinx *et al* (2010), the Guttmann Typology blunts theoretical utility. They note that within the model, free will encompasses both personal desire as the highest (category one) level and the demands of a mandatory school curriculum or employer at category level three, yet in practice both elements may be present, generating complexity the model cannot cope with (Hustinx *et al*, 2010: 414). The model also fails to account for changes over time and changes in practice – thus ignoring how volunteers develop and learn as they engage with organisations and other volunteers (Percy, 1998). These issues are fundamental for this thesis, and so a Guttmann Typology would have little utility.

In the next section, Snyder and Omoto (2008) address several of the issues raised, particularly relating to context and change over time. However, I argue their model, though a development on from the Guttman Typology (Cnaan *et al*, 1996), is open to similar issues for its categorical approach.

4.1.2 Snyder and Omoto (2008): Volunteer Process Model

Snyder and Omoto (2008) developed the Volunteer Process Model across several years of study and published articles (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Volunteers, they suggest, are defined by psychological and behavioural features, which they developed into a conceptual model called the Volunteer Process Model, below:

Levels of Analysis	Stages of the Volunteer Process		
	Antecedents	Experiences	Consequences
Individual	Personality, motivation, life circumstances	Satisfaction, stigma, organizational integration	Knowledge and attitude change, health
Interpersonal/ Social Group	Group memberships, norms	Helping relationship, collective esteem	Composition of social network, relationship development
Agency/ Organization	Recruitment strategies, training	Organizational culture, volunteer placement	Volunteer retention, work evaluation
Societal/Cultural Context	Ideology, service programs and institutions	Service provision, program development	Social capital, economic savings

Table six: Volunteer Process Model (Snyder & Omoto, 2008: 7)

This model attempts to understand volunteering at four levels and as an activity over time. It is an attempt to illustrate the complexity of voluntary practice whilst maintaining a categorical approach to analysis. The first two levels, individual and interpersonal, represent much of the literature the researchers surveyed. Societal and organisational categories are an attempt to reflect the concerns of sociology and political science (Snyder & Omoto, 2008: 9). I suggest that the categories chosen to represent the stages of volunteering are unsatisfactory. For example, whilst ideology is placed as an

antecedent within the societal level, the practice of ideology, social activism or religious devotion for instance, is missing from the individual experience stage, where it should be represented as practice (attending demonstrations, for example). This affects how consequences are defined: for an ideologically-driven volunteer, social change may be the goal, but the model reverts to individual consequences of social capital as an individual-level benefit not a collective benefit. It is also hard to see where volunteering as leisure (Stebbins, 2004; Dunlap, 2013) fits into the model. In research into how city dwellers volunteer at farms by '*playin' farmer*' (Dunlap, 2013: 118) as a leisure activity, Dunlap evidences how volunteers join a community of practice as a distinctly leisure pursuit, where their labour pays for learning, accommodation and meals. Thus, the approach by Snyder and Omoto, whilst moving the debate on from the Guttmann Typology developed by Cnaan *et al* (1996), fails to capture the variety of activity and the relationships between the levels of analysis, as volunteering is posited as an experience of an individual life from which definitions are arrived. From this model, we may describe how society interacts with individuals but cannot explore how society impacts on organisations – an issue to explore in this thesis.

In the next section I explore a model which attempts to address the issue of how individual volunteers and organisations are dynamically inter-twined, affecting how volunteering is understood.

4.1.3 Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008): Volunteer Stages and Transition Model

The Volunteer Stages and Transition Model (VSTM) was designed based on data collected in ethnographic fieldwork with Israeli volunteers working with at-risk youth organisations. The case study approach opens the researchers to critical questions about developing general models from a single case, but the model is illustrative of how analysis may be conducted on the relationship between individual and organisation, and therefore offers an alternative perspective on how to analyse the factors that combine to generate definitions of volunteering.

The model developed from data that suggested models of volunteering in the literature did not match the experience of the Israeli volunteers who, despite working within an organisation, had to '*construct their unstructured roles*' (Haski-Leventhal & Bar-Gal, 2008: 68). The VSTM therefore explains how volunteers are socialised into their voluntary organisation, and the relationship between the various influences on their voluntary activity.
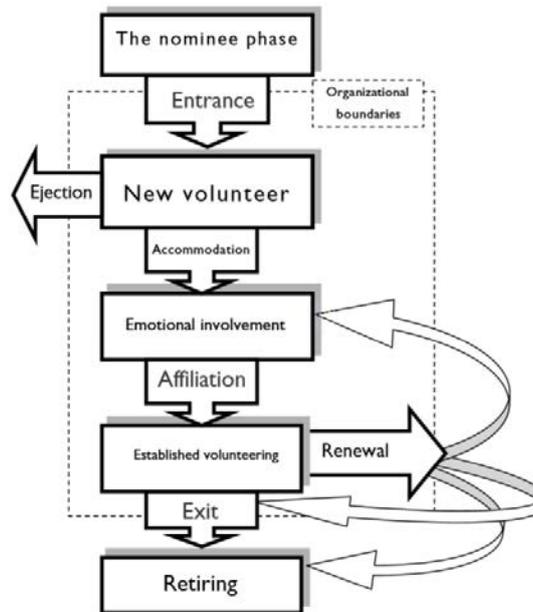
Diagram two: Volunteer Stages Transmission Model (Haski-Leventhal & Bar-Gal, 2008: 74)

The authors suggest that volunteers go through phases in which they develop their practice under the influence of organisational factors as well as individual motivations. Volunteers retire having possibly renewed their commitment a series of times. It is the stages that are applied to analysis of the experience of the volunteer. Table seven below examines how the stages of organisational socialisation may affect aspects of voluntarism. Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008) identify, '*activity', 'emotion', 'relationship', 'motivations', 'attitudes'* and *'cost and benefits'* (ibid: 76) as key elements in their findings, and use these to create a table through which each stage of the phase of volunteering in the VSTM model, from nominee to retiring, may be analysed.

Themes/ Phases	Activity	Emotions	Relationships	Motivation and commitment	Attitudes and perceptions	Costs and benefits
Nominee (1–2 months before entrance)	Applying to volunteer	Excitement mixed with fears and fantasies	Some have relationships with other volunteers; Attraction to target population; Attraction to organizational image	Motivation to volunteer: altruistic, egoistic and social; Low commitment	Romantic idealism; High ambiguity; Low satisfaction	A good feeling emerges as one applies to volunteer
Newcomer (first months)	Entering the field: Trying to help as many as they can	Avoidance and frustration	Marginal members of group and organization; Recipients distrustful; Helping by 'being' and focusing on quantifiable factors of help	Contract commitment; Do not feel particularly needed	Limited idealism; High ambiguity; Low satisfaction	Emotional strain; Frustration and sadness
Emotional involvement (4 months to 8 months of volunteering)	Giving actual help	'Ups and downs': deep sadness with high satisfaction	Close relationship with recipients may cause dilemmas; Helping by 'doing'; focusing on quality of help; Important group members	Highest commitment; Identifying with organization and clients	Sober idealism; causes sadness; Low ambiguity; High satisfaction and meaningfulness	High emotional costs and secondary trauma mixed with feeling of satisfaction and meaningfulness
Established volunteering (after a year)	Giving actual help to fewer clients	Detached concern, burnout and fatigue	Close relations with fewer clients, no new contacts. Helping by 'being'; Central and influential group and organization members	Levels of commitment and feeling needed are low again	Realism, cynicism; Low ambiguity (mainly regarding long-term results)	High awareness of the variety of costs and benefits related to volunteering
Retiring (after a year or two of volunteering) and clients	Separation from organization, group, and clients	Sadness mixed with relief	Separation and rites of passage. Remembering the clients	Commitment to volunteering in general and to social change	Gain back some general idealism	Putting all they gained from volunteering into perspective; Hard to let g...

Table seven: The Stages of Organisational Socialisation (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008: 76)

Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008) offer a way of conceiving the lifecycle of a volunteer, and to understand it in multiple ways, including economic, sociological and psychological paradigms and examine the relationship between these paradigms. However, their model has several deficiencies. It fails to account for past voluntary experience and how this may affect how people join organisations. It should not be assumed that a nominee begins with low commitment, or indeed that an established member is aware of the cost/benefit ratio to themselves. It also fails to account for the diversity of people who choose to volunteer: there is an assumption that all volunteers will behave in the same way which may not be the case. Thus, the VSTM model, whilst addressing the issue of analysing volunteering from several perspectives from within the same organisation, fails to account for the wider experience that volunteers may draw from when they volunteer. Brodie *et al* (2011) suggest that by understanding volunteering as a fluid dynamic across greater spans than the volunteering opportunity itself reveals greater complexity in understanding motivation. This suggests that other contextual factors from outside of the organisation should be considered when evaluating participation as a volunteer.

The three models examined so far fail to capture how volunteering activity can resist categorisation, and how activity may be influenced by factors outside of the organisation. Rochester *et al* (2010) developed the three-perspective model to address what they call the 'fuzzy boundaries' of volunteering, and it is this I examine next.

4.1.4 Rochester et al (2010): Three-Perspective Model

Rochester *et al* (2010) developed a, '*three-perspective model of volunteering*' (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 18) which suggests that three major paradigms of volunteering interact, using a Venn diagram to illustrate the interactivity between paradigms. They suggest that their rationale challenges categorical approaches to volunteering which adopt largely economic approaches, such as, '*volunteering as service'*, which they call '*the dominant paradigm*' (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 10) and instead focus analysis

on examining data and placing individuals or defined voluntary positions within the model which generates greater equality or balance between paradigms. This is presented in the model below:
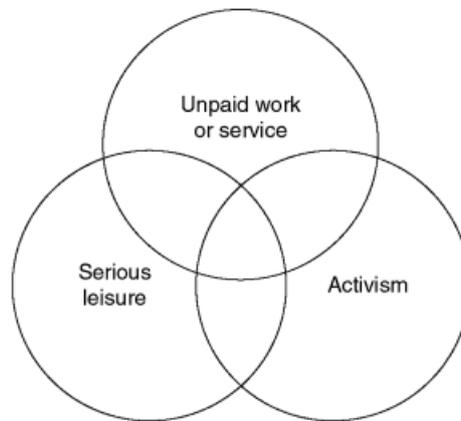
Diagram three: The Three-Perspective Model of Volunteering (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 18)

The authors begin by defining three boundaries drawn around three areas of activity, *'volunteering as service', 'volunteering as activism'* and *'volunteering as leisure'* (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 22). These paradigms interact, creating space in which to place complex voluntary activity. '*Volunteering as service'* uses an unpaid help model for delivering services, and may incorporate religious devotion or the voluntary delivery of social services. '*Volunteering as activism'* pursues a campaigning model, hoping, for instance, to improve services or raise recognition of an issue. The third perspective, '*volunteering as leisure*', builds on the work of Stebbins (1996) who identified '*serious leisure*' to describe the skills and knowledge and experience of volunteering for pleasure that retains a social mission (Stebbins, 1996: 211). Compared to civic motivation or altruism, *'volunteering as leisure*' is recognised by self-interest and earnest commitment as the primary motivation, involved in an area chosen by the individual for a special interest, such as arts or sports but that engagement may develop to involve other motivations.

The regions in which the three primary perspectives cohere suggest complexity between areas of volunteering lacking in the other models – thus, a volunteer may be a performer, as an actor or sports person, but may also undertake administrative roles at an organisation, as is the case with many

sporting or artistic organisations in the UK. Thus, they may be placed at the centre of the model, with leisure, campaigning and service aspects to their volunteering. As with the models offered by Cnaan *et al* (1996), Snyder and Omoto (2008) and Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008), the three perspective model is designed for volunteering to be measured against it – thus it provides a framework for analysis of voluntary practice.

The use of three perspectives for volunteering may lack utility on finer points of the debate. As with the other models, Rochester *et al* (2010) seek to define volunteering against a model rather than examining the complexity of how volunteering is defined in practice; the focus on '*fuzzy boundaries*' (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 22) suggests the influence of different perspectives but fails to adequately account for several significant issues. The model proposes that a volunteer may statically occupy several paradigms at once, which is problematic where volunteering is (as they suggest) defined by sets of relations. Thus, the model lacks the dynamism between levels of analysis that Snyder and Omoto (2008) propose. The (related) concept of time is also a missing component, which Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008) identify as a key factor in how volunteers develop and learn their roles. Without a defined timeframe, an examination of a static voluntary experience as represented in the model becomes difficult to apply in practice. Can we really compare volunteering for an hour with long term volunteering using this model? I am left to ask whether plotting a model of static experiences is enough to help develop a richer understanding of volunteering.

4.1.5 Summary

I began by suggesting that much of the literature has focused on categorising volunteering. This section has examined four attempts to define volunteering using models, scales and a table to illustrate, capture and categorise how it may be defined. I found that these approaches do not satisfactorily describe and explain the interplay of factors involved in volunteering. This raises a significant issue for how to approach collecting and organising data, as a clear understanding of how

participants may conceive of their activities in the community radio stations should feed into the research design.

Yet there is something for me to draw on from these models. Snyder and Omoto (2008) recognise multiple levels of analysis at which a deeper understanding of the interplay between factors must take place. Whilst their model may insufficiently consider the societal level, nonetheless it is present and a vital part of understanding volunteering, reflecting as it does how organisations and individuals may be affected by external influences, such as national government policies aimed at either volunteers or voluntary organisations. I also draw from Haski-Leventhal and Bar-Gal (2008). Their model presents a system to be applied to voluntary organisations, recognising the interplay between organisation and individual as mutually constitutive factors in learning to become a volunteer. Rochester *et al* (2010) warn how an economic analysis often dominates at the expense of other motivations to volunteer. Their three-perspective model reminds me that multiple motivations are connected and blended. Finally, Cnaan *et al* (1996) explain how volunteering has multiple and often contradictory definitions when derived from practice.

Despite the recognition of blurred boundaries and blended influences, the use of models to categorise, define and locate volunteering within societal practice is problematic for me. Each of these models fail to examine how influences on volunteers, from policy, to organisation, to life choices by an individual, combine to create a changing, dynamic and unstable sense of what volunteering is for both an individual and society. As Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) note, '*although a dramatic change in the meaning and patterns of volunteering is widely heralded, accounts of the exact nature of this transformation process vary greatly'* (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003: 168).

To better understand this dynamic, I need to understand how the interplay between factors motivates young people to volunteer. Addressing the issue of for whom volunteering is for may help me differentiate between influences and better explain the shaping influence of society on young volunteers.

4.2 Who is volunteering for?

To understand how society shapes volunteering undertaken by participants in this research I need to appreciate how the literature describes and examines the dynamic between volunteers and the factors that influence them to volunteer. To do this is to look towards how young people are influenced in their choices. I start with a critical examination of how an increasing trend towards biographical and career oriented motivations has been identified (Low *et al*, 2007; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003), influenced by in the UK by government policies and, in particular, the role of educational organisations. I then critically examine how solidarity, collectivism and membership offer a counter-narrative to this analysis. I briefly illustrate how membership organisations including community radio use membership in different ways to underpin voluntarism.

In conclusion, I ask whether volunteers seek to satisfy multiple agendas when volunteering, but I also recognise that such a conclusion does not address the issue of how different motivational factors may connect and interact. I then suggest that this research will attend to connections made in practice between influences if a clearer idea of the purpose of volunteering is to be achieved.

Recent literature describes an increase in individualistic and career oriented motivations for why young people choose to volunteer (Eley, 2001; Low *et al*, 2007; Hustinx & Meijs, 2011; Dean, 2014). Eckstein (2001) suggests that volunteering has moved from collective to individualistic motivations, whilst similarly, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) identify a change from, *'tradition to secular-rational values, and from survival to self-expression values'* (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005 <u>in</u> Hustinx *et al*, 2010: 426). The authors locate this transformation in the rise of neo-liberal politics and economics, and an increase in state interest in volunteering. For these authors volunteering has become less about altruism and more about personal economic enhancement. For instance, according to Holdsworth and Brewis (2014) volunteering for young people can act as a pre-cursor to work, preparing young people for work through experiencing the work environment.

These assertions raise questions about the values researchers ascribe to individualised motivations to volunteer. The notion of separate and defined 'individualistic' and 'collective' is problematic as such as position assumes a link between individualism and economic production. As Stebbins (1996) suggests, volunteering for leisure can be individualistic, but this type of volunteering does not have the economic basis that appears to be a necessary element of this version of individualism. Nonetheless, individualism underpinned by economic thinking may reflect the claims of a rise of personal biography to enhance curriculum vitae (Kamerāde & Ellis Paine, 2014) or strategically to improve employment prospects by being seen as the right kind of person to employ (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Baines & Hardill, 2008). The rise of personal biography has been identified amongst young people and so is relevant to this research. Handy *et al* (2010) in an international comparison of large-scale survey data from twelve countries note this trend, as does Stowe (2013) who observed the phenomenon in case study research in Canada (Stowe, 2013), and similarly Wuthnow (1998) in a series of United States case studies. Others identify the trend in the UK and Europe (Smith, 2000; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Low *et al*, 2007).

In this section I examine theories that suggest an economic individualising basis for volunteering and seek to highlight complexities that confound the argument that young people volunteer for personal, individualising reasons. Firstly, reflexive volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003: 178) and episodic volunteering (Handy *et al*, 2010) suggest that individual volunteers are strategic, keen to enhance their individual biographies at the expense of collective values. However, Browne *et al* (2013) examine micro-volunteering which suggests that complex lives are managed by young people through short, repeated, voluntary experiences, often with the same organisation. Finally, Holdsworth and Brewis (2014) suggest directional volunteering, in which students are expected to volunteer if they are to become successful economic producers. I take each in turn.

4.2.1 Volunteering for personal biographic enhancement

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) propose '*reflexive volunteering'* (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003: 178) as a feature of youth volunteering, defined as conditional, irregular and individualised. They argue reflexive volunteers are *'clever volunteers'* (Giddens, 1994: 94) as they match an opportunity with their individual biography by employing a strategy to, '*actively pursue personal interests*' (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003: 183) ahead of engaging in a collective identity that may be associated with community organisations (Bennett, 1998). To explain this phenomenon, Hustinx and Lammertyn adopt Beck's (1994) analysis of reflexivity in modern society in which, '*structural reflexivity'* has given way to '*self-reflexivity'* (Beck, 1994: 174-183) which, '*involves a shift from former heteronomous or collective monitoring of agents to the autonomous, active, and permanent self-monitoring of individual life narratives'* (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003: 169). Thus, the concepts that helped define the self – including for example the idea of the nuclear family or familiar work roles for men and women – have given way to a modern period in which choice, and the individualism this promotes, has become prevalent. The authors do not deny collective volunteering but reflect on the stability that communal activities may confer. Instead they focus on the link between voluntary activity and personal biography, noting multiple factors which may generate precarity and intensity in that activity, including life crises and biographical uncertainties, as well as what Evers (1999) calls, '*the market of possibilities'* (Evers, 1999: 55) in which volunteering becomes a personal response to the choice of career possibilities. As a *'theory-guided exploration'* (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003: 180) the authors provide no data for their theory which presents issues for assessing their claims, but based on literature findings they suggest a theoretical dichotomy between collective and reflexive volunteering, linking reflexive volunteering firmly with career and economic outcomes and suggesting its increased prevalence in neo-liberal societies today.

The conclusion of Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) is echoed in evidence-based research elsewhere. In an international comparison of survey data on youth volunteering in twelve countries, Handy *et al*

(2010) found, '*volunteering is motivated by career enhancing and job prospects*' (Handy *et al*, 2010: 498). Their research identified characteristics of youth volunteers' relationships with voluntary organisations, arguing that:

> *…The countries that have the highest rates of volunteer participation (India and China) are also the countries where students participate most frequently on an occasional basis and invest the lowest average number of hours volunteering per month. In these countries episodic volunteering is highly prevalent.*

> (ibid: 509)

Whilst cohort studies may provide an overview of volunteering, they must also be considered with caution. The data selected was from young people in university education and so careers are highly likely to be a major consideration in determining voluntary activities. There was also little detail as to what the activities involved: no distinction was made between types of voluntary activity but rather an assumption of definition was carried from the primary research into their secondary analysis. We are unsatisfactorily asked to assume that the questions in the primary questionnaires were suitable for Handy *et al*'s (2010) secondary research.

Handy *et al* (2010) argue that episodic volunteers are likely to require the ability to search and strategically choose voluntary options. In doing so, this suggests that episodic volunteers make an investment of time and income to support such a strategic approach. In their research, Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) also suggest strategic volunteers are likely to be well resourced and confident. Such volunteering may not be an option for the less privileged who may be excluded from episodic volunteering or for those young people with less supportive backgrounds or caring responsibilities. If volunteering at organisations is predicated on episodic or strategic young volunteers, this may have consequences for volunteering for those from less privileged backgrounds, who may choose to volunteer based on other factors, including geography or prioritising generating income.

The findings of Browne *et al* (2013) challenge the notion that short periods of volunteering are linked solely to income and career. Through case study research with organisations in the UK they identify a new relationship between volunteer and organisation. They describe micro-volunteering as, '*small, specific, discrete actions with no commitment to repeat and with minimum formality*' (Browne *et al*, 2013: 64). Whilst some (Cnaan *et al*, 1998; Snyder and Omoto, 2008; Musick and Wilson, 2008) argue that that these features of micro-volunteering are not consistent with their definitions of volunteering, others (Rochester *et al*, 2010; Hustinx *et al*, 2010) suggest that with a broader definition of what constitutes volunteering, micro volunteering may be included.

Browne *et al* (2013) argue that micro-volunteering has come about because of three drivers: '*busy and unpredictable lifestyles; changing perceptions and expectations of participation and technological developments*' (ibid: 33). They posit that these drivers create new conditions for the relationship between organisation and volunteer, with volunteers responsive to a call for help on a specific project, often through internet technology. Individuals determine how volunteering fits into their lifestyles. This may generate greater recruitment issues for the organisation, however Browne *et al* (2013) found that micro-volunteering was used by young people as a strategy to remain involved in an organisation in some small way. This was because of belief in an organisation's work, rather than attempting to enhance a curriculum vitae (ibid: 63). Micro volunteers therefore commit to the organisation's mission but not as regular volunteers.

Browne *et al*'s (2013) small scale study reflects on the complexities of commitment, and challenges the notion that short forms of volunteering reflect only a rise in personal biography. Wuthnow (1998) in a single case study noted how volunteers return to the same organisation to campaign, and can move between campaigns at different organisations to lend support on the same issue. Frustratingly Browne *et al* (2013) did not examine the other commitments of the micro volunteers in their study – were they committed elsewhere, spreading their volunteering in small ways across several organisations? Nor did they examine in detail how repeated commitment might be defined. Their

focus, on the effect on the organisation of the transactional nature of such volunteering, is limited. Nonetheless, micro volunteering may represent another strategic approach, with commitment to a cause or causes activated across a range of voluntary organisations. Several features described by Browne *et al* (2013), including the use of technology by volunteers to remain remote but connected to organisations as well attempting to accommodate lifestyle demands, are points of consideration for this thesis.

Episodic and micro volunteering reflect how busy lifestyles can shape voluntary participation for young people today. I highlighted earlier how this might not just mean a strategic approach to enhancing career prospects but also that those with less family support or greater caregiving responsibilities also have busy lives. Schooling is also a factor within the choice of when and where to volunteer. In their study, Handy *et al* (2010) identify institutional expectations that young people include volunteering on their curriculum vitae to distinguish themselves from other employment candidates. The authors do not examine this phenomenon in detail but suggest that, '*required volunteerin*g *begs for special discussion'* (Handy *et al*, 2010: 519). Elsewhere in the literature, researchers suggest that volunteers feel social expectation to volunteer. For instance, workers may feel pressured to agree to volunteer (Pearce, 1993; Tchirhart, 2005) or likewise parents at a school (Gee, 2010). This suggests that volunteers may do so under some expectation, but for young people, the 'required' element may have dramatic consequences. Students may fail a course or receive a lower mark for not volunteering for example (Cnaan *et al*, 1996; Hustinx *et al*, 2008; Griffith, 2012).

Researching the relationship between young people and the expectations of educational institutions, Holdsworth and Brewis (2014) note an increase in compulsory volunteering within further and higher education colleges. They suggest that educational institutions may link volunteering with advancing personal biography, and this strategy they link to government policy. This form of volunteering they term '*directional volunteering'* to account for what they call the '*inherent contradiction'* (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014: 208). They raise fundamental questions about the relationship between the individual

and their school, with volunteering not simply expected but instigated to suit a policy regime. In their study of schools through interviews with key staff, approved policy-friendly voluntary opportunities were identified and offered to young people as part of an agenda in which applied abilities were given prominence:

> *V*olunteering *[that] was organised primarily by the students themselves was less appropriate, given the important changes to both university finances and the social and political context of HE, particularly the expansion of the 'skills' agenda.*

> (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014: 210)

The authors conclude that this form of volunteering challenges definitions on the basis that it is not a free choice:

> *…In practice, as many students are aware, the outcome of not choosing to get involved could reduce their options on graduating.*

> (Ibid: 216)

This form, like reflexive or episodic volunteering, links personal biography with economic outcomes: young people are told that volunteering will enhance their chances in future life, but it also performs a function for the school by raising the school's status as an achieving school. By encouraging young people into approved 'skills-based' voluntary opportunities, the school focuses more on the policy outcomes than the young person's interests or needs. Thus, who do the young people volunteer for? Micro volunteering may offer some insight: smaller interventions, perhaps based around campaigning, may act as a disruptive influence on the expectations of schools and policy actors. While there are scant literature examining this phenomenon, it raises issues pertinent to this thesis. What is the relationship between the wider policy regime that encourages them to become economic producers and young people using volunteering to enhance their biography, but also disrupting this convention by volunteering for other reasons? In the next section I examine some of these other reasons.

4.2.2 Membership, solidarity and youth volunteering

In this section I offer a counter-position to the literature that suggests young people volunteer primarily for personal economic reasons. I highlight how membership and solidarity may form a central part of how young people participate in organisations. I suggest that the picture of what constitutes volunteering for young people is complicated by how time given is understood within organisations. Young people may feel compelled to volunteer episodically, or to adopt a strategic approach to volunteering, particularly if their school has expectations of them to do so. Nonetheless, this adds to a complex understanding of volunteering for young people in the literature. I suggest that understanding how young volunteers use these opportunities, and the connective means by which they do so, is paramount and a key area of interest in this thesis.

The distinction between membership and volunteering has been less examined in the literature. It's important to make this distinction because membership may confer rights that non-members do not enjoy, or the experience of volunteers may be differentiated based on different types of membership. Nonetheless, in practice, those within an organisation that depends on members and non-members may engage in similar activity. Cameron (1999), in an examination of two studies, her own doctoral research into five congregations, and Harris (1996) of three congregations, attempts to understand the distinction. She explains of her doctoral work that:

> *Much of the unpaid work force of these programmes was provided by church members, but there were also volunteers from the wider community who were not church members. Conceptually, I put the two groups together.*

> (Cameron, 1999: 53)

Cameron highlights how one member, when asked about her volunteering, replied, '*I am not a volunteer, I'm a member*' (ibid). In the paper, Cameron posits that church members' use of

'membership' refers to a spiritual collectivism rather than an agreed public policy agenda or shared sense of civic improvement. Membership reflects greater commitment to the cause than volunteering. Such a position creates a different kind of relationship to the church than volunteers. Firstly, members expect influence over key decisions that affect the membership, what Cameron calls '*substantial discretion*' (Cameron, 1999: 62), whilst volunteers do not – in the church volunteers expect to be tasked, with little discretion. This, she suggests, may reflect a distinction between activities of volunteers and governance by members (ibid: 60), leading to members having a better grasp of organisational structures than volunteers. It may follow that members therefore are more likely to have a greater understanding of the external influences over an organisation, such as funders or policy, although Cameron did not investigate this. Secondly, members look to clergy for leadership and spiritual guidance, which volunteers do not, and that this investment of greater respect in the clergy reflected greater commitment to the cause of the church (ibid). Together, Cameron argues these two distinctions suggest that membership may be more complex in other organisations where a mix of staff, volunteers and members creates differing expectations and requirements for management.

The distinction between volunteering and membership may be relevant to this thesis. The findings of Cameron (1999) are reflected in membership as a feature of community radio stations in the UK. For instance, volunteers of Meridian FM community radio station are expected to join as fee paying members to enjoy the benefits of broadcasting (Meridian FM, 2016). Radio Verulam also apply this policy. Their website explains that, '*Being a member enables you to take part in running Radio Verulam*' and that '*your membership fee will help us to continue to provide our services for the local community*' (Verulam, 2016: n.p)*.* Payment represents a necessary contribution to support the organisation, much in the way religious organisation accept weekly donations at services or political organisations also charge membership fees, and also reflects the reality of performing a public service without public funding (see section 2.3).

Membership also applies in other arenas for volunteering. Cammaerts (2016) examined political volunteering by young people in Europe using data from the European Commission *Youth on the Move* project (European Commission, 2011) as well as his own interviews with young activists. Cammaerts suggests that young people who participate in politics first gain experience of this by volunteering to improve their local area: *'for many young people, political participation in democratic life starts with proximity, first and foremost at the local level'* (Cammaerts, 2016: 115). He further suggests that young people are most likely to be motivated by non-biographical reasons but rather by a sense of collective agency:

> *Many of the actions taken by young people in relation to politics and democracy are altruistic and for the benefit of the entire community rather than just themselves.*

> (Cammaerts, 2016: 115)

Cammaerts (2016) suggests that young people come together to ensure their shared voice is heard in several ways, not just as volunteers or as members of organisations, but through unions, informally and in demonstrations: volunteering may be defined by activity that steps beyond organisational membership and instead reflects solidarity and for community benefit, and the ways in which different spaces may be used to achieve the same voluntary ends. Yet the issues that Cammaerts (2016) highlights raise questions about the spaces available for voluntary activism. Cammaerts suggests that young people use a variety of spaces to engage in political participation. He cites Scandinavia trade unions that offer a legal place for youth debate (Cammaerts, 2016: 130), and in the UK, groups such as Woodcraft Folk (Prynn, 1983; Mills, 2014) also provide a place for volunteering for political discussion.

How these spaces are organised also reflects how young volunteers perceive participation. Cammaerts (2016) suggests they are attracted to what they consider new initiatives or inventive approaches to social mission and less so to established approaches in which they are expected to perform pre-defined roles. His analysis of 7,201 responses to his own questionnaire by young people across Europe

(ibid: 109) suggests that though young volunteers are less likely to join a political party (n=22% of >18s) they are likely to join a peaceful demonstration (n=59% of > 18s) or join a pressure group (n=49% of > 18s). Cammaerts *et al* (2016) argue that, in terms of political volunteering at least, young people want to be involved in not just the mission but how it is organised and delivered, and that non-institutional forms of activism attracts young people. Thus, a similar conception of membership in religious groups may also be sensed here, where commitment to a cause generates an understanding of what constitutes voluntary activity, which may involve governance, or an appreciation of the context of the voluntary work.

Such approaches to voluntary activism challenge the definitions of volunteering presented in section 4.1. However, they also situate volunteering within a wider perspective of mission that involves not just individuals but groups across multiple spaces, and one in which the wider context of volunteering, such as the policy environment or political is a consideration.

4.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have attempted to show how academic debate over the boundaries of voluntarism and different approaches to research often offer contradictory arguments. Despite the attempts at clarity using models, volunteering is also presented as unstable and dynamic. Categorical approaches (for example, Snyder and Omoto, 2008) do not capture the nuances of lived voluntary action that is needed to advance this thesis, but do suggest an interplay between a variety of factors, from the psychological to societal without examining what this interplay might constitute. Rochester *et al*'s (2010) Three Perspective Model also posits that definitions are dynamic and blended, but to suggest '*fuzzy boundaries*' (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 22) is equally unsatisfactory as the interplay suggested is generated within a static model. Whilst defining volunteering is a valuable exercise, definitions become difficult where dynamics and instability are at play. What causes these shifts and changes is therefore vital to a fuller understanding of voluntarism.

In section 4.2 I, therefore, examined the question 'who is volunteering for?' to attempt to address the relationship between society and the volunteer. This is particularly important for understanding youth volunteering because of the interest of policy makers in volunteering, which I examined in chapter three. In exploring more closely how theorists understand who youths volunteer for, I found that some theorists suggest that motivations to volunteer have become more biographical, and link this to economic changes in society. Theorists note a strategic, choice-based model of episodic volunteering in which volunteers are less committed to organisations or causes. I problematise this, asking whether strategic volunteering is only focused on biography. Micro volunteering (Browne *et al*, 2013) for example offers a theory in which volunteers remain supportive of an organisation or a cause in small, discreet volunteering commitments. This form of volunteering is shaped by complex lives and technological advancements. In this theory, young volunteers are committed for very small periods, but remain connected in a variety of ways to return when they can. I also note how opportunities for collective volunteering remain and flourish. Religious groups and political volunteering highlight how membership re-enforces commitment but also includes a sense of how volunteers as members may expect a greater say in governance.

I conclude that the literature suggests multiple and complex definitions without fully exploring how the many facets that shape volunteering that they describe are connected, or why. If the individual volunteer is the unit of analysis, understanding how they are motivated to volunteer must come from an examination of the many kinds of connections they seek to make with their volunteering. This conclusion has significance for the research design of this thesis as I cannot assume to know the connections the participants make to maintain their volunteering or make it worthwhile. Thus, the design must incorporate an element where the participant reveals these connections themselves in practice. In doing so, the research may attend to the dynamic and nuanced nature of voluntarism described in this chapter.

5. LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICE

In this thesis I am concerned with young volunteers in community radio. There are several elements to this. There is the voluntary offer: why might young volunteers be attracted to community radio? To understand this, I examined (in Chapter Two), the split-personality context for community radio in the UK as part of the media sector and as part of the voluntary sector and found that community radio is both a commercial entity and a social cause, drawing on different and, perhaps, competing philosophies, but by being both, the community radio station may have broad appeal. In Chapter Three I agree with Kenny *et al* (2015) that similar, but competing philosophies, also define the policy context for the young volunteer. In chapter four I examined more closely the difficulties in researching volunteering to conclude that to understand volunteering one needs to examine the layers of contextual factors, and that as these are often nuanced, changing and dynamic, requiring a research design that can capture such data. The second element concerns how the organisation conducts its activities with young volunteers. If the voluntary offer concerns what takes young people to the door of the radio station (and may also contribute to keeping them there, or not), the organisational offer concerns how young volunteers acquire the knowledge and develop the understanding necessary to become established members, in this case, community radio broadcasters. How do they learn their practice from the established members of the organisation?

To understand how learning as a volunteer occurs, an examination of theories of learning in practice is necessary. This chapter begins with a brief review of the literature on learning in voluntary organisations. Two studies of volunteer learning in practice raise issues around the type of learning volunteers engage in, how organisations organise access to knowledge and what constitutes valuable knowledge.

A discussion of theories of learning through practice is undertaken, including formal and informal learning, experiential learning, self-direction theory, tacit learning and communities of practice theory, to understand how researchers have analysed and theorised learning in practice. I argue that

communities of practice theory may offer the greatest utility as it does not set boundaries around what constitutes learning but instead focuses on the relationships within an organisation that enable or disable learning.

5.1 Learning in practice as a volunteer

Fletcher (1997) suggests that learning is a fundamental aspect of volunteering: that volunteers must undertake learning to articulate the mission of voluntary organisation through the practice of volunteering. Akingbola *et al* (2010) also suggest this in a study of Canadian Red Cross volunteers: '*the process of aligning the altruistic aspiration of the volunteer with the mission of the non-profit organization involves learning*' (Akingbola *et al*, 2010: 68). Osborne (1996) in a study on training and voluntary organisations notes some of the challenges organisations face regarding volunteer learning:

- *the changing environment and the context of non-profit organisations*

- *the changing pattern of social and community needs*

- *the diversity and distinctiveness of the non-profit sector*

- *the rise of the contract culture and managerialism*

- *the importance of equal-opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices*

(Osborne, 1996: 98)

In his study of voluntary organisations, Osborne suggests that addressing these issues is crucial to the effective practice of the organisation but that to do so is a complex and difficult process for the voluntary organisation management who must recruit and train its volunteers. The Akingbola *et al* (2010) study also suggests that volunteers must be continuously trained, and that organisations must embrace training to win funding tenders and respond to societal changes. On this point, Saks *et al*'s (2002) analysis of US non-profit incomes suggest that organisations with a commitment to training and development increase revenue compared to those without the same commitment (Saks, et al.,

2002). Thus, from an organisational perspective, volunteer training is an essential component of organisational practice.

