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A sociological analysis of who volunteers are, and why they volunteer in sport and non-sport organisations

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Acknowledgements

Student Declaration

This research dissertation project has not been submitted for any other degree or examination. I have read and understood the regulations of plagiarism and cheating and declare that it is my own original work.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore, from a figurational perspective, 1) the similarities and differences between individuals who volunteer in a sporting environment and those that volunteer in other volunteering environments, and 2) the shared and distinct issues that might exist within each area of the voluntary sector. There is a reasonable amount of literature on volunteering generally, including some from a sociological perspective; however, there is much less available concerning volunteering in a sporting context. Furthermore, voluntary Sports Organisations are a substantial provider of services and opportunities for participation and central government include goals of increasing sport participation through them (Game Plan, 2002). The study was based in the county of Flintshire in North Wales. Using a combination of research approaches both questionnaires and interviews were used. The questionnaires aimed to produce demographic information about both sports and non-sports volunteers. For the most part, both groups of volunteers were above the age of 45 and well educated. Sports volunteers were more likely to be employed in full time roles. Non-sports volunteers were more likely to be female, where as sports volunteers were more likely to be male. Individuals from both groups were likely to undertake more than one role for their organisation. The purpose of conducting interviews was to provide a more in depth analysis of the views and perceptions of volunteers themselves, that is, what it is that they do and think about volunteering. For non-sports volunteers, their primary motivation was helping others, although when explored more closely, this was also aligned to the satisfaction gained from helping others often coupled with a number of other internal functions, such as, the socialising aspects and gaining a sense of purpose. For sports volunteers their motivation was very much aligned with their love of sport itself. This study found that for the sports volunteers interviewed, their voluntary activity was a way of them engaging with their sports. For some it was a necessary function in order to keep the club they played for going, for others it was a way of maintaining their connection with the sport. Non-sports volunteers made a proactive choice to volunteer where as, for the most part sports volunteers gradually became involved in the running of the organisation as a consequence of their membership. Both groups considered frustrations with their voluntary activity, for the most part non-sports volunteers discuss fund raising and bureaucracy. Sports volunteers frustrations were around a lack of commitment from others and difficulty in recruiting new members as well as funding. I have argued that it is the networks of figurations in which individuals are involved that influences behaviour. These networks have both constraining and enabling elements that either support or limit volunteering behaviour. Further, these networks influence the types of activity one in which one engages. The conclusions from this study have implications for both the methodology and future research questions. What is clear is that there is much more research to be undertaken reflecting on volunteering in sport and from a sociological perspective.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The input of the voluntary sector in the delivery of sport and physical activity is widely recognised. Game Plan, the Government's policy document for sport (2002, p. 9) states, "Sport depends heavily on the commitment of thousands of volunteers". Numerous authors make similar statements regarding the input of the voluntary sector in the delivery of sport and physical activity (Hylton, Bramham, Jackson and Nesti, 2001; Watt, 2003; Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006). Furthermore, sport and exercise has been identified as the largest area for volunteering in the whole of the voluntary sector in the UK (Anheier and Salamon, 1999: Houlihan and White, 2006). For example, in a study conducted by the Institute for Volunteering Research (1997) the largest category of voluntary work was Sport and Exercise with 53% followed by Religion (44%), Children's Education or School (44%) and Health and Social Welfare (38%). Despite all of this, there remains little research concerning this sector. In addition, what information is available is often discussed tangentially rather than as a key or central area of consideration, and very little is discussed from a sociological perspective. There is, however, a much greater array of academic research available on volunteering in the more general sense. This higher proportion of literature includes many studies exploring volunteering from a sociological perspective. Many of the issues cited as having an impact on volunteers within sport are mirrored in the literature on volunteers more generally (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). These include recruiting and retaining volunteers, pressures from other commitments, increasing rules and regulations, such as child protection and health and safety, and changing expectations in terms of 'professionalism'

(Sport England, 2003; Nichols, Taylor, James, Holmes, King and Garrett, 2005). An exploration of volunteering from a sociological perspective will offer a greater appreciation of the influences, which combine and interact to either facilitate or inhibit volunteering behaviour. The figurational approach will be explored in relation to these influences; it places human figurations at the heart of the analysis, and helps to reveal the ways in which these figurations have both enabling and constraining effects on the actions volunteers. Further, a comparison between those that volunteer in a sporting context and those that volunteer in a more general setting may reveal similarities and differences between these figurations and the way they influence individuals. The figurational approach will be introduced in more detail later.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will continue to refer to the 'voluntary sector' throughout, however it is crucial to understand that the voluntary sector, like any large body or organisation, is made up of many individuals. It is not a uniform mass. Individual volunteers are bound to have differing backgrounds, opinions, and ideologies. This is especially the case when we consider that volunteers can be associated with any variety of activities including care work, youth development, environmental conservation, and sport.

Set in the above context this study aims, from the perspective of figurational sociology, to explore: 1) the similarities and differences between individuals who volunteer in a sporting environment and those that volunteer in other volunteering environments, and 2) the shared and distinct issues that might exist within each area of the voluntary sector, as

described in the available literature. The study is based in the county of Flintshire in North Wales and to this end can be considered a case study. It is recognised that the findings may only represent the views of those who were studied. However, it is hoped that the findings produce something upon which to compare other studies and also inform future research in this area. Volunteering within sport is a largely neglected dimension of research; therefore, the objectives of the study were kept deliberately broad and broken down in to two main areas of exploration. The first, to gather and compare the socio-demographic information of volunteers within sport and those who volunteer more generally; and the second, to provide a more in depth analysis of the views and perceptions of volunteers themselves. In particular, this included: (1) why individuals become involved in volunteering; (2) what pressures they face and (3) what influences their ability to volunteer. In doing so, the study aimed to contribute to a more informed understanding of the motivations and pressures experienced by volunteers both within sport and more widely, and help to provide a more solid evidence base on which to better inform policy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I shall begin my review of the available literature by exploring what is available from a sociological perspective, I shall then move on to an examination of the literature on volunteering more generally. Finally, I will explore what little literature is available on volunteering in a sporting context.

Volunteering

As previously described there is a substantial body of research which explores volunteering, including particular research from a sociological perspective. I have concentrated on some key papers that highlight or summarise what already exists. Janoski and Wilson (1995) outline the two prominent sociological theories of volunteering, that of Emile Durkheim who has influenced the study of volunteerism primarily through the concept of socialisation, and Max Weber who attributes more significance to socioeconomic factors: voluntary action is driven, or made possible, by socioeconomic interests and resources. Wilson and Musick continue to present several papers in 1997 and 1999 in which they explore they the effects of financial capital (income and wealth), human capital (level of education and health), and social capital (community and religious involvement) on giving and volunteering, these will also be discussed. Moving away from a theoretical approach, I will explore the work of Bussell and Forbes (2001) who provide a very useful account of volunteering, aimed at those concerned with recruitment and retention of volunteers and offer a summary of the

current research. They do not attempt to further understanding but to clarify what already exists and in this regard, it is a very useful summary.

Sociological theory

There are two prominent sociological theories that have guided the study of volunteerism thus far. The first is associated with the work of Emile Durkheim and the second with the work of Max Weber. According to Janoski and Wilson (1995), Durkheim has influenced the study of volunteerism primarily through the concept of socialisation. From the perspective of Durkheim, joining is an expression of the solidarity that comes from adherence to a set of obligations. These obligations, or norms, are learned in the same way that other norms are learned, informally through family and friends, and formally through schools, churches, and the workplace (Janoski and Wilson, 1995). In addition, a person's current social relations will also influence their propensity to volunteer as they present opportunities for people to become involved through their children, partner, and/or friends for example. The second theory, Weberian theory of voluntary association membership, according to Janoski and Wilson (1995), attributes more significance to socioeconomic factors: voluntary action is driven, or made possible, by socioeconomic interests and resources. Socialisation, of course, is linked to economic and social status and therefore these two theories are very similar and overlap. For Weber however, emphasis is placed on current socioeconomic status. One might have been persuaded of the merits of volunteering through social relationships, but without the preconditions of higher status and finance, becoming a volunteer is unlikely. These preconditions are resources, which are attractive to organisations that may wish to recruit volunteers.

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Indeed, education is considered to be a prominent predictor of volunteering behaviour (McPerson and Lockwood, cited in Janoski and Wilson, 1995, p. 273). Skills learned through education, such as, proficiency using IT equipment and knowledge of accountancy, for example, will better enable a volunteer to contribute to the running of the organisation. Although, Durkheim recognises socioeconomic status has a central role, for him, it is gained through a persons' socialisation, primarily through their parents, and therefore he places more emphasis upon socialisation. The two arguments seem to represent the process and the outcome. Durkheim places greater emphasis on the process (socialisation) while Weber concentrates on the outcome (socioeconomic status). Despite the prominence of the two theories, Janoski and Wilson (1995) argue that due to the diversity of the individuals and groups that comprise the voluntary sector it is difficult to use any one theory to encapsulate the range of activities and motives associated with volunteering. Figurational sociologists would argue that a person's behaviour, in this case their propensity to volunteer, can be better understood by examining the network of figurations to which they belong, both past and present. The socialisation and socioeconomic status of an individual are formed through their interactions, past and present, with those around them; parents, friends, teachers, colleagues and so on and can be better described in terms of a persons networks of interdependency. Elias argued that every person is connected to others in networks of interdependency and individual behaviour is determined by past or present relations to other people whether as friends or enemies, parents or children….manager and employees (Elias, 2001). Therefore, our propensity to volunteer is a product of our networks of interdependency. This will be explored in further detail later.

Problems with defining volunteer

According to figurational sociologists' it is crucial to understand that the voluntary sector, like any large body is made up of many individuals. These individuals are brought together, and are recognised by others, such as, MPs, LA officers and members of the public by virtue of the activities they involve themselves in. However, as a large group of individual people, they are bound to have differing opinions and ideologies, even more so when we consider that volunteers can be associated with any variety of activities including care work, youth development, environmental conservation and indeed sport. Therefore it is of central importance to keep in mind, that when the voluntary sector is referred to in a more general sense, the comments made may not represent all those who come under the umbrella of the 'voluntary sector'. Indeed, within the sector itself, within and between the organisations that comprise it and the individuals that make up those organisations, there are almost certain to be differences and conflicts that arise. Further, according to the literature there is a difference between formal volunteering, which involves more prescribed structures, clubs and groups for instance and informal volunteering, which is done on a more ad hoc basis, helping an elderly neighbour, for example (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Mutchler, Burr and Caro, 2003). This distinction can have implications for those attempting to measure rates of volunteering or compare volunteering between studies as some authors choose to include the *informal* aspect and some exclude it. In my discussion of volunteering in a sporting context, I am concerned with more formal forms of volunteering, such as, coaches,

counsellors or individuals who are members on a board, for example. However, it is important to keep in mind and separate out the more informal aspect. Although we tend to refer to the 'Voluntary Sector', the associations encompassed within this term vary greatly with regard to both their size and their aims and objectives (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). It includes large national organisations with local branches, such as, Age Concern and Banardos, to smaller local groups that emerge through local need, and even smaller village/community groups such as, the local Village Hall Management Committee. In addition, the aims and objectives or the 'mission' of organisations varies greatly. For example, each county has a volunteer centre that is responsible for supporting volunteers. Within the County of Flintshire, on the volunteer centre website there were 23 catagories of volunteer work aligned to a specific themes, such as, caring, gender and sexuality, environment and conservation, sport, recreation and leisure and the arts, culture and heritage (www. http://www.volunteering-wales.net). These examples demonstrate the wide range of topics the voluntary sector can cover. I have focused thus far on defining the 'voluntary sector'. I shall now explore what is meant the term volunteering. The lexicographic definition of a volunteer is 'a person who works for no pay' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2004), however there are often far more complex motives for the individuals and more complex structures within the voluntary organisations and these shall be explored later. This, and most, definitions include certain fundamental requirements for volunteering, that it is undertaken freely and without financial gain (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). As discussed, voluntary organisations can be associated with all kinds of work or themes, further to this, the volunteers themselves can carry out a variety of different tasks within these organisations. For example, on the Flintshire

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volunteer centre website there were 16 types of activities individuals could carry out including, administration/office work, advice and counselling, fundraising, legal work, management and committee work (www. http://www.volunteering-wales.net). Bussell and Forbes (2001) with their exploration of what volunteering is highlight further difficulties in defining it. Moving towards a less theoretical and more practical approach they provide a very useful account of volunteering, aimed at those concerned with recruitment and retention of volunteers and offer a summary of the current research. They highlight the very complex nature of volunteering and voluntary organisations, and therefore the complex nature of their study. For example, the difference between those that volunteer their time to an organisation referred to as 'time donors' (the more common understanding of 'a volunteer') and those who give money or gifts in kind, such as office space or donating equipment or money. For the purposes of this research I will be concentrating on those giving up their time to an organisation, rather than donations. However, in some American studies both types of volunteering are given equal consideration (Eckstein, 2001). Some definitions suggest that to be a volunteer one must have some 'altruistic motive'. Indeed, studies have shown that public perceptions of volunteering are strongly associated with the costs and benefits to the volunteer (Handy et al, 2000). One could argue that the donating gifts requires less of an input on the part of the individual and so might not be regarded as too great a cost to the person. Another example of the complexities involved in studying volunteering is the difference between the extent of free will and obligation to volunteer. There are many instances of volunteering where a degree of coercion is involved. For example, employer led schemes where employers actively promote volunteering through policy, through to community

service where offenders are obliged to be involved or face a prison sentence, raising further questions about the degree of altruism required to be considered 'a volunteer'. The extent of free will has implications for understanding volunteer motivations and will be discussed in more details in a later section. It also highlights the importance of understanding the situation in which one volunteers.

