Girls who learn to serve: An ethnography exploring the gendered experience of school-based volunteering

by

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Thesis submitted
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

2021

Abstract

This is a study of a school-based volunteering programme; an ethnography of six girls enrolled into the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) scheme at their secondary school in a deprived coastal community in the South-East of England. Building on feminist research into the systematic gender inequalities created by school structures, identity and society, this thesis explores how these six girls experienced volunteering in different and gendered ways. Applying feminist theory including Gilligan's theories of moral reasoning (1982), Arnot's theory of gender code (2002), and Skeggs (2002) theories of identity, this ethnography demonstrates how the school's prefect group, based on relations with school leaders and teachers, were, in many ways, coerced into the DofE award. The study reveals how gendered norms ensured the girls and boys volunteered with different motivations and were incentivised and rewarded differently. The PhD uses a feminist methodology to understand the realities of the girls' lives, focusing on the girls' experiences of school hierarchies and power to explore how the social structures within school are lived, reproduced, and challenged. Taking an insider approach, I participated in volunteering with the girls in order to live their experience, as well as conducting observations and focus groups. Reflexivity and sharing my ethnographic field diary were important ways I was able to work and my ethnography with the girls took me both in and out of school gaining access to their personal space and thinking. Constructs of classed and gendered identities, reinforced by school structures and practices, were evident in gendered school duties and caring responsibilities given to the girls. The study proposes that extending Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital to include the concept of 'care capital' would reposition the girls and recognise their contributions to society. This research raises important considerations for voluntary sector-school partnerships that aim to increase and improve student opportunities. In this school study, rather than challenge and empower young people, school-based volunteering served to reproduce societal classed and gendered inequalities.

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Acknowledgements

There is going to be a long list of people to thank on this page. They say it takes a village to bring up a family, well it takes a community to help write a PhD and, luckily, I am fortunate enough to have an amazing and supportive community of family, friends, and colleagues.

First to my supervisors Shane and Ruth who have always supported and encouraged my thinking even from its garbled beginnings. Your enthusiasm and patience allowed me both to believe in what I was writing but also helped refine it. During a difficult couple of years your comments, challenges and moral support have been everything I needed. Also, to Ali and Andrew who started the journey with me and have continued to be mentors. The PhD would not exist without your early thinking and direction.

Next to my colleagues who've cheered me on, Joy Mower, my PhD buddy, with the added incentive of Bob's lemon cakes in the middle of a long library day, Anna Playle for lifts to library, moral support and to my great team of proof-reading pros. To Paula Stone for mentoring support as well as huge thanks to all my university colleagues. Also, to Emma Taylor-Collins, it has been a pleasure to share a final writing up year with you via our online chats. To the VSSN network and Jane Cullingworth and others on the new researchers' stream, you gave me a space to test out early ideas and gain my confidence for conference presenting, it was invaluable.

To all my family - for every time you've stepped in to help with the kids, calmed me down and helped me plan. To my marvellous mum who has spent weeks looking after the children and protecting my writing space. To the amazing network of friends who live in my bubble and have just provided encouragement and love, you know who you are. To my mum and dad who taught me to never give up on something once you've started it.

To my own three feminists - Alfie, Charlie, and Ruby. Thanks for bearing with me. May you always resist the status quo, challenge inequality, and look after the world.

To Chi - who has shared in every step of this PhD and just about survived. I could not have done it without you.

Finally, to the St Francis girls. I will think of you always... and often wonder where your paths have taken you.

I declare the work in this thesis is my own.

Thirteen

The boys have football and skate ramps
They can ride BMX
and play basketball in the courts by the flats until midnight
The girls have shame.
One day,
When we are grown and we have minds of our own,
We will be kind women, with nice smiles and families and jobs,
And we will sit,
With the weight of our lives and our pain
pushing our bodies down into the bus seats,
and we will see thirteen-year-old girls for what will seem like the first
time since we've been them,
and they will be sitting in front of us, laughing
into their hands at our shoes or our jackets,
and rolling their eyes at each other.

While out of the window, in the sunshine,
the boys will be cheering each other on,
and daring each other to jump higher and higher.

Kae Tempest (2015)

Chapter 1: Introduction to the thesis

Research Vision and Motivations

This research focuses on the lives of six girls, year 10 students at the St Francis Academy, a Catholic Secondary school along the South-East Coast. A year-long ethnography was used to record the experiences of the girls as they participated in a period of volunteering, both in their role as prefects for the school and as part of their enrolment into the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award. As part of my ethnographic approach, I met with the girls both inside and outside school, observing them in lessons as well as studying their relationships with teachers and other prefects. I also volunteered alongside them at a local care home for the elderly on Wednesday afternoons, walking to and from the home together each week. I wanted to explore how the girls' experiences of structures and institutions were lived, reproduced, and challenged, and therefore I participated alongside them so that I could '*live their experiences*' (Simmons and Smith 2017).

As my research evolved, I adopted feminist research principles within my ethnography as I started to realise that the gendered realities of these young girls' experiences were rarely told in the performance data collected by school and voluntary organisations about their programmes. This perspective was also informed by my own professional experience; for over ten years I had led a voluntary project working in secondary schools across London and despite a belief in the organisation's commitment and vision, I never felt the organisation was able to deliver the impact it intended or change the lives of the young people. The organisation I had worked for had also used performance style data including self-assessing questionnaires and target-driven monitoring without ever critiquing the ways they were gathering data or considering how embedded inequalities within school and the sector could be controlling the way the students had experienced the project.

I started my research at St Francis in January 2019 as the school leaders and the regional DofE team were launching the award with an ambitious drive to recruit many more St Francis students. In the early weeks of my data collection, I had spent time with the DofE as they visited other schools in the area, working with local school leaders to try to reach more disadvantaged students across the county. In 2019 The DofE Award received £3 million through the #iwill fund, a combination of government and National Lottery funding, this was given to increase the number of disadvantaged young people the DofE award reached from 50,000 to 70,000 by 2021. Data collected both by #iwill and other researchers had suggested participation in volunteering and enrichment was still determined by background and class (Arthur et al, 2017, Dean, 2014,2015). The Habit of Service report published in 2017 by the Jubilee Centre following a project set up by youth organisations Step

up to Serve and the National Citizens Service had found that if young people were involved in volunteering before the age of 10, they were twice as likely to volunteer as young adults (Arthur et al, 2017). The findings of the report concluded that early experiences of volunteering had led to the young people forming a habit of service, and this strengthened the narrative that it was important to engage more young people in volunteering in their school years to ensure that we raised a generation of actively engaged citizens. The Habit of Service report (2017) guaranteed that volunteering remained prominent on the education and youth policy agenda from 2017 onwards. Over the last thirty years volunteering has formed a large part of different education policy agendas around youth voice, citizenship, and the big society, however, due to the changing shifts in government, these policies have all shifted and reconceptualised the concept of volunteering and the way young people experience it. What I was seeing at St Francis in 2019 was a push to involve more young people in mandatory school volunteering based on ideas that young people, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, were less likely to participate, but that encouraging their participation would have positive effects on both young people and wider society.

St Francis is a school where students are considered disadvantaged, and the school performance is considered in need of improvement. The study focuses on the policy context in England and rests on how education policy in the English system focuses on improving schools through academisation and transformative new leadership, strict behavioural codes, and a narrative of raising aspirations (Kulz, 2016). St Francis, located in a city in the South-East of the England serves some of the most deprived communities in the area, eleven areas rated as within the top 20% most deprived in UK fall within the school catchment (Social Mobility Commission, 2020). It is a secondary modern, historically serving the Catholic community in the area, when it opened in 1962, although now open to all faiths. There are no entry requirements for this school. Whilst other grammar schools in the area select students based on their completion of a test, taken before pupils are eleven years old, St Francis is open to all students. In 2019, OFSTED rated the school at 3, 'Requires Improvement', after the school's progress 8 score was found to be 'well below average', although more positively, a December 2019 denominational report called it an outstanding catholic school, citing the improvement under new leadership. The Head, who always professed he would turn the school around during three years' service, was brought in with a specific target to improve the school, which he intended to do '*by transforming the culture and raising aspirations,'* (*Head, Field notes*). During his three years at the school, he brought in new teaching staff and set ambitious targets for the school's extra-curricular programme, including volunteering opportunities and DofE aiming for the participation of more of the school community.

The research participants in my study are six girls who all form their identity within socially constructed classed and gendered bias. Their identities and experiences of power are constructed through the fusion of their class and gender identity, as presented by Skeggs (2002). The coastal area where they live and go to school is surrounded by the district's deprivation hot spots, four of these areas fall into the most deprived in England. Twenty-three percent of the St Francis students receive free school meals, the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is above the national average while most pupils are from White British backgrounds (Ofsted, 2019). The girls have all grown up in the local area, many of their parents and siblings work in local industry. While three of the girls Bea, Kate and Etta chose not to sit the local grammar school test, the others, Annie, and Verity did not pass, while Freya was recommended not to take it by her teachers. My ethnography observed these girls in three stages, first, as they were recruited as prefects and to the DofE, next, as they chose their volunteering options and finally as they volunteered at a local care home. The first stage of the research consisted mainly of observations recorded in the field diary, while the second and third stage included interviews, focus groups and observations as the girls chose and carried out their volunteering. In the first and second stage of the research many observations are based on observations and experiences of the whole prefect group. This includes the prefect boys and the other girls in the prefect group, in the second stage of the research, the boy's perceptions on volunteering were also collected through interviews.

Locating the Research

Theory drawn on in this research is multi-disciplinary and research is explored from the disciplines of education, sociology, and voluntary sector studies. A wealth of qualitative studies exists within the field of education, using ethnographic studies to understand the lives and unequal experiences of children, and young people in school. These studies show how relationships of power, cultural identity and unspoken symbolic violence define their experiences. Limited research has focused on the experiences of school-based volunteering through this lens. Both Christine Griffith's (1985) and Paul Willis's (1977) school ethnographies have been an important influence on this study. Griffin's (1985) study was one of the first studies of this kind to focus on women's lives and use informal conversations with women to explore the way they perceive and navigate the world of work and home. Both ethnographies explore the way individuals adapt to their social class, and while Willis (1977) describes how working-class boys are culturally and symbolically prepped for a labourer's life due to the classed experience of education, Griffiths (1985) exposed the ways domestic responsibilities and societal expectations influenced the career choices of the girls in her study.

While the girls in my study may not be learning the social codes to prepare them for a life of working-class male labour, just as in Griffith's (1985) study completed over thirty years ago, class and gender is at play in a world where students volunteer as service and girls are subject to feminised ideas of specific duties and caring responsibilities.

Bourdieu's (1986) theories of class and habitus describe how people are bound to particular social groups. When people's experiences transport them into different social groups, Bourdieu (1986) theorises that this can shift and change an individual's habitus. Many educational and sociological researchers since have demonstrated how this shift in habitus can feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar for those who make this transition. Ingram's (2018) research is important for my understanding of class and identity within the secondary school experience. Her study of working-class boys navigating their way through grammar school revealed the realities of how living out of habitus can affect young people's sense of self. My study is looking not only at the school experience, but at the experiences of volunteering programmes brought in as part of a drive to improve the school by '*raising the educational aspirations*' (Strand and Winston, 2008:249) and enhancing the '*cultural capital*' (Reay, 2004). This study is interested in where volunteering sits among social groups and how the volunteering experience may be different for someone coming from a disadvantaged background. This thesis looks at the way within a disadvantaged context, the idea of mandatory and service volunteering has formed the heart of government policymaking over the last ten years.

Madeleine Arnot, (2002), Diane Reay (2018) and Beverly Skeggs (2002) are all interested in class, disadvantage, gendered experiences at school and the identities of working-class girls. Arnot (2002) has built her theories on Bernstein's (2002) theories of code and social class patterns within education. In addition, Christy Kulz's (2018) work has also been hugely influential in the completion of this research using her research, which suggests modern day secondary academies are run like factories creating compliant, consumable subjects. Building on the work of these feminist scholars, this research has focused on how experiences of service-volunteering are also gendered, with girls learning to serve in a way that recreates structural inequalities. Delamont's (1980) study on sex roles in school, is still relevant and has been important in understanding the implicit ways schooling can reproduce and reinforce the gendered roles of wider society. This work is also influenced by the research of Feminist Educational Scholars including Rosemary Deem and Gaby Weiner who have explored gender in schools and the historical female and ongoing gendered dimension to the curriculum (Deem, 1981 Weiner, 1994). It also hopes to offer lessons for policy around youth and volunteering in the same way that the studies of feminist educators have worked hard to implement equality at an educational policy level, with the work is well documented by Deem (1981). Here my thesis builds on Dean's (2013, 2015) extensive work into youth volunteering in UK neoliberal

contexts and the way youth volunteering has been reframed in asset driven ways as well as Eliasoph's (2011) 'Making Volunteers' which also demonstrates the problems that arise when volunteering is simultaneously referred to as both empowering and transformative and community service and civic duty. This study takes Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital to think about the position the girls occupy in school and in wider civil society. Exploring their experiences, it cautiously suggests that a valuable way of understanding the girl's identity, relations and social position is missing, and that their experiences could be better understood by adding a fifth concept to Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital. This fifth form would be 'care capital'. Care capital, it is argued could be part of a wider feminist campaign, led by feminist scholars such as Tronto (2016) to repoliticise and reposition caring in a neoliberal driven world.

Feminist Theoretical Approaches

Feminist literature examines the ways school reproduce class and gender including school studies of Reay (2018) and Arnot's gender code (1987, 2004). Constructs of class and gender are reinforced in the everyday rituals, habits, and practices of society, explored, and presented in the arguments of influential feminist writers such as Judith Butler (1990). Feminist theoretical approaches take the position that gendered behaviours are cultural not natural, arguing that as individuals, we are entrenched in societal learned performance of gendered behaviour, that masculinity and femininity are '*an act of sorts, a performance, one that is imposed upon us*' (Butler, 1990:278). Schools are an important example of an institutional context where gender identities are fixed and maintained through the everyday practices of school life. Examples include the structures of school leadership, the roles girls and boys are assigned, the way teacher responsibility is delegated, the selection of prefects and the way student duties can be structured by gender (Delamont, 1980, Kessler, 1985, Dunne, 2007).

In addition to this, identities of girlhood inform the way the girls perceive themselves and this controls their relationships and behaviours within school; contemporary discourses of girlhood fixes female identity into different categories including what researchers have defined as *'the good girl', 'the bad girl', 'the academic girl'*, and ''*the rebel*', among others and adolescent girls grow up constricted by these constructed identities (Harris, 2004), (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005). McRobbie has called modern discourses of girlhood, '*the double entanglement; the co-existence of neo-conservative values… and processes of liberalization*' (2004:3). This double entanglement' simultaneously presents a discourse for girls about growing up strong and independent alongside more conservative ideas that remind them of their vulnerability as girls and suggests ways they

should be protected and rescued (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005). Gilligan and Brown (1993) have investigated how these dominant femininities manifest in the lives of women and girls through extensive research into girls' lives. They report a 'crisis' in adolescent girls' development, a stage when they began to edit out their true feelings and opinions, fearing that their true voices will lead to conflict and rejection as they are acting outside a category of girlhood to which they believe their identity should conform to.

Feminist theoretical perspectives begin with a view of society that is dominated by patriarchal power and control, with an understanding that knowledge and analysis are a product of this unequal system (Maynard and Purvis, 1997). Feminist perspectives, ethnography, and educational research are considered to be natural allies (Allen, 2012). These allies allow the researcher to look beyond the constraints of traditional research practice (hooks 1990), bring in a degree of subjectivity (Skeggs, 2005) and seek a deeper insight into the hidden experiences of women and girls (Allen, 2012). As my research unfolded, data was analysed alongside a belief in how the girls' experiences were marginalised and hidden by the current patriarchal social system. Taking a gender perspective allowed me to read and reread my field diary and identify where gender constructs and identities of femininity and masculinity were at play. Field diary analysis revealed the way roles and duties were gendered within the school, and how relationships were defined by gender and reproducing unequal experiences of control.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research aims to build on the current literature examining the role school-based volunteering can play in the life experiences of young people. Presented in the findings, one contribution of this thesis is the way it reveals how power structures within schools create different volunteering experiences for young people based on their class and gender. The findings highlight how powerful secondary school relationships and value systems are in determining how the volunteering project is set up and experienced. This contributes an important knowledge to voluntary sector organisations, such as the DofE, about inequalities within their programme and provides a foundation to help organisations understand how to break down unequal structures rather than reproduce them. This is important for a voluntary sector committed to empowering young people, rather than maintaining the status quo by reproducing inequalities and marginalisation.

The findings in my study contribute to understandings of how volunteering in school can be built on school values and practices and how in this case, this was gendered. Gendered practices and

constructs play into more formalised conceptualisations of volunteering and lead the girls and boys to choose or be asked to carry out duties defined by gender. This is valuable knowledge as it also contributes to understandings about gender inequality within volunteering. The field diary and the data findings reveal how the girls' understanding of volunteering devalued lots of the everyday helping and duties they were involved in. As the ethnography unfolds, we see how the girls' experiences of volunteering fulfil gendered expectations and how the girls encounter everyday sexism within the volunteering activity. This is an important contribution to the growing awareness of gender discrimination and sexism within both the voluntary and education sector. Various recent voluntary sector reports have shown a recognition of the structural and systemic inequalities that continue to exist within charities and the third sector (Lingayah et al, 2020, Breeze and Dale, 2020). While in the education sector, the 2021 Everyone's Invited website drew attention to the ongoing sexism and discrimination in schools prompting calls for more government action following the NEU report of 2017. Each of these reports have called for greater scrutiny into the practices that enable discrimination and sexism, and in line with this, my thesis makes a valued contribution to learning about gendered roles in schools and partnerships.

Finally, this thesis adds understanding to topical and timely questions around identity formation and feminist theories of caring, it explores how volunteering and school experiences contribute to the shaping of girls' identities according to gendered norms. The findings chapter reveals contradictions and tensions in the way the girls' talk about their identity conforming and not conforming to expectations of girlhood and constructs of femininity and power. Building on discussions within girlhood studies today and the crisis of the adolescents, the field diary reveals conflicts within the girls' voice and agency and a sense of being too strong, too bossy, too outspoken. Bourdieu (1979) is a popular framework often used by academics to understand and discuss the persistence of social inequality in our world, by extending Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital to include a person's care capital, this study suggests we could understand the contributions that individuals and social groups make and the way they are classed and gendered. Caring is a common theme running throughout the empirical findings and this study offers important thinking around the way caring is gendered and what this means for the agency of girls.

Structure of thesis

This thesis is set out in several chapters, the first chapter is the introduction to the research, which presents the context, purpose, and structure of the thesis. The next two chapters review the

feminist theoretical frameworks used in this study and the growing literature taking a feminist perspective on volunteering, wider civil society, and the concept of caring. In '*Feminist Theoretical Frameworks'*, I review the literature provided by feminist researchers who have carried out important research around Education and Gender, their work provides an important foundation for this study. The theoretical frameworks that this study focuses on provide a way of understanding the relationship between school structures and gender roles, they include Arnot's (2002) gender code theory (2002), and Skeggs theories of identity and capital, (2002). In '*Feminism, Volunteering and Caring'* I apply feminist thought to reframe volunteering and show how women and girls remain invisible in more formal definitions of volunteering, the chapter also uses Gilligan's (1982) theory of moral reasoning and feminist arguments about reframing the concept of caring to look beyond school to wider society. This chapter examines definitions and literature showing how gendered values within the family and wider society are reproduced in volunteering and unequal caring responsibilities. These important feminist theories provide the framework I used to explore how gendered experiences of identity, power and agency impacted the girls' volunteering experiences at St Francis.

The next chapter presents the methodology and method of the study. '*Ethnographic Investigations'* presents the way the research was carried out, the selection of schools, the selection of the participants, the use of the field diary, the challenges to the study and all the other research methods that enabled the collection of the data as well as reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of this research. The chapter provides an overview of the feminist approaches that underpin the approach of this ethnography and describes the different stages of the research. Detail about the way I used a feminist approach to gather the data and my relationship with the research participants is discussed and reflected on includer a discussion into Blackman's crossing borders (2017), and ventriloquy in research with young people (Fine, 1994a) and issues of familiarity as discussed by Delamont, Atkinson and Pugsley (2010).

Making up the findings are five empirical chapters presenting and analysing the field diary data. These five findings' chapters follow the stages of my ethnographic journey and offer an introduction to the acoustics of the school and the three representations of the girls' identities determined by the structure and experience using the feminist theories explored in the literature review. '*Acoustics of the School'* explores the structures, relations, and hierarchies unique to St Francis, the school positions itself as a family and this had an important influence on the perceptions and experiences of the girls. '*Girls as recruits'* looks at the earliest part of my ethnography and at the first of the girls' roles, as they are recruited as prefects and DofE participants. '*Girls as Prefects'* moves on to their next role as prefects. As my field notes become focused on extracts observing the experiences of the

six girls in the prefect room, interview transcriptions reveal their evolving identities, their feelings about the boys, and their perspectives on leadership. '*Girls as Volunteers'* uses field diary examples from the final stage of my ethnography which includes reflections on their experience of volunteering at the care home and notes from our walk to and from there.

The final chapter in the Findings section *'Reflections: Leaving the Field'* discusses the process of finishing an ethnographic study, an area that lacks discussion but was important in this context, when my leaving coincided with the start of COVID-19. To conclude the final chapter *'Conclusion: the girls that serve'* draws out the consequences of the emerging findings from the field diary, and within the suggestion of the concept of 'care capital', this chapter is a discussion of some of the ways the voluntary sector and education sector could use the data to inform their programmes in the future bringing together the findings of the research.

Conclusion

This opening chapter has introduced the field and theories underpinning the research, including concepts from voluntary sector and education studies, and feminist theory. In the chapters that follow I offer a detailed narrative about how these concepts and theories bind together to influence and shape the lives of six secondary school girls as well as providing a detailed discussion about my research methods, data collection and analysis that looks carefully as the role of the research participants. Through this micro-study of a school, its partnership projects, and my field diary, this thesis presents the everyday relationships, activities and perceptions of the students and staff at St Francis, this study intends to reveal the way school and volunteering activities are lived and experienced, and how they connect to theory and current policymaking around education and youth volunteering in schools and wider society. The story of the ethnography will be told across the rest of this thesis as a representation of the girls' experiences that aims to give the reader a more detailed and authentic understanding of their lives. This understanding is offered as a way of implementing change in schools and youth projects into the future.

Chapter 2: Feminist Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

This chapter reviews the feminist literature that has been investigating education and gender from the 1970s onwards that informs the feminist approach I apply to this study in order to reveal gender inequalities. It also reveals how girls face inequality and gender bias though their volunteering and school duties. Going back to the work of Delamont (1980) and her description of the roles attributed to girls and boys, this chapter reveals how forty years later gendered roles continue to exist within school and how volunteering is specifically prone to reproducing notions of female domesticity and male leadership. The chapter also looks at growing research which shows how researchers are beginning to understand how neoliberalism ideology infiltrates the everyday narrative within school and the voluntary sector. In doing so it ensures that school and voluntary projects mirror the roles and inequalities of a neoliberal society and how voluntary projects can contribute rather than challenge entrenched inequalities.

This thesis uses the theories of Bernstein (2000) and Bourdieu (1986) on power within school structures, and social class and habitus to examine the experiences of school duties and volunteering, however these theories are applied using feminist work to include a specific gender lens within the frameworks. In this way Madeleine Arnot's (2002) application of Bernstein's (2000) theories within her framework of gender codes are used to analyse the school structures of St Francis. In the same way Bourdieu's (1986) theories are applied through the work of Beverly Skeggs (2002), who uses his concepts of capital to understand identity. She describes how the fusion of gendered and classed identities in contemporary society are used to analyse the girl's self - perceptions. Bringing together the theories of these feminist scholars builds up a picture within this chapter of the consequences of how educational structures reproduce the social order by categorising pupils, and transmitting social inequalities, as well as the way constructs of class and gender can be seen in the identity of the girls within the school.

A Feminist Approach

This chapter explores the feminist theories that will be used in this study to understand the experiences of the St Francis girls. When I began my school study, I was not looking, at first, for gendered differences, indeed I was far more interested in the class differences between

disadvantaged young people and their middle-class peers. However, within weeks of arriving at St Francis, I had noticed key differences in the relations between the girls and their teachers, and the boys and the teachers. As my observations continued around the prefect programme and DofE I realised that there were again significant differences in the girls' and boys' perceptions and choices around school duties and volunteering. After a few more weeks, my fieldnotes contained examples of how girls were excluded from agency and power, and this exclusion emerged as a key theme to unravel and analyse. To try to gain an understanding of what was happening within the school structure feminist theoretical frameworks were applied. It is important to note that this is white feminism, the girls in the study were white and the socio-economic mix and ethnic representation at the school are slightly out of balance with the local community with a higher than expected in-take of white students.

The experiences of the girls will be seen through theoretical frameworks of power and identity that are suggested by Arnot, (2002), Skeggs, (2002), Gilligan (1982) and others such as Weiner (2009), McRobbie, (1991), Reay (2017), Aapola, Gonick, and Harris (2004) and Fisher and Tronto (1990). A feminist approach to research has its roots in the earliest feminist thinkers, including Simone de Beauvoir (1949), who first made the sex-gender distinction. Her work discussed the way gender is socialised, showing how females learn to be women, and to quickly learn their place as the second sex in a patriarchal world. Her distinction of sex and gender has formed the thinking for many theories of social and cultural reproduction and opened discussions for the current generation of feminist writers. These include the influential gender theorist Judith Butler and her theories of gender and control. For Butler, (1990) gender is a social construct, she argues there is nothing natural about gendered differences of behaviour, but in fact gender is an act that is performed to fit with social norms. It leads to learned performances of femininity and masculinity, which are imposed by society and socialisation (Butler, 1990). For Butler, identity is formed by what society tells us is '*socially sanctioned*' and what is '*taboo*' (1990:271). Butler (1990) questions the very idea that feminist theory rests on, that there is an existing category that belongs to women, she challenges whether there is one common identity for all women, instead arguing that gender, like race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, gender intersects with political and cultural reproductions and as a construct, it is produced and maintained. Separating and categorising women, Butler (1990) suggests is part of structural power. She calls on research to disrupt and disprove binaries of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Feminism is, essentially, a political movement, Kelly et al (1992) have argued that the relationship between feminist research and political change is not always strong enough. Rather than being defined by a particular tool or method, feminist research is defined by Maynard and Purvis (1994) as

an approach. Their argument discourages seeing feminist research attached to feminine notions of qualitative ways of gathering information about women's lives as this can position feminist research against scientific research, however they do define the distinctiveness of feminist research practice as taking a different theoretical perspective on patriarchal power and control, (1994). Feminist research takes a gender perspective, it asks different questions because it is seeking something distinctive, to understand the truth about women and girls' experiences in a masculine dominated world. Rather than describing a distinctive method, Maynard and Purvis (1994) describe a uniqueness in the approach, a gender-conscious awareness in interviews, a starting point that assumes a hierarchical relation between the researcher and researched and attempts to break it down, an inclusion of discussion about the subjective experiences of research, and finally, the power of feminist research to be political and transformational. Many feminist scholars believe that research produced by women for women is a mechanism to challenge the current social order Maynard and Purvis, (1994). Harding (2004) and other feminists who align to feminist standpoint theory believe feminist research has a clear and important purpose, to understand women's lives by presenting the experiences of the marginalised which reveals a more complete knowledge than is produced by patriarchally dominated theories. Feminist postmodernists such as Harding (1990) and Benhabib (1992) seek to critique many of the grand theories that are dominated by male theorists and to reveal the authentic, fragmented, and multiple types of social and cultural experiences lived by women and girls that are gender specific.

While this study does not abandon the male dominated theories of social structures and power that have influenced modern day thinking, this study does apply a feminist perspective to expose where the theories may need extending or rethinking to include a female perspective, and where applying the theories through a feminist lens reveals particular occurrences of exclusion and power relations. This study, taking a feminist informed approach, is there to record both the visible and invisible power structures and value systems that normalise what are in fact gender exclusionary institutional processes (Ackerley, Stern and True, 2006). The fact that this study is guided by an attentiveness to power and exclusion drives the methodology and it is here that the use of feminist theoretical frameworks and feminist methodological approaches of interviewing and positioning work in partnership.

Gender and Education

This study builds on decades of important feminist work on gender and education. Like feminist theory itself, the approaches that different feminist positions have taken make the research '*multifaceted and complex',* as Acker (1987) describes in her discussion of liberal, social, and radical feminism and education. Of course, there are important overlaps, and each feminist position offers an important lens for the girls' experiences at St Francis. Liberal-feminists examine inequalities of opportunities, sex roles and bias, socialist-feminists look at socio-cultural reproduction and gender divisions in school, while radical-feminists look for male-dominated knowledge and power. Gendered roles and duties, as well as reproduced inequalities and girls' exclusion from knowledge and power, all form themes in my field diary and so it is important to show how the themes link to the research of others.

David (2016) in her Feminist Manifesto for Education, celebrates feminist movements who have '*successfully campaigned for women's inclusion in public and political agendas*' (2016:19) including educational agendas, but describes how '*neo-patriarchy, everyday sexism and misogyny continue unabated*' (2016:20). This has been brought into public light with the 2021 multiple allegations of sex abuse revealed in UK schools (OFSTED 2021). The sexualisation of girls in schools continues to be a serious problem and a topic of feminist research (Ringrose and Renold, 2014). Within this study examples of constructed gender roles, inequalities in experience and everyday sexism as described by Bates (2016) are revealed, supporting David's assertion that feminist research in education still has important work to do. Thompson (2003) highlighting problems for feminists working towards gender equality in education has pinpointed that while girls' academic progress may make the picture seem bright, this advance can veil the sexist cultures that continue to exist within schools and the impact it has. While girls may be doing better academically across the world, this does not translate into girls' advancement within higher paid jobs and careers.

Significant contributions within feminist research into gender and education gained momentum from the 1970s onwards with the research into women and schooling and women in education, by Deem (1978) and Byrne (1978). Deem's (1978) work into schooling for girls showed how dominant culture in society manifested itself within the school, her research built on theories about how the structures and relations within education express, sometimes unconsciously the wider organisational values of culture and a society. Deem's (1978) study is significant for this ethnography because she, like Arnot, (2002) comments on the relationship between family and schooling. An important theme of the St Francis girls' perceptions of volunteering and caring is that their

perceptions were reinforced not only by school structures but by parents, wider family, and society. As Deem states at the beginning of her study:

> *It will be argued in this book that sexual divisions, in the process of bringing up children within the family, and more especially in the formal education of children carried out by schools, are of crucial importance both to an understanding of the position of women in capitalist society, and to a comprehension of how the divisions of labour between the sexes is maintained* (1978:2)

A key part of this study, applying the theories of Deem (1978) is to show how the girls' sense of identity is reinforced by gendered family, school, and community values. It is important not to assume, Deem (1978) argues, that education is a mechanism for breaking down stereotypes about where girls and women should work. In fact, she continues feminist research shows us that educational institutions, contrastingly, play a large role in confirming existing gender roles and expectations. Byrne's study published the same year provides important examples of sexual inequalities in education that continue to hold girls back, rather than challenge the hierarchy. This was supported by the work of Stanworth's study in 1981 as she raised the issue of male-centred language and discourse that maintained the patriarchal structure of knowledge within schools. David (2016) describes the ways that feminist research has been able to reveal the subtle ways links between schooling and moral order and how they were being retained and acting in opposition to some of the wider feminist work around education. This ethnography too aims to reveal some of those subtleties that exist within a school-based volunteering programme that continue to reproduce gendered roles and experiences within volunteering.

Second wave feminists including Acker (1987) who reviewed and critiqued the work of earlier feminists were significant in changing the position and Arnot and Weiner's study into Gender and the Politics of Schooling (1987) was able to directly link the forms and structures of schooling and the impact on girls and their future direction. Looking at different femininities and the intersection of gender, race and class has been an important feature of second wave feminism. For example, second wave feminists have played an important part in ensuring researchers understand the complexities of experience and identity when the specific experiences of black women are understood, who are a group excluded on account of both their sex and gender. This understanding

has ensured more research has examined the intersectional approach to inequality and produced richer studies of women's lives.

In 1988, Weiler using feminist approaches and through her study of female high school teachers showed the challenges, as an individual, to teach against the power of structures and institutional values. Bank, Delamont and Marshall (2007) provided an analysis of gendered theories of education and applied them to modern day feminist issues of gender inequality and gender violence in schools. Weiner (2012) summarises the challenges of second wave feminism in her paper labelling theory, feminism, and education a '*dangerous addiction*', (2021:1). She suggests that a gap has arisen between feminist academic researchers and educational practitioners, as the field of gender and education has become increasingly driven by theory, rather than real data. She encourages academic researchers to engage with the more activism driven feminism in the work of modern-day writers such as Caitlin Moran (2020). This multi-disciplinary study tries, through ethnography, to reapply feminist theories to a contemporary look at girls, duties, and volunteering. It works with contemporary works on gender and education that seek to address why, when there is greater participation in education among girls, experiences of education are still characterised by gender, and why the improving performance by girls at school, does not translate into more women in more positions of leadership across society.

Feminism and male-dominated theory

This study, while taking a feminist perspective, applies theory that is rooted in the work of influential male theorists. More radical feminist scholars have critiqued male dominated educational theories and knowledge and the lack of women and girls' voices and the reproduction of a system where men continue to hold power and knowledge over women (Weiler, 2002). The feminist theories in this study have different relationships with male theorists and the historical context of male-dominated theory. Gilligan (1993) provides an example in her theory of how feminist theory can be used to challenge the make epistemological stance, Mackinnon (1983) has described how knowledge has been created and legitimised within patriarchal structures and with masculine bias, therefore the world is created and seen from a male point of view. Gilligan's (1982) theories of moral development offer a direct challenge to Kohlberg's theories. Her research was formed based on an analysis of Kohlberg's research methods and how his methods ensured the invisibility of women and girls. Her challenge is an example of how feminist research can question male bias and be used as a

mechanism to reveal the way the knowledge is created by marginalising female voices and writing knowledge from a male viewpoint.

The other theorists introduced in this chapter have a different relationship with male theorists, Bernstein, and Bourdieu, respectively. Arnot (2002) and Skeggs (2002), like other educational feminists and sociologists such as Reay (2015), Lovell (2000) and Moi (1991) recognise the place of Bernstein and Bourdieu in their work. Weiler (2001) has suggested that it is important to think beyond the claims of some feminists that women '*must create a new language and a new imaginary*,' Weiler believes it is self-defeating to ignore the work of male theorists who have addressed questions of knowledge, culture, and power. Instead suggesting that by engaging with them, even though critique, a new perspective can be brought to their work. In this study the frameworks of Arnot (2002) and Skeggs (2002) are used, applying a gender lens to theories of Bernstein (2000) and Bourdieu (1979, 1986), and offering extensions to their theory to recognise the impact of gender within power. This is because, as both Arnot (2002) and Skeggs (2002) assert, while Bernstein (2000) and Bourdieu (1986) theorised about class, their theories did not include detail about how their ideas applied to gender. Taking their theories and exploring ideas of power, authority, and identity in relation to gender has been the work of feminist research. In this study, Arnot's (2002) and Skeggs' (2002), gender specific work is the focus, however, is it important to refer to and explore the theories of Bernstein and Bourdieu they are located within.

Using Bourdieu and Bernstein, feminists within educational research have been drawn to and have redeployed the conceptions of culture, hegemony, and race and put forward a feminist analysis of women, knowledge, and education (Arnot and Reay, 2006, Mills, 2008). Arnot (2002) has taken up many of Basil Bernstein's (2000) sociological theories of schools as agencies of pedagogic control in her gender code theory, while Skeggs, (2002) taking inspiration from Paul Willis's ethnography of working-class boys and Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital and fields in social class has built her own theories of classed and gendered identities upon their work. Therefore, the theories of Bernstein (2000) and Bourdieu (1986) still form a significant part of this study exploring social and cultural reproduction in schools and pupil identities. This chapter explores the ways feminist theories have revealed bias in grand theories to underpin their theoretical frameworks and used their own lens and perspectives to include a gendered dimension in the theories of Bernstein (2000) and Bourdieu (1986). Each of these theories have powerful ways of understanding the lives of the girls in my study.

Bernstein's (2000) theories of educational knowledge, pedagogic control and its transmission through school relations and structure are the origin of Arnot's (2002) gender code theory. Going

further than Arnot (2002), Delamont, (1995) in her defence of Bernstein and his role in gender studies has argued that Bernstein provides a theorised framework for analysing gender roles. Delamont (1995) argues that Bernstein's theories of the new middle class contained within his paper on pedagogies (1971) shows his understanding of the way invisible pedagogies exerted implicit control over pupils not only in classed but also gendered roles. Gendered roles are referred to in the way Bernstein (1971) acknowledged the way the class system was changing, and a new role for middle-class girls had evolved which posed contradictions for changing middle class values (Delamont, 1995). Singh (2002, 2010,) like Arnot (2002), has written prolifically on Bernstein's theories, along with other feminist writers. Her recent work alongside Pini and Glasswell (2018) has helpfully brought together feminist applications of Bernstein's (2000) theory of code that are all useful models for this study.

Skeggs (2002) is not the only feminist scholar to use the theories of Bourdieu. Indeed, her work sits within a group of writers including Lovell (2000), Moi (1991), and Adkins (2004) who have all offered us a way of applying Bourdieu's theories of class alongside a feminist approach to research. Their work provides a helpful relationship when researching the lives of women and girls, who are also impacted by discourses around class and culture. Like Bernstein, Bourdieu did not talk in detail about gender in his work, however Adkins (2004) believes his social theory is useful for reframing some of the theoretical issues of feminism. She believes feminists can apply Bourdieu's (1979, 1986) theories on social agency to explore the relationship of social movements to social and political change. A return to Bourdieu is a key part in Adkins' (2004) call for feminist theory to move away from cultural theories and back to the way social action is important for feminism. Alongside this, building her arguments on how to understand gender, Moi (1991) has argued that gender can be conceptualized as an example of one of Bourdieu's fields. Moi (1991) points to the shifting and fluid nature of gender and gender relations, as her reasoning for it to be included as a field. More recently Lovell (2000), who describes feminism as a social movement, defines feminism as an example of Bourdieu's (1986) understandings of class.

Gendered Roles and School Structures

A number of feminist educational researchers have taken a focused look at the roles girls and boys play at schools, both inside and outside the classroom. These include Delamont (1980) and more recently Reay (2001) both looking at girls' roles and identities within the school. Taken from research published over forty years ago, Delamont's (1980) study describes how adolescent girls were subject to an expectation that they would take domesticated or administrative roles and how this came

from both family and school structures. Structural inequalities that explained why girls were less successful in science subjects was explained by a lack of laboratories and equipment in girls' schools, or clashes in timetables where girls were encouraged to take Home Economics not Biology. Delamont (1980) shows how differences in uniform dictated performances and how stereotypes about woodwork being a boy's subject prevented girls from participating. While feminism and gender equality movements have worked to eliminate some of these more obvious gendered inequalities in school over the last forty years, unfortunately however, other examples in Delamont's (1980) research study provide more subtle existences of gender categories that remain with us today. These include gendered constructs in the teaching materials, and examples of teachers reinforcing gendered roles in the classroom, as well as the use of everyday sexism in and outside the classroom. Delamont's study points to a lack of leadership opportunities for girls and the way '*domestic subjects crept in for girls*' (1980:100). These differences in schools are often more subtle and hidden and take a detailed study to observe. Despite the gap of forty years Delamont's (1980) findings of everyday use of sex roles in schools relates to the subtle differences and stereotypes I found at play at St Francis and shows the relevance of studies like this one even in contemporary schooling.

Reay's (2001) study of a primary school classroom investigates how constructs of masculinity and femininity dictate social hierarchies and power relations. Her account of a primary school group where group identities included '*girlie girls'* and '*tomboys'* demonstrates how in fact the multiple ways girls and boys identify themselves within gendered categories makes power within the classroom groups complex and hard to unravel. In Reay's (2001) study all the different girl groups were subject to derogatory comments and usually excluded from power, any power that was attributed to each of the girl groups was dominated by the boys, who always remained the dominant actors in the room. This study is useful for accounts within this ethnography of the complex power relations within the prefect group and gives us a model for understanding how and why the girls in my research study began to feel excluded and treated as outsiders due to the relationship between the boys and the other girls in the prefect group at St Francis.

Understanding the identity of the boys was important in this study. By breaking down the relations of the prefect group, I came to understand that the boys at St Francis were also subject to constructs of masculinities, none of the boys in the prefect group embodied stereotypical constructs of macho masculinity that are often assumed to dominate, known as the hegemonic masculinity discussed by Connell (1995) . While the girls talked about the working-class majority of boys who do not engage with school practices other than sports, the boys in the prefect group were different and used power in different ways. They refused to engage with sport and the other boys in the school. Within the

prefect group, however, they still controlled the power relations. Connell's (1995) research on masculinity in schools and society helps us to understand the way that the boys were in control and had power among the prefects. As well as femininity, it is important to acknowledge in discussions of gender, identity and control, that the concept of masculinity and its constructions must also be explored. Connell (1995), writing on masculinity has defined gender as:

> *The ways the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction 'organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities to symbolic rituals, to large-scale institutions* (p. 71).

Just as discourses of girlhood address constructs of femininity such as the girlie girl, or the good girl, Connell (1995) identifies practices and characteristics that are socially understood to be masculine, and which are inherently purported by school structure and form part of social identity. Connell's (1995) theories of gender projects describe how individuals move through and produce masculinity and femininity by engaging in masculine and feminine practices. In line with theories of Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic codes and control, Connell (1995) believes that masculinity is a set of practices that through their daily operation dominate the distribution of power, authority, and knowledge (Schippers, 2006). Connell's (2000) theories of symbolism and the production of meaning and values links to Bourdieusian ideas of symbolic capital, habitus, and fields (Coles, 2009). The interesting part of Connell's (1995) theories of gender projects and masculinity is that within the model, femininity is subordinate to masculinity. This creates interesting questions for the ways in which gender identities of masculinity and femininity reveal themselves at St Francis. Also, as explored in later findings chapters, an interesting point made by Connell (2005) is the importance of understanding masculinity from a more fluid recognition of the multiple masculinities that exist and control power, rather than the tendency to see one hegemonic masculinity in education studies. The relations at St Francis are controlled and made more complex by different manifestations of masculinity within the school structures.

Arnot and Gender Code Theory

This study uses Madeleine Arnot's (2002) theory of gender code as a framework to understand the way school structures can produce a gendered code of practices and relations. Her work is applying

the work of sociologist Bernstein (1971, 2000) and his studies of cultural reproduction in schools, like Arnot, I too, am fascinated by the interplay of structures and rituals in society and the way these intersect in schools to maintain order. Arnot's (2002) work is important as she has taken Bernstein's (2000) theories of social and pedagogic control and used a gender lens applied to them to the way girls are subject to institutionalised codes, manifested in language, structure, and rituals of control in schools. Arnot's (2002) application of Bernstein's (2000) theory of pedagogic codes has its roots in socio-cultural reproduction theories that Bernstein (2000) described were at play within educational institutions including schools.

In a school context social reproduction theory argues that schools can never be institutions of equal opportunity because their social systems mirror society and the inequalities that exist through class, race, and gender (Hill-Collins, 2009). Bernstein' s (2000) frameworks suggest how social relations are reproduced through agency, identity, person, and voice (Bernstein 2000). Contemporary studies still suggest social and cultural production is transmitted through gender, race and sexuality and everyday practices including school and family relations (Bhattacharya and Vogel, 2017). Bhattacharya and Vogel's recent work is important because they have argued that the understanding of gender, race and ability, must be embedded in an understanding of class formation, rather than seen as separate.

Arnot (2002) in her description of socio-cultural reproduction uses the theories of scholars such as Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) who both argue that education plays a critical role in social reproduction. Althusser discusses how it is not only the reproduction of productive forces that maintain a capitalist system, but also the reproduction of the social relations that underpin them. Arnot, analysing the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) argues that the '*function of the school is to produce a differentiated, stratified and conforming work force*' (2002: p 25). For Arnot (2002), the social relations preserved by the school have a gendered dimension based on the gender differences within the workforce. Using Bernstein's (1971, 2000) ideas of symbolic control, Arnot (2002) points to classed and gendered differences in the labour force. In the professional middle-classes men, are still more likely to take manager roles, while women are still located in the 'caring' professions, within welfare and educational agencies. This was written over twenty years ago, but still is relevant to contemporary trends in labour (Devine, Foley and Ward, 2021).

Arnot's (2002) theories are rooted in the way there remains a gendered dimension to the routes that girls take through school, with a particular significance to this when looking at class and gender. In 2002, when Arnot wrote this study, she argued that working class girls were still more likely to be directed to domesticity and pointed to patterns of working-class girls' schooling that suggested work

remained a secondary concern to marital and maternal roles. While there are differences between notions of working- and middle-class culture, Arnot (2002) still believes there are gendered differences in the way schools guide girls' career choices to what can be considered 'feminine' professions, and this guiding is only possible through the transmission of socio-cultural norms about gendered roles and norms. Arnot describes her theories of gender code as such:

> *Derived from Bernstein's concept of educational codes and educational theory codes, the concept of gender codes distinguished between the principles of gender classification (similar to Bronwyn Davies' (1989) concept of gender dualism) which reflected gender power relations and the gendered framing of classroom interaction in which students learnt the extent to which they could negotiate gender identities. The effect of the gender code transmitted through the structures and processes of schooling would be found in the formation of an individual's gender identity, experience and property (2002: p8- 9).*

Arnot (2002) also alludes to the influence of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and cultural reproduction, citing how gender relations shape pedagogy and also an individual's habitus, that being the habits, customs and practices pupils can learn and become accustomed within a school classroom and that they keep with them throughout life.