The literature on volunteer management suggests an increase in those undertaking training as part of their volunteering since the mid-1990s (Percy, 1998; Cox, 2002). Two recent studies examine young people's engagement in learning how to be community radio broadcasters in both formal and less formal ways. *Speak Up!* (Lewis and Mitchell, 2012) explored, '*listening, speaking and creative skills, and in the digital skills needed to deliver radio broadcasts'* (Lewis & Mitchell, 2014: 3), whilst the *Connect-Transmit* project (Radio Regen, 2014) evaluated training at four community radio stations to:

> *Evaluate more rigorously what is already well known anecdotally by community radio practitioners: that participation in, and learning through, community radio can boost young people's development.*

(Radio Regen, 2014: 4)

These studies attempt to understand youth volunteering as a learning experience in community radio but were limited in their approach and so failed to address questions fundamental to this thesis. *Speak Up!* was conceived to examine the engagement of young people through specific training projects at two community radio stations. Researchers interviewed young people and the management of the community radio station. Recruitment of young volunteers to the two community radio stations came through schools and the alternative curriculum service (for young people excluded from mainstream education) directly onto training courses. Despite the requirement of their attendance, suggestive of directional volunteering (Holdsworth and Brewis, 2014), young people were still conceived of as volunteers (Lewis and Mitchell, 2013). The stations involved in *Speak Up!* were different in how they sought to engage with young volunteers. Sound Art Radio in Devon followed a creative approach to training aiming to get young people broadcasting as soon as possible whilst Diversity in Barrier Breaking Communications (DBBC Radio) in Bolton adopted a highly structured approach that restricted on air access, if it offered any at all.

Findings suggest that both approaches were largely successful in their aims of teaching broadcasting skills, but by using a cross-sectional design in which young volunteers were interviewed in the settings before and after the project, the researchers failed to address several issues. For example, by not capturing the experience of young volunteers, they did not examine peer support or how topics discussed on air increased knowledge and understanding (about the local community or the nature of volunteering for instance). By interviewing young people at the setting, volunteers may have felt compelled to be positive, and so tensions and problems were not identified.

Connect: Transmit was an evaluation of youth radio provision at four community radio stations undertaken through interviews with young people and staff. It describes the '*added value'* of community radio:

> *As part of a GCSE in Media Studies, an extra-curricular activity at school, a station-based training slot, a station-based peer-led weekly radio show, and one-to-one mentoring.*

> (Radio Regen, 2014: 21)

Based on interviews with young volunteers and key staff at community radio stations across the UK, the authors identify the dual purpose of community radio was to enable young people to have a voice that is respected and relevant (ibid) and to offer a learning experience that is '*different to school'* (ibid: 22). Much like *Speak Up!*, the researchers on *Connect: Transmit* suggest that youth provision requires funding based on the need to offer qualifications and to work in partnership with schools and other youth agencies. Thus, youth volunteering is given a narrow and individualistic definition through a programme-style approach to volunteer management (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) which is not evaluated.

Both research projects identified successful cases in which volunteering in radio is linked to the expression of opinion and increases in skills and confidence. For example, the *Connect:Transmit* project interviewed Sam, a young volunteer at BCB radio in Bradford, who explained how the project

helped him develop confidence and clarity of speech (ibid). Yet neither *Connect:Transmit* or *Speak Up!* sought to understand why some young volunteers did not remain on the programme. For example, the rigours of the demands of the Future Radio course in Norwich, part of the *Connect:Transmit* project, led to a 33% attrition in those participating in a twelve week course designed with a local college (ibid). Those who left were not interviewed. No data was collected on the reasons for leaving, whether it was the structure of the training, the expectations to produce coursework or some other reason as to why they left. It is not known what might have kept these young people involved, whether they felt like volunteers or clients (Wuthnow, 1998) or whether they felt solidarity about the mission of community radio.

However, as with the volunteer management studies, there is a heavy emphasis on the training provision designed for volunteers. Hill *et al* (2009) note a gap in the literature where volunteers, especially young volunteers, are not understood in terms of the value they bring to an organisation:

> *There is a lack of information about how organisations involve, support and value young volunteers. More research is also needed into the impact that young volunteers have on these organisations.*

> (Hill *et al,* 2009: 26)

This may include for example peer learning or skills brought in from other experiences. Hill *et al* (2009) suggest that volunteers themselves can contribute to the learning of newcomers in vital but unrecognised ways. This has been addressed by several studies which explore volunteering as a learning practice rather than as an opportunity to undertake formal training (Pantea, 2012, 2013; Akingbola *et al*, 2010). They reveal how the learning relationship between organisation and volunteer is shaped by practice. Findings highlight ways in which knowledge is exchanged between volunteers to support each other's development, and reflect on the way voluntary organisations seek to dictate what knowledge is useful and how this knowledge should be accessed.

Akingbola *et al* (2010) examine the Canadian Red Cross as a '*learning environment*' (Akingbola *et al*, 2010: 68) for volunteers. Using semi-structured interviews, the researchers ask about what knowledge volunteers learn, how learning occurs, and who benefits from the learning. The participants report they learned most from what the researchers call informal practice. Akingbola *et al* (2010) suggests that volunteers learned through two means:

a) tacit or incidental learning that volunteers acquire by observing or being guided by others; and, b) learning by experience that occurs as a result of volunteers performing the required tasks

(Akingbola *et al*, 2010: 73)

The researchers suggest that volunteers learn informally using these methods, *'despite the numerous non-formal learning options and opportunities that the Canadian Red Cross-Toronto Region offers through workshops, courses, and orientation and program sessions'* (ibid: 76).

For these researchers, tacit and experiential learning are members of a broader 'informal learning' family, an approach I dispute. Though they use informal learning such as observation to compare to formal learning in workshops, the authors do not explicate tacit and experiential learning, nor do they critique the descriptions themselves. Instead, informal learning as a concept is used as a catch-all for learning that is not defined as formal, and so any learning that occurs outside of formal workshops is classed as informal. Yet as I go on to explain, there are fundamental differences in the way that experiential, tacit and informal learning are conceived of. In order to fully examine how volunteers learn, for this thesis the differences between ways of learning must be examined.

Akingbola *et al* (2010) suggest that learning through the practice of volunteering led to knowledge not contained within the training courses. Based on interviews with volunteers, the researchers describe the breath of this learning as, *'skills, knowledge and consciousness'* (Akingbola *et al,* 2010: 71) but they do not define these. Learning as a Red Cross volunteer is placed within a societal sense of solidarity

action. Issues about which the volunteers developed knowledge and consciousness include, '*awareness of poverty, learning about seniors' issues, marginalized people and vulnerable populations, and acquiring social and interpersonal skills*' (ibid: 74). That these issues were raised between volunteers and not through training courses raises questions around what knowledge organisations consider useful for volunteers. Do volunteers need to hold a fundamental grasp of the mission of the organisation or sector to perform as volunteers, or can volunteers be satisfied without this knowledge?

Yet, whilst volunteers considered that the training courses were valuable as an induction (Akingbola *et al,* 2010), practice, and peer support through practice, led to a greater understanding of the organisation, its mission, and the people the organisation seeks to help. The status of knowledge in this study is also revealing: volunteers determined what knowledge was valuable to them. That they did not privilege the training programmes and workshops suggests that volunteers valued social practice as learning – a point noted by the researchers in their concluding remarks. This raises issues about mechanisms for support for volunteers, and recognition of experiential learning as a valid source of knowledge.

In a study that examines youth volunteering and learning through practice, Pantea (2013) focuses on the relationship between the youth volunteer as a newcomer and established members, usually older people, at voluntary organisations. Pantea interviewed young volunteers about how they engaged with established members of the organisation to increase their knowledge of the organisation, and identifies three ways of how the relationship is practice:

(1) the '*special relationship'* between an established member and newcomer in which the established member is perceived as *'resourceful'* and able to help with the, '*uncertainties of the project'*, newcomers therefore, '*feel secure in making changes to their voluntary practice*' (Pantea, 2013: 162);

(2) '*teamwork*' where newcomers make '*attempts to situate* [themselves] *in inherent subordinate positions*' by negotiating with established members about status (ibid: 168);

(3) by, '*shaping notions of volunteering*' newcomers seek to avoid '*destabilizing*' the relationship but demonstrate what volunteering means to them. As one participant explains, '*You are a volunteer and they cannot oblige you to do what they like*'.

(ibid: 169)

The learning practices which Pantea (2013) identifies involve support from established members but also involves newcomers attempting to subordinate themselves as well as express how they perceive participation as a volunteer. This suggests that newcomers are in a period of flux, attempting to establish a role or gain a foothold of support from established members. Newcomers are therefore highly reliant on established members, which in this study included staff and other volunteers, and experience this flux as an individual and not as a cohort. Pantea notes that newcomers and established members, '*may hold different assumptions on the status of volunteers* [therefore] *young people cannot help but negotiate volunteer roles and rights on an individual basis*' (Pantea, 2013: 169). Yet by negotiating, Pantea argues that the newcomer risks their positive relationship with established members to establish a role they are satisfied with. Thus, Pantea suggests, newcomers must, '*assume or resist*' the organisation (ibid: 169).

Participants in Pantea's study also reflected that where there is no structure to training they are likely to make mistakes in their practice and, ultimately, stop volunteering. One newcomer, Victoria, explains that:

> *They did not specify volunteers' rights and responsibilities. There was no contract, no training on how to deal with clients. If you don't have training, you can't blame them for getting into troubles.... there was a continuous confusion on my role*

(Pantea, 2013: 170-171)

Pantea's (2013) study highlights the need for different styles of learning, where training covers how to deal with the work of the organisation, but to learn how to become a member of the organisation comes from establishing a relationship. The failure of the organisation to provide support and direction in either type could lead to the volunteer leaving.

By examining voluntary practice, Akingbola *et al* (2010) and Pantea (2013) reveal that volunteers learn informally as well as through formal training courses, and that they see the value in both. The authors raise several points of interest, including what constitutes valid knowledge and how this knowledge is formalised, retained and authorised by established members. This gives rise to questions about how the relationship between established members and new volunteers is defined by methods of training or support. These themes inform the research questions for this thesis because they point to how activity shapes learning. However, learning through practice has been theorised in several ways and an analysis of these theories is necessary. It is these theories that I turn to next.

5.2 Theories of learning in practice

In this section I address learning from a situated perspective to understand more clearly how activity shapes learning, and to consider who determines what activities are undertaken, and how. I start from the premise that is proposed by Mill (1832) and Ingold (2000) that being situated is first a matter of dwelling and practice, rather than abstract instruction:

> *The importance of school instruction is doubtless great; but it should also be recollected, that what really constitutes education is the formation of habits; ...we do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it*

> (Mill, 1832: 158)

A being who is dwelling in the world...does not encounter stones. He encounters missiles, anvils, axes or whatever, depending on the project in which he is currently engaged. They are available to him to use in much the same way as are the hands, mouth and feet.

(Ingold, 2000: 417)

Mill (1832) theorised that instruction is of benefit but it is through 'doing' that one learns skills crucial to life: one cannot learn to read or write, ride or swim without practice. Mill's use of the examples of reading and writing is not accidental: schools, bastions of propositional, theoretical formalised knowledge, rely on pupils to learn the very practical skills of reading and writing. Ingold (2000) suggests similar aspects of what it is to learn. Firstly, that, in some way, life is interpreted, and secondly that we dwell. Beyond creating mental representations of the world to explain what we see, our being in that world is an actual, social, creative, learning activity in which we extend our physical self onto objects which become, by their use, extensions of us. Representations are therefore purposive, grounded in practice. Thus, the stone in Ingold's example above has representations as a hammer, a missile or an anvil, depending on the project. These two theorists suggest that our relationship with our context defines what we may learn and how the process of learning might happen. Context shapes how we access tools, knowledge and support, and we must negotiate complexity within environments through practice – through what we choose to do and not to do, and through what is permissible or not.

What, then, is it to 'learn'? Within this debate two paradigms may be broadly identified. To learn through reflection (cognitive theories) and to learn through action (situated theories). Cognitive theories are usually psychological in nature and generally privilege the mind as the central processing unit bringing order to a chaotic world; this world we see is a representation created by our minds. To learn this way is an epistemological process and as such cognitive theories are likely to focus on the process of knowledge transfer rather than its generation and re-generation in society (Packer, 1998; Lave, 1993). Such an approach is challenged by arguments for the dynamising effect of social contact

on the individual; this distinction suggests that the mind is no sentient master but that it is also continually moulded by engagement in context and that research should address the continual dynamic between the individual and contexts.

These may be described as situated theories which explore context and emphasise social participation, although attempts have been made to reconcile the two approaches, notably Seeley-Brown (1988). To situated theorists, learning is an ontological process. They argue, *'there is no such thing as learning sui generis'* (Lave, 1993: 6) but rather that learning exists as a facet of everything we do (Billet, 2002). Within this paradigm, several approaches have been proposed, including, for example, communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Edwards, 1994; Usher *et al*, 1999; Fenwick, 2006). In this chapter I examine several approaches to understand how to interpret and theorise the experience of young volunteers learning within an organisation. By doing so I will develop a broad but detailed understanding to how learning in practice for these volunteers may be understood.

Situated theories of learning analyse social context and emphasise social participation as the method of learning. Theorists draw from examples of practical skill development as an aspect of our everyday practice, for example, blacksmithing (Keller and Keller, 1993). Lave and Chaiklin (1993) suggest that research in this area is an issue of significance:

> *It is important to reconsider the problem of social context, given the intensity of contemporary concern about relational, situated, historical conceptions of social practice and activity, the self and subjectivity, and their located everyday character.*

> (Lave and Chaiklin, 1993: i)

The focus of a situated perspective is on the relations that govern the learning process and not the mechanical process of knowledge transfer: context itself is problematized, as described by Gherardi *et al* (1998):

The adoption of a social perspective on learning… has a close bearing on the basic question addressed by research. Instead of attempting to understand what kind of cognitive process and conceptual structure is involved, such exploration seeks to explain what sort of social engagements provide the proper context for learning

(Gherardi *et al*, 1998: 277)

A social perspective is therefore concerned with how individuals develop, through participation in everyday practice, an understanding of the cultural practices of a group so that they may comprehend its knowledge, develop understanding and become members of that group (Lave, 1993). Researching from this perspective may help identify issues relevant to this thesis such as those raised by Akingbola *et al* (2010) and Pantea (2013).

By examining practice, the researcher attempts to disentangle the dynamic relations in social practice between those with authority and those without. Lave (1996), in researching how apprentices learn, concludes that the success or failure of learning is the responsibility of the '*ongoing social practice'* (Lave, 1996: 28) as established members of organisations determine what knowledge is valuable and provide the means to become knowledgeable. This does not suggest that the learner cannot exert influence but can only do so contextually. For example, McDermott (1993) examined how disabilities *'acquire'* children (McDermott, 1993: 294), arguing that context is a powerful and shaping influence on learning because of how it is difficult to resist multiple forces that organise how we act in society. For McDermott, context is a creative and dynamic force: *'context is not so much something into which someone is put, but an order of behaviour in which one is part'* (ibid: 297). Yet McDermott's conception of context includes the behaviour of the participants: they are not merely bodies performing the willing of context, but are a constitutive part, suggesting something more than the tensions between individual and context, and reflecting more on whose influence is more powerful, why, and what this influence means.

Whilst recognising that the situation in which the learner enters is an environment that is fashioned, organised and defined by an organisation's established members, analysis may also focus on how the learner attempts to become a member and identifies what knowledge is valuable to them, raising the question as to whether they can contribute to the renewal of the community through new knowledge and understanding. As Pantea (2013) suggests, newcomers to organisations may have to negotiate their position within the group to find support which may involve different forms of learning. These issues have been examined through different lens by theorists, which I turn to next.

5.2.1 Formal learning

In her study of youth community radio provision, Manchester (2013) found training primarily involves formal courses linked to funded qualifications, using a curriculum accredited through a local college and with specialist teachers (Manchester, 2013). The formal aspects of the learning she identified reflect the literature definitions. Formal learning is most likely to occur in institutions using knowledge bound in curricular form and usually taught by an individual society deems an expert. A teacher, placed in a position of authority, presides over a classroom of students moving them through a curriculum to a goal such as coursework or an examination. Though formal learning is often most associated with curricula, it does not have to be. According to Livingstone (2001) formal learning is a system that is essentially authoritarian and is replicable across cultures and in a variety of learning situations. Livingstone (2001) notes that formality occurs *whether in the form of age-graded and bureaucratic modern school systems or elders initiating youths into traditional bodies of knowledge'* (Livingstone, 2001: 21). This raises issues that Manchester (2013) did not address: that formal learning may be associated with authority and experienced differently by cultures, and that bodies of knowledge are those called so by established members of society.

These questions were addressed in a series of questionnaires with home learners. Penland (1977) explored the question, '*why do you prefer to learn on your own?*' (Penland, 1977: 32) as a way to

understand why being self-taught was a preference for some. The researcher offered ten cards to be placed in order of importance by 1,501 participants and found the most common reasons related to authority and control. The two cards ranked highest by far were, *'Desire to set my own learning pace'* and, *'Desire to use my own style of learning'*. (Penland, 1977: 3). The cost and physical effort to go to a school or college was reported as the least common answers (ibid: 4). This research, although dated but with a large sample size, tells us two things; that a 'classroom' to a learner may not be just a physical space but a representation of formalised learning, and second, that such learning may be a restriction on choices and freedoms to determine how, why and when learning occurs.

Such findings are relevant to understanding how learning in community radio may occur, especially where formal learning takes place as part of a series of activities in which different styles of learning may apply. However, formal learning is problematic for this study. In the literature, formality is a term ascribed by the researcher. How young volunteers understand formality may be different, and opinions between young people may differ. Moreover, formality cannot be examined alone; other terms are needed for other types of learning. These are examined below.

5.2.2 Informal learning

Tough (2002) argues, *'not only are we as a society (or as educators) oblivious to informal learning, we don't even notice our own'* (Tough, 2002: 6) whilst Sousa and Quarter (2003), in a study of a co-operative shop, note that participants could not identify or define informal learning easily (Sousa and Quarter, 2003: 24-25). Livingstone (1999) and Tough (2002) invoke the metaphor of the iceberg, with the part below the sea line representing informal learning, unseen and less prominent than formal learning, represented by the smaller visible iceberg above (Livingstone, 1999: 9; Tough, 2002: 1).

As a descriptor, 'informal learning' is a given by academics to learning environments that are not formal (Coffield, 2000). Given the variety of contexts to which the term is applied and lack of

definitional consensus therein, informal learning may be harder to define than other forms of learning activity (Livingstone, 2001). Perhaps due to too much focus on the single learning environment they are researching (Colley *et al*, 2003) academics have lent the title 'informal' to a wide array of learning interactions, including, '*networking, coaching, mentoring and performance planning'* (Marsick and Watkins, 2001: 25-26). Brookfield (1986) also recognises this, describing the variety of informal learning situations as '*bewildering*' (Brookfield, 1986: 147). Eraut (2000) argues informal learning as a phrase is *'colloquial'* and, *'as a descriptor* [informal] *may have little to do with learning per se'* (Eraut, 2000: 12). The disagreements do not stop when considering agency and learning relationships; informal learning may or may not involve some sort of educator: to Brookfield (1986) there are informal learning '*facilitators*' (ibid: 150) but to Coffield (2000) it is simply, *'learning without a teacher'* (Coffield, 2000: 2).

Livingstone (1999) defines informal learning as, *'any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies*' (Livingstone, 1999: 2). Livingstone here sets informal learning apart from formal learning by setting it *'outside'* of organisational, teacher-led settings. It is distinct from other learning that is also *'outside'* by the, '*retrospective recognition of both a new, significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired on one's own initiative and also recognition of the process of acquisition*' (ibid). However, in a later (2001) paper on informal learning, Livingstone revisits his definition: *'informal learning is any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria*' (Livingstone, 2001: 4). The alteration makes a clearer distinction; informal learning is, *'determined by the individuals and groups that choose to engage in it'* (ibid). Livingstone removes the locative element and instead argues the direction and power of learning does not reside outside of the group of informal learners who provide the purpose and drive. The lack of this curricula presence allows Livingstone to express informal learning as an expression of agency amongst 'groups' as well as 'individuals'.

Yet for McGivney (1999) informal learning may not involve agency related directly to a learning experience. Instead, the focus can be on another activity entirely, with learning a by-product. This has particular relevance for this thesis as volunteers may not be directly motivated to volunteer to learn but to help first. McGivney (1999) examined adult engagement within pre-school play sessions. She initially used a survey to determine type of learning. The survey discovered little evidence of informal or experiential learning. Interviews with 50 of the 300 survey respondents yielded different results. By rephrasing the question away from '*learning*' and towards, '*new knowledge or understanding gained as a result of their voluntary activities*' interviewees began to expand on new knowledge about, '*health and safety, creative play, chairing meetings, organising play events, fund raising and bid tendering*'. (McGivney, 1999: 16-17). For McGivney, informal learning went unrecognised by participants as they equated learning with formality but not new knowledge with non-formal settings. This suggests that research into learning through practice needs to account for how participants conceive of terms such as learning, and in particular how activity and setting exerts an influence on how learning is described.

Beckett and Hager (2002) argue that informal learning is more potent than formalised learning because it not only engages the mind but also the whole being, including emotions, values and kinaesthetic skills. Much like Livingstone, they argue that learning can be collegiate, '*activated by learners*' (Beckett & Hager, 2002: 115). Their initial analysis expresses a desire to explore informal learning of this kind in areas of, '*paid work and unpaid work of all kinds*' (ibid: 113). Whilst paid work is clear to define, unpaid work appears less so; the researchers suggest domestic home keeping, volunteering and hobbies (ibid). The research focus on payment offers an insight to how learning and knowledge is given a value in society, that is, how commodification confers value. Beckett and Hager (2002) suggest that informal learning is valued less by organisations who require skilled labour, therefore it is less recognised by workers who must recognise the aspects of their learning considered more valuable by employers. Moreover, they identify that tensions between informal learning and formalised learning that play out within learning environments such as the workplace through the choice of words that reflect the informal / formal dyad: including, '*attitude vs. skill*', '*character vs.*

competence' and 'education vs. training' (ibid: 6-7). These tensions highlight the limited understanding of informal learning compared to formal learning amongst their research participants – an imbalance that needs to be accounted for in research design and analysis.

Workplace learning provides the material for Quarter and Midha (2001) who explore the nature of informal learning at a worker's co-operative in Canada. The organisation itself is a democratic institution with a one-member-one vote-system (Quarter & Midha, 2001: 2). Quarter and Midha suggest informal processes were the most used forms of learning, and they identify three from their analysis:

> *(a) Learning from experience, that is, learning by doing;*

> *(b) Discussions, either one-on-one or during committees and board meetings;*

> *(c) Questions to internal and external experts and other members.*

> (ibid: 1)

Formal and semi-formal methods, such as courses taken elsewhere (formal) and internal training (semi-formal) '*ranked very low*'. (ibid: 10). Though findings from research into a single organisation may be critiqued because it is a single case bound by context and time, their conclusions remain useful to understand how members learn in large co-operatives. Quarter and Midha (2001) conclude that the success of this large co-operative (at the time of research - 1997 - it was the largest single natural food retailer in Canada) may be explained by its democratic organisational structure, where time is given for conversation and worker relationship building. This suggests that organisational type may have a strong influence on how informal learning is managed. Workers principally spoke of, '*trust* [as] *critical to the informal learning processes and particularly the willingness of the members of the co-operative to turn to internal experts'* (ibid: 7). Thus, membership confers status as someone who can rely on those with greater knowledge and an expectation that knowledge is available when needed without interfering with the business of work.

Similarly, Marsick and Volpe (1999) identify a difference between training and informal learning as indicators of formality, and link informal learning within the organisational structure with the need to deal with change and flux: '*informal learning, as opposed to training, is more appropriate to a business environment in which jobs are constantly changing'* (Marsick & Volpe, 1999: 2). They conclude that there is recognition of the value of informal learning within the organisations they researched:

> *Organisations are regarding formal training programs as only one learning tool and are acknowledging that informal learning has always been the most pervasive type of learning in the workplace.*

(ibid: 3)

Despite this, the value of informal learning to employers is reduced because it is not commodified:

> L*earning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and non-institutional. Informal learning takes place as people go about their daily activities at work or in other spheres of life. It is driven by people's choices, preferences, and intentions.*

(ibid: 4)

Informal learning therefore may be associated with knowledge that is not authorised by those who manage curricula or employers, and with knowledge transfer between peers in ways that seeks to develop a collective identity and sense of belonging. It is also located within a sense of purpose and experience. Researchers report that it occurs as other activities take place in situations where there may be little time to stop and organise a lesson, or when change is a feature of the context, and, as such, new knowledge needs sharing and applying. However, researchers also report that it is often unrecognised by those using it, or is not valued when they do.

5.2.3 Experiential learning

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is learning through reflection on practice by focusing on the context of the experience of the individual learner (Kolb, 1984). Such an approach may resist expertise as a repository of knowledge and focuses attention away from formal settings. Individuals undertake reflection on their experience as valid and valuable learning. It suggests a value for experiential knowledge as it is the experience from which theorised knowledge is distilled. This knowledge is therefore afforded higher status as it becomes more valued (Kolb, 1984).

For this thesis, the value of this approach lies in individual assessment of experience of community radio volunteering. However, expecting participants to assess their data may be complicated by the age and commitment to the research of the participants. Edwards and Alldred (2012) warn of too much expectation on young volunteers and suggest that researchers consider processes to engage but avoid attrition. Seeley Brown *et al* (1988) suggests that whilst experiential learning may be designed to be assessed by individuals it may only have a value when individuals return this assessment to an environment in which the knowledge is valued (Seeley Brown *et al*, 1988). For example, experiential learning may be used in working environments where knowledge has a marketable value for the organisation. For instance, Challis (1996) evaluates Accreditation of Prior Learning Experience as used within education for those with few formal qualifications to gain formal recognition of their experience. She suggests that whilst experiential learning is valued through the creation of a portfolio of evidence (Challis, 1996: 36), such practices may be criticised for failing to correct the disjunction between individual experience and the demands of public accreditation. If individuals are expected to be assessed against public criteria their experiential assessment will be subject to the discipline of the assessment rather than their own, intuitive assessment.

Even without accreditation, theorising as a route to understanding experience as part of the research process raises methodological issues. Fenwick (2006) suggest that rather than an understanding of experience, *'what becomes emphasised are the supposed conceptual lessons gained from experience'*

(Fenwick, 2006: 43). Fenwick suggests the remembered distillation is a caricature of the actual experience: as such new knowledge is '*static*' and fails to be representative of, '*the interdependent commotion of people together with objects and language'* (Fenwick, 2006: 43 - 44). As such, she suggests that certain forms of knowledge may be excluded based on an assessment by the learner of what experiential knowledge is useful. Fenwick (2006) calls such knowledge '*excluded bodies'* which may include, '*sexualities, desires and phantasy', 'intuitive knowledge'* and '*knowledge without voice or subject that lives in collective action'* (ibid: 45).

Fenwick's observations raise crucial issues for this research. Whilst the young participants are most likely to focus on activity they identify as learning, it is through discussion and reflection that deeper understandings are revealed. Whether young people are willing to commit to this analysis revisits Edwards and Alldred's (2010) argument above. Without commitment to a stage of analysis beyond data collection, participants may not reveal the interplay or '*commotion'* of life, as Fenwick puts it.

5.2.4 Self-directed learning

The phrase '*self-directed learning'* suggests that the central resource of learning comes from within the individual and not from an external source; that individuals who set their own learning goals and arrange the resources and schedule to achieve them are self-directed. Self-directed learning is most associated with adult education (Penland, 1979; Tough, 1979; Brookfield, 1986; Livingstone, 1999, 2001) but it has been used in the workplace (Fisher *et al*, 2001; Confessore & Kops, 1999) and formal educational settings such as schools (Corno, 1992) and university (Leach, 2000). Volunteers may use self-directed learning to achieve goals associated with tasks as a volunteer, but also learn skills and gain experience that is transferable to other environments.

Candy (1991) suggests that what constitutes self-directed learning is disputed. Firstly, that some individuals may want to direct their own learning seems not in doubt, yet the definition of self within

self-direction is contested. As Zepke and Leach (2002) note, the self of self-direction may be a universalised self, pertaining to motivation, applicable regardless of ethnicity, gender or age or class (Zepke & Leach, 2002: 208). This generalised self may assume that everyone can in some way give direction to their learning, that everyone, to an extent, can be self-motivated and organised. This perspective appears to atomise the individual, placing them on a private trajectory of learning. Taking a second perspective, Candy (1991) and Brookfield (1994) argue some learners may not want to take control of their learning but rather rely on educators and curricula to organise timings, learning aims and content. This perspective they argue does not deny self-directed learning. Instead, they suggest that the 'self' is particular to the individual, created by a historical context of class, ethnicity, gender, age, (dis)ability and opportunity. This conception is essentially political; the 'direction' of this 'self' becomes more than a self-propelled trajectory. Into the analysis comes an awareness of context, and, importantly for this thesis, what participation in that context may mean for the self-directed learner.

This second theoretical perspective can be seen in the writings of Brookfield (1986, 1994), Candy (1991) and Leach (2000, 2002). They emphasise an increasing awareness of context and its conditioning effect on the self-directed learner. For example, Brookfield (1986) suggests from his own research, *'self-directed learners appear to be highly aware of context'* (Brookfield, 1986: 44) but, *'taking control of our learning is likely to bring us into direct conflict with powerful entrenched interests'* (Brookfield, 1994: 237). Brookfield (1986) identifies self-directed learning as, *'the possession of an understanding and awareness of a range of alternative possibilities'* (Brookfield, 1986: 58) and suggests that at the heart of the decision to undertake learning a need for praxis; an assessment of what is needed personally and what is needed to provide change.

In this definition, Brookfield argues self-direction provides the appetite to perform as a *'"good" functionary'* in any given setting - as a, *'party member, employee or graduate student'* (ibid: 58). Tough (1979) in research into adult learning suggests that adults do take the initiative when it comes to self-directing learning because they need to be perceived by society as doing so. The notion here is where

learning becomes a search for understanding and sense of one's role in society. Purpose therefore appears to be given privilege over means of learning delivery. For Brookfield (1986) whilst learning technical skills from a tutor and curriculum, we may also engage in self-directed learning as an, *'appreciation of the contextuality of knowledge and an awareness of the culturally constructed form of value frameworks'* (Brookfield, 1986: 58)). Joblin (1988) locates this appreciation of context as a feature of societies with democratic ambitions in which adults are the main source of cultural construction. He cites Friere (1970) to suggest that self-directed learning is perhaps one way of understanding and challenging oppression, that, *'adults are both capable and want to be actively involved in their complex, socio-political realm'* (Joblin, 1988: 119). Self-direction is therefore claimed to represent both an appreciation of the abilities needed to participate but also a desire to understand the contextual value and function of these abilities.

Yet both Brookfield (1986) and Candy (1991) do not consider young people to be able to be self-directed learners, instead identifying it as exclusively adult territory (without prescribing when young people make the transition to adulthood). Their assumption (because they did not conduct research with children) is that young people need direction. Joblin (1988) refutes these claims and suggests that though children may be more dependent on adults in their development and learning, his observations of young self-directed learners suggest that young people can be, *'perceived as both dependent and independent'* (Joblin, 1988: 115). Indeed, Candy (1991) and Brookfield (1986) do argue adults often want direction in their learning, but that this does not take away from the central need to direct their own learning. Joblin concurs with this, but extends the concept to young people: *'children and youth can become as committed to and preoccupied with certain self-chosen activities as adults'* (ibid: 120).

This analysis resonates in volunteering in community radio which requires the development of a specific skill set (broadcasting) alongside joining an established set of volunteers (value frameworks) with the goal to becoming an established member with a strong set of broadcast skills. Whether this

can be extended to understanding the economic, social and political context in which community radio finds itself however may not be so easy to claim, particularly for young volunteers. Young volunteers may be theoretically construed as self-directed if the volunteering is motivated to learn a specific skill set whilst volunteering under the direction of the established members, lending a self-directed learner analysis to volunteering. However, research would need to examine their appreciation and learning of the context for community radio and their role within it.

The relevance of the findings of Brookfield (1986) and Candy (1991) must however be questioned in a diverse society. Both worked with successful adult learners using interviews, but their samples were not representative. Brookfield (1986) admits that there is little data on unsuccessful self-directed learners and that his own work has solely focused on successful self-directed learners (Brookfield, 1986: 43). Candy (1991) admits that research into self-directed learning overwhelmingly has focused on white and male learners, also noted by Brockett and Heimstra (1991). For a theory that debates about the nature of the self within the definition of self-directed learning, there is much to do for the claims to be understood as representative.

5.2.5 Tacit learning

Polanyi (1967) argues that, '*into every act of knowing there enters a tacit...contribution'* (Polanyi, 1967: 6) constituted of a three-step process: (1) learning takes place; and (2) is reflected upon; from this (3) knowledge is applied (Polanyi, 1967). This process assumes that an examination of what is undertaken will reveal what knowledge has been learned. However, more recently, Reber (1999) argues tacit learning is, '*independent of conscious attempts to learn and the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned'* (Reber, 1999 in Eraut, 2000: 12). Kersh and Evans (2006) define tacit learning as:

'The "hidden" dimensions of the skills and competencies that people can learn from a variety of experiences, such as formal education, family experience, informal learning and so on.'

They define tacit learning as within a non-formal framework, explaining that, *'skills acquired from non-formal learning are often tacit in nature'* (ibid: 104) and suggest that the key feature of such learning is that it can be redeployed in alternative situations (Evans *et al*, 2004). Yet Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) are more circumspect by suggesting, '*Tacit learning has so far resisted operationalization*' (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001: 811) because, as Rao (1994) argues, '*despite widespread agreement…that intangible resources underlie performance…little empirical evidence exists in the literature*' (Rao, 1994: 29). For Rao, tacit learning has been discussed abstractly and with little evidence to suggest its existence. However, a small number of studies have attempted to collect data on tacit learning using interview methods (Kersch & Evans, 2006) and observation (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001: 820).

Kersch and Evans (2006) through interviews with adult learners attempting to re-enter employment argue that tacit skills are employed without fully realising the *'usefulness or value of such skills'* (Kersch & Evans, 2006: 117) and that that recognition or non-recognition of tacit skills by others can affect confidence and self-esteem. Such recognition may lead to further '*motivated*' engagement in learning opportunities (ibid: 118). Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) used semi-structured interviews to record stories of where tacit learning '*was a success'* (op cit: 820). Their rationale was based on a study of the role of stories within organisations by Martin (1982), who suggests that stories explain, '*how things are done around here'* (Martin, 1982: 256). However, whilst stories may elicit '*unflitered*' data (Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1988: 1,394), their application as a method has not been tested within the literature as a way of accessing tacit data. Indeed, after their study, they conclude that their process became more formal, requiring focus from the researchers to, '*concentrate on those skills'* that are identified in the stories, rather than allowing the participant to express themselves, however '*imperfectly articulable'* (op cit: 825-6). They also noted other factors, including the instability of participation at the organisation, an issue for volunteering research.

The difficulty for this thesis is the lack of successful methods in recording tacit data. Where data are collected by participants, how can tacit and non-tacit learning be identified and separated, and by whom? As with McGiveney's (1999) study into informal learning, participants may struggle to identify learning, requiring researcher support and influence. As with experiential learning and the experience of Hansen and Kahnweiler (1988), the methods might need to include a great deal of reflection, perhaps guided by the researcher, as to what constitutes tacit and non-tacit, but whether young people will consent to this level of engagement needs careful consideration.

5.2.6 Communities of Practice theory

Lave and Wenger (1991) examined apprenticeships as learning through social practice. Their concept of communities of practice has achieved a great deal of academic traction since its debut. It posits that a community of practice is a group of participants who work together to undertake a project. This project may continue beyond the involvement of individual members (such as that within an organisation) with new members being required to continue the practices of the community as members. The move from newcomer to full membership is to acquire the knowledge and understanding of an established member, theorised by Lave and Wenger as, '*legitimate peripheral participation*' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 21). This process is not pre-constructed abstractly, as in a curriculum, but instead is mediated by established members who determine a newcomers practice, and in doing so control access to knowledge and resources. Thus, a newcomer begins at the edge of a community of practice as *legitimately peripheral*, and, through the practice of being a member moves towards legitimacy.