The context of volunteering

Bussell and Forbes (2001) refer to this as the context (where) in which volunteering occurs. They discuss numerous different authors approaches to this, the most accessible and encompassing is that of Handy (1988) who distinguishes between three categories: mutual support, where people with mutual enthusiasms come together; service delivery, where organisations provide a service to people in need; and campaigning or cause specific. Most voluntary sports associations can be placed in the first category, mutual enthusiasms. Individuals come together out of enjoyment for a particular sport such as, Tennis, Hockey and Rugby among many others. The second category, service delivery, is the more common association with volunteering. Organisations associated with the care of others for example. The third category, campaigning or cause specific are groups associated with a particular cause, such as the environment. Most voluntary organisations can be placed in one of these categories; however, some organisations can perform any combination of all three. For example, a carers support group could involve mutual support, that is, a place for people to meet and discuss shared issues; service delivery by providing a respite service for carers; and campaigning by promoting carers' needs to policy makers. This distinction however, concentrates on the type of organisations one is involved with and neglects the situation of the individual.

The characteristics of Volunteers

Bussell and Forbes (2001) refer to this as the 'who' of volunteering. There have been numerous studies with the aim of exploring the socio-demographic characteristics of volunteers. The most recent large-scale survey reinforces what is already well known from previous studies - that certain types of people are more likely to volunteer than others (Low, Butt, Ellis Paine and Davis Smith, 2007). At the time of the survey individuals from higher socio-economic groups were twice as likely to volunteer than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This is supported by earlier research (Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Wilson and Musick, 1999; Bussell and Forbes, 2001). Employment was also a high predictor of volunteering behaviour. In terms of gender, women were significantly more likely to volunteer than men. With regard to age, the survey confirmed that volunteering tends to peak in middle age, with a tailing off after the age of retirement. Levels of all formal volunteering did not vary significantly by ethnic origin (Low et al, 2007). Although, the statistics provide a useful picture of volunteers, arguably an understanding of why these particular individuals are more likely to volunteer is beneficial, specifically their motivations.

Volunteer motivations

It is important to remember that the variety of motivations identified will be reliant upon the authors' definition of volunteering. As discussed previously, altruism is regarded as important to more traditional definitions of volunteering (Eckstein, 2001), however leaving aside the philosophical debates and focussing upon the reality of volunteering may reveal more genuine motivations. Bussell and Forbes (2001) draw attention to the following categories; altruism, community benefit, family benefit, affiliation/social

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needs, skill development, corporate volunteering, prestige, religious beliefs and the volunteering process (invitation, family or friends involvement and image). Low et al (2007) found that volunteers reported a range of pragmatic and altruistic reasons for starting to volunteer. Over half of respondents said, they wanted to improve things or help people and 41% said they began to volunteer because the cause was important to them. For example, an individual may become involved with an organisation that promotes the needs of young carers if they themselves had caring responsibilities as a child. Although the overall priority of reasons for getting involved was similar across different age groups there were, some differences according to age. For example, getting involved in order to meet people or make new friends was most common among the youngest and oldest age groups. Getting involved because of the needs of family or friends was most common among the middle aged. Young people (aged 16–24) were most likely to mention their careers and wanting to gain new skills from their volunteering. Conversely, older people (especially those aged 65 and over) were the group most likely to say that they got involved because they had spare time. The patterns identified with regard to age suggest that a persons location in the lifecycle has a powerful influence over their volunteering behaviour. Motivations for volunteering were broadly similar among men and women, although more men than women were likely to say they got involved because their friends or family did it (Low et al, 2007). Regarding motivation Wilson and Musick (1997) raise further complexities concerning the work-leisure debate. As most definitions of volunteering include a reference to it being undertaken 'freely and by choice' it could be considered a leisure pursuit. For Wilson and Musick (1997) volunteering is unlike other leisure time pursuits and forms of

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consumption as there is an output produced. There is a gain and benefit to both the volunteer and the organisation. In leisure pursuits the beneficiary is the participant, in volunteering the volunteer may experience a sense of wellbeing or pride, whilst simultaneously helping to achieve the aims and objectives of the organisation. Further, the value of the experience may offer career opportunities, for instance, a volunteer who has been helping to develop opportunities for Asian girls to play football in their local area will have valuable experience for roles within the LA, such as Football Development or Community Cohesion. In this case volunteering could be considered leisure as work and work as leisure, people volunteer out of both choice and reward. In addition, volunteers are often recruited to perform a specific role and it has been argued that this can then become a duty or obligation for the individual concerned (Stebbins, 1996) and therefore could also be considered work or serious leisure. Stebbins (1996, p.223) argued that there is a "complicated link between voluntary action on the one hand and serious leisure and career volunteering on the other". Wilson and Musick (1997) argue that if volunteering is conceptualised as a form of labour that it could be determined by the same kind of forces as those that determine any other kind of labour (Wilson and Musick, 1997;Musick, Wilson and Bynum, 2000). For example, as highlighted earlier numerous studies conclude that individuals with a higher socio-economic status measured by educational attainment and/or employment are more likely to volunteer (Hagedorn and Labovitz, 1967; Bussell and Forbes, 2001; Mutchler, Burr and Caro, 2003). It is argued, "they have more verbal, writing and social skills, which give them more confidence to reach out to others – and makes them more desirable as volunteers" (Wilson and Musick, 1997, p. 710). Conversely, it may be that individuals with higher education attainment

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are more likely to be employed in self-directed jobs, and that volunteering in a particular environment serves a purpose in the individuals' career (Wilson and Musick, 1997). They also state that volunteer work, to varying degrees, involves collective action. Employment creates an environment in which individuals have contact with large networks of people. Wilson and Musick (1997) describe friends, networks and relationships as a form of social capital giving a person the ability to be able to engage in this activity. Social ties make volunteer work more likely by supplying information, fostering trust, making contacts, providing support, setting guidelines and creating obligations. This social capital is a resource for collective action. The arguments presented by Wilson and Musick regarding, educational attainment and social ties align with the theory proposed by Weber, in that, volunteering behaviour is influenced by current socio-economic status. Wilson and Musick (1997) also argue that the volunteer-recipient relationship is an ethical one. There are many reasons people give for their participation in voluntary work, a re-occurring theme is an ethical justification: 'I feel it is important to do things for others', for example. According to the authors, in many cases this may be true, but it may also be the "vocabulary of motives" people use to cover their more personal objectives, advancing their careers or status, for example. One might argue that Wilson and Musick's (1997) conceptualisation indicates there is a complex myriad of reasons why people involve themselves in voluntary action. Further, different individuals may be involved in the same activities but have different goals (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Bussell and Forbes, 2001). These external and internal justifications can intertwine and run alongside each other at both a conscious and sub-conscious level. Wilson and Musick (1997, p.709) conclude, "people who bring job skills can be rewarded

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with assignments drawing on those skills. Just as people use social capital to find volunteer work, organisations offer…interpersonal rewards of various kinds – to obtain commitment". This suggests there is a symbiotic relationship between what a volunteer brings to an organisations and what they gain (Clary and Snyder, 1999). Bussell and Forbes account of volunteering has guided an exploration of the what, where, who and why of volunteering, however it does not attempt to explore the pressures faced by volunteers nor the limitations and drawbacks.

Limitations or pressures faced by volunteers and voluntary associations

Few studies explore the limitations and drawbacks of volunteering; choosing to focus on the reasons people became involved in the first instance. This approach neglects the reasons why people stop volunteering which could provide a valuable understanding for retention. Low et al (2007) in their national volunteering survey did ask a number of questions about the more 'off-putting' aspects of volunteering. For example, participants were asked about how volunteering is organised within their association. With regard to advice and support - the majority of volunteers (83%) were happy with what was available. The associated costs of volunteering, such as, travel expenses and consumables was considered with the number of volunteers who had incurred expenses at 54%. Of those volunteers who had incurred expenses, 77 percent did not have any of them reimbursed. For some volunteers they saw this as a donation, others chose not to ask for expenses to be reimbursed as they felt this was taking money away from the organisation, and some organisations simply do not reimburse expenses. Seventy-nine per cent of volunteers had not received any training for their role although those who had

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received training, nearly all (96%) felt it was adequate. The authors were also concerned with how volunteers were managed. The majority of volunteers (78%) had not been asked to attend an interview, although there were some variations according to the types of activities volunteers were involved in. Those volunteers involved in befriending and giving advice were more likely to have had an interview before commencing their activities, whereas those involved in fundraising were least likely to have done so. The majority of volunteers had not been provided with a role description, had references taken up, been asked for details of criminal convictions, or been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, however of those that had, most did not mind. Although organisations are increasingly concerned about the implementation of risk management, for the most part volunteers themselves were not overly concerned about issues connected with risk. Additionally, the type of voluntary work undertaken also influenced these aspects (Low et al, 2007). Overall, the statistics from the survey suggest a high percentage of individuals were happy with their volunteering experience. Indeed, with regard to the highs and lows of the volunteering experiences the authors state "on the whole, evidence suggests that the situation seems to have improved somewhat since the last National Survey of Volunteering in 1997" (Low et al, 2007, p. 56). For example, 31 percent of volunteers were likely to think that volunteering could be better organised compared to 71 percent in 1997 and 13 percent thought that volunteering took up too much of their time compared to 31 percent in 1997. Although, this study provides very useful information regarding the pressures faced by volunteers, those surveyed continued to volunteer, which may have distorted the results, it does not account for those that have ceased volunteering activity. Further, the study does not explore the different, although

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related pressures faced by the organisations as oppose to the volunteers themselves. Hutchison and Ockenden (2008) researched eight community-based organisations (CBOs) across England to explore the impact of public policy on volunteering in community-based organisations. Their research suggests that CBOs are increasingly being molded externally by policy, particularly the funding environment. Some organisations had managed to secure funding and felt able to plan and extend their services. However, organisations that had lost funding had to reduce services. Further, organisations also found that funding was increasingly linked to externally prescribed outcomes and targets causing some organisations to refocus their services. The study suggests those organisations that had secured funding were better able to positively influence the more off-putting factors affecting volunteering management described by Low et al (2007) above, that is, support and advice, expenses, training, CRB checks, risk assessment and so on.

Volunteering in Sport

Few authors discuss the voluntary sector within sport to any great length; it is generally mentioned alongside other topics, such as, resources and community development. Consequently, there is considerably less research to discuss than in the previous section. Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld (2006) present a focussed and the most comprehensive account of volunteering within sport to date, drawing upon some sport specific research from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK. To my knowledge, this is the only dedicated resource on sports volunteering available and aims to link theory with research to provide guidelines for volunteer management. However, although some sports research is used, much of the research referred to is based on general volunteering research, the conclusions of which have been applied to sports volunteers. Although it may be assumed that there are similarities between volunteering more generally and volunteering in sport, there are almost certainly going to be differences. These differences are worthy of consideration given the policies of bodies such as Sport England to increase provision of sport through voluntary sports organisations. The English Sports Council commissioned a piece of research in 1996, which provided the first significant data and information about UK sports volunteers. The renamed Sport England commissioned a follow up study in 2002. This is the most recent and substantial piece of research that has been undertaken regarding volunteering in sport in the UK. Nichols, Taylor, James, Holmes, King and Garrett, R. (2005) aimed to quantify the contribution made to English sport by volunteers. Building on the 1995/6 work they identified the estimated hours of volunteering in sport are equivalent to 720,000 additional full-time equivalent paid workers in sport. In addition, the authors also

explore pressures on the UK Voluntary Sport Sector. Nichols et al (2005) conclude that volunteering remains the bedrock of opportunity in many sports, without volunteers there would not be as many opportunities for people to participate in sport. Numerous authors discuss volunteering within their exploration of other aspects of sport and these will be discussed where appropriate.

The context of voluntary sports organisations

Roberts (1999), in his examination of leisure, refers to volunteering in sport, and although he is concerned with leisure rather than sport in isolation, the two are inextricably linked. Roberts (1999, p. 4) states, "voluntary organisations are not profit seeking businesses that are subject to the rules of the market place. Nor are they branches of the state, though they may sometimes receive state subsidies. Voluntary associations are formed and die according to their members' wishes and enthusiasm or apathy". This statement suggests that voluntary organisations are independent from external influence however; Cuskelly et al argue that VSOs are a substantial provider of services and opportunities for participation and that the government policies of several nations include goals of increasing sport participation through them. One could argue that no one individual or indeed voluntary organisation is ever completely independent; we are always reliant upon one another for what the other can offer. In this case, the government is dependent of voluntary sports organisations to deliver participation opportunities and the voluntary sports organisations are dependent of the government for the funding they can provide.

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According to Cuskelly at al (2006) Voluntary Sports Organisations (VSOs) are located at the centre of the UK and most sport models, with the idea that competitive sport begins with community schools and local sport clubs identified as the 'grass roots of sport', and that for the most part these type of organisations are run by volunteers. Hylton and Totten (2001) state "the scale of voluntary organisations is such that they range from small local organisations…to nationally [and] internationally linked organisations such as the YMCA and YWCA". As is the nature of voluntary associations, they are not required to affiliate themselves, although most organisations tend to become members of a representative body to learn from each other and keep up to date with national developments. However, the umbrella organisations available are aimed at volunteering more generally such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) or the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Despite a recognition that volunteers within sport represent the largest group within England and Wales attention is given to promoting community development and sport itself receives little attention from these umbrella organisations. Most voluntary sports organisations are required to affiliate with their National Governing Body (NGB) to be able to compete at regional, however the recognition of the contribution of volunteers is not made explicit, and the standard of support available to volunteers varies greatly.