This transmission of socio-cultural gendered norms within the school is what Arnot describes as gender code (Arnot, 2002). The existence of this gender code in schools is what constructs gender identity and gender roles. Arnot, (2002) like Bernstein, (2000) does not specifically isolate this code to school, indeed, a key part of reproduction theories and transmission is the role of the family and society. Yet, Arnot (2002) agrees with Bernstein (2000) that the school plays a mediating role between an individual's identity and how they are socialised by the structure of society. A school's categorisation of pupils is what maintains a social order, stability is established in school despite it being a site of cultural diversity, and as Bernstein (2000) suggests, this is established by each pupil recognising their place within the school's social system.

The way this stability and system is maintained is by pupils' taking their place in the school's classification system, established by boundaries that are created by classed and gendered activities, interests and motivations; in this way Bernstein (2000) argues that relations and hierarchies are established. To build her theory of gender codes Arnot (2002) uses examples of how gender is constructed within traditional schools that may operate with values in line with femininity and

masculinity. Gender code can be reinforced by school uniform, the activities offered to boys and girls, (as is specifically looked at in this study) and chosen subjects. Behaviour codes will be different, and this has been found in numerous research studies, (Arnot and Weiner, 1987, Delamont, 1994, Leach, 2010). There will be, Arnot (2002) argues, often an overlap between family and school life, with the strongest gender roles in schools where at home similar gendered divisions of labour and domestic work can be found. Citing research in primary and secondary schools, Arnot (2002) shows there are clear examples of gender codes adhered to by school staff within the classroom that clearly establish constructs of gender roles. She also describes how gender code is an important way of observing how social relations in school can be a way that girls learn to be prepared to be subordinate to men. This again can be seen within the classroom; the way pupils are involved in decision-making and within the school duties undertaken and is an important lens for understanding the social relations at St Francis.

Skeggs' theories of Class, Gender, and Identity

An important feminist voice in debates around cultural and social theory is Skeggs (2002) who contributes to feminist ethnographic work that seeks to present a picture of how power relations work for women, based on class and gender. Her work is rooted in feminist cultural theory and builds on theories of class in the work of Bourdieu (1979, 1986) and his model of how class is characterised by various forms of 'capital' that give individuals and social groups different degrees of power. Skeggs (2002) is not only interested in the numerous identities and their social constructs that feminist cultural theory offers of women, but she is also interested in investigating the processes of how women and girls, particularly those of lower socio-economic class, come to negotiate their realities and understand themselves and their place in society (Skeggs, 2002). Her methodology is rooted in longitudinal, 'in-the-field' ethnography in order that her work can represent how women's identities are constructed and subjective to changes in site, time, and movement from one position to another. Skeggs' (2002) approach intends to understand how women navigate shifting social positions and cultural representations and her intention is to record the lived experience of those women at each shift. Skeggs (2002) work rests on the idea of multiple, different subjectivities that build identities, so for example in this study, it is important to understand how the girls' make sense of their position as prefects, as Mr D's special team, as non-grammar schoolgirls, in relation to the boys, in relation to the other girl groups, and as young women outside school and the family. All these multiple positionings are significant.

Skeggs (2002) uses the concept of respectability as a tool to analyse the ways women position themselves within social and cultural relations. The reason she uses respectability for her analysis is because as she points out: '*Respectability contains judgements of class, race, gender and sexuality and different groups have differential access to the mechanisms for generating, resisting and displaying respectability*' (Skeggs, 2002:2). In her study of the ways class and gender are fused, Skeggs (2002) maps respectability to class categorisations arguing that there must be a framework for understanding class identity when it comes to women and girls' lives. Skeggs (2002) continues to build a picture of how particular social groups were defined by their respectability or lack of it, focusing on women and their homes, their childcare, and their place in family hierarchies. The themes used by Skeggs (2002) to explore the way women identify themselves include processes of identification (subjective constructions), issues of location (their social space), interrogation and applicability of concepts, and finally a Bourdieusian concept of different forms of capital. Using these themes, Skeggs (2002) maps out frameworks to reinstate class into contemporary feminist cultural theory.

Skeggs (2002) argues it is still important to talk about working class girls although there have been many attempts by women to disidentify themselves as working class. Skeggs (2002) believes that while in some cases working class men can use their working class as a positive social identification. She claims working class women are subject to more disidentifications and exclusions (2002). Building her ideas on the ethnography of Paul Willis (1995), who described how working-class men have access to capital through their labour and economic resources, Skeggs (2002) argues this has not been in the case for working class women. Referring to working-class male culture, Paul Willis (1995: 56) describes how culturally they are bound through '*their similar problems and are subject to the similar ideological constructions'*. His ethnography was important in how it revealed a class and gender-based rejection of education as a means for upward mobility by working-class boys. Willis (1995) identified, by following the boys through two years of school, particular features of the counter-school culture the boys had used within their group. Their experience of school included many examples of how they were rejecting attempts to be 'schooled'. These examples included the ways that they constructed their group identity in opposition to authority and rejecting conformity and realised this by always claiming spaces within the school which they would occupy and where they would flout the rules. This culture, Willis, (1995) argues is not just picked up though a solitary school experience, but as described above, develops over time and through years of reinforced messages.

Cultural norms are not just reinforced by those around you in that moment, but they are reinforced by the families and societies you grow up in and they subject to the influence of ideologies and

reproduced relationships such as the teacher- student relationship. For Willis, (1995) the teacher-student relationship cannot do anything else but reinforce this message, just as the social organisation of the school does. At as institution, the school rules, the bell, the rituals of patience, the off-limits of the classroom, these all reinforce the norms, the boys have set themselves up in opposition to. While Willis (1995) accepts these practices are a necessity, he still calls out for breaks in the cultural norms, a yielding of some ground to the students, would in his opinion, offer a break though in the relationship. When it comes to labour power and class and culture, Willis (1995) offers examples from his study that show how the teaching paradigm becomes differentiated with respect to working class values, using examples from the outside world of those who '*had no respect, not getting on in life*' (1995:92). Willis (1995) uses arguments of student resistance and social reproduction to suggest that working class culture plays a huge role in the kind of jobs and futures that young people go on to take after leaving school.

Yet Skeggs (2002) would argue that working class female culture is just as important, despite the differences. There are other struggles for working-class girls: women referred to their class positioning through employment, background, housing, and money with strong, united ideas that their social and cultural positioning was unfair. They struggled against their class positioning, and attempted to disidentify, rather than identify. Disidentifying plays a part in other feminist understandings of identity. Another important body of work in feminist literature is the work on identity described by discourses of girlhood.

Scholars including McRobbie (1982, 1991, 2004) and Harris (2004) have revealed how the identity of young girls is often categorised and constricted by different discourses around girls, for example, the good girl, the rebel, the bad girl and the academic girl. Understanding the impact of these constructions and concepts of girlhood on adolescent girls is an important tool in understanding the ways they understand and present their identities. Girls can identify themselves in ways that either conform to or resist these constructs of girlhood. This plays into, McRobbie (2003:3), has called '*the double entanglement*', this being the '*co-existence of neo-conservative values … and processes of liberalization'*, her work on girlhood shows that while one narrative tells young women to be strong, assertive and speak their mind, other narratives focus on the need for women and girls to be protected. While female leadership is presented as an aspirational goal, often taking a lead may leave girls stuck between discourses of girlhood, ensuring their identity becomes about being different.

Writing about the social reproductions of class, McRobbie (2004) presents a view that historical and political shifts have transformed the landscape and traditional class structure for women and girls.

The way that over the last century larger numbers of women have entered the labour market, as well as contemporary families where women no longer fulfil the traditional family roles, has created new and different categories and conflicts of class and identity among women. Understanding the manifestations of class and gender for women and girls is an important way Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital can be applied. Using discourses of girlhood and theories about gendered identities is important in understanding how the social structures at St Francis are upheld. Skeggs (2002) and her framework of capital and multiple subjectivities provides a useful framework to understanding the different ways class and gender work to create identities and power. By unpicking the different ways women and girls form and present their identities, as a researcher, we can get a deeper experience of the lived experience of the girls, the ways they work as a group within the school, their relations and the structures and struggles that inform them.

Neoliberalism, disadvantage and feminism

The educational experiences and the identity of the girls in my study sit within an important contemporary political ideology of neoliberalism, which driven by themes of individualism and self-responsibility influences the way young people and young girls perceive and position themselves within society and the social order. Neoliberal policies of social mobility and individual aspiration as a mechanism to succeed lies at the heart of contemporary British Education and Youth policymaking. This has important consequences for experiences of education and school-based volunteering in schools. To understand neoliberalism within the context of volunteering and education in England, it is important to recognise the western liberal contexts where neoliberalism has become popularised and entrenched across disciplines not only as a set of economic principles, but as an ideology. Mirowski and Plehwe (2009) refer to a thought collective, theorists of the Mont Pelerin Society whose thinking ensured neoliberalism became transdisciplinary and able to pervade governments, institutions, and other mechanisms of power as well as dominating discourse. Davies (2017) has stated, the most important way to look at neoliberalism is look at the way quantitative, economic indicators have permeated political discourse. Political theorist Wendy Brown describes how neoliberalism has transformed political character, operations, and meanings by reconfiguring them as '*economic*' (Brown, 2015: 17). She explains how the key mechanism of neoliberalism governmentality is the way politics and public institutions have become rooted in market-based principles, including competition, that remain at odds with more traditional understandings of politics or democracy as the rule of the people, for the '*common good' (2015: 17)*.

Through a neoliberal lens, citizens become consumers, and learning and skills become assets. Volunteering projects for young people and improvements to education are located within a narrative of raising aspirations, which claims that in line with neoliberal values, young people can be socially mobile for as long as they have the drive to succeed. Christy Kulz's (2016) research within a secondary academy in England challenges this belief, her ethnography shows that by failing to acknowledge structural reasons for disadvantage and pushing a neoliberal rhetoric of aspiration in schools, young people experience compliance, disappointment, and persistent inequality (Kulz, 2016).

There is extensive research suggesting young people are also subject to ideologies and government narratives within youth volunteering programmes, these studies look at how volunteering and citizenship have been marketed and reframed with an economic imperative and how young people are constructed and manufactured (Dean, 2013, 2014, 2015a, Mills and Waite, 2016, Murphy, 2017). Dean (2013) looks at how volunteering is framed through government policies of the Big Society and as a solution to the perceived problem of youth, linking with policy around citizenship and the tool of governmentality, his work shows how volunteering has been presented as an important responsibility, a duty to our community and society. This voluntary sector research extends to thinking about how reframing volunteering in market terms has led to a focus on the individual benefits for young people and how this changes volunteering.

Other useful research is Mills and Waite (2016) and Murphy (2017) and their studies of the National Citizens Service, a youth volunteering project endorsed by previous and current Conservative governments, predominately in England. Drawing on the language used by the organisation, Mills and Wait (2016) argue the NCS constructs young people as citizen-subjects and uses militarised language of service, and duty. Mills and Waite (2016) highlight the politicised messages behind NCS, their research discusses how the project aligns with current government ideology around nationalism arguing that NCS is an ideological tool and '*a sustained attempt by the UK Government to 'couple' citizenship and adulthood together as dual goals for young people to reach 'successfully'* (2016:73); they believe it support government ideology that reframes citizenship within a sense of Britishness. Murphy (2017) and his research of NCS shows how the rhetoric of compliant citizens and fixing young people that is part of government narrative finds its way into the everyday discourse of the organisation, aligning the programme with the narrative around troublesome young people and the need for service and duty as a solution to their behaviours.

Neoliberalism as a political rationality is found in discourse and contemporary society through what Batilwala (2007) has described as important ideological buzzwords. Indeed, Mills and Waite (2016)

underlined in their study how citizenship became a Conservative buzzword and became a key tool in the setting up and marketing of the NCS. In reality, the mainstreaming of buzzwords has infiltrated modern political policymaking in England. As seen in the research studies above volunteering is used alongside buzzwords such as social action, citizenship, and civil society, which are all concepts that are widely used without a clear definition. These words alongside others, such as empowerment and participation, have become what Batliwala (2007:1) calls '*mainstreamed*.' As they begin to be used as a political concept or as they become a political buzzword, these words are used in ways that take away their original meaning, (Batliwala, 2007). Volunteering, as a buzzword alongside civic participation, social action, and others, remains a key tool for communicating political ideology and policy rationale. St Francis uses a number of these buzzwords in their section describing DofE as a place to learn skills for life, a place to lock your potential and experience a journey of personal growth. These metaphors are based on individual, rather than collective growth, and therefore fit with narrative. On their school webpage St Francis describes DofE as transformational and life changing. The DofE, also, adopts this language on its website stating how the award can '*level the playing field and offers possibility; the possibility of progressing in education or securing a job interview*' (DofE, 2021).

Eliasoph (2011) writing from the US context calls youth volunteering projects an example of '*crisscrossed promises*', '*crisscrossed sponsorships*' and '*crisscrossed missions*', labelling the approach to youth volunteering *'Empowerment Talk*', (2011: 1). Her description of the all-encompassing descriptions of the possibilities of youth volunteering projects resonated with my own experience of managing a youth project that was supposed to include civic engagement, participation, inclusivity, youth leadership, community-focus, active citizenship, and employability, among others that were included in the buzzwords of the moment. Eliasoph (2011) highlights how these types of projects, supported through a blend of hybrid funding sources and organisations become characterised by '*morally magnetic*' missions, she suggests that very often it is more appealing to ensure those characteristics include support for disadvantaged youth, who need the opportunities and support. For Eliasoph this example of a '*criss-crossed mission*' inaccurately labels independent and motivated civic youth volunteers as '*needy youth*' and misrepresents the contributions of young people. Volunteering and disadvantaged young people were themes I heard a lot about during my time managing a youth volunteering project and five years later it was still a theme of DofE in the Southeast when I started my research. In receipt of large-scale funding to work specifically with disadvantaged young people, the DofE became all about engaging with students classed as hard to reach. During an early meeting between DofE and representatives from the school, I recorded this note from one of the teachers arguing they should receive funding for DofE:

> *At our schools, there is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities as well as the proportion of disadvantaged students being well above that seen nationally (OFSTED P9). With students in our schools making lower progress than the national standard and with very low starting points and poor attendance, achieving a DofE award would be valuable for students. (Teacher Reflections, 2018).*

What is interesting about St Francis is that, despite multiple approaches and commitments to ensure that the DofE reached the hard to reach, the students who participated in DofE were not the 'hard-to-reach' ones that the school had discussed, in fact it was the most engaged and participatory in the school that were coerced into volunteering. Just as Eliasoph (2011) describes in her project these more motivated and engaged young people within the school became swept up in the narratives of how the DofE was reaching and saving the futures of disadvantaged young people, which appealed to donors and policymakers alike.

It is not only the framings of disadvantage that have been reframed within the context of neoliberal rationality. Gender has also been incorporated into the term neoliberalism within contemporary narratives, and while earlier feminist literature warned about the negative effects and 'gender blindness' of neoliberalism, in recent years an acceptance of it as the only legitimate system has allowed it to become dominant (Cornwall et al, 2009). In recent years a more critical narrative has developed which questions the impact of many recent policies for women that in fact are implemented within a system of neoliberalism. Feminist scholars led by Rottenberg (2018) show how while the focus on women and their visibility has been increased, gender equality has been lost. In the rise of a popularist feminist ideal, a construct of the modern woman as someone who manages to work, run a family, and take control of her own success is projected. In this projection, what we see is an abandonment of equal rights and distribution of labour and care and a construct of women who can take responsibility for it all and manage it alone without structural and systematic support. This shift from focusing gender equality on individual responsibility rather than social structures has dangerous repercussions for modern feminism, Rottenberg (2018) argues, but fits comfortably with dominant neoliberal ideologies of individualism and self-preservation.

Volunteering and Aspiration: 'Your dreams are not big enough!':

This neoliberal ideology and themes of aspiration and self-responsibility were present during one of my earliest introductions to volunteering at St Francis at the DofE assembly. This assembly, which was held midway through term to the whole of the school was part of the school's first attempt to get voluntary sign ups. The presentation started by using the wartime slogan '*St Francis needs you!*' and focused on themes I was familiar with after working in partnerships between schools and charities, these included slides about how to make your CV stand out from the crowd, and slides about new skills, slides about pushing yourself outside your boundaries and gaining opportunities that would transform your future. As the presentation built up a long list of volunteering rewards showing images of young people Djing and travelling the world, paradoxically, the students seemed to get more disengaged, and no questions were asked at the end of the presentation. While the volunteering slides focused on giving back to your community, they also predominately focused on the chance to obtain teambuilding and leadership skills and CV opportunities. The final slides took it a step further with two slogans designed (I assumed) to be motivational, '*If your dreams don't scare you then they aren't big enough*', and '*Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten'.* Both slogans assume the importance of inspiring aspiration in young people and assume a lack of ambition and self-belief. Beliefs like this were confirmed by a teacher and recorded in the field diary, he stated that he supported participation in the DofE award because: *the challenge was to get young people in this area to aim higher and that the challenge for teachers was harder because the students had no role models at home or in their community to aspire to*.

Contemporary understandings of youth volunteering in schools have been framed around the ideas of acts of service, building on neoliberal ideology that argues how the structural problems of inequality in schools, can be fixed by increasing youth aspirations and a sense of citizenly duty in young people (Gaskin, 2004; Mills and Waite, 2016). This chapter will show how these framings are particularly class focused and based on deficit assumptions that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to volunteer, and how, therefore, the benefits of service volunteering justify mandatory approaches to school volunteering (Helms McCarty, 2013). Numerous examples at St Francis suggest how the narrative about disadvantage and low aspirations drive the way projects are introduced and I will draw on data from the early ethnographic stages of my research to show the way the schools and the voluntary sector adopt a particular narrative of what Kulz (2017:28) describes as '*aspirational disadvantage*' about students who they consider hard to reach, academically disengaged, or lacking in aspirations due parental and societal contexts.

The themes of this DofE presentation, like so many I had seen in youth projects, were rooted in these aspirational social mobility policies claiming education was the key to climbing the ladder and moving from one social-economic group to another. These policies have been dominant for the last fifty years and interventions have consistently targeted areas of low socio-economic disadvantage. However, data examining the trends within this idea of education and social mobility have been disappointing; in 2020, a report by the Sutton Trust provided evidence:

> *Friedman and Laurison show that many elite professions – such as medicine, law and journalism – remain highly socially exclusive. Only 6% of Britain's doctors are from working-class backgrounds, even though they are 33% of the workforce as a whole. Significantly, they also show that even when those from working-class backgrounds are successful in entering elite occupations, they go on to earn, on average, £6500 a year less than colleagues whose parents did 'middle-class' professional or managerial jobs. This is partly explained by differences in educational attainment but, importantly, even when they adjust for education plus a range of indicators of merit, still half the class pay gap remains*.

While the report concedes small gains have been made in educational inequalities at a school level, the gap in wages, inequalities at higher education and access to jobs remains stark between children and young people from disadvantaged areas and their wealthier peers. The COVID pandemic that led to thousands of young people missing school in 2020 served to exacerbate and increase these inequalities. In 2017 the entire board of the Social Mobility Commission resigned, including the head, Alan Milburn in protest at the government's lack of support for social justice.

The theory of social mobility rests on key assumptions; first, that there is a clear and universal understanding of what the concept means and how it operates (Goldthorpe and Mills, 2004), and second, that there is a universal idea of what it means to 'do better' (Blanden et al, 2008: 57). Arguments for the failure of social mobility are multiple and lie, not only in the inequalities created by market driven reforms, but also within the reproduction of cultural and societal norms that are also influenced by neoliberal ideology (Cadez and Kelava, 2009). A 2016 report into the relationship between social mobility, ethnicity and gender revealed that girls, and those of ethnic minority groups, are still more likely to face social immobility than their white male school peers (Shaw et al, 2016). A growing body of ethnographic research studies into the lives of working-class children, young people and families has done much over the last two decades to expose that social inequality

lies much deeper than within educational failure. Deeper qualitative data, it is argued, is critical for exploring the realities of youth and education policies and programmes in a world that assesses impact by measurement outcomes and performativity (de St Croix, 2017). Ethnographic studies have revealed a complicated myriad of factors including race, class and identity at the family and societal level which offer understanding into some of the reasons why social inequalities continue to be reproduced despite numerous policy interventions and employability programmes. Critical approaches to research such as taking a feminist perspective are important to allow deeper insight into the ways young people are excluded and subject to structural inequality. This thesis aims to be one of those studies that shows how volunteering opportunities can also serve to exacerbate inequalities rather than challenge them.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the important theoretical frameworks in this study and the justification for taking a feminist approach. Key influential feminist studies including the work of Deem (1978), Bryne (1978), Stanworth (1981), Weiner (1994), Weiler (1987), Delamont (1980), Arnot (2002) and Reay (2013) have been identified. Feminist studies of identity and girlhood in the work of Skeggs, (2002) McRobbie (1991), Harris, Gonick and Aapola (2004) are also examined. The chapter outlines the important theory of gender code that Arnot (2002) has shown how schools, as an institution, can reproduce gendered norms by applying her theories that can play a useful role in understanding both how language can reproduce classed and gendered social structures, and how control can be reproduced this by the very fabric and acoustics of the school. The chapter has shown how Skeggs' (2002) framework based on Bourdieu's (1986) model of capitals and her own concepts of respectability, subjectivity and disidentification is a valuable theoretical tool in this study as it can show how it is important to understand the experiences and identities of women and girls through multiple lens including class and gender. The chapter concluded with an exploration of the neoliberal context that has had consequences on policymaking around young people, education, and volunteering, for young people labelled disadvantaged, and for girls, who are still more likely to face lower social mobility.

Chapter 3: Feminism, Volunteering and Caring

Introduction

This chapter explores the key concepts and contexts underpinning the volunteering experiences of the St Francis girls, the conceptualisation of volunteering as service and the increasing use of mandatory approaches to school volunteering. The chapter reviews the literature around the problematic definitions of volunteering and suggests that by re-examining the way we define volunteering and framing the concept using a feminist perspective we can explore how everyday caring and more informal acts of volunteering remain hidden and invisible in modern life. Reviewing the literature around the concept of informal volunteering and caring responsibilities in contemporary society, this chapter reveals how this invisible volunteering and caring is gendered with caring roles and caring duties often part of the everyday expectations of women and girls, and part of domestic careers that are inherently female dominated such as childcare and caring for the elderly.

The key themes running through this thesis are all built around the way that the girls' experiences are characterised by the notion of caring and alongside feminist philosophies of care including the work of Joan Tronto (1993, 2013) the key theory I draw on and discuss in this chapter is Carol Gilligan (1982) and her theory of women's development, caring and moral positioning. Her theories of how women and girl's experiences are shaped their responsibility of care is the lens used in my analysis of my field notes. The work of Gilligan, (1993, 2004), Tronto (2013) and other feminist scholars is used to show how understandings of differences in morality can enable us to better hear the voices of girls, rather than allow them to remain invisible. Studies from wider society, volunteering and activism all provide examples of the caring responsibilities that drive women's responses, but also suggest as Gilligan (1982) describes that a devaluing of care in modern neoliberal societies has left women, alongside other marginalised groups such as those of colour and from lower socio-economic groups, with the responsibility for care while simultaneously excluded from knowledge, agency, and power.

Learning to Serve: Mandatory School Volunteering

This thesis argues that school volunteering at St Francis is one of the mechanisms by which the girls learn to serve. Service and caring in this study go hand in hand and a duty to serve the school and

community works alongside the responsibility for care the girls have and ensures they are coerced into a number of school duties including DofE volunteering. The empirical chapters show how this unfolds. I argue in this thesis that the girls participate in volunteering due to motivations of duty and responsibility, and that these motivations are gendered and based on gender code within the school structures and identities built around girls and their caring responsibilities. Both gendered bias within the St Francis school structures and the way volunteering roles can often be gendered enable this to happen and it defines the way the girls' experience volunteering at school. The girls at St Francis learn to serve through volunteering in a number of important ways, first they do not choose to volunteer, they are mandated to do the DofE award with the volunteering component as one of their prefect duties. Second, they are subject to gendered choices as they make their choices about what volunteering activities they should do, and finally the type of volunteering they engage in at the care home is what can be defined as service volunteering as they were expected to behave in a particular way and were also subject to everyday sexism and gendered stereotypes.

The reasons why the girls experienced service and mandatory volunteering in this way is due to their school and its structures, their sense of identity formed by school, family, and society, but also due to the way volunteering increasingly is offered in classed ways at schools that are considered disadvantaged. In the early days of my ethnography, after almost two months shadowing the new DofE lead as he visited schools across the South-East meeting senior leaders and signing students up to the programme, I witnessed the challenges the organisation faced securing school and student participation in their targeted areas of disadvantage. When finally, I began my research at St Francis I observed that, this school too, only obtained sign ups by recruiting the prefect group to the programme to try to meet the numbers they had discussed with the DofE. The school also struggled with the participation of teachers and school staff, who after years of involvement refused to participate when the school took responsibility for the licence for certain sections. Despite the best efforts of the DofE regional co-ordinator, the school seemed unable to convince large numbers of students to sign up voluntarily and this meant the project was implemented by targeting and coercing students rather than students engaging voluntarily.

Opting out of the DofE was not an option for St Francis, when targets and expectations had been set by the Head and the DofE lead, both who were reasonably new in role and working to ambitious goals and promises of school transformation. The new DofE Regional Lead had become a School Governor and spent time with the new Headteacher of St Francis, and he had secured the role due to his commercial experience and track record, in the same way the Head had told me had secured a headship at a young age by leading transformation in other schools. The DofE lead had been given the role and entrusted with engaging as many schools and students as possible. He told me that

becoming a governor was more an attempt to understand how schools work, as this was a career change for him, but it was obvious once he was governor that he would not expect the school he governed at to opt out of DofE. In the same way during one of my earliest meetings with the Head he had confidently told me his aim was '*transform the school in three years then move on'* and he had declared that *'his aim was to see DofE running throughout whole year groups, with every student taking the opportunity to participate'.* Based on these declarations both the Head and the DofE lead made sure that Mr D, the teacher in charge was clear that opting out would not be an option. In turn, students were also coerced to stay involved, and while some students did manage to opt out, overwhelmingly, it was the boys who found a get out and it was the girls who were coerced to stay and serve.

This class-based approach to youth volunteering dominated the approach of the DofE at St Francis, culminating in two framings that defined the volunteering experiences of the St Francis girls, these included the use of mandatory volunteering in schools and the concept of service volunteering. As someone working in the sector, I have followed the different policy initiatives and strived to understand the way the initiatives are perceived and experienced by the young people who take part. After a few years taking a break from the voluntary sector I was surprised on my return to education to see that schools, increasingly, were supporting mandatory school volunteering, including one school that made it part of an alternative curriculum for students who were considered disengaged with learning. During my time working in youth empowerment, voluntary participation was deemed essential for the true impact of volunteering to be realised. St Francis, as is shown in this study, also made volunteering in the DofE mandatory for selected students from the prefect group as they were coerced into continuing with the programme as part of their commitment to becoming a prefect.

By service volunteering I am referring to the rise in the way charities and policymakers increasingly talk about *'acts of service*' (Rochester, 2006) or developing '*service- orientated citizens*' (Dekker and Halman, 2003). When I left the youth charity sector in 2013 the focus had still been on empowerment and youth leadership within volunteering projects, so the use of mandatory participation and the change of language around service felt like significant shifts. An important piece of research that was significant in framing volunteering from 2017 onwards was research from the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, which drives lots of the work around young people and moral development. Their report titled A Habit of Service, was a project co-led between Step up to Serve, an organisation set up to increase young people's social action, and the National Citizens Service, (NCS). The findings of this report were significant because they suggested that the younger an individual was when they first started volunteering, the more

likely they were to continue volunteering throughout their lifetime, from young person and into adulthood, (Arthur et al, 2017). Key findings included how those who had first got involved in service under the age of ten were found to be more than twice as likely to have formed what the report defined as '*a habit of service*' than if they started aged 16–18 years. The report also suggested that those children and young people involved before the age of ten reported better identification with moral and civic values, more skills and confidence, more friends and family connected to volunteering, as well as greater participation in a wider range of activities.

All this set the way for a targeted approach to embed volunteering and social action in the lives of more children and young people, as early as possible and it became the narrative behind the mission of Step up to Serve and its campaign #iwill to make social action and volunteering a part of as many young people's lives as possible. The way youth social action and volunteering was framed was around the notion of the 'double benefit':

> *When young people engage in meaningful acts of service, there is a 'double benefit': a contribution to the common good of society and the building of one's own character. Service to others is, therefore, an important virtue to cultivate in young people. (Arthur et al, 2017: p5)*

Step up to Serve was a coalition of youth organisations coming together in partnership to maximise opportunities and expand the reach of young people participating in social action, and included DofE, NCS, Scouts and other large, national organisations. The notion of the 'double benefit' the idea that young people could participate and help both themselves and their community was quickly adopted by youth organisations in the coalition. The other important part of the report's focus was the use of the idea of service as an important virtue for young people. This reflected growing thinking in western contexts about the value of young people engaging in community service activities, as discussed by Henderson et al (2007), Warburton & Smith (2003), Taylor & Pancer (2007) and Youniss et al (1999).

Yet there are complexities within these notions of service volunteering and the double benefit. First, in many studies focusing on the perspectives of young people who are participating in volunteering and social action, the idea of double benefit is rarely referred to. When asked about the benefits of volunteering young people focus on the skills and opportunities they are receiving, rather than focus on the community benefits. A research paper looking at the experiences of girls from three different

English secondary schools in a study by Taylor-Collins (2018) looked at their perspectives on participating in a social action project. Her work found that most of the girls talked about volunteering in terms of personal benefits and skill development, their incentives were taking part to gain skills and experiences they could add to their CV and university personal statement. Using Kuehn and Corrigan's 2013 definition of '*hope labour*', '*in or undercompensated work carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow*' (2013:18), Taylor-Collins (2018) describes how in the neoliberal context characterised by individualism and recognising yourself as an asset, these girls, who were all from working-class and disadvantaged backgrounds, saw engaging in volunteering as a way of levelling the playing field and a stepping stone to achieving access to top universities and careers. Taylor-Collins (2018) shows the way the girls described volunteering as a part of the NCS programme in a very asset and reward driven way and very much saw their volunteering experiences as a means to an end.

The drive behind a Habit of Service can also be linked to growing examples of young people coerced or engaged in mandatory volunteering programmes. Partnerships between schools and the voluntary sector are impacted by the marketisation of the voluntary sector amid the huge funding changes charities and organisations have faced over periods of austerity and changes in government (Cushman and Milbourne, 2015). Many youth organisations have had to pivot their projects and change their income models to reflect a lack of available funding and a need to diversify their income streams (Sepulveda et al, 2011). Many youth organisations have tried to streamline their offer both to reduce costs and appeal to donors and supporters, in this study changes to the way DofE fund their programmes over the last couple of years have also created changes to the way the programme is delivered as a large amount of funding received in the last couple of years is based on the organisation's ability to reach young people in disadvantaged areas. St Francis, among other schools in the South-East of England, were moving to a different model of running DofE by becoming a licenced organisation for specific parts of the award. Traditionally the local authority had been the DofE licenced organisation for St Francis and other schools in the local area but a decade of funding cuts had made that increasingly difficult. The school was now its own licenced organisation for the volunteering, physical and skills section of the award and they were looking to an approved activity provider to run the expedition section. Many teachers, who had traditionally been involved, were concerned that taking responsibility for the licence and three sections would put an extra burden on staff time.

To try to and ensure the organisation was able to reach the numbers targeted in the South-East, the DofE agreed to use the award in new ways including embedding the award into the timetable for students who were sitting the career-related programme of the International Baccalaureate, (IB).

The IB is an alternative qualification to A levels or BTEC designed for students who the school felt were more focused on a vocational career pathway. Whereas traditionally the model of DofE had always stipulated all components should be off-timetable and extra-curricular, students at this school were targeted and offered the chance to complete DofE as part of their weekly lessons. In other schools volunteering programmes are embedded into obligatory citizenship duties or as in this case the prefect students were obliged to take DofE to complete their prefect application. Each of these examples shows how volunteering became mandatory for students, or how in each case they were coerced or 'voluntold' (Kelemen et al 2019). The increased pressure on schools and organisations to reach higher numbers of young people, particularly from low socio-economic backgrounds, created an environment and narrative that the outcomes justified a more coercive approach.

This context is significant in my study. During the early days of my ethnography, I spent almost two months shadowing the new DofE lead as he visited schools across the South-East, meeting senior leaders and signing students up to the programme and witnessed the challenges the organisation faced obtaining sign ups. When finally, I began my research at St Francis I observed that, they only obtained sign ups by recruiting the prefect group to the programme to try to meet the required number of sign-ups. The school also struggled with the participation of teachers and school staff, who after years of involvement refused to participate in the new model. Despite the best efforts of the DofE regional co-ordinator, the school seemed unable to overcome many of the barriers created by the new operational model and this meant the project was implemented by targeting and coercing students rather than students engaging voluntarily. In this context, Keleman et al's (2017) concept of *'voluntolding'* (2017: p1249) is also useful when thinking about how contemporary youth volunteering is often framed as instrumental for the development of young people, which has led to a driven approach to persuade young people to participate (Strickland, 2010).

Conceptual Problems

Mandatory school volunteering is a contradiction in terms, mandatory suggests compulsory, but this sits alongside volunteering that is believed to be about acting through choice. The key problems for this study, and indeed, for policy around youth volunteering is the way the concept has been redefined and reconceptualised by different agendas. Today the way volunteering is understood and presented can be vastly different when discussed by policymakers, voluntary organisations, and in this study, teachers, DofE, and the students themselves. Voluntary sector research is plagued by the

multiple uses of the concept of volunteering. Shachar et al (2019) have called the concept of volunteering *'a black box'* presenting how it is a term that often has a constructed meaning. Shachar et al suggest that seeing volunteering as a fixed concept conceals the realities of the changing patterns of volunteering experiences, and suggests it is more useful to see volunteering as '*a constructed phenomenon with unstable and shifting boundaries that are subject to movement from a variety of actors'* (2019: p246). These definitional ambiguities partly come from an attempt to formalise or incorporate volunteering into organised schemes and policy drives, but also from historical perspectives that are both classed and gendered, as Lucca and Ellis-Paine highlight through public perceptions of volunteering that focus on volunteer stereotypes such as '*helpful elderly women*' and '*middle class do-gooders*', (2001:11). Lucca and Ellis-Paine (2001) also show how other concepts such as participation and community action are used alongside volunteering and are subject to a muddying of their meanings through implicit suggestions that they can be used interchangeably rather than through clear differentiations of what they look like in practice. In this way volunteering is a concept that is used in a variety of ways in both practice and theorised differently in both policy and academic discourse.

These ambiguities around the definition of volunteering create problems for those trying to communicate, measure and capture its impact. One such ambiguity that is particularly important for youth volunteering is the framing of the concept as political or non-political, as throughout the last few decades youth volunteering has shifted in the way it has been aligned with political action. Depending on the purpose of the discourse, volunteering can be defined by and located distinctly within the political sphere or defined by removing the politics all together. Eliasoph (2013) through her examination of politics and volunteering has presented how civic engagement, activism and volunteering are used interchangeably in discourse, but with an implicit assumption that each are evidence of an individual's political engagement. Volunteering is often used as evidence of a strong civil society and democracy, purporting the idea that if we have a high number of volunteers, we have a healthy democracy. However, Eliasoph (2013) identifies an important distinction, that the reality is that not all volunteering is political activity, as she describes:

> *Usually, volunteers do not routinely question the roots of the problem they aim to solve, but just get in there, hands on, directly, to solve the problem, not necessarily caring about its source, (2013: 44).*

Discourse referring to youth volunteering programmes often conflates volunteering with politicised action, by using other concepts alongside it such as social or community action. A 2017 document from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) presented a framework for social action and offers nine examples, which included political activities including advocacy, social movements, and peoplepower to tackle social inequalities (2017:7) but separated out formalised volunteering and service. In other discourses such as the narrative from the National Citizens Service, political activities such as advocacy and social movement are missing, with a strong focus on the service aspect of supporting your community. In the context of youth engagement, it is important to make distinctions between what Kahne and Westheimer (2006) describe as the political citizen and the non-political citizen, because different actors have different reasons for encouraging or discouraging political engagement in young people depending on their agenda and ideology.

Another way this ambiguity has been framed is by looking at volunteering as either service or action. An historical perspective of volunteering and social action, looking at the post-war period until the end of the 1970s, suggests that volunteering and community action has always moved through periods of service to periods of action, depending on the social and political context of the country at that time. Brewis, (2010), who has traced student volunteering from post-war to the 1990s demonstrates how post-war politics, changing socio-economic conditions, and the rise of young people attending Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) have all impacted the nature of volunteering. By identifying key moments over the last hundred years, Brewis has identified these periods of service volunteering and periods of action, and her work traces the roots of student volunteering to groups such as the Union of Girls Schools for Social Service, which ensured that the post-war volunteering groups were much more about service volunteering (2002:441). It was only with the onset of the sixties, where the still relatively small minority of those within HE, took a more radical approach to student- led activities such as fundraising and volunteering, that volunteering become much more about student movements and resistance (2002:442). Documenting the tensions between the two terms, Brewis shows how even by the 1970s sustaining support for student volunteers linked to activism had become politically difficult and describes how:

> *The early 1970s were marked by a shift in the language used to describe the activities of students in local communities. New groups were formed and some of the older social service societies rebranded themselves as Student Community Action groups*,' (2002:444).

Fitting with the distinctions made by Eliasoph (2013) above, Brewis identifies service volunteering as '*social service or welfare'* described as *'purely practical help on personal or group basis*,' with a key difference in action volunteering that she describes as '*political, alternative, community action'* (2002:446). The key point in her historical research shows that these tensions in defining volunteering are historical and highly dependent on the political context and narrative of the time, periods of action and service have coincided with more liberal and more conservative periods of political power.

In a similar way the categories of formal and informal volunteering need to be fully applied by researchers to ensure a full and authentic picture of an individual or social group's contribution through volunteering are understood. In practice, the lack of recognition of informal volunteering is problematic and is recognised here by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who in a report published in 2019 NCVO acknowledge the lack of representation within their own definition of volunteering recognising that how their definition only includes 'formal volunteering':

> *Throughout the report, we use the term 'volunteering' to refer to formal volunteering through groups, clubs, or organisations, which is the focus of this survey. It does not examine the more informal ways of giving time and helping others outside groups, clubs or organisations (NCVO 2019).*

Exploring the different duties that the girls at St Francis were involved in reveals how they were involved in both formal and informal volunteering, and how this is not fully represented. These definitional ambiguities are important because they fail to provide a full picture of volunteering in many discourses and research studies. Equally importantly, however, is that these ambiguities are subject to conflation and misrepresentation, and this has been significant for understandings of youth volunteering over the last thirty years and beyond. With youth volunteering and civic engagement high on the agenda for policymakers over the last thirty years, concepts and framings of volunteering have shifted and changed to suit agendas and ideology.

A feminist approach to defining volunteering

Taking a feminist perspective on volunteering involves examining the conceptualisations and framings for the hidden and unspoken experiences of women and girls, and in this way breaking

down the concept of formal and informal volunteering is helpful. The work of Taylor (2004) is useful here as she examines whether we see volunteering as social action or labour in modern conceptualisations. An answer to this is unclear because volunteering, as a concept, it is missing in traditional economic and sociological theories (Katz and Rosenberg, 2004, Taylor, 2004). Concepts of work and labour are presented in economic theories, while the social action of individuals and groups forms thinking around social order in the theories of Weber (1922) and Durkheim (1933). Volunteering, however, is missing in both theoretical disciplines, leading to questions in current research about whether it should be defined by the economic contributions it makes to society (Overgaard, 2019) or whether it should be defined as the mechanism of civil society and democracy and as the actions of individuals and social groups to facilitate change (Janoski, 2010). Overgaard (2019) has argued that conceptualisations of volunteering focusing on skills and altruism distract from the fact that essentially *'volunteering is, in fact and before all else, unpaid labour' (2019: p129).* Modern conceptualisations see volunteering as a term used interchangeably with other concepts such as active citizenship, social action, participation, unpaid work, and service. Each of these concepts shifts the understanding of volunteering, changing the meaning by applying market values or connecting the concept to the political sphere.

Defining volunteering is also intrinsically connected to the notion of self-selection and therefore motivations, whether instrumental or altruistic, also play an important part in interpreting the concept (Dean, 2014). There is a body of research looking at the *'good glow'* associated with volunteering (Dean, 2020) and even the idea that people volunteer to offset guilt about the way they live their lives (Wymer and Samu,1996). Taylor (2004) has shown it is important to understand the ways individuals are obliged to volunteer or do unpaid labour through '*institutional, community and family relations'* (2004:31). Outside of recognised theory, Taylor (2004) highlights how an individual's life could:

> *Include a lifetime of voluntary work, non-standard forms of employment, juggling several jobs, balancing familial care and public work, work in and for the community, political work, work after retirement and work whilst 'unemployed'* (2004:31).

Taylor's (2004) argument to include volunteering into contemporary understandings of labour and Kelemen et al's typology of volunteering motivations both provide a starting point for research into experiences of volunteering that can reveal classed, raced, and gendered inequalities. Taylor's

(2004) argument that there are invisible and devalued notions of voluntary work is important in this study as it can be used to record volunteering in the ethnography that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. It builds on feminist approaches to theories around the relationship between women and modes of production and reproduction in a material, consumer driven world and labour market such as Kuhn and Wolpe's 1978 study into Feminism and Materialism. When individuals and social groups in lower socio-economic groups are obliged to sell their labour then the value of men and women's contributions, historically was seen differently, and despite modern shifts, we are still living with those values. Conceptualising types of volunteering by motivation is also useful when researching the experiences of young people, particularly focusing on how the notion of volunteering roles raises questions about imposed gendered identities and how education and youth policy has shaped the experience of school-based volunteering (Kelemen et al, 2017).

Modern definitions of volunteering are also embedded within the context of modern policymaking in England, its discourse, and its agendas. For example, volunteering is part of social policy and is viewed as a key mechanism in strategies to promote social participation and citizenship (Smith et al, 2005). Shifting definitions of youth volunteering have been employed through different government policymaking agendas, educational institutions, and youth volunteering organisations over the last thirty years and beyond. Volunteering in schools and school - voluntary sector partnerships change in character depending on different conceptualisations of volunteering, alongside key ideological shifts and political buzzwords under different governments that have underpinned policies around volunteering. Reviewing the literature around service volunteering, research presents how, in some contexts, it can be argued young people have been coerced into volunteering rather than choosing to participate (Warburton and Smith, 2003).

For academic scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike it is important to acknowledge that volunteering can look and be represented differently depending on context, with some definitional ambiguities that are more troublesome than others. Butcher and Einolf (2017) looking at volunteering across the world show that western examples of volunteering are based on narrow categories of formalised and institutionalised examples which is problematic in the context of young people as it can misrepresent the informal ways young people contribute to their communities and society (Nenga, 2012). Defining volunteering at St Francis was interesting as students and staff, and DofE offered a range of perspectives, for staff, volunteering was often linked to school duties and values, while for students they focused on the benefits and the ways they were persuaded to participate by teachers and the DofE.

Dean (2013) who has also focused on the '*manufacturing of citizens'* through more asset-driven understandings of volunteering, has shown how neoliberal manifestations of the individual have served to '*side-line*' any understanding of volunteering as the everyday acts of giving and helping, (Dean, 2015a). Focusing on what has been defined as '*informal volunteering*' (Einolf et al, 2016) in the current context, researchers have shown how communities and of all socio-economic levels, and cultures are held together by voluntary acts of goodwill that prevent the most vulnerable in the society to fall into crises (Martinez et al 2011). Indeed, if we calculated the cost of these acts then we would recognise the huge value of neighbours and family informally volunteering to help their communities (Tanaguichi, 2012). Formalised, benefit driven acts of service and volunteering dominate the way volunteering is defined and represented, which means that many informal acts of helping remain underreported (Martinez et al, 2011). This is a classed and gendered issue; those living in higher socio-economic areas are more likely to be participating in formal volunteering, with those in lower socio-economic areas reporting less (Dean, 2015b). Dean has built on his research and in more recent research drawn on the ways that women, those of colour, and those in working-class communities' face illegitimacy through a lack of recognition of their informal acts of volunteering bind their communities together. It is women who are also more likely to be involved in informal acts of helping that goes unrecognised (Martinez et al, 2011). In many of these lower socio-economic areas, where low numbers of formal volunteering are being reported, an enormous amount of informal volunteering may be taking place, many examples of it undertaken by women and girls (Dean, 2021). This provided an interesting way of examining the volunteering at St Francis, it widened my scope to include not only the formalised actions of the girls through DofE, but also their school prefect duties that they were obliged to carry out, and to include the different ways they were called on by family and society to participate in acts of helping and caring.

Caring girls at St Francis

The girls at St Francis care. Boys do too, but it does not characterise all the choices they make, the roles they take and the way they identify themselves. My fieldnotes tracing each stage and every event within my ethnography are defined by references to the girls as carers or caring, their own perceptions of themselves as caring, and the way the women and girls within St Francis have the responsibility for caring. While caring is a dominant theme in my own field data, it is also a dominant theme in feminist literature about women and girls, and as such features in the research of Skeggs, (2002) Reay (2010) and Arnot (1997).