Using this approach to understanding learning in practice, theory is generated by examining the continuing social practice of the group (Lave, 1993: 26) rather than through pre-theorised categories. Analysis, they suggest, moves, '*away from teaching and onto the intricate structuring of a community's*

learning resources' (ibid: 94). By focusing more tightly on the aspects of activity researchers create an, *'uneven sketch…of what constitutes the practice of the community'* (ibid: 95):

> *This might include who is involved; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk, walk and work, and generally conduct their lives; how people who are not part of the community of practice interact with it; what other learners are doing; and what learners need to learn to become full practitioners…In particular it offers exemplars.*

(ibid)

Legitimate peripheral participation is not limited to social relations between members of a community of practice. Artefacts and technology are included in their definition as epistemological embodiments of the community's practices, suggesting that to understand a community of practice, the researcher needs to attend to access to, and use of, equipment (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Access to knowledge, whether from an established member or through an artefact is negotiated within the community of practice. Lave and Wenger cite examples where access to this knowledge is restricted, leaving newcomers *'peripherally legitimate'* (ibid: 104). Newcomers may also be ignored, called *'benign community neglect'* (ibid: 93), in which their learning is perceived within the community as a low priority. This can lead to newcomers being peripheral together to *'configure'* their learning with other as newcomers (ibid). Their peripherality leads to disillusionment, as the newcomers are unable to learn from established members to ensure their practices are legitimised.

Hay (1996) suggests that legitimate peripheral participation may be a too simplified notion, failing to account for where communities may not be accepting of different or reformist views: this is particularly difficult criticism for a theory that incorporates a role for reflexivity. Hay (1996) argues that communities can sometimes leave newcomers with, *'a binary choice of in or out'* (Hay, 1996: 92) and cites skinheads, the Klu Klux Klan and youth gangs as examples where there is little option to address issues from multiple perspectives. He advises that the focus of analysis should be on the space a learner finds to develop skills, and suggests a scenario in which a newcomer could learn by, *'playing*

with tools, materials and products of the community' (ibid: 95). How the community is instructive in its approach to this 'play' is another focus of analysis. The learner seeks, *'comments from the old-timers…any of which the student may take or leave'* (ibid: 96). This suggests a deliberate focus on practice, rather than the constitution of the community, and how newcomer practice is at the centre of the learning experience. It also suggests that the student brings value to the relationship, that through their own practice they contribute to new methods and concepts that may challenge the community but ultimately be valuable for its survival.

With too much focus on the 'community' of community practice, there may be too little critical analysis of tension within communities. Contu and Willmott (2003) suggest that, '*those interested in developing situated learning theory* [should] *emphasize the idea of practice rather than "community"'* (Contu & Willmott, 2003: 287). This serves as a warning to those researching this theory: Contu and Wilmott suggest that recent uses of communities of practice are a conservative reading focusing heavily on '*community*' (ibid: 288). This suggests that the opportunity to examine how a single community may be fractured or negotiating within itself may be missed. Whilst the warning from Contu and Wilmott is to focus on practice, this can also mean neglect. Lave and Wenger argue that, '*Hegemony over resources for learning and alienation from full participation are inherent in shaping legitimacy and peripherality of participation'* (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 42) but do not examine legitimacy deeper. Lave and Wenger note the limitations of their structural analysis. They accept that, '*...unequal relations of power must be included more systematically in our analysis'* (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 55), but fail to examine for example how different newcomers may experience legitimacy and what this might tell them. Although as suggested earlier, Lave and Wenger do address neglect with their concept of '*benign community neglect'* (ibid: 93), they argue that apprentices revert to group learning, although this is unsatisfactory as it assumes a coherent group. For example, in examining the Master Meat Cutters' apprentice, they quote Marshall (1972) whose vignette of the lonely apprentice's experience states:

The physical layout of a work setting is an important dimension of learning, since apprentices get a great deal from observing others and being observed. Some meat departments were laid out so that apprentices working at the wrapping machine could not watch the journeymen cut and saw meat. An apprentice's feeling about this separation… 'I'm scared to go in the back room. I feel so out of place there. I haven't gone back there for a long time because I just don't know what to do when I'm there. All those guys know so much about meat cutting and I don't know anything.

(ibid: 78)

Lave and Wenger do not dwell on these issues and certainly do not offer criticism of the Master Meat Cutters' understanding of welfare for the apprentice. In stating that, '*by acting as pedagogical authoritarians* [Master Meat Cutters] *can prevent rather than facilitate learning'* (ibid: 76), Lave and Wenger identify that communities of practice can control the tools needed to engage in learning practice. Nonetheless, whilst the apprentice cannot cut meat, he becomes aware of the binary that Hay (1996) highlights. The apprentice may be learning about what neglect means, his status as an apprentice, and his helplessness in asking for support or training, and how he is peripheral. Moreover, he learns this alone. Their lack of critical analysis about the nature of understanding in practice also raises the questions about how a community of practice develops new ideas and accommodates multiple viewpoints? Hay (1996) cites the example Lave and Wenger give of the Yucatec midwives who become apprentices, '*simply in the process of growing up'* (ibid: 94). In this example, Lave and Wenger fail to address the learning from the point of view of the learner: the process is not itself a transformative process in which the newcomer is given a stake, it is a formal process in which the newcomer is expected to take up the role and learn.

Communities of practice theory has analytic utility because it does not seek to impose pre-formed theory onto situations but encourages theorising from situations recognised as unique. Through legitimate peripheral participation, it provides a way of understanding learning as a process of

becoming a legitimate member, and can help articulate the difficulties in being a newcomer that Pantea (2013) also noted. The warnings of Contu and Wilmott (2003) are also valuable for this thesis: an approach that seeks to describe a community may fail to be critical, whilst Hay (1996) reminds us that the periphery might be lonely, but it is also an opportunity to observe and 'play' without affecting the serious business of the community's established members.

5.3 Chapter summary

In this section, I attempt to bring together my analysis of the variety of theories to draw some conclusions for this research project. Attention is paid in this section to the methodological and design issues that these theories illuminate.

Theories of formality, which includes informal and formal learning have been used extensively to describe the learning environment and the activities within that environment that constitute learning. These theories highlight important issues for this thesis: that a single environment can contain aspects of learning that is formal and informal (Colley *et al*, 2003) and learning can occur in environments that are unstable or changing because of the networks that share knowledge. Whilst Informal learning has been equated with learning in practice and formal learning is associated with expert knowledge (Quarter & Midra, 2001), informal learning may go unrecognised by workers and therefore might be hard for them to define (McGivney, 1999). Organisations, whilst recognising learning that is not formal, may reject the validity such learning as chaotic (Marsick & Volpe, 1999), lacking the status of formal learning (Tough, 2002; Eraut, 2000). These issues reflect the hierarchical organisation of society – formal learning may reinforce the position of those at the top through accreditation but also through not valuing the collective practice that is reflected in informal learning.

These are valuable insights for this thesis as they help shape an understanding how organisations operate to legitimise knowledge and the knowledge user. However, several methodological issues make theories of formality a challenge for this researcher. First, the learning environment is described

by pre-existing criteria, defined by the academic and not within the environment, e.g. whether a curriculum exists, the nature of the learning environment, age, focus and other activities of the learners (Colley *et al*, 2003). Criteria are applied using categories, which, as with the categorical analysis of definitions of volunteering in the previous chapter, may marginalise hidden or less visible experiences. Livingstone (2001) asks whether categories of formality are useful and so recognises this limitation, as do Colley *et al* (2003), who suggest that, '*very little learning would fit completely into either ideal type. In practice elements of formality and informality can be discerned in most, if not all, actual learning situations'* (Colley *et al*, 2003: 29). Duguid (2013) suggests that research into learning should recognise the, *'fluidity of the boundaries between, and the potential simultaneity of, the different learning types'* (Duguid *et al*, 2013: 25). Nonetheless, by taking a categorical approach in which the value of the situation is ascribed by a researcher the possibility of a richer understanding in practice may be lost.

Experiential learning offers a valuable process for learners to use informally acquired knowledge and make it useful by reflecting on practice. Theorists raise important issues around the status of knowledge and how experiential knowledge can be formalised into a portfolio and given a higher status. However, as with informal learning, such an approach raises questions around what knowledge is given a status, and who makes this decision. A concern for this researcher is that were this process adopted as a research method in which participants develop a portfolio of voluntary experiences and reflect on their value, the focus of participants would not be on experience, but rather on distilling experience for presentation within a portfolio. Moreover, the distillation of knowledge into a formal report may lead to the loss of valuable knowledge that is not included or cannot be (Fenwick, 2006).

Self-directed learning as theorised by Brookfield (1986, 1994) and Candy (1991) suggests that learners attempt to manage a learning situation by determining aspects of the learning process. As Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) suggest, the, *'political dimensions of self-direction continue to be largely overlooked'* (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991: 228) and so are worthy of academic attention. A political self-

direction theory raises the important issue of the relationship between learner and learning environment. As Brookfield (1986) found, some self-directed learners need aspects of their learning dictated. This theory has utility in how it highlights the tensions between those who manage the learning environment and the self-directed learner, suggesting such tensions are evident in, '*timings of access to resources and access to knowledge*' (Brookfield, 1994: 46). Joblin (1988) notes how young people may be considered self-directed learners, which is directly relevant to this research. Joblin also notes that the current research into self-direction is limited, and Brookfield (1994) also admits that his research has focussed on successful self-directed learners, whilst others note the narrow ethic profile in the literature. This raises the issue of what becomes of unsuccessful self-directed learners, or those who, because of the political nature of access to knowledge and resources, experience success and failure. For this research, there may also be an issue of intentionality: *'self-directed learning is learning in which the conceptualization, design, conduct and evaluation of a learning project are directed by the learner'* (Brookfield, 2012: 2615). This precise defintion may not sit easily in a learning relationship where the volunteer cannot achieve these outcomes because their focus is on voluntary action, not learning.

Tacit learning as described by Polanyi (1967) describes a form of learning that occurs without intentionality, and as such may have utility for this thesis. However, the absence of explicit knowledge, and the difficulties researchers have in operationalizing research through adequate techniques and methods, suggests that tacit learning is difficult to evidence. Indeed, as Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) note, the stories they hoped to record became more formal as the researchers sought to focus on what they identified as tacit learning. Its utility for this thesis is blunted by a lack of evidence of how tacit knowledge data may be evidenced using methods other than interviews.

Communities of practice theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) may have more utility as it suggests that established members of organisations authorise access to knowledge and resources, and in doing so inculcate newcomers using a process called legitimate peripheral participation. An examination of

voluntary activity over time to understand how inculcation works (or not) is plausible: successful newcomers move from being legitimately peripheral to legitimate through learning in practice dictated by established members. These practices may include, for example, training courses, discussions, observation of voluntary practice, and so, unlike a focus on informal or formal learning, it is the whole experience that is considered learning, not just some aspects of it. As Contu and Wilmott (2003) and others (Gherardi *et al,* 1998) suggest, the analytic focus must be on practice to engage in a critical debate about what constitutes successful learning. Moreover, Hay (1996) suggests that because of a reflexive element in which the newcomers and established members negotiate through practice, this theory, *'opens up the community to multiple viewpoints and forces the student to face the notion that his work is situated'* (Hay, 1996: 96) thereby proposing the question, *'Whose situation is it anyway*?' (ibid: 89). This question also raises the issue of context for the organisation, as an understanding of the context of their operations, and the influences that can shape that context, must also be examined. In this research, the policy and historical context for community radio stations is vital to understand how they work with volunteers, and the process by which volunteers establish themselves by acquiring the knowledge of other established members. The reflexivity of the communities of practice model suggests a method of capturing reflections on experience across a time span that can accommodate the opinions of participants as soon after their experience happens as possible.

Understanding the failure of newcomers to learn from established members, and providing a contextual understanding for this, is a gap in the literature of learning theories suggested here. Pantea (2013) reveals that volunteering for young people can be about issues of neglect and abuse, and, in communities of practice theory, newcomers whose practices are not legitimised by established members undertake a process called, *'benign community neglect'* (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 93) in which they are ignored by established members. However, this aspect of the communities of practice theory has been under-theorised (Contu and Wilmott, 2003; Hay, 1996). Thus, this thesis needs to attend to how learning may develop out of conflict as much as harmony.

6. METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN, RESEARCH PROCESS

In this chapter, I explain how an interpretive approach helped me to develop a methodology which was appropriate for the data that I wanted to gather, and the questions that I wanted to explore. I state my research questions before explicating my methodological stance. The research design is then discussed before the research process is explained. Finally, an analytic framework is discussed.

6.1 Research questions

1. What can an examination of practice tell us about young people's perceptions of volunteering in community radio in the UK?

2. What does community radio volunteering by young people tell us about formal volunteering in the UK?

3. How do young people develop understanding and access knowledge when they engage in the social practice of volunteering at a community radio station?

In framing these questions, I attempt to understand the experiences of young volunteer in community radio and relate them to wider debates around what volunteering is and what volunteering is for, as well as contribute to the literature on learning theory.

6.2 Methodology

To understand the unique experiences of young volunteers I used an interpretivist approach to emphasise an exploration of practice without the pre-judged conceptions of the researcher. Interpretivism is an approach to researching society that does not assume or hypothesise what the

researcher will find in the field but instead seeks to understand the research subject and the influence of its context (Lather, 2006). As such, the interpretivist researcher does not seek to replicate the results of research to test a hypothesis but rather recognises that replicability is not possible in a, *'complex web of relationships'* (Hammersley, 2000: 168). Moreover, by examining these relationships, the researcher may adopt a critical stance, and seek social justice, social transformation, equality or greater democracy as an explicitly stated outcome of the research (Lather, 1986). Such an approach is one way of many approaches to researching. As Wolcott (1995) argues, what matters is justification that the approach was appropriate for the research questions and the participants. This section seeks to justify my approach.

The reason for undertaking research is to collect data and to advance understanding of society by analysing these data. My methodological principles guide my understanding of what constitutes the knowledge that becomes data, and how within complex relationships this knowledge is created, held and valued, and how I value and understand this knowledge as a researcher. This also makes me reflect on what my position is within the research process, and what effect I might have on the participants. Thus, methodology for me is a guide for navigating these issues in the research process. They may be best understood as a series of strategies to help me reflect, learn and proceed with an appropriate research design.

In my approach to research the most valuable knowledge about a phenomenon comes from those who experience it. This knowledge, forged through practice, may not be written down but evident in the choices made by an individual as well as in their skilled practice. For example, radio broadcasting is as much about choosing broadcast content as creating the broadcast by using a studio in a skilled manner. Whilst such knowledge may be distilled into books, how individuals broadcast reveals not just their abilities but also their concerns and priorities, and what they are permitted (or forbidden) to do. An examination of practice may then reveal knowledge and understanding about the status of people and their situated knowledge within an organisation. This is not to deny formal knowledge but

rather to recognise the value of uncodified knowledge. Formal knowledge, held in written, video or audio form, is also valuable to research as it may provide a counter-point by offering a comparison with practice-based knowledge. Both formal and situated knowledge are partial views. As a brief illustration, and relevant to this thesis, community radio stations are legal broadcasting entities and therefore subject to law and regulation, and are therefore likely to codify a volunteer code of conduct, perhaps signed by volunteers. Nonetheless, this document cannot explain how volunteers behave on a day to day basis, merely the expectations placed upon them. By approaching the research from an interpretivist perspective, I may gain a greater understanding of how a volunteer comprehends the expectations placed on them by a code of conduct. Who writes, authorises and reviews the code and on what basis and whether other codes that are unwritten are in practice are also relevant. For the research questions, I am asking and the issues I am raising, a focus on understanding knowledge in practice should reveal more about how and why young people engage as volunteers in community radio.

In accepting the '*complex web of relationships*' (Hammersley, 2000: 168) as a formative force on the individual, I must also accept its influential role on the research participants and on me as a researcher. Data are affected by the research context. Bias represents a starting position for participants engaged in this research and so their biased response to context are data I am interested in. What data the participants provide me with will in part be determined by how I frame data collection and by their own judgements of what to tell me. It may also be that the research conditions also have an impact on what the participants are willing to reveal: participants may fear reprisal for voicing their opinion in the form of a changed attitude towards them from other volunteers. As they are likely to continue with that relationship after the research process they may judge what they say according to their future relationships, not the immediate fieldwork period.

As Wolcott (1995) notes, bias is not the same as prejudice, and can be used positively where it, '*stimulates enquiry without interfering with the investigation*' (Wolcott, 1995: 165). In my

introduction, I invoked how Wolcott compared bias to air (ibid: 163), and here I develop this. As a researcher, bias affects my relationship with the participants, what Wolcott (1995) calls an *'insider/outsider'* debate in which, *'bias requires us to identify the perspective we bring to our studies'* (Wolcott, 1995: 165). By identifying my perspective, I am being critical of my position and my influence, and by accepting I am influential, I must attend to it and use it to stimulate my argument. In this research, I was concerned with my expertise in community radio broadcasting but also my position on youth learning in community radio. My experience as a community radio worker told me that young people were engaged volunteers and can learn the skills and knowledge of broadcasting through a role in a live broadcast situation rather than an accredited training course. That I knew how to create radio and could answer questions on broadcast skills placed me in a difficult position: should I support the participants as a way of developing rapport or should I refer them to the station staff as if I were not there? Neutrality therefore became a difficult topic for me. As a teacher, I wanted them to succeed as broadcasters and I could certainly help them if asked, but as a researcher I needed data to reflect their relationship with the voluntary organisation. I could not regard the voluntary space as neutral. After all, I was keenly seeking the voices of young volunteers and this provided me with the impetus to research and study. I therefore took the position as a concerned researcher, listening and observing, aware that my research depended on the participants and that, if required, they might depend on me.

The literature on volunteering in chapter four highlights how research may fail to capture a rich sense of what volunteering means to participants because of pre-formed notions or prescriptive terms. My conclusions in that chapter are that pre-defining terms may be at the expense of a richer understanding of what voluntary activity might be described as. I wanted to avoid using terminology that may confuse or have different meanings to the participants, and this extended beyond what volunteering might be, into what learning is, much in the way McGivney (1999) concluded (see section 5.2.2). I could not assume that I shared the same meaning of key terms in this research, therefore the participants needed to express their own definitions of terms. For example, although I understood

how the literature definitions of volunteering are contested, this suggested to me I should not limit the theoretical scope in the research design of what was considered volunteering by, for example, setting questions based on literature definitions. Instead I wanted the participants to explain to me what they understood about what they did, and I wanted to reflect on how learning and volunteering was evident (or not) in this practice.

My methodological position may lead to accusations of ungeneralisability. I consider that the specific and local knowledge has value as described above within the setting, and the findings of this research will be of interest to those in the field of youth volunteering because little research has been conducted on learning through practice as young volunteers. Even with fourteen young people, a small number, I have attempted to offer broad variations of geography and setting, not in order to generalise but to show that where similarities exist, they do so in diverse settings: thus, well selected settings are relevant for research.

The next section explains how the research design was operationalised using this methodology.

6.3 Research design

The research design sought to operationalise the methodological issues related to this research. My plan was to examine multiple settings. The aim of this would be to uncover practices of young volunteers in the community radio sector, which has spread in rural and urban settings across the United Kingdom. Appendix A shows the geographical spread of community radio in the UK. By examining several settings, I thought that I could capture something of the variety of understandings of how volunteering in community radio is practiced, and what determined these practices. This raised some practical issues related to frequently visiting several community radio stations but was the most appropriate way for analysing what community radio can tell us about formal volunteering in the UK.

The research design also involved an ethical dimension given I would be working with some participants under the age of 16. In addressing these concerns, I was guided by four questions:

1. How do I involve participants in this research?

2. What is an appropriate design for working on this research with young volunteers?

3. How can I ensure I do not pre-judge or attempt to influence their reflections on volunteering?

4. How can I collect data from several places at once?

I also sought to understand the context for each community radio station by interviewing the Station Manager at each community radio station selected. This single interview supported documentary analysis of the key commitments required of community radio stations by Ofcom. By interviewing the managers, I did not seek to triangulate data from participants but rather understand the operating philosophy of the community radio station, how it provides opportunities and support to all volunteers, including the young volunteers who participate in this research. Together with the documents, a broader narrative of the context of the volunteering of the participants is possible. Data from the managers are treated in a separate chapter (Chapter Seven) from the perspectives of the young volunteers.

6.3.1 How I recruited research participants

I could not easily access the young volunteers directly and, with possible permission needed from some parents, I used the community radio stations as gatekeepers to the young volunteers. Most of the 230 full-time community radio stations are members of the Community Media Association (CMA, 2012). As part of their commitment to community media, the CMA hosts an electronic mailing list, called the CMA-L (CMA, 2015) for members to discuss issues within the community media community. It was by contacting list members via an email that I sought to engage community radio stations into the research, using a snowball sample method designed to capture self-selected participants from within a network (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Faugier and Sargent (1997) note that because they self-select to become partners, this method may also help identify participants who are concealed by other routes of accessing participants (Faugier & Sargent, 1997). For example, I might have directly asked

the CMA, who may have directed me to favoured stations. My email was a simple request for community radio stations interested in taking part in PhD research into youth volunteering practices in community radio to nominate themselves to me. I also explained that the research was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Birmingham, and that all necessary consents would be made. Ten community radio stations from across the UK contacted me expressing an interest, including the four whose participants decided to take part in the research. Through email I explained that I was specifically interested in the perspectives of the youth volunteers on their practices as broadcasters and as members of the volunteer team at the community radio station. I did not specify how many young people I was interested in at the stations at this point because I did not want the radio station to consider the research an interference should a large group of young people consent. I wanted the chance to visit the ten community radio stations, meet the young volunteers, and let them decide whether they wanted to participate.

Of these ten, eight followed through with an offer of a meeting. They were geographically spread, from Scotland to London, and were a mix of rural, town and city stations. I visited each, except one, which cancelled. This station, an Asian radio station in a large city, would have been an interesting partner. However, despite early interest, the Station Manager described via email how he had explained my research to his young presenters and that they were not interested. He would not give me permission to put my case directly to the young volunteers which was what I had requested. Whilst his response was frustrating, particularly as he would not provide further details on why I was not permitted to speak directly, I had to accept the decision. Whilst Heath *et al* (2004) note that there are, "*inequalities in status between gatekeepers, researchers and 'the researched'*" (Heath *et al*, 2004: 2-3), can lead to constraints within the research setting, as participants may be denied individual agency because of gatekeepers attempting to manage the research process I also came to understand that gatekeeping when researching with young people requires careful consideration at the outset (Edwards & Alldred, 1999), and that I cannot expect any form of justification for a decision. I had seven other stations willing to let me visit and I arranged to visit each of them.

I wanted to develop rapport quickly at each station, hoping that this would be a way to convince the young volunteers with whom I hoped to research. I did not know what to expect, or how the meetings would be conducted, except that I requested the chance to talk to the potential participants without the presence of a gatekeeper. This was because I wanted the young people to consider the research as something between me and them, and that we might discuss negative as well as positive issues related to the station. On reflection, I was very concerned that the gatekeeper might use their authority to prevent the research from taking place having heard my plans, but at the time I was focused on the young volunteers, and that their voices and perspectives mattered to me the most.

I made myself available whenever the group of young people arranged a date. The meetings were conducted at the community radio station at a time appointed by the gatekeeper, generally early evening, to accommodate the young volunteers, although one group preferred a Saturday morning. I was aware of the need for formalities which would demonstrate clarity of thinking about process to the volunteers and their gatekeepers. I produced a two-page introduction to the research which I handed to potential participants. In this document, I was careful to explain how this research would record how they experienced their volunteering and what contributed to their development (or not) as a broadcaster. I explained that the fieldwork stage might last for six months. In this document, I did not mention how the data might be recorded as I wanted the participants to contribute to finding the best way to approach this research. I recognise that I am twice their age and cannot presume I understand how they conduct their lives, and how methods of data capture might successfully fit into this. Edwards and Alldred (1999) suggest that:

> *The understandings that inform [young people's] decisions to participate in [research] are strongly linked to the meaning of the topic of the particular research project in the context of their lives generally.*

> (Edwards & Alldred, 1999: 262)

Edwards and Alldred (1999) also suggest that the strength of this interest may depend on the influence of other pre-existing meanings such as family or school and other activities as pre-existing meanings are inter-related and differ from young person to young person. Accommodating these subtle differences in meaning may offset potential attrition (ibid). I therefore wanted to talk as a group about what methods might suit their lifestyles and the needs of the research best.

In the meetings, we spoke briefly about why they volunteered in community radio and their commitment to it. This was to draw from the young people an idea of their sense of commitment to the research more than some form of data collection. It also gave them a chance to talk freely about a known topic. My rationale for this also drew on the literature on volunteering, given the participants would be 'volunteering' for my research. Davis-Smith *et al* (2002) suggest that young people volunteer because they find volunteering an enjoyable process. Resonating with Edwards and Alldred's (1999) theory that young people locate meaning within their existing daily practices, Davis-Smith *et al* (2002) found young people conceive voluntary activity as part of an ongoing community-based process, rather than as an isolated activity. Their participants did, '*not see themselves as engaged in volunteering, but rather as in helping the community*' (ibid: 23). If young people may view volunteering as part of a social framework, volunteering to participate in my research may follow similar principles. The research topic and its methods should be something participants understand, '*within the context of their lives generally*' (Edwards and Alldred, 1999: 279). It should be something participants may enjoy doing that has some benefits to them.

After the initial discussion about volunteering in community radio I spoke about the research. I began from my experiences and explained my motivations, and why their voices were crucial to me, and why the findings of this research might be important to community radio. I also explained how I needed their input on the most appropriate way to record their experiences. We discussed the pros and cons of using sound, interviews, observation. We debated interviews, possibly using the phone or internet (Skype), but arranging these, and keeping to meetings, might prove difficult. Phone conversations

were also difficult to record. Observation, which was also suggested at each meeting, was practically difficult. I had seven groups of young people at communty radio stations across the UK, but my driving (and one flight to Scotland) between them for these initial meetings meant that future visits would be expensive and time consuming. From this experience, I decided to select four or five groups if they all assented to taking part, based on the rationale of location and the percieved commitment of the groups. Observation also meant I might be asked to assist (rather than the usual station support) and so presented complications I hoped to avoid. I explained to the group how my abilities as a radio producer might be attractive to them, but also how it might affect their relationships within the station, which might continue long after the research. As a method, I wanted some way in which the young people could record data themselves, without my interference. At these meetings we spoke about recording a diary using the radio station equipment. The advantage of this was that it could gather a great deal of data but the disadvantage was that it would be undertaken at the station, which were busy places but also the ones they were writing about. The possibility of interest or even interference from other station volunteers or staff was greater at the station than elsewhere.

The main point I took from these meetings was that the young volunteers did not want to undertake onerous tasks as they already had busy lives. They wanted a data collection method they could complete themselves in their own time and words, but also wanted regular dialogue with me. I suggested to each group that a diary method might be the most appropriate method. This change reflects the Edwards and Alldred (1999) point about fitting into the lifestyles of young participants. A variety of safeguarding issues, such as privacy from the organisation and from each other and from the public were discussed. Some of the reponses in my field notes were, '*I'll fill it in at home'* or '*I'll do it on the bus'* to avoid prying eyes or feeling uncomfortable.

Three stations at this point did not continue with the process. Their reasons differed. The first was an organisational decision. The community radio station was awarded a large fund for working with young volunteers and wanted to focus on that. I did not discover whether this was an agreed decision

with the young volunteers who seemed genuinely keen to be involved in the research. The group in Scotland decided that the geographic distance was too far: after one visit I was inclined to agree given that I would be visiting on a regular basis. The participants at the third community radio station, a group of five, decided as a group against joining the research. They considered that the research was too much to undertake given their commitments at school for exams, which they would be taking at the end of the fieldwork stage. I had not considered how the exam period impacts on young people at a very specific time, but also in the lead up to that time for revision.

I was satisfied with the fourteen young volunteers at four community radio stations who elected to participate because they gave me the geographic spread I hoped for, and they were committed to their community radio programmes. Fourteen participants across four stations seemed a managable number because, I calculated, one monthly meeting would be possible. I was also not seeking to generalise from their experiences and so did not seek to compare the experiences within a cohort, but rather look at what they did as their interpretation of volunteering. However, I only recruited white participants, which was a source of frustration. Meetings at two community radio stations were with ethnic minority volunteers, but these stations had declined to take part, meaning I could not add a perspective I was keen to examine. I did return to the four stations to identify more ethnic minority recruits but this proved fruitless. As with the station manager at the ethnic minority station which declined to participate in the meetings, without a clear reason for not taking part, I cannot fully understand why I was unsuccessful at recruiting ethnic minority participants.

At the meeting with the young volunteers, I left them not only with a copy of the introduction to my research, but also with informed consent forms. I provided both electronic and paper-based forms as requested, and asked them to either forward the forms to me, or I would collect them in the next meeting when we would discuss research design and agree dates to begin fieldwork. By leaving the forms I attempted to avoid placing the volunteers under duress to participate from either me or from

the management at the organisation. The volunteers could inform me, via email, if they did not wish to take part, or, by not completing the consent form, they could not take part anyway.

At this point, participants and their community radio station, assigned codes to anonymise them, appeared as this:

Name	Location (2011 census)	Number of young participants	Age	Gender	Volunteering frequency
Grape	Small city (approx. 300,000 population)	2	Both 17	2 female	Weekly
Cherry	Rural (approx. 20,000 population)	5	All 14	1 female 4 male	Weekly
Apple	Large city (approx. 470,000 population)	3	All 17	1 female 2 male	Weekly
Plum	Town (approx. 50,000 population)	4	One 14 Three 17	4 male	weekly

Table 8: The Participants in the Research

My next task was to work with these groups to refine the research design and in doing so, provide the participants with more understanding of the ethical issues involved in this research.

6.3.2 Informed and ethical consent

In this section I reflect on how as a researcher I am placed between the institution that sponsors my research and the participants, and consider how consent can be informed and ethical. I wanted the participants to understand how my ethical stance involved not just safeguarding but recognised the value of their contribution through how we researched together. In research with a small number of participants at each location, and over a long period for fieldwork, an ethical approach that builds

relationships is a necessary component of successful data collection. Therefore, the participants were not repositories of data but people whose involvement reflected their capabilities as social actors to enhance the research. Thus, they would not only be informed about the research but as they would contribute to creating the research they may achieve more understanding about the ethics of their participation (Parsons *et al*, 2016).

Informed consent was a necessary part of the ethical clearance required of the University of Birmingham ethics committee, described by the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (2012):

> *Research staff and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.*

> (ESRC, 2012: 2)

Informed consent is necessary from an institutional perspective, particularly when working with children, as it sets out standards for research based in policy and literature reviews (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Alderson & Morrow, 2012). Homan (1991) suggests that explaining research in terms to be understood by young participants may be difficult to achieve because informed consent must achieve a dual purpose of offering detail required by ethics committees and simplicity required by participants, what Homan calls the, '*peculiar balance of purposes'* (Homan, 1991: 36). Homan argues that the demands of institutions to explain research is based on a first principle of avoiding litigation and not safeguard participants, and that in practice an ethic of care has more utility ahead of institutional paperwork. For Homan, the researcher should strive to engage participants in a way that is more meaningful to the participants. Funding institutions have a balance of responsibilities, including to themselves and their funders, as well as the researcher and participants, leading Alderson and Morrow (2004; 2011) to argue that informed consent remains an important component of ethical care as it assures participants of the institutional provenance of the research. This was particularly important for this research, given the participants were young and their community radio stations also

have a duty of care, but also because of the commitment of six months meant they needed to be assured that their time would be well spent. The issue of informed consent however remains contested, as Heath *et al* (2007) suggest:

> *Despite their best intentions, gaining a measure of informed consent is rarely, if ever, a straightforward process, and it is indeed questionable as to whether it can ever be genuinely achieved, not least because of the subordinate position of children and young people in relation to adult researchers and gatekeeper.*

(Heath *et al*, 2007: 414)

My ethical approach sought to address the issue of subordination as identified by Heath *et al* (2007) by engaging the participants in the process of research design. Already in the initial meetings at seven community radio stations, a diary method was proposed as a potential method and the next meeting with the four groups would refine what a diary method meant.

I designed a questionnaire that, whilst satisfying the university and funders, also provided some simple questions that, if answered in the affirmative, meant that there was informed consent. Key terms and words were explained. These questions were:

1. Do you know you do not have to participate in this research?

2. Do you know you may withdraw at any time?

3. Do you know who to contact regarding the research?

4. Do you understand the stages of the research in which you may participate?

5. Do you know do you know where to get help with collecting data?

6. Do you know what 'private' and 'confidential' means?

7. Do you know what the risks and benefits to taking part are?

In keeping with my position that the participants were capable of making their own decisions, I decided to seek consent from the volunteers alone, and not their parents. I did not therefore ask for a parental signature nor ask the volunteers to show their parents the paperwork, although of course they could if they wanted to. However, I also needed to ensure gatekeepers were satisfied that consent from the volunteers was enough. Three stations explained that they were happy for the participants to write about their voluntary activities as community broadcasters without asking parents. However, in one of the community radio stations, the gatekeepers decided to ask for parental permission using their organisational processes. This gatekeeper recruited young volunteers from the local school he taught at. This decision was to ensure that the relationship between the station and the school would not be strained by following my process. The volunteers therefore signed consents for me, whilst the radio station and school wrote to the parents of the participants explaining their involvement in my research.

6.3.3 Methods

Methods were devised with the participants in four meetings, one with each group. I first visited Grape, then Plum, then Cherry then Apple. I kept notes on these visits and use them here to reveal the discussions. The participants focused on two connected subjects. First, setting parameters to the researcher and researched relationship. Second, the choice of method and how it would be used by the participant. These subjects converged as the participants looked for a way to record data with the most support from me, whilst I looked for a way to ensure I could avoid too much of an influence on their learning of radio.

The notes in my research diary reveal several discussions in which I attempted to set limits of my involvement with the participants volunteering. My intention for doing so relates to my methodology: I was a radio producer and I did not want the volunteers to learn from me but rather I needed them to detail the conditions of learning within their organisation. These discussions often related to

support, either for their radio skills or for involvement in the research. Two participants from Grape talked with me about when the diary would be completed by them and how it would be shared with me. They asked whether I would receive the diary after six months or in instalments, as I visited to interview them monthly. The participants were keen to ensure they were correctly collecting data, but they also wanted my opinions on their diary entries to support their broadcasting and to use me as a radio tutor when I visited. I explained how I wanted to understand their relationship within the community radio station and how my presence and knowledge might affect this. My preference would be as far as possible to avoid being involved in their volunteering, but I did accept that they would ask me questions and in doing so they would expect an answer. This placed me in a dilemma. I did not wish to appear discourteous given their commitment to me but how could I evidence my commitment to them without teaching them, given that was their request? I explained that I could not teach them on visits as they asked, but that I might be able to answer questions from them where they could not get answers from within their community of practice. I remained concerned about this, but in attempting to recruit, avoid attrition and appear as myself, I accepted that there might be times when I needed to be flexible and perhaps answer a question of theirs – if the staff and other volunteers at Grape could not help them. I considered this to be a reasonable compromise. However, even this attempt to satisfy all parties led to difficulties. After a few months, I answered a question from the participants at Grape that their Training Manager could not answer. The Training Manager subsequently described me in unkind, sarcastic terms to the participants as, '*your new best friend*' when they explained I had answered their question and they could now apply this technique. A few words generated the interference I was trying to avoid, although their blogs also reflect on a poor relationship with that member of staff before (and after) the incident. In subsequent conversations with the participants at the other stations I tried to avoid answering questions, though I was asked frequently for support. Instead, my tactic was to focus on why the community did not answer the questions. This raised more issues on the relationships between young and old, established and newcomers, staff and volunteers, which was revealing. The tactic revealed existing dynamics,

suggesting that I needed to reflect and take care with supporting my participants, but that if research relationships are built on how issues are handled, as the researcher I would sometimes be placed in a difficult position.

My approach to choosing appropriate methods was to take the diary method to each group and let the discussion develop from there in order to foster a group dynamic. This worked, and participants spoke about how the research could be situated within their lifestyles. At Plum, one participant suggested a paper and pen diary would be frustrating because they would need to remember to take it out with them on the day they volunteered, which they were unlikely to do. They would not return home for it because they volunteered straight from school, and they wanted to complete the diary on the bus, before they got home, where they had other activities planned. This level of examination from the participants of how precisely the research might be accommodated suggests that a successful method very much needed to fit into their lifestyles. At Apple, the participants also considered a paper diary another item to remember, and forget. One participant from Plum suggested that the diary might get lost in his bedroom and never be seen again.

We debated issues about using a diary that could be completed online – like a blog, and discussed how this would need to be private, so it could not be seen in public, except by me, to allow for the participants to feel free to write what they wanted and about whom they wanted. The participants liked the ideas of using their phone or computer to complete the blog, and were used to logging into computer systems. I agreed to examine how blogging had been used in other research projects with young people, and to set up trial blogs for them to use.