Cuskelly et al (2006) state VSOs and sport volunteers operate in a wider sport development network, which is conceptualised by the sport development continuum: foundation – participation – performance – excellence. Individuals can move can move up through the stages or remain at one level depending upon their circumstances, family

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and work commitment for example. Volunteers can be involved at every level of the continuum. The political environment in which sport development emerged has undergone many changes since its emergence in the 1960s, and as such, this has had implications for those volunteering in sport. Houlihan and White (2002) provide a detailed account of the faltering emergence of sports development in 'Sport for all', where governments were using sport for the good of the welfare state and marked lack of sustained political interest for sport itself. This was followed by a new focus and more positive policy climate for sport with a set of objectives that were more specific, that is, talent identification and development. In this phase, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) had more of an influence on policy writing than LAs who were primarily concerned with mass participation. Finally, New Labour gave sports development a substantial reinvigoration with a revival of commitment to 'sport for all' bringing LAs back to the heart of sports development. This constant shift in emphasis has lead to varying "perceptions of the role to be played by government, sport governing bodies, the education system, health departments, and local councils in the development of sport" (Cuskelly et al, 2006 p.29). Houlihan and White (2002) contend that this has lead to a number of changes including changes in administrative arrangements, a growth in the power of consumers, a trend towards privatisation and increasing professionalisation of the sports industry. For voluntary sports organisations, Houlihan and White (2002) argue further that this has lead to a "decline in deference towards volunteerism and amateurism in sports clubs and governing bodies". Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that this has led to governments being much more inclined to influence the sports sector. Sport and Recreation organisations rely heavily on volunteers – more so than any other voluntary

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sector. Sport is also the largest voluntary sector with the greatest number of hours, the majority of which are in delivery as oppose to governance. This has implications for the delivery of sport development schemes as laid produced by government through targeted funding schemes. Reflecting the Australian Sports Commission, Cuskelly et al (2006, p.32) argue that "while sport governing bodes facilitate the promotion of the scheme and provide the material resources to clubs ands schools, it is volunteers who organise and deliver programmes at the local level".

Defining sports volunteers

Within a sporting context, similar issues exist with regard to defining volunteering as discussed earlier in a more general context. In their most recent publication related to volunteering, Sport England define volunteering as "someone who gives their time to help with a sports club, organisation or event in any support role, whether generic or sport-related" (Sport England, 2007). This definition includes an element of most definitions that is, donating time, however does not state it should be 'without financial gain' and does not include any reference to benefiting the wider community. As will become clear in later sections, the benefit to society and community is considered of central importance to both central government and the WAG. Although, it does suggest that to be a volunteer in sport one does not have to assist with sporting activities indicating that Sport England wish to widen their volunteer base. The Sports Council for Wales has not attempted to define volunteering, nor has produced a volunteering policy. It could be argued that this is an indication of their understanding and/or interest in the

sports voluntary sector and is worthy of note as the research in this study is based within a county of North Wales.

Characteristics of sports volunteers

Nichols at al (2003) explored demographic and socio-economic characteristics of volunteers, such as gender, age, dependent children, employment status, and education. The study showed that men were twice as likely to volunteer within sport as women were. This differs from volunteering more generally, where Low et al (2007) found that women were more likely to volunteer than men were. This suggests an equity issue in sports volunteering similar to the long-standing issue in sports participation generally. Of those women who did volunteer in sport, they were more likely to do so for school, perhaps as a consequence of their children, where as men were more likely to volunteer for sports clubs. For sports volunteers the proportion with no dependent children is high, at 68% suggesting that the parental motivation for volunteering in sport only affects a minority of volunteers. Unfortunately, Low et al (2007) did not ask questions in their wider study relating to dependent children. In terms of age half of sports volunteers were under 35 years, and half were 35 years or older and in line with volunteering more generally the volunteering rate decreased with age. The data also suggests that the proportion of volunteers who are retired rises sharply when considering core, more formal volunteers, for example secretary and chair type roles. The authors raise questions as to whether this represents a preference for older people in core roles, or a constraint to younger people achieving such positions and suggest further research is required. With regard to employment the voluntary sports sector is reliant on a large

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proportion of volunteers (70%) who also have paid jobs. Associated with paid work, lack of time is one of the main reasons for no longer engaging in voluntary activity along with the conflicting demands of their job and age. For sports volunteers, 54% were educated to 17 years or above. Again Low et al (2007) did not ask questions in their wider study relating to education; although as highlighted earlier, education is considered a high predictor of volunteering behaviour (Hagedorn and Labovitz, 1967; Bussell and Forbes, 2001; Mutchler, Burr and Caro, 2003).

The roles of sport volunteers

With regard to specific roles of volunteers within sports organisations, Cuskelly et al (2006) break these down into five categories. Firstly, administrators – these individuals are committee or board members and offer overall guidance, direction, and supervision. They operate at all levels from local to international responsibilities and oversee planning, policy, relationships and finances, for example. There involvement is dependent upon their experience, motivation, qualifications, commitment and the culture and resources of the VSO. The next role is that of the official such as, referees, umpires, judges, scorers and timekeepers. These individuals are generally unpaid, are crucial to facilitating sports opportunities, and are difficult roles to fill. These roles are becoming less attractive as there can be excessive training and accreditation requirements, rising costs and individuals can be subject to abuse. Coaches are also well-established roles within VSOs. The majority are unpaid depending up resources, although at the elite level they are more likely to be remunerated. There are structured training and accreditation schemes for coaches as high "standards are recognised as having an important impact on

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sports development" (Cuskelly et al, 2006, p. 35). The above three roles are more likely to be core volunteers and have a relationship with the club and other volunteers. In addition to these roles, VSOs also require individuals with more peripheral responsibilities, as previously discussed. Event volunteers are more likely to have a short-term commitment and undertake a variety of task often dependent upon specialist skill or knowledge. These volunteers require an intensive approach to managing, such as, timeliness of recruiting, selecting and training. Finally, there are also general volunteers who become involved in fundraising, managing, player registration and match day arrangements (car parking, stewarding and promotion). The majority of general volunteers have an existing link with the club, they may be the parent of a player, a former player, or have friends who are members. These roles tend to be less formal or onerous. Cuskelly et al (2006, p. 36) state, "most NGBs recognise the significant impact of the above roles and have numerous initiatives to ensure they are well managed and trained to deliver strategically important sports development outcomes". However, this approach must be balanced against adversely affecting the motivations of volunteers.

The context of sports volunteers

Further aspects explored by Nichols et al (2003) included, volunteer roles, time spent on volunteering within sports clubs, lapsed volunteering and potential volunteers. The data suggests that that sports volunteers generally are multi-taskers, fulfilling a variety of roles. Indeed, the percentage of volunteers that had taken part in various activities was as follows; coaching 88%, admin 85%, match official 82%, fund raising 75%, practical help 64%, helping relations 43% and other activities 28%. The authors concluded that a

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striking feature of volunteers in sport is that multi-tasking is typical, due to the variety of tasks involved in running a sports club and the smaller numbers of volunteers, they are required to take on a number of diverse roles, such as coach, chair, receptionist, accountant and so on. Pearce (1993) identified two groups of volunteers described as core and peripheral. Core volunteers (strategic) tend to be board or committee members; they lead or guide the organisation making strategic policy decisions. Peripheral (operational) volunteers are steady contributors to the organisation involved in more service delivery, operational type activity. With regard to the organisations as oppose the volunteers who make them up, Taylor (2004) conceptualises VSOs on a spectrum between traditional and contemporary. Whether closer to the traditional or contemporary end of the spectrum organisations require both types of volunteer to function effectively. However, the core volunteers within the more traditional type organisations tend to be willing to muck in and take on more duties as volunteers leave whilst resisting external assistance. In more contemporary type organisations, they are more likely to "develop a culture of contribution in which all members…are expected to help" (Cuskelly et al, 2006, p. 25). Nichols et al (2003, p. 42) argue that "this is particularly relevant to the management of volunteers because any initiatives to increase formalisation and specialisation of key roles needs to be flexible enough to preserve the 'mucking in' culture that pervades many of these organisations". Finally, as suggested by Cuskelly et al (2003) governments are now more inclined to influence the sport sector by targeting funding to achieve certain policy goals.

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Sport volunteer motivations

Motivations are described in both sport specific research and general research around volunteering as a list of reasons to volunteer. Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that although there has been considerable focus on volunteer motivations few actually agree on what these are. Much of the research concludes that they are complex and multifaceted. However, they do describe motivation to volunteer as a desire to help others, as well as for personal and social rewards. They state "these rewards co-exist in motivating volunteers in formal organisations" (Cuskelly et al, 2006, p. 88). They go on to suggest that volunteers in sport are more likely to be persuaded by personal benefits, work experience, tapping in to community networks or assisting their child to participate in sport. Nichols et al (2003) also found that the most common motivations were a desire for social benefits and wanting to put something back into the club, followed by wanting to help as a parent. Cuskelly et al (2006) also suggest that the seasonal nature of volunteering has an influence on when they consider their motivations and whether or not to continue, that is, at the beginning and end of the season. During these periods, they may consider who will be approached to fulfil certain positions.

Limitations or pressures faced by sports volunteers

Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that several societal and institutional underlying factors are placing increased pressure on those who are interested in increasing participation in sport. Taylor (2004) lists these as increased choice and competition for peoples' leisure time and expenditure; more time devoted to employment and childcare; greater expectations of higher quality service delivery; central government and Sport England requirements and

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initiatives; and NGB standards and requirements. Indeed, Nichols et al (2003) found that issues for voluntary sports organisations included shortages of volunteers; a problem in recruiting new volunteers; and consequently the increased volume of work required from fewer people. The authors suggest that this is further compounded by the increase in demands upon these volunteers with the members looking for clubs that are more professional and NGBs placing increasingly stringent procedures upon these clubs, such as, risk assessments, child protection, and equalities policies. According Nichols et al (2005) this is having an impact on the recruitment of core volunteers who are required to do more of this type of work. VSOs vary in many ways including their size, structures cultures and traditions and for Cuskelly et al (2006, p.20) 'importantly their capacity to respond to changes in their external environment'. The research by Nichols et al (2003) highlighted that sports organisations have responded to this challenge to varying degrees, with some embracing this increased need for professionalism by introducing new policies and procedures and others rejecting this approach trying to maintain their informal structure and culture. According to Taylor (2004) there are two types of voluntary organisations that lie at opposite ends of a spectrum. Firstly, traditional and more informal organisations where groups with a mutual enthusiasm, stSidg collective identities and operate as cooperatives. These groups view professionalism and external assistance as a threat to their organisation. In addition, contemporary organisations that are more formal tend to be systematic, business-like, and receptive to external assistance. Taylor (2004) suggests that the more contemporary organisations will be more able to respond to these pressures.

Nichols et al (2005) later combined the research discussed above with research carried out on behalf of the CCPR to highlight some of the key issues facing sports volunteers and club managers. They indicate that many of the issues faced by sports organisations may be shared with voluntary organisations more generally, such as the decrease in the number of volunteers, the increase on pressures of a core group of volunteers and pressures from policy objectives, legislation, and risk assessments. An issue that may be more relevant to sports organisations is the demand for professionalism from club members. For example, private companies such as David Lloyd Leisure are able to provide better facilities and employed coaches and co-ordinators, members of local tennis clubs may feel they should receive a similar level of service and may eventually leave their local club in favour of these services. Cuskelly at al (2006) argue that the wider variety of choice of things to spend money on may mean VSOs have to change their relationship with members from one of participation to one of consumption of services. They will become a provider of services rather than member driven organisations, which may have implications for management. In addition to the pressures of recruiting volunteers, organisations are also facing a number of pressures brought about by government intervention. In addition, there are a number of organisational barriers, such as, poor management, increasing demands placed upon volunteers and simply not being invited to volunteer. There are also a number of personal barriers facing potential volunteers, as identified by Doherty (2003). These include work commitments, lack of time, family pressures, past experience, lack of skills and the inability to make a year round commitment. Some of these are beyond the control of VSOs but others can also be addressed.

A comparison of sports volunteers with volunteers more generally will allow an exploration of not only the pressures but also the motivations experienced by the two groups and highlight shared and distinct issues between them.

Chapter 3: Figurational Sociology

Figurational sociology is the study of how people cope with the problems of interdependence (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994), although the people under investigation may not be aware that this is what they are doing, as they go about their everyday lives. Norbert Elias, the founding father of figurational sociology introduced the term 'networks of interdependency', arguing that each and every person is linked to others with invisible ties. Elias (1978, p. 127) states "we can never think of people singly and alone; we must always think of them as people in figurations". Therefore, figurational sociologists suggest that in order to understand society and behaviour, one must look at the networks and inter-relationships formed by individuals. For Elias, "One must start from the structure of the relations *between* individuals in order to understand the 'psyche' of the individual person" (Elias, 2001, p.37). This allows an exploration of the constraints and pressures that influence a persons decisions and the outcome of their choices; in this case a persons' propensity to volunteer, whether in a sporting or non-sport context.

As previously discussed, there are two prominent sociological theories that have guided the study of volunteerism thus far. The first is associated with the work of Emile Durkheim whose focal point is socialisation. From the perspective of Durkheim, joining is an expression of the solidarity that comes from adherence to a set of obligations, or norms, that are learned in the same way that other norms are learned, informally through family and friends, and formally through schools, churches, and the workplace. The second theory, Weberian theory of voluntary association membership attributes more

significance to socioeconomic factors: voluntary action is driven, or made possible, by socioeconomic interests and resources. One might argue that socialisation is linked to economic and social status and therefore these two theories are very similar and overlap. Figurational sociologists however would go one-step further and argue that both aspects are simply features of human figurations, our habitus.

Habitus

For figurational sociologists we only exist in and through our relations with others, we are all interdependent, and this notion is of central importance. Figurational sociologists would suggest that the 'self' is a product of our interdependency as we are born into a network of individuals who existed before us. Elias (1978) suggests a person is not only a product of his own life history and experiences but also of those who have gone before him. As far as we can see back in time the individual is born into a network of individuals who existed before them with values and beliefs which are past on, refined and modified. Elias refers to this as 'embodied social learning', this history of those who have gone before us becomes a deep-seated part of our 'selves', it is our 'habitus'. For example, a person born in to a family that regards social responsibility as important will inevitably be influenced by these values and as a result will be more likely to engage in behaviours in accord with such values, such as volunteering. However, individuals are also influenced by their current relations. Elias states "the form taken by the psychical function of a person can never be deduced solely from his or her inherited constitution but only from the working up of this constitution in conjunction with other people (Elias, 2001, p.36). For example, an individual may have been influenced by the figurations in

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to which they were born, as through values, however their current circumstances may not facilitate volunteering behaviour, such as work and family commitments or physical ability. For figurational sociologists, preference and choice are constrained by our interconnectedness in present day and back through time, and highlighting again how our habitus is central to our development. Elias states "the opportunities between which a person has to choose…are not created by that person" (Elias, 2001, p.49), they are created by the figurations of which they are a part. It is highly unlikely, for example, a child born in a poor working class family could choose to become an Olympic sailor. Therefore, to understand more adequately the actions of individuals, such as volunteering, one must explore the figurations to which they belong, both past and present.