Skeggs (2002) showed how white working-class women's identities were formed in response to the perceived problem of female unemployment of white working-class women, with the constructed solution to enrol them on domestic or '*caring*' courses. Her ethnographic study focused on a group of women from an industrial town in the North that were undertaking these '*caring courses'*. By taking these courses women positioned themselves in relation to caring, making this a key part of their identity. It became a way they identified themselves as different to other women, the class difference becomes articulated between middle-class women who worked and sent their children to childcare and the women in the town who stayed at home during the early years and worked part-time. Caring women became associated with staying at home with those that went out to work categorised as uncaring, and unnatural. Skeggs (2002) shows by conforming to these characteristics of caring and uncaring, the women became predisposed to voluntary and unpaid caring which led to their exploitation and invisibility. Characterising class and gender by caring became a restrictive, positioning working class women in '*the reiteration of reproductive caring performances*' (Skeggs,2002:72). Interestingly, within the Primary School in Reay's study where masculine identities and working-class boys dominated the social hierarchy, Reay shows how girls play down their 'girlie' identity and good behaviour in order to fit in (Reay, 2010).

In Arnot's (1997) article looking at the gendered dimension of conceptions of citizens she presents an argument on how the definitions of citizenship have evolved rooted in the rationality and individualism of western European masculinity and therefore have excluded women's writing and understanding of citizenship and its position in education. In Arnot's (1997) argument she claims the experiences of being a citizen is gendered and that women have been regulated as:

> *Women are symbols of emotion, natural feeling, caring for those closely related to them. They are not seen to be capable of the objectivity and the principled behaviour which characterises precisely the worker, the soldier, and the citizen* (1997: p281).

These references to women and the way that they are excluded, and their contributions devalued as being too caring and emotional is an important lens to apply to the girls and the way their propensity to care governs the position that they have in the prefect group, among their peers and with their teachers at St Francis. Caring and the way it changes the experiences and positions of girls has also been theorised by Feminist theorists such as Gilligan (1982), Gilligan and Mikel Brown (1993) and Tronto and Fischer (1993).

Feminism and Caring Theory

Caring theory has been an important theme in feminist work in recent years. This thesis uses the framework suggested by Gilligan (1982) about the ways that women and girls feel caring is their voice and how this censors them in other ways to avoid self-expression. What is interesting for this thesis is the way Gilligan (1982) argues caring guides girls' moral decisions and personal choices. Other feminist writers have also contributed to the body of work around caring theories and its role in reproducing inequalities and exclusion. Tronto and Fischer (1990) take a position where they expand on the notion of caring and the problems it causes for feminist research. They argue that the modern Western neoliberal world has no place for caring and therefore it is devalued. Tronto and Fischer claim three types of caring have been conceptualised by feminists' responses to the idea of caring, the selfish carer, the androgynous carer, and the visible carer. The selfish carer suggests that caring erodes women's sense of self, the androgynous carer promotes caring is also completed by men to solve gender inequality but fails to address the deeply embedded societal expectations that make caring a daily part of women's lives, while finally the issue of visibility is seen in Gilligan's (1982) theory of values systems, which she states how these systems leave women contributions invisible. Tronto and Fischer (1990) believe that caring needs reconceptualising and explore the problematic feminist ideals that suggest caring is based on motherhood, sisterhood, and friendship. Tronto and Fischer (1990) suggest how important it is that caring is understood as a force embedded within all our lives:

> *The idea of caring as a separate sphere for women's moral and emotional work does not match our daily realities (1990:39).*

Like Eliasoph's (2013) discussion of volunteering as political or non-political, Tronto and Fischer (1990) argue whether caring is political or non-political, but they believe that all as all political action stems from a notion of caring, therefore caring is political and subject to dimensions of power and control. Caring changes within '*historical, cultural, class and other contexts*' (1990:40). Tronto has published two important books looking at caring and the gender split, one examining caring and morality (1993), and the other arguing for a caring democracy (2013).

Tronto and Fischer (1997) also allude to the contention that caring theory has caused among feminist thinking. Second wave feminism refers to the feminist movement across the world from the 1960s onwards, when in contrast to the visible fight taken on by the suffragettes, feminism was

fighting unseen gender discrimination that existed throughout society, culture and everyday structures and practices. Theories about women and caring have presented problems for contemporary feminists, who as Tronto and Fischer (1997) have described, have struggled with whether to champion or abandon it but have ultimately claimed caring is a valuable part of female morality that has been devalued in a patriarchal world. Thompson (2003) has also discussed the problematic nature of caring, summarising the key problems of caring theory for different feminist approaches. Thompson (2003) discusses caring as it is theorised in socialisation theory, gender difference theory, structural theory and deconstructive theory, outlining the problems this causes for Her article highlights how despite some consensus in different feminist positions on the exclusionary and disempowering impact of caring on women, there is no one clear direction moving forward to reconcile the concept with modern forms of feminism.

Thompson's (2003) articles describe how caring is interpreted by each approach. Socialisation theories in feminism deny any concept of gender difference and qualities or attributes that are feminine, while other feminists such as Gilligan (1982) would argue that feminine traits such as caring need to be recognised and celebrated. For structural theorists who believe in the ways that structures reproduce inequalities, masculine and feminine constructs are part of how those power structures are maintained and therefore must be eliminated to make progress. Deconstructive theories in feminism go further and attempt to deconstruct all categories including gender. Despite their differences, however, the one place these theories converge is in a recognition of the contradiction that sits at the heart of modern understandings of gender, idealised representations of women as carers and modern narratives of being strong and independent present contradictory pictures that serve to devalue care.

> *All three positions argue that the idealized 'feminist' character claimed for caring and for 'women's ways of knowing' is, in the final analysis, pretty much indistinguishable from the conventionally and contingently feminine character of the values and habits that women in advanced-industrial societies are supposed to enact. And if the feminist character of caring and women's ways of knowing is simply borrowed from what patriarchy assigns to women anyway, then, however much women try to claim those values and make them their own, they still derive much of their character from patriarchy and function for patriarchy. (Thompson, 2003: p39).*

While this study acknowledges the contradictions that lie at the heart of modern feminism and understands how the concept of caring is problematic for much feminist thought, Gilligan's (1982) model of an ethic of care and the models of other caring theorists are applicable in this study, where the girls' relations, decisions and identity is guided by their propensity to care.

Gilligan and the Female Voice

The framework that is used in this study to understand gender and caring is the feminist psychologist and writer Carol Gilligan (1993, 1982), her theories on female moral development and her research approach rooted in listening to the real voice of women and girls has made significant contributions to the themes of gender and morality. Her work has been important in that it has reopened a debate about accepted moral theories of development with Gilligan (1982) revealing how theories can be misleading when the research is carried out and written with a male bias and therefore excluding and failing to represent the experiences of women (Gilligan, 1982).

Gilligan's (1982) work is focused on voice. It is not only that she considers that there are differences in men and women's moral voices, but that she also introduces the idea of how we hear people's real voices, how voices can be censored and how people theorise from their own voice, rather than truly listen to the experiences of others. Gilligan (1982) is not making any comment on the discussion about whether gender differences are biologically created or social constructs, indeed it is this binary that she finds alarming, because as she states:

> *This way of posing the question implies that men and women alike, are either genetically determined or a product of socialisation – that there is no voice – and without voice, there is no possibility for resistance, for creativity, or change whose wellsprings are psychological* (Gilligan, 1982).

Gilligan (1982) takes a relational approach to voice, she is not only interested in what people say, but also in the natural voice. For Gilligan (1982), voice is not true unless it has resonance, unless it is part of a relationship and unless it has come from people's core. Gilligan (1982) states that while people use voice all the time, this does not mean they are talking from their core. Gilligan is interested in the physiological, cultural, and psychological elements of voice, the fact that when we hear people,

we need to understand how voice is mediated through language and culture, diversity, and plurality. She is interested in how people can be persuaded by other voices and can learn to censor their own.

Gilligan and Brown (1993) have spent time unravelling the way theories have been developed under the influence of male voice. This is problematic because this means the world is seen within male bias. Critiquing the theories of Freud, Brown and Gilligan (1993) build a case for rethinking some concepts by including female voice. As an example, Brown and Gilligan (1993) have investigated how these dominant femininities manifest in the lives of women and girls through extensive research into girls' lives. They report a 'crisis' in adolescent girls' development, a stage when they began to edit it out their true feelings and opinions, fearing that their true voice would lead to conflict and rejection as they are acting outside a category of girlhood to which they believe their identity should conform to. This is what Gilligan (2004) believes happens and happens to girls rather than boys in a patriarchal system. Her work is focused on collecting and sharing women and girls' true voice.

Gender, Family and Civil Society

The psychological perspective of Gilligan (1982) provides a theory that enables us to understand the way girls and boys often respond to moral problems in different ways with distinct types of power attached to their decisions, and consequences for how their decisions lead them to be positioned in the social order. Gilligan (1982) builds her theory around the idea that women have a different moral voice. Other research studies have found that in a crisis-type scenario, girls display more empathy and care for the individuals affected by the crisis than boys, who, the research suggests, often respond by focusing more on ways of solving the dilemma (Skoe, 2010, Karniol et al, 2003). While these studies do not claim boys are incapable of empathy and care, their findings strongly suggest that girls focus more on taking on a caring responsibility for the emotional and relational impacts of a crisis. This way of understanding the way girls make decisions and respond to situations has been important in the way of I have made sense of the episodes and events within my field notes. I have used Gilligan's (1982) theories of girls and the way caring responsibility drives their responses to understand the ways the girls at St Francis respond and build their relations. Feminist theory helps us understand how this caring- focused approach has led to less power and agency for the girls who take it. Taking a feminist perspective on moral development, Gilligan (2004) suggests that notions of caring have become a feminine virtue and demonstrates how this is problematic in a modern patriarchal society.

Gilligan (2004) describes how, over time, a capacity for empathy in women has been both romantically idealised, often with descriptions of women as almost angelic, yet, simultaneously devalued. The devaluation of empathy, Gilligan (2004) asserts, is a result of the lack of women's voices in one of the most dominant psychological and moral theories of modern times, Kohlberg's theories on moral development (1958) which were developed using a male only research group. Gilligan (1982) describes how the prominence of Kohlberg's theories, has meant psychological, moral, and political thought has been built on a gender binary and hierarchal structure that has divided reason and self from emotion and relationships, placing reason and self as the more important response (2009). Justice, reason and self, and a more rights-based approach to moral reasoning that were found in Kohlberg's study, Gilligan (1982) states, have become elevated under our patriarchal society. Gilligan (1982) argues that current gender binaries ensure that those that speak with a more caring voice are considered weaker and not given equal power and agency. This has led to a lack of caring voices within modern society's decision-making, and a gendered split between ideas of justice on the masculine side and caring as feminine, which has prevented the ideas being used alongside each other (Gilligan, 2004). Karniol et al, (2003) using Gilligan's (1982) theories, looking specifically at girls in adolescence, indicate that adolescent girls who feel responsibility for, and empathy with, those affected by a crisis, may start to censor themselves, feeling their opinions do not count as much as those taking a whole picture view.

Gilligan's (1982) theories of moral voice are developed in response to Kohlberg's (1958) theories of moral dilemmas. Kohlberg (1958) developed his theory of moral development based on three perspectives on moral choice, the preconventional, conventional and postconventional. He was building on Piaget's research with children and moral dilemmas and applying these three perspectives to the moral decisions of adults and adolescents. These perspectives are in line with positioning from an individual to societal to universal perspective. Kohlberg (1958) argued that the postconventional stage, where ethical morality is found transcends the individual and societal level and perspective on decision-making. Using a series of dilemmas with children, Kohlberg (1958) decided that only a small percentage of individuals would make decisions at the postconventional level and that in most cases decisions were guided by individual rights and sense of justice and society and its expectations. Gilligan disagrees with this in her 1982 study, regarding decision-making when it comes to women, she argued that women constructed the moral problem in different ways to men. She argued that by only including male participants in the research study, Kohlberg (1958) had distorted the data and presented a male bias.

Gilligan's (1982) critique of Kohlberg's theories is also based on her own experiences of how his own voice was too present and too dominant in the production of his theories. Gilligan's (1982) research

showed how women constructed the moral dilemma not as a choice rooted in rights and justice but as a problem of care and duty, the language they used around the moral decision was different to Kohlberg's study, there were more references to obligations of care and avoiding hurt (1982:73). Often Gilligan (1982) reported the women talking about being selfish or responsible in making the decision and for her the underlying care for others in the moral dilemma presented a different voice to the research study than the voice she had heard when she had carried out the study with men several years earlier. It set the women apart from the men and paved the way for Gilligan's (1982) theories of women and an ethic of care in moral decision-making, but it also developed her thinking about the influence of male bias in the world of research and knowledge and the importance of feminist thought to challenge that lack of voice and to use her study of different voices to challenge the dominance of theories that had been controlled by male voice.

A good example of this can be seen in voluntary sector studies of wider civil society, (which is widely understood as the space outside the family, market and state (Cooper, 2018). Muddiman et al's (2020) study into the role of family in ensuring participation in civil society is important as it has identified the role the female carers play. Research into young people's participation showed higher participation if they had first been involved in volunteering or environmental activities with their families. Breaking down their data and looking at family relationships, the research found that women and caregivers play a powerful role in encouraging participation:

> *We found that the relationship with mother (as measured here) is the strongest predictor of young people's civic participation – the more positive this relationship, the more likely that they are engaged in activities to help others or the environment (an improvement in this relationship of one standard deviation was associated with a 39% increase in the likelihood that a child is engaged in a civic activity). (Muddiman et al, 2020: 91).*

The research conducted here suggests that women, as primary female carers, nurture a care for others and for the environment within their children and this leads to trends in male and female participation in volunteering. What this also meant was that girls were much more likely to be involved that boys at early secondary level. While this is encouraging, what is less encouraging is the research showing higher male participation within civil society during adulthood (Phillips, 2002), and higher numbers of male leaders in the voluntary sector as a whole (Teesdale, 2011). While females may overwhelmingly be taking many of the caring and helping roles within the voluntary sector,

males still maintain decision-making and leadership. These was also the case in research looking the experiences of men and women in activism, where both Dodson (2015) and Angelique and Culley, (2003) signal systemic gender issues. Women in the research suggest paradoxically that while the gendered role of motherhood was a catalyst for their social action connected to their care and responsibility for their children's world, they soon realised their gender was a barrier to their participation.

The women in activism reported everyday sexism in the ways they were treated in meetings and show downs, as well as being condescended and told to go home and '*bake cookies*', this all contributed to the ways women faced a lack of agency and power. Dodson's (2015) study also shows that women's resistance to participate in confrontational activities excludes them from opportunities of leadership and power within activism groups, attempting to suggest different ways of protesting were not listened to by the wider group. The moral decision-making and care driven approaches employed by women in wider society here resonates with examples from my St Francis school study. It supports arguments that taking a care-drive approach and in-built gendered notions of care limit women's agency and power in wider society, just as is the case at St Francis. Volunteering and its own trends of gendered bias ensure that it becomes another mechanism for the girls to experience the DofE in a gendered way, this is further explained by gender bias within the school structures and gendered constructs within the girl's own identity making.

Caring and Bourdieu's theories

The importance of care within identity-making is something that has been picked up on by Skeggs, (2002) who describes that to understand the multiple subjectivities of class and gender, Bourdieu's metaphors of capital can be helpful (2002:8). These include economic which is more straightforward as they include income and wealth. Cultural, which Skeggs (2002) states, is complicated when it comes to gender as seen in examples above as discourses of masculinity and femininity govern the cultural capital of different social groups. Next is social capital, which is capital generated through relationships and symbolic capital, which includes all the forms of capital above once they are legitimised by the social group. Skeggs (2002) defers to Moi's (1991) work here on the inherent meanings all social positions have, being a woman denotes some forms of capital, being a black woman denotes others, being working-class denotes access to and acquisition of capital (2002:9). While gender is not a category of capital in, within our gender are the relations and into which capitals can be realised. Skeggs (2002) uses Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital alongside her own

concepts to map the social position of women in her study. Her concepts include subjectivity, respectability and disidentifications and are studied alongside the capital held by social groups to understand the social positions individuals find themselves in according to class and gender.

Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital have been discussed widely and applied in a great many ways, particularly his concepts of cultural and social capital. In 2020, the government in England used the concept of cultural capital in OFSTED guidance offered to schools as a way of understanding how to widen opportunities for their pupils, although this came under attack from scholars such as Reay, who in 2004a had written about uses and misuses of the concept. For Reay, it was often research studies of '*highbrow aesthetic culture such as classical music and fine art*' (2004a: 74) that were used to conceptualise cultural capital within empirical educational research, and she argues that in fact Bourdieu's (1977) concept is much more encompassing, defined as '*subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language'* (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). In fact, cultural capital is a much more useful framework when it is seen the way Bourdieu (1977) intended as he discusses the ways it is created in individuals. Cultural capital is imparted by parents, family, caregivers, in the state and its structures that validate it, and in good such as the arts. Indeed, in this way, many have drawn parallels between Bernstein and Bourdieu, and the complimentary frameworks of code and capital (Katartzi and Hayward, 2018), although Bernstein himself was often quick to point out the ways the theories differed (Harker and May 1993). Cultural capital remains a useful tool for understanding class and gender identities as it presents a framework to locate particular acquisitions of capital to social groups.

Social capital has also proven to be an important concept for many discussions within sociology, education, and voluntary sector studies as it refers to the '*relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'* (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119). Famously, in 2000, Putnam's book, Bowling Alone decried the loss of people's social capital as the decline of America's sense of community. Yet, again critiques quickly emerged that showed differences between Putnam's more functionalist interpretation of social capital as moral obligations, values (trust) and social networks (voluntary organisations), and Bourdieu's (1986) use of social capital in his theorising on class, (Siisiäinen, 2000). An important difference in Bourdieu's (1992) concept of social class and some of the more functionalist interpretations of it, is that Bourdieu's (1992) concept of social capital sits within a discussion of capital as a power function, linking to his theories of field, Bourdieu (1992) argues that individuals use their social relations to increase their power and position. For Bourdieu (1992) social capital is a resource in the social struggles that are part of class and social systems. In this way, mapped out alongside Skeggs (2002) concepts of respectability, subjectivity and

disidentification, in line with her vision of working-class cultures bonded through struggle, Bourdieu's model of social capital is a useful framing tool.

Critiques of Bourdieu's (1986, 1992) theories of capital however emphasise how his theories, despite, often being celebrated for extending understandings of social position beyond an individual's economic wealth, the theories remain rooted in economic imperialism, (Tittenbrun, 2016). Tittenbrun (2016) argues that despite Bourdieu's (1986) assertion that all forms of capital, not only the economic, are essential to understand the structure and relations of the social world, in fact Bourdieu's other forms of capital are governed and controlled by economic position. For example, cultural capital which Bourdieu (1986) attaches to educational achievements, is controlled by an economic system, where those with money can access better education and institutions. In the same way Tittenbrun (2016) argues that social capital too is characterised by the economic freedoms given to those with more wealth and the networks they access. When it comes to this study, I am not looking at the way economic, cultural and social capital plays a role in their lives. Data from this study will suggest they are at a disadvantage due to their socio-economic backgrounds, perceptions about the school they go to, and negative stereotyping about them in wider society. Relations and networks are important in this study, but it does not explore any wider social capital they or other students including the boys may have outside school. Rather, in this study I am focusing on a part of the girl's identity that Skeggs (2002) refers to in her study of working -class women and girls, although she does not call it a form of capital. For me this study is about the power of caring and its invisibility and relegation in studies of social position, capital and identity.

I would argue that, while Bourdieu's (1986) theories, are helpful to recognise the different ways that an individual or a certain social group's agency and power can be diminished or amplified, there are gendered dimensions not identified. One example of this is the propensity to care. In this study, using the concept of capital as Bourdieu (1986) theorised it, which is as a representation of an individual's social relations, I suggest using Bourdieu's theories of capital to consider the role of caring in each of the girl's lives. Indeed, it is caring that defines and drives all their relations with each other, with their peers and teachers and, with me, the researcher. I suggest it could be useful to look at the position of individuals in social systems and structures through the lens of social, cultural, and economic capital, we could use the lens of care capital. It is worth looking at how, if we were to measure capital through the amount of caring a person is involved in and has responsibility for, how different the positions of certain groups could be. As Tronto (2016) has described rather than recognising caring for its contribution and value, modern society faces a care deficit. Associations with caring often lead to a diminished position in society and less power and agency. This study will explore the girl's experiences through this lens.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the complexities of engaging in a study exploring volunteering and service volunteering of the girls at St Francis by looking at the way volunteering is framed, and the way youth volunteering has moved to more mandatory approaches. The chapter suggests taking a feminist approach to defining volunteering, which can reveal the hidden and informal contributions made by women and girls to the everyday caring within society. The key contributions include Taylor (2004) who draws attention to the unstable definition of volunteering and highlights how some definitions miss or hide realities about volunteering that are important as they show classed and gendered experiences. These invisible contributions link to feminist theories of caring and the gendered way caring responsibilities fall to women and girls. Feminism and caring theory are explored within the second half of the chapter as this provides a framework for understanding the ways girls experience service and duty at St Francis and the way their experiences are characterised by caring and their identities and position that is impacted.

Chapter 4: Ethnographic Investigations

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods and methodology of this doctoral study. The chapter gives an important overview of how I built my approach to this ethnography building on youth and school ethnographies from the past. I outline the key features of the study including the school, my gatekeepers, and the research participants, while providing a discussion of the limitations and constrictions to my research. My fieldwork was conducted fitting in with the daily life and chaotic events of St Francis and was subject to disruption and timetable clashes that obliged me to make changes to the way I worked with the girls. As I followed their choices for volunteering, my approach was based on adapting my methods to fit with the girls. These adaptations and adjustments will be introduced and reflected on within the chapter. I have presented my fieldwork in three stages. The first stage was an introduction to the whole school as the girls were recruited. The next stage was within a micro field, the prefect room in the school where the tensions between student to student, student to teacher, and student to society were seen. The final stage was outside the school gates, where I saw the girls as volunteers and girls within wider society and its lens. These stages will be discussed as they form the structure of my data chapters.

This chapter explores my positionality as a researcher, the research paradigms that inform my ethnographic study, and the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research. It explores the reasoning for an ethnographic approach and techniques that guided my relations with the girls including '*critical ventriloquy*' (Blackman, 2007), '*the hidden ethnography*' (Blackman, 2016) and navigation of hyphen spaces (Cunliffe and Karunanayake, 2013). A grounded theory approach in the research helped me transcend disciplines and build theory around my emerging data. The chapter introduces the critical position I take in the research, and the feminist perspective to conducting research with the purpose of challenging inequality and seeking social justice. As the work of other thinkers in the disciplines are explored, this chapter provides the reader with an understanding of my research stance and the key theories that underpin the research.

'Fighting Familiarity'

Arriving in academia in 2014 and starting my journey into research about young people, education, and extra-curricular activities, I immediately connected with the ethnographic studies that I found.

In a context dominated by social mobility, neoliberalism, and aspirational disadvantage, I found the detailed stories and descriptions of everyday lives found in ethnographies such as Paul Willis (1977), Christine Griffith (1985), Diane Reay (2018) and Jay Macleod (2009) fascinating. Attending a conference on Bourdieu in Education, I heard how contemporary educational researchers were using ethnography to show current education policymaking was failing, not only in explicit ways, but in the way it was reproducing social and cultural norms. The way this linked to extracts from the classroom, or the playground, was fascinating to me and led to a period of reflection about my own time spent in schools with young people. I had soon read Christy Kulz (2017) and Nicola Ingram's (2016) ethnographies about modern secondary academies, and working-class boys respectively, and before I had even decided on my area of investigation, I knew that ethnography would be my method.

Preparing for an ethnographic study, Delamont, Atkinson and Pugsley (2010) talk about the importance of *'fighting familiarity' (2021:5)* which they attribute to studies of ethnographies by Geer (1964) who exposed the problems that exist when ethnographers choose to research in a field, practices and context that is already familiar to them. Fighting familiarity is about attempting to defamiliarize yourself with your research field in order to try to take the position of a stranger and question everything about the scene, the interludes, and the relationships. Like so many researchers I chose a field from my own society, and culture. Yet young people and their subculture, defined by Blackman (2005:6) '*as a form of symbolic politics to particular class and cultural experiences',* ensured I was presented with an element of the strange. While my own working-class background and gender identity aligned me with the girls, differences in where I grew up, and the difference in the decades since I was a schoolgirl made many of their subculture with their cultural points of reference and their identity unfamiliar to me. Nevertheless, I was still pleased to note that one of the key strategies for fighting familiarity in Atkinson, Delamont and Pugsley's (2010) study, is to engage with past studies as a point of comparison, to understand what may have changed and as a start in the examination of why.

This ethnography is about paying homage to other ethnographies of young people, class, gender, race, and inequality; each ethnography records a particular subculture defined by the identities of the young people studied, which keeps them, as Delamont, Atkinson and Pugsley (2010) would describe, as 'strange' instead of 'familiar'. However, at the same time, overlapping themes helps us, as researchers, to understand where inequality has been eradicated, where there has been very little movement over the years, and where inequality has not disappeared but just reappeared in different places. It helps us understand the way that the current political order and educational policymaking shifts and changes, but still reproduces social and cultural inequalities.

I did not enter my study with any questions of gender. As you will see from the earliest gathering of my fieldnotes I was far more interested in the relationship between volunteering and class, and inequalities within school structures. Gender was a theme that quickly emerged and required a shift in my standpoint. While I was familiar with the work of feminists such as Beverley Skeggs (2002) and Diane Reay (2018) as their work discussed the intersection of class and gender, I now entered the world of feminist research. From that time, I began reading and applying frameworks that allowed me to observe and record in my fieldnotes how structures, relations and practices reduced power and agency for girls, and how structures enabled patriarchal power. Suddenly, relations between staff and students that had seemed wholly positive and supportive, became reframed with implicit suggestions that, in fact, they acted as mechanisms for control.

Similarly, the approach of Taylor (2005) and her argument to reconceptualise volunteering as unpaid labour and Gilligan's (2010) notions around caring and its place in a patriarchal society switched my positioning and triggered me to question the observations I had made. I immediately realised that my field diary exposed the existence of unseen contributions the girls were expected to make, and did make, on a regular basis, without any recognition. This turned the direction of my research and brought in new emerging themes of identity and coercion. This, again, I believe is an example of what Delamont and Atkinson advise in their recent book (2021) as a strategy to fight familiarity. By taking a feminist standpoint, I was suddenly given a perspective that allowed me to see how gender, reinforced through school structures and volunteer duties, was discriminating against the girls, and allowing persistent inequality.

Gaining access to the field

My ethnography took me both inside and outside the school gates with my participants, observing them within and outside institutional boundaries. The principal research field was a co-educational, non-selective school and in total I spent fifty-two days in the field, although these were school days and often started about 11am and finished at 3:30pm. The setting was identified and selected both due to its location and demographic, with the intention that I would conduct research in a school that was non-grammar and working with students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. At the time I conducted my research, the school had approximately four hundred and fifty students, having closed the sixth form a couple of years prior. In fact, I did not always intend to carry out research at St Francis; I had several other target schools but gaining access to schools with DofE up and running in the area proved challenging. Drawing on previous partnership work I had done between schools

and the university, I was able to gain access to many schools, however as time went on and they were no closer to starting DofE, it was a chance meeting with the new the DofE Operations Officer for the South-East of England that helped me gain access to the field. A mutual contact from the voluntary sector introduced me to the DofE Officer and he invited me to shadow his meetings with schools towards the end of 2018. The early notes I took at these meetings have also been extremely useful as they helped give me an understanding of the power struggles and structures between the DofE and the school, and within the hierarchies of St Francis itself. The DofE Operations Officer for the South-East of England was in fact an extremely important contact who helped me secure access to St Francis, where he had influence as he was a recently appointed school governor. He was also able to inform me which schools were just beginning the programme coinciding with my research and invited me along to the first assembly at St Francis, where he introduced me to the headteacher, and asked permission for the school to host my research. It was through the DofE Officer that I met my gatekeeper, Mr D, who had responsibility for the programme.

Conscious to ensure I was not seen as a teacher or associated with DofE by the students, I made deliberate attempts to set up a different relationship with the students. The school is a traditional, faith school and formal in the way students and teachers dress and address each other. In contrast, I dressed in a non-formal way, and made sure the students understood they could call me by my first name. In the same way I had to work hard to gain the trust and openness of the school staff, who considered me an outsider at the beginning. Despite trying to communicate my neutrality from the DofE programme, throughout the fieldwork, the school staff and students remain convinced of my connection to the DofE programme, and at times this kept them on their guard. The Operations Officer for DofE was described by staff at the school as a flamboyant character. He had never worked in education before, in fact he had thirty years of experience in the fashion industry, which led some of the teachers to question his experience. He believed DofE needed a shake-up in schools. His optimism and refusal to take a 'no' irritated some members of the St Francis team, who treated him as an outsider even though he had also become a school governor. Their mistrust initially ensured that I was also ignored as someone associated with him. However, by the end of the research, the association had become a helpful one in enabling me access to build the trust and respect of staff and students.

During the next stage of my research, I spent one day a week for six months in school and within the prefect room. This ensured I gained access to a kind of micro field, as it led to more concentrated time with my participants within a room that held symbolic value. Only prefects, Mr D, visitors such as I and the DofE lead, and teaching assistants were permitted to enter. Other students were prohibited from entering and did not, even when friends of prefects came by to talk to them about

something, they remained at the door. The room, which was just an empty classroom, became a symbol of the power and identity of the prefects and a field of conflicting perspectives and school tensions. This field is where the greater amount of my observations was conducted, and where there was also a large number of interruptions, as there always seemed to be some other event or requirement for the prefects to do once they were in that room.

The final field became the visit to the care home for the Elderly where the girls and I engaged in volunteering every week for four months. Once at the care home I was able to observe how the girls presented themselves and interacted with the residents at the home. However, the twenty-five-minute walk to and from the Home also led to rich data collection. This, I believe, is because the situation was unique. By this point in our research relationship, the girls trusted and enjoyed talking to me, and they particularly liked talking as we walked to the Home each week. Even during some of our most significant sessions within the school, we were usually accompanied by other prefects or the Teaching Assistant who helped facilitate prefect activities. The walk to the Home provided us with an unrestricted and private field, where the girls became more open and honest about their feelings and experiences.

The only way I was able to secure access to the same students, who were participating in DofE, on a regular basis, was to adapt and adjust according to my research field. Therefore, my ethnography spans different fields and includes studies of prefects and side by side volunteering. In effect, I had to follow the girls, and this included participating in Youth Alpha, the Christian course, attending prefect meetings, and finally volunteering alongside them. While these experiences led to fruitful data, I did often have to reflect on the way my own role shaped the direction of the ethnography. I played a significant role in ensuring it was possible for the girls to engage in DofE volunteering, as with no school staff available to chaperone, it had not been clear whether the girls could do it.

In the same way recruiting my six research participants was not a straightforward process, but indeed evolved from my presence in the school and the personalities of the girls. From January to April, I attended the group's enrichment slot, where it was intended that DofE would take place. The group were all students aiming to become prefects, there were just two boys, and the rest of the group was made up of girls. Although it was anticipated that DofE would feature in this slot, students were also participating in a youth alpha course, a course for young Christians, as part of their prefect journey, so this is where I began my field observations, as an observer within this class activity. For a few weeks I watched as the group discussed issues of faith, forgiveness, and patience, and often the Deacon, who ran the sessions, would ask me to chat with the students. From the beginning, a small group of girls, Bea, Freya, Annie, Verity, Fi and Etta, seemed inclined to move towards the tables I

was at and were interested to share their feelings at length. This continued for almost eight weeks, and it became clear they were interested in becoming my research participants as the rest of the group seemed to be in another social group and were not as interested in talking to me.

From May onwards, I continued to meet with just this smaller group of girls on a weekly basis to explore their experiences of volunteering, after the whole group were offered the opportunity to meet at lunchtime. Only the six friends attended consistently, and we started to explore issues of volunteering and thought about where they would like to do the volunteering part of their DoE award. From June, the girls participated in four months of volunteering together, (June and July. September and October) and I attended as a researcher and chaperone. Finally, we met back in the classroom from October to December 2019. I had a close relationship with these girls, during session they would share lots of feelings about the school and the teachers, their families and friends, and the troubles they were going through. The girls had a shared love of Korean pop music, and this is something I could relate to, having spent many years teaching in Japan. By allowing them access to some of my life experiences, I engaged their interest and got them thinking beyond their usual environment. It led to a good relationship that was cemented by volunteering alongside each other. My relationship with the girls and the ongoing collection of data meant that exiting the field was problematic and this is referred to in Chapter 9 'Leaving the Field'.

Introducing the research participants

My research began by working with the prefect group at St Francis, a large group made up of about eighteen girls and six boys. These numbers fluctuated as prefects took on different roles within the school, and after a month, my core research group became the six girls, who are all introduced below. I have also introduced my gatekeeper and the teacher, Mr D, as part of this section. This is because Mr D's role in and impact on the relations, power structures and identities of the girls is significant, and it is important his values and position are understood. All the girls identify as female and are white. Verity, Bea, and Kate align themselves with a Catholic Faith, while Etta, Annie and Freya say they have no religion. The girls were mainly aged thirteen and fourteen when I started the ethnography, Etta and Annie were fifteen by time the ethnography finished.

Bea, who describes herself as clever not kind; usually takes the role of speaker for the group but can be very shy and self-conscious. She is from a large family and Kate is her identical twin, they are close, but they try to do different things because they both think that is important. Bea often talks about being bullied in her first year at High School, saying this experience has guided her decisions to

speak out and try and be more confident now she is older. Bea is funny and often laughs at herself, making the others laugh too.

Kate, Bea's twin sister joined the DofE group late as she was committed to performing in the school play. She says she is shyer than Bea and says that she makes herself perform and take speaking parts in plays because she knows she needs to challenge herself and get more confident. She is very supportive of her sister and often talks about how Bea was bullied, she says it what has made Bea so determined to help other people. Bea and Kate's parents both work in local industry following in the tradition of many of the girl's family members.

Etta is outspoken, which she often talks about it and says it gets her in trouble. At the same time, she is also vulnerable and has had negative experiences of comments on social media, which stay with her. She often misses school, which she says is because of a stomach-ache but is also connected to her anxiety. She is the best at starting conversations with the residents at the care home, as she can talk in a way far beyond her years. Coming from a large family with younger siblings, she has lots of responsibilities for childcare.

Annie either stays quiet because she is busy doing something else or becomes talkative when engaged in the topic. She seems more aware of what happens behind the scenes than the others and is often the one who points out how something has happened. She gets frustrated about things when they are not done fairly. She is the member of my group who tried to quit DofE the most often and complained a lot about being convinced to stay involved.

Verity seems younger and more distracted than the others; she rarely gets upset about some of the things the others do as she has not always registered what is happening. She is a huge fan of Korean Pop music and often busy listening to that. She is proud of herself for organising a K-Pop club and surprised because it was really popular with the younger students. She is also from a large family and spends time taking care of her nieces and nephews. Her mum is from South America and while Verity was born in England, her older siblings all spent time living there before moving to the England. Most of Verity's family work in local industry.

Freya is best friends with Verity and another keen founder and member of K-Pop group. She does not always have the confidence to speak out in the group, and when she does, she often begins with a disclaimer about how she is probably wrong. She sees the best in everyone and often tries to smooth the way if people are getting upset or angry. She says she is only a prefect because the teachers told her to, she never would have made that decision on her own.

Mr D is the Head of RE, as well as having responsibility for multiple leadership roles. He leads the school's social media page and often uses it to celebrate the success of the school. After a recent grading from the Catholic Federation, Mr D commented how he had never thought he would see such a happy day for St Francis. He is wedded to the school and its progress; he has been there for over twenty years since he started his teaching career. In the local area, he is well-known as a teacher and leader within the school. He has a friendly and informal relationship with everyone in the school based on banter and making fun of himself and others. He can, however, be intimidated by senior leadership. He is always rushing around and complaining he has too much to do.

Ethical considerations

This research was designed to get beyond the labels (Smit, 2012) that are so often attached to students and their educational progress and through ethnography present the realities of young people's experiences of school-based volunteering. Therefore, the methods were selected to ensure a depth of information could be collected, while ensuring this was done in an ethical and sensitive way, maintaining researcher integrity. The research plan was submitted to the University Ethics Board in October 2018 and was granted following minor revisions in December 2018, please see appendices A – E. Working within the Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC, 2010), the research follows the six principles of: high quality research, fully informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, avoidance of harm, and independence of research. In the early days of working with the larger group, all students were provided with a short summary of what the research was about, a letter from my supervisor and a description of how the data would be used. Students opted in and I always made it clear that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Once the smaller group had been formed, due to the age and according to my ethics form, I sought permission from their parents or guardians and requested permission to collect data through filming, audio, and written data, which was provided by all six parents and guardians. Once it was decided that I would continue my research alongside the girls at the care home, I considered with my supervisors if ethical permission needed to be sought from the care home residents. However, the nature of the data was observation only and I never recorded conversations that took place within the home, in fact this was often impossible as the girls were all involved in different conversations. The data I recorded at this stage of my ethnography was taken from the girl's reflections on the experience as we walked to and from the home and the conversations they reported on.

The location, the students, teachers, DofE staff and volunteers have all been anonymised using pseudonyms. This is deliberate due to the specific features of school culture that relate to this research, and the decision that this should remain unidentifiable in a time when schools continue to face high scrutiny and often press attention. Time was spent getting to know the students, school, and programmes they were participating in. This was done purposely with understanding of the context that student's experience with numerous organisations visiting their school and being involved in numerous interventions and evaluation gathering.

This research poses risks to individuals, due to emotional harm as we explore their feelings about the future; this was an important consideration when selecting the participants for the study. This issue was something I turned to teachers for advice on, as it emerged that the six participating girls were keen to be involved. Mr D and the house leads assured me that these students were resilient and confident, and all had good open relationships with teaching staff, who they would turn to if something was causing them distress. Due to the nature of ethnography, I was able to spend time building a good relationship with the girls and able to talk them through the ethics forms and the meaning behind the research and continually reiterate the option to opt out at any time. When visiting the residential home together, I was able to advise the girls to let me know if anything inappropriate or distressing came up and speak with them after the volunteering to debrief. Collaborative sessions were open and honest. During this stage I referred to the work of Alderson and Morrow for guidance on maintaining ethics in research with young people (2011).

This research also poses risks to both school and the DofE organisation, as I, as the researcher, was privy to confidential, inside information about both the school and charity operations. There is a risk to status and reputation as the research aims to provide a truthful and accurate picture of the young people's experiences, both positive and negative. The school gave me open access to their school after seeing my DBS check, allowing me to enter the school without a chaperone. I was also asked to be the responsible adult accompanying the students out of school. DofE gave me my own log in for their online system, which recorded the activities and comments of the students and as an administrator in this system, I was able to view the entries students were making. There was a fear when speaking with teachers and DofE staff that they would only be presenting a more optimistic version of some of the challenges both the school and organisation were facing.

To address this tension, I spent time building a relationship with both teachers and the DofE operations officer, making it clear they understood my research was about the challenges as well as the benefits. Trying to look at it objectively, I shared some of my own experiences of working in schools and in charity projects, where circumstances other than personal failure had made progress

impossible. In this way, both teaching staff and DofE staff began to speak more honestly about capacity and engagement issues that made it difficult to reach the expected success of the projects. I also ensured I shared what I was looking at with the students on a regular basis to avoid any feeling of subterfuge or suspicion. The reaction from both school and charity was overwhelmingly positive and I was granted access to information at each request, I believe I engaged their trust, and this gave me an important responsibility alongside the data I was collecting with their support.

Despite having common ground with my school and charity experience, this was my first experience of the school and my first experience of the DofE programme, and I made this clear to all teaching and charity staff. This meant that I was able to ensure a degree of equity within my relationships with those participating in the research, as I had genuine knowledge gaps about the school and the organisation. I have ensured that I kept information confidential about opinion I gathered, sharing only reflections on their comments with my supervisors. I am confident that as I had the time to observe and reflect on my observations, I did not attempt to guide the girls in any way when discussing themes from my research and data gathering with them. All data I collected has been protected on a secure drive and all interviews and quotations remain anonymised. Furthermore, quotations were only used once themes had been identified and explored to avoid anecdotalism (Silverman, 2000). Finally, I had to minimise risk to myself as the sole researcher. This was easily maintained as research sessions happened in school, or out at our volunteering destination.

The Field Diary

Field notes are the critical underpinning of the ethnographic study, yet as Emerson et al (2011) points out the field diary often remains the invisible work in ethnography. It is important to pay close attention to the way field notes are gathered as not everything from the ethnographic encounter can be recorded, so researchers are constantly choosing what to write or not write down (Eriksson et al, 2012). These choices were something I was aware of throughout my data gathering. During the research period, I undertook in-depth ethnographic research, observing students in their school setting, undertaking volunteering work alongside them recording their activities and responses by taking detailed observation notes. However, due to the constraints of the field, I did not always have the capacity to take down everything in my field diary as it happened. Different constraints included often having to move location as I followed the girls as they did duties, or being asked to participate in their duties as well as often being involved in conversation with them during many field visits. In this case I adopted a technique that follows the advice of Emerson et al (2011)

and I wrote up my notes almost as soon as I had an opportunity, alongside documents that recorded my reflections and questions to myself. Very often the car and car park made a good location for writing up key observations, as soon as I left the school gates to ensure that I recorded as accurately as I could the events, relations and opinions I had witnessed on that day. These notes turned into my thesis field journal. These notes were always edited on the day I collected them and then saved securely on the cloud. I took my notes on my laptop computer and always ensured the group around me knew I was taking notes based on their responses.

My ethnography was very much in line with what Emerson et al (2001) indicate is the use of participant observation to seek to understand how people interpret the world and their experiences, recorded in researcher notes. I reviewed and reflected on my field notes often, and one way I reflected on them was by sharing extracts from the field diary with my participants based on a technique I had seen in the ethnography of Blackman (1998). Participants were invited to read the notes back if they would like to. Once, I was working with the smaller group and had parental consent and of course, consent from each individual participant, I recorded sessions on my Dictaphone so I could transcribe responses at a later period. Again, I ensured participants understood they could request to see these transcriptions, could opt out and understood the purpose behind the recordings.

The strengths and limitations of observation notes has been discussed by many ethnographers as they reflect on their research journeys and the way they represented the lives of their research subjects. Barron (2012), reflecting on his own ethnography looking at identity and kindergarten children has reflected how his method of research observation and field notes gave only a '*partial representation of the empirical world'*, (2012:117), he argues that researchers can still overlook crucial details, and that ethnography can be guilty of '*too easy generalisations*', (2009: 536). Hammersley (2017) has also discussed the future of ethnography in a research context driven by big data, mixed methods, and accountability. He cites issues of access in educational research and ethics to argue to show that ethnographies in education are now increasingly done '*under different meanings and in different versions*' (2018:1).

My approach to my field notes has been rooted in an awareness of these limitations and rooted in my axiology and aligned to my critical realist stance, outlined in my methodology. My approach takes Van Maanen's (2010) approach to the complexity of identities represented by ethnography and uses Bhaskar's critical realism, and the way we interpret the world. In view of my field notes it is essential that I adhere firstly to a self-consciousness and review about my word and text choices, as Kouritizin (2002) has pointed out, ethnographer's field notes are subject to a world view based on

biased perceptions and interpretations, therefore it is important I recognise the potential inaccuracy of what I am recording. Kouritizin (2002:120 calls for ethnographers to re-read and reflect on choices of language, verbs, and '*colourful*' descriptors; rather than purge this detail from field notes, it is however important to ensure that field notes include transcriptions of actual conversations recorded in their entirety without inclusion of selective choices from the researcher. Using this combination of my own notes, as well as co-constructed research, video, and audio conversations, should allow my field notes to encompass the real voices of my participants.

Hamersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest a querying of notes after they have been written including questions looking at how I have recorded something, what have I omitted, what have I included, what will they say to other readers. My practice of re-reading and reflecting the day that I have taken the notes, sharing them with my research participants, and asking them to add or reflect too, adds a deeper exploration to the field notes. What remained challenging was how I pulled out my casual arguments and situational evidence from these field notes, without it appearing that I have taken a huge leap and made assumptions from my notes, particularly given the variations shown from field notes. Katz (2014) offers the ethnographer particular strategies to support the development of arguments from field notes, ruling out researcher behaviour and bias. These suggest building a research triangle between researcher- subject – reader where the reader feels they have their own access to the subject, rather than feel they are only hearing about the subject through the researcher's interpretations (2014:15). This is the model I have tried to adopt within my field notes, including the following strategies to create this access, including sharing extracts from my field notes with the reader in as much detail as I can, and weighting my evidence within my field notes.

> *The formal recommendation was to give one weight to observations made in the sole presence of the researcher and greater weight to observations of behaviour undertaken in the presence of others also at the scene* (2014:18).

Finally, by acknowledging any misfit between my causal arguments and variation within my data, I am giving the reader an opportunity to make up their own mind about the findings and evidence of the field notes. My observations and field notes have adopted the approaches suggested above.

My analysis of field notes was done using thematic analysis. NVivo was useful in mapping extracts to themes, and the data was subject to a review of some key themes by the research participants. Thematic analysis must be systematically coded to ensure as the researcher constructs and

interprets the realities from their data. As Taylor and Ussher (2001) argue that '*themes do not just lay about waiting to be discovered, they do not simply emerge, but must be actively sought out*' (p. 310). Xu and Zammit (2020) present how vital the codebook can be to the study; my codebook defines and categorises examples and ensures that thematic analysis is detailed and valid. Using feminist conceptual frameworks of gender code, identity and moral reasoning was helpful in providing a lens to interpret and categorise themes and field diary extracts.