Blogs seemed to be a method that suited both our purposes. As well as fitting into their lifestyles, I could access data iteratively, it would be transcribed already, and I would maintain contact with the participants to help rapport. Yet the literature suggested caution. The concept of keeping a diary may be familiar to participants, but understood and practiced in different ways. Diaries may suit an interpretivist approach that sought to understand the nuances of experience but participants record

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their own data in a way that suited them, so I should not expect a standard or uniform response. Kaun (2010) found that despite guidance, participants engaged with the research method in different ways to suit their pre-existing meanings (Kaun, 2010), including one diarist who copied a personal diary and others who used, '*Dear Anne'* or '*Dear Diary'* or even wrote headings to a perceived public (ibid: 141). My participants responded in individual ways, using the blogs to write and upload images and documents, but also using the comment function to continue a discussion along a theme. Sandy at Plum posted nine times but commented a total of 21 times underneath these posts, often in response to something he had previously said. Sandy returned to his blog to continue posting, but rather than edit the post he continued in the comments box. Others simply wrote a blog each week.

Blogging would occur weekly after the radio broadcast and was the responsibility of the participants. Interviews would be much less frequent but my responsibility to arrange. Blogs offered the chance to iteratively engage with the participants as they blogged, developing rapport, whilst interviews took their lead from the topics discussed that month. Hessler *et al* (2003) reported that participants seemed to relish the chance to engage with the research through email conversation with the researcher, and the method enabled an enjoyable physical process as well as encouraged deeper, more reflective data. However, Hessler *et al* (2003) warn of a fine line where, in crossing, meant the researcher may become an agony aunt. Such a position they suggest may contaminate data. I avoided discussions and instead focused on asking more questions, which prompted responses as the blog emailed the participant to tell them of my comment. This method did gather more fine grain data, although not every participant responded to my questions.

Blogs can accommodate multiple types of data. I envisaged the possibility of not just text but images and audio from broadcasts as contributing to my fieldwork. The participants uploaded images, documents (play lists and planning documents) as well as blogged, an experience Kaun (2010) also found (Kaun, 2010). The chance to move beyond text enabled participants to redirect me to something produced or written elsewhere on the Internet and encourage those who did not want to type out a

diary entry to contribute in another way. In this sense, as a method blogging is inclusive, "*a commitment to 'beyond text'* [which] *does not imply an absence of text, but rather a pluralism of tools alongside conventional text*" (Beebeejaun *et al*, 2012: 44). A participant who was not keen on writing but keen on speaking (and these were radio volunteers) might find it easier to record and upload their voice. Further support came through the choice of software, WordPress, as it was compatible with accessibility functions such as screen reading software. This made WordPress software World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliant, which means they are committed to access regardless of ability, as stated by the W3C founder: '*The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect*' (Berners-Lee, 2015: n.p). Such planning however still required participant commitment. One participant from Cherry revealed their dyslexia and agreed to record audio at his studio and upload this to the blog. However, he did not do this and instead waited for the monthly interview in which he was vocal. The interview recorded the participant just as he could record in the radio studio. However, my research diary records that the personal contact and dynamic from the interview made a difference to this participant, who was animated in discussions, moving it between topics including school support, local politics, transport and youth services provision.

There were other drawbacks to using blogs to be aware of. Blogs are usually public, and available on the Internet, which requires a paid Internet connection. This raised issue about how inclusivity and private blogs were. Electronic platforms were expensive, and I stood the blog-hosting cost, but I relied on participants to have access to the Internet. Whilst their community radio stations could offer them this the participants preferred blog elsewhere. Without a computer at home they might have little chance to blog. Indeed, the computer of one participant at Grape broke and for a month she completed her blog at Grape, not at home. She explained that:

I wrote a really detailed reply to this but my computer decided to crash so it got deleted, grrr!

I'm going to summarize the most points because I don't have the energy to write it out again,

sorry, technology and me are not the best of friends.

She was not entirely happy with this given the dynamics between her and the Training Manager, and discussed using a pen and paper at home as an alternative, but settled on using the station's computers, '*as far from* [name] *as possible!*'

To assure the participants of confidentiality I needed to ensure the blogs were password protected to maintain the privacy of the participants, achieved by adding password protection software to the websites. The first page of the website therefore asked for a password. I maintained a main password to ensure that I could also access every blog should problems arise. To further ensure privacy I generated passwords for the participants, so they would not use a password that may be familiar in their friendship and family circles. I also decided to host them on my own purchased web space. This issue was not found in the literature, but the terms and conditions of WordPress allowed them to delete or suspend websites for a variety of reasons, including use of unacceptable content (WordPress, 2012). Whilst I did not expect participants to use unacceptable content, the loss of control and deletion of data would be catastrophic to the research. Hosting the blogs on my own web space allowed me to use codes for the participants rather than their name, for example http://www.kyneswood.com/21x. This meant a web search for the participant's name or email address would not reveal the location of the blog online.

The final design involved participants using individual blogs designed by me, and group interviews at monthly intervals. This meant creating fourteen websites, each hosted on my web space, and which each participant could redesign to claim ownership, which they did. Some added images of themselves to create banners, and added templates to re-design the whole website. This shows a high degree of technical knowledge about blogging software, but also highlights how the participants took control of

their blogs. A sense of ownership was reflected in the participants' blogging because those who did not re-design their website blogged the least.

Finally, the blogging began with a single question: tell me about what you do at [station name]. I deliberately avoided contested terms such as volunteering, learning or authority, although these were the main themes of interest. I planned to follow a similar open structure for the interviews, beginning each with: '*so tell me, what has been going on?*'. My role would be to focus the conversation, using the blogs and the interview topics. By leaving questions open, I hoped that the volunteers would begin to describe their own definitions and explain practices using their own language.

6.4 The fieldwork process

This section addresses what data I gathered, how it was gathered, and from whom. The section begins with four vignettes of the community radio stations and the volunteers who participated in the research. These vignettes contextualise the volunteering of the young people and contextualise the community radio stations within the policy framework for community radio as detailed their mandatory key commitments to social gain (section 2.5.1). I then review issues raised during the fieldwork process and how these issues affected the collection of data.

I do not reference the Key Commitments documents that sit with Ofcom to maintain the anonymity of the community radio stations that took part, although quotes are used where I have felt the wording is valuable to this thesis. These quotes have not been traceable using a web search.

6.4.1 Grape

Grape was established in the mid-1990s, broadcasting first on temporary licences and since 2001 as a fulltime FM radio station. It is in a northern city that has a population of over 300,000 (Census, 2011), most of which are non-Christian. Its Key Commitments documentation are to broadcast mainly in

English with some other languages, '*led by the community…as appropriate*'. A variety of programming includes music and speech that reflects the, '*cultural diversity of the local communities'.* Grape committed to involve 40 new volunteers from non-traditional learning backgrounds and marginalised communities each year in radio skills training, '*integrating basic ICT, numeracy and literacy skills*', plus eight placements for students per year. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including on air advertising, but mainly from grants and tendered project work. The building that houses Grape is in the city centre and has an open plan office, several well-equipped studios and two meeting rooms. Staff and volunteers are together in the open plan office. Management are very experienced within the community media field. The training staff member has a background in youth work. Young people are not represented in the governance structures of the organisation, although other older volunteers are.

Two volunteers at Grape agreed to participate in this research. Tina and Olivia were seventeen years old and volunteer within a youth group at Grape that pre-records broadcasts during the week which are then broadcast by computer on Sunday evening when the station building is closed. The aim of the youth group is to develop a shared identity for the young volunteers. Unaccredited training is offered to all young volunteers. This involves the basics of using a broadcast studio and presentation techniques. Most studio skills learning occurs through practice, with staff and other volunteers acting as a reference point when needed. Reviews of broadcasts are not undertaken by staff so broadcast development is ad hoc.

Tina and Olivia have volunteered for one year. Olivia undertook work experience and stayed, recruiting Tina to share the broadcasting duties. They are left alone to record their radio broadcasts. The times they visit the station depend on what else is occurring in their lives. During the research they were also volunteering at several other places, working part time jobs, and studying for A-levels. They however continued to broadcast, citing it as more important than other volunteering.

6.4.2 Cherry

Cherry is a newly licenced community radio station in the rural south west. It represents several parishes in its broadcast area. It is volunteer run with no paid staff and uses a small facility rent free from a supporter. Cherry has committed to training at least fifteen young volunteers each year to enable them to broadcast, recruited from local schools through a teacher, who is also the Station Manager. This teacher uses the BBC School Report with pupils to explore interviewing and reportage at school to encourage them to try community radio. Two hundred people broadcast at least one programme on Cherry in its first year on air. There are no young people involved in governance at Cherry.

Training at Cherry is unaccredited. The BBC School Report qualification is described by the teacher as a *'hook'* to get the young involved in community radio. In two years since launch over 50 pupils have tried broadcasting and at any one time around ten have remained to broadcast regularly.

Five of these young volunteers, all aged 14, consented to participate in this research. They attended the teacher's school and broadcast in pairs: Michael and Eric, Ken and Alicia, with Martin broadcasting solo. Because they live in different villages they broadcast together during the school lunch hour. The school is less than a five-minute walk to the community radio station.

6.4.3 Plum

Plum has been broadcasting since 2008 in a small town in the middle of England with a population of around 50,000 (Census, 2011). It is based in a business park on the edge of town. Plum's key commitments state that it seeks to work with under-represented groups such as the young, elderly and the unemployed. It has several paid staff who manage Plum and generate income through advertising, as well as through contracts with colleges to provide accredited training to young people in ICT and numeracy skills. In their Key Commitments, Plum aim to train 25 young volunteers per year.

Volunteers broadcasters are not trained through an accredited programme but instead are given one-to-one tuition by other volunteers. There are no young people involved in the governance of Plum.

Four young volunteers from Plum took part in this research. Sandy and Yannick, both aged 17, were volunteers who broadcast together and were best friends. Nigel was 17 and approached Plum to offer to build new studios as a volunteer to which the management consented. He is a member of the team that provides training support to other young volunteers. Norbert was 14, a newcomer to Plum, and broadcast a request show.

6.4.4 Apple

Apple has been broadcasting since 2009. It is based in a large city and is licenced as an under 25s only community radio station, which means those aged over 25 cannot broadcast. It is based in a community college having converted a former classroom into three sections: studios, manager's office and open plan office. It has two full time members of staff: a Training Manager and a Station Manager. It also recruits volunteers to temporary paid positions to support individually funded projects.

Training is not accredited but has been designed in house by the Training Manager. It is a mix of one to one and group work with pathways to support young volunteers into positions across the station, including production, news and broadcasting. Young people aged over 18 are involved in governance at Apple, including holding board positions such as Head of Volunteers. During fieldwork, the station manager announced he was leaving and the new station manager was to be a former volunteer who became Head of Volunteers. She began to oversee several changes at Apple, including a closer link to the college to offer accredited training.

Three young people participated in this research. Alicia was 17, a media student who broadcast a dance music show; Xavier was also 17 and a club DJ whose volunteer broadcasting also promoted his nightclub DJing; and Nate was also 17 and a film director who used Apple to broadcast a chat show.

6.5 Fieldwork review

The fieldwork took around 12 months between recruitment and the last blog post on September 9th, 2013. The initial six months in the period up to the A level exams in June was extended by the participants who continued blogging, despite knowing fieldwork had ended and I was no longer interviewing. After a period of no blog posts during the summer, two participants resumed blogging in September to provide me with what they considered to be valuable updates. Fourteen participants produced 187 blog posts and comments about their 115 broadcasts and volunteering. This was supplemented by twenty-one group interviews across the four radio stations that were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants also contacted me via Facebook and email. Appendix B is a comprehensive list of the data collected. All fourteen participants undertook the monthly interviews and all remained with the research during the fieldwork stage.

The blogs yielded a great deal of data about voluntary activity but time spent blogging was inconsistent. Participants were asked to blog whenever they participated in a broadcast, but the fewest entries was by Norbert at Plum who posted six times but broadcast over twenty times, and the most was Tina at Grape who posted thirty-seven times. Tina covered all instances she visited Grape, not just her weekly show, a method adopted by Sandy and Yannick at Plum and Nate at Apple. The participants at Cherry posted nothing for the first month because they could not broadcast due to school staff being unable to chaperone them to visit Cherry during school lunchtimes. Instead, group interviews detail their complaints about the high frequency of staff cancelling the visit to Cherry at short notice. These issues reflect how, despite my attempts to be clear about what I needed from the participants, most were wedded to blogging only when volunteering occurred but not when it was cancelled or they did not attend. I should have asked for a weekly blog whatever happened – which would have contextualised the study further, rather than a blog to describe the volunteering visit.

The second method of group interviews supplemented the process as an alternative form of data collection. The interviews were principally led by the participants and were particularly useful for the participants who did not blog much. For example, the participants from Cherry in the first month because of a lack of supervision undertook two interviews instead, whilst Norbert interviewed for over an hour on multiple occasions but blogged less frequently, apologising that he didn't have the time. Interviews allowed participants to express group frustrations that had been revealed on an individual basis in the blogs, often explaining in greater detail the historic genesis of an incident. For instance, at Grape, Tina and Olivia explained the historic context of their poor relationship with the Training Manager, and situated this within a broader discussion of the treatment of young people at Grape. In their blogs by contrast, they focused on specific incidents without that context. Interviews therefore created an opportunity for greater depth and analysis from the participants.

The fieldwork period was designed to end by July 2014 to coincide with the exams and the end of the school year. Participants concluded their involvement in different ways. I sent emails of appreciation to all participants, and had also thanked them at the final group interviews. Participants gave up blogging at Cherry as agreed and continued their volunteering but others stopped volunteering in community radio during fieldwork. This was for different reasons. At Grape, Olivia went travelling around the world; at Apple, Xavier and Ellie left in June after their exams to pursue other commitments; at Plum, Sandy and Yannick had already left because of an unresolvable situation. Tina remained at Grape, Nigel at Plum and Nate, keen to remain at Apple, took a holiday during which his broadcast slot was given away permanently not temporarily, after which he was told he could not broadcast unless he undertook the accredited training. These last blogs were reported in September. This meant a twelve-month fieldwork period, with three months for recruitment, nine months for blogging and six months for interviews. Blogging was valuable because the method was in the hands of the participant. The September posts by Tina and Nate contained important data about their volunteering. In particular they reflected the impact of policy on their community radio stations and therefore on them. This raises the issue of fieldwork timescales in interpretivist research – context is

not always a fixed period, and there must be flexibility built into the design that can be operationalised by the participants to account for data they consider valuable. For the following period to Christmas 2013 I transcribed the audio from 22 semi-structured interviews, and downloaded the blog posts into PDF format to prepare to analyse the data. This is the subject of the next section.

6.6 Organising and analysing the data

Documents of the verbatim transcribed interviews and blog posts and comments were input into Nvivo 9 digital software, which enables researchers to organise data by coding text in documents and then analyse codes from across these documents.

I used Framework (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) designed specifically for social policy researchers because of a, '*persistent requirement in social policy fields to understand complex behaviours, needs, systems and cultures*' (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994: 173-174). Framework is not a '*mechanical process*' but instead, '*relies on the creative and conceptual ability of the analyst to determine meaning, salience and connections*' (ibid: 177).

Framework identifies five key stages:

1. *Familiarisation*

2. *Identifying a thematic framework*

3. *Indexing*

4. *Charting*

5. *Mapping and interpretation*

(ibid, 178)

These stages allow for re-working of data as new information and theories emerge. My approach to the data required a familiarisation stage: whilst I had transcribed the interviews, I had not had a chance

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to examine the blog posts in detail. The iterative way the data had come to me, and the interviews in the settings, had begun to make me think in terms of interpretation, and about the learning theories from which I could draw, but I needed to understand the data by drawing some of the key themes. I first spent time reading the data without coding.

I then began to free code, identifying words relevant to the thesis: '*volunteering*' (51 times), '*motivation or motivated*' (100), for example. I also began to look for words and phrases that were relevant the research questions: '*frustrations*' (61), '*rules*' (46), for example. Where words or phrases were used by the participants that were a near or equivalent word, I added these within the code. For example, '*authority*' (67) also included '*authoritative*' and '*telling me to*' and '*Broadcasting*' (116) included '*working together', 'partner', 'interviews'*. Using this process, I checked data twice.

I was beginning to understand what issues were important to the participants. This led me to stage three and four of Framework, where I began re-reading through the coded data, a process of re-familiarisation, but with the added dimension of beginning to think about these themes and their relationship with each other. For example, I noted under volunteering there were twelve references to being '*treated differently*' from other volunteers, and under '*authority*', volunteers were mentioned as much as staff. Under '*broadcasting*' were references to learning in practice, such as support from fellow volunteers. The number of these links highlighted how participants focused on the relationship between themselves and the organisation, and the incidents in which there were harmony, or conflicts or tensions, to develop their ability to broadcast.

Finally, from analysis of these links a series of themes emerged from which I could begin to organise the data to answer the research questions. These were:

- How motivations to volunteer changed through participation as a volunteer;

- The commitment of the participants to community radio;

- How community radio was used to connect to civil society;

- The participants' definitions of volunteering in community radio;

- How learning was concerned with participation and not training;

- How they needed the support of the organisation to learn;

- How that support came from discussions about developing skills;

- How much the organisation sought to organise their practice;

- That without organisational support they felt helpless and neglected;

- That without organisational support they often directed their own practice;

- How learning without the support of the organisation was slow;

- How neglect prompted reflections on the power and authority of the organisation.

These themes structured the findings chapters to answer the research questions set out at the start of the methodology chapter. I judged that these themes suggested that communities of practice theory and legitimate peripheral participation (section 5.2.6) had the greatest utility for analysis. Data revealed that the participants were concerned with how the established members legitimised or peripheralised their practices, effectively managing their volunteering through approving or disapproving of how the participants made radio. Data also how young volunteers saw community radio as a transformative opportunity to create and connect to people outside of the station, but from the periphery of the organisation's membership this meant they relied on their own efforts. The participants understood the aims of community radio as a force for not just minority voices but also for connecting these voices in civic society, using it to directly connect peer groups to issues of interest, for example. Three participants reflected on the impact of policy on community radio stations. Learning through practice therefore came to be about a deeper understand of the contextual factors that shape individual success.

6.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have explained how the influence of my interpretivist methodology placed the opinions of the young participants in this research at the centre of my research design. I sought to

understand their experiences as individually unique and contextualised by the setting of their voluntary practice. I attempted to design a research project that makes their private lives a matter of public interest. The approach to research design highlighted my concern for participant involvement in design, but also an awareness of the needs of young research participants. This thinking was based in the literature (Edwards & Alldred, 1999), as was the approach to my ethic of care and understanding of informed consent (Heath, *et al*, 2004; Hill, 2005).

A careful strategy involved several stages of recruiting gatekeepers, face to face meetings and, once for groups had been selected, methods planning. Interviews with the Station Managers provided contextual information on the philosophy of the station and how it engages with young volunteers. The concept of an electronic research diary, or blog, enabled participants to engage over a long period, and in a way and during times that suited their lifestyles (Edwards & Alldred, 1999), although metrics for time spent blogging were not collected, and future projects should consider this. Group interviews developed rapport, created an alternative space to deepen debate and offered the design flexibility as the electronic method was relatively untested in the literature.

The flexibility of the design was tested during the process. Volunteers needed support using blogs, and one reported they had lost data due to failure of equipment. Participants used blogs to express their opinions through images, text and hyperlinks, and through customising their blog. Whilst this suggested that blogging was a valid method, privacy and anonymity meant I could not include images or links to other websites in the thesis. Issues with blogging meant group interviews became the primary source of data collection for one participant. His dyslexia was not an impediment to participation, and he could have uploaded audio to the blogs should he wished but he chose not to. The visits however developed rapport, and he contributed fully in group interviews, suggesting the flexibility of a face-to-face method allies well with an electronic method.

The key factor of whether blogging was a success was whether participants continued to blog. They did, although some more than others. Group interviews supplemented those that blogged less more.

No participant left the project during the fieldwork stage, and indeed, three continued to update me about their volunteering several months later with vital data that reflected greater understanding of this thesis and their volunteering.

Analysis was undertaken using Framework (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). By familiarising myself with the data, including blogs and transcribed audio from interviews, I coded using words within the data, adding to these codes sentences and phrases that were relevant to that code. I then mapped out a series of key themes, which began to shape a narrative. This approach allowed me to develop themes without losing the unique experiences of individuals or community radio stations, and so the final analysis, evident in the structure of the findings chapters, expresses the complexity of learning through practice as a young volunteer in community radio in the UK.

7. HOW CONTEXT SHAPES YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN COMMUNITY RADIO FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MANAGERS OF THE COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

This chapter analyses how established members sought to oversee the practice young volunteers at Cherry, Grape, Plum and Apple. I do this through four vignettes of each community radio station, building on the introductions to the community radio stations in section 6.4. Understanding context enables me to reflect on how community radio stations define youth volunteering and how they seek to shape the experience of young volunteers in full time community radio in the UK. The role of this brief chapter is to inform an understanding that context rather than to triangulate data from the research participants.

Data take the form of four transcribed interviews from established members at the participating community radio stations on the topic of young volunteers in community radio and on community radio in general. Those interviewed had key responsibilities at their stations, including two paid station managers (Apple and Grape) and two volunteer managers (Plum and Cherry). I also refer to the key commitments of the four participating radio stations. As these documents are in the public domain, and a web search for quotations may identify the participating radio stations, I refer to key commitments but do not quote them.

The interviews reveal how contextual factors contribute to shaping definitions of youth volunteering in community radio. Established members identified factors that include the history of the radio station, its relationships with funders, advertisers and public policy bodies, and plans, as well as the motivations of the young volunteers. The interviews revealed how these factors overlap and diverge: the established members refer to success, compromise and failure when working with young volunteers. These findings reflect the complexities of defining the volunteer role within an organisational setting, and that the fluid nature of participation reveals tensions about definitions. These factors also reflect the analysis in chapter two on community radio and volunteering policy,

particularly in defining the context of youth volunteering. I refer to this analysis where appropriate but in detail in the concluding chapters. I take each of the community radio stations in turn before a short summary section.

7.1 Cherry – Interview with the (voluntary) Station Manager

Cherry is a new rural station. Their key commitments state that young volunteers are a priority, recruited principally from a local secondary school. This interview was conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork phase with the Station Manager. It concludes with a brief second interview from the end of the fieldwork phase, in which the Station Manager contacted me to update on what he considered a significant change in policy at Cherry. Whilst this did not affect the fieldwork phase of this research, I include it as a brief example of how shifts in policy may affect the practice of young volunteers, and to highlight the need for contextual understanding of volunteering.

The Manager at Cherry focused on the community rather than the radio element of community radio:

> *It's almost incidental that they are doing radio. To me it's about being in the community, doing something. They could be digging a hole or something, it almost doesn't matter, it's just a place where they can get out of school and do something supposedly a little bit more real.*

By invoking, '*being in the community*', the Manager's definition of volunteering at Cherry appears to draw from community media defined by solidarity and civil service (Cammaerts, 2002; Howley, 2005; Buckley, 2010). According to the Manager, volunteering is an altruistic activity reflecting the communitarianism of Etzioni (1998) in which the values of solidarity become the central motivating factor. The Manager did not suggest that young people should choose between what he called, '*a bit more real*' or something programmed, but implied there is room for the two approaches in the lives of young people. Thus, situated in its community, Cherry should be perceived as an opportunity for

young people to engage in the wider community rather than an opportunity to volunteer with an organisation

According to the Manager, Cherry has, '...*an informal set up. We have a committee and that is it. There's no training course, just what we show them to use the studio...and they get out and make radio'.* The Manager defined informal as a structure that enables and supports activity and which presents itself as non-hierarchical. The Manager is also a schoolteacher at the local secondary school, and provides training and support through an agreement with the school. The school authorities have agreed that lunchtimes are available for broadcasting if pupils are chaperoned to the nearby station by a staff member. The Manager is committed to this agreement. He explained that, *'The pupils in this research, I walk them up on Tuesdays, and some older ones, Fridays'.* In the first year of broadcasting full-time the Manager considered he recruited plenty of young people. He explained that, '*it would run into 50* [young people] *and there's still quite a number still involved, I certainly know of 8 or 10 that I know still do something for the station'*. He suggested that consistent recruitment and commitment results from how young people are treated at Cherry,

> *I believe in trying to treat them like normal people as kids who do stuff. That's what I think they might get from doing it, that they are treated like normal people. I'll say 'do you want a cup of tea?' and treat them like normal people like you would in the real world.*

By making tea, he offers a symbolic gesture to them about solidarity and status, suggesting that the hierarchical boundaries that define their school relationship do not apply at Cherry, even during school lunchtimes. Even so, in my presence, young volunteers from his school still refer to him as '*Sir*'.

The Manager explained that, given the absence of staff, volunteers plan and prepare radio content themselves. This included young volunteers, who are expected to engage other people's opinions to create meaningful radio content. Thus, the mission of Cherry is to forge connections in the community through making radio content. The lack of systems, staffing and resources may also reflect the youth

of Cherry as an organisation. The Manager suggested that Cherry has, '*not yet developed relationships with advertisers, public policy bodies and other funders'* that may require greater organisational structure and policy formation. Using the hybridity model developed by Billis (2010) (section 2.5.3), Cherry may be described as largely associational, with hybridity created from public service or social gain requirements as part of licensing conditions, but with a marked absence of private sector values, particularly in relation to advertising.

Despite the ethos that underpins the approach to youth volunteering the Manager identified difficulties for young rural volunteers. He suggested that the rural setting may make young volunteers '*more deliberate'* about their choices as they, '*cannot try something, then something else, then go there for something else'* because they cannot physically do so. The agreement with the school reflected the difficulties some young volunteers might face in getting to Cherry without parental support during evenings and weekends. However, the Manager also explained that he must '*incentivise'* young people to ensure they try volunteering at Cherry, arguing that, '*Kids are usually incentivised or they usually put a currency on most things they do, that's what I find, nowadays'.* With the experience of being their schoolteacher, he also identified the benefits of volunteering in more individualistic terms. Schools, he suggested, encourage this approach:

> *It's an interesting thing that has happened I think in the last ten years in education, more than before, probably because teachers are always telling them all the time they need to put things on their CV.*

The Manager suggested that schools may encourage young people to undertake experiences that enhance their curriculum vitae but that this form of motivation, '*disconnects them from the community'* because, '*they are not thinking about the community, not really',* which he argued is a necessary part of volunteering. The Manager explained that he tries to encourage altruism alongside individualistic motivations, but that '*it is a struggle'* because, '*if it hasn't got some kind of currency in terms of something they can put on their CV, or an exam, they won't do it'.* In attempting to understand

the issue from the perspective of young volunteers, he suggested that young volunteers, '*get involved on their own terms*' but must also account for, '*what the school wants and what we want too. It must be difficult for them'.* Thus, the high recruitment figures may be young people, '*taking advantage of a CV enhancing opportunity*' but that does not explain the retention of 20% (10 recruits from 50) of those young people who remain as volunteer broadcasters after the experience has been added to their curriculum vitae. This hints that individualizing motivations may not be the only reason to volunteer, suggesting complex motivations to volunteer.

Towards the end of fieldwork, the Manager contacted me to explain a shift in approach, and that the original community ethos model discussed (and which applied during the fieldwork phase) has not worked out:

> *I always thought it might take another step into fully fledged community education in some way that didn't involve necessarily getting a qualification at the end of it, or some sort of stamp in your planner that said you are a successful citizen, or something. But just for kids to be involved in their community and help out in all sorts of ways, but it's not worked out like that.*

Cherry trustees were negotiating with public bodies for the first time and considering accreditations and delivering contract-based training:

> *Accrediting training opens opportunities for us to partner with other groups, particularly those working with young people, to deliver training as a funded exercise. There has been some interest in doing this for groups at risk of exclusion, and young people who are NEET* (Not in Employment, Education or Training), *as well as others.*

In the second interview, the Manager stated that those who want to volunteer for, '*a kind of normal experience doing a normal thing in the real world'* will not excluded or marginalised. Training courses, '*will not become the mandatory route for all'.* Cherry will attempt to maintain the ethos alongside a

strategy that will raise income through partnerships and offer those volunteers looking to enhance their curriculum vitae an accredited route for doing so.

Cherry developed from a vision of what community media might offer as part of a wider experience for young volunteers. The Manager proposed that the social solidarity mission at Cherry and the more individualistic motivations promoted from school can be accommodated in the life of the young person. However, the new policy direction at Cherry is a concern for the Manager, whose grand plans have been curtailed:

> *I was someone who planned a revolution with helicopters and leaflet drops. I thought we'd have* [Cherry] *free-state or something by now but it has not really happened*.

The Manager feared that the communitarian aspects of what Cherry sought to initially offer will be replaced by volunteer programmes, designed to increase station income, but having the effect of fewer young people exploring the potential of community radio as a tool for public engagement.

7.2 Grape – Interview with (paid) Station Manager

Grape is one of the longest established community radio stations in the UK. According to the Manager, staff are '*highly successful*' in their relationships with funders, including major charitable foundations and public bodies, and undertake an array of local, national and international projects involving paid staff, volunteers and also young people on mandatory training courses. Grape's key commitments reflect diversity of voice and culture through voluntary participation, testament to their location in a city with an ethnically diverse population. They also refer to social mission projects including information technology and computing classes, and literacy and numeracy classes, and offering work experience to young people.

The Manager considered volunteering at Grape as a process of bringing people together in dialogue:

What we want to do is make everybody who works as a volunteer at [Grape] *comfortable so they can be themselves, which if you think of the diversity of people that is blooming hard. But there is a bottom line at which there has to be some mutual respect for each other, and tolerance, even if you disagree. If there isn't the level of tolerance, or willingness to enter into dialogue, or see another perspective, then that makes it difficult when you do have extremes.*

The Manager defined the body of volunteers by the complexity of their personal characteristics and personal opinions. By encouraging volunteers to '*be themselves',* they must engage with and support each other at a personal level. The Manager referred to '*talking*' and to '*dialogue*' as the '*defining characteristic of the station'* where volunteers create a developed and mature perspective, which, she hoped, reflects in broadcasts. Thus, the Manager described volunteer broadcasters as people who learn from each other:

I think an awful lot of learning goes on in this building from people talking to each other because people encounter other people they wouldn't encounter in their normal life by coming into this building.

The desire to bring volunteers together led to a structured approach to youth volunteering. The Manager explained that, '*We have a strand of broadcasting to make sure we made space for young people to have programmes'*. This '*youth strand'* brings young volunteers together in a regular meeting which gives them '*an identity in the station'.* The Manager suggested that, '*young volunteers broadcast as part of the same team'*, with thirty minutes per pairing on Sunday evenings, and so the youth strand is evident on air as well as inside the building.

The Manager suggested that sometimes dialogue is limited between young volunteers and the volunteer body, and so efforts are made to overcome this. Building relationships between younger and older volunteers, '*is sometimes difficult. Young people slink in and slink out. It's because at 15 or 16 maybe don't feel as confident to say 'Hi, I'm Elena, what's your name?'* Despite this, the Manager

recognises the need for younger people to engage with older volunteers in line with the dialogue approach to defining volunteering:

> *Everybody has got busy lives, school and college, blah de blah. We want to try to make the young people on the station to feel more part of a team, feel they could work together more, they could not just be doing their programmes but link their programmes together.*

Thus, the youth strand *'is a safe space'* but also one in which new relationships are tested.

Like Cherry, Grape promotes solidarity amongst its volunteers ahead of a focus on individual reasons to volunteer, again resonating with the definitions of community media (Cammaerts, 2002; Howley, 2005; Buckley, 2011). Because Grape focuses on broadcasting the voices of minority groups, the Manager also suggested that this promotes a form of community radio from when it primarily sought a media plurality mandate from government, discussed in chapter two. She argued that for community media, *'…the real need is to capture their voice, to support them as much as we can and to produce radio programmes'*. The Manager offered several examples that reflect the Grape commitment to volunteer voice. A volunteer from Georgia broadcast in her native language because, *'it was really important for her to be speaking Georgian, not Russian, because that was the language of liberation'* and because of the diversity and interest it offers the audience, despite considering it unlikely that more than a few people in the city would have understood the language. As a member of national committees on community radio, the Manager described how in these meetings, management from other stations often reveal in the language that they use how volunteer voice has less priority than income. She explained that, *"I'm shocked, and I will say shocked, by some of the people I encounter in community radio who use 'letting volunteers on the airwaves' or even worse 'not letting volunteers onto the airwaves'".* She also suggested that in another meeting a community radio Station Manager explained how his station, *'had stopped young people broadcasting because their advertisers didn't like what the young people were doing. I was absolutely gobsmacked'*.

Though anecdotal, her forcefulness in the interview was revealing of her position on the value of volunteer voice. The Manager also highlighted a debate being held across the UK about how, for some, community radio must prioritise income over voice in order to survive in an environment where public funds are heavily restricted. Young volunteers must navigate through this difficult environment in which their voice may not be a station priority, and in which the role of community radio in general, and their community radio station specifically, may only be revealed in meetings that they do not attend.

As well as the strong stance on media plurality and volunteer solidarity, Grape embraces the more recent social mission of community radio. Grape developed in the 1990s with public policy support and was among the first awarded a full-time licence. The Manager explained that staff generate revenue from projects that are policy focused as part of the key commitment to undertake non-radio related courses, including literacy and numeracy courses. Using Billis's hybridity model (Billis, 2010), Grape is a hybrid, as it draws from across the private, public and community sectors and works with a broad constituency, not all of whom are volunteers, but includes a mix of staff, those on mandatory training and volunteers.

According to the Manager, projects and training are '*twin edged*' because they can, '*produce some fantastic volunteers who get us* [the Grape mission]' but she added that, '*many don't. They are here because they have to be, or come to add us to their CV'*. These people she suggested are difficult to define as volunteers because, '*perhaps they don't get so involved with others, at least as much as we'd like'.* Nonetheless, the Manager described volunteering to enhance a curriculum vitae as, '*a society thing. We're all expected to have a really good CV to get a job, and volunteering goes on the CV now'* and so that aspect of volunteering is, '*really important to kids. You can understand it'.* Despite the difference in reasons for attending Grape, the Manager continued to promote volunteering as a group activity with, '*the single cause of the voice of the unrepresented*'. She explained that Grape has, '*not*

changed their mission to broadcast the diversity of [city name]' since they began, and this '*is their strength'*.

Grape is a complex environment created by a willingness from management to engage with funders who have different priorities from the historic stated mission of Grape to build solidarity around broadcasting minority voices. Therefore, those who volunteer or attend Grape do so for different reasons. To develop a coherent volunteer body, Grape encourage dialogue and participation to help volunteers understand the Grape ethos – to, as the Manager puts it, '*get it'*.

7.3 Apple – Interview with the (paid) Station Manager

Apple has been broadcasting for over five years on a licence that only permits youth (under 25) broadcasting. According to the Manager, Apple developed as a response to youth provision in the city in which it is situated, after government granted full time status to community radio in 2004. Thus, '*Apple was not really grass roots. It got going thanks to the commitment of funders and staff'*. The Manager, recruited as a former youth worker, suggested that he and the volunteers might have different views on Apple and its purpose:

> *We are a youth and community centre in a roundabout way. Young people are coming into a space each week doing radio but it is ultimately youth work for us. That's how we can get the best out of them without me coming in and saying this is a youth centre. That might scare people off. Make them confused about what we are.*

The Manager did not discuss this view with the volunteers, whom, he suggested, instead define participation in terms of radio roles rather than as volunteers. He explained that, '*they'd probably say they are radio presenters, radio producers, technicians and Deejays and not volunteers, not first, anyway'* and suggested that this was because, '*they're focused on their shows and their audience, so they're DJs, not volunteers'*. Though the volunteers may define themselves by their radio specialism the Manager offers a broader sense of what Apple is attempting to achieve. He argues that, '*to them*

it's a radio station. They come in and do radio but to me I see it as a something else as well'. This *'something else'* reflected his wider concerns for Apple's many young volunteers, whom he suggested can, *'struggle at school, with authority, with youth services, getting a job, sticking college out'.* The Manager therefore promoted an ethos that he suggested is, *'different from youth work they're used to'.* This involved giving young volunteers increasingly greater roles and responsibility at Apple, if they wanted it:

> *I am conscious that we let them do whatever they want pretty much within reason. It's a democratic kind of place and I try and do that through the way I lead, I suppose. I'm not authoritarian. It's quite open and we let them come up with ideas of how the station can move forward.*

The Manager explained that volunteers engage at all levels of Apple, with volunteer broadcasters on the board and steering committees. Apple is the only community radio station in this research in which young people over 18 participate at a trustee level:

> *At the moment there's supposed to be one volunteer on there but whoever becomes head of volunteers takes their place but it's actually worked out that they've stayed on, so there's two on there now which is quite good. So they are on that and the other main thing is the steering group where we meet people in the community, so there's a volunteer who runs that as well.*

Apple is hybrid organisation according to Billis's (2010) model, with a number of influences feeding into the organisation. To fund its key commitment obligations, the Manager explained that Apple takes advertising and receives local authority funding, as well as support from a local college in which it is situated in the form of free facilities and policy support. However, the approach to structure is of interest. Apple though associational and democratic, is hierarchical with levels of decision-making, with identifiable volunteer presence at each level.