Blind Social Processes/ Unintended Consequences

Elias (1978) also proposes that the intertwining of these networks of relationships that people form, become complicated and uncontrollable. For that reason, it is difficult for any one person to form a clear picture and control the direction of events. Elias (1978, p.95) states "out of the intertwining of many peoples' actions there may emerge social consequences which no one has planned". The interweaving of the conscious actions of individuals may result in a social process, developed autonomously of the individuals who form the web, with an intended but also unintended outcome. For example, voluntary organisations are reliant upon obtaining funding from various different methods. One of the most significant means is through funding bodies, such as, the National Lottery, Comic Relief and central or local government. These bodies often have

a particular concern or issue upon which they are required to focus, public safety for example. In order to obtain funding this way a voluntary organisation must demonstrate that it can meet a number of specific criteria in relation to this concern or issue. The intended actions of the funding bodies targeting funding in a particular area so as to alleviate perceived social ills may have unintended consequences for the organisations applying. As previously highlighted, the government have renewed interest in the voluntary sector in terms of service delivery. One of the justifications for this is that the voluntary sector is perceived, through their independence from public bodies, as having greater trust of the public than public services themselves. However, if an organisation is required to demonstrate pre-determined objectives to their funding bodies there is a risk that their original mission will drift and they will reduce their independence; the very strength the government is intending to utilise. The concept of 'blind social processes' can aid our understanding of these 'unintended consequences', such as the unforeseen aspects of targeted funding. These more negative aspects of targeted funding are not random occurrences, but, if one is to take Elias's view, the unintended consequences of the intertwining actions of all those involved within public service delivery.

With regard to sports organisations specifically, the policies of both central and local governments to use sport as a vehicle for wider social objectives such as, reducing crime and increasing health (Houlihan and White, 2002; Jackson and Nesti, 2001) may also have unintended consequences for volunteers and voluntary sports organisations. According to Cuskelly at al (2006) Voluntary Sports Organisations (VSOs) are located at the centre of the UK sport model, with the idea that competitive sport begins with

community schools and local sport clubs identified as the 'grass roots of sport', and that for the most part these type of organisations are run by volunteers. These types of organisations tend to have more sport specific objectives driven by competitive ambition. Perceived interference by external bodies, such as local governments trying to influence organisations to take on these wider roles, may persuade organisations to keep their distance and rely more on their own sources of income, such as, membership fees and donations in order to concentrate on developing talent. This is an example of shifting power balances, which will be discussed shortly.

Above are some examples of blind social processes, though many more are evident in the literature. According to Elias (1978) the individual actions of people or groups of people, influence the actions of other individuals or groups, resulting in outcomes that no one had foreseen or planned. These unanticipated aspects are the result of the actions many individuals and the interdependence that exist between them.

Power Balances

Elias (1978, p.74) states "balances of power are always present wherever there is functional interdependence between people". We depend on others and others depend on us, one may be more so than the other. People are necessarily constrained by virtue of their interdependence. That is to say, where a figuration is formed by many interdependent people, a person is often compelled to act in a way that they would not, except under a perceived compulsion. As previously discussed, voluntary organisations are independent of the state; nevertheless, to obtain funding from a local authority or

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Sport England (SE) they must demonstrate they can achieve pre-determined policy objectives, such as increased health of participants. This is an example of funding bodies constraining voluntary organisations to act in a certain way; they are exerting control. According to Elias (1978, p.93) no one person or group have complete control or power, "A's dependence on B is always connected with B's dependence on A". Public services are still reliant upon voluntary organisations for the services they provide whether sport or non-sport; therefore, voluntary organisations hold a proportion of control. The balance of power resides with the funding body, but according to Elias, power is not absolute. As above, the organisations may resist this external interference and rely solely on their own income. However, this policy is not likely to generate as much income as a funding application might.

This is an example of the government exerting power over voluntary organisations. The governments influence over service delivery is greater than that of the volunteers themselves, although the same rule applies, they are interdependent and both hold a proportion of the power, although one may hold more than the other. As Murphy et al (2002, p. 93) suggest,

> power is always a question of relative balances, never of absolute possession or absolute deprivation, for no one is ever absolutely powerful or absolutely powerless. Neither is the balance of power between groups in a society permanent, for power balances are dynamic and continuously in flux.

Although volunteers and voluntary organisations seem to have relatively little power to influence the course of voluntary action, that is, becoming aligned with government policy through targeted funding, they do have a proportion, due to the functional relationships they form with others. This situation can also vary as power balances are not fixed and the potential for change exists.

Involvement – Detachment

Elias rejected the concepts objectivity and subjectivity since he believed that no one can ever be completely objective or completely subjective in their work. Instead, he chose the terms involvement-detachment. The terms do not represent "two separate classes of objects" (Kilminster, 2004, p.31) in the way that objectivity and subjectivity do but more accurately, are best viewed as a continuum between the two poles of involvement – detachment. Arguably, a person who is able to exercise a greater degree of detachment will be more able to make sense of the situation, to accurately describe and explain it with what Elias (1978) termed 'greater reality congruence'. It is important to note, though greater detachment is essential, a degree of involvement is also required to better understand certain aspects of particular situations; a unique insight. A person may have a greater degree of involvement or a greater degree of detachment, and their position on the continuum is reflective of how adequate their analysis is, in terms of its capacity to explain concrete social processes and account for the available evidence. Involvement and detachment is central to the understanding of research methods from a figurational perspective, one is constantly striving for an appropriate balance between the two. Where sociologists have been constrained to demonstrate the scientific merit of their

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work in a way dictated to them by the natural sciences, figurational sociologist are equipped to take another approach.

Chapter 4: Methodology

It was my intention to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods in the form of questionnaires and interviews. Figurational sociologists would argue against an understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods as diametrically opposed concepts. On one level, directly administered questionnaires and formal interview schedules begin to merge. Social research methods might be better understood on a continuum as more or less quantitative/qualitative. Due to the limited research available from a sociological perspective regarding volunteering generally and volunteering in sport it was deemed necessary to gather statistical information on volunteers, therefore questionnaires were distributed. However, to gain an in-depth understanding of the various factors that combine to either facilitate and/or inhibit volunteering behaviour, it was intended that focus groups would be undertaken to achieve a greater appreciation of the views of those engaged in volunteering activities both within sport and more generally. Unfortunately, as will be discussed, there were some barriers with the methodological approach, which resulted in an enforced decision to use semi structured interviews as an alternative. The study was based in the county of Flintshire in North East Wales.

Self-completion Questionnaires

Due the limited research available regarding sport volunteers, questionnaires were used to collect a broad range of information from recipients. These included socio-demographic characteristics of volunteers and basic information about the type of voluntary activity

undertaken (see appendix A). It was intended that this would allow a comparison between those that volunteer in a sporting context and those that volunteer more generally. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed to 60 voluntary organisations in the county of Flintshire in North East Wales using the Community Directory on the Flintshire County Council website (www.flintshire.gov.uk), 150 to non-sports organisations, and 150 to sports organisations. A standard letter was included with the questionnaires and instructions for distribution was sent addressed to the contact on the database inviting them and their colleagues to participate in the research. Pre-paid envelopes were included with each questionnaire for the research participants to complete and return. This included a section asking them to indicate if they would like to be contacted to participate further in the study. The responses participants provided in the questionnaire were intended to inform the selection of focus groups, however due to certain barriers experienced, which will be discussed later, interviews were undertaken. For the purposes of the questionnaire and subsequent interviews, a volunteer was defined as 'any person who freely engages in unpaid activity, in their spare time, for the benefit of the organisation and/or its users'.

The self-completion questionnaire is considered to be, relatively cheap and quick to administer. This allows the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a short space of time. Although, of central concern should be to what extent the research method or methods advance our understanding of the research problem. Each respondent receives exactly the same set of questions in the same order producing results that are consistent and replicable. Respondents are free to complete the questionnaire at their own leisure

and in particular, without the presence of the researcher. In contrast with focus groups and interviews, which I shall discuss later, where one of the most significant criticisms is the effect of interviewer bias, the notion that the presence of the interviewer may influence the answers that the respondent provides. However, questionnaires in the way that they are constructed, that is, the questions asked and not asked and the choices offered in multiple choice questions, for example, may also influence the responses provided by participants. There are also several other limitations of the self-completion questionnaire. Generally, surveys produce low response rates and opinion differs as to what percentage is acceptable for credible research (Bryman, 2004). Respondents are able to miss questions if they feel they do not know the answer, which can increase the risk of missing data and the researcher can never know the reason for this omission. Further, the researcher cannot guarantee the questionnaire reached the right target group. One of the most noteworthy criticisms of questionnaires and in contrast with interviews, the researcher is unable to collect additional information, to probe the respondents and allow them to elaborate on certain answers. This reduces the researcher's ability to explore answers and make sense of them from the respondent's perspective (Bryman, 2004) and raises questions as to the 'richness' of the data. According to Goudsblom (1977), the requirements of survey research can produce results where sociological significance is sacrificed for statistical significance. Whilst one recognises the importance of statistical information, it could be argued that quantitative measures can only provide the researcher with a portion of the picture. Statistical information can show trends and patterns, for example, nonetheless "most sociologists, although there is no precise definition, are interested in causal explanations of the social world"

(Abercrombie *et al*, 2000, p. 334). It is for this reason that the above questionnaires were combined with the more qualitative approach of interviews (originally intended to be focus groups) below.

Focus Groups

It was planned to use focus groups to allow an investigation of the motivations and pressures experienced by volunteers in both groups. The questionnaires provided information on the type of voluntary work being undertaken and the socio-demographics of the participants. This information was intended to inform the composition of the focus groups. As highlighted earlier, volunteers are not a homogenous group but a collection of individuals undertaking an often quite common activity. They will have different beliefs, ideologies, and understandings based on their experiences, some of these they may share with others and some will be distinct. Therefore, it was my intention to have two mixed groups of volunteers in sport and volunteers in non-sport organisations to explore the similarities and differences between these beliefs. It was expected that mixed groups would persuade the participants to question one another about why they hold a particular view, encouraging participants to justify their statements/arguments and allow the researcher a greater understanding of why people feel the way they do about certain topics. In addition, it was anticipated that this would also identify where issues or views were common to the different groups and where they diverge. Due to difficulties with the methodology, which will be discussed later, semi structured interviews were undertaken.

Interviews

Participants were selected based on the information they provided in the questionnaires. The interviews formed part of a study the central object of which was to investigate, from the perspective of volunteers themselves, the motivations and constraints that influence volunteering behaviour in sports and non-sports voluntary organisations. The interviews are based on semi-structured interviews (see appendix B) with eight volunteers from within Flintshire in North Wales. Four of the participants were from non-sports organisations (all female), associated with care work, advice work, campaigning and social groups and four from sports organisations (two male; two female) associated with team and individual sports. Interviews were conducted in October and November 2008. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. In order to help allay any suspicions concerning the use of the data, at the beginning of each interview the participants were given guarantee of confidentiality that neither they nor the organisation for which they volunteer would be identified, therefore in later discussions about the interviewees responses they will be given pseudonyms. All participants were asked (and in writing on the Participant Information Sheet) if the interviews could be audio tape-recorded and were assured that the recorder could be stopped at anytime should they request/desire this for any reason.

Semi-structured interviews are more qualitative in approach. They enable the researcher to gather in-depth and detailed information from participants, from their own perspective. Their flexibility allows adjustments to the interview guide to follow up areas of enquiry that may arise during the interview process, such as unexpected data or for the

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participants themselves to elaborate on areas that they regard of particular interest or importance. This is not possible in more rigid and inflexible research methods, those that involve closed questions, for example. In addition, Face to face interviews allow for a level of trust and rapport to build between interviewer and interviewee, this may be particularly important for sensitive or confidential subject matter. Conversely, they can also give rise to antagonisms and hostility. Interviews can allow for an understanding of the responses context, by listening to use of language before and after a statement and listening the subjects tone of voice and body language (Denscombe 2003; Gratton and Jones, 2004), although interpretation is by its very nature problematic. Further disadvantages to interviews include the required resources than other methods, travel and time costs, for example and time consuming transcription and analysis. Although, as highlighted earlier with regard to questionnaires importance should be placed on what extent the research method or methods advance our understanding of the research problem, in this case the motivations and constraints for volunteers. Most proponents of qualitative research methods believe the costs are outweighed by the rich data collected and required to gain an insight into the topic from the perspective of the interviewee. The data analysis can be difficult and is not as straight forward as with other methods. Interviews produce non-standard responses compared with questionnaires. Although, one might argue that the data generated in questionnaires, apart from being basic, may appear straightforward at first but in reality is far from it. Other potential disadvantages, as indicated earlier, include the possibility of 'interviewer bias'. The researcher may unconsciously encourage certain responses and discourage others although as indicated earlier this is also problematic in questionnaires. Miles (1979 cited in Bryman, 2004,

p.399), describes qualitative data as an 'attractive nuisance' because the data can be so rich, but this often means it is more difficult to put the data into comparable categories. Figurational sociologist would argue that of central importance when considering different research methods approaches is the capability of the approach to further our understanding rather than the convenience they present.

In addition, as previously discussed it was important to consider the principle of Involvement and Detachment. It was recognised that it is important to avoid making personal judgements of the participants and their activities (in the interviews and subsequent analysis), and an attempt was made, insofar as possible, to combine simultaneously a capacity to empathise or identify with the volunteers being studied with a certain critical degree of detachment from them. By doing this, it is anticipated that the research will offer a relatively detached analysis of the ways in which volunteers view and experience volunteering.