Key concepts included within the frameworks including duty, ritual, values, power, authority, identity, caring, guilt, were applied as codes to the data in the codebook. This is in line with Crabtree and Miller's (1999) theory-driven, deductive approach to coding, applying someone else's theoretical framework(s) to develop the codebook(s) with codes are attached to the texts. Once these codes had been identified, the conceptual frameworks of Arnot (2002), Skeggs (2002), and Gilligan (1987), were applied as themes. At this stage, some codes are discarded or changed, as Clark and Braun (2014) describe good themes must work together and form a coherent analytic story, and some codes and themes will go. This step ends with the emergence of the relationship between themes.

Both transcribing observations and interviews and reflecting on every exchange were always done on the same day the research had been gathered. It is imperative in ethnography that the researcher familiarises themselves with the data in this way (Xu and Zammit 2020). Reviewing the data was a very significant step in this study and led to validation but also to a review of key themes. Research participants reacted to the field diary extracts with surprise at times and often felt they needed to re-explain, which led to reflections for the researcher. In line with Clark and Braun (2014) this research undertook two levels of checking, ensuring the chosen themes capture the essence of the coded data, and ensuring the themes support the investigation identified in the research subject. Once confidence is obtained around the codebook and themes, the research becomes about telling the stories revealed in the data.

Positionality

My own biography is a part of this study, and it is not possible to take a neutral position (Delamont and Atkinson, 2021). It is essential, that as a researcher, I address my own position, and endeavour to identify and understand how my own world view is colouring my analytical lens as well as the interpretative influences that are guiding my position (Bourke, 2014). Researcher reflexivity, which is defined as *'turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for*

one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation '(Berger, 2015, p. 220). It is an essential tool in ethnographic data analysis and one of the final chapters of this thesis offers some critical reflection on the interpretation of the findings. Reflexivity is about understanding the dualism between '*reality and representation*' (Edwards & Usher, 1996) and about understanding the responsibility of the researcher and the way research can be a way of constructing realities.

Rose (1997) describes how examining the researcher position reflexively, before, during and post research, enables a researcher to understand the ways in which their own gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity can and may have determined the structure of interactions undertaken during the research. Reflections on power and power sharing in research is a defining factor in developing the research collaboration (Muhammad et al 2015). I must accept my position as a white, female, education, and voluntary sector professional and the way my own school and volunteering experiences have shaped my values and understanding of the context I am researching. I, too, am a girl that served, having been subject to gender bias and sexism within my own education and I must ensure I do not see the girl's experiences through my own. Atkinson and Delamont (2021) warn how this can also act to narrow the lens and to ensure I did not use my own lens, I reengaged with the boys several times in my fieldwork to challenge and review my interpretations, as well as asking the girls themselves to look at their comments and reflect on their validity and accuracy.

Educational research is defined by its communities and paradigms that support these communities; what Edwards & Usher describe as '*rules of exclusion, set boundaries, and impose closures'*, (1996:34). While it is possible to move and budge these boundaries, an important part of researcher reflexivity is acknowledging and continually reflecting on how these boundaries are impacting the data collection design, collection and analysis. A qualitative method of gathering data was chosen, with the intention to gain an authentic understanding of young people's lives and look beyond fact-based research or self-assessing questionnaires, where theory and value-laden assumptions can drive the research findings. Theory, fact, and value are inter-dependant and qualitative data is an appropriate tool for gaining insight into the real picture of what is guiding behaviours and perspectives.

> *Indeed, the notion that findings are created through the interaction of inquirer and phenomenon (which, in the social sciences, is usually people) is often a more plausible description of the inquiry process than is the notion that findings are discovered through*

> *objective observation 'as they really are, and as they really work,* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:107).

I must also scrutinise the research community I belong to and how I identify myself within this community of educational, sociological, and voluntary sector researchers. Research into youth and young people's subcultures is located in my community of researchers who believe in sharing stories that can offer perspectives on a group that are marginalised, misrepresented, and under-researched (Blackman and Rogers, 2017). It is important to note that researcher reflexivity goes beyond my own identity and is, as Wilkinson (2002) argues, also a question of the identity the research itself is taking, the story I am constructing and the knowledge I am using (Scott and Usher, 1996). This also becomes yet more complicated with ethnography and the shifting of positions and identities as deep-level relationships between the researcher and the participants are established over time (Van Maanen, 2010).

As an ethnographer working with young people, I am adopting Fine's (1994:70) conceptual framework of '*working the hyphens'* to understand the identities of young people and how they are susceptible to social change and often their identity reflects this. Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013:366) describe how a '*hyphen-space'* draws on the fluid and agentic nature of the researcher - respondent identities and the implications this has for the research. Blackman (2016:65) also uses Fine's interpretation of '*ventriloquy*' to discuss how rather than speaking for young people, ventriloquy in ethnography is the technique of selecting the data that represents the voice of young people, while still allowing yourself, as the ethnographer to be visible. Blackman believes ventriloquy offers a way of accepting the presence of emotion and subjectivity in ethnographic fieldwork while the notion of a '*reflexive turn*' (2016:67) in ethnography has allowed the researcher to write themselves into their research.

I was acutely aware that as the relationship with my research participants developed, I was representing their positions and values, in addition to my own, and how neither are static. My conclusions will reflect an understanding of their social identities and the world they navigate. However, at the same time, and despite this crossover and shift, my values cannot be separated from the enquiry, my epistemological position is subjective, and my findings are impacted by own values (Biddle and Schafft, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011). Our paradigmatic assumptions are ingrained in our own, personal everyday way of thinking, our understanding of our own place in the world and the way our relationships form part of our understanding, and this must be recognised ahead of the research.

Thinking about the reflexive turn, and some of the experiences the girls and I shared, it is important to reflect on the way the research built a close relationship between myself as researcher and the participants. In this way my research contains what Blackman (2007: 699) calls the '*hidden ethnography*', referring to the emotional connection I formed with the participants. Blackman (2007) argues it how emotion is always an important part of the research process, only in the past it was hidden rather than acknowledged as researchers feared that emotion limited the position of the researcher. Blackman (2007) argues it is important to call the emotion out in order to understand how emotion makes the research richer. We, the girls, and I, became important to one another as the year continued and we spent time volunteering together. I believe, as a researcher, I experienced what Blackman (2007:701) refers to as '*crossing borders'* through my emotional attachment to their girls and their experiences. Several times in the ethnography we shared important moments including the moment when Bea became Head Girl, and when the girls were upset, as well as their disappointment and disorientation when exams were cancelled due to the pandemic.

As I built a friendship with the girls, I deliberately chose to reveal details, which as Blackman argues in his study, have often remained hidden in research; this had a significant impact on my relationship with the girls and my data collection. Rather than a focus on negative emotions in ethnography, the growth of reflectivity in qualitative research has created a space to discuss and think about the role emotion can play in the ethnography (Blackman, 2007). This study often needed reflection. I accepted the role of emotion and attachment in the research process; I became attached to the girls and some of their struggles. Blackman's (2007) detailed and honest accounts of the role of emotion in his own different ethnographic stories resonated with me and allowed me to bring emotion and honesty into my fieldwork. The intimacy that I had with the girls led them to reveal open and honest thoughts about their experiences and relations at school, their homelife and peer relationships, with members of the school and volunteering staff and with people in their community. Yet, as the same reflective spaces within my field diary and with my supervisors allowed me to record and validate the data I had collected. Sharing access to my field diary at several points in the ethnography also developed trust and openness and acted, as Blackman describes, as another important '*reflexive turn'* (2007:711).

Emotion within ethnography works well with the feminist approach I have taken to research. I took on my role as researcher, already accepting my role as an advocate for the girls within my research study. I believe, like other feminist scholars, that I was engaged in emotionally engaged feminist research, observing with an ethic of care (Campbell, 2001) that led to a more holistic, richer, and more accurate study (Blakely, 2007). My greatest awareness when reflecting on the data I had

gathered was how I was responsible for interpreting and making meaning from the research data, as a researcher we will '*always be at risk of mislabelling, misinterpreting, mistranslating, and misunderstanding that which and whom we hear, record, and analyse/interpret*' (Devault, 1999:190). I engaged in a regular review of my use of language and perspective, using my field diary notes as a way of mediating between what was said and what was implied. Recognising the constant need to reflect on boundaries and self-care, I believed and applied the use of the hidden ethnography as it had significant value in my study.

As my research participants are young people, I have adopted methods that are consistent with approaches that aim to recognise them as current, not future citizens (van Deth, 2011) and as important deliberators in today's social and political challenges (Nishiyama, 2017). My approach is also informed based on the work of Nolas (2011) and Varvantakis and Nolas (2019), who argue for young people's citizenship and right to express themselves through research and offer research methods and approaches that allow us to really hear and understand the voices of children and young people. This research approach also comes from a critical position and a recognition that often research with young people is done to or done on rather than done with, and often collecting young people's voice can be tokenistic (Hanley et al, 2005).

Power was, however, undeniably part of the research process. Despite the close relationship I developed with the girls, I was always aware that as an adult, coming from the outside world, a power relationship existed. It is important, as the researcher, to conduct research understanding the way power and hierarchies can impact on it. Although, I am aware that the research relationship would never attain a non-hierarchical basis, I do believe that the relationship I developed with the girls, took away some of the power relations that exist between teacher and student, mentor, and mentee. The girls started to see me as someone who was not trying to teach them, that was listening to them without reply. I was someone who accompanied them when they were volunteering but was not part of coercing them to go. Several times, when I arrived at school the girls did not feel like going to the care home as they had exams or studies. Rather than list the reasons they should go as Mr D did, as a researcher, I was able to allow them to make their own decision, and sometimes we just stayed and talked at school. Due to the nature of this relationship, I felt like the girls dropped their guard, I believe they felt they had more agency in their relationship with the research. As Kulz points out in reflections on her ethnography (2013: p 70) '*there are spaces for conversations teachers can't have*', I sensed surprise and pleasure from the girls when they realised that I was happy to sit and listen to their conversations. I also think they started to share more once they realised that I did not have an agenda, as the school and DofE often had when they came to talk to them.

Research Approach and Ethnography

Research paradigms are defined within an interpretivist research context as representing the '*researcher's world view*', (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006:4). The world views or values that guide a researcher's research action or investigation and the paradigms a researcher identifies themselves as within, dictate what will be studied, how it will be studied, and how the results will be interpreted (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). First, although I locate my research within an interpretivist position as it seeks to understand human behaviour, it is also critical enquiry as it aims to challenge the structures within education and society. I believe that qualitative data will reveal subjective knowledge, and this comes from a subjectivist ontology, interpreting reality from a position that understands that people behave in subjective ways. This is an important distinction to researching the physical world. Researching people is about understanding that we cannot interpret what people do by observing their behaviours (Pring, 2000), and indeed even by the things they say, we must understand their intentions, as it is intentions that guide human behaviours. The importance of research and its potential to translate people's subjective meanings is a clear rationale for a deeper, longitudinal research study that allows the researcher time to develop relationships with an understanding of '*the subjective states of those being researched*' (Scott and Morrison, 2006: 232).

My thesis is also theory-building, exploring, not only individuals, but the way social groups and communities behave and why, examining the influences and reasons for the behaviour and action of certain groups within an educational and charity programme and attempting to understand why things happen. The research uses an in-depth ethnographic study to attempt to interpret and find meanings and motivations by looking at values of social actors, structures, and patterns. It offers a different perspective as an example of what Hamersley and Atkinson state as (1995:8):

> *The search for universal laws is rejected in favour of detailed descriptions of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the social rules or patterns that constitute it*.

My epistemological view of knowledge and how we acquire it is located within a social constructivist paradigm – believing knowledge is constructed through our social interactions, cultures, traditions, and beliefs. As Scott and Morrison describe '*each human being is born into a culture with its own symbolic systems that always underpin individual meaning-making*', (2005:233). This is how we understand our realities, through the constructions laid out by our family, communities, their

histories, cultures, values, and beliefs. As many social constructivists have argued, that practices within institutions are legitimised by discourse, power networks and social orders and therefore those who have greater power are in a better place to endorse practices that control social life. Educational institutions, third sector organisations and the discourses within them are examples of this and many researchers have used social constructivism in their arguments exploring how the discourses of education policy and the school curriculum are an example of how social order and power permeates educational life (Young, 2010).

My methodology is qualitative and is rooted in an anthropological design attempting to become immersed within the group I am researching, or as Scott and Morrison (2005) has suggested ethnography that involves the researcher behaving like the participants. In keeping with this methodology, interviews and focus groups will never be formalised to avoid compromising the researcher – participant relationship, my field note diary will become my main source of observation data and I will engage with volunteering activities alongside my participants. Finally, my axiology is founded in critical realism; I believe the value in taking a sociological understanding of education is to show how social structures are manipulated and constructed to reproduce inequalities and power dynamics. Based on my own experiences working in education and with charities that aimed to provide equal opportunities to all young people; my research is driven by a social justice goal with the aim of exposing these inequalities and making a change. In a world where we must seek alternatives systems and approaches, taking this critical position is crucial to understanding the ways we need to change institutions, discourse, and practices.

Social Constructivism is a sociological approach that argues social and cultural realities are constructed by humans, their actions, practices, and habits, which when ritualised and habitually performed become the social norm (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Berger and Luckman present a shared symbolic world where power is held in the values and meanings these of society's daily rituals and practices, which ensures individuals play their part in the social order. This thesis challenges the ways concepts are being interpreted and suggests that the meaning of concepts is adapted and shifted within discourse, both text and talk. It rests on an underlying assumption that power is unevenly distributed within the group participating in this research that those in areas of disadvantage face barriers of class and identity (Bourdieu, 1984), and, therefore, are also subject to inequalities of power.

Taking a position rooted in social constructivism, my research is not so much concerned with whether the social construct is true, but more about how informed, sophisticated, and powerful the construct is; founded in an idea that there is no single reality or truth, and as such the 'reality' must

always be interpreted to understand the way it is constructed. As a social constructivist I believe in multiple realities and interpretations, qualitative research allows you a method to collect and unpick those different interpretations. This is important when looking at both education and the way knowledge is developed and constructed, and indeed, social order and the way social groups, communities, and institutions shape and reproduce our realities.

> *Attempting to depict in writing what it is like to be somebody else—arguably, ethnography's main claim to fame—has never been a simple matter but today it appears almost Herculean, given the problematic nature of identity in the contemporary world. A certain instability, rupture, uncertainty, and fluidity of meaning attends then to some of the best of contemporary ethnography (Van Maanen, 2010).*

I deliberately chose ethnography, like so many others, to explore the realities of young people's educational and volunteering experiences, however, while recognising, as the work of Van Maanen (2010) does, that any group of people bring diverse and fluid positions and experiences.

Ethnography, with its roots in anthropological research and its undertaking to experience the life of the research participant is, as Guillion (2016) describes '*a lived experience that is dynamic, and one of the best ways to capture that movement is through engaged ethnographic practice. The ethnographer witnesses, uncovers, and documents the motion and fluidity of life*' (2016:7). It moves beyond more snap-shot research methods that gain only a momentary perspective, and instead, allows the researcher to understand how the responses and behaviours of individuals and groups can change through longer, sustained research that allows the researcher to see beyond people's initial responses and understand the way individual and groups change and make their choices. Ethnographic writing is more than interpreting, '*it is a form of collating, reporting, and interpreting at the same time; it is both systematic and artful*' (Madden, 2017:153). Barley (1990) has outlined how longitudinal studies and ethnographies require discipline, as it is important to record every tension, relationship and event that happens to the group within the period, ethnography is not a research method that can remain tight and controlled, its value is in the '*uncontrolled*' and ensuring this is recorded and collated adequately (Barley, 1990:220). The researcher must be able to respond to the changes and variations that are experienced when you spend time observing and exploring the lives of individuals and the interaction of social groups.

The reasons I chose ethnography is due to the position I uphold on the role of ideologies and power in education and third sector structures that seek to reproduce inequalities, and because I do not believe the discourses that these institutions present about the experience of young people reflect the reality, therefore, my ethnographic approach is a deliberate attempt to delve beyond the institutional discourses. This study is an attempt to understand the real experiences of young people, through longer, closer ethnographic methodology because I also believe, as a social constructivist, that the social order is ever changing and that in reality, education and community have an agency and power that is not represented and realised. This ethnography is a response to the way that within both the education and third sector, the experiences of young people are represented through research, evaluations and assessments including self-assessing baseline surveys, focus groups and teacher reports, and the limits of trying to capture more realistic data about young people through more quantitative, accountability focused measurements and evaluations.

This culture of performance measurements in youth programmes and education has led to a poor representation of the complexity and diversity of experience, as Lee and Greene (1999:164) has identified using a constructivist viewpoint, the experiences of programmes are '*highly entangled and contextual*', '*programme quality is in performance measurement is based on judgement, and what individuals judge as programme quality can varies between and within stakeholder groups*' (Lee and Greene, 1999: 164). Taking this approach to understanding the experiences of young people of volunteering programmes too often relies on reporting for accountability, either to the school and educational institutions or the funding and quality mechanisms of the charity or third sector organisation and often relies on these quick, snapshot style assessments.

This approach to gathering data from young people also draws on arguments in sociology focused on the notion of voice and the problematic nature of attempting to represent the voice of the other, the marginalised or the subordinated, within school's social structures and pupil experience (Arnot and Reay, 2007). Bernstein's (2000) principles of the open and closed schools are also useful here for identifying the ways school structures can limit opportunities for student voice. As Arnot and Reay (2007) show through their examples, more silenced voices in the classroom are often aware of the dominant voices and allow those power relations to play out, researchers first, also, must understand these rules of communication within the classroom before they can find access to less dominant voices. Arnot and Reay (2007) using Bernstein's (1977) theories, describe how thinking about the structures around student voice within a school setting can allow the researcher to understand how:

> *Rather than promoting higher levels of reflexive subjectivity, participation and self-direction, students can therefore become incorporated in the project of social control. In this context, it is very important to consider, as Bernstein (2000) argued, whose voice is heard and whose voice is listened to in what he called the ‘‘acoustic of the school’’ (Arnot and Reay, 2007:321).*

As someone who has worked in the third sector and education on volunteering programmes with young people, I am all too aware of how the mechanisms for collecting what is claimed to be student voice can often lead to dominance of the same voices, (Hadfield and Haw, 2001). Very often focus groups may be selected by school and charity leader leaving them open to the selection of dominant voices and the silencing of others, collecting data from those who participated means ignoring the data from those who chose not to get involved and acknowledging why. More quantitative tools such as self-assessing questionnaires supplied by third sector organisations already have questions selected by the organisation and are delivered in a whole class context. It is important, when analysing these surveys, that we allow for variables and think carefully about bias that can impact the results given (Silvermann, 2015).

Among young people, who complete these surveys fairly frequently, it can be that they tend to be overly positive or overly negative depending on the relationship with external organisation, they can be influenced by the answers of their peers or choose to leave large parts of the form unanswered, all factors, which effect the validity of the method used. They can often feel what is termed research fatigue (Clark, 2008) and this affects the way they answer the questionnaire. When third sector organisations work with the students selected by schools, they are reproducing the power relations of that school, rather than challenging and finding ways to work in different ways. Researchers must move beyond the reproduction of the same voices and this study employs ethnography to develop a relationship with the young people that allows more time for the connection and true data to emerge rather that use short-term research methods that may make it more difficult to get rich data.

Ethnography is a way of exposing the labels that are given and that stick within the educational and social fields. Even within research as well as in the operations of schools and charities we refer to young people using a variety of labels that are used with funding bodies, accountability mechanisms and within both sectors to justify the impact of the programme, these can include labels such as disadvantaged, under-achieving and hard to reach. This study deliberately takes an ethnographic

approach in order that we can challenge and disrupt this notion of labelling and look beyond what has been described as the damaging and potentially self-prophesising nature of such labels, that occurs when young people are aware of how they have been categorised (Deakin et al, 2020). Research around labelling indicates how categorising people can indicate very little about the behaviours and actions of those labelled but has an enormous impact on funding and accountability processes within the education and third sector. Returning to a more critical enquiry approach indicates looking beyond these labels and first asking why it is necessary, within the constructs of power and ideology, to create these categorises of the outsider (Crotty, 2007). The stigma associated with being labelled disadvantaged is to be viewed in deficit and less human ways (Shelton, Alegre, and Son, 2010), it presents a view of difference as deficit and dictates that young people labelled in this way will be seen and communicated with in a particular lens by teachers and practitioners (Hargreaves et al, 1975). Labelling also strips away the diversity and variety of individuals within a social group that is discussed by Van Maanen (2010) in the opening to this discussion; my intention within this longitudinal research methodology is by immersing myself among my participants within their educational setting and by participating in the programme alongside them, that I will be able to understand the different ways each individual participant experiences the programme. Ethnography is my attempt to relate the experiences of the programme that looks beyond the experiences of a disadvantaged group and resists some of the conclusions that can be drawn about certain groups, when they are presented through a certain lens and or by using more quantitative and snap-shot data.

My methodology uses Blackman's (2010) presentation of ethnographic methods as a 'mosaic' built on the tradition of the Chicago School researchers who '*pioneered methods such as informal interviewing and observation' (2010: 196).* Blackman (2010: 196) argues that these methods '*mark the beginning of participant observation'*, (2010: 196) moving beyond method and towards an unlocking of participant agency. Ethnographic fieldwork in contemporary sociological studies is heavily influenced by empirical work conducted by the University of Chicago, and their development of work in urban cultural studies using detailed local social settings. What characterised the Chicago School was their focus, the social world was studied through everyday interactions and the researcher positioning themselves as the other (Deegan, 2001:20). In a break from tradition the research approach was based 'an openness to people, data, places, and theory', and as such there could not be any strict criteria structuring the research process. The idea behind the Chicago School ethnographies is that these 'real and authentic accounts' should and could be used to understand and drive social change (Blackman, 2010).

Grounded Theory in sociology also derives from the Chicago school based on an idea that researcher will build theory from their data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory includes methodological principles including open coded and diary writing to show theoretical claims could be supported by data. Grounded theory underpins social constructivism in the way it will 'understand knowledge as beliefs in which people can have reasonable confidence; a common sense understanding and consensual notion as to what constitutes knowledge' (Andrew 2012:39). This study applies the guidance of Charmaz, (1996) who believes researchers can collect rigorous data using the strategies that underpin grounded theory, just as Charmaz describes this study began by studying the individuals within my school context, observing, and sharing their experiences before applying categories to my field diary to explain and identify the themes and patterns within it. This is the way my data was collected and analysed, my theoretical analysis was built after discovering what was relevant in the everyday worlds of the girls and their off-timetable duties at St Francis. Just as other ethnographers in the Chicago tradition have employed strategies of grounded theory, I too, could apply this to my study.

Many of the strategies included by Charmaz were used in my fieldwork, these include working on the simultaneous stages of data collection and analysis, the creation of codes within my field diary, applying theories to behaviours observed, and regular referrals to notes within my field diary as the intermediary between analysing and writing (Charmaz, 1995). Grounded theory methods are relevant for my study of individuals, social groups, and larger social processes within education and volunteering. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe grounded theory can cross disciplines, and the methods are useful for studies in education. Grounded theory worked for my analysis as it allows the researcher to focus on emerging data (Charmaz, 1995), studying the lives and perspectives of young people, a grounded theory approach ensured I was more aware of the implicit meanings of my participants and able to analysis what had emerged from the findings in my field diary. Grounded theory also supports the emergence of new concepts; in this study theories emerged including the suggestion of rethinking Bourdieu's theories of capital that developed from the findings of the field diary.

A Feminist Critical Inquiry Approach

Crotty (1998) has illustrated that critical enquiry does not stand alone but crosses over with other research paradigms; it goes beyond interpretative approaches, which have as their primary objectives to understand, rather than challenge. While interpretative studies are a study of human

behaviour only, there can be indeed cross over with studies into how human behaviour can be impacted by power dynamics and social constructions. This study takes a feminist approach, which scholars such as deMarrais and Lapan (2004:206) have identified as one of the most fertile grounds for new critical enquiry research approaches orientated towards the interests of marginalised social groups and finding new ways to meaning making in the context of human experience with an advocacy purpose driving the studies.

Feminist theory is important in a critical ethnographic approach as it assumes nothing is outside ideology, the research is conducted from a perspective that lives are lived and mediated by systems of inequity of class, race, and sex (Lather, 1986). Lather uses examples, in her work on feminist, critical enquiry (1986, 2004) of how this research looks in action. By critiquing dominant, often western assumptions of people's lives, new realities can be told. Practices advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) involve research participants and tests of validity by sending out coded data analysis, and asking the group to review the themes. What followed was a secondary data analysis that included the participants response to the way she had constructed the themes and the meanings they made from that.

This is an example of a feminist, critical approach and it encouraged me to share my own data analysis with my participants to include their ongoing feedback into how the story was being written. Crotty (1998) links critical enquiry to ethnographic studies using the work of Mead (1934) who linked personhood to social forces and looked for what is known as '*symbolic interactionism*'. Symbolic interactionism encourages the researcher to work with the researched to ensure they can take on the perspective of those within the study to understand and evaluate their experience. Ethnography, a study by the notion of taking on the lives of those studied, is undeniably an example of this and links the methodology with social interactionism and critical enquiry.

At its core, the critical paradigm is focused on power, inequality, and social change. While critical enquiry has always been a part of the work of the greatest thinkers, who have always questioned and challenged power and social structure, within the critical paradigm of more recent times, we are no longer focusing on violence and bloody resistance, but the hidden power of ideologies. It is these dominant ideologies that form the challenge within my study. In a world where knowledge is used both within different elite groups of society and legitimised through discourse, power is not distributed equally, and particular social groups are left without power and agency in their lives. Within the tradition of this critical thought, it is important to focus on the power of ideologies and how they maintain the rule of one group against another leading to the school of thought and the institute for social research. This critical paradigm became an important part of the understanding of

sociology of knowledge and sociological research, and it is important perspective for a study focused on schools and gender inequalities.

Critical realism is based on an understanding that social structure is key to the conditions that we understand the world through, and that social structure always precedes any kind of human agency. It is social structures that allow the reproduction of power relations. Corson (1991) discusses the potential of critical realism and emancipatory social practice to offer an alternative model for researchers, exploring the possibilities for human agency. He believes that critical realism gives us a philosophy we can act on, '*he believes that if we understand and interpret the world adequately then it is possible to change it*', (Corson, 1991:230). This is done by focusing on social change and the importance of agency. By understanding the way agency and social structures change and shift, it is possible to see the ways human agency is realised within these shifts. This understanding forms the purpose of my thesis and developing practical explanations to solve human problems, an aim '*to uncover the reality of human accounts and the reasons which constitute social mechanisms that maintain social structures*', (Corson, 1991:236).

Critical realism and taking a critical enquiry stance in my research represent an attempt to understand the mechanisms behind social interactions and the reasons why structures are upheld and the ideologies and discourses that uphold them. At the same time, however, this is not only an attempt to understand. The understanding also has the important mission of action, action to change and to secure freedoms. Through my philosophical and ontological belief that the world, and our knowledge of the world, is not static; that the way society works and interacts is always shifting and transforming, there is also a faith in identity and agency and the way it can be recognised and challenge social structures and dominant ideologies. This forms a clear part of the emancipatory aim of my study that is recognised through critical enquiry and believes in the way it is important to understand the lives of the girls in my study, the ways that find agency, and the ways they are subject to reproduced societal inequalities.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the ways data was collected, the research setting and the participants. In line with the methodology the techniques of reviewing data and reflection were employed. Important research such as Clark and Braun (2014) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have instructed the way this study was carried out and data analysed. The key part of ethnography is the way data is coded and themed, and this was done carefully by using theoretical and conceptual

frameworks. In this way patterns and relations between themes emerged and developed helping build a picture of the story of the girls and their experiences of volunteering and school duties. This chapter has explored how my research position is rooted in my understanding of reality through a social constructivist paradigm and my ontological position that human development exists through the acquisition of knowledge, constructed by our social interactions. It has shown how critical theory and writing within a feminist social justice perspective. I need to ensure this perspective informs my reflexivity to ensure I am not only seeking the negative stories that emerge from the finding. It is imperative I represent the participants and by following the Chicago school ethnographers, a grounded theory approach will be taken allowing data and theory to emerge.

Chapter 5: Acoustics of the School

Introduction

This chapter is the first of the empirical chapters using examples from my fieldnotes to present the gendered relations, identities, and themes in the lives of the girls in my study. It represents the initial stage of getting into my ethnography, the slow but essential process of getting to know the field, the participants, and the protagonists, described by Riese (2019) as the process of access. This was the stage where I was continually negotiating and renegotiating my access and forming my understanding of the structures and relations governing the field. This chapter describes what Bernstein (2000) called the acoustics or the dominant voices of the school, revealing while there may be one narrative presented by the school, this may not be a narrative that is representative of the experiences of all those inside. Each school has its own acoustics that are dominated by the values, relations, and rituals of the school, and having spent time working and visiting many different secondary schools, the first stage of my ethnography was spent observing and understanding the unique ways the social system within St Francis worked. While there may be formal hierarchies and orders, embedded within the social structure power relations can be different. To uncover this, the ethnographer in schools, acting as Delamont (2013) has described, acts almost like a detective, to see beyond what is told to achieve a more authentic understanding of the realities of people's positions and experiences. This chapter introduces the key protagonists in the ethnography as it explores dimensions of power and agency, the culture and social system of the school, as well as perceived identities of class and gender and the gendered dimension of volunteering in the school.

The chapter describes how school values, faith cultures and practices can be an example of what Arnot (2002) presents as gender code, as well as the internal power relations between teams and key actors that reproduce gendered experiences of power and control. As Skeggs (2002) suggests identity-making is influenced in this school, like in others, in the classed and gendered societal norms experienced by the girls and boys and this will be explored through an analysis of the girls' perception of their school and grammar schools. Finally, this chapter will look at the girls' early perspectives and introduction to the concept of volunteering and how this is also has gender code and gendered identities embedded within it.

Solidarity and Belonging: 'Our school is our family'

By acoustic I am using Bernstein's (2000) theory of a unique set of values that everyone within the school adopts and applies. Often when I heard Mr D or the girls speak about St Francis, they spoke from the same, shared position, that represented the ideology and value systems of the school. Bernstein (2000) describes school acoustics in the following way, as a n explanation of the way the acoustics of the school also maintain structures and hierarchies within staff and students by creating a sense of belief in the value systems and every individual's place within them.

> *A school metaphorically holds up a mirror in which an image is reflected. There may be several images, positive and negative. A school's ideology may be seen as a construction in a mirror through which images are reflected. The question is who recognises themselves of value? What other images are excluded by the dominant image of value so that some students are unable to recognise themselves? In the same way we ask about the acoustic of the school. Whose voice is heard? Who is speaking? Who is hailed by this voice? For whom is it familiar? (Bernstein, 2000: Introduction xxi).*

One of the most important acoustics that I noticed at St Francis in those first early weeks was the way that those within the school referred to is as a family and valued their place within that family. This was a key characteristic underpinning the social structures at the school in that it promoted a sense of collective solidarity. Following a period where I had visited several large secondary schools in South-East England and London, which had often felt large and disconnected, St Francis, with its lower numbers and tucked away location, did indeed feel different. When I had been selecting the school as my research field, a teacher colleague whose wife worked at the school had told me that '*the teachers at St Francis, they stick together, they enjoy being together after school. I never go out with the team from my school, but I'll join my wife with the St Francis lot' (December 2018).* This resonated when a few months later, in one of my early sessions with the girls, one of my research participants Bea, was explaining about some of the intimate and open relationships I had witnessed between teachers and students at St Francis, this is an extract from Bea in one of the earliest observations in the field diary:

> *This is a small school, it's a family. We take only eighty students per year, which actually means that the school has too low numbers and it is a worry for the future, it is a worry for all of us who are part of this school*.

Bea' s voice almost appeared not her own in that moment and brought Bernstein's (2000) questions to mind. I felt that in that moment it was not Bea speaking as herself, but Bea as a student of St Francis. What became increasingly clear about St Francis was the sense of belonging staff and students felt towards the school, that was almost compounded by threats to the school from OFSTED and other outside forces, they seemed to be united in a sense that the school needed to be protected. Bea, and the others, all considered the school a family, but they also shared a feeling of responsibility for the school's problems and its uncertain future. Referring to the school's negative reputation and falling numbers, Bea showed that she, the other girls, and many students at St Francis were aware of the challenges the school faced. This sense of the school as a family, and the collective responsibility for its protection permeated through the school values and could be witnessed in the relations between teachers and students. As the days went on, I realised the openness of staff and students was one of the acoustics of the school, understanding this acoustic and the responsibility students felt to protect the school was a key driver for the way that students took on collective responsibility for parts of the school and school duties. After a year at St Francis, I can admit that I too felt part of the family, during meetings with the teachers and students I was often brought into the banter and conversations that relied on a particular sense of familiarity and a sense we all knew each other inside out.

Yet there were gendered issues to the acoustic of the family at St Francis. In line with Arnot's theories of how gender relations maintain a sense of social order, over the course of my ethnography, I observed how staff used the notion of the school as a family to underpin a sense of duty and responsibility, and how this sense of duty was used particularly among the prefect girls. The main way school duties and responsibilities were enacted was through the prefect group, and within these group eighteen members were girls and only six boys. Very often teachers would remind the girls in my group that they were St Francis Girls and St Francis students did not let people down. On one occasion when the girls had come out late from a revision class and were debating whether they would still have time to get to the care home to volunteer, a teacher reminded them '*It was important to fulfil your moral and school duty*' and not let people down. There were not enough boys in the prefect group for me to witness boys being reminded of this in the same way,

however it is worth mentioning that I never saw the boys reprimanded about duty and responsibility during the year.

This concept of fulfilling duty rested on another important acoustic at St Francis, the principle of moral and spiritual service. St Francis display their key values of service and faith around the school including a key message about the importance of learning about yourself by placing yourself in the service of others. Learning to serve underpins a notion I heard many times at St Francis, that sometimes serving others means sacrificing your own wishes. Mr D often reminded the prefects of this when they resisted some of the duties they were signed up for. Yet fulfilling service and duty became another example of gender code that existed within the acoustics of the school. After a few weeks of observing the newly organised prefects come together, I realised that while becoming a prefect was supposed to be a voluntary decision, all the girls had in some ways been selected. They had all been told they should apply to be school prefects by teachers, and all had been influenced by this.

One of the first things they talked to me about was preparing to perform at the prefect swearing in ceremony where they all took an oath of service to carry out their duties and be responsible for leading by example within the school. Parents and the wider school community were invited to this event, and as someone who had never experienced a prefect system at secondary school, this ritual and the symbolic value attached to it seemed like an important acoustic. The prefects are bound to participate in school duties internally as well as volunteering and representing the school at outside events. However, as Arnot (2002) has theorised this led to different roles for girls and boys within the prefect group. In line with research by Kessler et al (1985) the school duties at St Francis were gendered, the boys participated in more representative tasks, for example, they were often called to speak in assembly, they had taking responsibility for delegating door duty (a task undertaken by the whole prefect group), they led the reorganisation of the prefect room. While the girls were involved in more people facing tasks and domestic tasks, these included working with the local primary school, supervising the prayer room, and keeping the prefect room tidy (although this was a shared task, in theory).

Arnot (2002) has an interesting perspective on family-school relations that is useful when looking at the examples of gender code at St Francis. Arnot (2002) proposes that rather than look at school and family as separate spheres for young people, she draws on the work of Connell (1982) and other sociologists who have shown it is important to explore and understand how family circumstance and schooling link as they form the largest experiences of a young person's life, the time when two large structures meet and interact. Connell's definition of the family as a '*close knit group which has an*

intense life and reasonably stable organisation' (1982:72) could also be used to describe St Francis and the small, close community the school embodies. Arnot (2002) suggests that the relationship between family life and school life is important as in most cases it reproduces gendered societal norms. Indeed, in the case of the Sr Francis girls, their sense of duty and responsibility to help with the school's problems, was reinforced by their homelife, where, as girls, they had numerous childcare and domestic responsibilities. Bea, Kate, Verity and Etta, were all part of large families with siblings and cousins. All of them had responsibilities across the week for babysitting or school pickups and both Bea and Kate told me that they were often volunteered by their parents to help local neighbours. Taken from an extract from the field diary during an observation where the girls talked about why they were volunteers and prefects, this quote from Verity shows how fulfilling duty was also reinforced at home:

> *Verity: To be honest I do things, well because I know if I did do something then my mum would, I mean I am scared of my mum, she's Spanish, I mean she's Colombian, I mean she's got very strong values and if you go against her values… (Mimes scared face), that's not good. (Field diary April 2019).*

Agreeing with Verity, both Bea and Kate described how they believed learning to help was part of your upbringing and they were clear about how their parents expected them to help with chores and sibling care at home. Notions of domestic duties for girls at home and the way housework seemed to be a gendered process in many households in a variety of contexts is well documented (Dotti-Sani, 2016, Antill et al, 1996, Blair, 1992). This has importance in this study when we look at school duty and the volunteering participation of the girls and motivations that lie behind them. Gender code can be applied through the ritualisation of duties and responsibilities and the different expectations that exist when it comes to girls and boys at St Francis. Just as Verity and Etta complained that their older brothers were not expected to carry out chores at home, and complained about how their little brothers were spoiled, teachers had a different expectation of girls and boys at St Francis. The prefect group was very unequal in numbers of girls and boys, and I witnessed several boys drop out of the group near the beginning. In contrast, all the girls stayed with the prefect programme just as they stayed with DofE despite several attempts to withdraw. Another important example of gender code at St Francis was the way girls and boys participated in school activities. Boys at St Francis had a lot less interest in volunteering and other extra-curricular activities and seemed to get away with not signing up or opting out without pressure. During of my earliest interviews with the six girls, Annie

described this to me talking about the reasons why boys did not sign up or stay with the programme, from an interview recorded in the field diary:

> *There is a boy stereotype in our school – there are boys in our school who are like, well they are chavvy… they are idiots … and that is being polite, and I think they might feel pressured that they might get laughed at so they would never be prefects or volunteer or any of that …*

St Francis is a school where activities and practices are gendered. There is evidence of what Connell (2005) described as a gender regime, a concept of masculinity in his definition relates to patterns of practice adhered to by men and boys in line with gendered constructs of what it is to be male. On my school tour of Enrichment activities in the second week of my research, I witnessed a gender bias in activities. Groups doing Chinese, Dance, School Newspaper and Horse-riding were largely made up of girls. Huge groups of boys were on the football pitch and basketball court, a hall full of boys were trying boxing, which the teacher invited me in to see telling me how it had transformed the engagement of so many of the challenging boys. Gendered differences in experiences for the girls and boys, started immediately from a lower expectation that boys would be involved and with less targeting of boys to take part in volunteering, school duties or other leadership roles within the school's student structures as well as an easier path for them to opt out. Enrichment activities, while they were offered to girls and boys alike, quickly became segregated by gender, and started to reinforce constructs of girls who bake and dance, and difficult boys who need sports and physical exercise to remain engaged. The choices girls and boys made reinforced and reproduced gender stereotypes.

Mr D – the key protagonist

Another key feature of the school acoustics and structures was the way key protagonists within the school were able to use their relations to maintain the structures and hierarchies. Cobb and Hoang (2015) have argued that ethnography should place research participants as the protagonists and in this study, while the study focuses on the lived experiences of the girls, Mr D, their teacher, became a very important, driving force behind the experiences the girls had. The key protagonist in this study is Mr D, the girl's RE teacher who played an important role in upholding the school value system. Examining the school relations between the girls, other students in the prefect group and the

teachers Mr D was a key protagonist in this ethnography. Mr D has multiple, hierarchical roles in the school structure, he is Head of RE, but he also manages the three house leads and is school leader for Enrichment, DofE and volunteering, the Prefects and Head Girl and Boy structures, as well as school representative for Student Voice. Also, however, these multiple roles mean Mr D acts as an intermediary between students and senior school leaders, school staff and school leaders and between the school and external visitors including me and the DofE lead. Mr D within these roles and layers of school authority plays a very important role in the school social systems and codes. His role shows how influential single protagonists can be in driving the relations and gender code within the school.

Mr D was responsible for introducing me to the school and the students, and by spending time in his office, I got to know the pastoral team that led the three houses. At St Francis, school structures are gendered. Despite several women in senior leads and governor roles, lower down in the school, males hold the leadership roles while pastoral, teaching support roles and administrative roles are all filled by women. Mr D has leadership responsibilities for the three women who are house leads and who take pastoral care of students in each house. As I sat in Mr D's office over those first few weeks, I saw that the house leads responsibilities were widespread, they dealt with all student-facing enquiries and problems, including absences, illnesses, uniform, and permission slips for trips and activities such as DofE. The house leads were the ones who contacted parents, mediated student fall outs, and chased for medical notes, permission slips and letters from parents, and they did all this on very tight deadlines and with very limited capacity.

The relationship between Mr D and his house leads is an example of gender code, while the leads and Mr D clearly had a pleasant working relationship and clearly liked one another, the relationship was based on the gender constructs of him as a self-confessed '*hopeless and disorganised man'*, he referred to '*his team of ladies as his saviours*'. During my observations of the relations between staff at the school. I used the field diary to make notes as I sat in Mr D's office. This extract from the field diary shows the dynamic between Mr D and his staff team, and the way Mr D flatters Clara and compares her to the others, while relying on her to complete the administrative tasks for him, as well as dealing with students. It also suggests a pride within Clara's role that she is able to solve most of Mr D's problems, a key characteristic of the female staff at S Francis.

> *My early days at St Francis are spent in Mr D's office as he sets up the DofE volunteering programme. Mr D shares a room with a female colleague, who is the House Lead, Clara. He jokes to me that they are like a married couple and how she regularly saves his life. Clara is*

one of three House Leads but clearly his favourite and today he is moaning about the others to her. He complains how they give him so many headaches because they are very negative and not like Clara who is just brilliant at getting the job done. Clara smiles at me when he says this but rolls her eyes when he starts looking for something he has misplaced on his desk. She does not say much and is very distracted by the work on her computer and trying to get hold of a parent who has not yet sent in permission for their son to leave school, (the minibus he is supposed to be on is leaving in 5 minutes). We are in the office today as Mr D is trying to show me the list of students who have signed up to volunteer for DofE on the computer, but he has forgotten the password. While he tries to log on, Clara is collecting the consent forms for volunteering together. She is interrupted six times in ten minutes by different students asking which enrichment activity they are in, complaining they have a stomach-ache and asking what they should do as they have forgotten their clothes for horse-riding. Clara deals with all these students briskly and quickly and still manages to chat and secure verbal permission for the child leaving school. She also finds and hands Mr D the consent forms. (Taken from the Field diary).

At other times I witnessed Mr D using his relationships and power within them to navigate his position between senior leaders and his own house team. In relation to volunteering and student participation there was a significant gap between the aspirations of Senior Leaders and the DofE, and the reality of student participation understood by the house leads. Moving from Mr D's classroom to the Head's office was not uncommon in my first weeks at the school and I used my fieldnotes to record observations of the way the school structures and relations worked. The notes below are from the field diary, taken from an observation of a meeting between Mr D, The DofE coordinator and the Head. The extract from the field diary below reveals an exchange between the three men about the DofE numbers and my own surprise at how the Head embarrassed Mr D in front of external visitors:

I am shown into the Head's office, and I am introduced as a PhD student to the Head and the teacher lead, Mr D, the Head tells me a little bit about his career as a Teach First teacher. Talking to me and the Lead for Duke of Edinburgh, John, the Head is extremely positive and ambitious about Duke of Edinburgh and talks about how his ambition is to ensure every single student in Year nine will complete their bronze award. There is a long silence however when he asks Mr D for the numbers, and he is very disappointed to hear only nine students in

Year nine have signed up. He clearly feels a bit embarrassed at these numbers after his commitment to involve the whole year group. He puts Mr D on the spot asking whether he thinks 9 is aspirational enough number after a week of recruiting. Mr D looks uncomfortable but says it is not far from what he expected and much better than previous years. The Head looks extremely embarrassed again and states that he does not consider nine a good enough number and instructs Mr D to try again. There is another awkward silence before Mr D says he could try another year group, although he worries that they will be thinking more about their GCSEs.

Under pressure to save face in front of the DofE Lead and myself, Mr D agrees to try for more sign ups to the DofE and promised his house leads would support on this. When he and I returned to the house leads, Mr D apologised and agreed with the house leaders' complaints about how students did not want to sign up and how the senior leaders did not sympathise, however by the end of the conversation, he managed to get each house lead to promise to try again for more sign ups. This relationship and his navigation between the structures of the school is something that he reproduced in his relationship with the students, and it is an example of gender code, as it leaves the females in the organisation with less power and agency and more duty and responsibility.

This relationship was possible because of Mr D's open and self-deprecating manner. An important acoustic of the school is the relationship teachers like Mr D have with the students at St Francis. There are several teachers who have taught there and lived in the area for a long time, and they create a very close and familiar relationship with the students. Mr D is a well-known and popular teacher, who represents the family ethos of the school that the students in my study enjoy so much, they tell me about the conversation and jokes that they share with Mr D, especially when he jokes about his own life and experiences. The extract below is taken from my field diary observations of a meeting between Mr D and the prefects, where I observed and recorded these reflections:

Their relationship with Mr D is based on him revealing funny stories about his life. After he had left, they talked about why he was a good teacher. They said his lessons are good because he is always talking about himself and the arguments he has with his wife, and other family secrets.