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During the interview, the Manager explained that he expected to leave by the summer (end of fieldwork) and was undertaking a review to, '*let them* [volunteers] *come up with ideas of how the station can move forward'*. This involved the Head of Volunteers, a young volunteer who is a broadcaster and trustee, becoming the new Manager, with several months to develop a strategy for Apple's future to present to the trustees:

> *We want to get her making some decisions. She went to see a station in London and came back rejuvenated and happy to go with it and try and implement some changes of her own, with me overseeing it and having my say where I could. For the long-term future, it needs to be her stamp on it a little bit more.*

Her '*stamp*' involved addressing a recurring issue, called '*the big struggle'* at Apple by the Manager:

> *The problem is quality over community. We constantly have arguments about it in the office because we want to be a station that is reputable so we can attract people who might want to give us money so we can keep going. But at the same time we never want to exclude anyone, and so we have this thing of, well you're not as good as this person so do we bury you at 2am or do we showcase anyone can join. So that's kind of the big struggle.*

This suggests that some Apple volunteers and staff may privilege how the station should sound to audiences ahead of a philosophy of alternative voices promoted by community media organisations (Howley, 2005) and by other community radio stations in this research. The issue resonates with the experiences of the incremental licences such as FTP in Bristol (2.3.1) in which a commercial model led to fewer community voices and ultimately closure.

The Manager explained that the proposed solution to the '*big struggle'* from the Head of Volunteers is to grade volunteers against criteria:

*It's just going to be a little bit more like when you are going for a job I suppose. They apply to be a volunteer. We invite them in for an informal interview. We do actually treat it as an interview process where they get marked against certain criteria that we are looking at. It won't be used as strictly as a job environment but it will help us gauge what ability they are at and **where they can fit in with us.***

(my emphasis)

This approach subverts the volunteer-defined specialisms used at Cherry in such a way that Apple selects those best placed to fill vacancies rather than encourage a diverse cohort of volunteer broadcasters. The Manager conceded that this change may affect how Apple has worked with those in the past who have struggled to find a foothold in society. He asserted that, '*it'll move away from what we've done in the past in terms of being a place where anyone can come and have a go at radio, just anyone off the street',* but he also argued that he is following through the ethos to encourage volunteers to direct the future of Apple. The Manager ultimately claimed confidence that Apple will, '*always be a volunteer-led environment but with a management structure more clearly defined*'.

7.4 Plum - Interview with (voluntary) Volunteer Manager

Plum is a music-based community radio station on the edge of a small northern town. According to the Volunteer Manager, Plum largely survived on commercial revenue from sponsorship and advertising, and is therefore, '*careful about who we let on air'.* He explained that this, '*protects how we sound so advertisers and the listeners get what they expect'.* Being dependent on advertising therefore has a significant impact on how young people volunteered at Plum.

The Volunteer Manager explained that, '*most come here for their CV. They want to do media at college and it looks good to have done this'.* Plum he suggested are, '*training the radio DJs of the future'* who are looking for, '*someone who can trust them and give them a good chance to get into the industry*'.

However, the Volunteer Manager was aware that radio is a competitive industry, and suggested that Plum operate to ensure the experience young volunteers receive is useful in other situations:

> *Not all will make it so we train them up to work in the world rather than just broadcast media. Because if they walk out of here knowing just radio…they're not going to get very far without being retrained on everything, so we teach people how an office would operate.*

Plum mirrors the world of office work with volunteers expected to do as they are tasked. The Volunteer Manager explained that, '*it is hierarchical, if someone is above you and says can you go and do that, then you go ahead and do it'.* The hierarchy performs a business function rather than an associational function as seen at Apple, suggesting that business issues – in this case, revenue from advertising – is prioritised.

Applying the Billis (2010) model, Plum maintains hybridity because of the social gain requirement of public service and from its key commitments, which focus on training volunteers including young people. Plum may draw more from the private sector values than from associational values, particularly given the influence of advertising in how Plum works with young volunteers and the hierarchy in which young volunteers are located at the bottom, with little influence.

The Volunteer Manager recognised that volunteers are not paid but this does not alter how Plum perceive volunteers:

> *As a volunteer you don't want to walk in and be told what to do. It's always more polite to say '*can do you do this with us' rather than 'go and do that', because when you start doing that they start thinking 'we don't have to do anything' and we don't like that mentality. So we are polite, you know, to tell them what to do.*

A prerequisite for volunteers at Plum is, '*the right mentality'.* As with Grape, Apple and Cherry, the managers expected volunteers to understand the mission of the community radio station. Whilst at

Cherry and Grape the managers suggest that debate is necessary to achieve this, and at Apple democratic expression acts to galvanize volunteers, at Plum there appeared to be little opportunity for volunteers to shape the station. The Volunteer Manager suggested that volunteers who do not conform to the *'house rules'* can leave. He explained that, *'we have a job to do at [Plum]. Any volunteers causing problems are asked to leave.'* Asked about what these problems might be, the Volunteer Manager suggested, *'not doing as you've been asked, like not playing the adverts on time, or playing music we wouldn't normally play, or interrupting on air'*. He suggested that young volunteers are given latitude and, *'given instruction and support to make sure they understand what's expected* [of them]', and so he suggested, *'We won't ask someone to leave right away. We'll do a review, and talk to them. But ultimately they will be asked to leave and not return* [if they do not conform]*'.*

7.5 Chapter summary

Cherry, Grape, Apple and Plum each have their own ethos that derives from the history of the radio station and its relationships with influential other parties, including advertisers and funders. Using Billis's (2010) model, each station is a hybrid due to the commitment to public service, but the range of hybridity across the four stations is highlighted by what Billis (2010) calls *'operational priorities'* (ibid: 55). At Cherry, the model remains largely associational, with concern about influencing factors compromising their social mission. Grape draws from this associational model but also from the public service model due to grant funding relationships. At Apple, the model is also associational, particularly given the focus on democratic expression through a set hierarchy (as distinct from the informal structure at Cherry with similar aims) but the concerns about the link between quality of broadcasts (voices) and advertisers, draw from private sector values. Plum also identify this link as a major concern. Plum draws least from the associational features of Billis's model and more from private sector values, with commercial income a priority focus, allied to a strong hierarchy and little input

from volunteers into how the station operates. These four stations are not representative of the community radio sector but the range of their hybridity raises questions around the clarity of mission for community media when it becomes involved in issues other than media plurality (Jankowski, 2001).

However, the managers also highlight the influencing external factors. Cherry and Apple are in a state of flux, with changes on the horizon, and this meant they must consider compromising their ethos. What is of interest here is how the two managers perceive the influence of young volunteers in these changes. At Cherry, the Manager identifies the influence of school in how young people choose to volunteer for individualising reasons, such as enhancing curriculum vitae. Cherry therefore must compromise its ethos to remain relevant to the young volunteers by offering accredited training. Apple is placing the future is in the hands of one volunteer who identified standards of broadcasting as the major concern to be addressed, implementing by a formal job-style volunteering process to assess new volunteers. At Grape, the oldest of the four community radio stations, the mix of projects and the motivations of members creates flux. As with Cherry, individualising motivations are identified by the managers as brought in from the outside, challenging the internal ethos. Plum design their regime to avoid flux but the Volunteer Manager admitted subversive young volunteers may cause flux but that measures are available to restore equilibrium.

The community radio station managers accepted that their mission, or ethos, may be compromised, and that there are internal and external influences at work. The willingness of established members to accept compromise, or engage young people in delivering change, may also be a factor in creating flux. At Apple, the management actively embraced change, at Cherry it was reluctantly accepted. Stability was the focus at Grape and Plum. Whilst the managers at Cherry and Grape expressed volunteering in terms of solidarity, the managers at Apple and Plum did so more individualistically. The managers equated youth volunteering with broadcasting, with the addition of trustee activities at Apple. Volunteer voice was therefore interpreted in multiple ways, as an expression of social ties and

the right to broadcast, as consumable goods to attract audience and advertisers, and as key decision makers in the station's future.

None of the managers directly refer to citizenship in their interviews, although the issues highlighted reflect the debates and definitions around volunteering and citizenship discussed in Chapter Three. Entrepreneurial definitions identified by Birdwell *et al* (2014) may be reflected at Apple where volunteers self-define their roles and may take up positions within the hierarchy of decision making, leading to opportunity and influence. The tensions created by individualizing motivations to volunteer within the organisations at Grape and Cherry reflects debates within the citizenship and volunteering literature (Gaskin, 2004; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). These are discussed in the concluding chapters.

Finally, the managers did not refer to volunteering as a fun activity for young people to do. Stebbins (1996) refers to volunteering as '*serious leisure'* (Stebbins, 1996: 211) and Dunlap (2004) as '*playin'*" (Dunlap, 2004: 118), but though volunteer broadcasters entertain their audience, there was little sense that volunteering in community radio is anything other than a serious affair. The interview situation may have affected this as the managers concentrate on what they consider vital knowledge for me, though my semi-structured technique was not used to elicit categorical but more reflective responses. Nonetheless, volunteering can be '*serious leisure'* (Stebbins, 1996: 211) and an examination of data from young volunteers may reveal whether this is a motivating factor.

The next two chapters concentrate on the data collected from the young volunteers in this study. The first addresses several issues raised by the managers, including definitions of volunteering and the practices at community radio stations that support or disable youth volunteering. The second examines more closely how young volunteers learn from other volunteers in community radio, using communities of practice as a model for understanding how learning between members occurs in community radio.

8. WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE VOLUNTEER IN COMMUNITY RADIO AND WHAT CAN THIS TELL US ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN THE UK TODAY?

This chapter is structured into two sections to address two research questions.

1. What can an examination of practice tell us about the experience of youth volunteering in community radio in the UK?

2. How does community radio volunteering help us understand formal volunteering in the UK?

To answer these two questions, I examine (1) young volunteers' experiences of involvement in community radio; and (2) young volunteers understanding of the purposes and nature of volunteering. From this, an understanding of how community radio volunteers define volunteering becomes clear.

In Section 8.1 a focus on participant practice reveals how community radio volunteering was used to connect to other activities in their life and to broadcast the voice and culture of young people as an important social function. Practice therefore centred around developing a fragile network of community contributors, including friends and family, to develop an embryonic radio show. Broadcasting the voices and perspectives of young people was perceived to perform a valued social function. Other examples include activities in the lives of the participants, including fostering friendships, careers, school and college, family interests, political action and connecting with volunteering undertaken elsewhere. Yet four participants also reported how community radio could be a retreat from the pressures they felt in their lives. They suggested that they disconnected from wider society to concentrate on the pursuit of broadcasting with a close friend. This apparent contradiction of connecting and disconnecting reflects the complexity in which the participants understood the practice of community radio volunteering, and I suggest that it is this complexity that may attract and retain these young people as community radio volunteers.

The second research question is explored through an examination of what maintained the voluntary relationship with the community radio station. Participants appeared committed to community radio

volunteering, which increased as they engaged as members of the organisation. They defined

voluntary practice in community radio as broadcasting their own radio show, plus additional tasks.

Examples of these other tasks include taking part in other broadcasts and project work, and supporting

other volunteers. Participants also identified governance as another aspect of volunteering, but

undertaken by established volunteers only. Ten participants suggested their role was specific to radio,

defining themselves as radio workers and not volunteers. However other participants suggested that

their status was less than established members because they were only broadcasters.

The commitment of the participants was tested through disagreements and changes to practice. They

reported that at these times they were peripheral to the volunteer body and could only be committed

to their broadcasting. At these times, participants evaluated their engagement in community radio

between themselves and without support of established members. Peripherality was attributed by

participants to several factors, including the structures of youth participation at the station, changes

in how the station operates, the attitude of other volunteers to youth volunteering and to a lack of

confidence in asking for greater involvement.

8.1 Young volunteers' experiences of involvement in community radio

This section addresses the first research question. It does so by drawing two themes from the data.

First, that volunteering in community radio enabled participants to connect to other pursuits and

activities in their lives. Community broadcasting was described as a form of active citizenship,

embodied in a keenness to discuss youth issues and to represent youth culture. To do this, participants

developed a fragile network of solidarity in which people in the community contributed to their

broadcasts. This had three elements: to connect to family and friends; to develop the skills to be a

broadcaster; and for the voice of young people to be heard as entertainment as well as address social

issues. The second theme is one of disconnection: some participants used community radio

volunteering to disconnect from their wider circle of friends. The apparent contradictory state of

connecting and disconnecting within the variances in the lives of young people highlights how community radio volunteering is perceived by participants as highly flexible and complex in its application. I suggest that it is this complexity of this practice attracts young people.

8.1.1 Volunteering to connect to other pursuits and people

Participants reported how their volunteering in community radio enabled them to connect to a range of other pursuits. Martin at Cherry used broadcasting to promote other volunteering he was engaged in. He organised, *'a disco on Thursday for years 7 & 8 at school to raise money for Cancer Research UK'.* He also regularly attended another voluntary group in his village with his family, stating that, *"I go to a club called 'Greenpower' and it's a club in which we build an electronic powered car and race it annually".* Martin explained that his broadcasting supports the other voluntary activities:

> *By being involved in these groups it's a positive thing for me. I think the radio pulls it together though because I promote events, give them some coverage…It's good to give the charities your support. I can do a little bit more with my show, which is good.*

Martin perceived his volunteering as contributing to his community with him at the centre of his network. His understanding of the role of community radio volunteering developed out of his understanding of the role of activities in the community where it encouraged solidarity with other people, and he applied this to build his network around his broadcasts. He recognised the value that community radio volunteering brings to his other activities and in turn how these other activities provide his broadcasts with content. His choice of community content may reflect the ethos of Cherry (section 7.1) but is more strongly reflective of the values he brings to Cherry.

Olivia at Grape listed the other voluntary activities that she and her broadcast partner Tina undertake alongside community broadcasting:

> *Cooking free food for refugees and asylum seekers...cooking food in festival kitchens, running sessions for younger members of The Woodcraft Folk...working with* [a local environmental charity], *going on weekends away to work outside, chopping down trees, tidying wild spaces.*

Community radio volunteering has a complex role to play in connecting the various strands of Olivia's and her broadcast partner (and best friend) Tina's other voluntary activities. Tina considered that community radio volunteering, '*fits into what we are trying to do with our lives because we do so much and it kind of brings it together*', suggesting they identify a connective quality across a range of activities. They promote activities and events but are more likely to broadcast on issues taken from their other activities, as Olivia explained:

> *If we find out about a demonstration open to everyone then we'll often air it on the radio.* [Tina] *and I usually go to the same things and know kind of what we'll talk about, we don't normally have 'new' conversations on air as we've already had the conversation already and thought it was interesting enough to have on air! So about publicising events and things is normally something we both know about and would like to encourage as many people to come along.*

Tina and Olivia described themselves as '*activists*' which underpinned their choice of pursuits as well as deciding to volunteer at Grape. Tina suggested that they could connect the debates they engage in as members of Woodcraft Folk with radio:

> *Bringing wider discussions into* [Grape] *that are talked about and debated in Woodcraft could work. We can talk on air about any of it* [topics].

Being able to broadcast political debate re-affirmed Tina and Olivia's commitment to Woodcraft Folk which had waned, '*Since being at* [Grape] *we've planned to go back to the ethos of Woodcraft and try and get more political sessions in instead of just socialising*'.

As with Martin, community radio volunteering allowed Tina and Olivia to highlight the issue as important to them as young people and individuals, but they also took the opportunity to build a network of active citizenship, based on their shared ideals. Their focus on politics, and how it is debated locally, suggested they understood the role radio might play in this. Martin, aged 14 in this research did not address local politics, unlike Tina and Olivia, aged 17, reflecting the findings of Cammaerts (2016) (section 4.2.2). The difficulties faced by a solo presenter compared to a pair of broadcasters, such as finding and planning interviews, may also account for their willingness to engage in more complex radio content.

In these two examples with three participants, community radio volunteering is used as a strategic choice that links personal experiences from their wider life to their new roles as young volunteers, strengthening the participants' sense of solidarity and commitment to community. Moreover, any successful broadcasting that is the outcome of developing local links suggests that the sense of solidarity is reciprocated. Thus, the network is a two-way process of development and support. Other examples illustrated how individual success is seen to be linked to connections beyond community radio volunteering. Xavier is a DJ and Nate a film director, both used community radio to promote their other activities and for networking purposes. This suggests that active citizenship extends to individualising motivations, without necessarily affecting the solidarity of the network.

Xavier at Apple is also a DJ in a local nightclub. In interview, he explained he used his broadcasts to, '*play the music local kids want to hear. I do their requests, their events too – even school discos* [laughs]'. He explained that radio broadcasting importantly supported his DJing, allowing him, '*to promote music and my DJing, and stay in contact with people who can help me. It's a bit like networking. I get a profile on the radio*'. Xavier targeted local music producers to provide free music, and encouraged his listeners to become his nightclub audience too. This entrepreneurial flair matched a desire to build a solid following on both radio and in the club: '*it's all about an audience getting*

together around my music. It's a real buzz when someone listening comes to the club. They bring their friends, they listen, they know my music, ask for mixes. It's great'.

Nate at Apple used community radio to explore the social side of young life. He explained that, '*I do film, I do radio, both about similar topics, about young people, life, that sort of thing'.* For Nate, connecting with an audience was to build a narrative about their life, through the prism of his radio show. He suggested that, '*It's a picture of what's gone on. What people are talking about.*' Nate's show was largely, '*talk, with interviews, sketches and requested music*', reflecting his week in the local area. He also explained how working on his show deepened his understanding of creative media, '*It's another string to my bow I suppose but it also brings together my media interests'.* The connections he saw were with his future employers, '*I figure I'll get the job if I've done all this, if I can tell the story in lots of ways'.*

Similar to the examples from Martin, Tina and Olivia, broadcasting was an opportunity to build an embryonic network to discuss local issues in a low-level, exploratory way. Community radio volunteering was also a strategic choice to support paid future work for Xavier and Nate. The principles behind it were therefore mixed. Individualism was clearly present in that they are promoting their work and they connect with people in different ways. For Xavier community radio was about connecting with a community of nightclub goers and music makers, with him at the centre of the activity. For Nate, the show was about connecting with the social life of young people to build a narrative, but he did not explore the value in building these relationships, and instead focused on his abilities as a storyteller.

Participants used community radio volunteering to connect with a wide circle of friends. This was less a direct engagement with an organisation, whether a place of work or another voluntary organisation, but the show audience was identified and targeted. Sandy and Yannick at Plum broadcast a comedy show, based around humour common to their friends. Sandy blogged that, '*they get what we're talking about, though really it's nonsense to the public',* whilst Yannick in interview also said, '*we*

choose topics we've talked about in college, and get text messages from friends joining in when we're on air. I suppose it's a bit closed to the public isn't it [laughs]'. Norbert at Plum also connected with friends through the design of his radio programme. His show was organised during the week by taking requests from his friends and broadcasting them. During the show, friendships were maintained using social media: '*I'll get thanks for mentioning people when its on on my FB* [Facebook] *page, and the groups will get together the week after to choose more music. I suppose it's not my show!!*'

The participants evidenced examples of how community radio enabled them to maintain and develop connections across groups of friends or at other community organisations, which operated as a form of active citizenship that is at odds with the policy-focused active citizenship identified in Chapter Three. Entrepreneurship, for instance, is present but in a way that promotes community solidarity. As Kenny *et al* (2015) suggest, such skills are not the sole province of policy-based approaches to citizenship. What is interesting is how low-key the activity of developing networks of support is. The participants do not make mention of links within the station to the key commitments or policy outcomes, and so creative and emergent forms are explored by the broadcast team or individual, and as listeners and contributors, by the local public. This suggests that community radio can offer spaces for a form of citizenship that is outside of the policy concerns that manifest themselves in the regulations set by established members. Norbert is a particularly good example of this, where friendship was built around music selected by request rather than the DJ. That participants broadcast debates, interviews and promoted events and performed comedy suggests that music is not the only common form of expression, and that creating more complex radio content is worthwhile because of its connective power. Thus, each participant thought closely about what constituted the best form of content for the connection. By creating complex radio content to promote a topic or message, such as interviews and debate, these differing approached reflects the plasticity of what can be achieved as a community radio volunteer.

8.1.2 community radio connects with school and careers

All participants in this study were at school (aged 14-16) or college (aged 16-18) and so they were engaged with educational institutions at the same time as being in community radio. The expectations of schooling and of volunteering developed into connections that reflected the priorities at school. Participants at Cherry report that community radio volunteering supported achieving the Arts Award qualifications in school, whilst Norbert, also aged 14 and at Plum, reflected on how speaking on community radio helped with Lamda exams. The other participants were at college, and saw community radio volunteering as relevant to college and career. However, directional volunteering (Holdsworth and Brewis, 2014) was not a feature of this research. Instead, participants highlighted the autonomy of their choices to volunteer and link their practice with educational attainment.

Martin, Alicia, Ken, Eric and Michael, all aged 14 and volunteers at Cherry, used volunteering towards achieving the Arts Award. The participants saw their community radio volunteering as an opportunity to achieve qualifications awarded at school. This was supported by the policy relationship between Cherry and the school (sections 6.4.2 and 7.1). To achieve the first stage, Bronze, part of the requirement was to teach another person a skill. Michael explained how the qualification worked:

> *For part D, I had to train an apprentice. For this, I trained my friend* [Eric], *who I am now doing shows with*. [Alicia] *also trained an apprentice* [Ken] *and so all four of us co-hosted a show.*

Alicia blogged that to achieve the silver and gold awards they need Cherry for its community reputation:

> *We want to do the shows because it's great to broadcast what people in the school think, the music they want to hear. But if we can get qualifications we will. I mean, we did the BBC School Report at school, but that wasn't with* [Cherry]. *It was a really easy thing. To get the Arts Awards is quite hard. We need* [Cherry]. *At silver and gold levels we have to interview people,*

go out into the community. We can do that with [Cherry] *because we are on it* [as broadcasters]

Alicia suggested that volunteering at Cherry was an opportunity to gain further qualifications, which was attractive, but also that they would broadcast regardless of whether qualifications were attached to the activity. Thus, the participants availed themselves of the opportunities offered by the relationship between the school and Cherry, but still recognised and cherished the distinct role that community radio can play in how they engage with their community.

Norbert at Plum was aged 14 and reflected in interview on how community radio broadcasting helps with his Lamda (performing arts) qualifications. He was an actor and found that community radio was good practice for the speech and drama he performed. He explained how, *'I get to concentrate on my delivery here* [in the studio] *because it focuses me. I think about being the radio presenter, playing the role, like a play, if you know what I mean. It's practice for being on stage in a weird way'.*

Other participants aged 16 – 18 were studying A Levels at college or school. Community radio complemented their subjects and their chosen university and career choices. These included studying media, but also creative writing and music production. There was no direct link between qualifications as with the younger participants, but rather a sense that community radio contributed to their future as broadcasters or their intended college courses. Xavier at Apple suggested of community radio that, *'It's a stepping stone isn't it. The majority of people here, you want some career in media so it's a stepping stone'.* Ellie also saw her involvement with Apple as a *'stepping stone'* and a *'sacrifice'* because '*I could be elsewhere earning money*'. Thus, those who considered their future perceived community radio volunteering as a first step. This raises questions about commitment to volunteering at their station and how practice may generate a different conclusion about commitment. Whilst Ellie remarked, '*how am I ever going to go to 1Xtra if all I think about is* [Apple]?' she continued to visit Apple for several hours twice a week, for over six months of the fieldwork period. She also blogged that:

I've thought about going to other community radio stations a few times because what I want to do as a career is be a radio presenter or producer for a radio show, so I thought the only way I was going to get experience is be proactive about it and seeing what other people offer.

Ellie blogged that her volunteering at Apple was time-limited because of her need to develop her career, and so her commitment may be understood in terms of practice: she was committed to making radio, and Apple was her current option. As with the examples above, her local connections created her broadcasts, '*I'm always playing local up and coming DJs, mixing it with famous stuff. It works really well, and I get local DJs sending me mixes now'.* Nonetheless, Ellie used her experience of Apple as a stepping stone, leaving for another community radio station within the city at the end of the fieldwork phase. She explained that, '*I'm doing the same show really, but I'll get to know DJs over there now too, so I'm building my contacts. It'll make my show better and give them airtime.'* Of this she blogged, '*It'll look good to have been at a couple of places. I'm going to uni soon so I could do with more experience to get the course I want'.* Ellie saw the value of her volunteering in personal terms, in particular how voluntary experience can distinguish a candidate for a competitive course, but her distinctiveness was framed by her practice, which reflected the community network around her show. Ellie needed her contacts to develop her show and create opportunities for herself and likeminded DJs.

Sandy and Yannick from Plum also saw the value of practicing skills they thought would be beneficial at University. They studied creative writing and music production at college. They used community radio broadcasting to develop their skills, '*we can try things out. Be a bit absurd I suppose. It's an outlet for us. We want to be comedy writers, so it's good for that, you know, before university*'. Olivia planned '*to be a journalist, or something like that*'. As with Ellie at Apple, the participants looked to the future, considering strategically what community radio volunteering does for them, but with a commitment to community radio as volunteers.

Participants did not report that their schools or colleges were responsible for making them aware of community radio (those at Cherry however were introduced by their teacher who is also the Station

Manager). Xavier at Apple blogged that, "*no-one told me about this. They* [college staff] *do say 'get lots* [of volunteering] *on your CV' but they didn't direct me here*". This sentiment is reflected in the interviews of other participants, including Olivia at Grape. She suggested that, *'They're* [school staff] *always telling you to put something on your CV. To think about your career but they expect you to find the opportunities out'.* These participants suggested that teachers put them under pressure to volunteer but without clear direction as to what opportunities are available. This may suggest that young volunteers are finding the places for themselves and interpreting their needs but, given the ways that community radio volunteering connects across their life, they consider volunteering in broader terms than just career. Thus, Olivia and Tina accommodate thinking about careers, about university and about the politics in their life.

The participants perceive community radio as an opportunity to develop skills whilst thinking about the future. This is perhaps to be expected at their age. The role school and college played in where they decided to volunteer was however less clear. Except for the direct relationship at Cherry through the school, other participants were only made aware of the value of volunteering in general for careers, and so the interpretation of how their voluntary practice could contribute to their future was their own. In this sense, volunteering for these young people was about shaping their future through situated practice, which included community radio volunteering, but also college, other volunteering and friendship circles. The decision by the participants to volunteer in community radio appears to be informed by future prospects, including university and careers, but this motivation sits alongside the opportunity to strategically network to build community solidarity around the idea of radio broadcasts of youth ideas and culture. In making these connections, participants revealed skills in networking, audience development and entrepreneurship, highlighting, as Kenny *et al* (2015) also identify, that these abilities can be associated with communitarian projects that develop from people, not policy.

8.1.3 Broadcasting the voices of young people

Sometimes I don't appreciate how lucky I am to have chance to voice my opinions on the radio. Giving people in communities the opportunity to have a voice is really important.

(Olivia, Grape)

Broadcasting the voices of young people was given as a reason for volunteering in community radio. I have already alluded to how community radio connects these voices in a variety of ways in the section above, but participants also described in more general terms how their volunteering to broadcast is an important societal function, as social messaging but also entertainment for an audience. Thus, participants recognised community radio as an entertaining, relevant, participative activity for young people.

How the volunteers attempted to represent the voices of young people was evident in their practice of making radio. Participants expected to use community radio to discuss issues pertinent to the wider community of young people. Tina at Grape, explained how she wanted to pursue radio based around the local elections:

Another thing was to work with people and elections, especially young people and interviewing them to see how much they know and getting them more involved in local politics. I'm really interested in getting young people involved in politics. It seems people hardly know anything about the local elections and don't really want to get involved.

Tina associated broadcasting with an educative and participative function, that by engaging the voices of people they were likely to become more involved in politics. Broadcasting also reflected her willingness to be the person who organised this in a public sense, and so the value of political debate becomes known through her practice at Grape.

Alicia at Cherry reported that, '*I develop my ideas from what I have seen in the news (mostly)*'. Her broadcasts, with Ken, were information-based broadcasts for young people in their rural community. Alicia explained how she developed radio content:

> *I choose my story's* (sic) *through what I have heard from the youth at school, on Facebook and around the school. I develop them by writing up the basic story line and elaborating upon it using facts or things from my own understanding.*

Both Tina and Alicia expected to broadcast issues relevant to young people and connect with them to provide the content for broadcast. They recognised how important this is but also that the connection needed to come from a source young people recognise. Tina suggested in interview that:

> *It helps that I'm young too, that I'm the one doing something and making the effort to find out their views. Young people don't say that much. There needs to be ways to hear what they've got to say.*

This point was echoed by Sandy, who suggested that even within young people there are many different opinions, '*young people should broadcast but it needs lots of people, lots of opinions. We are different from* [Norbert and Nigel]. *And that's a good thing.*' Community radio therefore may reflect a space where those differing voices can be heard, and can engage in numerous meaningful ways to ensure voices are accommodated.

Participants designed their radio show to reflect how they perceived young friends act when together. At Apple Nate sometimes involved two friends in his broadcasts which he described as sounding chaotic and unplanned:

> *We don't assign roles before the show, like, this week* [Sue] *you are going to be the funny one, I'm going to be the serious one and* [Dan] *you are going to be the dull one. We don't free plan what we are going to say, it just comes* [from] *one point and then off on tangents.*

The model was designed to replicate young friends being together in a relaxed social space, all talking, often at the same time, with high energy and laughter, choosing music and not worrying about the stresses of life. Nate chose this model to reflect how he perceived young people practice friendships. He explained that, '*it's just us, but you're checking in, getting to know us, laughing with us, so you're there too*' and so Nate invites his listeners to become friends. Similarly, Sandy and Yannick at Plum used their broadcast to trial their creative writing and music production and adopt a similar spontaneous manner. The broadcasts represented their attempts at comedy writing based on what Yannick described as their, '*observations of student social life*'. Sandy blogged that radio content taken from his own life experiences was kept in notebooks, full of, '*little ideas I have here there. Throughout all these notebooks I've compiled over these months, because I get through them pretty rapidly, there's just little ideas that we could do.*' These notebooks were his own musings on his wider life experiences, with community radio his outlet for expressing them back to the audience from where they came. Thus, for Sandy the broadcast content reflected their audience: asked about this in interview Sandy explained that, '*we hope listeners recognise what we're talking about as both a bit mad but also about them*' whilst Yannick added, '*people like us* [young people] *will definitely get the conversations. Not sure about anyone just tuning in though* [laughs]'. Yannick further explained that broadcasts were deliberately unplanned as an attempt to create rapport needed for live comedy:

> *It's kept flowing because of the significant lack of planning. Like, whenever we're playing music we're looking across the table at each other and shouting 'what can we talk about'* [laughs]

At Plum, Sandy and Yannick were the youth radio show with the largest audience, according to statistics collected by Plum management. Sandy explained that, '*We expected 50-ish listeners. Turns out we rake in literally hundreds and hundreds of listeners, which came as a surprise'.* As to why this is, Yannick blogged that, '*we get listeners because of the bizarre anecdotes, facts and tangents we go off on. The listeners are friends, and we make them laugh*'. Sandy also put their popularity down to being '*an antidote to the boring radio that* [Plum] *usually dole out'.* Sandy and Yannick took the

opportunity to broadcast what they consider their peers will be entertained by, a position supported by listener statistics, although how these statistics were collected remained a mystery as requests from me to management for clarity were never replied to. Nonetheless, the participants blogged that they had been told this by management, and so it was their belief that it was accurate.

Creating shows aimed at a young audience with disregard for other potential audiences reflects the point about the purpose of community radio raised by the manager of Grape (section 7.2). If different and diverse voices are to be reflected in community radio output, then some broadcast must be for specific audiences at the expense of a general audience. The participants also found their voices through drawing inspiration from the community and inviting them to be part of the broadcasts. The spontaneous nature of these radio programmes is in contrast to the philosophy at Plum, Sandy and Yannick's station, which created problems between the participants and the station, examined in the next chapter.

As well as broadcasting to promote the opinions and voices of young people, the participants recognised that their station output should be entertaining for them as broadcasters as well as the audience, and that this also brought the audience and the volunteers together. Firstly, broadcasting with a close friend made the experience highly enjoyable. Tina blogged that, '*volunteering at Grape is fun*' because '*...it's with one of my close friends, it's fun, WE'RE ON LIVE RADIO (pretty cool), we get to play music we like'*. Olivia, her broadcast partner at Grape, described volunteering in community radio as '*instant gratification*' and *"a 'public hobby'"* that is a, *'fun and interesting for us to do'*. Sandy blogged that, '*for us it's something that we come down, we do once a week and we have fun doing it...This just feels literally like something we do out of enjoyment'*. Volunteering had to be enjoyable for these participants and it was important for them that their friendship was heard on radio. In both these examples, the pairs of broadcasters were best friends. Tina blogged that, *'she's my best friend. I suppose how we talk over each other, and giggle when we make a mistake, and laugh all the time, shows on the radio'*. Other participants also recognised that they are there to entertain. Xavier blogged

that, '*we're here to entertain remember! It's not just about what we like*.' His point is echoed by Nigel who suggested that, '*we have to think about the audience. What do they like, what will make them listen?*' For Tina and Olivia, the audience extended to friends participating in their broadcasts. Tina explained how, '*We get our friends in. Jack and Emily choose music, and we chat*'. This led to Tina to blog how they were suddenly known as radio presenters in school, '*A lot of people at school have realised we've got a radio show. We had to put it on in our English lesson*'.

The experiences of young volunteers in community radio is marked by a consistent willingness to forge, develop and maintain connections that situates their community radio volunteering with in a wider network that involves the local community, schools and careers as well as the multiple voices of young people, including the presenters themselves, often with close friends. The community radio stations in this research appeared to offer the freedom for the participants to forge these connections, which they explored through practice. Participants reflected on how community radio operated as within their life, how it was part of it, rather than how it stood as an isolated experience or example of volunteering. This contrasts with research into volunteering experience, which has focused on single organisations without understanding how that organisation operates within the life of the volunteers.

8.1.4 Community radio as a retreat

Whilst community radio volunteering connected young volunteers to other activities in their life, some participants explained that it was also an antidote to stressful times. Olivia blogged that:

> [Grape] *was nice as a kind of break when doing exams. It really doesn't take that long to record and it was a nice relaxing thing to do which was completely unrelated to school work and everything else.*

Tina in interview suggested that they could relax because of how Grape operates, *'We can come in when we like to prepare our show, and no one tells us what to broadcast, so it can be what we want it to be really'*. At these times, Tina blogged that, *'we play what we like. Just music sometimes! But it's nice, relaxed and we forget about stresses like school'*. At Plum, Sandy and Yannick also suggested that the broadcasts are a retreat. Sandy explained that, *'we can get away from everything in the studio. I find it really weird, but it's just us, two guys trying to be funny'*.

These four participants used the space of volunteering to disconnect from their social and school networks. By doing so, they retreated into a safe place where they could maintain their creativity, and focus on themselves. Tina blogged that, *'sometimes with everyone around, I don't spend that much time with* [Olivia]. *At least at* [Grape] *we get to spend time together as best friends'*. This apparent contradictory state of connecting and disconnecting reflects how community radio is both 'out there' broadcasting as a form of communication but also how the actual station is a specific space, and, with control over that mechanism of communication, it can be used as a retreat. As Tina suggested above, by playing *'what we like'* the participants may use community radio volunteering as a site away from the commotion of life, and as a space that reflects their choices, their voices. Community radio volunteering for these two participants is attractive because of that flexibility – it is, as Olivia put it, *'a public hobby'* but also one that can accommodate private moments of reflection and friendship.

8.2 What do young volunteers understand of the purposes and nature of volunteering?

This section presents data to answer the second research question. It does so by examining participants' perspectives on their practice of volunteering and by drawing out their perspectives on the two main topics identified in the volunteering literature in Chapter Four: what is volunteering and who is it for?