Data Analysis:

The questionnaire responses were collated in an excel document. This allowed simple calculations to be made in order to provide descriptive statistics on those that volunteer in sport and those that volunteer in organisations that are more general. Participant responses were then examined to identify patterns and relationships with the intention of highlighting similarities and differences between these individuals, for example between their age groups.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and subject to thematic analysis. The transcripts were read repeatedly, and the responses that volunteers gave considered in relation to the key theoretical concepts and literature described earlier. The particular phrases, themes, and patterns that emerged within volunteers' responses were identified and arranged into categories of meaning based upon recurring themes in the data (Bryman, 2004). These categories were then amended to incorporate other areas of concern that emerged. In this manner, all of the categories of meaning were subsequently refined to ensure that all of the different kinds of 'units of analysis' (Bryman, 2004: 187) are included in the findings of the research. Through content analysis four key themes emerged; definition and meaning, motivation, pathways into volunteering and frustrations with and stopping volunteering. Several secondary themes emerged in places, such as, funding and these will be incorporated where appropriate. As will become evident, on some occasions all the volunteers shared the same views on particular issues. On other occasions, distinctions can be made within and between the views sports volunteers and non-sports volunteers. It will be suggested that these distinctions could be explained by virtue of the areas in which the volunteers' worked, the scope and size of the organisation, the number of years they have volunteered and their general background and history. According to Elias (1978) the individual actions of people or groups of people influence the actions of other individuals or groups. In other words, the background of the individual and the context in which a volunteer find themselves, impacts upon them and constrains them to behave in a particular way. Therefore, to facilitate the reader in following the discussion of the interviews it is suggested that the reader refers to the table provided which gives information on the interviewees about

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their particular contexts, illustrating the kinds of influences or constraints that may be placed upon them.

Table 1: Volunteer information

Name	Group	Sex	Age	Number of Years volunteered	Size/context of organisation
Sid	Sport	Male	84	60+ years	Small local club – informal – links to regional body
Steve	Sport	Male	62	15 years	Small local club – informal – links to regional body
Sarah	Sport	Female	58	35 years	Small local club – formal – links to regional body
Sylvia	Sport	Female	66	32 years	Large regional club, formal – links to national body
Beryl	Non-sport	Female	45	2 ½ years	Small local club – informal – links to national organisation
Bridget	Non-sport	Female	61	30+ years	Local community group – formal structure – links to many networks regional and national
Betty	Non-sport	Female	51	8 years	Local branch of national organisation – formal structure
Barbara	Non-sport	Female	68	4 ½ years	Local group with links to national organisation – formal structure

NB: in order to assist the reader, all sports volunteers names begin with S and all non-sports volunteers names begin with B.

The core themes evident within the responses of volunteers are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

I shall begin by considering the results from the questionnaires, including a reflection upon the methodological approach, followed by an exploration of the findings of the interviews. Throughout the analysis, I shall seek to draw out the similarities and differences between volunteers in a sporting and non-sporting context drawing upon previous literature and the figurational approach within sociology as tools for investigation.

Questionnaires

The aim of the questionnaire was to gather and compare the socio-demographic information of volunteers within sport and those who volunteer more generally. However, the overall response rate for both sport and non-sport respondents was low at 13.6%. Further, there was a significant difference between the response rates from volunteers in generic organisations compared to those returned from volunteers within sports organisations at 20.6% and 6.6% respectively, a 14% difference. Although opinion differs, as to what is an appropriate response rate for the results to be considered valid (Bryman, 2004), 20.6% for non-sport respondents is deemed reasonable. However, 6.6% for sports respondents is not and therefore, the following commentary will focus on the low response from sports volunteers. Although it had an adverse affect on the planned methodology for the research, this difference is worthy of consideration and some general observations can be made. Of course, it is worth remembering that these observations are the informed reflections of the researcher. However, due to the dearth of literature available on sports volunteering and the unique nature of the study the

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observations made regarding the methodology may have implications for future research. I shall begin by considering the methodology itself before moving on to a discussion of the nature of sports volunteers themselves.

One of the disadvantages of employing questionnaires is that generally, surveys produce low response rates and opinion differs as to what percentage is acceptable for credible research, further, the researcher cannot guarantee the questionnaire reached the right target group (Bryman, 2004). Indeed, the method used for the distribution of questionnaires may reflect the above disadvantages, which subsequently may have had an adverse effect on the response rate for sports organisations. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to 30 voluntary sports associations and 30 general voluntary organisations (5 per organisation, 300 in total) with a standard letter including instructions for these to be distributed to volunteers. The rationale for this approach was based on the premise that if one questionnaire was sent to each organisation the most likely recipient would be the secretary, consequently the responses provided would, for the most part, be from the same 'type' of volunteer. To counteract this, it was decided to send five questionnaires to each organisation in order to obtain responses from volunteers with a broad range of roles. Upon reflection, there are a number of reasons why this approach may not work in sports organisations, thus resulting in a much lower response rate from this group. Firstly, general voluntary organisations tend to have volunteers with clearly defined roles. For example, an organisation providing respite for carers will be managed by a board of trustees, these individuals will have more strategic (core) type roles, in addition they will have volunteers engaged in the more frontline (peripheral)

type voluntary work, that is, actually providing the respite service. Within a sports organisation however, according to Nichols et al (2005), and reflected in the interviews conducted which will be discussed later, sports organisations tend to operate in a 'mucking in' culture. That is, a core of long-standing members who undertake a whole variety of tasks. Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that there are five categories of roles within sports organisations administrators, coaches, officials, event and general volunteers. Indeed, the responses from the questionnaires and the subsequent interviews suggest that sport volunteers undertake combinations of all of the above categories. If this is the case, there will not have been additional volunteers with who the recipient could past the questionnaires. Of the ten sports volunteers that did respond eight indicated they were involved in administration type activities, indicating that the same type of volunteer responded. Indeed, in the interviews it was apparent that this was the case and most clearly demonstrated by Steve, who when asked who organised things said "usually me. I do most things". When questioned about the low response rate from sports volunteers he went on to say:

Well we are different people aren't we – people who play [sport] I don't think we are in to writing and things but if you were in to environmental issues for example, I suppose it involves writing letters. You know, people who manage teams they don't want to write anything if they can avoid it…but I've been a teacher all my life so I'm used to it (Steve).

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As will be discussed later, sports volunteers are involved in a 'self interest' activity, they are coming together to engage in sport for the enjoyment of it and may, therefore, be less responsive to external requests. Further, sport is an energetic and lively activity, Steve is suggesting that sitting down and reflecting in the form of a questionnaire may not be of interest. He on the other hand is not opposed to this due to his experiences in the workplace. As will be discussed later, sports volunteers are engaging in voluntary activity in order that they can continue their engagement with the sport they are interested in. Their voluntary activity is a means to an end – playing or being involved in sport. For non-sports volunteers, their voluntary activity is their past time, this may lead them to immerse themselves in their activity in a different way to sports volunteers. For that reason, the differences described between the administration and structure of the two groups of voluntary organisations, emphasise the difficulty in applying the same methodology to both. It seems sending more questionnaires to less organisations was appropriate for general voluntary organisations but not for sports organisations as they are less likely to have as many volunteers.

Further, the more structured delivery of the more general voluntary organisations may mean that volunteers meet on a regular basis in a formal setting to discuss service delivery. Within a sports organisations they are more like to meet more peripheral volunteers on a match day or at training, which does not facilitate the completing of questionnaires. In addition, it is more likely that general voluntary organisations employ a paid member of staff to undertake a management role or an administration function, for example. With this function in place, these organisations will be more able to coordinate

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responses. Of course, this is a generalisation; there are more or less formally structured organisations in both groups, it is simply more likely that non-sports organisations have a more formal element. Indeed, when Sid was questioned about the low response rate from sports volunteers he said, "well, I would think that the people in generic organisations are a bit more professional than the sports organisations". When asked why he thought this was the case he began to reflect on his experience of a more generic voluntary organisation.

> When you go to the home and you see the people, they are doing voluntary work but doing it in a very professional way, because that's what they like to do, that's there interest and you can see them blossoming in their interest. There own personality blossoms.

Further to the distribution method for the questionnaires, the timing may also have had an effect on the low response rate from the sports organisations. The questionnaires were distributed in August 2008. A proportion of sports are played during the winter months, with their seasons running from the end of September through to May. This would not have influenced the general voluntary organisations however, a proportion of sports organisations would not meet until the start of the new season in September, by which time it is likely the questionnaires were forgotten or not a priority. Either the questionnaires could have been distributed at a time of year when, both historically winter and summer sports, are being played or the researcher could have targeted winter or summer sports depending on the time or year.

One might have expected that, due to the supposed altruistic nature of volunteers that the response rate from volunteers would be higher compared to the general population. Indeed, this may be a further explanation for the higher response rate from more generic volunteers compared with sports volunteers. For example, the types of activities that individuals may be involved with tend to be more cause specific such as caring or conservation. Where as, sports volunteers as discussed in the literature, fall in to the category of mutual enthusiasm or self-interest. That is to say, sports volunteers are advancing their own interests and therefore may be les likely to respond to external requests. In addition, volunteers are giving up their spare time to conduct their voluntary activity and therefore may have limited capacity for other requests, which may have affected the low response rate. Indeed this notion was supported by Sarah, who when reflecting on the low response rate of sports volunteers said:

> I think sport can be, maybe a bit of a selfish thing…you are that tied up with what you are doing within sport sometimes, I suppose you are bit oblivious. I think in sport maybe the age groups are younger, because they are active and they are playing sport. Maybe with other voluntary organisations, maybe a lot are retired and have more time. When you look at sport, nearly everybody works don't they, where as, other voluntary groups might do it as a pastime.

Again emphasising the subtle but important difference between how the two groups of volunteers engage with their voluntary activity, that is, as a pastime in its own right (non-sport) or as a means to end to enjoy their pastime (sport).

Despite the low response rate, there are nonetheless some general observations and comparisons to be made between the two groups and with regard to previous research undertaken. I shall use percentages to describe the picture provided by the responses however it should be noted that the percentages for sports volunteers are made from a small number of respondents (6.6.%) and the results may not be representative of a wider population.

It is suggested in the literature that employment is high predictor of volunteering behaviour (Low et al, 2007). . Interestingly, and in contrast to the findings of Low et al (2007), the majority of non-sports volunteers were retired at 52% and only 19% were employed full-time. Further, the remaining 29% were either employed part-time, unemployed, full-time students or homemakers. One could argue that the respondents from the non-sports volunteers had more time to complete the questionnaire as only a minority were employed full-time which may also have influenced their higher response rate. Neither were the findings of Low et al (2007) supported by the sports volunteers, 40% of whom were employed full time, 50% were retired and 10% were in full time education. Indeed, the findings of Nichols et al (2003) suggest that voluntary sports sector is reliant on a large proportion of volunteers (70%) who also have paid jobs. Although in this study the numbers of participants employed full-time were not the

majority, there were significantly more than the non-sports volunteers. This may have had an effect on the low response rate from sports volunteers, who if working full-time and volunteering part time would have considerably less time to respond to requests such as the completion of questionnaires. This is also supported in the above quote from Sarah. Further, this is inconsistent with previous research which suggests that volunteering tends to peak in middle age with a tailing off after the age of retirement (Low et al, 2007).

On the subject of age, 45% of non-sports volunteers were between the ages of 45 and 64, and 42% were 65 or older. Respondents from the sports volunteers were younger with 70% of respondents between the ages of 45 and 64, and 10% 65 or older, indicating that sports volunteers are younger than non-sports volunteers are. This is supported by previous research, which also suggests that sports volunteers are younger. However, the results from the study by Nichols et al (2003) found that half of sports volunteers were under 35 years, and half were 35 years or older. As previously indicated, it is likely that the questionnaires for sports volunteers were completed by 'core' volunteers, who are more likely to be older (Low et al, 2007).

In relation to education, the literature previously discussed suggested that education is also considered a prominent predictor of volunteering behaviour (McPerson and Lockwood, cited in Janoski and Wilson, 1995, p. 273). Indeed the results from the questionnaires are fairly consistent with this assertion. Both groups had a relatively equal spread of educational achievement levels; however, in line with previous research the

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majority of participants were educated beyond compulsory education. For non-sports volunteers, the largest number of participants were educated to post 15 or 16 education (35%) (the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 in 1972), followed by bachelor education (29%), left school at 15 or 16 years (23%) and post graduate educated (13%). However, for sports volunteers the largest numbers of participants were bachelor educated (40%), followed by post 16 education (30%), left school at 15 or 16 years (20%) and post graduate educated (10%). It is worthy of note that the sports volunteers were educated to a higher level than the non-sports volunteers were. This data supports the argument of Weber that preconditions such as education are predictors of volunteering behaviour that make individuals attractive to voluntary organisations. This is also supported later in the interviews, however more again more specifically within sports organisations.

With regard to gender, the respondents from non-sports organisations were consistent with the literature (Low et al, 2007), which suggests women were significantly more likely to volunteer than men were; in this case, 77% were female and 33% male. In contrast, the literature on sports volunteers (Nichols et al, 2003) suggests that men are more likely to volunteer than women are; again, this was supported in this survey with 60% of respondents' male and 40% female.

Nichols et al (2005) suggest that sports organisations tend to operate in a 'mucking in' culture; this was reflected in the responses from sports volunteers with the average volunteer undertaking four differing roles. This feature is not discussed as explicitly

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within the literature more generally, that is, reference is not made to volunteers undertaking several different roles. However, the responses in this survey suggest that the average volunteer in more general organisations undertakes an average of three distinct roles, suggesting that there is a similar culture within both groups. One must apply a caveat here it has already been suggested that responses are more likely to be from core volunteers as oppose to peripheral volunteers who may undertake less responsibility. Further, another characteristic of core volunteers as identified by is Pearce (1993) is that they are more likely to have been with the organisation longer. Indeed, 80% of sports volunteers had been doing so for more than 10 years with an average between them of 28.5 years. Conversely, 42% of non-sports volunteers had been doing so for more than 10 years, of this 42% the average length of time was 19 years. This data highlights once again that the responses from the sports volunteers were primarily from core volunteers.