This relationship is key to the reasons why the students in the prefect group sign up and participate in volunteering, and the relationship has a bearing on the student's perceptions and experience of school duties and volunteering. As lead for prefects, volunteering and DofE, Mr D has the power to arrange the roles and structures, and through his relations with the students, that are gendered, the girls and boys participate in different ways and with different motivations. The next chapters will explore different examples of how Mr D plays an important role in the decisions of girls and boys, and why the decisions and experiences are gendered. If St Francis is family, Mr D plays many family roles within that family, at times he is the father and the patriarch. Other times he plays the role of dependent, but it is this constant shift that allows him to play with the power dynamic, the girls see Mr D as their carer, but simultaneously have a responsibility of care for him.

Hierarchies

Another of the key acoustic at St Francis is the implicit hierarchies that uphold power alongside more formalised hierarchical relationships. Mr D holds several positions of power over the students, and the way he shares and distributes that power, just like with his House Leads has consequences for the agency held by girls and boys at the school. While with the girls Mr D is self-deprecating and reveals funny stories about himself and his own life, with the boys he adopts more banter. There are fewer boys in the prefect group, so he has a smaller audience, and he laughs at himself as he makes bad jokes, for example when he brings the prefect badges down, he notices a couple are smaller and he winks as he tells the boys it is not all about size. This came off particularly badly because in the same meeting he had told Bea not to worry about whether she could or could not be Head Girl, as the Head Girl only really has to '*sit there and look pretty anyway*!' The more I observed the meetings between Mr D and the prefects, the more I started to recognise the way Mr D mediated conflict. Just as his with his house leaders, Mr D had to delegate duties and responsibilities to the school prefects. There was a tension at play here because he often told the students that they should have power to make their own decisions and run the prefect group as a whole, yet he was required (and he stated that it was due to pressure from the Head) to add more duties to their responsibilities. Very often the chat in the staffroom ended with, '*we could always ask the prefects to do it'.* I realised that in line with Bernstein's theories about schools, authority, and control (2000), hierarchies at St Francis were not only formal and explicit, but hidden through relations and systems in more implicit ways. My observations that were recorded in the field diary began more and more to show examples of these hidden hierarchies, particularly as I got to the know the staff and students and began to

understand the power within their relations. In this extract from the field diary below, Mr D uses his relationship with the students to coerce them into participating in another school task.

> *As always, his self-deprecating style was made by accompanied by a lot of joking, mainly at his own expense. He told the students stories about his old nicknames and told stories about how in the holidays he and his son 'drifted' because they did not have his wife and daughter to make plans for them (all teachers and students, they had had different holidays). He said he had realised that he is someone who is very good at doing things if he has it planned out for him. I thought this was interesting as this message is reiterated by the girls later in their transcripts. He joked about how he needed to be controlled by his wife. He did do a very serious speech about leadership and agency encouraging students to think about how they would take this on, and how he should not be making decisions or drawing up the rota. He suggested they would feel more empowered about door duty and monitoring the atrium if they organised it themselves. The group responded with mixed feelings about this, but no conflict or disagreement was made. The meeting finished amicably but without a sense that any key decisions had been made regarding the door duty rota, mainly because Mr D got to the next item, which was about an upcoming school anniversary, and he was keen to make sure who was coming and doing what – this was done in a hurry and as he flapped and panicked most of the students volunteered themselves and said they could help him out. Before long, the allocations for the anniversary were done.*

The formal and informal hierarchies at St Francis are preserved by mechanisms of gender code. In those early few months getting to know the school, I witnessed examples where women were deliberately excluded from knowledge or undermined within the school social system. One significant way this happened was again through Mr D's delegation of tasks and responsibilities. As his own role was so busy and had multiple, time conflicting time demands, frequently Wednesdays when I visited were chaotic, and a reluctant member of the team had been asked by Mr D to guide or facilitate me. This often happened with Mr D's responsibilities as more often than not he realised he was supposed to be in two places at the same time. Due to one such clash, where his responsibility for overseeing Youth Alpha and Enrichment clashed, he had assigned Mrs C, one of the school's teaching assistants to oversee the Youth Alpha Course.

As I was also a clash, Mr D assigned me to the Youth Alpha course too and so I spent a few weeks with that course getting to know the girls who would make up my research group and observing their interactions with both Mrs C the Teaching Assistant and the Deacon, who was leading the course. Mrs C was responsible for meeting the Deacon, who took the class, bringing the snacks and maintaining student behaviour while the Deacon led the course. Mrs C was very nervous about making sure the Deacon was treated properly by the students and reminded the students constantly about his position and the fact that he was running this course voluntarily for them. Often, the room had changed or the room we arrived in had been rearranged without Mrs C's knowledge, and due to Mr D's tendency to sign prefect students up to multiple roles the student list changed all the time and taking the register was complicated and long-winded. Mrs C tried to get this done before the Deacon arrived but usually, he stood uncomfortably in the corner while this process went on.

Each week Mr D had reshuffled the prefects or given certain students permission to take extra revision time, but Mrs C was never informed and had to spend time getting in touch with Reception to check the whereabouts of every student before they were allowed to leave the classroom. The Deacon very often did not get started until halfway through his allocated time, and then there sometimes was complications with the technology. The students found these sessions entertaining and enjoyed watching Mrs C having problems. She asked them to help her by running to get other staff or try and connect the video and they did these tasks slowly as it wasted lots of class time. Watching more sessions like this one and meetings in the prefect room I observed that Mrs C, along with other female teaching assistants, who were asked to facilitate sessions were almost always again uninformed or misinformed about student and room changes and their lack of knowledge meant that they all became sources of fun and entertainment for the students.

While students usually are lower in hierarchical relationships with teachers, what changed this hierarchical relationship and allowed the students to feel in a position of power over the teaching assistants was the way Mr D aligned himself with them, rather than the teaching assistants. On one occasion when the students were complaining again about the fact that they had been double booked and missed a prefect meeting because Mrs C had kept them in late and said they did not have permission to leave early, Mr D turned to the group and with his usual jokes and laughter stated '*What – you listened to Mrs C… you cannot listen to her, she never knows what is going on*'. This disruption to the hierarchy that positioned less senior female members of staff with less power and knowledge was a key acoustic of St Francis and its gender code. As my ethnography continued across the year, I saw the gender relations between Mr D and his female team reproduced within the prefect group and among the students. Mr D, as a key driver of relations in the school, reproduced this system of power and knowledge within the prefect group. Often it was the boys in

the prefect group who through communication with Mr D retained more knowledge and power, while the girls heard the communication through the boys and this often left the girls left without agency, often decisions had already been made before they knew about them. While the prefects remained hierarchically on the same level, just as here Mrs C is undermined by a lack of knowledge, examples throughout my ethnography reveal examples of how this happened to the girls in my study.

Other research into formal institutions has shown how embedded sexism of the decision-makers in the hierarchies leads to the reproduction of gender equalities (Stamarski and Hing, 2015). This research identifies how, within their research, gender inequalities was reinforced by the sexism of individuals in the system, despite the organisation's commitment to equality. St Francis is another example of how institutional bias is created by informal relations and hidden power within those relations.

Faith

St Francis is a faith school, and this is an important part of its acoustics and the way the students, even if they are not religious, are bought into the value system of St Francis that rests on ideas of obedience and service. The school mission, vision and ethos are based on the Catholic Faith, and forms the underpinning of its small, family-orientated faith community. Dedication and commitment to the '*Catholic way of life*' is outlined on its homepage, and the students are all able to repeat the School Values, Faith, Service, Courage, Justice, Love and Hope taken from the gospel. The school has a prayer space and RE is one of its most successful and most taken subjects. It may not be a surprise to hear that it is Mr D who is the Head of RE and most students' favourite teacher, hence its popularity. Bea, Kate, and Verity, three of my research participants all came from Catholic families and attended church. Annie, Freya, and Etta did not. The girls said that they did not think about the school values much although Freya could talk about them at length and admitted she still feels bad that she did not pray. However, over the course of the ethnography, I did not find many examples that showed the students thought much about faith, despite it being a large part of assemblies and lessons, but it was a part of St Francis that they accepted and complied with the duties and practices associated with faith as a matter of habit and routine.

Specifically, however the girls in my study had all been asked, in their duties as prefects, to join the Deacon's Youth Alpha Faith course, which was a nine-week faith course looking at the big questions of life. Initially, a course offered to all students, it had been arranged for the prefects after low sign

ups. I attended with the girls and observed the session in the second month of my ethnography. This was a useful moment in my field data. During the course I was able to spend time observing the girls as they debated questions of faith and morality, the contents of the course were useful for gaining an insight into the moral perspectives of the girls in my study as each week the course was focused on a different moral question. Each week I observed as the group watched a short film and following that the theme was explored through questions asked by the Deacon. The themes were interesting and on one week the Deacon led a discussion about forgiveness. The girls in my study were highly engaged and throwing forward many examples of situations and conflicting ideas. It was obvious when the Deacon came to facilitate the session that they had a lot to say. At first, the Deacon was keen to hear from them, but when the girls brought up highly topical and complex situations including the recent attacks on a mosque in New Zealand the Deacon seemed less comfortable and started to wrap the session up. The extract below from my field diary records their feelings about forgiveness and the Deacon' responses to them.

> *The session was about forgiveness, the deacon asked them what their feelings about it were. Most answered that you could forgive but you should never forget and that you could forgive yourself if you had made a mistake – they related it mostly to either their own friendships or to world events like WW2. The girl at my table referred to the recent shootings at the NZ mosque and how forgiveness can take back power. She was suggesting forgiving the perpetrator would be the right move and she offered this perspective. The Deacon seemed uncomfortable as other stories had focused on more straightforward scenarios like forgiving your friend if they betrayed a secret and he did not really listen to the girls' discussions. Instead, he moved tables and then paraphrased quickly about what he had heard. He began to tell his own stories. He changed the subject and talked directly to the boys about forgiveness, he suggested always playing it safe with their wives one day, particularly if they asked their opinion on what they were wearing which assumed they would all get married. I found the session uncomfortable, but the girls did not appear to notice how the Deacon had changed the subject and kindly thanked him as Mrs C instructed them to do.*

The fact that the girls did not notice or challenge the way the Deacon did not explore their ideas, and the way he reverted to gendered examples of forgiveness between husbands and wives are both more examples of gender code within the spaces of the school. This is an example of gender code outside the formal teaching of the classroom, showing how gender code is also present within the

interactions that students have with other individual and social groups that visit the school. This example also shows how space offered for debate for the student is limited and how in this example the girls' voices were silenced as they were offering a slightly more challenging viewpoint. This concept of silencing, links to other examples feminist scholars, who have researched the reasons why girls stop speaking out as they reach adolescence (Gilligan and Mickel Brown 1992). Their extensive research into girls' lives reported a 'crisis' in girls' development around the edge of adolescence when they began to edit it out their true feelings and opinions, fearing that their true voices would lead to conflict and rejection. This period in early adolescence is identified by these scholars as the period where many girls will suffer from a huge dip in self-esteem leading to increases in eating disorders and depression. This led to a recognition, both in academia and in the public response, of the way girls begin to censor themselves during adolescence, becoming afraid of their revealing their real identity. It links to notions of identity around and the way girls who are outspoken at school still find themselves ostracised and defeminised (Linton and McLean, 2017).

The girls in the Youth Alpha group identified themselves to me during this session as willing to take part in my research after Mr D had made a half-hearted attempt to re-introduce me that week telling everyone that I was there to do some research around DofE and that they should answer my questions if I asked them. The girls asked me why I just sat there, and they were interested in why I would want to follow and observe them, when I told them I was interested in their lives and experiences, they laughed and seemed embarrassed. However, I could also tell that they had enjoyed being listened to over the weeks I had been shadowing them. They told me from the beginning that they were the outsiders within the prefect group, and they wanted to know if that mattered. They were keen to tell me that they were not your average prefects and definitely not the best behaved in the school, (this particularly coming from Etta), but they liked helping people out and they would happily help me if they could. From that moment, I only worked with the six of them and I started to learn more about the way they identified themselves.

Grammar schools -selection or rejection?

The sense of our school as a family, which drives a feeling of solidarity at St Francis, is also driven by a sense that the students at St Francis are the underdogs or outsiders; the feeling of being outsiders was a dominant way the girls in my study identified themselves and it was reinforced in the school's acoustics. Status and being a grammar or non-grammar is an acoustic that defines many schools in the area, and it was no different at St Francis. Staff and students are all have bought into an ideology

their school faces struggle and stigmatisation and it brings them together. The girls' perceptions of their own identity and capital interacts with the gender code that governs the structures at St Francis, while the structures ensure girls and boys experience and participate in different duties, the choices the girls make are based on their own sense of self and the way they identify themselves. Skeggs (2002) has shown that class and gender intersect to create identity for girls from working class backgrounds. This is a key feature for the girls at St Francis, and it links to their fierce protection of St Francis and its feeling of family. Harris' (2004) representation of categories of girlhood are also important frameworks here, as the girls in my study used a sense of not conforming to any of the categories to define their own identity. But this very act of telling me what they were not (good girls, clever girls, typical prefects) shows the dominance and constraints of the constructs of girlhood.

Firstly, the girls' identity is established by the fact that they are 'not grammar girls'. Every day as I completed my day at St Francis, I would watch as the girls' grammar school opposite spilled out of the gates on the opposite side of the road. Two different colour uniforms walking in small groups on opposite sides of the road. From the beginning, the school the girls belonged to became part of the way they described themselves. In one of our early sessions the girls were talking about the schools their siblings went to and this started a conversation about getting into grammar school. This extract is taken from one of my interviews with the girls on the subject of why they came to St Francis and their feelings about grammar school.

> *Verity: My youngest brother was going to go to grammar, but he failed the local test by one mark same as me, and he is appealing… but I didn't really care. I didn't care even though my parents cared.*
>
> *Freya: I was told not to do it that I would fail it and not to bother.*
>
> *Verity: My mum made me study for 6 months …*
>
> *Annie: I chose not to do it.*
>
> *Bea: I got –well, my mum put mine and Kate's name down, we did the test, and I don't know why it's so hard (all- I failed), but my mum put us down for the grammar test then on the day I was like I don't want to waste my Saturday, I'm not going*
>
> *Bea – (looking at the others for confirmation) we would all have still come here (they all agree)*

The girls were united in a belief that they would have always come to St Francis, that St Francis was the right school for them. They all felt like they were all at the right school and happy that the

selective test had led them to St Francis. I believed this about Bea, Kate, Etta and Annie who all had not felt as much pressure at home and seemed genuinely confident, Freya and Verity, however, who were coincidently were the quieter members of the group, did seem disappointed. Freya seemed sad that no one thought she should try; and Verity, despite her assertion that she did not care, did say it was hard for her that both her sisters and elder brother had made grammar while her and her little brother had not. This solidarity around attending St Francis suggests that they could be hiding the fact that they all felt a rejection from the grammar schools that were closed off from them. In the abstract above and at other times when the conversation turned that way the girls all said that they did not feel bothered about going to grammar school. Nevertheless, they did all have ideas about grammar school that fit with discourses of girlhood, for example when they discussed Verity's sister, who attended the grammar school opposite, and they laughed as they said people are deceived because they always think that the grammar girls are always the good girls. This extract also comes from the same interview:

> *Verity: We're not your average 'good' girls like those over there.*
>
> *Freya: But your sister goes there, and she always gets detentions!*
>
> *Verity: Yeah, she's a bad girl. She was actually really sensible but it's the people she hangs out with, and her friends. It's her friend who is a bad influence and she's been skipping school and stuff and my mum is not proud of her but she's getting there. I think she's not hanging out with that friend anymore; I think they had an argument.*

The notion of bad girls fits with what McRobbie (1991) describes as cultural depictions that are used when girls behaving badly and become labelled as bad girls or tomboys. Reay, (2010), has shown that the categorisation of girls' identities begins as early as primary school using her study of a class of girls. She identifies the different ways the group are identified in '*varied positions in relation to traditional femininities*' (2010:153). Social power is created by these alignments to particular cultures, Reay uses her article to show how a primary class of girls were placed into categories both by themselves and others, and the way power played out among these groups. Her groups included a class of twelve girls who identified as either nice, spice, girlie or tomboy and the power relations that created. These categorisations and power relations were at play within the prefect group at St Francis and influenced the ways the girls in my study identified themselves and the capital they had.

Within the prefect group that was mostly female, there were distinct groups, the boys, the girls in my research study and the other girls that Etta described as the 'nice girls'. During one observation of the girls as they talked about themselves in relation to the other students Bea had this to say that part of a wider discussion about how as a group, the girls in my study identified themselves as being different to the other prefect girls, from the field diary:

> *Bea: There are plenty of other students in our year that are like really well behaved but they're not prefects. And that's even though they're even more well-behaved than me. People are usually surprised I am a prefect. Even Mr D says that!*

Yet the girls also at other times talked about being discriminated against by the negative attitudes around them, see chapter 8. Harris and McRobbie (2004) describe how modern constructs of girlhood including the category of 'the bad girl' is usually applied to any girls that behave in ways that may have formerly been attributed to boys. Rebellious behaviour in girls is still seen as exceptional and talked about as girls acting up or being bad. Griffin (2004) also discusses how constructing girls as either good or bad girls forms a narrow binary that fails to recognise the diversity of girls' lives and it creates a version of 'normal femininity' that means you are either one or the other. Griffin (2004) calls for greater recognition of the difference in girls' lives, because as she states:

> *Contemporary representations of girlhood also operate to marginalise or render invisible many other possible ways of being a girl, through their lack of resonance with the girls' lives…* (2004: 42).

During one of my observations of the girls meeting at school one morning, Etta, talked for a long time about an incident that day that had made her feel stigmatised, she described how she felt that people did not even wait for her to speak before they made up their minds that she is a bad girl, from the field diary:

Etta: When I go out in public the old people give me so many dirty looks and will say stuff, like I walked into the co-op the other day and this lady was like moving away and she was nowhere near me and she was like 'you're rude'… and I was like what, I just walked through the door, but I didn't say anything.

Later that day, I observed the girls as they sat thinking and planning their options for the DofE volunteering component. Returning to focus on the idea of volunteering and the different ways you can help your community the group talked about online communication and local Facebook groups. My field notes record Bea describing how despite Facebook groups being designed to bring communities together, most people use online forums "*to moan about the state of provisions and young people's behaviour*", Bea described that she had seen how local people often respond to community calls for help "*with a downbeat attitude about how it will all get wrecked again anyhow".* Rather than any encouragement or focus on any positive community spirit, Bea says it upsets her as many residents talk about young people in a derogatory way in these online groups. Etta, also alluded to this negativity, again referring to the way she gets treated on the way to school, from the field diary:

Etta: This morning, right, I was walking down the hill and you know when the froth is coming out of your mouth (talking about seeing your breath in the cold) so I was just doing that because it was fun and this old woman behind me was like 'you shouldn't be smoking, especially before school' so I looked at her and (mimes blowing air from her mouth) and I just walked off which was really rude but she did not see me, all she saw was smoke coming from out of my mouth and suddenly started screaming at me, which I just felt was really unfair.

For both Bea and Etta, the key injustice is that neither feel that young people are able to challenge or speak out against this negative stereotyping and labelling. They both talked about how older people would say they were being disrespectful if they challenged them, and also, both girls alluded to their knowledge that there was no point trying to show that they were different to the stereotype; they told me how negative stereotypes towards girls in their area were normalised and part of society, and already, at the age of fifteen, the girls felt it was impossible to change people's attitudes and opinions.

Caring and Crisis Solving

One of the most important acoustics of St Francis, which is also significant in this study, is the way that women and girls at the school take on a role as carers and crisis solvers. Relations and roles are a consequence of school value systems and ideologies, and in the case of St Francis, there is evidence of female and male constructed roles. A significant amount of my time, particularly in the earlier stages of my research, was spent sitting in reception at St Francis, while I waited as Mr D or the girls were located. As a professional and a researcher an enormous amount of time has been spent in secondary receptions. Sitting in a school reception offers a unique window into the life and character of school, it is where students come in and out with problems, questions, and crises. It is where teachers and staff arrive when someone is missing, or something is not in the right place or there is a room clash. It is where people come to locate the Head or other senior leaders. You can pick up a school prospectus or look at the artwork or opportunities board. You can eavesdrop when other visitors arrive and learn where they are going or what they are doing. In many secondary schools, there are student representatives who are there to greet you and take you where you are going when the person you are visiting has finally been located. Talking to the student representatives can tell you a lot about the school, and at St Francis my chaperone from day one had already informed me how '*everyone at St Francis is caring and friendly, particularly the teachers who are all very funny*!'. One of my earliest introductions to St Francis was sitting in the reception and the receptionist soon became my ally, always helping me with where to go or helping me Mr D or find the girls if it was time for them to leave to go and visit the care home. In one of my earliest visits, I recorded this impression of the school, recorded in the field diary:

> *At times as I sit waiting for the girls' I did feel like St Francis was a school stuck in the past. I could not help comparing the school to the other secondary schools that I had visited over the last few months. In some the classrooms were more open and brighter, teachers and students seem to chat in a much more mature, and equal way. I have visited schools where students in the sixth form at least can move freely on and off site. Visiting St Francis Academy reminded me of more recent visits to other academy chains, the multitude of rules mean the students are constantly asking teachers for things, which makes them seem needy and dependent, like a small child and a parent. It feels a lot like students are zoned and denied access to spaces, particularly at lunchtime. The uniforms look stuffy and uncomfortable, particularly in summer. People are constantly in and out, and there are always different problems to be solved. Those solving them are the receptionist who is*

always either talking to a student, on the phone to a parent or radioing a member of staff, or the Head's PA who comes out often to check on the late or early arrival of visitors or to pass on messages about overrunning meetings, nothing ever stops, it keeps moving all day long.

At St Francis, just as the house leads working with Mr D are women, so are the reception staff, and the Personal Assistant to the Head, it is always the female members of staff who are often in the middle of the crisis. While male members of staff are sometimes in the room, it is the women who tend to deal with the people-facing parts, they are the ones calling parents, speaking to those who have come to visit and getting them to the right place, talking directly with the students and mediating disputes. This is in line with feminist representations of the way labour continues to be distributed out in gendered ways. Skeggs (2002) studies of class and gender show how identity aligns with how the distribution of labour that has given women domestic roles, while Arnot (2002) suggests gender code is apparent in the way schools will direct girls to domesticated roles and careers. Tronto and Fischer (1990) also describe how even with professional and bureaucratic roles, women are still to be found in the lower levels where they are often conflicted between caring responsibilities at home and at work. There is a conflict according to their studies that shows while women bear the cultural burden of caring (childcare, caring responsibilities for relatives), they are forced to deprioritise work and compromise their own values.

The problem with crisis solving as pointed out by Tronto and Fischer (1990) is that by taking on the crisis, the solver almost positions themselves as accountable and if the crisis cannot be rectified, then the one solving it feels a sense of responsibility to those people who are affected by the fall out. For example, on one occasion while I sat in the reception a student came into the reception crying as she had forgotten to bring her spare clothes for horse-riding and was so disappointed as there was only six sessions and she did not want to miss one. The receptionist immediately set about comforting her and listed the things they could try to solve the problem, one involved ringing her parents, which the receptionist did, but could not get through. The house lead came and tried different numbers. They were losing time, the minibus arrived to take them horse-riding. Mr D was summoned, but on hearing the situation, he was sympathetic but told the girl she would have to pick something else that day. The minibus left and the receptionist and the house lead were left consoling the girl. At that point both the receptionist and the house lead looked sad and upset and they both consoled each other after she had gone, '*we did all we can, we sent letters telling them to remember their stuff, perhaps we'll get the house leads to send a text next time*'. By taking on the

crisis, they had, as Tronto and Fisher (1990) described taken on the responsibility and therefore felt accountable when it could not be worked out.

Ramvi and Davies (2010) have made the link between what they define as relational work, helping or caring professions, roles which are predominately taken by women. They discuss the problematic nature that is embedded within these roles and how it relies on a feminine ideal, which means women take on difficult responsibilities and censor the way they are coping with some of the complex needs they face. Ramvi and Davies (2010) argue that rather than celebrating this as example of female strengths, it is important to recognise the difficult position this role places women in:

> *We want to argue against the latter and suggest that female relationship workers instead have a constrained portrait of themselves, leaving little opportunity and permission to explore the difficult emotional and situational complexities that they experience in their professional practice (2010:441).*

In this way I observed the frustration and lack of agency held by the women working within St Francis, responsible for the care of others, they often found themselves facing numerous difficult situations and were not given recognition or support to deal with the emotions around that.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the unique value systems, relations, practices, and traditions of St Francis, or as Bernstein (2000) described them, the acoustics. Presenting the relationship between the protagonists, the six girls of my study, and their teacher Mr D, hierarchies and social order within the school are led by these relations of care and responsibility. The responsibility for care assumed and taken by the women and girls at St Francis creates a gendered difference between the girls and the boys. The next stages of my ethnography describe how the ways girls and boys were incentivised

and motivated or cajoled into doing school tasks and volunteering is based on how structures worked between men and women at a staff level, and it is significant that Mr D was a key actor in both sets of relations, staff, and student. Service is a key value running throughout the school, reinforced through the school's family culture and its principles of faith. For the girls in my study their sense of identity and capital comes from a sense of belonging to a close-knit school, and defying people's expectations by becoming prefects even though they are not the most popular or well-behaved. They draw their identities by showing how they are different to the different categories of girlhood around them but do feel a growing sense of not fitting in both at school and in society, and this is something that develops further throughout my ethnography. Skeggs (2002) understanding of class and gender identity is formed around capital, for these girls the capital seemed to their sense of duty, loyalty, and responsibility to the school, this is explored in the next chapter. They seemed united around a sense that just as the school was an outsider among the more successful schools in the area, they too, also being outsiders, belonged there and it meant they must stick together.

Chapter 6: The girls as recruits

Introduction

The reasons why young people participate in volunteering and the way they conceptualise the activities they engage was a key question for this ethnography. This chapter will critically explore how the girls in my study were recruited into the DofE award and the ways they were induced to stay and continue with the programme based on notions of service and a responsibility of care. It becomes part of a larger analysis looking at the motivations and rewards the girls receive for being involved in other voluntary activities in the school including prefect duty and other responsibilities to the school. Building on examples of the gender code that exists within school structures at St Francis, this chapter explores how volunteering participation was coerced and rewarded in different ways for girls and boys due to gendered relations between girls, boys, teachers and the DofE staff. Exploring these relationships brings in examples of caring theory and the ways this causes gendered experiences.

The girls' coercion into taking part and the reasons they continued to participate illustrate important ways they identify themselves as members of the school and as prefects and volunteers. This chapter uses discourses of girlhood to demonstrate how school and society influence the ways the girls perceive their own values and roles. Finally, linking together the ideas of caring that underpin the girls' participation in volunteering and self-identity, this chapter concludes by using theories of gendered moral reasoning to give examples of how, by being motivated by caring, the girls in my study had less access to knowledge, agency, and power. Questioning the way being caring leads to lower access to agency and power, this chapter starts to challenge the way the girl's relations are represented, by taking a view of caring as capital, and repositioning its place in relations and moral thinking, the girls could have more influence.

The girls and DofE

Volunteering, as a concept, at St Francis is told and understood through the neoliberal narratives of opportunity and skill development, (Murphy, 2017). This was explored in Chapter 2, which explored how a message of volunteering and raising aspirations was filtered down by the DofE presentation and school messages. Chapter 5 has also explored how service, duty and responsibility are a dominant 'acoustic' of the school that shapes the girls' perspectives, and this acoustic is important in

the way they were recruited to the DofE. Over the next few months, I observed as the girls in my research group, alongside two of the other girls from the prefect group and two of the boys, were persuaded into signing up to DofE, and persuaded to formally register themselves online. On a Wednesday, when I visited the school, the girls would tell me that they were not going to do it. However, the week after, I would find they had always been convinced to give it another go. Wednesday afternoon was enrichment and students had all chosen an activity to do each week. The prefects, including the six girls in my study were not able to choose an activity as Wednesday afternoon was their dedicated prefect time. However, as became the norm over the next year, prefect time was often disrupted by projects or events that Mr D asked the prefects to do, in the first six weeks of my research study they had been asked to attend the Youth Alpha course for most of the afternoon, after that prefect time became divided between prefect meetings and duties, and DofE, and that included all three school-based components, volunteering, physical, and skills. The fourth component was the expedition. The girls often talked about their reasons for signing up in the early sessions, although all of them seemed unaware how it had happened. During this stage of my ethnography, I frequently had time with the six girls to carry out informal interviews about the DofE experience and during one of these interviews we discussed again the reasons why they were still involved. The girls stated their reasons first, then started to discuss how signing up had happened in practice.

Verity: *Because I wanted to go on trip*

Freya: Because I wanted to be a prefect

Etta: Because the Head said everyone had to do it. He did force us.

Bea: We had to opt out not opt in so everyone else opted out.

Freya: No one wanted to do it …. We never really understood it.

Bea: It looks good on my CV – our teachers and parents said so.

Freya: We had a careers day – having DoE on your CV makes you stand out. I'm worried about my CV…I worry I don't know what I want to do when I'm older.

Annie: I couldn't afford the time and effort and costs of DofE. Everyone has to pay £60 for the experience.

(Interview with the girls, October 2019).

In the early stages of my ethnography if I asked the girls about volunteering and the answers came back based on the narratives that were told to them. Their early conceptualisations of volunteering were based on the neoliberal framings with examples linked to Taylor Collins' (2018) description of hope labour and Taylor's (2005) concept of volunteering as unpaid work. While they described it as helping, they added a condition, '*helping where you got something back'*, and they focused on the fact that you do not get paid as a defining feature. CVs and future opportunities were mentioned as reasons for volunteering. The ways Mr D and the DofE lead talked about volunteering had had an important impact on the ways the girls talked about volunteering and extracts from my field diary below also show the role family and community played in their perceptions. In the first days of my study the girls talked about volunteering as they tried to make their decisions around DofE.

Their experiences of volunteering were based on participating in formalised opportunities organised by their school or other youth organisations. When I first started meeting the girls, they showed very little interest in volunteering and did not have many ideas about what they could do if they signed up to DofE. They often focused on negative stories friends in the year above had shared with them about how it was difficult to get anyone to take you if you were younger than sixteen. Bea shared how once she had tried to help her friend get some work by walking into every charity shop in town, but that they all said it was too hard to get insurance for anyone under 16. Their perspectives were captured in one of our semi-structured sessions after they had attended a DofE follow up session where the DofE lead had given a motivational talk about the value and straightforwardness of being involved in DofE, taken from my interviews with the girls:

EL: So, what do you think volunteering is?

Bea: Helping the community

Annie: Helping

Kate: Helping and you get something back … but you don't get paid for it

Annie: Doing a job for free.

Kate: You don't get anything back, but you get something back mentally because you've helped someone like when you go to the care home you feel better cos you are keeping them company.

EL: Has DofE changed your ideas about volunteering?

Kate: NO, we just think about having to go for a long walk (laughing)

Freya: Yeah, we all feel too scared about the expedition

Kate: And getting lost and all that.

Annie: volunteering is doing a job for free … it's not a job but in the sense, you are doing something in your own time and not getting paid …

Bea: But it's for the community … I think everyone should do it once in their life.

Annie: because if you don't you don't understand.

Verity: volunteering shows character

Bea: it shows how you view life … because if they don't think they want to volunteer then they won't volunteer,

Kate: It depends on what kind of person you are… you might just be a very lazy person … who likes to do nothing … or you might be a lazy person who likes to help people just like we (they laugh)

An observation for me in those early weeks was the more the rewards were stacked up and emphasised by the DofE lead, the lower the girls' interest. The more the idea of new skills, new opportunities and new jobs were promoted, the lower the girls' interest and engagement appeared to be. As the weeks went on, they started to move away from the rewards of volunteering and focused more on ideas of duty and responsibility. The more I observed them the more they started to focus on the moral reasons for volunteering, the way it is almost a duty and as Bea said something that 'everyone should do once.' They talked about how volunteering was good for character. In fact, their focus on volunteering changed as the weeks went on and they were coerced into starting at the care home and unable to opt out like so many others did. After the first visit I recorded some of their initial thoughts which included some of my observations:

Freya: It is such a long way to walk to the care home… but then when you walk in, the ladies are all like 'helllooo' and at the end they always say how nice it was for us to go and that changes how you feel about it …

Kate: They always tell us how nice it was that we came and that changes it for me.

(Fieldnotes June 2019)

This sense of doing something even though you do not enjoy it and doing it due to the care and responsibility for others is what becomes the dominant theme of this ethnography. The girls' volunteering experiences become another example of school duty and caring responsibility that characterises their in-school experiences as prefects and their duty of care for Mr D. While the girls cite multiple framings and conceptualisations of volunteering, their decision to stay part of the DofE and volunteer at the care home is another example of the way responsibilities and duties are gendered at St Francis and the ways girls make choices from different moral perspectives than boys.

This sense of duty and responsibility that drove the way the girls came to understand volunteering was also due to the way they were recruited into the DofE. Attending meetings with Mr D, the Head and the DofE lead, I observed how Mr D was struggling to meet the numbers that the Head and DofE had hoped for. Further assemblies and a push from the house leads had generated interest, but no firm acceptance forms from parents and carers. The DofE lead was keen to get as many students as possible registering with the online DofE tool, which he seemed to think would help their engagement as it would give him and DofE a way of sending emails and reminders. This was also where students would log their hours for the different components. It was as this stage that Mr D decided that the prefects were the best placed students to take part in the DofE award. He immediately set about talking to the prefects about how it could be something they did in their prefect time and that it would be a useful experience for them. The students were added via the webpage at the next Wednesday session. Annie reflected on it afterwards in an extract from my field notes.

> *They ask everyone to do stuff, but then other people can say no or drop out, but if we try to drop out, we can't. Today was the clearest conversation we have had with Mr D about DoE… we are still only thinking about it, but Mr D said keep with it for now, and then decide later…*

The way the girls were persuaded by Mr D to take up DfE was typical of the way structures and relations worked at St Francis. Two boys also signed up, but they did so as they had been told that the volunteering they were doing as part of a church project could count as DofE hours. Mr D's persuasion and reliance on the girls reproduced the same lack of choice and expectations that exists within his relationship with his house leads and other female team members. When the decision had

been made that over half the prefect girls would do DofE, Mr D told me that now he had another headache, before setting off to the Youth Alpha room, where the last sessions of Youth Alpha were being run. From the field diary:

> *The clash between DofE and Youth Alpha had caused problems with Mrs C, the teaching assistant, who was worried there would not be enough students there for the bishop. Observing, I reflected on how upside-down this was (and it happened so much), a proposal for an intervention in a school is suggested with a huge focus on benefits to students. But when the uptake is low, there has to be a series of carrots dangled (such as being a prefect) to ensure students go along. It is the same for DoE. It is strange to watch after watching so many presentations to funding bodies where organisations talk about the huge need and the possibility of transforming lives, in reality these same organisations then scrabble around at schools for signups, often in competition with others, and in the end the same reliable, coerced students end up participating.*

Research has shown a tendency for volunteering in schools to be part of mandatory school programmes, (Stukas et al, 1999) or as Kelemen et al, (2017) have termed it individuals are voluntold, rather than volunteer. Keleman apply the idea of voluntolding to those who have to do community service as part of their prison sentence, but in many ways the prefects at St Francis were often voluntold to carry out school duties and projects. This is alongside highly incentivised rewards including CV opportunities and skills. Under pressure to reach a certain number of signups, students are coerced to participate as part of their school duty and responsibility, using one of the key acoustics of the school, the idea of service and through example of gender code within the school and using the girl's propensity to care. The existence of this care within the gendered relationships between teachers and the girls in my research group signed up is an important factor in why they agreed to participate.

We don't want to let Sir down! The girl's coercion

Signing up to DofE was based on the gendered way the school relations played on the girls' sense of caring and responsibility. Yet their relationship with Mr D was also a large driver. The notions of letting people down, particularly Mr D, and the girls' empathy that came from imagining the

challenges that their opting out could cause for other people were also important factors in their failure to opt out and why they were easy to cajole into continuing. Whenever the girls tried to give up or complained about participating, their sense of care and responsibility was prevailed upon, and they were asked to carry on due to their loyalty to and worry about Mr D and the school, from the field diary.

> *Annie: Mr D is so kind, he's the kindest teacher in school. All agree…*
>
> *Bea: He's my most favourite teacher in school.*
>
> *Annie: So, I feel bad if I know I am disappointing him.*
>
> *Verity: I know it's stupid but …*
>
> *Freya: It's the same way I feel like when I feel bad because I am not going to go to the church …*

This was part of a pattern, the girls had been targeted for prefects by key teachers, once they were inaugurated into the prefect programme, they had very little space to say no to tasks such as Youth Alpha and DofE. When the girls referred to the DofE at other times in the year, they referred to it with frustration and resentment that they felt about how they were the only ones still participating, even though they barely had time either. About halfway through they all told me that they had all had enough and were dropping it, but as always, it was their relationship with Mr D, and the way he communicated with them that kept that signed up. From the field diary:

> *I observed another meeting today between the prefects and Mr D about DofE. He immediately apologised, saying the school had not supported DofE, and he called it an 'unmitigated disaster'. Alluded to staff members who should have played a more active role, alluded to his own vulnerable position (slightly joking but giving details of the Head's insistence that the programme went ahead). The group stated their reservations, stated they did not want to do it and talked about the timescale and the pressure to get it signed off. Mr D alluded to the fact he was going to be the problem solver, that it could be worked on. He laughed about the reality of DofE, and the lack of progress compared to the way the DofE coordinator had talked up the success to his boss claiming that everyone was amber which was great. Mr D said he too had felt depressed about DofE then after a visit from the*

coordinator and his boss he felt joyous. Everyone laughed. He persuaded the group to continue for his sake (he referred to the culture of St Francis playing a large part in not quitting), he promised he'd invite all the parents and do a BBQ for everyone, he said he would personally cook the burgers and said not to worry that he would help everyone.

Again, Mr D is repositioning himself in this conversation, moving the girls away from a feeling that they have been burdened and treated unfairly to a sense that they are in this situation alongside Mr D, which they need to solve it together. Mr D deliberately starts the discussion from a position where he takes the responsibility back, admitting his own part in the blame while showing the girls how he too is a victim of the Head and DofE's unrealistic demands. Relying on his close relationship with the girls, he uses their 'ethics of care' (Gilligan, 1997) to encourage them to help him out. This is what Tronto and Fisher (1990) describe as '*one of the most persuasive contradictions involved in taking care of others concerns the asymmetry between responsibility and power*' (1990: p 43). They call the responsibility that comes with caring, for women assigns them the responsibility for '*maintaining and fixing the world*' and they describe the construct of the caring women who can fix anything despite a lack of time and resource. This, Tronto and Fisher (1990) state is an overwhelming responsibility that positions women in impossible situations of which they feel a duty to sort out, '*assuming responsibility makes you the one accountable*' (1990: p 42). This can be applied to the girls in my study, time after time they complained about the burden of being signed up to too many activities and declared their intention to quit, but each time their sense of care, duty and responsibility ensured they continued, although not to their own benefit, but rather in the role of serving others.

The way the girls in my study were often called on to participate also rested on gendered ideas of girls as more compliant (Jones and Myhill, 2004) particularly the request became a personal plea from Mr D, where he often stressed how much it would help him out and how there was no one else who could do it. It links not only to ideas of gender code and gendered structures within the school system, but also links to identity. Studies of class and gender presented by Skeggs (2002) has shown how women position themselves according to classed and gendered notions of caring as an example of their cultural capital. Skeggs (2002) links this to the way women in the post-war period, who have not been encouraged to go on to higher education and professional employment, started to take a path enrolling on 'caring courses' at colleges as people's lives changed and more women entered the labour market and started domestic life much later or combined it with working part-time. Looking for an identity that defined them caring quickly became the way they identified themselves. While it

was something that they were not able to fail at, as Skeggs (2002) points out quickly the caring courses that these women were encouraged to enrol on became '*the lowest status in the college hierarchy*' (2002:59), and, also led to the lowest paid jobs, a trend that still exists today even though caring for families, the elderly and those who are vulnerable involves long hours and important responsibilities. Echoes of these classed identities and caring are seen in this ethnography, with the way the girls define themselves as not clever, but caring and friendly and they can be seen in the ways the girls find themselves enrolled in DofE through empathy and caring, to the role they take as volunteers, the way these girls identify themselves as caring plays a significant role.

While Skeggs (2002) suggests that the women in her study were using caring as a form of cultural capital, and this resonates with the ways the girls used caring to explain their decisions, I am suggesting that it could be possible to also present care itself as a form of capital, that is not recognised within Bourdieu's (1986) framework. While Bourdieu, (1986) himself, saw capital as the resources of individuals that define their social position, in a different world, where care is repositioned, care could be interpreted as a resource that individuals can offer to contribute and improve communities and society. While within a neoliberal context, and within the patriarchal system of St Francis, the girls were not able to use their care as capital, in fact, the way it defines their relationships and decision, could be interpreted as care capital. Tentatively, as this study went on, I started to question how differently the girl's position could be if there was a recognition of their care capital, the way it defined their relationships and the value it added to their school and local community. This is explored in the next chapters throughout the other stages of the ethnography.

The boys and DofE

To ensure I formed an understanding of the boys from their own perspectives, I spent some time at several stages of my ethnography interviewing some of the boys too. The girls had offered many reflections on why the boys volunteered and interpretations about their position and relations within St Francis and comparing the girls' and boys' perspectives was important. Within the boys group only two of the prefects, Henry, and Tariq, regularly turned up although this section does also include field notes taken from observations of the whole group including some of the boys who had also completed the Youth Alpha Course and were involved in prefect duties as the year went on. The girls had already alluded to the constructs of masculinity that led to the unequal numbers of girls and boys in the prefect group, DofE group and other activities, and indeed my reflections on the choices around enrichment activities in the previous chapter showed choices based on gendered

constructs of boys and physical activities such as boxing and football, compared to the other activities that were taken by more girls.

Henry was a popular member of the prefect group, he was liked among the prefect boys, he got on with the other girls in the prefect group and the girls in my research group respected him. He seemed to have a good relationship with all the teachers, and very self-confident and did not shy away from taking the spotlight. In many ways he seemed much older than his fourteen years and he often described himself to me as the peacemaker or mediator within the prefect group. It was strange to hear him talk about the need to help resolve conflict between the prefects, as he sounded like he was talking about students far younger than him. He also talked in this way about the teachers, if there had been a misunderstanding (as there often had been) Henry almost seemed to sigh and roll his eyes in a way that seemed adultlike and paternalistic, before going to investigate what the problem was. The girls in my study told me him he was the cleverest student in the school, in fact Bea said he was probably the cleverest student she had ever met, and although he was quiet and unassuming, he often took important roles in the prefect meetings.

Tariq was a what Mr D called '*an outstanding student*', who was involved in everything. He did not have to begin any new activities for DofE because he was so involved in so many things in the community including St Johns Ambulance and with these added up, he had already completed enough hours. Tariq was friendly and responsible and again often worked with Mr D and was communicated messages to the others on Mr D's behalf. Tariq also tended to talk about the others in the prefect group as though they were much younger and needed his guidance. The other few boys who were in and out of the prefect room with various other responsibilities had very different personalities. They were a bit of an unusual group that again seemed united in the way that they did not fit in with the typical boys at St Francis. A couple of these boys were very shy, and they only ever sat at the back of the prefect room, so I rarely heard them speak and they never volunteered to speak with me. One, a boy called Jay was often angry with different things within the school and the prefect room. On several different occasions when I was in the prefect room, I heard him arguing with other prefects, boys, and girls and more often than not he would have issues to raise with the teaching assistants and teachers.

These boys, the ones involved in prefect duties and volunteering, identified themselves differently to other boys in the school. Connell (2005) has argued against a presentation of the hegemonic masculinity that was used in education studies to explain dominance and bullying in classrooms and playgrounds and has argued for a more fluid understanding of multiple masculinities that are part of systems of power and control. This interpretation is useful to understand the dynamics of power and

relations between boys and boys, and girls and boys at St Francis. The boys within the prefect group, particularly Henry and Tariq are not sporty boys, and they would not sit within Annie's description of the 'chavvy boys' at their school who were not as interested in having an academic reputation. Almost in the same way the girls in my study strive to identify themselves away from being what they describe as 'girlie girls' and 'grammar girls', Henry and Tariq create their identity by showing they are proud to be academically successful and enjoy the relationship they have with the teachers and senior leaders.

Just like the girls, the boys in the prefect group have a good relationship with Mr D. From each meeting you can see how relaxed and comfortable they are with him, and they joke and chat with him informally. Within the Youth Alpha group Mrs C often asked Henry or Tariq to help her when someone was missing, or the room was arranged in a different way, and she often asked them to go and find out where someone was or what time they should finish. I observed how both boys took pride in taking on the role of teacher support communicator. There was an element of trust with these two particular boys that gave them an elevated status within the teaching staff, and I observed how the students picked up on this and would use Henry and Tariq if they wanted to find out the answer or complain to Mr D about something. This just became part of the school system and structure, particularly among the prefect group. The girls talked about it in one of our sessions talking about prefect roles and school volunteering, from the field diary:

> *Annie: The boys (Tariq and Henry) are basically head boys already*
>
> *Freya: The boys have so many connections with the teachers, and they are always here after school…*
>
> *Bea: They come every day after school, like they are the head boys, but they were doing it before, for example they moved all the computers in here, they're redoing the room, they just do it on their own, but in conversation with Mr D.*
>
> *Annie: They know stuff that we don't know, and they won't always tell us. They tell us about it the day after or the day they're doing it.*
>
> *Freya: All the teachers go to them because they always feel that they are already the top of the leader of prefects and so they get told everything first.*
>
> *Bea: Don't know but the thing about the boys is that they have kind of like… connections … but kind of position and I don't blame them because they do work extremely hard, they stay*

behind after school, they help with homework club, and so I don't blame them, if they want to be that responsible that's fine, less pressure on me.