This section is divided into two sections. First, I explore the different ways participants defined volunteering through identifying clearly demarcated roles within the stations. Secondly, I explain how

for some volunteers, greater involvement as a volunteer reflected a complex understanding about who they were volunteering for.

8.2.1 Community radio volunteering is defined by practice

Defining volunteering in this thesis involved examining the difference between those rooted in the theoretical understanding of volunteering and definitions arrived at through practice in community radio. Whilst practice was described in the blogs, in my first interview with the groups I asked how they defined volunteering. The responses to this question accord with the findings in part one of Chapter Four on volunteering. The participants defined volunteering as time given freely: '*I do this for free'* explained Xavier at Apple, whilst at Cherry, Alicia said, '*we give up our lunch hours for the radio*'. Martin at Cherry suggested he made radio '*in my spare time',* whilst at Grape, Tina claimed that, '*it's amazing all these people do this in their free time. We don't have much free time, but it's worth it*'. In the recorded discussions, five participants also focused on communitarian principles: '*it's to help out in the community'* said Martin at Cherry, for example. Participants also reflected the economic arguments of unpaid work, '*it's doing work for free isn't it – not getting paid'* suggested Nigel. In these group interviews, they agreed and disagreed. Nigel's answer received a retort from Sandy, *'I don't do this to get paid, it's community radio, you know, community* [Nigel]*'.* In this initial interview, volunteering was defined as time given freely, for the community or as unpaid work. When directly asked to define volunteering, the interviewees lacked a deeper understanding what volunteering might be, whilst an examination of practice, of the blogs, describes so much more because the participants blogged about what they saw, in detail, rather than trying to develop an analysis of their activities at the community radio station.

An examination of the blog posts reveals how volunteering in practice was defined by the organisational context. Participants defined voluntary practice in varied ways, with some reflecting

the relationship between work and volunteering and others the relationship between participants and other volunteers. At Cherry, participants defined volunteers as the body of people who kept the station going by supporting each other, regardless of age difference. Participants at Apple defined their role as work, not volunteering. At Plum, one volunteer was defined by the management activities undertaken other than broadcasting, with the examples of training or studio engineering given. This volunteer was afforded by Sandy and Yannick a higher status than the participants, as mere broadcasters, gave themselves. At Grape, Tina and Olivia also identified volunteers as having higher status than themselves. These participants understood volunteering as broadcasting across a range of shows and engaging in Grape project work, and not just broadcasting on their own show. I conclude that definitions of volunteering generated by reflection on practice reveal a concern with the status of the volunteer. This is similar to that identified by Cameron (1999) where church members were concerned with governance, and volunteers with specific projects.

Unlike the other stations in this research, all of those involved at Cherry were volunteers as there were no paid staff. In interview, the participants recognised some difference in status by maintaining expected relations from outside the studio. They called the Manager '*Sir*' because he is their teacher, and adult volunteers were described as '*Mrs….*' and '*Mr….*'. The lack of visible hierarchy inside Cherry perhaps reflected a missing component of their understanding of voluntary practice (as management were also volunteers) as the other stations, populated with staff, made hierarchies visible in a way Cherry did not. And so, in reflecting on their practice, they thought about what they experienced, which was a non-hierarchical experience. In their blogs, the participants at Cherry described activity that suggested greater equality. Michael blogged that, '*We all do our bit here as volunteers. We help each other out so it isn't like school at all, even with the adults who we try to help*', whilst Martin described the support he received from an adult who broadcast after him, '*Steve has helped me with advice and I've been showing him how to plug in his ipod. I've shown him twice so far*'. Martin's familiarity in his blog post (he described Steve formally as Mr [name] in interview), suggests that

volunteering was defined in practice as a supportive system without hierarchies. Cherry was a new community radio station without developed systems (section 6.4.2). There was small team of volunteers, made even smaller when often only two people are in the building (the broadcaster on air and the broadcaster on air next). New broadcasters supporting each other might be expected to forgo formalities to create an atmosphere conducive to creative support. Nonetheless, what is of interest is the difference between blog and interviews. Participants were more candid in the blogs, and this reflected their perception of the relations between volunteers.

The participants at Apple defined their voluntary role as a form of employment. Ellie at Apple explained that, '*if someone said to me, what do you do, I say I'm a radio presenter'*. She also blogged that '*I do say I work here',* whilst Nate suggested in interview that:

> *I always think of volunteering as helping paint a fence or something. In this sense I'd say this is working for a radio station but not getting paid: it's not volunteering*.

Volunteering elsewhere was also perceived as something less serious by Xavier at Apple, compared to community radio: '*This is a lot more hard work I think, but it's like a step ladder so it's working'*. These participants also explained that *'worker'* afforded them status when they connected to other paid people outside of the station. Xavier blogged that, '*If I say I'm a volunteer they won't take me seriously. I'm a DJ at the club and a DJ here. That's what people understand*'. Nate blogged that, '*My girlfriend always says when the question, what does your fella work as, she says oh he's a radio presenter and he also makes films'*. Their practices reflected what they would like to be known for doing, creating radio broadcasts in a skilled manner, and so the participants played out their volunteering in a dichotomy as happy to perform as volunteers to enhance their skills and their reputations, but less happy to be labelled as such. Other volunteers at Apple were identified differently because of the non-broadcast activities they undertook. Ellie said that, '[name] *is Head of Volunteers. She does so much,*

she's here all the time. We do our shows, she's doing a show and all this other stuff. I don't know how she does it and college.' Nate agreed, *'there are a few here like that actually'* whilst Xavier added that he was asked to become a trustee, but declined: *'I'm a DJ and that's what I focus on, but it sounded like too much to do for free'*. Thus, workers were radio DJs, and those who undertook extra duties were identified as different but also volunteers.

Other volunteers did not consider themselves as workers, but also did not identify themselves as volunteers. Sandy suggested that the established volunteers at Plum were, *'volunteers because they do more for the station. We're just two abject idiots making radio'*. Both Sandy and Yannick consistently described themselves in unflattering terms, Sandy variously as *'idiots'* and *'loons in a perpetual cycle of gibberish'*, and Yannick used *'idiots'* and *'useless'*. Their *'inabilities'* reflected their radio abilities, which were still developing. They often referred to trying new ideas and at one point Sandy blogged on what he called the, *'momentous time when* [Yannick] *decided to control the desk. Naturally, it all went wrong'*. From their position as novices in broadcasting however, Sandy and Yannick compared themselves to more experienced volunteers, often referring to the non-broadcast duties, including for example Nigel's studio engineering work and management work. Sandy explained how, *'*[Nigel] *is always here, doing this, doing that. He built the studios, he does the training, he's always off to see* [name] *the manager'.* Their comparisons appear therefore to be competency-based, in which their perceived lack of expertise means they have yet to attain the status of volunteer at Plum.

Olivia and Tina at Grape also identified volunteers as competent and that they too had yet to achieve similar competency to be called volunteers. Unlike Sandy and Yannick, who referred to non-broadcast activities, for Tina and Olivia competency also reflected broadcast ability. Tina blogged that, *'volunteers do something good, like get interviews in, promote* [Grape] *projects, get out and campaign. All we do is play music'*. She also blogged about another volunteer who had been recruited into a

Grape broadcast project that she would like to know. Of her Tina explained that, '*she seems really sure of herself, and I should say hello, but I can't because I can't do anything for her*'. Olivia and Tina appeared to have a clear conception of what constituted a community radio volunteer, but needed to develop their practice from established members. Whilst their intention was to develop into such volunteers, '*we want to get stuff, people, onto our show, to be part of* [Grape]', Olivia explained in interview, '*we're not sure how, and there's no one to show us really but we've got to do it*'. Despite being unable to garner support from established members, Olivia and Tina did continue to broadcast with a sense of purpose. In doing so they developed their show but limited by their abilities, which identified differences between those volunteers who were established and those who were not. The distinction between the two types of volunteering as the participants distinguished it lies in how embedded into Grape those activities that define volunteering are. Therefore, the other person recruited to a Grape project is defined by Tina and Olivia as a volunteer because of the extra projects they are engaged in, whilst the self-generated connections of the participants are not enough to become established volunteers.

In summary, an examination of practice revealed several features of how the participants perceived volunteering in community radio. According to the participants, status was a defining characteristic of the participants' practice. Firstly, some definitions were rooted in having experience of organisational practice and these appear to have parallels between the station ethos and definitions. For example, Cherry's manager described how Cherry volunteers attempted to avoid hierarchies (7.1), and the participants at Cherry blogged that their practice reflected this. At Grape, Tina and Olivia blogged of the community project work they saw around them as a defining characteristic of volunteering, with community-based projects a feature of Grape's practice claimed by the manager (7.2). Thus, participants looked to establishment practice for definitions. Secondly, data suggests that participants were all concerned with status, but in different ways. At Apple, broadcasters were perceived as workers, with volunteers undertaking trustee activities. At Plum status was reflected by a place in the

station hierarchy: volunteering was broadcasting plus undertaking management tasks. At Grape, a similar equation operated. Broadcasting plus community projects equalled being a volunteer. Participants at Cherry, a station with no staff, described a non-hierarchical environment in which they considered themselves broadcaster volunteers alongside adults doing the same.

The next section explores a second aspect to practice. As participants noted, the more established the volunteer, practice became multi-faceted and status increased. Over the fieldwork period, some participants blogged how their practice became more complex and their commitment to their community radio station increased.

8.2.2 Commitment increased as practice became more complex

Two participants suggested that as they became established as volunteers they became more committed to community radio. At Grape, Tina became more engaged at Grape when asked by the Manager to be part of a project about young people and local politics. She blogged that:

> *Another thing was to work with people and elections, especially young people and interviewing them to see how much they know and getting them more involved in local politics. I'm really interested in getting young people involved in politics. It seems people hardly know anything about the local elections and don't really want to get involved.*

Tina wanted to use community radio to discuss politics but lacked the support from established members to develop their broadcasting skills to do so (section 8.1.1). Tina reported that the new project, '*is going to involve people from communities more, like young people from housing estates to help them learn how to use the radio'*. Of this Tina reflected that the, *'change will help me continue at* [Grape] *but change it as everything else will be different'*:

This opportunity will develop my people skills and teaching skills and just generally working with people I don't know already. And also not working on something solely for me and my life, as our show has been, but as part of [Grape], *for other people and creating something they're proud of and being able to pass on skills to people.*

Because the Manager was able to introduce Tina to established members and the project was clearly defined, Tina was able to identify how she would develop her abilities. She could also see how her voluntary practice would be situated within the organisation by working with established members, as well as the local community through the projects aims. As with the definition of a volunteer that she and Olivia suggested (section 8.2.1), she needed the organisation to show her the way. On this she explained that *'I'm hoping that* [Manager] *will be supportive and help me organise things'*.

Nigel at Plum reported that his role had developed and this required greater commitment from him. He began as a volunteer with a specific interest in the skills of the radio engineer. During the fieldwork period, Nigel and two volunteers (both 19 and not part of this research) built a broadcast studio to be used by young volunteers. He suggested the idea of a *'youth studio'* to the station management in a proposal document when he first joined as a volunteer: *'it was a case of proving I could do it, once they knew I was capable they had a performance review, and gave me the chance to do it'*.

The image below shows the studio built for young broadcasters by Nigel and his team (image one):

(Image one: Young People's Studio, Plum)

Nigel explained that he was given more responsibility because of his work on the studios. This included peer support for young volunteers and being, 'consulted…on a new training pack for volunteers' by management. Nigel blogged that he had increased his value to Plum and has moved up the hierarchy, 'I sit in on meetings about the station now. I suppose I'm the link to the young people here. I'm committed to [Plum] and they kind of appreciate that'. Nigel explained that his relationship with Plum has 'turned into a way of life' that he 'wouldn't be without'.

Tina and Nigel offer examples of where a volunteer needs organisational support to develop, and with that support, their commitment to the organisation increases. Participants who volunteered as solo presenters, Xavier and Ellie at Apple and Martin at Cherry, suggested that their commitment also developed, but instead of support from established members they identified how they collaborated with other participants on broadcast projects. However, their focus on broadcasting, and not becoming a volunteer through undertaking extra activities, meant they remained peripheral to the established membership.

Xavier and Ellie at Apple initially volunteered as solo presenters. They broadcast similar music shows to each other, but at different times. Ellie blogged that she, 'realised we had a lot in common. We talked about our shows and thought we might do something together'. Part way through fieldwork they took the opportunity to broadcast together on an additional show when a slot at Apple became available. This partnership became an assessment of their different abilities as radio presenters and the value of working collaboratively. Xavier planned meticulously: 'If I turn up on a Monday morning to do my Monday afternoon show with no songs and nothing to talk about then I'll mix a bad show'. He told Ellie in group interview she tries to 'wing it' to which she agreed. Ellie later blogged that she was not always prepared but that she is useful in other areas:

> I don't get much time to plan a playlist or research an artist, I'm always clued up about new music and have it with me , but it terms of having an organised folder on the computer etc I'm

not so good. But [Xavier] is, so i think the differences come together to make our show really

good.

Xavier and Ellie continued to broadcast for number of months before experimenting with a monthly podcast (an online radio show that is pre-recorded and so available to the listener at any time) and using social media to promote their broadcast. This secondary development gave them a renewed opportunity to collaborate, as Ellie explained:

We realised we got more listeners via the internet than listening to the live show. [Xavier] noticed he got more listeners on his Mixcloud when I was on the show. Now whether that was people who listen to my individual show go 'I'll listen to that one as well', his and hers are joining together, or he works better with another person, so we decided to do a podcast.

The podcast represented attempts by the participants to create a new avenue to connect with their listeners, reinforcing the connections and ensuring greater solidarity between themselves as broadcasters and their audience. It also reinforced commitment to each other within Apple as they helped each other reflect and learn about broadcasting through collaborative practice. Ellie blogged about what she had learned from Xavier:

I'm planning more now. It takes more time, but I feel more confident on air when I'm sure what I'm going to say. We're not a perfect radio duo, but I think from only having done 3 shows we've helped each other out a lot.

Though Ellie notes in her blog that only three broadcasts had been created, they continued to work together when the fieldwork stage had ended.

Collaborative practice was also a feature for Martin at Cherry. Martin undertook the Arts Award at his school, using Cherry as a place for his artistic practice, and collaborating with Alice. Martin explained that to receive the award he needed to train *'an apprentice'* but he also required, *'a producer to help me with my research and find interesting topics and points of interest'*. The role he identified for Alice

was limited initially. Alice had, '*to do her own research and try to find out things for the show*' as well as learn by watching Martin during broadcasts. As the collaboration advanced, Martin reported that Alice's role developed: '[Alice] *is already learning and picking it all up rather quickly*' and later that '*she thinks she might speak on the next show*'. Martin was keen to maintain the collaboration rather than return to solo presenting once he had achieved his qualification. The pair continued to broadcast together at the end of fieldwork, months after Martin had achieved his qualification, and were considering a new show: '[Manager] *spoke to me about going weekly which is really exciting!* [Alice] *will be excited too.*' Martin's primary motivation to achieve his arts award through Cherry developed into a committed partnership with his new co-presenter, which made him more willing to continue volunteering with Cherry.

In summary, commitment reflects a second dimension to how the participants developed an understanding of who they volunteered for. They reported how roles could be demarcated and identified that volunteering as an established member was defined by more than broadcasting. This placed the participants in a quandary: to become an established member they needed to learn how to perform these other activities, and only three, Tina and Olivia, and Nigel, did so. Others remained peripheral to these kinds of activities, limited to broadcasting and developing new ideas and projects with peers. Whilst being on the periphery was legitimised by established members through their lack of interest in the newcomers (Lave, 1991), the participants also found that developing their networks gave them a reason for remaining peripheral because of the space it offered to experiment with forms of practice, such as podcasting or collaborative work. The space participants used was created by the practice-based training regime which enabled the experimental citizenship networks to develop. As such, this space emerged as fundamental to how practice was undertaken, as it was within the organisation but without the strong control of established members.

8.2.3 Understanding the sector

As participants increased their experience of volunteer broadcasting, some developed their understanding of the community radio sector and its role in society. Two participants relied on the support of their community radio station to develop their understanding as part of their involvement in as project, suggesting that participants' understanding of the role of community radio was limited to local impact rather than a wider media mission. Two other participants independently sought out information to understand how other community radio stations operated as part of their commitment to community radio, but not necessarily their station.

As newcomers to community radio, the participants did not know much about the community radio sector. Tina at Grape blogged that, '*we didn't get told anything about community radio, you know, as a movement, it was just what we could do at* [Grape]'. Sandy and Yannick at Plum admitted they, '*knew nothing about community radio. We just saw* [Plum] *offering us the chance*'. Xavier explained that Apple did offer insight into its wider mission because of its focus on talent development: '*It's* [Apple's] *for training the next generation* [of broadcasters]' he blogged. This lack of critical understanding raises two issues: why did the young people not investigate something they were committing time to, and secondly, what would it take for the community radio station to raise the issue of the philosophies behind community media?

None of the participants investigated their community organisation as part of a wider network of community media operators. Instead, as Ellie in interview suggested, '*the focus is on the local area – everything we do is about* [city], *and so that's what we work on*'. Nate blogged that, '*we trained in skills, about interviewing, talking on air, using the equipment. We didn't talk about Apple as such*'. At Cherry, Eric explained, '*Sir told us that it wasn't the BBC or* [local commercial station] *but we didn't go into detail. He said it was our chance.*' Participants suggest that the established members focused the young people on the local area without contextualising their volunteering within community media as a movement.

Two participants developed this understanding as their engagement as volunteers developed suggesting that as the participants became established, they learned more about the community radio phenomenon. Tina and Olivia learned of the community radio sector in discussions initiated by the Manager, who had secured funding to support two young volunteers to represent the radio station at an international youth symposium on community media. Tina blogged that the, '[Manager] *spoke to us about a trip to Poland. She explained about community media across the world which we knew nothing about!*' Tina went on to blog that, '*I didn't know that* [Grape] *was part of a national or global network. I thought it was just another radio station but doing things differently*'. The lack of explanation of the wider context for community radio, as a type of radio in the UK, or as a part of community media globally, suggests that it may not be a priority in the radio stations in this research. Moreover, of the fourteen young volunteers in this research, none of them researched community radio before volunteering. Xavier explained in interview that, '*I did this* [volunteering – waves his arms around to symbolise his involvement] *because they said they would train me, which they have, but I didn't know about community radio really*'. Others also suggested training was the focus of recruitment. Three of the four radio stations in this research did not use a formal training programme, and even where a programme was used at Apple (section 7.3) neither management nor participants mentioned the need for volunteers to understand the philosophy or policy debates behind community radio. In the context of this research into young volunteers, the radio station managers did not feel it was necessary to explain about community radio to newcomers.

However, for Tina and Olivia, an opportunity arose through Grape that required an understanding of the context of community radio. They were asked to represent Grape at a symposium in Poland for European young volunteers in community media. The residential was designed to expand how young volunteers think about community media through inter-cultural dialogue and practice of community media. On their return, Olivia explained how she now understood, '*community media as a global movement*' of which '*community radio was a part, but there's film and newspapers, and other stuff too*'. She blogged that the workshops in film, radio and web, '*showed me how different countries make*

community media'. Her assessment was that, '*the project also opened my eye to how big the world really is and how many things are going on!*'. Olivia reported that this new knowledge politicised her understanding. She blogged that, '*I knew how mainstream TV and radio don't* (sic) *reflect everyone's concerns but now I know how people fight for an alternative*'. The experience made her reflect more about the role of Grape in her community and what she considered the practice of community radio entailed*:*

> *Community radio in general is more about giving members of communities the opportunity to voice their opinions rather than producing really amazing radio presenters. it's basically a free platform with very few restrictions, for me providing that service to a community is far more important than having a slick, tight radio station.*

Tina also went on the trip to Poland. She blogged how the experience made them known to the established members at Grape: '*It was nice stepping into* [Grape] *after Poland – everyone was like "ohhh how was your trip?" and they all remembered and wanted to hear about it*'. The commitment of Olivia and Tina began to be spoken of in project terms, not just their own broadcasts, and so as they became involved in plans, the station committed more to them:

> [Manager] *suggested we should get involved with more stuff which made us feel less like it was a one off thing and more something we should be encouraging and looking for more of. She said* [Grape] *should get involved in a European Union funded organisation and organise some thing similar itself – which would be so exciting.*

Tina and Olivia relied on the Manager at Grape to explain the sector and develop the possibilities for greater understanding of the potential of community media in their local area. They suggest that this knowledge was made available because of a specific project, and was not proffered as a necessary introduction into community radio. This suggests that knowledge held by established members may be transferred on a project by project basis, and not as part of a collaborative and engaged learning experience.

Two participants at Plum, Sandy and Yannick, sought to understand community radio for themselves, prompted by a poor experience in which they were denied access to the studio:

> *Me and* [Yannick] *have had a couple of discussions about seeing if we could just try finding a new radio station where we could do our thing. We looked online. There's lots of community radio stations, but not many that close.*

Initially they examined other community radio stations online, *'looking at what they do, stuff like that, but there's not much info except to say get in touch'.* They were searching for a philosophy which fitted their ideas of making radio*: 'we can't find anyone asking for comedy, just the same stuff about radio for the community'*. Without much success, in interview they asked me a pertinent question for this research, *'these community stations, are they all the same?'* Asked why they thought they might be Sandy suggested, *'Commercial stations all sound the same, you know, rubbish music, adverts, so are community stations the same?'* This raised methodological concerns for me. I was hopeful that they would be supported from within Plum, but their blogs described otherwise. If I suggested that community stations were not the same, and provided examples, I felt I might have been interfering in some way. But I also thought I might be letting them down by not maintaining an honest relationship with them. Their plight at Plum, explicated in the next chapter, and my quandary, led me to suggest they could record at Plum and offer the recordings for broadcast elsewhere. This would then help them discover interest in their radio from another radio station. Their research into alternative radio stations, limited as it was, revealed how little they took from looking at community radio station websites. What they wanted to learn about and understand, was how they would experience being part of a community at a station, not what skills were on offer.

8.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have attempted to answer two research questions. The first concerns how the participants experienced community radio volunteering. I showed how their practice was concerned

with connecting to people, pursuits and careers by using community radio as a broadcasting tool. Volunteering was therefore more than an activity to build a curriculum vitae. Rather it represented how the participants engaged in the areas in which they lived, and reflected their active citizenship as members of their local community through how they could reflect youth culture and ideas in their radio programming. By developing an embryonic network of collaborators, the participants located their volunteering in a very real sense of their lives, using community media to link and strengthen relationships. The voices of young people, both the participants and other voices, also reflected the desire to locate their broadcasting in a local reality, whether an interview, comedy or bringing friends into the studio. Finally, close friendships were also seen as an important part of the experience of volunteering in community radio. Four participants described their volunteering as a refuge from their busy lives in which voluntary practice cemented an already strong relationship. It is a way to engage with the public through the airwaves, but a studio is also a real space, a small soundproof booth, and as such is also a refuge.

The second research question concerned how the participants defined volunteering. Following on from the literature chapter, I identified two areas of interest: what volunteering was, and who volunteering was for. For the former, I noted how despite differences in voluntary practice, each participant was concerned with their status as a volunteer within the organisation because of how it affected their practice. Volunteering was defined by their perceived relationship with the established members of the station, and what being an established member constituted. Broadcasting was considered an acceptable peripheral activity because it could be based around the embryonic and emergent network and was therefore not isolated. Being an established member became a choice of whether to engage in other activities. I drew on Cameron (1999) who suggested that membership might imply governance or administrative interest, whilst volunteering is restricted to public-facing projects.

I addressed the second question of for whom volunteering is for by examining the practice of commitment. In doing so, the features of motivation were revealed. Increased commitment took the form of more volunteering at the station to produce more and better broadcasts. This practice took two forms: collaborative learning and peer support between participants, and working on projects to become established members. Participants therefore identified that commitment is associated with a deepening of engagement in a variety of projects through collaborative, creative expression, but this was not at the expense of their commitment as broadcasters. Participants who chose to remain still considered themselves committed and this was evident in prolonged practice over the fieldwork period.

Whilst commitment to the public was evident in improving broadcast outputs through creating a network, commitment to community media as a platform for the expression of non-mainstream voices was less evident. This was reported as due to community media not being contextualised in the initial training the participants received but was also discussed when Tina and Olivia became more established as volunteers, suggesting that such knowledge is considered necessary to be an established member but not a peripheral one by the community of practice. Only when the subject was pertinent to a project was it discussed with participants, who blogged their surprise at the new knowledge of community media a global phenomenon, which politicised their view of community media as a movement that *'fights'* as Olivia put it. For most the participants, volunteering for community media was rooted in a local sense, and focused principally on training broadcast skills, not the broader debate about the function and role of media in society.

9. THE EXPERIENCE OF VOLUNTEERING: HOW FULL PARTICIPATION WAS CRUCIAL TO LEARNING

This chapter addresses one research question:

1. How do young people develop understanding and access knowledge when they engage in the social practice of volunteering at a community radio station?

In this chapter I examine how the participants described in their blogs and group interviews their experience of learning the skills and knowledge to become successful volunteer broadcasters and members of the organisation. In doing so I focus their comments about the established members to unpack the dynamics of that relationship. As I noted in the previous chapter, positive associations with established members were crucial to how the participants viewed successful volunteering, itself defined by status and increased commitment through undertaking activities other than broadcasting. In this chapter, I develop this to suggest that participants also needed to be legitimised as volunteers to become successful community broadcasters. Legitimacy was defined by collaborative practice between newcomers and established members. Using examples, I describe and examine the various ways this is achieved, or not. Data suggests that participants were expected to collaborate with established members through three stages. Firstly, basic studio training quickly introduced radio broadcasting within the context of the station, with a focus on equipment not context for community media. Secondly, participants learned to broadcast through a system of practice and review, although their experiences of this differed across the community radio stations. Third, some developed their volunteering into a rich and engaging experience involving deeper collaboration with established members. In applying the concept of legitimacy, I use communities of practice theory and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991), in which newcomers hope to become established members by learning the practices of the community. Without legitimacy being conferred by established members through a process of approving learned practices, the newcomer remains a peripheral figure to the community. At this point, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that commitment

to the group may be questioned, and newcomers either leave the group or remain peripheral, ignored by established members and relying on peer learning from other newcomers to develop.

Data suggests that, as with communities of practice theory, learning from established members did not proceed until participant practices were legitimised through being directly trained or involved in collaborative practice. Yet the participants reported experiencing a process that was not straightforward but was nuanced and challenging: that to become an established member involved not just learning through the stages, but also negotiation about support, ideas, space and access to equipment. Participants also '*played*' (Hay, 1996: 96) on the periphery by developing embryonic networks that reduced isolation, and used this time to reflect on their status as volunteers and the authority they had to influence the established volunteers. They also offer examples where legitimacy once conferred was removed, with participants finding themselves once again peripheral, suggesting a two-way, not teleological, process.

Participants revealed an understanding that learning was as much about conflict as harmony, and that the periphery could be a creative space for exploration of ideas and practices through new networks that did not affect the practice of established members. However, though the periphery was a creative space for participants, new practices were still either accepted or rejected by established members, and so legitimacy of practice remained vital to develop from being a newcomer into an established member.

9.1 Legitimacy of practice

Participants reported that there were three ways that established members legitimised their practices: first, basic broadcast training provided in one to one and group induction sessions gave participants the impetus to pursue radio content. Second, they reviewed broadcasts and new

broadcast ideas. Thirdly, participants were invited to undertake activities other than their own broadcasts to become established members. I take each in turn.

9.1.1 Basic training & technical Inductions

The community radio stations offered basic studio training based around a membership-style system (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) of support and assistance as and when required rather than a programme-style of formal training courses. Nigel at Plum described basic training as an, '*induction in the studio*' which involved, '*using the equipment to learn how to do a show*'. Ellie at Apple blogged that the induction was, '*being shown how to use the studio*'. At Cherry, training in the studio involved, '*basically being told what fader does what, and then you get to have a go*' blogged Michael. Nigel at Plum blogged that volunteer broadcasters, '*learn by having a go*'. The focus of the basic training was technical; how to physically press the buttons and lift faders on the sound mixing desk, and use a CD player and microphone. At Apple and Grape, staff carried out training whilst at Cherry and Plum volunteers oversaw it, but the induction was described by the participants as the same.

Participants described that the training induction at the community radio stations moved volunteers into the position of broadcaster quickly. Ellie at Apple explained that, '*my training went quickly*'; Olivia at Grape undertook her training, '*in a day, on work experience*'; whilst Nate at Apple suggested that basic training took, '*a few days'*. Nigel at Plum suggested training took, '*a few hours'*. Sandy at Plum illustrated this when he blogged his experience with Yannick in a conversation with a volunteer, Peter:

> '*Do you two want a show?*' (Peter)

> '*Yeah alright.'* (Sandy)

> '*When can you start?*' (Peter)

> '*Whenever.'* (Sandy)

Sandy continued:

> *And that was that. We returned the next day and were very swiftly sat down in a studio, shown how to turn the microphones on, instructed on how to play music, given a brief tour on what to do should everything suddenly collapse and cease working, and told to return to them when we had an hour long radio show recorded.*

The focus on practice reflected an emphasis on practical skills but it also reflected the desire of the participants to being broadcasting. Ellie at Apple blogged that, '*I couldn't wait to get going*' whilst Xavier agreed with Nate in interview that, '*we're here to broadcast – from the start. Even the training took too long.*' At Grape, Tina joined Olivia, '*in the studio, recording. My first time, and I was on air. It was brilliant – I think I picked it up quick* [both laugh]'.

At Plum, a focus on practice is intended to get the newcomer to think about content. Nigel at Plum explained that, "*They have to start thinking for themselves… people* [should] *realise 'it's not all done for me. I have to think, I want to put an interview there, some TV showbiz there'*". Plum was the only community radio station in the research to offer training documentation, where new volunteers were given what Nigel, who supported training as a volunteer, described as an '*initial training pack*', which, '*tells them what we expect and what they should expect from us*' and '*explains who does what and the dos and don'ts of broadcasting*'. According to Nigel the training pack encouraged newcomers to seek support from established members and not to attempt to resolve a situation or experiment themselves. Legitimacy was conferred through appropriate use of this hierarchy by newcomers. In describing the expected relationship at Plum, the training pack may have reinforced the authority of the established members by declaring that valid knowledge must come from these members, and not from experimentation or exploration. The '*initial training pack*', according to Nigel, reinforced the hierarchy at Plum alongside other policies of choosing music for presenters to ensure the station was attractive to listeners and advertisers. Thus, membership was perceived to be on the terms of established members only, with no room for exploration by newcomers.

In the next section I offer examples of how legitimacy, once conferred, may be removed by established members. At Grape, Tina and Olivia described themselves as, '*separate from everyone else at* [Grape]*'* because of a 'youth' tag, which relegated them to second-class status: '*The young people here are not seen as full volunteers, and everyone just gets annoyed at us being here'* blogged Olivia. What they describe is how they were peripheral and remained so for most of the fieldwork period, separated by the established members. Participants at Apple reported that staff supported volunteers with an, '*open door'* policy for discussions that encouraged learning and experimentation with new ideas. At Plum, participants reported a hierarchical '*office*' environment that suited some but not others. At Cherry, participants took the responsibility to learn through practice and review their work, eschewing support from adults. Finally, changes to policies at Plum and at Apple meant that established members de-legitimised the practices of some participants when they would not conform to new rules. These examples highlight how hierarchies and status confer legitimacy as a component of the practice of the participants, and show the variety of ways that established members legitimise practice, but also how as community of practice changes, volunteers are expected to change too.

9.1.2 Grape: Starting on the periphery and staying there

Tina and Olivia were members of a dedicated Grape youth scheme alongside other young volunteers. A staff member dedicated to youth volunteers supported their learning in a single weekly session, providing training to newcomers and support for existing volunteers. However, Olivia explained that, '*it doesn't really happen because* [staff member] *is always so busy*'. As such, Olivia explained that the group didn't meet regularly. Tina reported that:

> I don't feel like I'm part of [youth strand name]. *I've met just one of the people and I've kind of talked to them about his show but I don't know what anyone else's show is like.*

According to Tina and Olivia, the youth strand, promoted widely to recruit volunteers, did not function as advertised. Tina reported that she did not receive training because, *'[name] said he was so busy he left me with* [Olivia] *to show me'*. She also blogged that

> *They taught* [Olivia] *the stuff when she did her work experience but have never mentioned training me up or anything. I don't think the station has contributed much to our technical learning.*

This led Tina to explain that she was, '*not confident at all in using the controls'*.

Tina reported that she and Olivia frequently asked for support from the staff member but that he was reluctant support them and from their perspective, actively avoided them:

> [Staff member] *rarely speaks to us, unless we go and talk to him. And even then he tried to keep conversation to a minimum. So we only really speak to him when we have a problem or a question. And even then I don't know how much he helps.*

Olivia illustrated the lack of interest in supporting them. Olivia and Tina asked whether digital editing software could remove background noise from a recording. According to Olivia, the staff member responded:

> *He'd never heard of it, that there was only one way and it wasn't possible with our show. Then he said he'd have a go, so we left and I don't know if he ever edited it.*

It appears that Tina and Olivia needed the training staff member to understand and support them from their position at the periphery and what was required to establish them as members. They were isolated by his lack of support: '*We didn't have anyone else to ask',* blogged Tina. By avoiding them and not supporting their practice, the training staff member appeared to very visibly not confer legitimacy, and seemingly placed Tina and Olivia on the periphery of the community, that is, unsupported by the established members.

Olivia also suggested that support was also not forthcoming from other established members. She created a blog post entitled, '*the list of annoyance*' which included, '*people running over into our studio time*' and '*people taking our studio time'.* Tina reported she was frustrated by, '*People barging into the studio demanding that they're booked in – when they're clearly not*' and, '*Booking studios and then having our names scribbled out with other names over them*'. Tina further complained that she sometimes disliked being at Grape:

> *When other volunteers and staff invade our studio space, they do it in a rude and authoritative way and make us feel that what we're doing is wrong, and they seem to flip the situation round so it's our fault and not their fault about whatever. I think this belittles us and can make us feel angry.*

Tina explained that she and Olivia maintained their civility: '*we don't want to argue back at the time and we want to come across as nice and friendly*' but Olivia reflected that, '*sometimes I feel like we're not taken that seriously here'.*

According to these participants, they were restricted to peer support and learning and developing the connections outside of Grape to develop their show. Tina reported that they learned through trial and error:

> *We usually try a hands on approach first and try and do it ourselves. When we didn't know how to edit, we'd just record and then when leaving ask* [staff member] *to edit it, but now we deal with problems ourselves.*

Olivia demonstrated what little she knew to Tina, who blogged that she did not grow in confidence:

> *I wouldn't say I've learnt a lot about the radio industry at* [Grape]. *I can't even say that I know much about community broadcasting,* [Grape] *seems to be very hap hazard and just running on self-motivation and people getting on with their stuff*.

The participants expected more organisation of their involvement by established members, who were, *'getting on with their stuff'*, and not, as expected, sharing knowledge through organised support of newcomers.

Olivia and Tina blogged that they did connect to friends and causes outside of Grape to develop their show. Tina blogged that, *'Jack came in on today's show and brought some CDs'* whilst Olivia blogged that, *'we are thinking today we might talk about Woodcraft, and see if any listeners are involved'*. Other friends joined in via social media and in person, including, *'Annie and Ellie'* and, *'Emily, who is lovely. She is doing Art Foundation with me next year'*. Connections with friends and covering issues relevant to young people maintained the development of the show. Tina blogged that:

> *It's great getting people in. It changes things a bit and we have to do new things, like find and connect extra microphones, that sort of thing. Emily told her friends about it too so we've got new listeners.*

Though Tina and Olivia reported that they failed to access knowledge from the training staff member and from the other established members, they do highlight how through peer training and support in the studio, and by connecting with their activities outside of the station, they maintained momentum as volunteers. Thus, the position at the periphery in community radio is mitigated by the volunteering practice which connected to people outside of Grape through the networks developed by the participants. By training the participants quickly in studio practice, established members created the chance for the periphery to be developed into a creative and useful space, and newcomers experimented with new knowledge, and have the room to forge their network connections. However, this does not necessarily mean they become less peripheral to the established members, who were still required to legitimise practice.

9.1.3 Apple: Legitimacy through discussions

At Apple, Nate reported that volunteers learned through the practice of broadcasting and through reviews with staff of that broadcasting. He blogged that the management encouraged an, '*open door policy*' as an opportunity to talk about previous shows, to discuss new ideas or resolve issues when it suits the volunteer or the staff. He explained that, '*There is that higher authority and* [Manager] *and* [Deputy Manager] *know their stuff like, if there's any problems you should go to them*'.