In summary, from this sample, sports volunteers were more likely to be in full time employment, younger, educated to a higher level, be male, have volunteered for more than 10 years and undertake more roles than non-sports volunteers. Summarise what has been said and explore sociologically!

The descriptive statistics above provide a useful picture of volunteers within the county of Flintshire; this was felt to be important due to the dearth of literature available on sports volunteers. However, an in-depth understanding of who volunteers are and why the volunteer in sports and non sports organisations will allow the researcher to gain a

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fuller understanding of why these particular individuals are more likely to volunteer, what pressures they face and what influences their ability to volunteer.

Interviews

The purpose of conducting interviews was to provide a more in depth analysis of the views and perceptions of volunteers themselves, that is, what it is that they do in the name of and think about volunteering. The following section will discuss the data produced by the semi-structured interviews and attempt to explain the findings in relation to previous literature and figurational sociology.

Definition and meaning of a volunteer

As described in the literature there are numerous complications associated with defining a volunteer due to the diverse nature of the activities that volunteers are involved in and the varied scope and size of the organisations that are included (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Bussell and Forbes, 2001; Cuskelly et al, 2006). Despite this, there was a consistency among the responses of both groups, sport and non-sports volunteers, that voluntary activity should be undertaken in a persons own time for no financial reward. . This was illustrated by Sid who states, "I suppose it's a person that says he will do something for an organisation for no remuneration". As described in the literature, these elements appear in the majority of definitions. Indeed, this is the most widely held view of volunteering, it is expected that most volunteers would give this standard response. However, when examined further there were subtle differences between what the two groups regarded as volunteering. Non-sports volunteers focussed on the 'helping' aspect of volunteering and undertaking tasks that need doing for the collective good. For example, when asked what defined a volunteer Beryl said, "a volunteer is a person who

gives up their own time to help and assist other people". A number of definitions suggest that to be a volunteer one must have some altruistic motive. Indeed, Handy et al (2000) found that public perceptions of volunteering are strongly associated with the costs and benefits to the volunteer. For Elias, the figurations in which non-sport volunteers belong will influence their perceptions of volunteering, that is, the nature of the relationships in which they are involved by virtue of their involvement with voluntary organisations leads them to the unquestioned assumption that volunteering is about 'helping others'. Indeed, after sport the largest categories voluntary work are traditionally associated with helping others, that is, religion, children's education or school and health and social welfare (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997). On the other hand, sports volunteers tended to concentrate on the enjoyment aspect when they considered defining volunteering. This suggests that sports volunteers do not feel constrained to associate their volunteering with 'helping others'. Due to the nature of relationships they are involved in, that is, a groups of individuals coming together to play sport for enjoyment, they did not associate their volunteering with helping. Indeed Steve said "I have never thought of myself as a volunteer really, its more something for me…I do it because I enjoy it, that's the volunteering part" (Steve). Despite having responded to the questionnaire and being invited to an interview, this person still considered that, despite giving up significant amounts of time to ensure the effective running of the club, because his primary motivation was personal enjoyment he was not truly a volunteer. This supports the dominant ideology of volunteering; that it is fundamentally connected to helping behaviour. Further, this statement has implications for the methodology utilised in this study and that of future studies, highlighting the inherent difficulties in identifying sports

volunteers. If they do not view themselves as volunteers, using this type of terminology may not be appropriate.

When asked to consider what volunteering meant to them personally, the differences between how sports and non-sports volunteers viewed their activities became more explicit. Non-sports volunteers continued to highlight that giving something to the community was of central importance to them and that gaining a sense of achievement from doing so was their reward. For example, Bridget states:

> It gives me a huge amount of fulfilment, I mean most of my life seams to be spent on it…It makes you feel good about yourself, it makes you feel as though you are contributing.

Bridget was retired, heavily involved in campaigning in her local area and was very passionate about local issues and the community. Sports volunteers, in addition to the enjoyment aspect, also expressed that sport had always been a part of their life and that this very much influenced them in their volunteering behaviour. One sports volunteer exclaimed "it's the enjoyment, it's the mixing with the people, it's a leisure thing isn't it…its just in your blood, it's been in my blood. I just enjoy it" (Sarah). Indeed, the response 'it's in your blood' emphasises just how much sports volunteers are influenced by their Habitus. Most sports volunteers, as will discussed further when considering pathways have always been involved with sport and as such have an emotional attachment to it.

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Motivation

With regard to motivation, non-sports volunteers when questioned about this placed emphasis upon the needs of others, illustrated by this extract:

> I can't help being an empathetic type of person, especially with elderly people and people who are marginalised because of their status in society (Betty).

It was found that this person volunteered for an advice-giving organisation and had previously been employed in the area of social care, suggesting that her previous occupation, which focuses on the needs of others, had influenced not only her decision to undertake volunteering but also the 'type' of volunteer work she chose. For non-sports volunteers the needs of others are often intertwined with personal satisfaction, that is, they gain a sense of personal satisfaction from their helping others. Indeed, Betty went on to say:

> You do feel good helping people for one. I've always felt good about that, it is about enabling people…I just like it, doing that part of it and that's what gives me satisfaction.

When explored further the personal satisfaction that non-sports volunteers experience becomes more explicit within their responses. Indeed, the following statements reflect how these volunteers do not just gain a sense of achievement they have also come to rely

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on their volunteering experiences to fulfil certain needs within themselves, socialising and a sense of purpose respectively:

> I'd be completely lost without it to be honest. I don't feel as though I'm just going out to help. I feel as though I'm going out for me as well because you are meeting people (Barbara).

> I thoroughly enjoy it because it keeps the brain ticking, it's quite involved in law and stuff which I am interested in too. It just satisfied a need in me, its not just about giving back to others, it satisfied a need I had too (Betty).

Both these volunteers had experienced the loss of someone who was dependent upon them. The implications of this are two fold in that, firstly they found themselves with time available for additional activity; also, it could be argued that their volunteering activity has given them a new sense of purpose, now this dependent relationship had come to an end. This suggests that the 'needs of others' may be how volunteering behaviour is justified externally to others but that there are much deeper purpose for these volunteers. In fact, Low et al (2007) found that in their study volunteers reported a range of pragmatic and altruistic reasons for starting to volunteer. Wilson and Musick (1997) argue that there is a gain and a benefit to both the volunteer and the organisation. That is, there is a duel function. Figurational sociologists would argue that this highlights the interdependent nature of the relationships they are involved in. As previously discussed, Elias (1978, p.74) states, "We depend on others and others depend on us, one may be

more so than the other". Although, it may appear that because these individuals are engaging in 'helping' behaviour that it is the recipient that is dependent upon the volunteer. However, if one were assume an Eliasian perspective then the volunteer is also dependent upon the recipient for the sense of purpose and satisfaction they acquire from undertaking the activity. Beryl also reinforced this view that there is a mutual dependency, she said, "It's more just that feeling of well-being, the fact that you are able to contribute". Of course, the balance may still reside with the volunteer but it is not absolute.

This functional interdependence was also revealed when considering sports volunteers. The personal satisfaction gained by sports volunteers, as previously indicated was much more explicit in their responses to questions about motivation. However, it is worthy of note that this personal satisfaction was often connected with a personal attachment to the sport they were involved with. This was highlighted most clearly by Steve who states, "I wish I was out on the field playing with them. It's a way of being there – what else would I do on a Saturday afternoon? It was found that this person had played the sport for 35 years before he gave up due to age. Although he can no longer actually play, his volunteering allows him to continue his involvement with the sport; such is his emotional attachment to it. This suggests that although the beneficiaries of this volunteer's actions, that is organising and running the team, are those who are able to participate in the sport, the players, however if it were not for these players he would not be able to maintain his tangible connection to it. His voluntary activity is his way of keeping a connection to the sport.

These following extracts demonstrate how sports volunteers tend not to demarcate between their playing activity and their volunteering activity, they go hand in hand, and for them they cannot have one without the other and view both combined as a leisure pastime:

> It's the enjoyment, it's the mixing with the people, it's a leisure thing isn't it. You know playing along with people, playing in the team…I get a lot of pleasure from meeting new people all the time…so over the years make great friends, and you know, [I get] a lot of enjoyment from that (Sarah).

> To organise has always been a part of my life and I enjoy doing it …putting all that hard work in before the season starts that you go and see and play in the matches and its all worth it at the end (Sarah)

This suggests that sports volunteers view there voluntary activity as necessary and part of their being able to play or simply be involved in the sport. As previously highlighted when discussing the questionnaires, this points to a subtle difference in the way the two groups view their voluntary activity. For non-sports volunteers, their activity is like a pastime they do it for the personal enjoyment they get from helping others. For sports volunteers, their activity is a necessary part of being involved with sport and it is sport itself, which is their passion.

Although the data suggest that sports volunteers' primary motivation is personal enjoyment, they also demonstrate that they experience pleasure through the enjoyment of others. For example, the following volunteers state:

> I have organised the presentation evening and stuff like that, and that's nice to see, everything coming to a head and all the winners getting there trophies and things. That's nice (Sarah)!

> I enjoy giving other people pleasure. People say to me sometimes 'oh, you're a mug you. Why are you doing that, why do you spend your time?', because I like to do it (Sid).

It was found that Sid was also likely to engage in informal volunteering, using skills gained through his employed role as an engineer to help his children and grandchildren with projects in the home. This highlights that when trying to understand the motivations and differences therein between sports on non-sports volunteers caution should be applied when generalising about the differences between the two groups. There are bound to be elements of cross over and differences within and between the individuals of both groups, sport and no-sport. As suggested there seems to be a range of reasons why people engage in volunteering, Cuskelly et al (2006) state that motivations are complex and multifaceted. However, they also suggest, although they do not make clear upon what they base this assertion, that sports volunteers are more likely to be persuaded by personal benefits. Indeed, this would appear to be supported in this study.

Finally, both groups emphasised the socialising aspect of volunteering. This was something that they valued as a key component of their activity.

> I also enjoy the company, good camaraderie, that's the team and having been around people a lot I would have missed that...so that is another satisfaction I have – being part of a team (Betty).

> It's a good body of people and we all get on well together (Sylvia).

The complex way in which both groups of volunteers describe their motivations highlights, as described in the literature, that there are an intricate myriad of reasons why people involve themselves in voluntary action. These external and internal justifications can intertwine and run alongside each other at both a conscious and sub-conscious level. For non-sports volunteers they suggest that the activity is undertaken to assist others but that they also gain some personal enjoyment and satisfaction. For sports volunteer, they indicate are undertaking the activity for themselves but others also benefit from their doing so. Further, the data suggests that there are subtle differences between the way the two groups perceive their activity, with non-sports volunteer viewing at as a pastime and sports volunteers viewing it as a necessary component of their involvement in their sport.

Pathways in to volunteering

Further differences between the two groups of volunteers can be seen when we explore how they became involved in their voluntary activity. For non-sports volunteers they seem to have made more of a proactive choice to become involved again driven by a sense of responsibility and a desire to give something back to the community. This is supported by Low et al (2007) who also found that a re-occurring theme was an ethical justification. However having the time was also a significant factor in their decision-making. For example, as responsibilities became less through retirement or their children leaving home and they were looking for something to fill time. Such as these volunteers who state:

> I was always conscious that I should be doing [something], so as soon as the children had grown up a bit I got involved" (Bridget).

> It just fitted in with my life…well, I didn't want to sit at home and do nothing…..I was looking around for something I could become involved in (Betty).

The first volunteer Bridget had previously described how her mother had always been a 'hands on Christian' doing the jobs that needed doing, indicating that a sense of social responsibility had been developed throughout her childhood. This is also supported by the research of Low et al (2007) who found that older people (especially those aged 65 and over) wee the groups most likely to say they got involved because they had more time. For some sports volunteers however, the pathway in to volunteering was less of a

proactive choice, through their 'always having been involved with sports' came a gradual inclusion in the running of the organisation. For example, all the sports volunteers in this study started by attending their club in order to play the sport, however as needs were identified in relation to the running of the club they began to take on responsibilities. This was most clearly demonstrated by this person, who states:

> Well what happens is you do things, you help people, it's just an automatic progression really. Its just like work isn't it, your empire grows (Sid).

Sid had volunteered for many sports organisations over a period of 60 years and his description of how he became involved was similar for each one. Indeed is was similar for all sports volunteers, they began playing for the club and as tasks needed completing they slowly become more and more involved. It could be argued that this occurrence is the result of the interdependence between the now volunteer and others members of the club. Elias (1978, p.74) states "balances of power are always present wherever there is functional interdependence between people". We depend on others and others depend on us, one may be more so than the other. People are necessarily constrained by virtue of their interdependence. That is to say, where a figuration is formed by many interdependent people, a person is often compelled to act in a way that they would not, except under a perceived compulsion. Over time, the actions of the individual become constrained by others. For example, the person who used to bring the equipment to training has left the club and an individual offers to do it next week. Over time, this gradually becomes their responsibility as people expect them to do it and training could

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not take place if they didn't. This person is now a sports volunteer, but they did not make

a proactive choice to do so, they were constrained. For figurational sociologists,

preference and choice are constrained by our interconnectedness. Sports Volunteers also

reflected on skills and knowledge required to become involved in the running of the club,

where as, non-sports volunteers did not raise or reflect on what it was about them that

meant they became a volunteer. Perhaps because they made more of a pro-active choice

to be involved, where as, sports organisations may look for people to fulfil certain roles,

demonstrated by the following two quotes:

> I did secretarial work, so maybe that was it, maybe I was good at organising
> (Sarah).

> I think its just yourself, your personality, your industry, how industrious you are,
> how you like doing things…I have had a tremendous amount of experience and
> therefore I can give something, make a contribution towards the effective running
> of the club (Sid).