Freya: It's not because they're boys… at least I hope it's not. 'I'll be honest, me and Verity don't do anything for prefects we just turn up and do the duty – the boys do everything for us, they sort out the duties, then if I have a problem I will go to boys.

The way communication happened between Mr D and the girls and Mr D and the boys in different ways was significant. Possessing the knowledge entrusted more power to the boys and limited the agency of the girls. It also reproduced the social system that existed between Mr D and his house leads, where he acted as communicator for the senior leader, but chose which knowledge to reveal and how, while playing mediator with his house leads. It reproduced within the prefect group and duties, gender code and impacted on the roles played and the way relations were gendered.

Motivations and Rewards

The role of communicator had been allocated to the boys and as I continued my observations of the different ways that students were recruited into DofE and prefect duties, I realised that this played a role in the way the boys were motivated and rewarded differently to the girls for taking part in volunteering and school duties. During my interviews with the boys, Henry and Tariq discussed their motivations for volunteering and taking on a prefect role in very different ways to the reasons the girls have above. They did not mention their relationship to Mr D but focused more on playing a role for the school. Henry described his prefect's role as: '*making sure other students are doing what they are supposed to*', and described how his overall intention was:

Henry: To make the school a better place. I wanted to make sure that I was going to change all the bad things in the school. I also liked some of the jobs that were involved.

(Henry, Prefect, St Francis: Interview, October 2020).

This aligns with Gilligan's theories of gendered moral reasoning. Other research studies, such as, Skoe (2010) and Karniol et al (2003) particularly focusing on adolescents, have found that in a crisis-type scenarios girl display more empathy and care for the individuals affected by the crisis than boys,

who, the research suggests, often respond by focusing more on ways of solving the dilemma. While these studies do not claim boys are incapable of empathy and care, their findings strongly suggest that girls focus more on taking on a caring responsibility for the emotional and relational impacts of a crisis. However, as Tronto and Fisher (1990) suggest caring responsibility rarely leads to rewards, but often feelings of accountability. On the other hand, taking the moral position of responsibility for change and authority as is suggested by Henry's motivation usually leads to recognition and reputation. Within my ethnography of St Francis there are several examples that suggest that the boys were being rewarded for volunteering through recognition and elevated reputation, this is an extract from an interview in the field diary:

> *Annie: I know this sounds so bad, but I genuinely feel like there is a bit of 'the girls have done this, so we have to do better', (some murmurs of mixed agreement) and if we say something you know that they're smug about it, that they've done the right thing and then they're proud of doing it' … I think they do it for their self-esteem, … how many times have they had chocolate bars?*
>
> *Freya: While me and Verity were there, they had like this giant chocolate bar from one of the teachers for doing something*
>
> *Annie: We don't get that. We don't even get a thank you most of the time. We literally get nothing… Henry and Tarik do most of our assemblies for our form… me, and Ginny did it and we didn't get anything in return, and they get chocolate and … and we never got anything…*

While I never witnessed material rewards been given out to either girls or boys, I did observe the ways the boys had responsibility for delegating tasks, which is explored in the next chapter and how the boy accepted that as a reward for the role they were playing at school as well as enjoying the leadership and authority it gave them over the others in the group. I also watched the boys present in assembly at different times and act as messenger between the different hierarchies of the school in ways that the girls did not. Gender code, identity and moral reasoning all had gendered dimensions at St Francis leading to different experiences.

Girls and boys as leaders

There was a distinct difference in the way the girls and boys thought about leadership and the ways they took on those roles and responsibilities. For the boys, leadership opportunities, according to the girls, were the motivation for their participation. While the girls all insisted that they did not want to oversee anything as they did not enjoy being in charge.

> *Verity: Because they, the boys in our group they like being in charge maybe*
>
> *Freya: They like to be helpful*
>
> *Bea: They like to be the loudest voice that's heard*
>
> *Freya: They are just very much leadership personality and they like being in control of everything*
>
> *EL: Do you like being leaders?*
>
> *ALL: Noooo!*
>
> *Freya: I'd rather be told what to do and I'll do it*
>
> *(Field diary 6th November 2019)*

The attitudes of the girls in this field diary extract correlates with research conducted by Archard (2012) whose research suggests that while girls often state they believe in gender equality, they also hold a belief that boys are naturally better at leading. This is guided by their own sense of appearing to loud, and the fact that girls only exhibit lower confidence.

> *Many comparisons were made between girls and boys in relation to the three concepts under investigation. There were conflicting reports as to whether boys had more confidence than girls or vice versa, particularly in relation to leadership. It was also suggested that whilst boys were confident of success, girls demonstrated a fear of failure and as a result tended to 'start beating themselves up and putting themselves down'* (Archard, 2012:200).

In this way the girls often stood back when it came to leading roles or when Mr D was assigning who would delegate and oversee different duties. Their position on leadership was interesting. They talked about the boys as leaders, particularly Henry and Tariq, as if it was something that came

naturally to them, but they assured me that they would not be able to do it well, even though their declared that they knew their roles were important in other ways. Bea's definition of leadership shows her lack of confidence, from the field diary:

> *Bea: 'I kind of like bring a leader but I like it if someone has told me how to do it because I find it difficult to do it by myself, I don't like figuring it out by myself. I need it to be described to me, in specific details.'*

The confidence the boys have in their ability to lead undermines Bea as can be seen in the next chapter when she is faced with a leadership role as Head Girl but faces opposition. Her comment above though suggests she does not have that confidence in her own decision-making and rests on the advice of other people. Another day I saw the reluctance of the girls to volunteer themselves as lead during a day when I was with the girls as they set up their volunteering activity. On this day, after weeks of trying to quit the DofE award, Mr D told them that they needed to set up their own volunteering activity. I was in the room as they discussed it, from the field diary:

> *When I met the girls today, they seemed demotivated about signing up for volunteering and disheartened saying they were sure that no care homes would take them on. Bea and Kate said their friend had spent over half a day walking round the charity shops, but no one would take her as she was under 16. The girls decided they would call the care homes; they got a phone out then they all started nominating each other, refusing to do it, and saying they couldn't do it. As always, they looked back to Bea, who started to look like she could be persuaded. Suddenly Etta was full of energy. She got the girls to start googling the care homes near the school. One was at the top of the hill. Despite not knowing the distance she wrote down the number. The rest of the group wrote down a few more. When they had a list of four numbers, Etta turned to me and asked me what she should say. She was laughing nervously, and the girls were all joking saying how hard it was talking on the phone. I suggested they write down what they needed to ask. They sat down together and did this; it took quite a long time. I could tell Etta wanted to be the one to make the call but at this point she started saying she didn't want to, like the others were, she kept suggesting Bea or Kate would do it better. The others disagreed saying they would be way too nervous. Etta started practising, she was good but a couple of times she got jumbled up and then she would start*

again saying she couldn't do it. We moved rooms to a prayer room on the side of the school, Etta practiced again then started the protestations about being too nervous. I started to think she would not do it. Suddenly, she grabbed the phone and called the first home, she spoke perfectly and confidently and despite the care home saying no, she thanked them and put down the phone. I was surprised and I could tell the others were too, both how she suddenly did and how she did it so confidently. She called another, no one answered, and she left a detailed, polite message. She called the third one and had a positive response, she finished the call saying she would ask Mr D to email over the details and wrote down the line manager's email address. She looked at the whole group. We were all impressed, but she acted like it had all been totally natural.

The significant part of this is the way Etta is naturally good at motivating and leading, this was the first example, but in later chapters we see how she is the one who leads the conversation at the care home and supports the other girls. The lack of self-belief means that very often Etta took a back seat and rarely had the conversation to speak out. This is contrasted with Tariq, who provided a different example of embracing leadership. The boys approach leadership in a different way at St Francis.

One day when I arrived at school, the girls appeared in the prefect room looking upset because they had been told that they had to attend a catch-up revision session that afternoon at 2pm. This would mean that they would not be able to visit the care home and they were upset because it was one of the last sessions and they wanted to see the residents, but also were aware they would not complete their required number of volunteering hours when they had almost done it. I asked them if they could talk to Mr D about it, but he was away on a course, and they said the message about attending the revision class had come via the deputy head and that no one was allowed to miss it. Tariq then came in and asked what the girls what the problem was. When they explained he became quite angry on their behalf. He was happy to attend the revision session as he currently had no other prefect responsibilities, but he said that he distinctly remembered that Mr D had said that prefects were to be excluded from revision if they had other duties and he confided that it was not the first time the deputy head had made a mistake. Tariq set off to find the deputy head, who was also out of the building. Tariq spoke to the Head's PA and explained the problem. She agreed to get permission for the girls to leave from the Head and in between meetings, secured this. At the very last moment news came that the Head had given his permission for

the girls to leave, they all thanked Tariq who said he did not mind at all as this kept happening and it needed sorting out. He said he'd speak to Mr D himself when he came back. (From the Field diary October 2019).

This links to the way that relations work and practices operate within the school. The way that the two boys are usually chosen for leadership roles leads to a situation where everyone accepts this and within the group it becomes a given norm that they are the best two to lead and delegate. In contrast the girls' lack of confidence and hesitation means they are not considered for leadership, so they start to believe it is because the boys are more suited to roles of taking charge. The perceptions of themselves as not naturally good at leading is created by the system of reinforcing leadership in the boys. It also provides us with an example of the crisis point in girls' identity when they start to censor themselves and feel conflicted between narratives that tell them to be strong and assertive, and discourses of girlhood that often depict confident girls as outspoken and difficult. Further examples of this are seen later in this fieldwork.

Youth agency and tokenism

Etta's confidence in her role as advocate and leader was further undermined by her experience of tokenistic structures for youth agency and leadership. In the initial period of my ethnography the school were also recruiting for the Head Girl and Head Boy role as well as the Director of Student Voice. While Etta did not believe she was Head Girl material and was leaving that to Bea, she believed that she could advocate on behalf of other people (again a belief reinforced by Mr D). She told me excitedly as she prepared her application, from an interview recorded in the field diary:

Etta: Mr D said I would be better as Director of Student Voice because I am good at speaking up and solving problems. If the other students have got a problem, yeh like they want a new table tennis table, I will be the one who will go to the teachers and the Head teacher and tell them that is what people want.

Kate: Director of Student Voice, basically if they want table tennis tables in the playground or want something changed in the classroom, we have a meeting with the form captains every week and they give us feedback from all the different forms, then we go to Mr D and tell him what they say.

Etta liked this role because it gave the opportunity to use her voice but put distance between her and the request, as she said it was better '*because she was being bossy on behalf of other people*'. She was doing it with Ginny, who is one of the other girls from the other girl group within the prefect and she laughed as she told us all how she can see how it will have to be her who plays the bossy one as of course Ginny was '*too nice*'. Etta got this role a month before the summer holidays and over the next few weeks she sat preparing her case to take to the teachers using the notes she had taken from each of the class reps from every year group in the different houses. So, it was disappointing to see her looking depressed about it after the summer holidays. From the field diary:

> *School was chaotic on my return today. It may have been because there were exams but there was also a tension ranging as all Year 11s were no longer doing enrichment, but from now on expected to go to tuition. As soon as I managed to locate the prefects, we set off to the care home. I walked with Etta and asked her about life and exams, then I asked her how she was getting on as director of student voice as she had been so excited about it before the holiday. She told me that her and Ginny feel really frustrated by the director of voice. Each month they must meet a rep from each form, from each house and listen to the problems and challenges they are unhappy about. The list is long and ranges from space, to toilets, to length of break time, and the idea is that then the directors meet with senior leaders each half-term. However, Etta told me that no one turned up to their latest meeting and when they went to find Mr D, he told them that the senior leaders had cancelled it as something more important had come up, but Etta was frustrated as she said no one told them. I asked her how many times the student voice had met, and she said never, both meetings had been cancelled.*

Research has suggested that giving young people a platform, but not listening to or failing to take their suggestions seriously is more damaging than failing to seek their contributions in the first place (Kara, 2007). The difference in Etta's attitude showed how that can be true. To engage in the research but not be given the platform ensured that Etta felt that her contributions were not valued and reinforced power relationships between teachers and students that a platform like Student Voice is meant to disrupt. It is also a disappointing observation that this lack of recognition for Etta can be compared to the way that at St Francis when boys showed leadership, they were often rewarded with recognition. It did suggest a gendered notion that supported the idea that often the voices of the girls go unnoticed. While, this could be coincidental, it also fits with the gender code

underpinning the structures of St Francis where women's voices at all levels were devalued. This is important as it sets a course for the positions that girls take in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored my first observations as the girls and boys within the prefect group at St Francis were coerced into taking up DofE as part of their responsibility as a prefect. Building on the gender code, identities and theories of moral reasoning that was introduced in the previous chapter, this chapter has shown how this translates into how school relations recruited the girls into the programme using different ways than the boys. The role of the field diary has been to identify examples of the way girls and boys are motivated and rewarded differently, which has significant consequences for the experiences and perspectives of the girls and boys. It shows how it builds on an assumption about girls and their caring responsibilities, boys and leadership, and the way we reward girls and boys through recognition and reputation. These are all important themes as we move to the next chapter and a study of the relations and structures within the prefect group. Within the recruitment of the girls into DofE and other school duties, the girls were left with less agency and power, and it is vital to see if that continues as they participate in their prefect and volunteering duties. This chapter also brings in the notion of the girl's caring as capital, which is further explored in the next chapters.

Chapter 7: The girls as prefects

Introduction

The way that the girls were recruited to the DofE was through the prefect structure. The role of prefect and observations within the prefect space made up a large and important part of this ethnography. This chapter explores the power the prefect role and structure had over the girls' sense of identity and their perspectives and attitudes to volunteering and duty. By design the prefect role required all students in the group take responsibility for helping and caring and played a significant role in shaping how they felt about their sense of duty. Data exploring the process of applying to be Head Girl reveals important findings about the girls' sense of identity and the ways they construct their identity as not clever but kind.

The prefect room was a space where, as a researcher, I was able to witness the way power relations played out and the room was witness to some differences between the girls and the boys. Applying the frameworks of gender code, identities of class and gender, and feminist theories about caring, is useful here and it is through field diary examples such as 'the fall-out' (p 145) that the consequences of reproduced gendered relations is demonstrated in the power imbalances between prefect girls and prefect boys. This chapter shows how gender code existed within the prefect group and how roles and responsibilities within the prefect group were assigned in unequal and gendered ways. As an observer watching the ways power played out in the prefect room, it became clear how the gender code that existed within the staff structures at St Francis, became reproduced within the student relations, with implicit mechanisms such as access to knowledge playing a key role in how the girls were denied power. This showed how the value systems of the school permeate, it is an example of the way implicit hierarchies are part of the acoustics of the school.

The Prefect System

St Francis is proud of their prefect system; their website and newsletters often discuss the contributions that the prefects make, and the system is often praised in external communications sent out by the school talking about the contributions of their students. The creation of the new prefect system was talked about as one of the positive developments that enabled the school to come out of special measures in 2014. Prefects at St Francis usually put themselves forward after a conversation with teachers, and then are chosen by Mr D and the senior leaders. They are then

inaugurated into the programme in a whole school ceremony, which is attended by their parents and during which they speak in front of everyone to confirm their commitment to serve the school. At St Francis, the prefect structure is a part of the authority structure within the school, in that prefects are responsible upholding some rules such as access to spaces during certain times of the school day. However, despite being asked to monitor these spaces, they do not officially have any tools of authority, except to report students who break the rules to a member of staff.

In fact, the position of the prefect is very mixed, while they are presented as a structure of power and authority, in other ways, becoming a prefect limits your choices and position to refuse, as there is an expectation attached to prefectship that assumes you will take on duty and responsibility. This is something the girls in my study were very aware of as summarised by Annie in one of our interviews, taken from the field diary:

> *I just think that they are like … well you should do it because you are a prefect… Yes, because they say, well yes because if you say no then that's not really being a prefect. But I do like being a prefect, I mean I like it, I just don't like … I mean we get our own room, and we do get to have certain freedoms, but even with those freedoms there are like pros and cons, pros are like we get our own rooms and other benefits and stuff, but cons are like we literally are like the school slaves, and it's like oh you need to do something, oh just get the prefects to do it, or do you need this happen, just get the prefects to do it, and it's like I know, we do have to do some of it but sometimes they ask everyone and other people do it, but then just ditch it and no one says anything to them…. Like on Friday we get to go in late if you've done something, but then people haven't done it, but they still go in late. They ask everyone to do stuff, but then other people can say no or drop out, but if we try to drop out, we can't. The other day was the clearest conversation we've had with Mr D about DofE… we are still only thinking about it, but Mr D said keep with it for now, and then decide later because the one thing is right, I'm so rubbish at commitment … either little things or big things, I start something for a few months then I'm like oh I can't be bothered with this anymore, and I know that's bad. I'm always all hyped up for it but then I'm like, and that happens with a lot of things.*

What Annie describes is the trade-off between the perks and rewards of the prefect system and the duty and service that is required. Rather than increased autonomy, Annie's experiences seem to suggest less agency and choice for the prefects at St Francis, which challenge some of the arguments

about the benefits of pupil leadership structures that are based on what Lavery (2007) suggests is student '*servant leadership'*. Secondary school's prefect systems in England have their origins and associations with middle-class public schools, prefects were created in the very first public schools in the UK (Eckstein, 1966). The implementation of a prefect system, it is argued, rests on an assumption that one method to improve society through schools is to replicate structures of authority for social order that students can fit into (Lavery, 2007). Other researchers have suggested that prefect systems, alongside other school practices, operate as implicit instruments to teach moral education (Bailey, 1978). This is because as prefects are often chosen by staff rather than students, and I undemocratic and protecting the values and beliefs of the staff over the students. Building on arguments about pupil leadership and democracy in schools, Coffey and Lavery (2017) have called the UK prefect system outdated. Pupil leadership in the UK has always been about a particular small group within the student population having power over others, opposed to other North American models where student leadership was much more about distributing power and voice to multiple students across classes and year groups (Wallin, 2003). The UK system is currently under threat from notions of gender discrimination and bias, it also ensures certain students have power over others and leads to situations of favouritism and gender and class inequalities. Research studies within schools have shown that generally the student population are more comfortable with boys in leadership positions (Archard 2013).

The prefect system at St Francis has twice the number of girls as boys, and is facilitated by Mr D. The girls in my research group seemed surprised when I asked them why they had become prefects and had to think for a moment about how it happened before Verity remembered, from the field diary,

> *In Year 10 Mr D said to us if you want to be a prefect you got to come to this place during this special session. So, we went there, and we wrote all our names down and… that was it.*

Bea and Kate were interesting, both admitting they applied to be a prefect to take them out of their comfort zone and try something new, while for Freya it was because a teacher told her to and for Verity it was because her mum told her to. Annie still could not remember why she became a prefect and Etta says the teachers told her to do it to calm her down. Importantly, however, over the next few months, as they became used to it, alongside both the positive and negative feelings about being a prefect, I saw the role become part of their identity, both symbolically in how they talked

about themselves and in the way they believed they were being seen by other people. This is explored below looking at uniform, badges, and other symbols of being a prefect.

Uniform, Room, and other perks

Several objects held symbolic value for the girls and showed how becoming a prefect became important for the girls' identity. It shows again the value of recognition and reward for acts of helping and volunteering. There was great excitement one Wednesday when I arrived in the prefect room. The new prefect uniforms had finally arrived, after a long delay and a lot of promises from Mr D. For as much as the girls often seemed demotivated and uninterested in their prefect role, duties, and volunteering, the uniform meant a lot to them. They had been wearing it for a few days and they were keen to show me and talk me through it. It was the first time I had heard them speak positively about their prefect experiences. The arrival of the new uniforms had meant that they had finally had their inaugural ceremony the afternoon before my visit. Taken from the field diary:

> *Today I met the girls in their prefect common room. They had moved the computers to one side, and it looked like they had taken over the space more than before when they had sat awkwardly around the old computers and other junk. It was covered in rubbish, they apologised and cleared up. They had no activities to do today and were filling in their DofE forms and chatting. The big topic was the new prefect uniform, which had finally arrived.*
>
> *EL: How does your new uniform make you feel?*
>
> *Bea: Like a cardboard box. It's really stiff.*
>
> *Annie: NO, mine is fine. I feel important*
>
> *Verity: Everyone is like they're prefects, they're different, I'm like huh!*
>
> *Kate: Someone actually said thank you prefect, when I opened the door, another one was like 'why has that girl got that tie?' but another said, 'well I don't care about Year 11s!' When I was a Year 7, I was petrified of Year 11s (Annie: and me) cos they all looked like men and women.*
>
> *Kate: The uniform has made a difference.*

Bea – it makes people take us more seriously – now people are deliberately noticing us, they are like oh, I like your uniform.

Verity: A lot of them say well done and it's like thank you thank you …

Annie: they say congratulations and it was stressful last night

Freya: I messed up my speech, I was first, and I forgot to say St Francis, and then I got halfway, and I forgot.

Bea: we said a speech then the Head give it (the badge) to you and says congratulations,

Kate: Before that we just had badges … we had to wait all this time because they were ordering the uniform…

Annie: we feel good.

Bea: it is good, but it was embarrassing – my mum was standing up in front of everybody

Kate: we were in front of all other people's parents

Verity: and the uniforms are eco-friendly – look

Bea: Look

Verity: my mum is happy she is a hippy she is like let's be eco and not use plastic, there is not plastic in our house – our toothbrushes are bamboo.

The girls' feel a strong sense of identity and purpose as the school's prefects. The comments the girls are making about the uniform show that they now feel visible within the school, they are happy to be standing out and recognised as prefects. They feel like they are getting respect and that does seem to be important. This is also true around the symbolic value of the prefect badges that again are delayed, taken from the same extract in the field diary:

The final thing was that the Head Boy and Head Girl and deputy badges were handed out to those who had been successful. Again, this was done in a chaotic way – Mr D had not ordered new ones in time, so he handed out the ones he had. He had a large size Head Girl badge, and no deputy head girl then two very small head boy badges. He apologised over and over again about this and made classic jokes to the boys about how size does not matter. However, he clearly felt sorry that they were not receiving new badges.

Another perk the girls refer to is their prefect room, from the beginning Mr D had promised the prefects their own space where only they could go, and other students would not be allowed. After a few weeks of meeting Mr D in his classroom, an empty classroom was finally secured for the prefects. It was among the Modern Languages classrooms and half filled with computers and old chairs. Mr D brought them an old filing cabinet that he said they could use to keep their DofE notes and other rotas and notes. There was a whiteboard and a noticeboard, which eventually emptied so they could use it for prefect notices. It did not seem much, but that room was important to all the prefects including the girls in my study. They used it during breaktime and lunchtimes as well as during their enrichment session and other students, who were not prefects, would loiter at the door if they wanted one of the prefects, but never enter. They all respected it as the prefect space. Other perks seemed to include representing the school and enjoying better relationships with teachers. The girls' perspective on being a prefect shifted each week I spent with them depending very much on the duties and experiences of each week. A few weeks later, Annie and Kate seemed frustrated at the duties and their role as prefect brought them into lots of conflict with other teachers that they often had to ask Mr D to mediate, taken from the field diary:

> *Annie: I don't like being a prefect. The only good thing is getting our own room, and we can go there at lunch. I don't like doing the door duty.*
>
> *Kate: We went to Dover castle a couple of weeks ago, on a Sunday because there was this big celebration for its 50th year and we just had to stand there and tell people where the directions were, … but I enjoyed doing that. I just don't like doing the duty. And when we get the uniform, the uniform is all pretty hideous as well. It's got blue threading around this bit instead, the inside bits here are striped, the others don't care, they just think we're goody two-shoes, and it's funny because I'm not a goody two shoes. Sometimes the year 7s ask us for help, but honestly, I don't think I have a better relationship with the teachers, and the people who aren't prefects. It's only Mr D who really asks us and actually he doesn't want us to do the lunchtime duty, it's the other teachers.*

The role of prefect at St Francis is full of contradictions. As recruits into the DofE the girls felt that they had been treated differently and not rewarded in the same way as they boys. They felt it had always just been assumed that they would participate and keep going. The prefect uniform and

ceremony as well as other perks of the role is a positive way the girls identify themselves, however this does not last long and after a few weeks the expectation and duties of the prefect role outweigh the positives.

Head Boys and Girls

Identity is very important for the girls and as we saw in the previous chapter, their sense of self is guided by their classed identity and the way they identify as non-grammar schoolgirls, and their perspectives of themselves as not naturally leaders. Using Skeggs' (2002) framework as a way of understanding the way girls identified themselves was extremely useful in this stage of my ethnography. During the months I observed them in the prefect room, I realised that they clearly identified themselves through their sense of caring, caring became a sense of capital for the girls, especially Bea who was putting herself forward for the Head Girl role. This became very clear during the Head Girl applications. When I visited one day Bea and Kate asked me if I would use my research camera to record a video for Bea to submit as part of her Head Girl nomination. The videos, which had to be under a minute, were going to be played in assembly and then the whole school would vote for which Head Girl and which Head Boy they wanted. We went to the prefect room so Bea could think about what she wanted to say. As she chatted with the others and made notes, her sister started laughing and drew a picture of a tall girl onto the whiteboard. She shouted to the others to have a look; this extract is taken from the field diary:

> *Kate: When you are HEAD girl you will be the best girl in the whole entire school and you will have the best hair, just like that…' (As she is talking, Kate finishes the picture she has been drawing on the white board of a girl with straight hair, very long legs and eyes with long eyelashes and they all start laughing). I check, and Bea is laughing too, she talks a lot about her hair and the way it does not behave and never does what other people's hair does, and sometimes she says that bothers her but other times it makes her feel different, and that is a good thing.*

The girls often talked about other girls in the prefect group describing them as '*goody-two shoes*' and '*perfect prefect*', they often made fun of themselves referring to their own beliefs about how they did not confirm to the identity of the prefect or head girl. On many occasions the girls laughed

about how they have taken everyone in because they are not your average girls, as they are not academic or well-behaved, but they had still made prefect. They spend a lot of time talking about how they are different. They compare themselves to another prefect Ginny and the other prefect girls who they are not very friendly with and make sure I understand that they are not like that, they are not girlie girls. After a few minutes Bea starts her Head Girl video like this, by telling us what she is not and how she does not conform. This is an extract from Bea's Head Girl Video:

> *I want to be head girl because most head girls are not really like me. They are normally really intelligent and like goody two shoes, and like teacher's best friend, and I'm not really like that. I'm not the most cleverest person, but I am friendly, and I care about other people's opinions, and I like to make sure people are welcomed. That's about it really. And it will look good on my CV, so when I fail my GCSE's I'll have Head Girl on there. (Starts laughing).*

Bea's sense of her own capital is her ability to be friendly to everyone, to listen and to be equally interested in people no matter who they are. Her head girl video and her identity are formed around her sense of empathy and care. Taken from the field diary:

> *Bea: What would I change if you were head girl? Older students being nicer to younger ones. About bullying. People being helpful.*

Bea's twin sister Kate is clear about how the impact that a period of bullying had on her sister Bea and how she also believes it forms Bea's desire to help others, she says the experience made Bea determined to be more confident and there are echoes of this here in this interview with Kate*:*

> *Bea wants to be head girl because you know she's got dyslexia and stuff, and she's been bullied in year 8.... She went through all that and she struggles with people understanding her, she thinks it will be a good thing to be head girl, and a role model for other people to show that you might not get top grades, but you can be caring, and you might not have had the best school experience, but you can still be head girl.*

There seems to be a clear sense among all the girls that you are not usually clever and caring, that you possess one or the other, and that being caring is much more important than grades and certificates. A large sense of identity is connected to being caring and having had real experiences. Again, this extract from the field diary recording Bea's feelings shows the way Bea interprets her own value through her sense of care:

> *I think it is more about the way you have experienced life, because personally for me I wouldn't be horrible to anybody, like I would never want anybody to feel bad because of what I've been through in the past. And also, my upbringing, whereas somebody that hadn't been that bullied, and they don't know the consequences of it, and they haven't had a very great upbringing and all they do is I don't care then they won't care about other people.'*
>
> *Freya: 'Mainly I became a prefect because it will look good on my CV, if I'm being completely honest with you it was to put it on my CV because my grades are like this (signals downwards with her hands) so I thought it would be something.*

Both Bea and Freya believe they do not possess what may be termed by Bourdieu (1986) as economic capital and they believe they are not going to secure grades and exam results that will lead them to success. Instead, they use the idea of being caring and taking on the responsibility of prefect as a way of gaining respectability. This fits with Skeggs (2002) framework of how identity is framed through Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital and respectability. How, when identity embodies class and gender, women and girls use a sense of caring and duty to identify themselves. The way that caring forms such a dominant part of the girl's self-identity also suggests how an extension to Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital could be useful. For the girls, in my study, they do not talk about their economic, cultural or social capital, they do not claim to have resources of networks or money or experience, but the way they do interpret their value to others is through the care they can offer. It defines their relationships with each other, other students, their teachers, family, with me, as a researcher and with wider society. Extending forms of capital to include the notion of care is a way, we, as researchers, can better understand the way individuals interpret their place in society, and by repositioning care as a resource, we start to develop a theoretical framework to recognise the girl's contributions.

Door Duty

In a different way, the boys in the prefect group are able to draw on their social capital and their relationships with teachers to manage their duties quite differently. One of the prefect duties that caused a huge amount of trouble was the allocation and obligation of all prefects to take part in door duty. Door duty was a break and lunchtime task that involved monitoring key areas around the school that were restricted areas for the rest of the students. Each day different prefects were assigned different doors and were asked to make sure students did not come inside unless they were meeting a teacher or had another valid reason. From the beginning the prefects had complained about this. Apparently, students hated the rules and tried everything to break them and get access to come indoors. As prefects, they still felt like they did not have the authority to ask them to stay outside. The prefects also felt that door duty was an example of how some teachers took the prefects for granted, that they assumed that is what the prefect role was all about. They were quick to defend Mr D in this, stating how he always fought their corner and defended them if teachers accused them of not monitoring the door.

As an observer, I watched as door duty was delegated, incentivised, and run and I could see how it was another example of the power relations and gender code that characterised St Francis. In the first place Mr D had a key role in arranging the organisation of the duty and was the one who had to persuade the prefects to take it on. The way Mr D negotiated door duty with the whole prefect group was again a reproduction of the way he conducted negotiations with his house leads, when asking them to push for the signups for the DofE award. During one of the prefect sessions, Mr D asked all of them to make sure they were there as he had an important topic to talk to them about, immediately making the prefects know there was something important being discussed. From the field diary:

> *I observed a session led by Mr D in the prefect room.*
>
> *He was talking to the prefects about leadership and their roles as prefects. He was asking them to take more ownership and agency over the decisions and duties connected to their role as prefects. He was suggesting that it was important for some members of the group to take over the leadership of the door duty rota among other tasks.*
>
> *He admitted that door duty had not been working but he was not critical at all about the different prefects; indeed, he was very self-critical. He talked about several miscommunications regarding the door duty and inconsistencies regarding messages from*

staff and each time clarified that he should have been the one to make sure everyone understood the expectations of the prefects. He took responsibility and said they were all his mistakes.

He was quite critical of other members of staff, without naming or criticising directly he made many comments about staff 'seeming to think the prefects would do everything' – as the students murmured in agreement and even though he was playing the intermediary, he seemed to very much on the side of the students stating that he agreed that some of the other teachers had unrealistic expectations of the prefects.

As always, his self-deprecating style was made by accompanied by a lot of joking, mainly at his own expense. He wanted to emphasise how important it was that the door duty was delegated and so he compared it to a personal story about been told to do things. He soon changed the subject and told the students stories about his old nicknames and told stories about how in the holidays he and his son 'drifted' because in the last holidays his wife and daughter had gone away, and they had not had anyone to make plans for them. He said he had realised that he is very good at doing things if he has it planned out for him.

Mr D then returned to do a very serious speech about leadership and agency encouraging students to think about how they would take this on and how he should not be making decisions or drawing up the rota. He suggested they would feel more empowered about door duty and monitoring the atrium if they organised it themselves. The group had mixed feelings about this, but no conflict or disagreement was made.

The meeting finished amicably but without a sense that any key decisions had been made regarding the door duty rota, mainly because Mr D got to the next item, which was about an upcoming school anniversary, and he was keen to make sure who was coming and doing what – this was done in a hurry and as he flapped and panicked most of the students volunteered themselves and said they could help me out. Before long, the allocations for the anniversary were done.

Mr D, first, takes sides with his house leads and sympathises with them about the unrealistic demands of the senior leader team. However, he then manages to get them to agree to try again for numbers and meet what he has described as unrealistic demands. The same happens here with the prefects and door duty, he sympathises and sides with the prefects, but then persuades them to give door duty another go and quickly changes the subject.

Unfortunately, for Mr D, the topic of door duty returned week after week as an ongoing problem. Just as with DofE and the low sign up, Mr D continued to secure promises from the prefects without ever really sorting it out. After a few weeks when the Head had intervened to ask why teachers were still reporting some doors unmonitored Mr D employed the same solution that he had with the prefects and DofE. He went to the two head boys, Henry and Tariq and tasked them with the responsibility of drawing up a rota and making sure all prefects were there on the days and times they were supposed to. This made the relations between the girls and boys in the prefect group difficult. On the one hand, while the girls said they respected the boys for stepping up and doing it, as time went on and the boys started to check up on them and had the authority to do that, it caused tension and resentment about how the duty was being divided up and the feeling of being told they had to do it. This interview is taken from the field diary:

Bea: Door duty… now we're told to do that …

Annie: It can be … there is a difference in being told to do something and being forced to do it or by oh and this is good for you, it will help them etc – that's a difference …

Bea: Some boys they aren't prefects because they don't want to help people ... mumbling… people can be so rude to so many people … there is one guy and he's so rude to everyone but he's really well behaved …

Kate: He outsmarts people and everything.

Annie: but for us, or I don't know about you, but I genuinely don't care.

Bea: If they have an issue with me, I'll tell them where to put it

Verity: No, erm yes… I think there is cos I think that some of the girls are like that too

Bea: at lunchtime/break time I would not necessarily hangout with this group (indicating the other prefect girls) this lot, I would hang out with other people that are more like kind of like er rude …

EL: Who is rude?

Bea: Not, the girls don't but the boys do give us a hard time, but they kind of just know that I don't really care, they just know to shut their mouth.

In the end giving the head boys responsibility for door duty drew out gendered tensions among the prefect group between the girls in my study, and the other boys and girl group within the prefects. Henry and Tariq tried to act as peacemakers and talked a lot about making sure door duty was allocated fairly, but among the group the boys started to accuse the other girls of shirking their duties, and the girls in my study started to feel door duty was unfairly split. The fact that Henry and Tariq had been incentivised to lead the door duty as a leadership opportunity and had a close relationship with Mr D meant that they started to talk to them about the problems within the other prefects. Mr D often came in on Tariq and Henry's side without talking to the members of the group. The girls in my research group started to feel that no one was listening, and this had a negative impact on their confidence. Rather than speaking out, they started to miss prefect meetings and concentrate on other things. Verity and Freya used their K Pop club as an excuse not to go, Etta and Annie just slipped off and did not attend, and Kate took up a role in the school play. All examples of self-removal. Only Bea continued to try to talk to everyone in the group, especially once she was successfully chosen as Head Girl, with Ginny as her deputy. In the end though, even Bea could not cross the relations and structures that had been enabled by the school power hierarchies.

Teacher relations and access to knowledge

Relations between the girls and the boys were exacerbated by other examples of unequal access to knowledge. The girls had alluded to me in an earlier meeting that the boys had 'connections' with the teachers, but that was their choice and they respected them for it. However, as time went on, they started to feel resentful and invisible when it came to decisions made within the prefect group. Just as how Mr D had given the door duty rota to Henry and Tariq without consultation and leaving the girls to receive orders from the boys, other examples of the boys and their increased access to knowledge occurred. One day when I arrived, the girls took me up to the prefect room and were surprised when they got in there to find the computers had gone and the seats been moved around. In many ways this was a good thing as the broken computers had been loaded up and taken up half the space in the prefect room, and Mr D had promised to get them taken away several times. However, I had also heard the prefects and the girls in my study talk about how they would like to organise the room, including different zones, when they finally were able. It was a shock to them to come in and find it all done and when the boys and Mr D arrived it transpired, they had arranged and done it between them. Although they the girls thanked Mr D and the boys, afterwards they reflected differently. From the field diary:

Bea: They, the boys, come in every day after school, like they are the head boys, but they were doing it before, for example they moved all the computers in here, they're redoing the room, they just do it on their own, but in conversation with Mr D, but without us.

Annie: They know stuff that we don't know, and they won't always tell us. They tell us the day after or the day they're doing it.

Freya: All the teachers go to them because they always feel that they are already the top of the leader of prefects and so they get told everything first.

This extract shows how the girls are at a disadvantage when it comes to agency and power. The way the boys communicate with Mr D and other teachers, without involving the prefect girls, and make decisions based on these conversations, removed the agency of the girls and rendered them invisible within the decision-making conversations. The girls' feelings of powerlessness through a lack of information also reminded me of gender relations I had observed in other structures and norms within St Francis. Often, Mrs C, the teaching assistant given responsibility for facilitating the Deacon's Youth Alpha course was put in a position of disadvantage because important information about room changes and student numbers had not reached it her and made her look disorganised and uninformed in front of the Deacon. Often because Mr D had given the information to the students it was them that corrected Mrs C when she said something wrong, and this placed her in an even more disempowered position in front of the Deacon. Other female staff delegated to facilitate or oversee something by Mr D found themselves in this position and it seemed to me to be a large part of the gender code governing the implicit structures and hierarchies within St Francis.

The girls' voices often failed to be included in some of the prefect decision-making with Mr D. This was done through the boy's possession of certain knowledge given to them by the teachers but was also achieved by the girls' own admissions that they prefer being told what to do and a belief that leadership comes more naturally to the boys in the prefect group. An example of this lack of agency is through one of the stories Bea told me about missing an important Head Girl meeting in an interaction that can be described as classic sexism, from the field diary:

Bea: … The Head boy came up to me and said – are you staying after school and I said no, I'm going home actually, and then he said you're meant to stay after school, but I was like well,

no one told me this, and he said well you're meant to be helping at the thing, and I said to him – I asked you if you wanted my help and I asked you if you wanted me to stay behind, but you said it was just you and the boys and the teachers wanted, just wanted you to do it, then the next day you had a go at us because we didn't stay behind…

Bea tried after becoming Head Girl to lead the prefect group. Mr D had told her this was her chance, and it was important she work alongside Henry who had been made Head Boy to direct the group. Yet, when she tried to take leadership, Bea felt disempowered, and I feel she did not understand why. While no one in the group directly challenged her leadership, she was often excluded from additional information and had it revealed by the two Head Boys. The relations of the prefect group were now fixed with the boys' group and the other girls' group being more friendly and involved in more activities together, while the girls in my research study, were doing their own things. These dynamics became more obvious as Mr D retreated much more from the facilitation of the group. He had always been honest and told the prefects he would no longer chair the meetings or arrange the tasks and described it as their opportunity to gain leadership experience and direct their own projects. From now on prefect meetings were to be facilitated by the Head Boy and Girl and another Teaching Assistant had been asked by Mr D to oversee the process. Gender Code at St Francis had been set, however, and as the next extract from my field diary shows, negative and gendered relations continued to be reproduced.

The 'Fall-out'

Tensions built between the girls and boys over the delegation of duties and decision-making within the prefect group over the next few weeks. The different ways Mr D and other teachers treated the girls and boys at St Francis can be seen as a key driver in of conflict and rivalries within the prefect group, as exposed in this prefect meetings, one of the first Mr D had not attended:

Today Mr D was not there for Weds afternoon as he was on minibus training. I went to the prefect room to see what the group were doing or discussing today. The girls seemed perturbed that Mr D was not there, but Bea, who had been made head girl the week before and had a long chat with Mr D was full of nervous energy and ready to co-chair the prefect meeting with the head boy. I realised I had never seen the dynamics of the whole prefect

group, having worked so closely with my six girls and this was the first time they had met without Mr D. The atmosphere was different straight away, the bigger group, who I recognised from different events as well as my six sat around the big table. The Head Boy and Bea were at the front. At the back, sitting deliberately away in a semi-circle were another group that I did not recognise so well. They kept coming in and out and were quite noisy, this group was made up of four boys I did not know so well and a couple of girls including the deputy head girl.

(Extract taken from the Field diary)

Before the meeting began, the tension was obvious. It was clear from the different groups and where they were all sitting that the prefect groups had different cliques and that some of them were already resistant to other students leading the meetings. As I sat in the corner, I witnessed some of the prefects showing some unease at the absence of Mr D and questioning whether they could make any decision. I heard Henry, the Head Boy reassuring Bea that they could do the meeting together, although he then suggested it would be good for Bea to start off and he encouraged her to be the one to speak first, saying he would take over as the meeting unfolded. Bea was surprised that the Head Boy was encouraging her to take the lead and suggested that the others would be expecting him to talk and introduce everything, nevertheless she agreed. I felt that she was nervous and felt out of her comfort zone but doing her best to seem confident. So, taking his advice Bea tried to get everyone to be quiet so she could start the meeting. Taken from the field diary:

The topic that the head boy Henry and head Girl Bea were trying to introduce was about the leaver's hoodies. It was the prefect's responsibility to make the decisions on the colour and take orders from the whole of year 11 and organise the money etc. They had two flyers that had come from the company that the school usually order from and there were a couple of main arguments – would everyone want one? Which colour would everyone want? Bea got out the flyer and tried to explain how to have them made in multiple colours rather than one was significantly more expensive, especially the more popular the colours you went for.

As Bea started talking the Head Boy went to sit at the back of the room with the students furthest away. I could see Bea watching him do this nervously as she tried to keep introducing the options to everyone and outlining her ideas for the best way to make a decision.

The debate was disorganised and chaotic from the beginning. Clearly, it had been discussed outside the meeting and people had strong opinions about which colour they preferred, whether colours should be put out to consultation and whether they should go for multiple colours.

(Extract from the Field diary)

Despite raising her voice, Bea could not stop the individual conversations and so her job was extremely difficult. Rather than one conversation three different groups were all talking about it at the same time.

Bea tried to restart the meeting by introducing the flyer and by suggesting that due to price and convenience she thought navy hoodies would be the best choice. There was obviously serious disagreement with this, however while those at the main table remained at the table arguing for different colours etc, the small group at the back, driven by two boys became extremely angry and turned their back on the rest of the group. One of the boys began whispering to the others and a few of them turned their chairs away from the main table to listen to him, some prefects walked across to his table at the back after he called them over. Speaking in a low voice, he had a different idea to how it should work out and was sharing his thoughts with several closer friends, but the rest of the group could not hear what he was saying. Intermittently, at key points he did shout out to comments to Bea as she tried to continue the discussion suggesting that different things would not work.

(Extract from the Field diary)

Taking a feminist understanding of power, research suggests that females can be disempowered in four key aspects; through the construction of knowledge; the access to voice; their position in authority; and their positionality (Tisdell 1998). In these ways Bea was immediately disempowered in her role as Chair of the meeting by the way the table of boys at the back set up an opposition that they deliberately kept her out of and did not give her the reasons for their opposition. They ensured the knowledge they possessed about how others felt was kept away from Bea so she could not act on it. Her voice and authority were undermined by the counterarguments being debated out of her

earshot and her exclusion from the knowledge they had about opposing ideas. This taken from the Field diary:

> *Bea quickly became flustered as she could not concentrate on the responses of the main table and did not know how to respond to the conversation at the back. On the main table people were suggesting surveys across year 11 asking whether people would buy a hoodie and if so, which colour. Other prefects thought this could get over-complicated. Bea was trying to listen to everybody's responses but was unsettled by some of the boy's comments, who were suggesting she had not thought about this or that that approach would not work. Bea made some attempt to ask the small group to come back to the table and join the discussion, but the two boys refused and said they wanted to discuss it over there, at this point they would get up and take people out of the room and then come back in. This meant door was opening and shutting a lot, and this all continued to distract Bea while she tried to keep talking about the options with the main table.*

By refusing to engage in the debate Bea was trying to start up, the boys created their own source of power at the back, which Bea and the other prefect girls were excluded from. An interesting and implicit positioning is that the Head Boy Henry, who, had played mediator and did not join in by shouting and contradicting Bea directly, still chose to go and sit with the boys at the back. This undermined Bea's position and contradicted his promise at the start of the meeting that he and Bea would run the meeting together, an observation from the field diary:

> *Interestingly, the Head Boy, Henry who had started the meeting stood alongside Bea and had seemed to be trying to play the role of mediator or peacemaker, was back and forth from both tables, however he also allowed the two boys causing conflict to take him out of the room and when he came back, he did not offer any solutions.*

The way the boys allowed Henry into their group but excluded Bea and the other girls disempowered the girls. Henry had access to the opinions and debates the boys and other prefects were having and could have used this to bring the group together. However, even though he kept

returning to Bea to say that they were unhappy with the meeting, he did not at any point try to explain their argument or reasons they were unhappy.