One example reported by Nate illuminates this point. Nate experimented with his show, trying ideas on air with his co-presenters. In one instance, they talked for eight minutes without a break to try to give the listener what Nate reported as, '*what it is really like being with us*'. The Manager asked them into his office to discuss this. Nate blogged his description of the events: "[Manager] *had said that he like the 'rawness' of the show, and the magazine style, however he pointed out a link which was 8 mins long*". The Manager reminded them of their basic training to keep vocal links simple for the audience:

> *I told him what I thought about the link, likewise he did the same. And to tell the truth it was just a little chat, he was only giving some constructive criticism which in the long run will probs* (sic) *help. He made the argument that for someone who has tuned in half way through, their* (sic) *not in on the joke and will turn off. Fair point. We're just going to keep it snappy from here on in.*

Nate reported that he and the team benefited from discussions about ideas, '*a few times*'. After several months, their broadcasting developed to include features such as recording bands on location, encouraged by management support. This culminated in the team winning the Bronze award at the station annual awards.

Ellie at Apple also reported that she benefited from management support. She explained in interview that the Manager would, '*drive me to Manchester if I'm going to Manchester to interview someone or something like that. He'll have the radio on and will be singing* (laughs)'. Nate blogged that, '*they're*

sort of like, and I have to use the type of phrase, down with us. They're quite natural'. Participants perceived staff as knowledgeable and accessible, and they reported that their broadcasting developed with this support. As they developed, Ellie blogged that she now supported other newcomers, *'there's a new girl and she was really scared, so I sat with her and showed her the controls. We had a laugh in the spare studio and she was much happier'.* This experience of peer support on the periphery suggests how the spare studio was a creative space that did not impinge on the space of established members.

According to the Manager (7.3) Apple engaged young volunteers in the governance of the station, but none of the participants in this research were involved in such decision-making. As detailed earlier, Xavier, aged 18 part of the way through fieldwork, stated he had been asked to become a trustee. Xavier also blogged that the Manager identified suitable candidates:

> [Name] *has been here for ages and she's doing a media degree now, but she's on the board. I'm going to do my degree hopefully, so perhaps that's what he thought.*

This suggests that legitimacy to become a trustee may be reflected in qualifications and ambitions (as well as age). Yet Nate, also 18 during fieldwork and intending to study media at university, explained that, *'they've never asked me whether I would want to be a governor* [trustee]. *I might you know, I might ask'.* However, Nate did not follow this up with an enquiry, later suggesting in a blog post that, *'it might be too much for me because I've got a film on at the moment'.* Both Xavier and Nate were fixed on their broadcasting and other, related activities that connect to Apple, such as DJing and filmmaking. Their developing broadcasting practices were legitimised at Apple through broadcast reviews with established members. This legitimacy also extended to assume they would be consulted on non-broadcast issues even though they were not trustees, as illustrated by Nate: *'I suppose they'll mention significant stuff to us, so I can talk to* [Manager] *then'.* Nate equated how he could talk to the Manager about broadcasting with discussions about governance, that his voice, through the, *'open door'* policy and the legitimacy the reviews and awards give him, carried authority.

9.1.4 Cherry: Peer learning

At Cherry, participants undertook radio training at school as part of a BBC project with their teacher, who was also the Cherry manager. Eric blogged that this short training course introduced, *'what we need to know about making a radio programme'*, whilst Alicia explained in interview, *'it was about choosing who to interview and what'*. Michael suggested that they learned studio skills from the teacher initially, but then as a group:

> *We did the BBC* [School Report radio training course] *which was really about using microphones and interviews. At the studio, Sir showed us the mixing desk first, then we all had a go. He left us alone, so it was great. We weren't broadcasting at first, but we were there together. Now we have our own shows, but at first it was all together so we all knew the same.*

Participants also reported that they reviewed broadcasts together in weekly meetings at school, and that though the teacher/ manager was present as a chaperone, they do this without their teacher in the room. Ken explained that, *'he waits outside, and drinks tea'*. Alicia added that he is, *'there if we need him, like, if something disastrous happens'*. Alicia continued that, *'[Cherry] itself has few rules, just not to swear and not to say things about anyone that is false. These do not in anyway prevent anything that we do on the show anyway'*.

As a new community radio station, Cherry had no staff and few established members, including the young volunteers. The participants as newcomers were therefore expected to take responsibility for their practice, and this appeared to elevate their status in contrast to the other radio stations. Martin for example blogged that he supported Steve, and adult broadcaster and established member, to extend his knowledge of the mixing desk and computer system when he began broadcasting after Martin's Saturday show. Martin demonstrated how to use scripts on the same computer screen as the station idents and jingles. Michael and Eric also began to experiment with using the equipment without asking for support from the teacher. Usually, they brought compact discs but, Michael blogged, that, *'this was heavy and annoying'* and so they worked out where on the mixing desk where

they could, '*plug in an mp3 player. We got the lead and it worked.*' They shared this with Martin, who demonstrated the technique to Steve, in a second example of a newcomer supporting an established member. In a further example, Eric also blogged that one week they had arrived to broadcast to find:

> *The original desk had been broken, when a cup of coffee had been spilt, and thus there was a new mixing desk. After a while it was fine but caused a few problems to begin with because we had to learn a few new things.*

Of the same incident, Alicia blogged that '*It wasn't an issue. We just worked out where things were, like the CD players, and that was that. We even showed Sir*'.

Michael blogged that being able to make decisions about their practice made them motivated to work together: '*We all decided to do the Arts Award at* [Cherry]. [Eric] *learned from me.* [Ken] *did from* [Alicia]. *We do a show after school and it's got better. We also all meet together every week*'. The participants undertook, '*weekly review meetings*' during lunchtime at school to discuss their programme and the content. Alicia explained in interview that it was her idea to keep the review to the group and not invite the teacher:

> *I thought that we should assess each other. We are all doing a show aimed mostly at the youth so we need the input of someone from the youth. If Sir came and assessed us his advice may be aimed towards what listeners of an older generation would want to hear.*

Cherry was a newly created community radio station, with members still establishing practices, which may explain their willingness to listen and learn from the newcomers, regardless of age. Being treated as a volunteer first and young person second encouraged shared working between newcomers and established members, whilst at school the participants supported their own broadcasting in peer review groups. They responded to the responsibility with increased confidence to investigate issues themselves to resolve them. They were legitimised by the teacher/ manager who gave them space and opportunity to explore, whilst ensuring they knew he was available for support.

9.1.5 Plum: Volunteer supported learning

According to Nigel, at Plum, volunteers were tasked with supporting young volunteers, whilst staff members focused on raising and sustaining income. Staff remained distant to newcomers, focused on fundraising and managing Plum. Participants suggested a hierarchy was noticeable, including Nigel:

> *It is hierarchical, if someone is essentially above you and says can you go and do that, then you go ahead and do it.*

Given information on staff, volunteers and their roles was made so visible in the formal training pack, suggests the importance of hierarchy to the established members. Besides Nigel, there were three other participants at Plum, Norbert and Sandy and Yannick. Their experiences of learning from established members at Plum were different but demonstrate how Plum attempted to direct the practices of young volunteers.

Norbert visited once a week as he lived a considerable distance away. He stayed most of the day and likened Plum to *'an office'* but also asserted his appreciation of this because of the way established members support him. He blogged that:

> *I like it here. I know in certain offices you've got to keep your head down and not cause trouble, but here you can just be yourself. Everyone's really supportive about what you do, so there's a lot of feedback going around, in nice ways. There's two ways you can give feedback. 'That was rubbish' or 'That was good, but maybe if you try this…' Always try to put a good spin on things.*

Norbert suggested that the established members at Plum encouraged conversation and observation as a way of learning:

> *I learn by picking up things from people. So I think an environment like this is perfect for me because everyone is quite open about what they are doing. It's easy for me to sit by the door while they're presenting and I'll take notes in my head, not written down stuff.*

Norbert also reported that experimental practice, followed by a review, was also another way he was encouraged to learn at Plum:

If you have an idea you'll never know if somethings going to work or not if you don't try it. I'm very hands-on learning, I'll give something a go and if it doesn't work I'll not do it again.

As a volunteer assigned to support newcomers, Nigel was also keen for this kind of learning through review:

We'll listen back if it's their first couple of shows and we'll say, 'look, this could be a little stronger, what do you think', then if they say, 'yeah I'll work on that', then they'll work on that.

Norbert reported that he was often supported by Nigel, whom he described as, *'very approachable, and if you've got a problem you can go and talk to him'.* It was through Nigel's support that Norbert felt he could learn how to make radio through explaining his ideas and being encouraged to try them out: *'[Nigel] is always, if you've got an idea, he'll always hear about it. I do a feature 'guess the intro' and he's always saying, 'if you have an idea have a go'.* Norbert's practices were legitimised through the review sessions, but Norbert followed the hierarchical structure as Nigel legitimised his ideas.

Sandy and Yannick at Plum saw their experience differently because they did not spend as much time in a day at Plum as Norbert. This may have affected how they developed their relationship with the established members at Plum. Sandy blogged that, *'For us it's something that we come down, we do once a week and we have fun doing it'.* They described a *'home made'* feel rather than an office feel. Sandy explained that, *'we're just being ourselves and having a chat, and it feels like a homely place than a work place',* which also reflected their lack of engagement with the hierarchies that were so visible to Nigel and Norbert. Their early descriptions of Plum focused less on the hierarchy and more on the physical spaces they engaged with. Sandy described their broadcast studio being, *'handmade by Nigel'.* Yannick blogged that, *'[Nigel] built it. It's pretty amazing actually'.* Their perception of Plum in the early stages of their engagement came from being together in the studio and not engaging with

the established members, '*We try to keep our heads down actually, but no one has come to speak to us yet, and it's always totally busy'*. This reflected a self-imposed peripherality. Sandy explained in interview that he and Yannick discussed new ideas through peer-reviewing previous broadcasts together, '*we listen at home to recordings – they're usually pretty shite but we talk about bits to try again*'. Sandy also blogged that sometimes there were, '*specific aspects of* [the show] *that doesn't work well, but we'll do that again and try to make it better'.* Their approach is in contrast to Norbert's. Sandy and Yannick were happier to work together on the periphery without Nigel's support, and to experiment without approval. This approach did not last for more than a month.

To evaluate their broadcasting, Sandy and Yannick reported that a session with an established member, Peter, was organised. This session was to check on their broadcast skills and introduce a new policy to them. This was their first experience of the hierarchy at Plum. Sandy blogged they were given little notice, '*they sprung it on us, without asking beforehand, but there was nothing we could do'*. He recounted in the blog that:

> [Peter] *sat in on our show to watch us using the controls then tried to tell us how to properly use them. He was doing it whilst we were recording* [broadcasting]*, specifically, during links.*

Sandy's frustration came from the invasion during the spoken parts of the broadcast which had been prepared during the week before. He continued:

> *It was very hard to get the vibe we usually rely on going, and he sat there, like a wet blanket, between us. He didn't get that we were there to talk, not to play music that much, so it really all just didn't work.*

Peter also sought to introduce the new Plum policy during this session. Yannick in interview explained that the station, '*had decided to playlist presenters'* – presenters had to choose their music from a set list rather than their own tastes: '*He was adamant that we play as much of this new stuff as possible'* Sandy blogged. This brought Sandy and Yannick in line with other volunteers.

Peter sought to legitimize the practices of Sandy and Yannick by highlighting where they might improve their use of the equipment, and adopted a method of observation and demonstration. In this way, Sandy and Yannick might improve, although to do so in a live situation might reflect how infrequently Sandy and Yannick visited Plum, as well as a lack of understanding from the established members about how Sandy and Yannick sought to make radio. By being present, Peter stymied their practice and sought to demonstrate what was acceptable to the established members of Plum. Through the policy of '*play listing',* Peter sought to legitimise their practice further by introducing the new policy. Sandy blogged: '*it's all the usual chart rubbish other stations play. It's not us.'* This led to further difficulties between Sandy, Yannick and the established members of Plum, addressed in the next section.

9.1.6 Plum: New broadcasting policies

During the late stages of fieldwork, Plum changed its station name, removing the word 'community' and the location from the station title, and instead the station name became a single, but exciting, word. The basis for this, according to Nigel, was so that Plum could be a '*brand*'. The Head of Volunteers suggested that commercial pressure to develop advertising revenue was the main factor in Plum developing its commercial model (section 7.4). This change reflects government policy in which community radio stations are expected to generate commercial income (section 2.5).

Plum enforced a music policy in which presenters did not choose music but instead were asked to focus on what they said between music tracks. To explain this policy to me, Nigel blogged that, '*we need to do whatever we have to do to ensure that brand is how we want it to sound'.* Nigel further blogged that training focussed on presentation skills – '*ensuring presenters speak slowly*' – rather than '*programming skills*', that is, how to create a broadcast from component parts:

We now say to presenters be unique as you want, but there are certain music policies set out etc, you have to do news at a certain time of the day, there are certain adverts. We teach people to follow the playlists rather than picking their own music.

When asked about the move to a more commercial approach to radio in interview, Norbert accepted that as a volunteer there were decisions he would not be involved in. He blogged that, *'I know there are certain things I don't get a say in. These* [are] *big changes to the station'*. Norbert accepted his place in the hierarchy, and saw that it was imperative for him to retain his show:

I don't want to rock the boat. My show is a request show, and most of the music I play is on that list [station playlist]*. Nigel says we'll sound better, so I suppose that's a good thing.*

Yet Sandy and Yannick did not agree. Sandy blogged that:

There had been a load of new songs added to our playlist by [name]*. Naturally, these songs were as close to the general presently-popular musical garbage, that for whatever reason everyone seems to enjoy at the moment, as you could possibly get.* [Name] *was adamant that we play as much of this new stuff as possible. At the risk of sounding like a bit of a hipster,* [name] *refuses to believe that there is any music outside of the boundaries of what is currently popular, an area that me and* [Yannick] *aren't massively fond of.*

Their response was to ignore the playlist and use compact discs when they, *'realised that we don't have much in the way of music to choose from off the playlist'.* For Sandy and Yannick credibility with their audience was clearly important to them: they did not want to play music they did not like and which did not reflect their audience. Sandy also reported that '*despite other volunteers being allowed to add music'* to the playlist, they '*were not allowed*' to add their music.

Of their subterfuge, Sandy was proud that, *'we manage to weasel our way past* [name] *week after week and continue to play whatever we feel like, despite every other presenter on the station playing exclusively chart music'.* He added that:

The show remains an hour long recording of two abject idiots sitting in a box and sporadically mocking themselves and the world around them, only occasionally interrupted by whatever music we fancy listening to.

The participants deliberately flouted the station rule and instead played music they preferred. In doing so they did not seek for their practices to be legitimised by the established members. Towards the end of fieldwork, the participants received hostile emails and agreements to broadcast were not honoured, or cancelled at short notice. Yannick copied an email from the management after they were late for a booking:

You are !!!!!!ONLY!!!!! to use the studio for the time that yourselves have booked and no more. Going into the Studio 40 minutes after your booking had started is not !!!!!!ACCEPTABLE!!!!!!

Of this Sandy explained that, *'Communication has well and truly broken down between us, and whenever we do actually go in we inevitably just end up getting heavily berated about something'.* Yannick considered appealing, citing the listener numbers rising whenever they broadcast, but blogged that, *'this may be to no avail since we both agreed if we did this we would still want to have control over the music we play'.* As such, they reconsidered volunteering at Plum, with Sandy blogging that:

Things have been odd these past few weeks, and I find myself wondering why it is we even bother doing a form of radio work. Increasingly, my time with [Plum] *no longer fills me with joy.*

Sandy's response reflects the tensions between the creativity of newcomers and the expectations to conform to the community. Their experimental, thoughtful, and popular show, challenged these rules, and the constant re-affirmation of the rules from established members left Sandy wondering what the value of volunteering was, if it was not to be enjoyed. Sandy explained in his final blog post that they had received an email explaining that their, *'volunteering was suspended'* due to *'rebranding'*, which

left him to report that, '*Our experience serves only to educate and remind me as to how inhospitable and un-cooperative such places can be'.*

Established members initially legitimised Sandy and Yannick's practices though they did not seek support, preferring the creative space of the periphery. Yet with (unexpected and compulsory) support, their radio production skills improved and they developed a strong audience following. They were returned to the periphery under the new policy, their practices no longer legitimate. The effect of the policy change suggests an expectation from established members to adopt to the new way of working – something that may be easier for some than others. Their experience did not deter Yannick from community radio. He explained that, '*Essentially we want to carry on the show exactly the same way but at a different, more reliable, better station*'.

9.1.7 Apple: A new approach

Sandy and Yannick were not the only participants to experience a fundamental shift in station policy. Apple introduced changes to how they trained volunteers towards the end of the fieldwork phase of the research, in an attempt to raise broadcasting standards, making it more attractive to advertisers. This is the issue faced at For the People (FTP) in Bristol when awarded an incremental licence (section 2.4.1). In the case of Apple, the new direction rendered Nate's practices peripheral. This section highlights how a community of practice can change its practices, and expects volunteers to accept changes without debate.

The changes had been explained to me by the Manager (section 7.3). Soon after, Nate copied an email onto his blog sent to volunteers from the Manager:

> *New recruits are jumping through hoops to be part of the station and earn a slot on air, for this reason it is only fair we ensure current volunteers are also up to standard. To do this we are requesting the following: All on air presenters to complete a competency exam on 24th*

August. You will be able to book a session throughout the day. If you fail the exam you will be

asked to carry out our new training.

Nate blogged that the new rules included, '*block training sessions scheduled quarterly and will cover;*

presenting, production, news and mgmt. skills and will involve homework elements'. This was a

significant shift in training at Apple to a formal training course rather than learning through practice.

Nate blogged that:

> *I feel like Poland in 1939. Just a nice little radio show, not the greatest population but a solid*
>
> *fan base. Like having a nice farm, we look after the cows (our audience) water the fields*
>
> *(keeping management happy) and tend to the chickens (our blog). But when we think*
>
> *everything is ok, the Germans turn up to wreck the fun. I feel like these new rules are directly*
>
> *aimed at us. They've came onto our farm, eaten our cows, burned the fields and stole the*
>
> *ovaries out of our chickens.*

Nate suggested his practice developed well under the 'open door' policy at Apple (section 9.1.3). This

included him believing he would be involved in debates about significant shifts in policy, much in the

way he would discuss his radio broadcasts with management. The move towards a structured training

approach took Nate by surprise. Nate reported that this change was implemented and not debated:

'*we weren't consulted or anything*', he complained in a blog. He added, '*There (sic) being set out like*

orders, and some hint of threat. And its not friendly'. He suggested the change affected how he

perceived Apple: '*It's a corporate monster that* [Apple] *have churned out. You are not intermixing with*

all of the people anymore. There's a pyramid. A hierarchy'.

Nate subsequently copied to his blog a second email from the Manager which stated that Nate needed

to sit an exam to keep his show:

> *Just checking in to see if you all received the email about the exam next Friday? It will only*
>
> *take you 10-20mins to complete and you can come in at any time between 9-5pm. If you don't*

> *attend the exam or you fail it, you will lose any show that you have at the station until you*
>
> *have taken the new* [Apple] *training and passed the test.*

Nate suggested that the change gave the management more opportunity to shape how his broadcasts sounded. Despite the open-door discussions, Nate explained that, *'they never had any input in it, the management. And I think that's what they didn't like'*. He then extended this theory to other programmes on Apple, *'With all these new rules they want more control of what goes out'.* Indeed, the manager's email stated:

> *By the 24th August all shows need to have an element in the show that targets our audience,*
>
> *a promo, a Sony clip* [for the radio awards] *and an up to date bio/picture on the website*.

This suggests that the established members may have wanted to 'standardise' how Apple sounded (in terms of style of broadcasting, type of show, levels of ability as some broadcasters had less experience than other volunteers), which may have the effect of reducing the diversity of its sound by removing non-conformist presenters.

Nate blogged that his decision to leave Apple came from his experience of the changes in how Apple operated with its volunteers. He provided an interesting contrast before the changes and after, and raised questions about the new values at Apple. When Apple introduced the new training and support regime, one of Nate's broadcast team decided to leave. Nate turned to the Manager for the support he had previously benefited from:

> *We explained our problem and he said exactly the same thing to us about training, only slower.*
>
> *I was expecting them to help us because they said always go to management if we needed*
>
> *help, and we went to management needing help and they just didn't give us it.*

Nate chose to take a short break from broadcasting to decide what to do with the show and arranged a holiday in which he blogged that, *'they knew I was going away for a few weeks. I said to* [name] *when I'd be back'*. He also reluctantly completed the exam, *'which basically was just basic questions'*

before he left. On his return, Nate found that his show had been permanently allocated to a new volunteer, and the management refused to, '*discuss me getting the show back, or anything*'. Frustrated, he left and had what he described as a *'wake'* for his show. He explained that, '*I said that if we don't contact them I'll bet they never ever contact us'.* According to Nate, Apple didn't before the end of September 2013.

Nate identified the established members as culpable. He suggested that, *'the Manager let this happen. He knew this would happen, and he let it, but* [new manager and former volunteer] *has got it so wrong – she won't listen to anyone'* he blogged. Diverse practices were no longer legitimate, '*It's this robotic corporatisation. It's not that friendly* [Apple] *from before where you'd meet all these different characters'.* Nate suggested that the new practices, such as the new training and broadcasting regime, produced broadcasters he described as:

> *Very robotic in a sense of what the presenters are saying all the time. I'm sitting listening to it thinking it's scripted. I'd turn off and listen to something else that would make me laugh.* [Apple] *is all about music, music, music but a radio DJ needs to have personality as well. He can't just be a button pusher.*

Nate also considered that Apple's location also may have been an aspect of the changes. It was located in a community college, occupying some rooms near the entrance. Nate suggested that the college pressured Apple. He explained in interview that:

> *It might be down to the college cutting back funding and trying to improve the bottom line. Because a lot of the tasks* [staff] *were doing, it was more like fundraising tasks* [than supporting broadcasting].

Nate also suggested that changes at Apple that reduced the diversity of the broadcast output were similar to changes in the college:

There's a related issue coming back to college. A lot of changes have been made and they say they're for the good, like they've bought everyone an iPad or an iPhone, or there's free toast. But they've taken away everybody's free travel pass to pay for it, so everybody has to pay £120 per month to get their free education, their free ipad, and free toast.

Nate identified what he called the *'corporatisation'* of Apple as problematic for the diverse volunteer pool they used to draw from. This change was evident in how he reported the Manager had handled his request for support and the expectation that all shows sounded similar. Yet Nate's experience did not deter him from community radio: '*It was something to repeat what* [Ellie] *said, it was her thing. Some people swim, some play football, we actually liked doing a radio show'.* He explained that the experience highlighted the need to compromise and to listen:

It definitely teaches you something about you, maybe a sense that the world doesn't revolve around you and not everybody agrees with what you're going to say, but that it may be good to hear their opinion on what you are going to say.

For Nate, learning through practice developed the radio show, with support from the management, which he considered a success – culminating in an award. However, Apple no longer reflected his values as a volunteer, nor the way he was willing to learn. It appeared that the new approach to management meant that iterative discussion and reflection was no longer part of how volunteers learned and earned legitimacy, but rather roles were defined for volunteers to fill, first as learners, and second as volunteer broadcasters. That Nate linked this to a wider expectation in society to conform to expectations reflects some of the issues discussed in Chapter Three, although as this data came three months after the end of fieldwork, I was unable to explore it more deeply.

9.1.8 Grape: Legitimised at last

At Grape, Tina was peripheral for a long period (section 9.1.2). She reported her ambitions to develop as a volunteer were thwarted by lack of support from the staff member designated to provide youth support, as well as by established members that saw youth volunteers as an imposition. A trip to Poland representing Grape meant Tina and Olivia returned to a friendly community of practice, with established members keen to hear about their trip (section 8.2.3). Towards the end of the fieldwork stage, the Manager offered to engage Tina in a series of community-based projects. Of this Tina reported:

> *She's got loads of things that she wants me to get involved with which sound sweet!' After having not much open to us all these years at* [Grape] *finally something has been suggested to me to get involved with. And it isn't just a one time activity or something but a programme that I will hopefully get a lot out of and learn a lot from.*

The '*programme*' was funded activity with young people in the local community about local youth politics. Tina explained her new role was to, '*help them learn how to use the radio to speak out, and* [manager] *would like me to be a mentor and show them how things in the studio work*'. The mentoring aspect suggests that the Manager saw direct support for newcomers as a necessary for legitimacy, and saw Tina as a resource for delivering the basic training and support. As a Woodcraft Folk member Tina discussed politics as part her broadcasting (section 8.1.1). The project therefore matched Tina's interests. She explained how '*This sounds fantastic because I'm really interested in getting young people more into politics'*.

To learn more about her new role, Tina was asked to, '*spend up to a whole day at* [Grape] *which will be ace as it will give me more time to be in this space and get to know the team*'. Being at Grape all day was a different approach to volunteering for Tina who previously visited only to record a show and prepare to broadcast. Developing personal connections with other volunteers was a key aspect of legitimising Tina's practices. She suggested that, '*when I start spending more time then more people*

will start getting to know me and just recognising me'. Tina was aware however that she had not learned enough in her time as a peripheral volunteer and required support from the Manager to maintain momentum for this project:

> *I'm just hoping that* [Manager] *will be supportive and help me organize things I want to do with the show and with anything else I'm helping* [Grape] *with due to her.*

The legitimacy of Tina's practices was due to the Manager identifying Tina as a resource and Tina's willingness to develop as part of the community of practice. Her future success lay in becoming an established member of that community by volunteering alongside other members. The activities planned reflected Tina's ambitions for her volunteering, and link to other volunteering she undertakes. Her '*hope*' reflected her experience as a peripheral community member and the helplessness she reported at that time, compared to now being a, '*fully paid up* [Grape]-*ite'* (section 8.2.2).

9.2 Chapter summary

In section 9.1 I explained how each of the four community radio stations in this research undertook informal basic training with the participants. Subsequent sections have related examples of experience to highlight their relationship with established members. I suggest three possible stages for the participants to learn the skills, knowledge and understanding of established members, although not all participants completed these stages. The theme that runs through these examples is how dependent participants were on the established members for legitimising their practices, which was the key to their development. Legitimacy of practice was crucial to developing as a full member of the community radio station. As noted in Chapter Eight, participants reported how they infused community broadcasting into other activities in their life to generate valuable connections, but within the organisation participants were reliant on established members for the knowledge and support to develop. This experience occurred as a learning process. Participants reported in their blogs and interviews how they understood that their progress as community broadcasters was tied closely to

their relationship with established members. As such, they learned that understanding through practice is as much about harmony as it is about conflict.

Those participants whose practices were legitimised enjoyed a varied experience commensurate with how volunteers understood volunteering in community radio. They moved beyond broadcasting to experience other opportunities, including the trip to Poland and working on projects other than their own shows. These developed their skills and broadened their networks both inside and outside the radio station. Whilst those that were successful could broadcast and undertake more practices, participants whose practices were not legitimised found their opportunities to learn limited to peer support. In the cases of Sandy and Yannick at Plum and Nate at Apple, they were de-legitimised, reporting that they were actively encouraged to leave. The youth group at Grape seemed to confer secondary status on the participants which meant less engagement with established members, whilst at Plum a hierarchy maintained a distance between established members and newcomers – volunteers trained newcomers, not staff. Even within this small group of young volunteers at Plum a periphery exists, with Sandy and Yannick struggling and Norbert seemingly thriving.

Being peripheral limited the participants to broadcasting which might be considered the aim of all participants – to be broadcasters, yet these findings suggest that broadcasting is not enough. Part of the attraction of community broadcasting was connecting with the established members within the station as well as with friends and other groups outside of it. To develop longer term commitment, connections need to be made within the station with the established members. Such connections developed practice through new projects and a deeper understanding of community radio as an alternative to the mainstream.

Legitimacy therefore appeared structural, formed by the policies and practices of the organisation and enforced by established members. It also required the willingness of newcomers to want to become established members. This appears evident in how Norbert and Nigel seemed happy with changes at Plum, and in how Sandy and Yannick at Plum, and Nate at Apple were not willing to accept changes.

They were de-legitimised – returned to the periphery – when they attempted to negotiate different practices. In both cases they reflected on the hostility towards their different practices within the community of practice, and this made them question the role of community radio as a place for broadcasting diverse voices.

The experiences of the participants suggested that external factors such as funding and policy affect legitimacy although, of the participants, only Nate at Apple explicitly examined this. Funded projects supported legitimacy. For Tina at Grape, this involved two projects, a trip to Poland and working on a local politics project with young people. For Nigel at Plum, this translated into support to build radio studios. In both cases the skills of the participants were legitimised by the Manager, and these skills developed by working with established members. The changes in policy at Plum and Apple reflected the uncertain eco-system community radio operates in and how this can directly affect voluntary practice. Three Managers reported significant shifts in priorities to sustain income (Chapter Seven), although changes at Cherry were implemented after the fieldwork phase of this research. These changes align with government policy on funding community radio, with a particular focus on commercial revenue (section 2.5.2). The stations took different approaches to how to resolve their funding issues. At Plum a name change and focus on commercial radio was implemented, with young volunteers made to play station-chosen music. At Apple volunteers were asked to attend a college-sponsored training course, with less able presenters filtered out. These approaches attempt to raise standards by legitimizing a narrow set of practices at the expense of diverse voices: at Plum, this was Sandy and Yannick, and Nate at Apple noted not just himself, but any other newcomer wanting to do something different.

As a recently established community radio station, Cherry offered an example of a new organisation developing a community of practice in which all members were, to some extent, newcomers. The participants were engaged in peer learning with each other and other volunteer broadcasters. The comments of the Manager (section 7.1) about developing solidarity amongst young volunteers is

reflected in their blogging, but so are his concerns that they are volunteering for qualifications. As with the other participants, volunteering is defined by Cherry's participants by a mix of initial motivations, and commitment to continue through developing their own group that supports and reviews the others work.

The understanding in practice of the participants in this thesis may be theorised as a search for legitimacy from established members. This was not an easy road to take. Some participants were more peripheral than others but all participants understood that established members vital to their learning. In the next chapter I examine more closely how these findings answer the research questions before concluding.

10. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I sought to examine how fourteen young people understood their experience of volunteering at four community radio stations in the UK. By using regular group interviews to supplement participant blogs, I hoped that an examination of practice might illuminate what was important to the volunteer and organisation, and, as the volunteer gains experience of being a member a voluntary organisation, what aspects of voluntary practice were crucial to becoming a successful volunteer. I framed volunteering as a learning experience, one in which to become successful, a volunteer needed to develop skills and gain an understanding of the practices of the organisation. Successful learning was therefore theorised as a situated practice dependent on the established members of the organisation, whose legitimising approval was fundamental to developing from newcomer to established volunteer.

This approach enabled me to look at what the experiences of the research participants tells us about formal volunteering in the UK, how they defined their volunteering, and finally how learning as a volunteer may be theorised. To contextualise the experience of the participants, I also examined how volunteering policy and government policy for community radio might influence their experience of volunteering in community radio.

I sought to answer three research questions. I repeat them here with a summary of findings for each, before taking each question in turn.

1. What can an examination of practice tell us about the experience of youth volunteering in community radio in the UK?

Participants in this study engaged in a variety of experiences as community radio volunteers. Beginning their voluntary practice on the periphery of the community of practice, the participants developed embryonic networks with the public to generate relevant broadcast content. Broadcasting

therefore connected the participants to friends and other voluntary projects elsewhere on terms developed by the participants. Becoming a community radio volunteer involved practices other than broadcasting, including collaboration with established members and peer working. Those who engaged with established members deepened their experience to include collaborative project work and a greater understanding of the role of community radio in the local area. Participants who did not engage with established members focused on broadcasting with peers and developing their networks to create broadcast content and generate networking opportunities. They were as committed as those participants who sought to become established members. Consistent with the findings of Lave and Wenger (1991), there was some peer learning success, but participants needed the support of established members to fully develop their skills. However, establishing networks in the public domain to support broadcasting, and using the periphery to be creative and play with ideas, mitigated the isolation of peripherality identified by Lave and Wenger (1991).

2. What does community radio volunteering by young people tell us about formal volunteering in the UK?

Findings reject the simplified notion of volunteering to enhance a curriculum vitae or for purely altruistic of community reasons. Instead, participants revealed how volunteering in radio connected them to their community and how peer support developed friendship ties. Whilst improving their career chances was important, it was seen through the lens of the experience of volunteering rather than as a line on a curriculum vitae. For three participants, volunteering in community radio was a process in which they took on greater responsibility through deeper collaboration with established members, and in doing so learned more about what it is to run a community radio station. However, two participants revealed how dogmatic established communities can be, stymieing their creativity. This suggests that though established members are fundamental to the learning by newcomers, organisations need to offer the chance for new ideas to develop and be considered. In this research,

participants achieved this through experimentation on the periphery of the membership, before they became more involved in the community.

3. How do young people develop understanding and access knowledge when they engage in the social practice of volunteering at a community radio station?

Developing an understanding in practice involved established members legitimising the practices of the participants in two ways, first, through peer support on the periphery, and second by working with established members who provided a three-stage process. As newcomers, participants learned to broadcast in practice on the periphery of the main body. They were also taken through a process the final stage of which sought to establish them as members. However, only three participants sought to become established members, with eleven choosing to focus on broadcasting and remaining peripheral. This was because the periphery was a space for innovation, but also because they could rely on their developing networks and peers to support and test ideas. As much as the periphery could be both a positive, creative space which incubated safe experimentation, it could also be a negative space, isolating participants, who discovered that learning could be about conflict as much as collaboration.

10.1 Discussion of findings

10.1.1 What can an examination of practice tell us about the experience of youth volunteering in community radio in the UK?

By examining the practice of fourteen young people, this research has attempted to reveal the diversity of experiences that constitute youth volunteering in community radio. Themes that emerged include how participants used their volunteering to connect with and complement other activities in

their life. The features of this connectivity are suggestive of a form of emergent active citizenship where participant activism develops an embryonic network of support (Kenny *et al,* 2015) which links them to new people in the community, revealing a sense of community support around their broadcast content. Findings also reflect those of Cammaerts *et al* (2016) who suggest that young volunteers are attracted to participate in new initiatives or inventive approaches to social mission which are less predictable: the space on the periphery of membership, as well as projects with established members, were attractive to the participants. They were highly committed, whether to their broadcast only, or broadcast plus other activities. Youth volunteering in community radio was considered therefore to be an exciting and immersive activity.

From a seemingly contrary perspective, some participants also considered community broadcasting as a retreat, a safe space from the pressures of life, and as an activity to enjoy between friends. From their place on the periphery, participants reflected on the difficulties in becoming an established member of the community radio station, and that, to be one, broadcasting might not be enough. This reflects Cameron (1999) who identified a distinction between members of churches and non-member volunteers based on trustee and governance interest (section 4.4.2), and Gaynor and O'Brien (2012) whose own study into community radio suggested volunteers need community development not broadcast skills, that is, skills required to successfully run a community organisation. In three cases, deeper engagement with established members led to new knowledge about the role of community radio in society, how projects are funded, and the breadth of practice of a community radio station.

The experience of the participants during fieldwork was in most cases highly involved, committed and positive, but several negative experiences offer insight into how difficult accommodating diverse voices can be for community radio stations attempting to deliver programme-style projects (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001). The examples in Chapters Eight and Nine contrast with the concept of the young volunteer as a product of policy, utilising experiences for personal gain or of the volunteer seeking to do good in a community. Instead of that binary, an examination of community radio volunteering also

reflects the serious leisure identified by Stebbins (1996), where volunteers act with seriousness and earnestness. Volunteering is perceived as an aspect of their everyday life, not as something extraordinary. As such, volunteering in community radio reflected the complexity of the daily life of the participants.

In this thesis, I argue that community radio volunteering might be understood in relation to how the participants used broadcasting to connect and disconnect from local society, and in how the established volunteers created the space for this to happen. Participants identified and nurtured a fragile web of connections that extended beyond the organisation, some of which were deeply personal, rooted in planning for the future, and located in a sense of solidarity with others, reflecting their history with their community. Kenny *et al* (2015) through examples of low-level community activism highlight how networks emerged that were self-generated and supportive. The researchers identified entrepreneurial practices and leadership within these nascent and fragile groups, abilities associated, perhaps, with more singular policy visions of citizenship (Kenny *et al*, 2015: 175-8). The special property of community broadcasting is that it can be heard in people's houses and places of work, and that content is locally sourced and redistributed, but it also requires leaders to pursue community interest, cultivate it and encourage others to participate. This was the task of the participants, who imbued the project with their own interests and sought an audience they could be active with. They narrowed the distance between themselves and their audience with strategies, including knowing their locality, walking the streets, meeting at different kinds of clubs and by using social media. In doing so, some gained regular audiences followings for output as diverse as debate, comedy and dance music. If measured by content output, participants reflected a willingness to involve and connect to a diverse community through the experience of community radio volunteering.