Indeed in relation to volunteering more generally, Weber argued voluntary association

membership is associated with socioeconomic factors: voluntary action is driven, or made

possible, by socioeconomic interests and resources. He suggested that an individual with

resources such as proficiency using IT or 'being good at organising' are attractive

attributes to an organisation. Figurational sociologists would argue that these skills are

part of persons' Habitus. Perhaps this is more significant for sports volunteers who tend

to be recruited into positions; where as, the general volunteers in this study seemed to make more of a proactive choice to become involved. Interestingly one of the non-sports volunteers was recruited in a similar way to that of sports volunteers. However, rather then being involved with a cause specific organisation she was volunteering for a non-sporting 'self interest' group. She states:

> Originally group I joined the group as a walker…I started chatting to the walk leaders, they were very enthusiastic and they encouraged me to become a walk leader (Beryl).

Perhaps, self-interest groups, such as sports and other social groups, engender a sense of responsibility upon beneficiaries for the services or provision they are receiving. Again, emphasising how volunteers are constrained or enabled to volunteer by those around them. In a similar way, as suggested in the literature, for some sports volunteers their activity is driven by their children (Nichols et al, 2003). A sense of responsibility towards the organisation that is providing this activity for their children may also have a significant influence in the decision making process, as demonstrated by this lady who said:

> My two youngest children were recommended to come…and started doing things like making the teas, and such like, and things like that and gradually got further and further in to it, that was 31 years ago (Sylvia).

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Indeed Cuskelly et al (2006) suggests that volunteers often have an existing link with the club as a parent of a player, for example. On a similar theme in relation to volunteering more generally, Durkheim argued that volunteerism was a product of socialisation. He suggested that current social relations present opportunities for people to become involved through their children and others. Figurational sociologist would argue that this is a result of their networks of interdependency, that is, through their children parents are constrained to behave in a way that that would not expect under compulsion. Indeed, it was recognised by this volunteer that to enlist parents as volunteers can sometimes be an unsustainable way of recruiting, for although once her children had left the club she remained a volunteer reflecting on other coaches she states:

There is a big tendency, if your kids are in the club then you will get qualified, like this coach, his son is in the club now – whether he will stay on the club when his son finishes. People tend to say, 'oh, well my children aren't in it anymore, that's it I'm a volunteer, I' off' (Sylvia).

This highlights again the constraining element of relationships. Once free from this constraint, parents no longer feel they have to be involved. When asked to reflect on what encourages them to continue volunteering, non-sports volunteers' indicated that the activity had become a part of their lives. Indeed this lady had come to think of her role in a similar way to employment. She states:

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Well, you get committed, I'm the kind of person that gets committed to anything I do really and I feel like, well almost like I'm employed, I'm that committed …I just can't imagine not doing in now (Betty).

A second non-sports volunteer felt that, it was not a commitment because she enjoyed it so much, however she did admit that sometimes it took away time from other responsibilities, she states:

I don't ever feel it's a commitment, if I felt that I don't think I would enjoy it as much. To me, I want to do it. Sometimes, I think oh, I've got this and that to do. But once I get there and it's just, I can't explain it really. It's like going in to a cosy warm place (Barbara).

Similarly, sports volunteers also reflected upon how their responsibilities had become a commitment but that this was overcome by the enjoyment they received by doing it.

It gets to you sometimes when you have to get all the things ready for Saturday, get the forms to the referee, the football is not pumped properly and there is a hole in one of the socks or something. All kinds of things, of little things like that get to you, but I still enjoy it (Steve).

It does take up a lot of you time you know, so obviously, its all voluntary and its all your own time that you have got to give up. You have to have a great love of sport to spend so much time doing it (Sarah).

These frustrations are another example of how for sports volunteers their voluntary activity is a means to a sporting end. For them, all the little things are necessary for them to gain enjoyment out of either playing or being involved with their sport.

Frustrations and stopping

As described in the literature (Nichols, 2003), for sports volunteers, a particular barrier, or frustration was focussed around difficulties in the recruitment of players and other volunteers, demonstrated in the following quotes:

In 15 years, we haven't put out the same side on two consecutives Saturdays…other Saturdays you'll have 18 turning up. That's a frustration for them more than me because I have to leave people out and they don't like it, but they stick with us, fair play (Steve).

That is one of the problems, we haven't got sufficient members…we try hard, even the young lads you know, we get them in when they're watching and we get them bowling, but we can't get bone fide members, just the small nucleus that we've got. So it is difficult (Sid).

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All of the sports volunteers had been involved with sport from a young age and demonstrated a frustration with the commitment of others, both in recruiting members, and also with members that did attend but we not seen to pulling their weight. Each club needs certain tasks to be completed in order to run, if some people will not help it means this falls to a smaller number, putting increased pressure upon this small group. Nichols et al (2003) suggest that because of the difficulties organisations face in recruiting both members and volunteers, the majority of the work seems to be undertaken by a committed few. This was referred to in the above quote as 'the small nucleus' and is also reinforced in the following statement:

> You get a few who are really keen and then you get a few who need coaching along and jollying and your sort of lifting, you know. But you get a core that are really keen (Sarah).

This is another example of our interconnectedness. Taylor (2004) suggests that there are a number of underlying factors placing pressure on those trying to increase participation in sport. He lists these as choice and competition for peoples' leisure time and expenditure; more time devoted to employment and childcare; greater expectations of higher quality service delivery; central government and Sport England requirements and initiatives; and NGB standards and requirements. These are external factors beyond the control of those trying to increase membership within the club, never the less they are having an impact upon how the club is running and causing them considerable frustration. Indeed, Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that this difficulty in recruiting

members may mean that sports organisations may need change their relationships with members from participation to one of consumption. This was reflected in this quote:

> You know, in any sport, there are always the ones that like to come and play and don't want to have anything to do with the running of it. They are just happy to play the sport (Sarah).

For both groups funding was highlighted as an issue. The following volunteers, non-sport and sport respectively, describe having to fight for funding:

> Only when we can't get the funding and we can't do what we want to do. That is frustrating…we have to fight a lot for our funding, but when you have it, you feel good (Barbara).

> That's always a problem, raising money…..we have gone into debt a couple of times, a couple of us have put money in – we have always got it back but it is always hard work trying to find money (Steve).

Again, this is an example of how volunteers are constrained by the interdependency with others. Interestingly, one of the sports volunteers raised questions as to whether sporting organisations should receive funding in the form of grants. The same volunteer discussed earlier, who did not view himself as a true volunteer because his main motivation was

personal enjoyment, is equally unsure as to whether an activity with the purpose of enjoyment should be publicly funded:

> Should you get a grant just to enjoy yourself? I'm not quite sure about that. It's too easy if you get a grant. If want to enjoy yourself then you should get out there and work for it, to get the money but not expect that councils will give you a grant (Steve).

This suggests that this volunteer did not see himself or the club he volunteers for as contributing to wider social agendas, such as health and social inclusion. This raises questions as the extent to which these organisations can or are willing to become involved in the aims both central and local governments is to use sport as a vehicle for wider social objectives such as, reducing crime and increasing health (Houlihan and White, 2002; Jackson and Nesti, 2001). Further, if such organisations do not apply for grants they cannot be influenced through targeted funding.

For non-sports volunteers, when asked to reflect on frustrations general themes, in addition to funding highlighted above, included tasks associated with bureaucracy, such as monitoring requirements. This was demonstrated in the following extract:

> The expectation [of the organisation] is that they complete all the paperwork, all the monitoring is handed in on time and at the end of the day, these people are

> actually volunteers. You can't expect them to fulfil some of the things that perhaps the paid employees are doing (Beryl)

Monitoring and evaluation requirements are generally imposed by funding bodies in order to demonstrate the impact that their funding is having. This is often because funding bodies are responsible for public money, such as central and local government. They have to be confident that these funds are being put to the best use. Unfortunately, this can be an onerous task for volunteers, particularly if they are motivated by personal enjoyment. This emphasises the extent of lengthening chains of interdependency. The voluntary organisation and volunteer are in an interdependent relationship, the organisation and the funding body create the next chain, further, the funding body and the wider tax paying public are also interdependent, not forgetting that the volunteer themselves is a member of the tax paying public. Elias (1978, p.95) states "out of the intertwining of many peoples' actions there may emerge social consequences which no one has planned", in this instance onerous monitoring and evaluation. We are all constrained to behave in certain ways by virtue of our interconnectedness. This extract also points to a discrepancy between the role of paid staff and the role of volunteers. This was not generally perceived as problem for sports volunteers as the majority did not have any paid staff. However, one lady who volunteered for a regional based did reflect upon this, stating:

I personally don't agree with getting paid because I think you have far more commitment out of a volunteer, who is doing because its something they want to do, than out of someone who is being paid to do it (Sylvia).

It is worthy of note that this was the only regionally based sports club in the sample with much stronger links with the national body than the other sports organisations. None of the other volunteers, including non-sports volunteers, cited external influences as a frustration. She went on to describe conditions being placed upon funding and disagreements with the NGB over certain initiatives. It could be argued that the other sports clubs in the sample were much smaller, more locally based organisations. Their main concern was enjoyment and personal achievement rather than the development of the sport and they therefore had little to do with the regional or national bodies, other than affiliating in order to play. One might suggest that the chains of interdependency of the smaller more local clubs are a lot less complex than those that have links to national organisations. This could have implications for the methods and sampling of future research. Further exploration needs to be undertaken regarding the size of sports clubs. Indeed Taylor (2004) argued that more traditional sports clubs would be resistant to external influences where more contemporary would embrace it, although perhaps 'embrace' is not reflective of how this change occurs. With regard to non-sports volunteers, they are less likely to describe frustrations with external bodies as the volunteers in this sample are engaged in more frontline type activity, rather than the running of the club. In addition, they are more likely to employ paid managers who will deal with these kinds of issues.

The following extract is taken from an interview with a lady who experiences a certain amount of antagonism as a result of the campaigning work she engages herself in. She states:

> I've had a lot of flack as well from councillors and people…, because I write to the press and I'm always trying to get the local council to do more…they don't like me at all! But then you get other people saying, oh I really agreed with that letter and I'm glad somebody is doing this work Bridget).

However, when whether these frustrations would ever encourage her to stop volunteering her response was:

> Its gets me very angry and frustrated but no it would never stop me, it would just make me more determined to go on, to prove them wrong Bridget)!

Interestingly, all of the sports volunteers had reached a stage where they were ready to or had considered stopping their voluntary activity, although they were all still enjoying it. For the most part this was associated with age. Indeed, involvement in physical activity, particularly sports whether actually playing or coaching etc can place demands upon the body. This was illustrated in the following extracts:

Simply because I thought by the time I reached 60 it was time I did give up. That was all, nothing else really, I just thought it was about time somebody else came through. And it gets to be a bit heavy really when your getting older (Sylvia).

I'm getting to the stage where, maybe this year, maybe next year or the year after, well its an age thing isn't it, I can't go on forever…I'm still enjoying it, don't get me wrong – maybe this year or next year (Sarah)

However, there was also the suggestion from one volunteer that the voluntary activity was taking time away from being able to participate in the sport:

Well, I hope they get somebody to do it. I'd like a younger person to come and pick it up…its very tying at the moment and I haven't got a lot of time and I can't play. If I'm doing the jobs for the club, I can't play as well, its another facet taking time out of my day, so I have to consider everything and I want to play bowls more (Sid).

This quote also demonstrates the commitment of the volunteers, despite wanting to step down, all volunteers expressed the opinion that they would not do unless someone was willing to take over. This supports that argument of Stebbins (1996), that volunteers are often recruited to perform a specific role and that this then becomes a duty or obligation. Stebbins (1996) refers to this as serious leisure. This argument is particularly salient with sports volunteers who all suggested they wanted to stop. In support of this, all of the

sports volunteers highlighted that it was difficult to get people involved in the running of the club, which was influencing their ability to be able to stop. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

> Well, I would like to be able to stop. Some of the lads are not young lads anymore…I'd like for one of them to take the team over for me…but they all know there is a lot of work involved (Steve).

> It is up to individuals, some people like to come, play, go! I think sometimes, they think, if they take on extra responsibilities that it might affect their game (Sarah).

This highlights again the perception that becoming involved in the organising of the club takes away from the actual playing of the sport. One further reason for being unable to hand over responsibilities was an attachment to the club and members; this is reflected in the following extract:

> I have threatened to retire three times… the kids say, 'oh you can't' and because there isn't anybody else the others are saying it as well (Sylvia).

This again, reinforces the argument that participants had come to rely on their voluntary activity to fulfil a need. Cuskelly et al (2006) suggest that sports volunteers are more likely to consider who will fulfil certain positions at the beginning and end of the season.

For non-sports volunteers, when questioned about what might make them stop volunteering, most seemed genuinely surprised at the question indicating this was not something they had considered, in contrast to the sports volunteers. Non-sports volunteers had demonstrated the enjoyment they experienced but also how much they had come to rely on it. This was demonstrated in the following quotes:

> I can't see how I would… the only reason I would might be health reasons, if my family commitment became more that it has been. Honestly that's the only reason I can give you, well my manager says I'll still be there when she has retired and gone (Betty).

> If something happened to something in my family and I needed to look after them, like my mother for instance and I just wouldn't have time or if I was very ill myself – I'd still be holding fort probably (laughs) Bridget).

Interestingly, Low et al (2007) in their study asked questions in relation to the following topics, advice and support, travel expenses, training, being asked or not to attend an interview, provision of role descriptions and references, as what they describe as the more 'off-putting' aspects of volunteering. None of the volunteers from the non-sports group described any of the above topics. As the volunteers in this study were enabled to discuss issues that were salient to them, it suggests that the topics covered in the study by Low et al (2007) were more relevant to the researcher than the volunteers themselves. Further, these issues are more relevant in organisations where volunteers are managed.