> *A teacher was there to 'facilitate', and she had spent several minutes at the large table shouting out suggestions about what might be done, rather than trying to help get the meeting under control. She then suddenly noticed the group at the back and became angry that they were not sitting with the others, she took a very forceful approach demanding they re-join the table. This antagonised the two conflict boys, who got upset and reported that they wanted to stay where they were, however as the discussion turned to trying to understand why they might be upset, the teacher shouted they must re-join the table. They did so but were clearly very angry and sat looking at the group in a hostile way.*
>
> *(Extract from the Field diary)*

This is another example of gender code embedded in the power relations of the school. Mr D, in his absence, had delegated one of his female staff a position of power without giving her any authority, or access to knowledge. He had asked one of the female teaching assistants to sit and observe the meeting, without participating, but also given them no information about what the group was doing or the objectives of the meeting. Based on the lack of authority this member of staff had, the intervention made no different and in fact antagonised the situation further. From the field diary:

> *Starting again Bea tried to initiate the idea of just choosing one colour, this upset the boys who shouted that they did not agree with this suggestion. At this point, two of the girls from my research group, friends of Bea got very angry and told one of the boys he was behaving in an immature way and called him a child. This made him very angry, and he started to complain about not being listened to and the girls driving through their ideas. By this point the meeting should have finished and students were supposed to be at their enrichment activities, to avoid the argument many left saying they would talk about it later. The girls remembered we were meeting to plan volunteering activities, but while they were finding a classroom, there was still plenty of arguing and name-calling such as 'they're so immature, arrogant, childish' as well as objections to navy or some of the other colours that had been requested. Lots of the group were talking in the corridors and I could see the girls were*

feeling either angry or upset. The two boys, who had caused the rift, and argued with some of the head girls' friends also seemed upset.

Be the end of this exchange, the boys and other prefects were suggesting that the six prefect girls in my study had acted undemocratically in the decision-making process, which it is important to look at in the context of girls and leadership. Applying frameworks of identity, girls within my research group had all identified leadership as something that was more suited to boys. Bea had repeatedly claimed her capital rested on her sense of caring and empathy, and the fact she would listen to everyone, while the girls and boys themselves ad identified leadership as a male trait and capital of the Head Boy. In reality as Bea tried to fulfil the leadership responsibilities that Mr D had encouraged her to do, she was not listened to, and it was suggested she was undemocratic. It is a case example of the ways in which the girls' agency and power was again diminished at St Francis due to the gender code within the school, prefect relationships that mimicked teacher relationships and the consequences when individuals act out of the gendered and coded roles they are moulded into (Arnot, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided detailed field diary extracts to show how gender code entrenched at St Francis within the senior and staff structures finds its way to the prefect group and influences the way decision-making plays out between girls and boys. While the boys in the prefect group do not represent typical gendered constructs of masculinity, as explored in chapter two, other ways that boys are rewarded by leadership opportunities and knowledge through teacher relations, still acts to ensure girls remain in a lower position of power within the school structure. The way the girls in my study identify themselves also plays a role into how the boys receive more agency and power and gendered relations are reproduced. The conflict and events within the prefect room and the crisis of girlhood experienced by Bea is significant because it shows how gender code, embedded within the social structure of St Francis, plays out. What is noteworthy here is that it is Bea's peers, both the other boys and girls in the prefect group, who reinforce gendered perspectives and reproduce behaviours. Constructs of girlhood explored in this study have shown a conflict between fulfilling roles of femininity and a modern discourse equality for girls and learning to be strong and outspoken and the events in this chapter show evidence of this (Gilligan, 2002).

When Bea attempted, as had been suggested to her by Mr D, to stand up and exercise her leadership, she was undermined and not listened to with more of the group listening to the head boy. This fits with research that shows that very often it is through peer relations that gender constructs are upheld. (Stromquist, 2007). Gender code at St Francis meant that among Bea's peers there was a lack of acceptance when she took the lead. The significance of Bea's crisis following this incident is that it fits the modern dilemma of girls and girlhood described by Aapola et al 2005. By being confident and speaking out, girls find themselves outside of gendered societal expectations of themselves which is a disorientating feeling, voiced by Bea when she asked me and the others '*did I do something wrong*?'. As outlined by Gilligan's theories of gendered censorship, at St Francis the prefect group seemed far less comfortable with Bea speaking out and taking charge than they did when the Head Boy took leadership. This can only be explained by different expectations based on gender and it fits with research around girlhood that suggests girls either have to learn to live with being outsiders, as the girls in my study referred to themselves, or censor themselves and avoid taking positions of advocacy or leadership. The next chapter will examine the types of volunteering the girls participated in and how this further confirmed gendered ideas about girls and caring roles and shows how this too ensures girls remain in positions of diminished power and agency.

Chapter 8: The girls as volunteers

Introduction

This chapter describes the role the girls played as they took a weekly volunteering role at a local care home. Each week, the girls sat with eight residents at the care home up the hill, coincidentally they were all women as the only man was usually asleep or receiving visitors. The chapter looks at how gendered roles within volunteering and conceptualisations of female caring play an important role in how the girls' experienced volunteering outside the school, and the similarities this had with the gendered roles they had played at school and with the distribution of school duties and power. The chapter looks at the ways that the girls saw themselves as volunteers and considers some of the caring responsibilities they all already have. Within the volunteering experience the girls were subject to everyday sexism and the opportunity gave them very little opportunity to become more visible or increase their agency, instead volunteering at the care home was an example of service volunteering that reproduces gendered and classed identities, relations, and roles that the girls were accustomed to. This chapter reviews the way notions of caring and gendered ways of moral reasoning play an important part in the way girls and women are constricted by gendered roles not just within school, but within families and wider society.

Recent research by Dean (2021a) drawing on feminist ethnographies of communities of women of colour, and of working-class, has suggested that positioned outside formal structures, informal volunteering, carried out by these groups binds communities together, yet is unrecognised, devalued and rendered illegitimate. His critical approach is valuable here as he like this study uses theories of identity and capital developed by Skeggs (2002). Skeggs (2002) describes how formal understanding of what constitutes volunteering and social value legitimacies middle-class cultures, while working-class cultures become delegitimized when volunteering experiences are tied in to raising opportunities and employability and acts of helping and giving are invisible.

The care home

This final phase of my ethnography with the girls took me away from the walls of St Francis and up to the care home, a small home with only about twenty-one residents, with about eight to ten who regularly made it to the lounge room where we met with them during the afternoon. As my methodology chapter describes my relationship with the girls changed once we started volunteering

together and spending the afternoon outside the school gates. The care home was not an inspiring place, the staff looked tired and overworked, the building needed painting, the residents were always watching TV or sleeping. Experiencing this environment with the students each week led to more reflections about the role of caring and empathy in service-volunteering. This kind of volunteering, which did not provide chances to develop skills or contribute to a project was based on the amount of empathy and care the girls felt as it was not a particularly happy place to be. From the field diary:

> *Today the girls and I visited the residential home for the first time. We were supposed to leave at 1:50 on the dot, but the girls were grabbing coats as it was pouring with rain, which meant we left a little bit late. Mr D walked the first part with us, but he was in a hurry, and he left us after we dropped two girls at a primary school. On the way the girls were quite excited but making jokes about what old people say and how they smell. They talked about how some of the residents may have dementia and forget their names or ask the same question over and over again. The girls' worries were whether mainly that they would fall asleep when they were talking or even die when they were there. At times they argued, defending the opinions of old people, and Bea accused the other girls of being too cruel. It took us a while to get there, Annie seemed to know where she was going but it ended up with us walking up a lot of steps, which the rest of the girls moaned about. We were soaked when we got to the top. It took us a while to find the entrance and the girls started hesitating. Eventually we got in and I talked to the care home manager, reassuring her I would attend to supervise each week due to the girls' age.*

The first few weeks the girls did not make many comments as we left, they never rushed to leave, but waited until the hour was up and as soon as we were outside the home, they all just started talking about their plans for the evenings. As time went on though, the girls did get more reflective and spent time thinking about the lonely life the women were leading. Observing the girls at the care home led me to think the types of volunteering experiences that are there. In my previous role leading youth volunteering projects in London, some of the young people had been involved in the regeneration of a local area. One group had designed, and spray painted the benches in the park next to their school and provided a space that their peers were proud to visit to sit in and enjoy. Another group of girls had taken their campaign on girls and media images to the House of Commons. Volunteering experiences can be so different and have such different consequences.

The service volunteering the girls were involved in at the care home was significantly different to the more exciting and powerful types of volunteering engaged in by the London students. Different volunteering experiences are inspired by different motivations and rewards. Experiences where young people volunteered and made a change led to increased prestige, reputation, and CV opportunities. The only reward for the service volunteering undertaken by the girls was '*the warm glow*' (Andreoni, 1990), the selfish pleasure of doing good. These are rooted in morals of caring and altruism and are significantly different to the motivations seen by the boys in earlier chapters. As a consequence of the way the girls in my study had been coerced into volunteering, and how they were rewarded by a sense of doing their duty, fulfilling their responsibility, and supporting the school and Mr D, they continued to participate at the care home, taken from the field diary.

> *On the walk-up Annie said she was fed up with being asked to do everything again. They all said they wanted to keep being involved in the research and continue to visit the old ladies, but they did not care about getting an award.*
>
> *I had so many reflections on this as we walked to the centre. The girls were feeling negative about school. A couple of them had been penalised for erratic attendance and were not allowed to go on a trip to Thorpe Park the next day. I watched the girls at the care home, the break had made a big difference, the residents were over the moon to see them after such a long time, most remembered them, which meant something to the girls as they know that most have dementia. The girls seemed so natural, they sat and listened and made polite conversation, different to the nervousness they had during the first weeks. On the way back the girls talked about how much it obviously meant to the residents and how important it was. They talked about what would happen when they stopped going and that they absolutely should keep coming as it was expected and well received. The girls left the home promising each resident to visit again next week and they expressed again a desire to finish DofE but continue visiting the home.*

There were no other rewards and the fact that several times they said they wanted to give up DofE but wanted to continue visiting the home shows that their motivations were rooted in care, obligation, and empathy. This was confirmed when they talked to me about their reasons for visiting each week. Interviews taken from the field diary:

Annie: We do like going though.

Verity: Yes, I do, do you. Because it's nice to talk to old people about their past lives.

Freya: they are really nice people.

Etta: We go there because we can. Because we want to help the old people.

Contrary to DofE evidence of impact to communities and individuals, this volunteering was not an example of creating change in their communities or even developing their skills. It was service volunteering and if anything, it was an extension of some of the examples of informal volunteering the girls already did. The volunteering experience served to reproduce the same inequalities and stereotypes the girls were used to experiencing. However, towards the end Bea did start reflecting on the experience in a slightly different way, thinking about the importance of the volunteering in the world, and the ways they could use it to make the world better.

Bea reflected on her volunteering experiences in her Head Girl presentation.

I would be really happy to represent you all and at the school events I would be excited to represent the school in the community. I would like to get students to visit old people's homes and I would like to inspire people to do what they want to do. When they asked me what would you change if you were head girl? I'd make sure older students were nicer to younger students. Sometimes they can be quite horrible. And I'd improve bullying… I'd try and help people with relief because sometimes teachers don't know how to deal with it and people would prefer a younger person to talk to and just, I'd make sure we helped more. (November 2019)

As time went on, I felt like the girls were engaging with the volunteering experience in a deeper way than just as a school duty, they were thoughtful before and after and one day Etta and Bea shared these reflections.

On one occasion after we had visited the Care home Bea and Etta started to think about the value of the women's lives. They felt sad that their stories were only hard by them, and they started to feel sad about the women ending their life in there. Bea decided that she would

like to do something for the ladies. She remembered that once Mr D had organised a tea party for student's grandparents in the school hall, and she said she'd like to do that for these ladies. She asked Mr D as soon as we got back to school, and he said he'd think about it.

It was significant for me on one occasion when the girls said to me that they wanted to give up DofE, but they still wanted to visit the care home. If they dropped DofE there would be no motivation except that of the warm glow and a sense of supporting the elderly ladies. It reassured me that despite evidence that showed how mandatory approaches could demotivate young people's participation, for these girls at least they were still more interested in volunteering to help and support others, rather than for self-motivated gains.

Volunteering to Care

The experiences of the girls at St Francis provides further learning about how girls, specifically are encouraged to carry out tasks of informal volunteering and the incentives for this lie in the way that families and society expect of girls, the moral reasoning of girls, and their taking on of caring responsibilities. It is hardly surprising when care characterises the way they are encouraged to contribute and behave that they believe it is a form of capital for them. When thinking about motivation and rewards for volunteering, the example of the girls and their visits to the care home provides an example of how volunteering as service is rooted in caring and empathic motivations and the way they perceive and cultivate relations. This is a common theme running through this study from the moment the girls were recruited, to their position as prefects, to their volunteering in the community, the driving theory behind each of their actions and participation is their sense of caring and responsibility. Care defines all their relationships even the research one and the growing care they felt for me as a friend and role model. In the early days, their sense of care for others was a key driver in their reasons for joining the DofE, just as it had been in other activities such as prefect duties and Youth Alpha. During our first visit to the care home, I found the experience shocking and sad due to the conditions and obvious limitations to the elderly residents' lives. They were mainly restricted to their chairs, many of them did not receive visitors, and the home was running on low funding and capacity as it was run down and poorly maintained. I imagined the girls had not enjoyed the experience very much, and as the adult accompanying them, I felt a responsibility of care for them. A description of one of our first visits is given below taken from the field diary:

The home is quite small, with lots of corridors and rooms. There is a strong smell of urine. The lounge is not very bright, although there are windows and there were about six elderly people dozing in armchairs. The girls did not want to go in. They crowded behind me and even Etta, who had set it up was lost for words. There was a staffroom opposite, and the team were making loud jokes and laughing. Eventually, we got through the door. The elderly people were excited when we arrived, and some looked up to chat immediately. Others did not seem to notice our arrival. The girls needed a lot of encouragement, they huddled together at the entrance but finally started to take chairs and got into pairs sitting with the residents. There were some long silences before they slowly made conversation and asked questions very quietly. I tried to talk to one lady, who reprimanded me when I tried to shorten her name. The girls nearest me looked surprised when she shouted at me and almost seemed afraid of her. The manager brought us some squash in plastic cups and the girls moved around slightly glad of the excuse I think to move away and have a drink. One lady was talking about her two teddy bears as if they were real, it took the girls sometime before they understood that she was talking about them, and they did not know what to say when she claimed they were whispering about her. In the end, they chose not to react and changed the subject instead, but afterwards they admitted they were shocked. At first the girls were quiet when we left and admitted it was harder than they thought. As we walked down the road the girls became chattier and talked affectionately about some of the people that they'd talked to saying they were sweet and gentle. They had talked about the ladies' families and jobs, upbringing, and houses. They were still shocked at how one old lady Margaret had talked to them at times, she was quite angry and confused during the session and at times she had deliberately challenged what they said and been quite provocative, which they were surprised about. Overall, though they said they were pleased with the session and keen to go again.

The girls surprised me as we left the home, as soon as we turned the corner, they became more animated and shared their experiences of the conversations they had engaged in. They all talked about returning without mentioning any of the negative feelings that I had felt about home. They were not surprised or distressed by the experience and accepted their role as a volunteer at the home. The way the girls accepted their role as volunteer at the home was like the way they had accepted their role as prefects at school, and accepted responsibility for the duties attached. Both

roles relied on the sense of service that drove the school and family context for the girls. Just as Arnot's (2002) gender code played out at school with females in the pastoral, domestic and caring roles, it was inherent in the structures at the care home. Residential staff, nurses, and kitchen assistants were female, and it took a few months before we saw male staff in the building. One day, after a few months, there was more noise than usual and several locums were sitting in the staffroom on a break, these were all males. Interestingly, the building manager, who sometimes let us in and out was male, but he was not always there. Just as Arnot (2002:26) describes how gender code produces classed and sexed students who will take their place in the social order according to the roles and duties they have been accustomed to taking at school and society, I saw that in this moment at the care home. The girls took their caring role at the home without question or surprise.

Other similarities existed between the girl's role as prefect and role as volunteer. Within prefect relations and duties, caring, had left the girls in a position of less knowledge and agency, and now again, their volunteering at the care home, despite being chosen by them was subject to the decisions and information released by Mr D. When I returned after the summer holidays to continue with my ethnography and accompanying the girls to the home, everything was upside-down and chaotic. Despite several emails with Mr D arranging the first visit back and confirming details with the care home, Mr D clearly had not informed the girls that I or their volunteering would continue. Taken from the field diary after I returned in September:

> *Today I was able to meet with the girls after a long summer break and a struggle to get into the school after a long break and a lot of problems getting access in September. I was worried that they would have lost interest in the research, and I was aware of how much pressure would be increased now that they had moved to Year 11.*
>
> *I was met by the teacher Mr D who looked stressed as usual and told me that unfortunately he would need the girls for 15 minutes first as he had to tell them something really important about being Head girl, but that they were all ready to go after that. He invited me to sit in for the speech and take them afterwards. When I arrived at the classroom, they seemed surprised to see me and were not aware that we would be continuing, Mr D admitted then he had forgotten to tell them. Mr D gave them some information about the Head girl programme quickly, telling them videos must be made by Weds (less than a week) and then urged the girls to get up to go to the volunteering at the resident's home. When the girls showed surprise because most of the time was gone, he said that we must fulfil our duty this week and think about it next week.*

In line with the way that the girls had learned to serve at school, the girls participated in service volunteering. The way the girls participated in this service volunteering fits with Gilligan's theories of female voice, moral thinking and the way that caring has been conceptualised as a feminine attribute. Gilligan's study into the female voice is a focus on the way relationships govern girls' moral responses. Participating in school duties and service volunteering at the care home is rooted in putting a responsibility for care ahead of a sense of self and to continue engaging in something because of a sense of duty and responsibility for others. Gilligan also talks about a crisis and the silencing of girls at the time when this contradiction for caring for themselves and caring for others manifests. During this time girls become conflicted between and being true to themselves but also caring for the feelings of other people. At St Francis, the girls' feelings for the residents were their priority in their decision to volunteer and keep volunteering at the care home. Volunteering for the girls as part of their DofE was not about CV development, skills or making change in communities, it was about caring as described by Gilligan:

> *The ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone (1993: 62).*

In a context where so often the social hierarchy is based on rational moral decision-making and asset-driven incentives for volunteering, the act of caring is rendered unseen. As Gilligan has shown for as long as studies are rooted in a patriarchal perspective then women's judgements will be tied to feelings of empathy and compassion and devalued against more rational decision-making. She argues we need a better understanding of women's moral voice to understand the ways decisions are made. Gilligan's theories set up different contradictions embedded within female moral reasoning and voice. The first is the responsibility for self and responsibility for others, the other is responsibility to self and the moral responsibility of doing the right thing. Examples the girls showing these inner challenges and tensions are to be found within this ethnography. The moral responsibility of visiting the home each week, despite the feeling of being uncomfortable or the clashes it has with exam revision and prefect duties. The moral responsibility of not letting the women down, despite their school pressures are all examples of how Gilligan theorises about the decisions of girls. Evidence from this field work also suggests that conflicts within decision-making are gendered, the girls feel less able opt out than the boys, they seem to have less power to do so.

Throughout this ethnography there are examples where boys are more able to opt out when activities did not suit, and even with the visits to the care home, Mr D, who visited the care home once and did not enjoy it, refused to ever accompany the girls there again. The conflict of care and responsibility for the girls or as a school duty did not incentivise Mr D to return. The girls are taught care should form their decisions, and it does, however, the girls are just expected to behave that way and do not receive any particular recognition of its value within the reward system of the school.

Volunteering and Gender Stereotypes

The ways that St Francis and other schools had introduced the DofE had at times taken a gendered approach emphasising camping and building fires for boys, and by suggesting caring duties as volunteering for girls. While the boys as St Francis used leading their local scout group as their volunteer activity and were encouraged to take on lead and communication tasks, the girls had been offered reading with children from the partner primary school, the option arranged by their school. Even the volunteering options that the girls listed for themselves, which included caring for the elderly, and working in a charity shop, showed how they themselves identified with duties linked to domestic and caring roles. The way the girls thought about DofE volunteering was based on the informal volunteering and caring responsibilities that already formed part of their experience.

All the girls were involved in babysitting or domestic help for family daily. Both Verity and Etta came from large families and therefore had important responsibility for younger siblings. Etta often hurried back early from our visit to the care home as she had to pick up her little brother from school, while Verity never made plans for the weekend until she had checked whether her sister needed her for childcare. Bea and Kate came from a large family too that was active in their neighbourhood and local community, and their mother regularly volunteered them to help people out. The girls did not see this as volunteering but admitted that they did not get paid for it. All the girls admitted they helped with shopping, cleaning, and childcare. The girls' experiences fit with research on families and responsibilities that suggest that within the family both boys and girls are asked to do chores and take responsibility, but in different ways. While boys may be encouraged to sort out the bins, or wash the car, girls are often relied on for domestic chores, babysitting and caring for grandparents (Brannen, 1995, Muddiman et al, 2020). Research by Ferrant et al (2014) shows that women and girls spend up to ten times more time on unpaid care work, and the distribution is linked to stereotypes around gender roles.

Bea talked about helping her neighbours and how her mum was proud when she was able to help a man in need in her community. From the field diary:

> *Talking about why it is important to help in your community, Bea said that once this man was wandering around her neighbourhood and no one knew where to take him, but she was able to come along and tell them who he was. She said this made her proud.*

Bea and Kate are both able to share many stories of helping their neighbours in this way. Other studies of young girls and voluntary action have found similar trends, Taylor-Collins, (2018) in her study of teenage girls from three different schools in England found a trend in the participation of girls in informal volunteering. Taylor-Collins describes how only low numbers of girls claimed they had actively engaged in formal volunteering, yet in reality many of them had childcare and helping responsibilities among their neighbourhood networks. Bea also fit this trend describing similar participation, but admitting she had never considered it volunteering, from the field diary:

> *Bea shared a story about keeping a man with dementia company while she was babysitting his grandchildren. She said he always come down but never remembers her, he talks and talks about WW2. She does this because her mum had told the neighbour that she would not mind, and the kids really love her. She asked me whether I would call that volunteering.*

Girls' and women's participation in helping and caring outside formal organisations is a common theme picked up across research looking at women and the voluntary sector, which Dean (2021) and others (Taylor, 2004, Martinez and Minkler, 2006) refer to as 'informal volunteering'. Within the debates about the 'narrow' definition of civic engagement that relies too heavily on formal volunteering that is only recorded when individuals register with an organisation and a recognition that representations of formal volunteering hide the contributions of women and girls (Martinson and Minkler, 2006). Informal volunteering is defined as unpaid, voluntary work or volunteering not coordinated by an organization or institution (Einolf, 2016). Focusing the discussion on more informal and invisible ways citizens support people within their local community, Martinez et al (2011) have called sought to broaden the conversation about the different voluntary acts that contribute to a community's wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, a gender difference has been found in

participation in informal volunteering, with women more likely to engage in activities that are often described as invisible as they refer to the acts of helping that often go unseen or that on their own do not seem to be making a huge difference. Yet often these acts can make the difference between a vulnerable individual coping or not coping (Martinez et al, 2011).

Indeed, Dean (2011), has argued that informal volunteering, done through genuine community networks and through family and neighbourly bonds is often the most important type of civil society action, it is often the action that can matter the most. Informal volunteering typically includes caring for the elderly or sick, families and other members of the community. Again, this shows a type of volunteering that is more likely to be engaged in by women, and more likely to be devalued in a society, where helping is not recognised as leading a change in people's lives. These are the types of activities engaged in by the girls at St Francis and it means that just as a substantial amount of volunteering time for women is going unrecognised, this is also true of the girls at St Francis and the volunteering they do, it goes unrecognised as they fail to recognise themselves.

Einolf has discussed how the social norms around gender roles and duties are reflected by women's choices in volunteering:

> *Some types of volunteering have strong gender norms, with men dominating the staffs of volunteer fire and rescue squads and women making up the majority of hospice volunteers. Differences in other areas are less clear. Some studies find that men are more likely to engage in sports and recreation volunteering, while women are more likely to volunteer for religious, human services, and educational organizations. Men are also more likely to volunteer with groups organized at their place of employment. (2011:1094).*

This can be applied to choices made by the St Francis girls linking women's volunteering with caring, nurturing and teaching roles. Dean (2021a) using Skeggs (2002) provides examples of how informal volunteering and helping characterises and becomes the identity and capital of working-class communities, women's groups and among people of colour. Very often, among those social groups, which are subject to exclusion and marginalisation, the ties of kinship are closer and informal volunteering is prevalent. This way of understanding how communities engage in invisible volunteering can apply to the wider relations and experiences of the St Francis girls, they are all driven and identify themselves as carers and kind, which is hardly surprising when examples of their involvement in informal volunteering is made visible. Dean (2021a) argues that the current neo-

liberal framing of formal volunteering with its links to working-class employability is a framing that hides and misrepresents their real volunteering experiences, and I believe this is what happened to the girls in my study. They are always considered as the ones who get involved the least, the ones who must be reminded of their service and duty, while simultaneously, deeper study showed the quantity of their informal contributions.

The role of volunteering and taking leadership is also important. Just as at St Francis the girls doubted their ability to make decisions or take a lead, and left that to the boys, research studies have shown that while women play huge roles in organising voluntary action, there is a gender bias of men within formal leadership levels of the sector. Muddiman et al (2020) have looked at the role the family plays in supporting participation in civil society. Other feminist researchers, have before, highlighted how the domestic domain is often disregarded in discussions of civil society, and how this means women are often excluded (Phillips, 2002). The research suggests a pattern of very gender specific roles within the voluntary sector that is reflected in the volunteering experiences of the St Francis girls. While the boys took roles representing the school and delegating prefect duties, the girls continued their caring roles into their volunteering by choosing to visit a local care home each week.

Returning to the acoustics of the school, the ritualised school duties, the relations and how a collective sense of service pervades, I soon realised that external organisations such as the DofE were quickly dominated by the social order of the school. Despite presenting DofE according to the organisation's mission and vision, the programme is so heavily reliant on teachers for sign ups and delivery of the key components that from the beginning, the project became another example of the power of gender code working within St Francis. This became apparent in the students that DofE had access to via sign-up sheets, which as discussed above was very female dominated. DofE also became a prefect activity and subject to the power and structures of the prefect group. Even so, with the high numbers of girls, DofE became about reading to primary school students and visiting the elderly. The sport component became about yoga and dance.

The DofE present their programme in assembly in most schools, although for many students the programme is well known due to the expedition part. At St Francis this led to many gendered jokes including 'girls surviving without a hairdryer' and 'having nowhere to do their make-up'. I watched the DofE assembly in other schools as the first part of my ethnography and watched as the presentation became fused with the different narratives and the acoustics of each school. In another school where DofE was being offered to targeted students as part of an alternative curriculum the teacher leading the assembly focused on skills and career opportunities. At a local boys' school, the

teacher had already told me engagement was low and that the DofE presentation on its own would not yield any great sign ups. The teacher told me show he had needed to put some extra time into it, he'd brought in his tent and some gear from home and set up the stage like a campsite, hoping to appeal to the adventure side of 'boys', building fires and sleeping outside. '*He said the tent and campfire on the stage was the carrot when he presented the advantages to doing the award*.' In every school the DofE needed a strong teacher with good relations with the students to get it going and St Francis was no different. It is no coincidence that Mr D's prefects became the DofE group too, just as they had been the Youth Alpha group and the local heritage site volunteer group. Volunteering at St Francis was built on gendered ideas that were held by the school, purported by DofE, and held by the girls themselves, reinforced by their families and wider society.

St Francis and Cultural Capital

This study began interested in class-based differences in volunteering. The school was chosen due to its location and the status of the school, the fact it had been declared requiring improvement. This study does rest on arguments that within a class-based perspective that has driven volunteering policy for young people; the argument is that those in higher socio-economic areas are more likely to be participating in formal volunteering, with those in lower socio-economic areas reporting less (Dean, 2015). While this is also linked to pressures on time and capacity among those in lower paid jobs, Dean (2015b) also uses a Bourdieusian analysis to show how among young people there is a sense that volunteering is a middle-class thing to do. Certainly, in some contexts, scouts, and guides and DofE have been attached to middle class schools and families.

Narratives within school and education policy documents have often focused on the ways extra-curricular activities in school including volunteering and enrichment can improve a young person's 'cultural capital', this term again borrowed from Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) found its way into OFSTED guidance for schools in 2019 and was subject to much criticism from within the discipline of Educational Research (Hall et al, 2021). The way it has been applied within a school context suggests that by offering different cultural activities you can level up all young people and ensure they receive the same life chances. Yet, as Reay, points out (2004:74): '*Within the sociology of education most conceptualizations of cultural capital within empirical research have focused on high status cultural participation*…' and she cites research studies which '*operationalize cultural capital primarily as knowledge of or competence with highbrow aesthetic culture such as classical music and fine art*.' Yet Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualisation of cultural capital is far more than

highbrow taste, it refers to language, preferences, and orientations, it is embodied in identity over time and becomes a distinction in a child's mind that is then institutionalised by family and school. Nevertheless, St Francis applied the idea of improving capital by diversifying its activities and providing important school headlines around the ones they considered the most different, Chinese, and Horse-riding.

Within an hour on my first research day, I had been informed about the ambition set and realised for enrichment, and the inclusion of new activities by the Head, Deputy Head and Mr D. When the first enrichment day came, Mr D and the Head celebrated with the students the fact that their school now could offer Chinese and horse-riding in their new enrichment programme. However, while a small group of prefects' volunteer and high attaining students take Chinese, the rest of the school remained organised into larger groups and in many ways, gender ordered activities. While small mixed groups are engaged in baking and school newspaper, the larger part of the school, over two thirds were involved in team sports, boxing, football, and rugby predominately large groups of boys, running and netball for mainly all girl groups. In Reay's 2004a educational research project, she shows how cultural capital is employed as a conceptual tool for examining family tastes add up to significant class differences. The activities at St Francis rely on an assumption of these same class differences, the celebration of them assumes the students at St Francis are unlikely to have tried horse-riding or speaking Chinese. The suggestion is also that by taking on these typically middle-class activities the school can increase its position and the opportunities for its students.

Volunteering is also used in this way. Based on assumptions that volunteering is more likely to be middle-class driven and the data collection of the #iwill campaign that shows how in many of these lower socio-economic areas, low numbers of formal volunteering are being reported, what both fail to acknowledge is that young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have caring responsibilities and be engaged in informal acts of volunteering. Identifying the barriers to young people's volunteering has not been researched enough, particularly in relation to studies of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds (Haski-Leventhal, 2016, Davies, 2018). Limited research suggests structural factors such as access to information and exclusion does play a role (Low et al, 2007). However, a recent study by Davies (2018) with young people in Glasgow has shown how the image of volunteering among some social groups, and the negative stereotyping of young people in particular areas are important factors as well. Earlier examples in this study showed how that was not only classed but gendered with a suggestion the boys would think they were too cool for volunteering, relating to Smith's findings in 1999 that described how being both a boy and from a lower socio-economic background reduced the likelihood of your participation in volunteering.

Shannon et al (2009) have shown how perceptions and relationships between adults and young people are important or increasing participation. In neighbourhoods where the relationship between the two group was weaker, young people were less likely to sign up. This can be applied as a barrier for the St Francis girls who described feeling disengaged with their community by the way adults perceived them. Fieldnotes show how the girls are subjected to stereotypes about them based on their age, class, and gender, from the field diary:

> *Etta: This morning, right, I was walking down the hill and you know when the froth is coming out of your mouth (talking about seeing your breath in the cold) so I was just doing that because it was fun and this old woman behind me was like 'you shouldn't be smoking, especially before school' so I looked at her and (mimes blowing air from her mouth) and I just walked off which was really rude but she did not see me, all she saw was smoke coming from out of my mouth and suddenly started screaming at me about smoking.*
>
> *Annie: It's like when you go to the shops and the security guards follow you …*
>
> *Bea: yeh, they are just looking at you the whole way … in Boots they follow me.*
>
> *Etta: Or superdrug*
>
> *Annie: In M&S they follow me.*
>
> *Kate: They think all teenagers are the same but they're not.*
>
> *Etta: I get that some teenagers are, and they do what they believe, some do and it's a shame, but that's not everybody, the second you start judging people and saying that's what they do, that's when you've done something wrong, not that person*
>
> *Freya: they stereotype*
>
> *Kate: I want to say to some of the parents with kids who look at us, your kids are going to grow up just like us. They'll be teenagers soon and how are you treating us, are you going to treat your own kids like that when they're 13 or 15.*
>
> *Etta: It's the same with anything though, if we see a man down the road, when you are walking in the dark you are automatically going to think I need to stay away from him but that sexist, he's just a man.*

Later in the conversation the girls were talking about how hard it is to know where you can be involved in your community and how you sign up. Again, returning to the idea of how perceptions can act as a barrier, Bea talked about a time when she had tried to reach out to her community via social media platforms, this was recorded in an interview in the field diary:

> *Bea: Once you know those community pages well, I joined the community page for my area because I wanted to see what was going on, but you know what well and old people complain about teenagers, that is what most of the posts are.*
>
> *Kate: It's the same on the city page, the Facebook one, it is just full of negative stereotypes.*
>
> *I feel like they think we're just dumb kids or worse that we are the ones for damaging things in our community and nothing else…*

The girls as St Francis experienced prejudice, particularly because they were young people and this served as a barrier to wider participation and paved the way for how they were categorised as candidates for mandatory volunteering, under the guise that it would be good for them and provide opportunities and cultural capital. Assumptions around the lower aspirations of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds drive the way volunteering programmes are introduced into schools, as this example from a school focus group showed, taken from the field diary:

> *Traditionally the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is taught as an extra-curricular activity either at school, or at another provision. At this school, the DofE Award is set up with the aim of it being accessible to students of all backgrounds and abilities and it is an award which many will use to add value to their CV. At the school, there is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils who have SEN and other disabilities as well as the proportion of disadvantaged students being well above that seen nationally. With students making lower progress than the national standard and with very low starting points and poor attendance, achieving a DofE award would be valuable for students at this school. It was agreed that a class of twenty-eight students that were currently not engaging with their current curriculum would be the students to participate in this Award Programme.*

This nearby school tried to make DofE mandatory and part of an alternative curriculum, to limited success. At St Francis, the award became a mandatory prefect project. Both schools had challenges maintaining engagement because of a feeling of being told or coerced. There is extensive international research out there that shows motivation is undermined when volunteering is mandated or coerced, (Bessant, 2000; Brock, 2001; Brown, Kenny, Turner, and Prince, 2000; Deci and Ryan, 1987; Goodin, 2002; Nietz, 1999; Turnbull and Fattore, 1999). In England, in the case of the girls as St Francis, coercion into volunteering had challenges and undermined other informal volunteering contributions that the girls were engaged in. Due to the way mandated volunteering can often be targeted among students from lower socio-economic groups, this makes it a classed issue. The norm being that more affluent students or students at selective school may experience volunteering differently, given choices to participate or not participate, and more choices about the schemes and activities they engage in.

Skeggs (2002) has suggested that caring can form part of the way women from low socio-economic background form and fuse their identity, however I believe a different way of understanding this would be to understand how the girls in this study did not see themselves as possessing any cultural capital at all. Despite the efforts of the school to demonstrate a commitment to developing cultural capital, their efforts were only able to reach a few, while the rest were missed. The girls in my study almost seem to reject any notion of cultural capital by deliberately playing down any notion of their intellectual knowledge, tastes and cultural experiences.

Everyday Sexism

Volunteering can be described as a mechanism for challenging social inequalities, however the girls' experience volunteering at a local residential home was not an example of this, in fact it exposed them to examples of everyday sexism, as described by Bates, (2014). Bates' (2014) collection of women's stories describing the bias and prejudices girls and women experience every day in simple and unremarkable ways struck a chord, as I watched the girls engage with the elderly residents of the home. The first incident I recorded was an observation of Mr D's reactions to the home after he accompanied us on a visit a few weeks in. An interesting comparison is how the girls immediately accepted the depressing nature of the home, and straight away got used to the eclectic personalities of the residents. The girls never questioned whether they should be there and how they were treated by the residents during the volunteering session. This was in stark contrast to Mr D, from the moment he entered he was very uncomfortable, muttering about the smell and cleanliness of the

home and he did not respond well when some of the women residents' made jokes about their boyfriend arriving and how he was their toy boy. When he left, he appeared stressed and declared he was never going up there again and he did not, even though the girls asked him to on many occasions.

The girls, however, had to often respond to some very difficult comments from the residents including a lot of judgements from the women residents, who frequently commented on how short their skirts were, compared who in their opinion was the prettiest and least pretty, and asked them repeatedly about their behaviour, often urging them always to be good girls, and asking them when they thought they would have children. Despite sometimes feeling embarrassed by these comments and questions, the girls always answered politely, never questioned whether they should answer or challenge the questions, and they all remained devoted to visiting the home each week, from the field diary:

> *They were shocked at how Margaret had talked to them at times, being quite provocative, talking about their sense of dress, but they laughed about it too.*

The girls only talked to the women at the care home as the one man was asleep. Therefore, they heard the stories of all the women who had ended up in the coastal town that they were growing up in. The stories represented women of the working-class at that time. All except one had been born and raised in the East end of London, before making a move to the coast for their family to find work as life changed in the post-war period. All the women had worked in domestic work, hospitals, cleaners in hotels and had been responsible for bringing up their children. They described the business of their lives, the sadness when they children left, and this often formed the basis of the questions they asked the girls. Although, we often talked about the women's lives that they told us about, leaving South London for a life on the coast, having children, part-time jobs, the girls did not express any surprise at any of the gendered stereotypes that the women used when talking to them about behaviour and or their desire to have children. The girls seemed unaware of the everyday sexism that existed in the way that the women always felt like it was acceptable to comment on and make judgements about the girls' appearance. In fact, the only time the girls were shocked was when one of the women behaved impolite or in a slightly outrageous way. They all thought it was highly amusing that many of them had commented about Mr D being their boyfriend and they found of the ladies' behaviour quite shocking as she often got very opinionated and cross, '*and behaved in*

ways they did not expect from old ladies', Etta, July 2019). I often asked the girls if they found the afternoons boring, the home was very dreary and the women repeated the same stories repeatedly, it was cold walking up in winter and it involved a steep hill, but the girls never complained and volunteered beyond the six months saying they knew the women would miss them.

The everyday sexism that the girls received at the care home took me back to other times I had heard them subject to similar comments at school as referenced in earlier chapters. Mr D had told the Head Girl once that her job was to *'look pretty',* and the boys were told to '*forget the idea that size matters*'. Just as at the care home, the girls did not appear to notice or object. It was just a part of everyday life.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways the girls experienced volunteering outside school. It showed how service volunteering at the care home served to reinforce notions of caring and relied on the girls' sense of empathy and duty. The girls were subjected to everyday sexism within the experience and the choices offered to them reinforced gender roles they took at home and at school, rather than offer them an experience to change or act differently. Applying Gilligan's theories of women's moral development builds on the theories that feminists have developed that show how women compromise their sense of self by taking on the role of carer and are less able to exercise power and position. This chapter concludes the exploration of the different roles the girls took on within the social structure of St Francis and shows how volunteering experiences were entwined with the roles and identities students have at school, these are carried with them outside school and into wider society.

Chapter 9: Reflections on 'Leaving the Field'

Introduction

This final empirical chapter will reflect on my research as I concluded my fieldwork and withdrew to finish my analysis and move to the writing up stage. 'Leaving the field' as it is termed by ethnographers such as Delamont and Atkinson (2021) and Bloor and Wood (2006) is a stage of research that is '*a seldom told story*' (Iversen, 2009:9) as it is not always written about. Choosing the time to withdraw and the reflective and analytical processes that follow afterwards are an important further aspect of the research relationship. This chapter will address the way my time in the field came to an end; physically. This was due to the escalating exam pressures the girls' faced, the imminent arrival of my baby, and the impact of the pandemic with the unexpected arrival of COVID-19. These combined factors ensured that finally that there could not be any final visits to the school to gather additional data or clarifications. During lockdown, however, in many ways my research continued as the girls continued to send me messages via Mr D, telling me how they were finding life in lockdown and their disorientation at finding the exams that their whole life had been about, suddenly cancelled. The emotional connection certainly had not ended with the end of my fieldwork. This chapter gives an overview of my research process once I had physically left the field, the ways I kept in touch with the girls' and how without knowing it they supported me in the final stages of writing up.

Iversen (2009) states that there are aspects that need attention when we think about leaving the field and discusses these aspects, which are reflexivity, and ethics. In keeping with the anthropological tradition, I re-visited the field several times after my initial completion date in December 2019 as the door still felt open. I completed two more studies with the boys to challenge my perspective as well as several more visits with the girls. This chapter will discuss the reflexivity and writing up and how the research process continued with my ongoing communication with the girls.

Researcher Reflexivity

My reflective practices in this study are influenced by Dean (2017, 2021b) where he cites Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) perspective on examining your own positionality, but also cautions against allowing reflexivity to become the dominant part of your work and an exercise of narcissism (Dean,

2021b). Indeed, with the many social researchers looking at inequality in society through close relationships with their research participants, it is important to be reflexive while still remembering that the social injustices underpinning the work are the driving purpose and it is important to not allow your own experiences to take over the story. This was a dominant theme as I carried out my work, and it is why I opted out of a more autoethnographical study, while there was crossover between the experiences of the girls and myself, (I realise I too was a girl who served) enough was different that I wanted this to be their story. While arguing that reflexivity is important, Dean's stance is it is vital to separate the '*purposes and functions between the spheres'* (2021:184), that it is essential to ask yourself '*what purpose is this reflexivity serving*?' (2021:184). So, while I accept like Dean suggests it is important to ask how my own class, race and gender affected the collection and interpretation of the data, it is also vital to understand the way I felt at particular times in the research may not add to the purpose of the study. The way I engaged in reflection on my field diary was not necessarily to spend time considering my own positionality within each link I had made, but to check emerging themes and links with the research participants.

The most important way I used reflexivity as a methodological tool in my study was reflecting on the gendered perspective I had taken and the themes I had drawn from the field diary in terms of power and exclusion from knowledge or gendered differences in experience and relations. As well as ensuring I represented the voices of the girls in my study, I was also aware that the conclusions I was drawing in my field diary analysis were based on the girls' perceptions and feelings about the boys and the other students, and this led me to reflect on trustworthiness and the accuracy of feelings and perceptions one day to the next. In line with Corwin and Clemens, (2012) suggestions on maintaining trustworthiness I shared my field diary with the girls in my study several times throughout my ethnography, particularly after events like their fight with the boys or their descriptions of how the boys had a different relationship with the teacher.

Rereading and sharing my field diary with the girls were important ways of allowing the girl themselves to reflect on whether this was a true representation or a reflection on the moment. Taking in printed our copies of transcriptions from my field diary was received positively by the girls. There were many cries of, '*did I say that*?', '*I don't remember saying that, but as I read it, I know it's me saying it*' Etta, November 2019. Interestingly, however, when I asked them to make any corrections or highlight anything there were not sure was accurate including my notes, the students did not make many alterations. Very often, when it came to feelings of gender difference, the accounts given by the field diary were discussed at length, but always with the conclusion that they were accurate and that there were gendered differences in relations and power. While I did not feel it was appropriate to share my feedback with teachers and staff, I could use the feedback on my

notes as themes to discuss with the boys and teachers and build a picture of how the boys saw themselves as behaving differently and how teachers saw the students differently.

Mr D's take on the different experiences of boys and girls was the uniqueness of the boys in the prefect group and their ability to take on responsibility, something he joked to me he had not had at that age. Mr D was always immensely proud of all the students and took any chance to discuss them to talk about how great they were, how great his relationship with them all was and laugh about the little things that went wrong.

It was important for me to reflect on the way I had portrayed the other key protagonist, Mr D, his optimism, and refusal to accept that anything was negative or had not worked out at St Francis, was both a likeable trait but also one of the ways, that paradoxically, unequal gender relations and exclusion were able to sit within the St Francis system. This became clearer to me, as I reflected on my field notes and the way he was portrayed within them. His representation of St Francis was one that everyone bought into and was a key reason both students and staff participated in activities and tasks. One of the key tensions within my ethnography was accepting that I could both like Mr D and his enthusiasm, and indeed feel bought into his family myself, while still acknowledging the way he drove and enabled the gendered relations and systems of St Francis. For a while, I do feel that the relationship I also had with Mr D, had held me back from drawing the links between his structures and inequality, however by employing reflexivity while both analysing my field diary, I realised I was allowing my personal feelings to cloud the way I was interpreting the data. Once I had seen his role in the relations more clearly, more examples appeared to me as visited the school.

Therefore, it was useful for me to engage in different research stages simultaneously. In line with grounded theory approaches described by Sköldberg & Alvesson (2017), I undertook parallel tasks of data collection and coding at the same time to ensure my emerging themes could be explored with my research participants and the wider school community. This ongoing reflexivity during the second and secure trustworthiness but also to have discussions with my research supervisory team to ensure research rigour. Discussing the relations and structures, and my interpretation of emerging themes with my supervisors as I was engaging on both my data collection and early analysis allowed me to check my own bias as recommended by Charmaz (2006) and answer their questions by going back into the field and looking for further examples.

Making my Exit

As it came to the end of a year in the field, practically in terms of my deadline, I knew I should start to think about withdrawing from the field and I started to feel 'lost' as Fitzpatrick (2019) has described in her discussion of completing an ethnographic field study and the sense of loss. Being so involved in the girl's experiences on a weekly basis on a Wednesday, I had also often felt like the days in between were also lost moments. How many more examples of gender code and identity could I have captured if I had been present Monday to Friday? Often the girls would come to me on a Wednesday full of news about something that had happened in the prefect room or in a school assembly and the day before and I would lament the lost opportunity that I had missed by only attending on Wednesdays. As an ethnographer, I reflected that this was the reality, when your study aim has been to embed yourself among your research participants with the aim of making sense of experiences from their perspectives and viewpoints, no amount of time is enough. The more involved with ethnographer you become, the more lost you feel. These feelings have been discussed in detail by the feminist ethnographer and educationist Lather (2012) who has discussed how getting lost is a methodological tool in ethnography that produces new knowledge. Allowing yourself to get lost, is like, Delamont's presentation of making research strange, the way the ethnographer must strip away their own skills and knowledge and start from a place of the unknown.