This is not to deny that some participants used volunteering in community radio strategically, they were clever and reflexive as Giddens suggests (Giddens, 1990), but their reported experience suggested they did not volunteer solely for personal biography (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). At the

schooling age of these participants, it is not unreasonable to expect them to be concerned about the future, and act on it. The question is, how do they do this when they volunteer? An examination of practice revealed layers of activity and intention, in which thinking about career is one layer. For these young participants, university or a career loomed large, and for some their response was to engage in activities that enabled them to experience their potential future as broadcasters, writers and journalists, as well as undergraduates. But as broadcasting placed the participants as a nexus between community information and entertainment, careers, or even university, could not be a sole reason for volunteering. This finding challenges Beck's (1994) thesis, that individuals in the post-modern society create their own destiny and are concerned solely with their personal biography. In this thesis, the participants appeared to appreciate their social context, recognise its value to them, and reflected this through their radio broadcasts. They could not broadcast without their community. This network reflects the version of networked active citizenship suggested by Kenny *et al* (2015), in which community support for a project is tentative and emergent and creative. In this process, the participants worked without what Kenny *et al* (2015) call a *'centralised controller'* (Kenny *et al,* 2015: 183) because they were given freedom to develop content dependent on community connections. The citizenship in this sense is very low level, exploratory but predicated on creative responses to what interests the individual and how that connects in the community. Thus, whilst Giddens (1990) and Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) correlate the rise of individualistic motives with a modern capitalist society with an increase in biographical volunteering, findings here suggest a need to understand how volunteering experiences are used strategically in a low level, local, geographic sense: the living, changing, biography of the area, perhaps, reflected through radio by an active citizen. Within a sense of this biography, the volunteer operates, and attends to changes and opportunities through trial and error, collaboration and support.

As the participants were aged between 14 and 17, educational institutions were present as an influence on their life experience, although directional volunteering (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014) did not occur in this fieldwork. Instead, we were offered two contrasting examples of alternative

strategies in dealing with the presence of schools. At Cherry, a community-oriented teacher and voluntary Station Manager was concerned about directional volunteering and individualistic motivations (section 7.1). Yet the nurturing of communitarian principles at Cherry reflected the philosophies for community media (section 2.3). The reported equality between older and younger volunteers at Cherry may reflect its youth as a station, but also how the participants undertook their broadcasting responsibly, with earnestness (Stebbins, 1996). At Apple, the end of the fieldwork stage saw a deliberate move towards directional volunteering as new Apple recruits would now be the College's recruits too. This reflected a programme-style approach to volunteering (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) which was not popular with one participant. Nate raised concerns about the loss of diverse voices on radio and his own lack of influence. His frustration and rage for the impotence of future (non) broadcasters reflected how in their drive for rationalisation such approaches often fail to account for difference. In these two examples, the influence of volunteering policy is evident: firstly, an attempt at Cherry to avoid the perception that schools encourage young people to build a curriculum vitae of experience, and second, the impact of a community radio station's relationship with government funding for community radio and its own, closer relationship with the college: young volunteers become perceived by managers as units of revenue, not volunteers. Formal training courses through a college reflect the suggestions of the *Connect:Transmit* project (Radio Regen, 2014) (section 2.3.6), in which young people were identified as '*a potential source of income'* (Radio Regen, 2014: n.p). Nate suggested that this limits the diversity of people involved, an admission also made by the manager (section 7.3). However, this approach to community radio also reflects the Restricted Service Licence era (section 2.3.3) in which training courses successfully prepared volunteers for broadcasting, for example Vale FM (Mornemont, 2005). In this approach, Gordon (2000) identifies several benefits for the new volunteer, including being less likely to suffer volunteer fatigue because training regulates engagement. Nate's concern was for the fundamental shift in learning away from learning in practice towards a formalised environment in which the legitimatised broadcasters practice radio that does not reflect the varied voices of young people. This may be a recruitment issue

for Apple to tackle, but also reflected his deeper concerns that Apple only wanted volunteer broadcasters who were attractive to advertisers and to the college as students.

Community radio embodies the philosophies and definitions of community media (section 2.3), including solidarity, equality and non-commercial approaches to funding access to media. This does not deny advertising as a source of income but rather questions the influence of advertisers: as the manager at Grape noted, she was startled when a colleague explained that advertisers influenced whether young people should broadcast at their radio station. The commercial imperative appeared present in the changes at Plum, who changed their name in a move similar to incremental licence FTP radio in Bristol, which also 'play listed' volunteer broadcasters to ensure the station brand was consistent. FTP eventually closed and the station became named after a chocolate bar (section 2.4.2). The need to generate income from advertising reflects the policy conditions in which community radio operates, where mandatory public service is paid for without public funds. These issues were not debated by the participant, yet as evidenced by Grape, funding could operate within an ethos that promoted the voice of the community as a shared concern of young volunteers and the station elders. The Manager at Cherry planned to undertake this approach to generating income and maintaining a community-centred ethos (section 7.1). However, Managers consented to a single interview rather than a series of interviews, which is a shortcoming of this research. A series of interviews across the fieldwork period may have provided greater insight into how policy affects the community radio stations from a management perspective.

The experience of volunteering in community radio involved becoming a community radio volunteer at an organisation, but rather than focus on how their broadcasts became increasingly complicated as their skills developed, the participants reflected their experience through the prism of their relationship with other people at the station and how these relationships enabled their volunteering. This was similar to the findings of Pantea (2013) and Akingbola *et al* (2010). Participants identified how volunteering involved more than broadcasting: it required negotiating new relationships framed

by governance and the need for peer support or collaboration with more established members. They noted that the process of legitimacy was the responsibility of the established members (Lave, 1992, 1996). The participants therefore identified how legitimacy and status were key ingredients to a successful voluntary experience. How legitimacy was conferred differed from station to station, but a three-stage process was used to move the participants from the periphery, through basic knowledge to an understanding of the rules and conventions of the community.

Commitment to the organisation increased when the experience of volunteering involved collaboration with the established membership on an interesting project, but it did not reduce if participants preferred to remain on the periphery of the membership. The active citizenship of broadcasting, developed through an embryonic network, appeared to ensure participants remained committed. Whilst legitimacy was conferred by established members by supporting participants to develop their abilities, by bringing participants into new projects for example, established members developed the role as volunteers of the participants (section 9.1.8). This finding reflects those of Cammaerts (2016) into successful youth political volunteering across Europe which is predicated on inventive engagement and use of space for multiple purposes. In this research, two participants experienced what it is to undertake broadcast volunteering, which is exciting in the first instance, but the development into other interesting areas is what made them committed. The community radio station suddenly become a more interesting space, and with a stake in this interest, the participants engaged more.

These positive experiences contrasted with negative ones, including deliberate marginalisation of practice, and of finally removing shows and asking the participants to not return. In these instances, participant practices did not align with those of the established members: indeed, they previously did, but policy changes to a programme-style approach to volunteering clashed with the expectations of the participants. Instead of accommodating their differences, the participants were marginalised and they left, their experience soured. As noted by Hay (1996), an organised group is likely to prefer

replication of its existing ideas by newcomers, and not renewal by new ideas. The experience of these participants then reflects how the established members seek to re-enforce new rules in inflexible and rigorous fashion: there appears little room for new perspectives as the established members themselves come to terms with their own new conditions, and retaining the status quo becomes vital. Indeed, one participant reflected on the hostility of the organisation towards him when deliberately flouting new rules.

10.1.2 What does community radio volunteering by young people tell us about formal volunteering in the UK?

In the previous section I argued that the practice of the community radio stations in this research attracted participants where practice appeared innovative, unpredictable and therefore interesting to them. I also suggested that the participants used broadcasting to connect to their communities. I proposed this to be a form of citizenship based around shared community values and practiced through low-level, emergent networks. Based on these features, community radio offered a commitment cocktail to the participants, a blend of interesting ingredients. The corollary of this was evident at Plum and Apple who moved to introduce programme-style rules and training, with the result that three participants of over six month's volunteering each, left. In this section I explicate how the community radio stations in this research operated to secure and retain its young volunteers through innovative practice and supportive training, but also how community broadcasting is itself an attractive feature to young volunteers.

The community radio stations in this research used a series of strategies in which to engage the participants, and it was how activities were practiced during these stages that provides some insight into what attracted young people to volunteer and kept them there. In the first instance, community radio was new to the participants. Being sat in a studio, shown the controls and then being expected to practice broadcasting was an exciting way to begin to understand volunteering in community radio.

The initial training was designed to be informal and relaxed, with little didacticism: participants were asked to create their own radio show. In being given this creative freedom, they created music, comedy, debate, chat and request shows by connecting to their community and broadcasting voices and opinions. Their networking to make their broadcasts reflective of their community expressed different and diverse values: Xavier wanted to promote his local nightclub evening to improve his paid opportunities, Martin at Cherry sought an apprentice to gain a qualification, and Sandy and Yannick aimed to entertain their friends through comedy routines. Thus, not all the participants explored the same issues, though they harnessed community radio as a resource. Such active citizenship does not deny the use of experience to bolster a curriculum vitae, but an examination of practice suggests that considerations such as these come after the practice: that getting the broadcast and its relationship with audience right was paramount. The form of active citizenship here is low key and exploratory, taking place at the periphery of the community radio station. But it is also celebrated in the community: from listening to a broadcast in English class at school to building audience followings, participants evidenced community solidarity around their broadcast.

In the second stage, reviews from established members at Plum and Apple encouraged deeper thinking about broadcasting by some of the participants. New ideas were encouraged, current ideas praised or modified, and peer support created new opportunities to learn. At this stage, participants experimented with live guests, recording on location and podcasting, with the approval of established members. Participants maintained the creativity of the first stage as they began to refine their broadcasts and learn a little more about the established membership at the community radio station. Commitment increased in this period when some participants spent more time at their station and took on new collaborative shows and other participants developed their relationships within the organisation, although this was not the case for some participants who were unable to access internal support. As these participants continued to broadcast, the fragility of their connectivity became exposed: it appears that the flush of excitement around a new project that can generate an embryonic network needs support from established members, regardless of peer support, because the broadcast

needs the expertise from within the organisation to develop. For Tina and Olivia, involving their Woodcraft Folk in broadcast debates did not happen when they could not muster internal support but Norbert's request show developed with support.

This suggests that, as the creativity at stage one was beginning to be framed more by the organisation in stage two, participants took greater notice of the established members and how established member shaped practice. As noted in Chapter Three, organisational activities may be shaped by government policies (see section 2.4 for how community radio licences are awarded against mandatory key commitment targets), and the features of the station were brought into relief as the newcomers became more familiar with how the community operated. This stage did not always go smoothly for the volunteers, who learned more about the nuance of volunteering in community radio. Thus, Tina and Olivia, and Sandy and Yannick, reported mistreatment as they sought a foothold with established members which supported their earlier creativity, as established members were described as busy with non-broadcast activities. From this, the established member was defined as a volunteer who undertook non-broadcast activities, a contrast that was stark compared to the hitherto experiences of the participants. Twelve participants did not move beyond the second stage. They remained at the station to create their community radio programmes, but they did not deepen their involvement in the life of the station. The station provided a platform for their citizenship and so their commitment appeared to be more to their own broadcasting practice and the fragile network that supported it, and its outcomes, and less the actual community radio organisation itself. Ellie provides an illustration of this (section 9.1.3). For the young volunteer to be committed to the organisation, the young volunteer needed to engage in projects they did not devise, or to be denied the creative space at the periphery of the organisation as a newcomer, by being on a training programme. A programme solution as introduced at Apple at the end of fieldwork might offer the chance to promote citizenship as a unitary construct from the initial engagement of newcomers.

The third stage involved being more deeply engaged in project work with the established members at the community radio station. Importantly, this volunteering ran alongside broadcasting and so the low-level network developed earlier was maintained not replaced. As with the first stage, engagement in projects was an exciting step into the unknown for the participants, with visits to Poland, building radio studios and community-based project work, each funded by major bodies, reported. Examining some of this experience was hard as fieldwork ended as Tina began to be involved in community projects (9.1.8). It is also difficult to assess the influence of the organisational projects on the broadcasting as not enough time was available during the research at this late stage. However, several months elapsed after the trip to Poland and the studios being built. Based on that short time, I make a very tentative suggestion that becoming an established member of an organisation is a process of accepting their terms of membership, based on earlier (stage two) assessments of the style and type of practice.

From the experiences of Olivia, Tina and Nigel, volunteering on projects other than broadcasting increased their commitment to the organisation and so they aligned themselves in some way with the approach to practice of the station. This alignment led to an understanding of what community radio meant at Grape and Plum respectively, and, because of the international dimension to Tina and Olivia's residential in Poland, what community media meant across Europe. Therefore, with these two stations we are offered different visions of community radio: at Grape, where local voices appear paramount (with two projects about young people, politics and media during fieldwork) and at Plum where a commercial model was perceived as the route to survival. This is the dichotomy that earlier community radio stations faced in the 1980s (section 2.4.1).

Finally, the introduction of programme-style (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) volunteering at Apple and Plum affected three participants significantly. Though Nate, Sandy nor Yannick were invited to undertake projects other than broadcasting, they chose to leave the station because of the change in values that directly challenged their way of broadcasting. Nate's response (section 9.1.7) illuminates how he

considered his show to be small and fragile compared to the juggernaut of the new approach. Nate made a considerable investment in his volunteering but he did not remain because the imposition of new values that no longer aligned with his creative, locally networked, approach. In this case, the station lost a talented volunteer.

10.1.3 How do young people develop understanding and access knowledge when they engage in the social practice of volunteering at a community radio station?

In this section I use communities of practice theory to examine how the participants sought to learn from established members in their four community radio stations. I have already stated that the participants saw volunteering in community radio as an opportunity to learn through practice, and that established members were expected to support that development, but that support was not always forthcoming. I have also highlighted how volunteering in community radio was underpinned by broadcasting as it enabled volunteers to connect to their local community. In doing so I note that established members were fundamental to how the participants learned, but that, unlike the theory of Lave and Wenger (1991), participants continued to use the space to creatively explore community connections and broadcast without becoming established members. Membership was reserved for those who were willing to undertake activities other than their own broadcast, and aligned themselves with the approach to community radio that informed the practice of the station. I conclude that volunteers need a broad set of skills to become established members at community radio stations, reflecting the findings of Gordon (2000) and Gaynor and O'Brien (2012), rather than a simply willingness to broadcast.

The scope of learning in practice was impressive and covered making radio as much as about being a member of an organisation. A diverse array of creative radio broadcasts involved live music; guest interviews; political debate; developing strategies to increase audiences; broadcasting online with podcasts; recording bands on location; using social media to interact with an audience; connecting

with other voluntary or paid work; teaching classmates for qualifications; undertaking community media training in Poland; building studios and working on projects on local politics. The community radio stations created learning environments in which participants made choices about their engagement ad therefore about their learning. This may challenge definitions of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where learners are given little chance to make decisions about their learning. Instead, the stations in this research reflect the suggestion of Hay (1996), that successful communities of practice should be less didactic and focus newcomers on, '*playing with tools, materials and products of the community*' (Hay, 1996: 95) and seeking, '*comments from the old-timers…any of which the student may take or leave*' (ibid: 96). This section therefore studies how this was enabled and disabled through the lens of communities of practice theory. I begin with an examination of how the participants joined the stations and what their initial peripherality meant.

In communities of practice theory newcomers begin as, '*legitimately peripheral*' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 93), that is, placed at the edge of the community, but welcomed. Their position on the edge reflects that they are not central to the performance of the community but nonetheless operate within it. In this research, being legitimately peripheral involved an induction from an established member that covered the technical aspects of using the studio and the basics of broadcasting. This function moved the participant into the position of broadcaster as quickly as possible (section 9.1.1). Once broadcasting, participants learned to improve their skills through reflective practice with established members, but remained legitimately peripheral (section 9.1.5 for an example). Peripherality in community of practice theory is also reflected in how the established members do not legitimise the practices of newcomers, which leads to, '*benign community neglect*' (ibid: 93). According to Lave and Wenger (1991) this reduces the newcomer to peer learning with other newcomers. This slows the learning process and focuses the newcomer on how their relationship established members reflects an imbalance of authority.

This research found that studio training was used to make newcomers legitimately peripheral by offering them basic skills and knowledge to practice and begin broadcasting. However, by developing their networks outside of the station to generate content, participants advanced their broadcasts independently of the established members. This is not to say they did not need or want support, but rather than the participants were resourceful and strategic. Support was sought but it was not a regular feature initiated by the established members (and sometimes not provided – see 9.1.2). The open door policy at Apple, for example, reflected a willingness to support without commitment to do so unless asked. Because broadcasting was established early, community connections strengthened participant commitment at the beginning of volunteering. Therefore, because they could broadcast, and work to create the content for that by developing networks, participants found that being peripheral did not mean they could not develop their broadcasts. Whilst progress to improve as broadcasters may have been slower without support (section 9.1.2) volunteers were not redundant because the tools of the broadcaster's trade, the mixing desk, microphone and broadcasting slot, were available. This was unlike the apprentices in Lave and Wenger's (1991) examples, illustrated by the meat cutter's apprentice, standing by the door to the abattoir, observing without understanding and not daring to enter (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 78). This is an apprentice without tools or recourse to external resources. In this research, the tools were available, and in being so, participants used them.

In this sense, the established members at the four radio stations gave the participants permission to '*play*' using the resources of the community (Hay, 1996: 95). Hay (1996) suggests that communities of practice theory fail to account for what he calls '*playing*' where newcomers challenge the, '*binary choice of in or out'* that Hay believes is implied by Lave and Wenger's theory (Hay, 1996: 95-96) (section 5.2.8). This thinking speaks to the findings in section 10.1.1, where a form of citizenship created by an individual broadcaster and rooted in community support may spark constantly shifting ideas. Thus, participants networked and connected to people constantly, playing with the concept of community radio to understand what it might be in the context of that local area. Radio is a medium to connect, and community radio is predicated on getting voices on air. Therefore, communities of

practice theory applied in a voluntary setting may need to account for *'play'* in which connections and ways of connecting may form a fundamental but exploratory form of voluntary practice in community radio.

The idea of playing also speaks to the concept of renewal – that communities of practice must change and transform to survive. This thinking is appropriate for voluntary organisations who to survive must adapt to new social challenges and policy environments by adopting new technology and methods of practice (section 5.1). In section 10.1.2, I identified how community radio stations were aware of the need to adapt to survive in a policy environment. Indeed, the changes forced by Apple and Plum that distressed three participants reflect those stations awareness of and attention to the forces of context. It also lends clarity to the community radio sector, which in its latest incantation finds itself adapting core principles of a market-style funding and policy regime (section 2.3.6) whilst attempting to recruit and keep their volunteer broadcasters. Renewal then may occur from low level explorations in community broadcasting, with discussions and new practices occurring on the periphery, as much as how established members attend to policy and funding regimes, though as this thesis shows (sections 9.1.6 and 9.1.7), this may not occur without disharmony between management and volunteers.

Commitment to broadcasting also developed from supportive established members who legitimised broadcast practices and then engaged the participants in a wider array of activities at the station. Apple (section 9.1.3) and Plum (section 9.1.5) are examples of this. Learning in practice for the participants in this research was therefore characterised by a need for legitimacy from established members, conferred by participation in a range of projects. At both radio stations, some participants remained peripheral whilst other participants engaged in non-broadcast activities and became less peripheral. This thesis suggests that to become on established member, participants needed to engage in a broad set of activities with different people. In this way, practices legitimised by established members are likely to be a diverse set of practices, thus we might say that the newcomer learns more. There were two examples of where this was claimed, by Tina at Grape (section 9.1.8) and

Nigel at Plum (section 9.1.7). Nigel interacted with members of the management team on several projects, from building studios, broadcasting and training, leading him to develop a diverse set of skills (section 9.1.5). This accords with community of practice theory in which multiple established members with a variety of skills and knowledge are necessary for newcomers to develop into established members.

Yet as suggested in the previous two sections, some participants did not pursue established membership, and instead appeared to be satisfied on the periphery. Community of practice theory does not easily accommodate newcomers who maintain their peripherality. Lave and Wenger's (1991) apprentices do spend a great deal of time on the periphery, which is deemed a negative space. As suggested above, to choose to remain peripheral may be linked to the success of embryonic networks, the ability to play, and successful broadcasts, whilst success to become an established member is linked to other activities. The periphery may appear to be an uncomplicated space to newcomers compared to the established membership and the centre of the community. Xavier, for instance, learned from the example of another volunteer and preferred not to complicate his broadcasting by becoming a trustee at Apple. This does not deny that the participants are, '*legitimately peripheral*' because they are still present with permission of the established members, but instead I suggest that it is the margins of the community that '*play*' occurs because the space is not complicated by the expectations of established membership. To become an established member is to accede to greater demand from the community of practice to be involved in organisational duties.

Whilst I have suggested that it appears that these participants were permitted to Play, findings also suggest that peripherality provides a chance for the participant to assess the established members. Both Ellie and Tina considered moving stations after a period, and whilst Tina remained to undertake the duties of an established member, Ellie frequently blogged about new opportunities (section 8.1) and eventually left to explore them. Thus, the negative role of the periphery as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) may be transformed into a positive where newcomers use the space to practice,

observe and assess the organisation, leading to their decision to remain, or not. Those keen to become established members seek extra duties, but those who don't remain to play.

Extra duties in the examples in this thesis were dictated by established members. Participants were offered projects they would find interesting, but learning was framed by the rigid project and established members. Thus, funding took Tina and Olivia to Poland (section 8.2.3) as well as the project on local politics for Tina (section 9.1.8), in which the participants had little input into the design or activity plan. This represents a formal version of communities of practice theory in which learners have little say, but it also represents a progression from 'playing'. For Tina and Nigel, it was the culmination of a long period of peripheral volunteering in which they were ready to operate within the culture of the community on practice, as they deemed being established as more valuable than their broadcasting (section 9.1.8). Thus, to these participants, volunteering was most valuable when it became multi-faceted and challenging – broadcasting was not enough.

The volunteers at Cherry developed a second method in which they also placed themselves at the centre of the learning process, but they raise issues for the communities of practice framework. In this instance, because of the absence of an established way of legitimising practices, participants designed their own process of peer review rather than learning support from established members, though that was available if they needed it (but they chose, during fieldwork at least, to peer review their work) (section 9.1.5). The context was important in organising learning this way (section 7.1). First, Cherry is a new community radio station with few established members and no process to legitimise newcomers. Instead, support was available in school from the teacher, but participants eschewed this in favour of peer review. Vitally, the participants were supported in their decision to peer review and so their decision was legitimised. The 'looseness' of the community of practice at Cherry provided a space for the participants to shape their volunteering practice: they were not peripheral but were dictating practice as an established member would. Hay (1996) refers to how through a less instructive community of practice, newcomers, '*find new and creative ways into the center of the community*'

and can, '*change practice from a peripheral position*' (Hay, 1996: 93). This appears evident at Cherry, as the participants suggestion of peer review as a new way of learning was legitimised by established members.

For community of practice theory, volunteering in community radio offers fresh challenges. A version of communities of practice suggested by Hay (1996) is evident. Firstly, participants connected their volunteering to activities outside of the radio stations, which insulated them on the periphery. That this was permitted by the established members at the four community radio stations suggests a type of community of practice that accommodates '*play*' (Hay, 1996: 65). Support to develop broadcasts was not enough to move participants from the periphery to the centre, and so legitimacy was conferred through a range of non-broadcast activities and with a variety of established members. Where the community was underdeveloped, newcomers sought to peer learn without established members, designing their own pathway to becoming established members.

10.2 Conclusion

This thesis reveals the hidden and unexplored voluntary practices of an under researched group, young volunteer broadcasters in community radio. By using blogs supplemented with interviews, the participants have recorded what they considered important stories, and so their voices and perspectives are to the fore. The stories they told week by week added together as a cumulative experience and offer an '*uneven sketch'* (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 96) of the social context of their volunteering. Taking fourteen volunteers experiences together offers a patchwork of stories that intersect through similar experiences and motivations, but also diverge, especially where context dictates practice. Together these stories tell us what these volunteers in community radio understood by their experience for over nine months to September 2013.

The approach to this research intended to be innovative in order to capture the imaginations of the participants. Substantively, the blogs performed as research diaries, but offered more to the researcher: they were iteratively accessible, already transcribed and provided some guidance for regular group interviews. Yet it was in their use by the participants that their value shone. Every participant used the blogs, recording intimate reflections, asking questions, uploading images and inserting links to reinforce their point. The blogs worked for the participants in their daily lives – on computers at home or on the mobile phone on a bus – and so their integration represents a success.

Yet the blogs were limited in some ways. I could not always use content which might reveal the participants or their locations. They required technological equipment for access and know-how too. Using blogs was not smooth for all participants, who occasionally emailed for support. The blogs were not fool proof either: the failure of a computer led one participant to compose a frustrated and abbreviated blog post. Setting up blogs for this research also took time. I had to learn the software quickly, installing password protection systems and using coded web-addresses to avoid detection by both the friends of the participants, as well as nefarious hackers and bots, keen to copy the data for themselves. Nonetheless, though research with young people is fraught with concerns about attrition, the participants kept recording data. These 14-18 year olds took their task seriously and earnestly, and the blogs made their data collection easy enough to not be a burden for nine months in some cases.

Three research questions were addressed by this research. The first focused on undertaking an examination of practice to reveal the nuances of the voluntary experience of the participants that might not be captured in accounts based on questionnaires or interviews. The second question covered what these nuances could contribute to our understanding of formal volunteering in the UK. The third question asked about the learning relationship between established members and participants in order to understand what success and failure might look like.

The findings that answered these questions were revelatory to me. Firstly, the participants focused on the relationships that govern their ability to volunteer, and develop as a broadcaster and volunteer,

rather than their own skills as broadcasters. By focusing on the dynamics of the community of practice, they identified how peripherality could be a key factor in their practice, and that, unlike in the theory of Lave and Wenger (1991), peripherality in community radio could mean an opportunity to forge links for broadcast content from their local area. The participants developed a strong sense of the local youth interests, tastes and cultures, represented through music shows, comedy, interviews and debate. That their shows became increasingly complex reflected their abilities to learn from peers, but participants also noted how vital established members were in helping them learn new skills and refine ideas for broadcast. However, participants also reported uneven access to established support for broadcasting, with marginalisation and abuse also discussed. The cause of this appeared to be a lack of willingness to establish the newcomers as organisational members, and so for most of the participants they lacked a clear understanding of how their station was managed and run, its role locally, and the purpose of community radio globally. Success at the periphery was therefore measured by broadcast success, a representation in audio of the network of civic commitment the participant had developed. The development and maintainence of a fragile network of contributors should be understood in comparison to making a commercial radio show. The rationale behind any broadcast choice made by the young broadcasters in this research was its local relevance, whether music popular in local nightclubs (Xavier and Ellie at Apple), locally produced artists (Martin at Cherry) or youth music less represented on radio (Sandy and Yannick at Plum). Youth voices were therefore the priority for these participants.

Legitimacy was conferred on those chosen to learn more than broadcasting, perhaps reflecting organisational concerns for survival in a changing policy and brutal funding landscape. Three participants developed this form of practice: their understanding of community media as a phenomenon growing along with it. They aligned themselves with the station's approach to community radio, willing to take greater direction from established members, whether adopting a community-centred approach at Grape or a commercial model at Plum. In doing so, they learned more of what community radio can do and how in practice, community radio stations are managed.

Frustratingly, fieldwork did not continue long enough to illuminate further on this form of volunteering, despite these volunteers contributing an extra three months' blogging. Further research into youth volunteering in community radio should include participants engaged in established practices, such as acting as trustees or working on funded projects, to better understand how young people perceive the local interpretation of the (though contested) mission and ethos of community media. In addressing question two, participants distinguished between just broadcasting and being an established member. Becoming an established member, or 'volunteer' as eight participants described this role, required the skills most community organisations need to keep operating, including, for example, governance and management. Therefore, a volunteer was understood to be useful in a number of ways to the organisation, which may also have reflected their newcomer status at the periphery. Only three of the participants in this research were interested to develop into an established member, and so the majority kept '*playing'* (Hay, 1996: 65) at broadcasting. This may be because, as several participants explained, they did not intend to stay, with plans for university or work. However, it also reflects how the participants conducted their volunteering after being given the space at the periphery to develop their networks. The concept of '*playing*' at learning evokes experimentation and creativity taken seriously, also conjuring up the idea of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1996), but also containing that important pedagogical lesson about practice being at the heart of an understanding of the situation (Ingold, 2002).

This lesson was examined by answering the third research question, where communities of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was applied to understand the relationship between established members and newcomers. Whilst the explanatory power of the theory was useful in providing an analytic framework, this thesis raised fundamental questions about the theory. The periphery was not so lonely and fruitless for my participants, who developed friendships and networks to support their broadcasting. Nor was the concept of legitimate peripheral participation a one-way experience: two volunteers were returned to the periphery after policy changes at their radio station and their refusal to cooperate with new rules. Moreover, as identified by Lave and Wenger (1991), established

members determine what is valid practice, but they do not explain how communities of practice cope with contextual changes, but instead suggest a static model, not one responding to economic or political circumstance.

The creation of networks on the periphery, and the reaffirmation of the community's dominion, reflect a broader issue highlighted in the literature (Hay, 1996; Milbourne, 2013; Kenny *et al,* 2015) on how community-based organisations renew themselves and prepare for the future. By using the periphery to experiment, the participants evidence their ideas in practice at little cost to the radio station, and those practices that were considered successful became established. Thus, an organisation renews its people and practices. Plum however adopted a different approach with mixed success: Norbert and Nigel were happy to follow the new regime, implemented by established members with no consultation, but Sandy and Yannick were not. Their de-legitimising reflected an organisation in which their voice as young, peripheral volunteers was not valued, and their ideas and practices, developed over months of committed broadcasting, were ignored as evidence. The organisation did renew – it did change, but in a commercial way that appeared contrary to the spirit of community radio, losing two talented and committed volunteers, who not only had a reduced opinion of that station, but perhaps of community radio and volunteering.

These findings speak to current concerns in volunteering and learning, and to community radio specifically. How do organisations involve new, young volunteers when so much is at stake in a fast-changing environment? The lesson from this thesis appears to be to find a space that allows for experimentation where practice can play, with little harm or cost to the organisation. This develops commitment and thinking, harnessing for community projects the skills that have been claimed by market-oriented policy makers, including entrepreneurship, leadership and collaborative working. Community radio stations are voluntary organisations, similarly bound by a public service remit and struggling with too few financial resources. Under these circumstances, developing commitment from

volunteers and pursuing innovative thinking may offer a plausible solution. In this thinking, the space to play becomes a fundamental aspect of practice, and of survival.

My experience of researching with young people was generally positive. Whilst there was no attrition, there were apologies from participants for several missed interviews and for not blogging enough, when, as researcher, I was often happy to maintain my connection over the long months. The few that worked so hard for me, especially Nate and Tina, committed beyond my expectations, and for that I was grateful. They understood the research and my needs, and showed me what commitment could mean. In building my relationship with these young people, I struggled at times to maintain a self-imposed distance because I wanted to help when asked, and because I am a decent person. This came out in some interviews, particularly with Sandy and Yannick, who had a terrible time and generally had my sympathy. I do hope they did not persevere with their radio efforts on my part because they had committed to me too. Their efforts to broadcast were commendable and the spark between them when they spoke about their broadcasts reminded me of why I began to volunteer in community radio many years ago.

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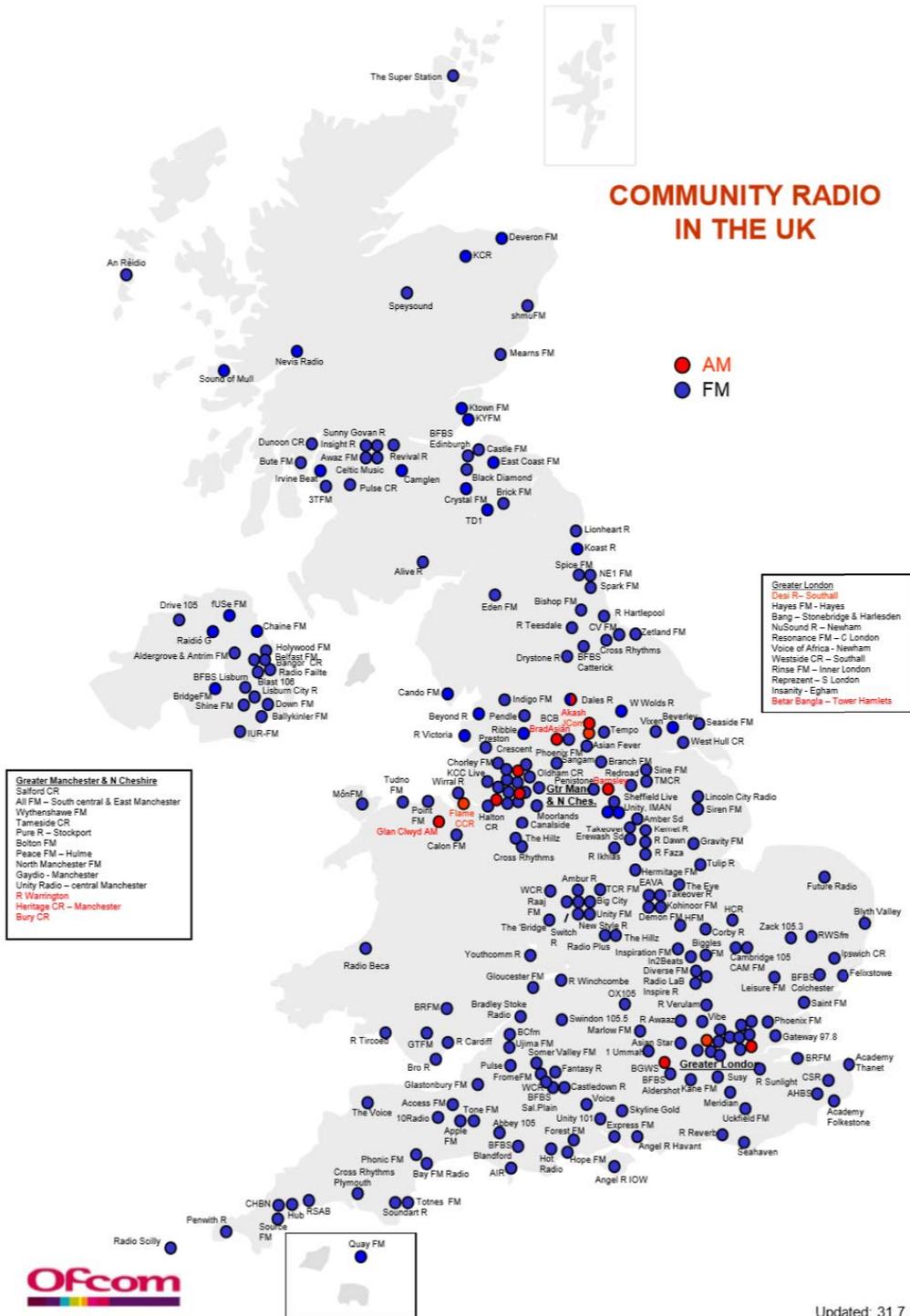
13.   APPENDIX B: ANALYSIS OF DATA GATHERED

Pseudonym	CRS	# of broadcasts	Altered website	Unstructured Interviews	Blog posts	Blog comments	Email/ FB chat	Total items
Tina	Grape	19	Yes	5	22	0	3	30
Olivia	Grape	15	Yes	5	10	6	0	20
Nate	Apple	10	Yes	5	15	4	1	26
Ellie	Apple	10	Yes	3	7	0	1	12
Xavier	Apple	10	No	2	6	0	0	3
Nigel	Plum	10	Yes	2	8	3	2	15
Sandy	Plum	6	Yes	3	11	7	2	23
Yannick	Plum	6	No	3	8	4	1	16
Norbert	Plum	8	No	2	9	1	2	15
Ken	Cherry	5	No	4	0	0	1	4
Alicia	Cherry	5	Yes	4	12	3	2	20
Michael	Cherry	5	Yes	4	6	2	1	12
Eric	Cherry	5	No	4	4	4	0	11
Martin	Cherry	5	Yes	4	20	17	2	39
14		119	9	23	136	51	18	