This is more customary in non-sports voluntary organisations. Sports organisations tend not to employ paid workers or have management structure, therefore things like interviews and training are not common. On the subject of advice and support Cuskelly et al (2006, p. 36) state, "most NGBs recognise the significant impact of the above roles and have numerous initiatives to ensure they are well managed and trained to deliver strategically important sports development outcomes". However, when contemplating advice and support, sports volunteers in this study did not reflect this, illustrated in the following quote:

So they are the umbrellas but I wouldn't say we get a lot of support from them, no. They take your money and let you play (Sarah).

This suggests that sport volunteers perceive the role of NGBs and regional bodies as more connected with governance than support, and again raises questions regarding the ability of grass roots sports organisations to deliver on the sports development outcomes referred to by Cuskelly et al (2006) or indeed wider social objectives. Also one sports volunteers did mention training and accreditation schemes for coaches, however this lady was the only one from a sports club that had links with the national body and the only that referred to external influences, such as the NGB and Sports Council for Wales. Perhaps, because the other sports organisations were smaller and not concerned with the development of the sport wider than their club.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to explore sociologically who volunteers are and why they volunteer in sport and non-sport organisations. There is a reasonable amount of literature on volunteering generally, including some from a sociological perspective. However, due to the dearth of literature available regarding sports volunteers the research intentions here were kept deliberately broad. The demographic information collected in this study shows that of the volunteers surveyed, non-sports volunteers were primarily retired, 45% were between the ages of 45 and 64, and 42% were 65 or older. The majority of sports volunteers were also retired, however a high proportion were employed full time and 70% were between the ages of 45 and 64 indicating that sports volunteers are younger than non-sports volunteers are, and more likely to be employed.. Both groups had a relatively equal spread of educational achievement levels. For non-sports volunteers, the largest numbers of participants were educated to post 15 or 16 education. However, for sports volunteers the largest numbers of participants were bachelor educated. It has been suggested that volunteers are more likely to be recruited in to volunteering positions if they have skills that are deemed of value in line with the notion that preconditions such as education are predictors of volunteering behaviour. Within this study, this was found to be particularly the case with sports volunteers. With regard to gender, non-sports volunteers are more likely to be female and sports volunteers are more likely to be male. In line with previous research conducted by Nichols et al (2005) sports clubs were found to be run by a small nucleus who perform a number of different roles. However, it was also found that non-sports volunteers are likely to carry out more

than one role. The above information has provided a picture of who volunteers are and some of some of the similarities and differences between the demography of those that volunteer in a sporting context and those that volunteer more generally. However, in order to explore in more depth why certain individuals are more likely to volunteer in sports or non-sports organisations interviews were undertaken. Previous research, particularly in relation to sports volunteers had failed to place the volunteers at the centre of the analysis. It is my view that this is essential to explore what it is that influences their behaviour. By virtue of our interconnectedness, we are bound to be influenced by wider social connections. The interviews enabled the researcher to gather in-depth and detailed information from participants, from their own perspective. In particular, this included: (1) why individuals became involved in volunteering; (2) what pressures they faced and (3) what influenced their ability to volunteer.

Both sports and non-sports volunteers agreed that volunteering should be undertaken freely for no remuneration. However, they began to diverge when considering what volunteering meant personally to them. For non-sports volunteers, their primary motivation was helping others, although when explored more closely, this was also aligned to the satisfaction gained from helping others often coupled with a number of other internal functions, such as, the socialising aspects and gaining a sense of purpose. Although, it is recognised that their can be any number of personal motivations depending upon the person and their individual context. For sports volunteers their motivation was very much aligned with their love of sport itself. This study found that of the sports volunteers interviewed, their voluntary activity was a way of them engaging

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with their sports. For some it was a necessary function in order to keep the club they played for going, for others it was a way of maintaining their connection with the sport. Indeed, all of the participants had played sport from a young age and it was seen as very much part of their lives. Although, they may still enjoy elements of their voluntary activity, such as, satisfaction from organising a presentation evening, fundamentally it was sport itself that was the key motivation. Linked to this 'love of sport' was the pathway in to sports volunteering. All but one volunteer had become members of the club and slowly been integrated in to the running of the club. The one volunteer who was not a player had been recruited as a parent of a child attending the club. It could be argued there is a martyrdom associated with sports volunteering as despite the enjoyment participants conveyed there is also a sense of responsibility to keep the club going. Non-sports volunteers had taken a different pathway in to their volunteering, for all it had been a proactive choice, rather than gradual integration, to become involved in voluntary action. For some this was driven by either a change in circumstances and wanting to find something take part in, for others' they had always felt a sense of social responsibility and volunteering behaviour was facilitated by opportunity, such as children leaving home. Despite their enjoyment of volunteering, both groups highlighted some frustrations. In fact, for sports volunteers their 'love of sport' was also linked with their frustrations, which included, a lack of commitment from other members, the work being undertaken by a committed few, raising funds and tedious jobs. For non-sports volunteers, frustrations were generally associated with raising funds and tasks associated with bureaucracy. These frustrations did not however take anything away from the enjoyment that both groups experienced as part of their voluntary activity. Non-sports

volunteers were engaging in their activity because, among other things, it brought something of value to their lives and for this reason had not considered stopping their voluntary activity. Indeed, non-sports volunteers suggested the only thing that would stop them would be ill health; either their own, or someone close to them. Sports volunteers on the other hand, had considered stopping, for some this was associated with frustrations, however for the most part was related to age. All intended to stop but were having difficulty in recruiting someone to replace them. In fact, this was another frustration for the sports volunteers and highlights even further the difficulty they face in trying to recruit volunteers and why much of the work is done by a committed few.

Janoski and Wilson (1995) argue that due to the diversity of the individuals and groups that comprise the voluntary sector it is difficult to use any one theory to encapsulate the range of activities and motives associated with volunteering. Further, Coalter (2007, p. 57) argues, "generalisations about such a heterogeneous area as the voluntary sector in sport are clearly not possible". Indeed, it is recognised it is problematic to generalise about such a diverse group of people. However, one might argue that this type of research is necessary to begin to uncover the complexity of human interactions that either enable or constrain volunteering behaviour. In fact, figurational sociologists would argue, and this is supported in this research, that it is an individual's context or Habitus, which influences all behaviour. Further, these influences are never replicated identically, although for some their may be similarities, people born in to the same family for example, we are all bound to have differing experiences, for even siblings have different friends and teachers, for example. The influence of a persons' context was particularly

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emphasised in relation to sports volunteers. A central aspect of these individuals context was sport which had always been a part of their lives was something with which they wished to maintain a connection.

The conclusions from this study have implications for future research in terms of both methodology and future research questions. Regarding methodology, it has been noted that although the questionnaire produced a low response rate from sports volunteers, the considerations made as to why this may have been the case may guide the design of future research in this area. For example, future researchers should consider the size of voluntary organisations when considering their sample. Smaller more local organisations experiences different constraints and pressure than larger organisations who with links to regional and national bodies and therefore more complex networks within which to operate. As has been discussed sports organisations are generally managed by one or two key individuals, therefore although there are a variety of different roles to consider, it is likely these roles are carried out by the same individual. In addition, sports volunteers are involved in a 'self interest' activity, they are coming together to engage in sport for the enjoyment of it and may, therefore, be less responsive to external requests. Furthermore, how organisations are contacted is of importance. For example, the timing of sports seasons may have implications, that is, if it is out of season it will be difficult to make contact and recruit participants. Finally, sports organisations tend not to have as many formal meetings as more generic organisations; therefore, the researcher must leave sufficient time for one of these meetings to happen in order to make contact with the most appropriate individuals.

Although the research question in this dissertation was kept deliberately broad, it is hoped that the findings will also allow future research to explore more specific aspects of sports volunteering. It is not adequate to apply what is known about volunteers more generally to questions concerning sports volunteers. As demonstrated, there are subtle differences between those that volunteer in a sporting context and those that volunteer in more generic type organisations. These differences have implications for the recruitment, management and retention of sports volunteers, and indeed for future research. This is a case study based in the county of Flintshire in North Wales and it is recognised that the findings may only represent the views of those who were studied it is felt that that the conclusions made raise more specific questions about sports volunteering. For example, due to difficulty sports organisations face in trying to recruit volunteers resulting in much of the work is done by a committed few, it would be prudent to explore why some members do not feel able to contribute. That is, what it is about their individual context that constrains them from assisting with the running of the club for which they play. In addition, specific studies relating to age would benefit those wishing to recruit volunteers, particularly as the participants in this study were looking to stop volunteering because of age. Indeed, all of the volunteers interviewed in this study were above the age of 45 although this was forced by the responses from the questionnaires, indicating there is a smaller pool of younger sports volunteers. It would also be valuable to compare sports volunteers with individuals that volunteer for other self interest groups, such as, arts and drama as there were some similarities found in this study relating to pathways. Given that it was a 'love of sport' that was a key motivation for sports volunteering, it may be that there are further similarities for those with a love of arts or similar pastimes. Finally,

voluntary sports organisations are a substantial provider of services and opportunities for participation and central government include goals of increasing sport participation through them (Game Plan, 2002). This research did not set out to explore the relationship between government, voluntary sports organisations, and their volunteers. However, there are clear has implications for future research. According to Cuskelly at al (2006) VSOs are located at the centre of the UK sport model and that for the most part these type of organisations are run by volunteers. Some studies have attempted to explore such complex sports systems while providing theoretical frameworks to do so (Skille 2008). However, few have placed the volunteers themselves at the centre of the analysis, therefore an exploration of sports volunteers' views on the policies of central and local governments would provide an insight in to how successful these policies may be. For example, exploring sports volunteers' commitment to policies concerned with mass participation and wider agendas, such as, health and social inclusion will enhance our understanding of their effectiveness.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Volunteering Questionnaire

You are being invited to take part in a research study: **Volunteering in sport and non-sports organisations: A sociological analysis**

The purpose of the research is firstly, to explore the nature of volunteers, who they are, where they live etc; and secondly, to investigate the views of volunteers, why they choose to engage in volunteering activity and what factors are important to enable them to do so.

The answers provided will remain **anonymous**. The only people who will have access to individual responses will be the researcher and their supervisor.

The questionnaire is part of a wider research study. If you give your consent, you may be invited to attend a focus group meeting to discuss and share your experiences of volunteering.

You have been chosen because you volunteer, in some capacity, for a community group or voluntary organisation.

For the purposes of the questionnaire, a volunteer is defined as **any person who freely engages in unpaid activity, in their spare time, for the benefit of the organisation and/or its users**.

If you feel, on that basis, that you do not volunteer please get in touch or if you would like any further information, please contact:

Rebecca Mead   07912221753
Researcher   0203870@chester.ac.uk

If you are interested in the results of this study please tick here   ☐

If you would like to participate further in the study please tick here   ☐

If you have ticked either of the boxes above please provide your contact details below:

Name ……………………………… Telephone …………………………………

Address ……………………………… Postcode …………………………………

E-mail …………………………………………………………………………………

Please answer the questions below. All answers will remain anonymous.

1) For which organisation (s) do you volunteer?

Please specify…………………………………………………………………………………..

2) What type of organisation is it?

National Organisation ☐   Local branch of a national organisation ☐

Community Group ☐   Religious Organisation ☐

Other (please specify) ☐ …………………………………………………………………..

3a) What type of activities do you carry out (tick one or more)?

Administration/ Office type work ☐   Teaching / Training ☐

Coaching ☐   Leader / Mentor ☐

Advice work / Counselling/ Advocacy ☐   Care / Supervision ☐

Committee member / Trustee / Board Member ☐   Catering ☐

Transport ☐   Campaigning and lobbying ☐

Practical / DIY ☐   Environment / Conservation ☐

Marketing / PR / Media ☐   Language / translation ☐

Fundraising ☐   Other ☐

3b) Please expand on your answer (s) and describe what this involves?

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4) For how long have you been volunteering?

Less than 1 year ☐   1 – 3 years   ☐

4 to 6 years ☐   7 - 9 years   ☐

10 years or more ☐ (please specify)……………………………………………………

5) How many hours a week do you volunteer (approx)?

Up to 1 hour ☐   Up to 3 hours ☐

Up to 5 hours ☐   Up to 8 hours ☐

Up to 10 hours ☐   Up to 13 hours ☐

Up to 15 hours ☐   More than 15 hours ☐

9) Are you male or female?

Male ☐   Female ☐

10) How old are you?

16 – 24 ☐   25 – 34 ☐

35 – 44 ☐   45 – 64 ☐   65 + ☐

10) What is your employment status (tick one or more)?

Employed Full Time ☐   Employed Part Time ☐

Self Employed ☐   Unemployed ☐

Student Full Time ☐   Student Part Time ☐

Retired ☐   Full Time House Wife / Husband ☐

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11) What is your gross annual salary or hourly rate?..

12) What is your highest level of qualification?

| Left school at 16 | ☐ | Post 16 education | ☐ |
| Bachelor Educated | ☐ | Post Graduate Educated | ☐ |

13) What is your ethnic background?
White

White British ☐ White Irish ☐

Other (please specify) ☐…………………………………………

Mixed

White and Black Caribbean ☐ White and Black African ☐

White and Asian ☐ Any other Mixed background ☐

(please specify)...……………………

Asian or Asian British

Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐

Bangladeshi ☐ Any other Asian Background ☐

(please specify)…………………………

Black or Black British

Caribbean ☐ African ☐

Any other Black background ☐ (please specify) ……………………

Chinese or other ethnic group

Chinese ☐ Any other ☐

(please specify)…………………………

Appendix B: Interview schedule/guide

1. What is a volunteer?

   a. What defines a volunteer?

   b. What does it mean to you to be a volunteer?

2. Why did you become involved in volunteering?

   a. Why do you volunteer?

   b. How did you become involved?

   c. How did you originally get in to volunteering – not just with this organisation.

3. What encourages you to continue volunteering?

   a. What do you get from it?

   b. What are your goals?

4. What might make you stop volunteering?

   a. Do you have any frustrations?

   b. Why have people left in the past?

   c. What might make you stop?