While engaging with these processes and ensuring they receive adequate attention and allow deep thought into how you enter the field, these methods of getting lost make knowing when to make you exit very hard. In the initial stages of my ethnography, I had happily allowed myself to be slotted into Youth Alpha at the school, an extra in the prefect room, be taken on tours and sit in staff offices as all the knowledge was new and strange and I wanted it to direct my research. These principles, however, are not so easy to follow when you are trying to make an exit and leave the field at the right time. I had a feeling that without practical forces at play, I would still be sitting at St Francis, or walking with the girls up the hill, as there was no sense of closure or finality to my study. In the last few months, I did make several half-hearted attempts to introduce a final session many times. When we made our last trip of the year to the care home, I told myself I should start to wrap up my research and then again as it approached Christmas, I suggested to the girls that I would finish visiting them then. Over Christmas, however, as I read through my field diary a number of new questions came to me, and when the email came from Mr D about whether I would be coming back in, I planned a couple of final sessions.

So, it continued. In February I was expecting a baby, but at the beginning of that month the girls wanted to pay a final visit to say goodbye to the ladies in the home. Heavily pregnant, I climbed the

hill making more promises that I would come to see them after the baby was born. It was not just the lost moments of the ethnography but the emotional attachment that was making it difficult to leave as many other researchers writing on ethnography have described (Monchamp, 2007, Blackman, 2007, Fitzpatrick, 2019). I did make one final visit at the end of February and perhaps that seemed like the better time, the girls had become heavily involved in thinking about their exams and seemed to have shifted in their thinking and focus. However, in any ways my engagement with the field did not end here as everything changed in March 2020 for the girls and for me, and the world, with the arrival of the global pandemic. Within a few weeks of leaving the field I received my first forwarded email from the girls, which they have agreed can be written about as part of my research. The email, which came from Etta, said:

> We *just wanted to say hi, we are all still in touch via social media, but we all feel so strange because the exams were all cancelled, and all that we have been thinking about is done and to be honest it feels pretty strange (Email, April 2020).*

These emails continued intermittently throughout lockdown, just brief updates about exercise they were trying and the schools they were going to. Gradually as they chose different schools, I only heard from Bea, Etta, and Annie. In many ways I do not feel like I left the field. I gradually moved away and in fact kept the girls with me as I conducted my analysis and writing up. My feelings about leaving the field (if I ever did) are summed by Fitzpatrick (2019) and her feelings about her own last exit from ethnography:

> *I feel a sense of wistfulness, and a lingering sadness. Is it regret? I don't think so, but something of loss lingers at the edge of my memory*… (2019: 168).

She goes on to reference Delamont (2016) who has aptly discussed the way that bringing an ethnographic study to a close always feels like unfinished business. Reading these reflections as I tried to bring my own project to an end was a reassuring way to accept the way my attachment to the field carried on, long into 2020, and with many points of reconnection along the way.

Writing in lockdown

Writing up my thesis in lockdown, after a year in the field, felt unusual. In many ways it was a gift as it was the time I needed to retreat with minimal distractions and focus on how I was going to tell the stories of the girls. As Fitzpatrick alludes to, I felt a mixture of feelings at finishing my fieldwork that included '*fatigue, break through, tension, excitement, alienation, responsibility and loss*' (2019: 166). Perhaps, most poignant to this study, is that ultimately, I felt a sense of responsibility. That sense of responsibility for others that had driven, identified, and acted to disempower the girls in my study, was now a part of me. I felt a sense of duty and a huge sense of responsibility to tell the story authentically, and this acted as a great motivator for me every time fatigue set in. I had many attempts written up events or exchanges from my ethnography, but suddenly I felt overwhelmed by the task in front of me, how do I choose the way I tell it, how do I choose what goes in and what stays out. As Humphreys and Watson (2009) describe writing up an ethnography is an account, and it is separate to the field work. While the challenge to writing the field diary is making sure every detail is included and nothing is left out, the complexity of writing up is choosing what goes in.

While Humphreys and Watson do describe the ethnographer at this stage as a 'craftsman' using the words of Wright Mills from the sociological imagination, (2009: 42) '*Avoid any rigid set of procedures*', they also acknowledge that the first step of any craftsman is to look at the work of more experienced workers. Reading ethnographies for inspiration became my new hobby, and I did not stay with education and school studies but ventured into a range of topics and themes. My ethnography is an example of plain ethnography in that I attempting to produce an account that corresponds as closely as possible to what I saw in the field, (Humphreys and Watson, 2009) but also, I wanted to write the story of the girls in a way that is engaging as Van Maanen describes:

> *The trick of ethnography is to adequately display the culture (or, more commonly, parts of the culture) in a way that is meaningful to readers without great distortion (Van Maanen 2011, p.13.*

It was important to me that this was not only an account of their lives but that it was an interwoven story that showed how my ethnography had moved and shifted, it had begun within the four walls of the school and its structures but had moved outside and beyond. It had started with a large group but had finished with a strong connection between me and the six girls. My writing up needed to explore those stages.

The challenge when I first began setting out the story was how much of myself, and my own interpretation, should be woven into the narrative. While I was not writing an autobiographical or autoethnographical study, I realised that it was impossible to keep my ethnographic self out of the study, that in fact the self is a resource in ethnography that plays a huge part in the data and how its shared (Collins and Gallinat, 2010). Viewing myself as a resource in the research and writing up process means accepting the self as an instrument in the story. During the writing up period Collins and Gallinat (2010) suggest that seeing yourself as a resource in ethnography takes you further than the reflexive turn, it brings you in a space beyond reflexivity and towards autoethnography when you bring in your own experiences into the writing up. While I was keen to ensure this study remained focused on the lives of the St Francis girls, I knew it was important to bring in my own experiences as a project lead and researcher in schools. It was those experiences that had already given me an insight and understanding of young people and volunteering that this study built on. As such my prior knowledge and experience of school-based volunteering programmes was an early dataset that needed to be included in the write up.

Lockdown gave me a space to reflect, plan and attempt several different versions of my ethnography. Weatherall (2019:110) has described how even though the writing up process is full of anxiety, '*doctoral writing is a privileged site of becoming a researcher*'. In my space away from the world as everything closed down, I certainly felt privileged to be writing up my research. As a doctoral student, how we write the ethnography is as important as our data set and it requires care and attention (Grey and Sinclair, 2006; Pullen, 2018). Writing was complex. While I was writing for the girls of my study, I knew there was a high chance that they would not read it, so wanting the research to have as much impact within voluntary sector and educational studies, I needed to make sure it was as much about structures and practices as the girls' experience of them. The writing up became about balancing my representation of the girl's story with my social justice motivations, I wated to emphasise the ways they experienced power and exclusion to fulfil my own social mission, and therefore that is why the story was told from a critical feminist perspective.

'We finished DofE!'

In June 2021 almost two years since I last saw the girls from my study, I was forwarded an email from Mr D and the DofE Lead. The subject stated, '*We finished DofE*' with several photos attached to the email showing Bea, Etta, and Annie with backpacks on, compasses and maps. In each one they were laughing and smiling and posing in a different countryside place. At this point, as I was close to

writing up the final draft of my thesis, finally I felt a sense that my research was almost finished. I reflected on the way that the girls still felt a responsibility to report back to me that they had completed DofE. I had worked so hard to disassociate myself from the award and ensure the girls knew I was observing their experiences and I was not judging whether they should or should not do the volunteering, but still it had been important to them that I knew they had finished. Researching with young people is problematic in this sense as they are always trying to second guess the answer that you want them to give or the way you would like them to behave. Adler et al, (2019) have provided lots of examples of how young people will try to give the answers the interviewer wants to hear and how to overcome this. By working with the girls over a long period and observing them on different times and weeks and in different settings, I had tried to overcome this element of the power relationship. Nevertheless, I had struggled with this at other points in my ethnography and this reporting back seemed another example of how the girls felt a sense of duty and responsibility to me, like they did to Mr D, the DofE lead, the ladies in the care home, their families, school, and wider society. The email read '*We thought you would like to know that we finally finished DofE, I know it seemed impossible, but we did it and we know you and the DofE guy would be happy*.'

Looking back over other emails I had received from the girls at different points since leaving the field, and looking again at the photos, I had a different reflection. This entire study had been about how the girls had been engaged in service volunteering through coerced gendered practices of mandatory school approaches and persuasion through their sense of empathy and care, it had focused on the fact that volunteering was no longer voluntary and the impact of that on how the girls learned their position in society. Yet, here were three different girls. After leaving St Francis in 2020, they had enrolled at a sixth form in the nearest city and started a new adventure. Emails forwarded to me at that time had been indicated nerves and excitement. '*We thought you'd want to know we are going to a new sixth form, me, Annie and Bea, and we will have to travel by train every day and we won't be far away from the university*.' They had taken that opportunity, which took them out of their school and community, and into somewhere new. Then they had chosen to complete DofE, by themselves, voluntarily. Just as when the four months at the care home had finished, but the girls had decided to carry on, this was another example of them choosing to be involved, rather than being coerced. That seemed to me to be something very positive and an interesting outcome of their experience.

As I finished the write up of my thesis and looked back on this email, one of my final reflections was the ways in which I had impacted on the girl's lives. As a researcher it is important to observe and tell facts how they are or how you see them without changing the course of those you are researching. Yet, just as, those historical anthropological studies led to transformation and change

within the communities studied, so did I have an impact on the lives of the girls (Pels, 2008). I often realised that I, too, acted as a status symbol for the girls and impacted on the power relations. Often when they were shouted to do one of their prefect chores, they would point to me and say that they were busy with their researcher. The idea that they were being researched made them feel special and valued. Bea, Etta and Annie, now at university in the city, are planning to come to the university they know I work at to look around. They have a dream now that they will study here, and while it is not accurate to say this would not have happened anyway, it is important to acknowledge the way I became a role model for them. Asking me questions about my life they were excited and intrigued to hear about travelling, work or other aspects of my life, they asked me about clothes and family. As Owton and Allen-Collinson (2013), emotion and friendship with the girls was very important to collect honest and true perspectives, but the process meant a lot of careful attention to the relationship. Sharing information, but not intervening, listening but not advising.

When I received the email that they had completed DofE I realised my impact had been greater than I expected. Yet, I reflected, as Blackman (2007) had on the value of the hidden ethnography and on the view of Owton and Allen-Collinson (2013:302) '*that that despite the challenges, the kinds of relationships such 'insider' status offers can lead to valuable and even unique insights*.' They warn that the relationship can become complex for both researcher and researched, however, due to age, and location the school space had ensured that our research relationship became friendly but uncompromised.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the ways that I left the field. It explores the complexities of this using examples from my field work of how there was never an obvious time for the study to end. Like so many ethnographic studies, this study was also ended by forces outside the field. The chapter has looked issues of reflexivity and writing up, showing how the processes overlapped and occurred while connections with my research participants continued. Working on my thesis, outside the field, my field work did not feel complete until I received a message showing the students had left St Francis, the research field and completed DofE, the task we were involved in together. This represents the last of my empirical chapters and data about the girls, and my own experiences of writing and reflexivity.

Chapter 10: Conclusion: The girls that serve

Introduction

St Francis shows how volunteering activities for girls can be a further reinforcement of the gendered societal stereotypes schools reproduce through their daily rituals, practices, and relations. At St Francis, the identity of the girls is rooted in classed and gendered norms around their caring and this is confirmed by the domestic roles and responsibilities they have at school and at home. The school based DofE volunteering experience acts as another mechanism to underline their role in a gendered way. This thesis argues that the girls learn to serve in ways that are gendered and exclusive to the way volunteering is experienced by girls. Learning to serve has its foundations in the ways volunteering has been framed in classed ways over the past three decades and beyond, with volunteering playing a key part in the youth and education agenda around citizenship and social mobility. While boys also take part in service volunteering, research in this school found that the roles that the girls took on were limited to caring ones, while boys were often rewarded with public recognition and leadership. This thesis argues that service volunteering has a particular framing for young people who are considered disadvantaged, as they are labelled at St Francis. I argue that deficit narratives of low community and student aspirations are used to justify mandatory approaches and coerce the young people at St Francs into participating, based on an idea that the volunteering experience will help them become good citizens. Even the coercion is gendered at St Francis, with boys still more able to drop out and girls coerced through incentives of care, empathy, duty, and responsibility, rather than promises of CV, leadership, and employability opportunities. This is also important within the debate on informal volunteering and the invisible contributions within working-class communities. Not only are women and girls taking on greater responsibility, but their contributions also remain unrecognised.

This study is concerned about the current support for service volunteering and mandatory approaches, not only because of the way they these approaches transform the volunteering experience, but also in the way the reproduce unequal classed positions of young people in society across England. The results, however, are more concerning when observed through a feminist lens and the way the roles of young girls are being confined to domestic, invisible contributions and how by maintaining an identity of care and empathy, young girls are becoming more invisible in a society based on patriarchal, neoliberal values.

This chapter brings the study together arguing that the key themes for this thesis are learning to respect caring, and substituting volunteering for service, for volunteering for action. Concluding the

thesis with reflections on limitations and suggested ways forward for the education and voluntary sector, this thesis calls for volunteering and education to be used as a mechanism for change, not the reproduction of classed, gendered norms and the status quo. The study believes this ethnography can contribute to the understanding of how everyday small acts and rituals can maintain power relations and exclude groups within society, and it is a step forward in thinking about how we challenge these acts, rituals, and structures.

Gilligan's (2004) overall position on the way caring devalues and diminishes women's power in patriarchal structures is useful to this study. It provides an overarching theory to understanding the girls, women, and dominating structures at St Francis. Skeggs' (2002) framework of identity and capital, and how caring becomes a form of capital sits within this framework. As does Arnot (2002) and her framework, which, usefully, can be applied to schools and structures. Together, these three theories provide a way of revealing and explaining the hidden inequalities and gender bias at St Francis and allowed this study a way of describing and discussing the way the girls were experiencing school duties and volunteering through relations and structures governed by implicit power.

The central notion that weaved their experiences together was the way that caring, and responsibility for caring, limited the girls' sense of power and agency, and this was reinforced by other theories within sociology and voluntary sector studies. Taylor (2005) and Dean's (2021) arguments that look at reconceptualising volunteering to understand the hidden ways communities care for one another or the informal volunteering reveals the way women and girls are more likely to be the ones carrying out more hidden caring responsibilities. Other voluntary sector scholars such as Muddiman et al (2020) have emphasised how women nurture and influence the volunteers and activists of the future, but are underrepresented in leadership, while finally Tronto and Fischer's (1997) feminist look at caring has deepened the arguments about how being caring places women as responsible for the problems, rather than the ones leading the solutions. Caring and the way that it dominates the experience of the girls and the way it positions them in the power structure is the way this study, data from the field diary and theory are woven together.

A concept of care capital

The powerful way that care and caring have emerged as interwoven themes across the different stories of my ethnography has taken me back to the question of where caring would be located within Bourdieu's theories of capital. Care and caring were embedded in the lives, experiences and identities of the girls at St Francis and in this conclusion I offer a provocation about the missing role

of care in Bourdieu's theories of capital by tentatively suggesting that care could be considered a form of capital in its own right. Care capital, in this study, would be defined as the caring roles that define different relations and the caring responsibilities that individuals align with and identify themselves with. However I am also suggesting a definition of care capital can be understood as the use of care as a resource or asset that can be applied to cultural advantage. As a concept it could sit within or alongside Bourdieu's theories of cultural and symbolic capital. Care capital, as a concept, is based on care that is perceived as a positive attribute within ones identity and an attribute that can be used to gain certain social relations and position. Bourdieu himself defined capital as having ' *the potential capacity to produce profits'* (1986:15) and I believe that examples shared in this fieldwork show the girl's positive belief in their role as caring and how they value the sense of caring that formed their identity. I believe the girls used care and caring as a form of capital when they describe their position in school and society and that they all refer to their role as carers when defining their identity and social relations. My provocation to extend Bourdieu's capital builds on the arguments of other feminist theorists including Skeggs (2002), Reay (2004b) and Huppatz (2009) who have all described the omission of gender within Bourdieu's theories of capital, and also suggested their own forms of capital, (emotional, feminine and female), these feminist scholars also believe that the accumulation of capital is a gendered as well as classed process.

Skeggs (2002) along with Reay (2004b) and Huppatz (2009) locate their extensions of gendered forms of capital within Bourdieu's conceptualisations of cultural and symbolic capital. My understanding of care capital applies the ideas of Skeggs (2002) who uses Bourdieu's framework of capital to show the way women and girls form their identities within the context of their social and cultural relations. As Reay (2004a) has suggested 'cultural capital' has been misrepresented and narrowly seen as taste, but if, in fact, cultural capital is about '*modes of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and qualities of style'* (2004:58) transmitted through the family then caring could fit within this. A key way of understanding culture Skeggs (2002) argues is to see it as a resource, she believes the women she worked with sae care as a cultural part of their identity. Creating their identity based on a concept of respectability, they talk about their role as carers as an important resource. Central to the idea of care capital is the framings of women as 'capital bearing subjects' rather than 'capital bearing objects' (Huppatz 2010) and the idea that capital is used to advantage. While it has been observed that the low status of care (Dowling 2020) can lead to gender inequalities (as it did for the girls as St Francis), we are missing half the picture if we do not understand how care is also used as a 'cultural resource' by the girls. While the girls were obliged to take up gendered roles of care, they also, as discussed by Huppatz (2009:49), held '*perceptions of advantage arising from ownership of feminine dispositions*' and did discuss care and caring as an

advantage within their identities and experiences. This can be seen when Bea describes the qualities that will make her a good head girl, caring is the focus.

Using Dean's (2015) discussion of the concepts of habitus and cultural capital is useful here to explain how the girls at St Francis were brought up with caring as part of their habitus, the '*everyday practices*' (2015:975) that ensured their roles and responses were gendered, but how also simultaneously care and caring formed part of the girls 'cultural capital' and how they navigated their social world. Decisions about volunteering, the roles chosen, and the experiences of their voluntary project all revealed gendered identities and behaviours that were often linked to the concept of care and caring. Using these examples I am proposing that more could be revealed about the position of gendered care and caring, both as habitus and as capital by reworking Bourdieu's concepts of capital to add a notion of care capital, it could enable a better understanding of the way care informs identities and plays a part in socially feminised roles as well as the way women and girls experience power and use care and caring within their social and cultural relations. An important theme of this study is the relationship between female associations of caring and gendered inequalities. One of the key contributions of this research is the way caring positioned the girls within school relations and structures, and the need for caring to be respected and repositioned, but also how the girls perceived care and caring to be a resource.

In line with Tronto (1994, 2013) I believe that life would be different for the St Francis girls if caring was repositioned within school, families, and wider society and this is the shift that Tronto has called for on a global and political scale, she argues for a rethink of current political ideology that neglects and devalues ethics of care within our moral boundaries. Dowling (2021) has shown how our current care crisis has been created by the unequal distribution of caring within our society. Tronto (2013) argues for a caring democracy, she argues that current market democracies exclude the everyday, non-profit-making activities that make up our daily lives, the need for care, for ourselves, for our families, the elderly and the unwell. A preoccupation for income driven activities means caring responsibilities fall to the few, and the caring roles are defined in raced, classed, and gendered ways. This is what Dowling has called a 'care deficit' (2021) both structurally and morally, she shows how we face a shortage of care workers in society, but we, as individuals, also do not have the time for everything and therefore neglect our own caring responsibilities. These caring responsibilities include the care we take of ourselves, our families, and our communities, they have all been culturally regulated for a consumer driven lifestyle. To change this, Tronto (2013) proposes democratic citizens need to work together to identify the caring needs of communities and assign responsibilities in a more equal and democratic way. The concept of caring is cultural and political.

Learning to act, not serve

This study also offers important reflections on the value of service volunteering for young people and alternative approaches to school and youth volunteering projects. Over the last ten years, in line with service volunteering approaches in the England, a large amount of government funding has been allocated to the NCS, with long-term aims of the programmes including social cohesion, social mobility and social engagement. Yet over the last few years the NCS has received criticism within the youth sector. New Philanthropy Capital, who were involved in the evaluation of the pilot project have urged caution on the amounts being invested in the programme, when long-term effects are not yet visible, (London Economics Report, 2018). The Local Government Association and other youth sector organisations have highlighted that NCS does not reach the most disadvantaged and have all argued the money would be better spent elsewhere in the sector, putting funding back into services that have a long history of working with young people. In 2020 it was reported that government spending on youth services had been cut by 70% over a decade (YMCA Report, 2020). With the long-term effects unknown and a negative relationship between mandatory volunteering and voluntary participation as an adult (Helms, 2013), findings from this thesis suggest a different approach to volunteering could lead to better experiences for young people.

More recently the concepts of volunteering and volunteerism have been adopted by those researchers writing by youth engagement (Ganesh and McAllum, 2016). Moving beyond volunteering framed around service, another narrative about volunteerism can be found in discourses talking about solutions to social problems and community empowerment (Ganesh and McAllum, 2016). Within the narrative around community apathy and decline, volunteering is often presented as the solution linked to increased civic engagement and participation, (Smith, 1999). This narrative has been used in the drive to connect volunteering to politics rooted in a perceived global decline in the levels of youth civic and political engagement (Cammaerts et al. 2014; Henn and Foard 2012b; O'Toole 2015; Pontes, Henn, and Griffiths 2017). Over the last forty years while there has been a steady decline in political participation (Cammaerts et al. 2013), but there has been an increase in young people using forms of activism, including street protests, informal groups, and online campaigning groups (Elliot and Earl, 2018). This new focus on youth action portrays young people and volunteering in a much more positive light, with volunteering framed as the mechanism for action to beat social problems, rather than as a solution to young people as a social problem themselves.

This collective action is referred to as the spirit of volunteerism, the United Nations and other leading youth organisations use the term as a way of describing the will to harness young people's

energy as a solution to social problems. The #iwill campaign, a coalition of UK youth organisations has also adopted this language around collective action and volunteering in the last two years have launched several campaigns including the Power of Youth which links the power of youth volunteering to global change-makers such as Greta Thunberg. The key difference to other participatory approaches is that we are now seeing a growing celebration of the ways young people are challenging governments and policymakers on issues of climate change, racism, sexism, and inequality. The so-called Greta effect has seen a refocus on the importance of listening to young people and the ways they are challenging authority and structures through demonstrations such as school absences and online campaigns. The #iwill campaign launched a celebration of youth action and voice, calling on higher structures to listen to young people, particularly throughout the pandemic when young people have been isolated from their usual networks. Celebrating the ways young people are standing for up causes and using their time to make a difference is a much more positive narrative and represents a break from seeing young people as citizens of service, not action.

Focusing on how volunteering and collective action can drive social change fits with the approach to citizenship education presented by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Their argument creates a typology of the different kind of citizens that different policymaking tries to create. While service volunteering and mandatory community service approaches underpin a drive to create *the personally responsible citizen* and *participatory citizen* (2004:4), a focus on the ways young people can discuss, debate and challenge on global issues is much more line with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) *justice-orientated citizen*, in which they argue is the kind of citizen that is important for effective democracy.

> *The vision of the justice-oriented citizen shares with the vision of the participatory citizen an emphasis on collective work related to the life and issues of the community. Its focus on responding to social problems and to structural critique make it somewhat different, however. Building on perspectives like those of Freire and Shor noted earlier, educational programs that emphasize social change seek to prepare students to improve society by critically analyzing and addressing social issues and injustices. (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004: 4).*

Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) case studies of different youth programmes in education showed the impact of the way programmes did or did not debate and discussion of inequality and

democratic principles. While each programme achieved its goals and young people made valuable contributions to society, the programmes that included democratic debate achieved more impact among young people and their engagement with social issues. This study shows the ways that service volunteering, while achieving positive contributions from young people did not challenge inequalities but instead reproduced societal gendered roles and inequality, and therefore it brings into question the validity of service-led approaches.

Limitations to study

This is a single school study and therefore the lack of comparison is a limitation. The thesis is not attempting to suggest that all school experiences of prefect systems and volunteering are coerced and gendered. Equally, this study is not suggesting that every DofE experience becomes embedded in school power structures and practices. Indeed, the field diary presents very personalised examples of events unique only to St Francis, with its own socio-cultural norms that create the school's character and shape the student experience. As a researcher, I rarely had the feeling that the students at St Francis were unhappy, during my year within the school I became attached to the building, the routine, the school staff, and the students. I witnessed many moments of laughter, celebration, and solidarity. For as often as the students moaned about homework or teachers, or the school rules, they referred to happy memories, funny episodes in class and often talked about the school community as their family. This thesis is not attempting to discredit the work of the school or the team within it.

Equally, this thesis is not trying to generalise the work of the DofE or suggest it always runs gendered projects; many young people across the world cite the DofE experience as pivotal and life changing and there is extensive research out there that shows positive links between the DofE experience and self-confidence. Indeed, this thesis is only trying to show what the ethnography revealed to me as a researcher in this school. As an observer, rather than a participant in the daily activities of the school, I spent a year in a unique position. I could see what often is hidden and what often remains invisible. That is the way simple, everyday acts and words are symbolic, on their own they seem irrelevant, but when these everyday acts and words interact and build on each other they can create the construction of identities, they can become mechanisms for power, and they can reproduce inequalities. The data in this thesis shows how the interplay of small, insignificant everyday actions and words can work together to create and maintain constructions of identity, support relations of

power and removal of agency, which changes and influences the experiences of the students, especially the girls.

To further understand the way that power and gendered stereotypes infiltrate and become embedded in youth volunteering programmes, much wider study is needed within different contexts. The area where this study is located is characterised by the selective school systems that categorises and informs the identity of young people, in the same way the coastal communities within this area have their own sub-cultures and identities. Other studies of DofE in different contexts, non-selective, rural, and urban would, presumably, produce different themes and tensions and it would be interesting to see how whether gender was an important theme in other contexts. Even within the school, despite my connection and interviews with the boys, I would have liked more time observing and working with those boys who did not engage and withdrew from the volunteering project at the first opportunity. Understanding the way that the identity of the boys played a part in their decision to opt out would have been deepened my understanding of the gender code at St Francis.

My research project would have also benefited from more time as well as comparatives studies. First planned to start in September 2018, the fieldwork was subject to the postponements and delays that so often characterise school research projects. The fieldwork was dependent on finding a secondary school willing to host the research for a year, where a DofE volunteering project was starting. Low sign ups and a shortage in numbers of those who wanted to be involved were problematic for this study as well as the DofE. Pressure of deadlines did not allow me to wait until the school were ready, instead I had to change location to begin at a school where there were some sign ups. As with all studies, the ethnography could have continued for longer with more observations of the school, and volunteering alongside the girls. Deadlines and the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions ensured that revisiting the school for additional fieldwork was an impossibility.

Sampling was also a limitation. Despite choosing a school in a particular location, I still did not have access to the students who were more likely to feel disengaged and avoid participating. The students in my research group were the higher attaining students from the school and the ones who had been selected as prefects, and, participating in DofE was another step in their path to achieve prefect status. Despite raising this with the school, and requesting access to a more mixed group, there was no real solution offered and so I had to work with the students available. This is often the case within institutional ethnographic studies, although official access is obtained at the highest level, access challenges can continue within an organisation with its own layer and communities (Grant, 2017). Access from the headteacher had been readily given at St Francis, however the

months that followed included more challenges as I worked hard to get to know the staff, and student timetables, to gain access to my research participants. These limitations did limit access, however I still believed that with additional time spent in school and perceptions gathered from students, staff, and visitors that my ethnography allowed me a deep and rich insight into the school. Follow up studies with other social groups within the school could have given me more comparative data, but it was a limitation I worked hard to overcome. It is important that those reading this research recognise the fact it exists as an in-depth study of one school context, valuable ways that school and society cultures reproduce inequality can still be learned as I had close and inside access to the girl's experiences and perceptions.

In the future

The inequalities in this study are structural and caused by political and ideological systems that need huge cultural and political shifts to dismantle and will need to be part of wider social change. Nevertheless, practitioners within the education and voluntary sector are committed to gender and class equality and can make changes to everyday practices and systems within education and voluntary projects on an operational level at school or in the volunteering space. This section of the thesis provides a series of recommendations for those working with young people at school or within the voluntary sector. The recommendations also suggest the ways this study can support the positions of feminist thought and policymaking around youth and education.

Recognising the volunteering young people are already doing

This study, building on others (Mills and Waite, 2016, Jardim and Marques da Silva, 2018) has shown how volunteering projects tackling young people considered disadvantaged are often introduced through deficit notions of young people. It often assumes they are not involved in their community and builds up a picture of skills that they do not have but that they can achieve by participating. In this study DofE was introduced built around the ways it could improve skills and raise aspirations, including messages about dreaming bigger and becoming more resilient and ambitious. However, volunteering could be introduced to young people in a different way. In the introductory session of projects such as DofE there could be an attempt to unveil and recognise some of the informal ways young people are already contributing to society every day. There could be questions about how many people help a neighbour, have sibling or relative childcare responsibilities, look after elderly grandparents, donate to charity though books or toys or help their community in other ways. This

would lead to a more positive starting point that also works hard to show that not all volunteering is formalised, and that we should be celebrating the acts of caring that young people are contributing to every day, the way their contributions support a healthy community and allow society to function, as well as building the skills and character of young people. This would help challenge some of the negative assumptions about young people, class and volunteering and raise the status and recognition of informal volunteering and caring.

Carry out a volunteer audit

In session one or within school and conversations of school duties and structures, practitioners could carry out a volunteer audit. Based on the acts of informal volunteering that had already been introduced and formal volunteering projects and activities, the practitioner could get a sense, not only of how many students already volunteer within the room, but also the types of volunteering roles they do and whether trends exist. For example, are girls more likely to be volunteering than boys, or are there certain roles take up by girls and by boys, or there are other cultural dimensions to volunteering, within different social groups. By reviewing the responses of this audit within the group, the discussion is then opened to examining some of the societal classed and gendered norms around roles, duties, and participation. It starts the conversation from a place of openness and honesty about the kinds of stereotypes thar drive the way we are involved in activities at home, school and in society. This also provides a good space to talk about service and action. The audit can address what kind of social benefit or social change volunteering leads to, it can show the difference between serving your community and taking action to address the issues or lead on lasting change.

Review traditional school structures

Gender code was present within many of the traditional faith and school value structures at St Francis. The prefect and head girl and boy structures all have their roots in traditional English public school society, which was both elitist and sexist, it is hard to shake off these biases when bringing these structures into modern society. Bernstein (1996) defines schools as open or closed and both the prefect and head boy and girl structure would provide an example of how symbolic boundaries are held up by the rituals and practices within a school and how this controls this acoustic (Bernstein,1996:98). Singh (2019) focuses on the dominant yet invisible pedagogies of school claiming it can feel from within like pushing against the symbolic boundaries of the school. Using the work of Singh, it is important to advocate the use of alternative pedagogies, critical, anti-racist and

feminist as ways of surmounting these boundaries. If student leadership structures such as prefects and heads are still felt to be appropriate for the school, it is important that they are reviewed. In 2021 a school in Hammersmith made the decision to rename the role of Head Girl to Head of School to ensure the label was not binary, and to reflect the conversations their students were having about gender identity. Reviewing the structures and practices of the student roles needs to form part of school structures in order to challenge gender bias, changing the title is just the first step, it is important that the structures also examine the roles, power relations and practices they are reinforcing to ensure they are in line with empowering students, rather than marginalising different social groups within the school.

Be open about institutional classed and gendered inequality

Many schools and volunteering organisations do not have class, race, and gender equality. While this is not a situation that cannot be transformed overnight, schools and volunteering organisations such as DofE need to be open and up to date about their own inequalities within structures and hierarchies. Lingayah et al's 2020 study into the voluntary sector has highlighted the work that needs to be done across the voluntary sector and feminist work into race, gender and class inequality in schools has identified recent sexism and sexual inequality and abuse. The starting point is a commitment to transparency about the structures and bias, and a pledge to address the balance and expose discrimination. This is very much in line with the openness the younger generation is calling for across society and it is important institutions and organisations looks inward as well as looking at that impact on society.

Ensure action, critical debate and voice are a lived part of school and organisational values

Biesta (2019, 2020) has argued for freedom in education, and that can only be achieved by the process of education he describes as subjectification, which is the recognition that the child is the subject of their own life. To ensure this happens within the classroom, Biesta (2011), has suggested that it is important to see the whole purpose of education as a means to give pupils space for democratic reasoning and moral questioning. Approaches based on this philosophy encourage teachers and young people to engage in critical debate and discussion around topics of social injustice, inequality, caring and social action. At St Francis, their values were based around service and faith, yet they also state they are progressive and forward looking. In line with that it is

important that schools, and voluntary organisations encourage debate, action, and celebrate the value of student voice.

Conclusion

This is the last chapter of this research study. I hope that this thesis strengthens the feminist voices calling for a new respect and repositioning of caring in political and moral thinking, and encourages policy that promotes action, rather than service in young people's volunteering programmes. The recommendations in this study call for voluntary sector practitioners and educationalists to consistently try to reveal the acts of caring and helping that are hidden, and to celebrate every act, whether it is classed as formal volunteering or not. At the same time, it is important they seek to empower young people into action as well as service. Those working with young people in schools and youth organisations should challenge what is unequal, to seek to recognise and understand where structural inequalities come from and to call out all inequalities, including ones of gender. Finally, it is essential that policymakers and practitioners pursue a way of working with young people that debates, discusses and challenges the inequalities of society. Education and volunteering can both play a huge role in helping the next generation fight societal class, race, and gender bias, rather than continuing to act as cogs in society's inequalities and injustices. This thesis does close with a word of warning: shifting the balance, addressing gender inequalities, and celebrating care and action will require a move away from the dominant neoliberal ideologies and patriarchal systems that institutionally and socially bind us to a belief in market-led values and their importance. Inequalities of class and gender cannot be solved by individuals, but by collective acts of exposing and dismantling the structures, and this involves recognising the societal bias that exists in our everyday lives.

Appendix A: Ethics Form

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review
Application for full review

For Faculty Office use only	
FREC Protocol No:	**Date received:**

*Your application **must** comprise the following documents (please tick the boxes below to indicate that they are attached):*

Application Form	*x*
Peer Review Form	*x*
Copies of any documents to be used in the study:	
Participant Information Sheet(s)	*x*
Consent Form(s)	*x*
Introductory letter(s)	*x*
Questionnaire	
Focus Group Guidelines	*x*

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review
Application for full review

1. PROJECT DETAILS

MAIN RESEARCHER	EMILY LAU
E-MAIL	
POSITION WITHIN CCCU	Researcher and Senior Lecturer
POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU	
COURSE (students only)	PhD Education
DEPARTMENT (staff only)	Faculty of Education
PROJECT TITLE	Social action within the constraints of neoliberal citizenship. Exploring young people's experiences of volunteering at a Kent school.
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME	Dr Alison Body
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL	

DURATION OF PROJECT (start & end dates)	January 2019 – December 2019

OTHER RESEARCHERS	

2. OUTLINE THE ETHICAL ISSUES THAT YOU THINK ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.

Ethical issues in brief:

1) Young people will be asked to reflect on their own life experiences and plans, as well as talk about their own skills and futures. This gives the discussions a potentially sensitive nature and, therefore, there are a number of potential 'risks' for those participating, which could come as a result of the discussions that are had in the focus group interactions. For example, if a discussion point reminded participants of a particular distressing experience etc.
2) Young people may also be aware of the fact they are being observed and their comments are being recorded. The researcher will work closely with the school to ensure all young people have clear information about the research and that all consent forms are well explained and obtained.
3) The project adopts a critical analysis of the Duke of Edinburgh within a school setting. There is a risk that critical challenges about the programme and delivery will be raised.

3. GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT in no more than 100 words. (*Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and expected outcomes.)* Please ensure that your description will be understood by the lay members of the Committee.

The research project examines young people's experiences of the Duke of Edinburgh Award when delivered in a school setting.

Participants will be young people aged 13 – 14 and be in Year 9 and 10 at xxx, and participating in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme for the first time. The researcher has a good relationship with the school and has worked with staff on several research projects, the Headteacher has approved participation in this study. Data collection will include baseline-surveying, ethnographic observation and focus groups.

Participants' activities will be both audio and video recorded, and the data will be transcribed with their consent and analysed. Only the researcher and supervisors will view any video data. It will be used for data analysis.

The researcher expects outcomes including a deeper understanding of children's experience of volunteering, social action and the DfE programme, an understanding of young people's perspectives and feelings towards volunteering and social action and to be able to explore whether the experience of young people matches with the mission and objectives of the DfE.

4. How many participants will be recruited?	Year 9 and 10, up to 100 students to take part in baseline and survey work, with focused work taking place with a single class cohort (up to 30)
5. Will you be recruiting STAFF or STUDENTS from another faculty?	YES/**NO** If yes, which Faculty? **IMPORTANT**: If you intend to recruit participants from another Faculty, this form must be copied to the Dean of the Faculty concerned, and to the Chair of that Faculty's Research Ethics Committee.
6. Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people?	**YES**/NO If yes, please add details. Year 9/10 students at xx school. This school has been chosen as it was chosen by DoE as a suitable location for additional funding into

	the DoE programme. Year 9 is the year, which DoE and the school have chosen.

7. Potential risks for participants: - Emotional harm/hurt* - Physical harm/hurt - Risk of disclosure - Other (please specify) *Please note that this includes any sensitive areas, feelings etc., however mild they may seem.	Please indicate all those that apply. **YES**/NO YES/**NO** YES/**NO**
8. How are these risks to be addressed?	The researcher is trained and experienced in working with vulnerable young people, fully aware of safeguarding and is DBS checked. Should the researcher be concerned about emotional harm/hurt of any participant she will immediately speak to a member of staff who will be acting as facilitator during the focus groups to provide immediate support. Time will be allocated to a 'debrief' period at the end of each focus group for participants to reflect upon the session, ask any questions or raise anything that may be of concern. The researcher will also agree on a shared set of 'ground rules' at the beginning of the focus groups where the researchers and participants will collectively agree on what qualities and behaviours are expected. This will be done to ensure that all participants are agreed on a set of principles to abide by during the focus groups, which can be consequently flagged up if appropriate. The researcher will also use her relationship with the school staff to ensure that she has a good understanding of the participants in focus groups and any potential issues.
9. Potential benefits for participants: - Improved services - Improved participant understanding - Opportunities for participants to have their views heard. - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. **YES**/NO **YES**/NO **YES**/NO The literature suggests that many changes to volunteering programmes for young people have adopted a branded (Mills & Waite, 2016), or manufactured (Dean, 2011) construct of citizenship and volunteering has been constructed around individualist, work-driven objectives, (Murphy, 2018). Other literature critiques the way young people are given space to participate in social action and decision-making. This study is an attempt to examine critically the DoE, as one volunteering and social action programme impacts on young people.

10. How, when and by whom will participants be approached? Will they be recruited individually or en bloc?	Through school. The school has given permission for the researcher to work with the Year 9 cohort. Letters will be sent to parents securing consent. An information letter will be supplied to all participants.
11. Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation?	All participants will be supplied with an information sheet and a consent form prior to the research, which will be returned to the researchers. The information sheet provided to both participants and parents is theirs to keep, and includes the researchers' contact details should they have any further queries about the research. The parent's information sheet also includes an 'opt out' section should they wish for their child not to participate in the research. Participants will be reassured that their participation is voluntary. Effort will be made to reassure participants it is not problematic to withdraw or ask for their contributions not to be noted. Due to the length of the time of the study regular reminders about the research will be sent.
12. How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them? - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. **YES** YES/**NO** YES/**NO** YES/**NO**

13. How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study? - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES/NO YES/NO **YES**/NO Through relationship with senior leaders at the school
14. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded? (Please give brief details).	Data will be stored securely at Canterbury Christ Church University, for a minimum of five years, at which point it will be destroyed. Digital data will be encrypted and password-protected in secure storage; participants will be anonymised in all transcripts with a self-chosen pseudonym (fake name). Data files will only be available to the researcher and will all be in line with GDPR. The researcher is trained in GDPR. Consent forms and demographic forms will be stored separately from the data and stored at a secure location at the university. Data made publicly available will be fully anonymised in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act and GDPR. Participants will be referred to anonymously in publications arising from the project. Data that does not

	breach participants' confidentiality will be made available more widely upon request
15. What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act? - Safe storage of data - Anonymisation of data - Destruction of data after 5 years - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. **YES**/NO **YES**/NO **YES/**NO
16. How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?	Key findings will be shared with the school with a presentation offered to all teaching staff involved in the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh programme. These findings will be available to parents and participants of the study on request.
17. What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their creative products and items of a personal nature?	Any audio-visual materials made that are used in data analysis will be co-created with the direction and participation of the young people. They will be consulted in the planning, filming and editing of any audio-visual data.

18. Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research. (Brief answer only)	Masters Level and experienced researcher

Attach any:

Participant information sheets and letters
Consent forms
Data collection instruments

19. If you are NOT a member of CCCU academic staff or a registered CCCU postgraduate student, what insurance arrangements are in place to meet liability incurred in the conduct of this research?	

Peer review comments

DECLARATION

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.

- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Researcher's Name: Emily Lau

Date: 14th October 2018

FOR STUDENT APPLICATION ONLY

I have read the research proposal and application form, and support this submission to the FREC.

Supervisor's Name: Dr Alison Body

Date: 15/10/2018

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE COURSE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

	NAME	DATE
Approved by Course Committee		
Checked by Faculty Committee		

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE EDUCATION FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

	NAME	DATE
Approved by Faculty Committee		

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet.

Dear Participant

I am a researcher from the Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University. As part of my PhD studies I am exploring young people's perceptions and experiences of volunteering programmes in school.

I am being supervised by Dr Alison Body and Dr Ruth Rogers from Canterbury Christ Church University and if you would like more information you can contact them at [redacted] or [redacted]

I am contacting you to ask if you are willing to take part in this research study. If you agree, this will involve observing and gathering your opinions in a focus group in order to understand the impact volunteering has on your life and decision-making. The focus groups may be recorded for data analysis, but will be available for you to see and deleted after the study is finished.

You will be free to withdraw their consent to participate at any time.

At the end of my study I will submit my thesis to the University. The findings will contribute, to a published paper looking at volunteering in schools and its impact. No individual participants will be identified within the thesis.

I will abide by the University's data protection requirements according to the General Data Protection Regulation's 2018.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor if you have any further questions. My email address is [redacted]

Yours sincerely,

Emily Lau

Researcher and Senior Lecturer

Canterbury Christ Church University

Appendix C : Consent Form

Parental consent form

I understand that my son's/daughter's participation in this project will involve:

Taking part in an interview with researcher, in which he will be asked questions about his views and experiences of volunteering in school.

During this interview, notes will be taken and the interviews video recorded for later transcription. The interview will be fully anonymised when it is transcribed. The audio files will be also then be destroyed.

I understand that my son's/daughter's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she can withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that his/her participation will be treated confidentially and all information will be stored anonymously and securely. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss any questions or comments I would like to make with the researcher.

I understand that I am free to contact the Canterbury Christ Church University Ethics Committee to discuss any complaints I might have.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to (researcher) proceeding with this study with the supervision of (supervisor).

Signature of Parent or Guardian: ……

Date: …

Appendix D : Introductory Letter

Emily Lau
North Holmes Road,
Canterbury Christ Church University

Dear (insert name)

I am a researcher from the Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University. As part of my PhD studies I am exploring young people's perceptions and experiences of volunteering programmes in school.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to give permission for me to ask your son/daughter to take part in my research. This will involve observing and gathering your son/daughter's opinions in a focus group in order to understand the impact volunteering has had on him/her.

This project will be supervised by Dr Alison Body and Dr Ruth Rogers at Canterbury Christ Church University. The observations and interviews would take place during normal school hours and may be recorded. Your son's/daughter's participation in this research will be treated confidentially and all information will be kept anonymously, meaning that no one will be able to work out what it is your child has said. Any footage will only be used for data analysis.

If you have any comments or questions about this research please could you contact my supervisor, using the contact details provided below. This research has been approved by the Canterbury Christ Church University Ethics Committee. If you wish you can contact the ethics committee by email c/o [redacted] if you have any complaints about this research.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you need more information. If you would not like your child to be involved in this research can you please let the school know at your earliest convenience so I can ensure they are not involved.

Regards,

Emily Lau

Researcher

Appendix E : Focus Group Guidelines

Focus Group Guidelines

Focus groups are about insight through guided group discussion, where participants share their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and ideas on subjects. They bring a rich source of data in participants' own words and develop deeper insights. It is very important ensure people attending feel secure and confident.

- The first minutes of the group will introduce the researcher and those in the room, taking time to outline the purpose of the focus group and of the research project. At this point participants will be reminded this is a voluntary activity and they do not need to stay if they do not want to.

- The researcher will listen attentively with sensitivity and empathy, ensure all group members have an opportunity to contribute, keeps personal views out of the discussion, and appropriately respond to any challenging group dynamics.

- Guidelines will be introduced; these include:
    i. There are no right or wrong answers, only differing points of view;
    ii. It is important to listen respectfully as others share their views a let others finish before adding your idea;
    iii. Terms of confidentiality will be agreed, e.g. ("what is shared in the room, stays in the room".

- The researcher will ensure everyone understands the group is being video or tape recorded. They will ask everyone to turn off phones or to take important calls quickly outside the room.

- The researcher will also let everyone know that they will be making notes, participants can ask to see these notes at any time or ask to see notes, recordings or films after the group.

- The findings from the focus group will be shared with the participants and their time and hard work will be valued and rewarded.

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